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Scriptural Narratives and Divine Providence: Spiritual Training in Augustine's *City of God* *

Naoki Kamimura

Abstract: In his most comprehensive work, the *City of God*, Augustine shows the destined beginning, progress, and end of the 'two cities' into which all humanity is divided: one of which is the earthly and the other of the heavenly. In the first part of the work, he attempts to refute the 'false teaching' of pagan religious practices and ideas, and then enters into a discussion of the philosophers proclaiming the usefulness of the cult of the gods. It is noteworthy that not only does Augustine admire the 'entire effort of philosophy' made first by Socrates as the 'correction and regulation of morals' (*De ciu. dei* 8.3) but emphasises the goal of the spiritual training as overcoming the limits of Platonists' philosophical reflections. I concentrate on the characteristics of Augustine's view of spiritual training in the *City of God*, thereby gaining some understanding of the perspective from which he made use of the dimension in speaking about divine providence. I shall first consider the significance of his critical assessment of the Platonists' philosophical reflection from the viewpoint of the division of all humanity. Then, in the latter part of the *City of God*, I shall ask how the different scope of the exercises of the soul is extended. Finally, I shall examine how his dealing with the appropriate attitude towards temporal realities in this life is affected and reveal the central feature of spiritual training from the viewpoint of the authority to which the soul is subject.

1 INTRODUCTION

What did Augustine think of spiritual training? This question has received frequent mention in Augustinian scholarship, particularly in Pierre Hadot's works, where the eminent classical scholar illustrates a complex set of modes of the exercises and defines this as the 'metamorphosis of our personality'.[1] Spiritual training has been regarded by some scholars as the purely intellectual training of the intelligence or mind. They hold primary attention should be given to it. All the same, the simplistic approach is problematic and merits careful deliberation. Hadot emphasises the need to consider

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[1] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. M. Chase (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 82 and 127.

the broad diversity of training and purgation of the soul within the very context of involving all facets of human thought and behaviour.[2] Although the training in question varied according to the circumstances of the Graeco-Roman philosophical tradition, a modification appeared in late antiquity. More specifically, from the mid-fourth century Christians began to pursue the matter in more detail than before. A crucial stage of development seems to have been prepared by Augustine. Given that this erudite and illuminating study describes the exercises as being closely correlated with a 'way of being' in its existential dimension,[3] thereby conforming to the spirit in its totality, the correlation still remains in question. It seems to be legitimate to revisit the subject in the *City of God* of Augustine, especially in Books 8–10 where he began his argument subsequent to a discussion of philosophers proclaiming the 'whole of philosophy towards the improvement and regulation of morality' first made by Socrates.[4] Since a series of explanations of such training emerged in this work, how did Augustine attempt to think about it?

Augustine's *City of God* is one of the most comprehensive works in his corpus. It allows the reader to appreciate the ways in which he explores a wide variety of topics such as the criticism of pagan thought, apologetic theology, biblical interpretation, political and historical issues, and the eschatological view of church and society. When he chose to write it around 412, after being psychologically motivated event by the sack of Rome by Alaric and his Gothic army in August 410 and the subsequent attack on Christianity by pagans, Augustine gave every indication to his trusted friend that it was a difficult task: 'my dear Marcellinus,... the task is long and arduous'.[5]

[2] See Hadot, 'Ancient Spiritual Exercises and "Christian Philosophy"', in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 126–144. For the theme of spiritual training in antiquity, see also J. Leclercq, 'Exercices spirituels. I. Antiquité et haut moyen âge', in *DSp* 4/2 (1961) 1903–1908; P. Agaësse, 'Exercitatio animi', P. Agaësse and J. Moingt (eds.), *La Trinité, Œuvres de saint Augustin*, BA 16, 2nd edn. (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1991) 612–614; G. Madec, 'Exercitatio animi', in C. Mayer *et al.* (eds.), *AL* 2 (Basel: Schwabe, 1996–2002) 1182–1183; A. Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault*, Sather Classical Lectures 61 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998); P. R. Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls: Revising a Classical Ideal*, Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity 17 (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010); B. Stock, *Augustine's Inner Dialogue: The Philosophical Soliloquy in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); J. M. Cooper, *Pursuits of Wisdom: Six Ways of Live in Ancient Philosophy from Socrates to Plotinus* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

[3] Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 127, 130.

[4] Aug. *De ciu. dei*, 8.3; CCL 47,218: 'uniuersam philosophiam ad corrigendos componendosque mores flexisse'. Eng. trans. in H. Bettenson, *St Augustine: Concerning the* City of God *against the Pagans*, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 2003). For the 'exercises' in the later work of Augustine, see L. Ayres, 'The Christological Context of Augustine in De Trinitate XIII: Towards Relocating Books VIII–XV', *AugStud* 29 (1998) 111–139; idem, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 175–272.

[5] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 1 praef.; CCL 47,1: 'fili carissime Marcelline ... magnum opus et arduum'. For the phrase 'magnum opus et arduum', which may be derived from Cic. *Or.* 10.33 and 23.75, see J. van Oort, 'Manichaeism in Augustine's *De civitate Dei*', in E. Cavalcanti (ed.), *Il* De Civitate Dei*: L'Opera, Le Interpretazioni, L'Influsso* (Roma: Editrice Herder, 1996) 193 n. 2; idem, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's* City of God *and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities*, SupplVChr 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1991) 64 n. 287; and G. O'Daly, *Augustine's* City of God: *A Reader's Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University

Although Augustine's promise to the tribune and notary Flavius Marcellinus (from late 411 and early 412) was not fully fulfilled because of the sudden execution of the latter on 13 September 413,[6] Books 1–3 were published in late 413 or 414. It may be admitted that Augustine could have retained both his dedication and address to Marcellinus unchanged in the memory of his friend.[7] The work was complete when he referred to it in the *Retractationes* (2.43). Thus, this work of twenty-two books was to take him about fourteen years, working sporadically even to finish it in 427.[8]

It seems natural that readers are led astray by the seemingly recursive and complex structure of this massive work. Reading the *City of God* requires them, upon reflection, to draw together the various threads of the argument.[9] Because he is very conscious of it, throughout the work Augustine repeatedly gives a summary of discussions in the preceding books and the further direction of his plan.[10] Besides, two pieces of evidence of the retrospective summary show the existence of a well-planned scheme. First, in the *Retractationes*, written after the completion of the *City of God*, he explains the overall structure of the work.[11] Second, the same account is taken from the *Letter* 1A* written to Firmus.[12] Augustine clearly articulates the work, which falls into two main parts. The argument of the first part (Books 1–10) is directed against the claim that the cult of pagan deities is necessary for Rome's prosperity and well-being. The second main part (Books 11–22) deals with the origin, growth, and destined end of the two cities: one being the city of God and the other the secular city.

The intention of this paper is to focus on the evidence for his view of spiritual

Press, 1999) 67.

[6] See S. Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, trans. A. Nevill, Eng. edn (London: SCM Press, 2002) 268–269. For the process of drawing up the plan for the *City of God* revealed in the letters between Augustine and Marcellinus, see Aug. *Ep.* 136, 138, and 139. Cf. G. Bardy, 'Introduction générale à *La Cité de Dieu*', in G. Combès and G. Bardy (eds.), *La Cité de Dieu, Œuvres de saint Augustin*, BA 33 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959) 17–19. See also M. Vessey, 'The History of the Book: Augustine's *City of God* and Post-Roman Cultural Memory', in J. Wetzel (ed.), *Augustine's* City of God: *A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 14–32 at 28–30.

[7] See Aug. *De ciu. dei*, 1 praef.; 2.1. For the significance of their relationship, see N. B. McLynn, 'Augustine's Roman Empire', in M. Vessey, K. Pollmann, and A. D. Fitzgerald (eds.), *History, Apocalypse, and the Secular Imagination: New Essays on Augustine's* City of God (Bowling Green OH: Philosophy Documentation Center, 1999) 40–44.

[8] For the genesis of the *City of God*, see Bardy, 'Introduction générale', 22–35; Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon*, 62; and O'Daly, *Augustine's* City of God, 34–36. Cf. Vessey, 'The History of the Book'.

[9] Although some scholars have criticised the structure as being somewhat chaotic (e.g. H.-I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, 4th edn., Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1958) 61; cf. J. T. Kelley, *What Are They Saying About Augustine?* (New York: Paulist Press, 2014) 27), we can consult the clear explanation offered by J. C. Guy, *Unité et structure logique de la 'Cité de Dieu' de saint Augustin*, CEASA 12 (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1961) 15–25. See also Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon*, 74–77; B. Studer, 'Zum Aufbau von Augustins *De civitate dei*', *Aug(L)* 41 (1990) 937–951; and O'Daly, *Augustine's* City of God, 67–73.

[10] See e.g. Aug. *De ciu. dei* 1.35–36; 5.26; 6 praef.; 6.1; 10.32; 11.1; 15.1; 18.1.

[11] Aug. *Retr.* 2.43; CCL 57,124–125.

[12] Aug. *Ep.* 1a*.1; BA 46B,54–56.

training in the *City of God*, thereby coming to some understanding of the horizon within which Augustine made use of its dimension and goal in speaking about spiritual training. It also considers how this might have affected his dealing with the appropriate attitude towards temporal realities in this life. I shall first examine what Augustine understands by the outcome of the Platonists' philosophical reflection; then I shall ask whether a different scope of the exercises of the soul emerges in the latter part of the work. Finally, I shall consider the principal feature of spiritual training from the viewpoint of the authority to which the human soul is subject.

2 AUGUSTINE'S CRITICISM OF 'PHILOSOPHY' AND SPIRITUAL TRAINING

In Book 8 of the *City of God*, after offering a critique of the *theologia ciuilis* for its sterile promise of a blessed life after death (Book 6) and focusing on the conflicting views of Varro's *di selecti* in his *De cultu deorum* (Book 7),[13] Augustine turns to the exploration of how philosophers dealt with the problem. More attention would be directed to Plato and his followers and to their worship of gods (Books 8–10). These books of the work's first main part were presumably written together and completed by 417.[14]

Augustine begins his argument by revealing the leading figure of Socrates, whom readers would discern as the one who initially changed the focus of philosophy from physics to the 'improvement and regulation of morality'.[15] It seems odd that there were seemingly two alternative explanations why he diverted his concern to ethical thinking. Socrates may have maintained, as Augustine suggests, that he could not dispel sceptical doubt about the possibility of answering physical questions on eternal and divine matters. On the other hand, he may have confirmed the existence of esoteric teaching about physics. Socrates' concentration on ethics will have enabled him to gain access to the highest causes of things, because 'the causation of the universe could be grasped only by a purified intelligence'.[16] Augustine does not make any further attempt to explain Socrates' dogmatic motive for giving precedence to ethical thought.[17] It is worth noting, however, that, in the subsequent account of Platonists' dealings with physics, a similar necessity for the purification of mind is clearly accepted. Because of their opinions about the incorporeality of God, the philosophy

[13] For this work of Varro, see P. G. Walsh, *Augustine: De Civitate Dei, Books VI & VII*, Aris & Phillips Classical Texts (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 2010) 186.

[14] In his chronicle of world history, completed in 417–418 at the suggestion of Augustine, Paulus Orosius made reference to the first ten books of Augustine's *City of God*: Oros. *Hist. adu. pag.* 1, praef. 11; CSEL 5,4: 'decem orientes radii mox ut de specula ecclesiasticae claritatis elati sunt toto orbe fulserunt'. Cf. Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon*, 157–158; O'Daly, *Augustine's* City of God, 34.

[15] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 8.3; CCL 47,218: 'corrigendos componendosque mores'. Cf. P. G. Walsh, *Augustine: De Civitate Dei, Books VIII & IX*, Aris & Phillips Classical Texts (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 2013) 165.

[16] Aug. *De ciu. dei*, 8.3; CCL 47,218: 'eas [*scil.* causas rerum] . . . mundata mente posse comprehendi'.

[17] For the reservation of Augustine's judgement about Socrates' intention, see O'Daly, *Augustine's* City of God, 111; Ayres, 'The Christological Context of Augustine', 100.

of the Platonists surpasses both 'fabulous' and 'civil' theology.[18] The Platonist's saw that no corporeal body is God and, in going beyond all material things, they have searched for God.

> This consideration has readily persuaded men of ability and learning, trained in philosophical discipline, that the original 'idea' is not to be found in this sphere, where it is shown to be subject to change.[19]

But if there were a genuine appreciation of the discipline and the purification of mind connected with Platonic beliefs about divine nature with which Augustine felt comfortable while showing their tripartite commitments to philosophy,[20] how did his view of purification as a Christian differ from that of pagan intellectuals? At the end of the detailed description of Platonism where Augustine is faced with the obscurity of Platonist opinions about the relation of human beings to the gods or demons, as well as about the nature of 'disturbance' and control over them, he offers advice on the value of Christian 'instruction of the true religion' over and over.[21] Again, in Book 10 where he is concerned with Porphyry's opinion about the worship of demons, Augustine sees Porphyry's reluctance to devote himself to 'some sort of purification of the soul by means of theurgy'.[22] Although the fact that Porphyry himself is warning us to beware of such practices as fraudulent, fraught with danger in their performance, and prohibited by law'[23] is for Augustine a clinical sign that there are malevolent powers over the purification of the soul, and this is not enough. Porphyry

[18] See Aug. *De ciu. dei*, 8.5.

[19] Aug. *De ciu. dei*, 8.6; CCL 47,223: 'Vnde ingeniosi et docti et in his exercitati homines facile collegerunt non esse in eis rebus primam speciem, ubi mutabilis esse coniuncitur'.

[20] See Aug. *De ciu. dei*, 8.6–8; CCL 47,222–225. For Augustine's use of the tripartite scheme for philosophy, see P. Hadot, 'Les divisions des parties de la philosophie dans l'Antiquité', *Museum Helveticum* 36 (1979) 201–223; idem, 'La présentation du platonisme par Augustin', in A. M. Ritter (ed.), *Kerygma und Logos, Festschrift für Carl Andresen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1979) 272–279.

[21] See Aug. *De ciu. dei*, 8.17; CCL 47,235.

[22] Aug. *De ciu. dei*, 10.9; CCL 47,281–282: 'quandam quasi purgationem animae per theurgian'. For informed discussions of theurgy, see e.g. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Sather Classical Lectures 25 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951) 283–311; H. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy: Mysticism, Magic and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire*, 2nd edn, M. Tardieu (ed.), CEASA 77 (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1978); and G. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995). For Augustine's knowledge of theurgy, see also G. Madec, 'Augustin, disciple et adversaire de Porphyre', *REAug* 10 (1964) 365–369; J.-B. Clerc, 'Theurgica legibus prohibita: A propos de l'interdiction de la théurgie (Augustin, *La cité de Dieu* 10,9,1. 16,2; *Code Théodosien* 9,16,4)', *REAug* 42 (1996) 57–64; and D. J. Jones, *Christus Sacerdos in the Preaching of St. Augustine: Christ and Christian Identity*, Patrologia 14 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004) 72–74, 84–85.

[23] Aug. *De ciu. dei*, 10.9; CCL 47,282: 'hanc artem tamquam fallacem et in ipsa actione periculosam et legibus prohibitam cauendam monet'. For the prohibition of theurgic rites by imperial law, see Clerc, 'Theurgica legibus prohibita', 57–64, and R. Dodaro, '*Christus sacerdos*: Augustine's Preaching Against Pagan Priests in the Light of S. Dolbeau 26 and 23', in G. Madec (ed.), *Augustin prédicateur (395–411), Actes du Colloque International de Chantilly (5–7 septembre 1996)*, CEASA 159 (Paris: Institut d'Etudes Augustiniennes, 1998) 377–393 at 379 n. 6.

is rather equivocal about the need for a mediator, so that human beings may become purified and freed from emotions. Thus he commits himself to 'une spiritualité sans la grâce'.[24] Unlike Porphyry and the Platonists, Augustine stresses the importance of the role of grace, that is the 'true and gracious Mediator' Lord Christ.[25] He offers the true 'religion' as the 'universal way' of the soul's liberation.[26] With the recurrent proclamation of the 'universal way' of liberating human souls,[27] the emphasis on the all-inclusive function of purification is taken seriously by Augustine and is indispensable to a discernment of the 'way' through which 'whole' human beings are purified, not merely any limited parts of their soul.

> This is the way which purifies the whole man and prepares his mortal being for immortality. . . . our Purifier and Saviour, the true Purifier and the all-powerful Saviour, took upon himself the man in his entirety. . . . This way has never been withheld from mankind, either when those events were foretold as destined in the future, or when the news was brought of their accomplishment.[28]

Significant as well is the dissimilarity that appears between Augustine and Porphyry on the view of 'study of history'.[29] Augustine repeatedly and explicitly cites a passage from the first book of Porphyry's *De regressu animae*: 'the universal way for the soul's liberation has never come to his knowledge in his study of history'.[30] Augustine's comprehension of Porphyrian '*historialis cognitio*' might, however, be imprecise;[31]

[24] C. Lepelly, 'L'aristocrate lettré païenne: une menace aux yeux d'Augustin', in Madec (ed.), *Augustin prédicateur*, 327–342 at 333. See also Jones, *Christus Sacerdos*, 43 and 102 n. 287.

[25] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 10.24; CCL 47,297: 'uerus benignusque Mediator'. See also ibid.: 'Bonus itaque uerusque Mediator ostendit peccatum esse malum,. . . '. Here Augustine explicitly criticises the rejection of the idea of a *mediator* by not only the Platonists but the Manichaeans. See Oort, 'Manichaeism', 199–200. For the orientation of Augustine's use of *Christus mediator*, see G. Rémy, 'Le Christ médiateur dans l'oeuvre de saint Augustin', 2 vols. Diss. (Université de Lille III, 1978); idem, 'La théologie de la médiation selon saint Augustin', *Revue thomiste* 91 (1991) 580–623; and G. Madec, *La patrie et la voie; le Christ dans la vie et la pensée de saint Augustin*, Jésus et Jésus Christ 36 (Paris: Desclée, 1989).

[26] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 10.32.1; CCL 47,309: '. . . religio, quae uniuersalem continet uiam'.

[27] Cf. G. Madec, 'Le *De ciuitate Dei* comme *De uera religione*', in *Petites études augustiniennes*, CEASA 142 (Paris: Institut d'Etudes Augustiniennes, 1994) 189–213 at 207 and n. 93.

[28] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 10.32.2; CCL 47,312: 'Haec uia totum hominem mundat et inmortalitati mortalem . . . praeparat. . . . totum suscepit ueracissimus potentissimusque mundator atque saluator. . . . hanc uiam, quae, partim cum haec futura praenuntiantur, partim cum facta nuntiantur, numquam generi humano defuit'.

[29] For the significance of Augustine's concern about 'history', see Vessey, 'History of the Book', 16–17.

[30] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 10.32.3; CCL 47,312–313: 'Quod autem Porphyrius uniuersalem uiam animae liberandae nondum in suam notitiam historiali cognitione dicit esse perlatam'. See also *De ciu. dei* 10.32.1; CCL 47,309–310: 'nondumque in suam notitiam eandem uiam historiali cognitione perlatam'; 10.32.1; CCL 47,320: 'nondumque in suam notitiam hirtoriali cognitione perlatam'. For the exclusive citations of Porphyry's *De regressu animae* from *De ciu. dei* 10.29–32, see G. Bardy and F.-J. Thonnard, 'Le « De regressu animae » de Porphyre', in Combès and Bardy (eds.), *La Cité de Dieu*, 619–622; A. Smith (ed.), *Porphyrii philosophi fragmenta*, BT (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1993); and O'Daly, *Augustine's* City of God, 258–259 and n. 56.

[31] For the alternative view of Porphyrian '*historialis cognitio*' as the 'study of (scholarly) evidence', see O'Daly, *Augustine's* City of God, 133 n. 45.

but the crucial point is that Augustine asserts forcefully the superiority of the history 'which has taken possession of the whole world by its towering authority',[32] thereby admonishing his readers to discover the 'way' in history, that is, in the scriptures.

All this was foretold and promised in the Scriptures. We see the fulfilment of so many of these promises that we look for the fulfilment of the rest with the confidence of a devotion rightly directed. This is the right road which leads to the vision of God and to eternal union with him; it is proclaimed and asserted in the truth of the holy Scriptures. And all those who do not believe in it, and therefore fail to understand it, may attack it; they cannot overthrow it.[33]

This view that in search for the vision of God the universal way of the soul's purification is prepared in the things foretold and proclaimed in the scriptures may afford clear insight into the 'exercise' which will be realised by the exegetical engagement with the scriptural texts. The general prescription for the 'exercise', that the human soul should follow the only reliable way of purifying and redeeming itself through the divine aid of the mediator, will be given a certain direction in the second half of the work.

Around the same period that Books 6–10 were probably finished Book 11 had been begun,[34] in the latter part of which Augustine thought of a series of trinitarian analogies in created things. In fact he found difficulty in investigating the suggestion of the Trinity in the works of creation. After he has given some indication of his interpretation of divine goodness (Gen 1:31: 'And God saw all that he had made, and, behold, it was very good'), the effect of scriptural interpretation is clearly stated as follows:

Now if the goodness is identical with divine holiness, it is evidently not a rash presumption but a reasonable inference to find a hint of the Trinity in the description of God's creative works, expressed somewhat enigmatically, so as to exercise our speculations. This hint we may find when we ask the question, Who? How? and Why?[35]

After offering the possibility of multiple interpretations of the opening verses of Genesis, again Augustine thinks about the theme of the Trinity, thereby referring to the effect of scriptural interpretation on the exegete's mind or intellect.

[32] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 10.32.3; CCL 47,313: 'quae uniuersum orbem tanto apice auctoritatis obtinuit.'

[33] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 10.32.3; CCL 47,313: 'in huius uiae scripturis praedicta atque promissa sunt; quorum tam multa impleta conspicimus, ut recta pietate futura esse cetera confidamus. Huius uiae rectitudinem usque ad Deum uidendum eique in aeternum cohaerendum in sanctarum scripturarum qua praedicatur atque adseritur ueritate quicumque non credunt et ob hoc nec intellegunt, oppugnare possunt, sed expugnare non possunt'.

[34] See Oros. *Hist. adu. pag.* 1, praef. 11; CSEL 5,4: 'maxime cum reuerentiam tuam perficiendo aduersum hos ipsos paganos undecimo libro insistentem'.

[35] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 11.24; CCL 48,343: 'Sed si nihil est aliud bonitas diuina quam sanctitas, profecto et illa diligentia rationis est, non praesumptionis audacia, ut in operibus Dei secreto quodam loquendi modo, quo nostra exerceatur intentio, eadem nobis insinuata intellegatur trinitas, unamquamque creaturam quis fecerit, per quid fecerit, propter quid fecerit.'

Each reader may take it as he likes. The matter is so profound that it may give rise to many interpretations which are not in conflict with the Rule of Faith, to exercise the minds of readers,...[36]

It is significant that the occasional references to the difficulty in interpreting the scriptural passages confirm the effect of these engagements in the purification of the soul. Although these descriptions belong to the different stages of the composition of the work respectively, they provide the same understanding of what the close relation between the exercises and scriptural interpretation is like. In Book 15, his dealings with the course of the two cities in human history start with the biblical narrative corresponding to the first phase of history from the creation to Noah. Into his sustained expositions, he simply inserts the significance of the exercises.

For Scripture is concerned for man, and it uses such language to terrify the proud, to arouse the careless, to exercise the inquirer, and to nourish the intelligent;...[37]

Augustine's endeavour to expound the biblical narrative is exclusively directed towards the Old Testament and extends to the books of the Maccabees.[38] He seems to appeal to the readers to discern the usefulness of the exercises, when he encounters considerable problems for the interpretation of prophecy.

Now this class of prophecy, in which there is a compounding and commingling, as it were, of both references, is of the greatest importance in the ancient canonical books, which contain historical narratives; and it has exercised and still exercises the wits of those who examine sacred literature. And so, when we read of prophecy and fulfilment in the story of Abraham's physical descendants, we also look for an allegorical meaning which is to be fulfilled in those descended from Abraham in respect of faith.[39]

This viewpoint of the relation between the historical and allegorical meaning in biblical narrative lies, in fact, at the centre of Augustine's view of the emergence of the exercises for the enquirer.[40] The explicit instruction derived from his confidence in the truth 'foretold and promised in the Scriptures',[41] that one should enquire into

[36] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 11.32; CCL 48,352: 'Proinde ut uolet quisque accipiat, quod ita profundum est, ut ad exercitationem legentium a fidei regula non abhorrentes plures possit generare sententias,...'.

[37] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 15.25; CCL 48,493: 'quibus [*scil.* omni generi hominum] uult esse consultum, ut et perterreat superbientes et excitet neglegentes, et exerceat quaerentes et alat intellegentes;...'.

[38] See Aug. *De ciu. dei* 18.36.

[39] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 17.3; CCL 48,554: 'Quod genus prophetiae ex utroque ueluti compactum atque commixtum in libris ueteribus canonicis, quibus rerum gestarum narrationes continentur, ualet plurimum multumque exercuit et exercet ingenia scrutantium litteras sacras, ut, quod historice praedictum completumque legitur in semine Abrahae secundum carnem, etiam in semine Abrahae secundum fidem quid implendum allegorice significet inquiratur,...'.

[40] Another indispensable viewpoint of the biblical narrative in which Augustine questions whether or not a clear dividing line between the prophetic and the historical texts could be drawn, I shall consider in the latter part of the next section. See 55–56 below.

[41] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 10.32.3; CCL 47,313 mentioned above at 49 n. 33.

the spiritual meaning of the prophetic text, is given the same direction in the following interpretations: the prophecy in Habbakuk's prayer,[42] a resurrection and last judgement in Isaiah,[43] and also the ambiguous expressions found in the last book of the New Testament.[44] If the scriptural texts are seen as the expressions in which the fulfilment of the prophecy is given, though not explicitly, and if the interpreters are not unwilling to continue their effort to understand its allegorical and metaphorical meaning within, their mind would be exercised and purified as well.

3 OTHER SPIRITUAL TRAINING IN THE *CITY OF GOD*

But apart from such repetition of the intellectual exercises undertaken through biblical exegesis, what evidence is there for the possibility that Augustine's view of training contains some recognisably different features, while nevertheless being directed towards union with God? It must be understood that to divide the intellectual element from another one in this way is a mere classification, but one which may help us to understand a different strand in his view of spiritual training.

It is not only in the criticism of Platonist philosophy, referred to above,[45] that the emphasis on the role of divine grace is given. At the final stage of his composition of the work, in Book 22 which was undoubtedly written as late as the year 426, he speaks of divine blessings on human beings. First Augustine stresses the goodness of God by confirming two kinds of good things that 'God has bestowed, and still bestows, even on the corrupted and condemned state of mankind':[46] one is the power of propagation, and another is conformation to type. Then he calls attention to the union of an incorporeal with a corporeal nature by divine power, thereby confirming the wondrous activity of God through which a living being was made.

> It is God who has given man his *mind*. In the infant the *reason* and *intelligence* in the mind is, in a way, dormant, apparently non-existent; but, of course, it has to be aroused and developed with increasing years. And thus the mind becomes capable of knowledge and learning, ready for *the perception of truth*, and able to *love the good*. This capacity enables the mind to absorb *wisdom*, to acquire the *virtues* of prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice, to equip man for the struggle against error and all the evil propensities inherent in man's nature, so that he may

[42] See Aug. *De ciu. dei* 18.32; CCL 48,623: 'Montem uero umbrosum atque condensum, quamuis multis modis possit intellegi, libentius acceperim scripturarum altitudinem diuinarm, quibus prophetatus est Christus. Multa ibi quippe umbrosa atque condensa sunt, quae mentem quaerentis exerceant'.

[43] See Aug. *De ciu. dei* 20.21; CCL 48,737–738: 'Locutiones enim tropicae propriis prophetico more miscentur, ut ad intellectum spiritalem intentio sobria cum quodam utili ac salubri labore perueniat; pigritia uero carnalis uel ineruditae atque inexercitatae tarditas mentis contenta litterae superficie nihil putat interius requirendum'.

[44] See Aug. *De ciu. dei* 20.17; CCL 48,728: 'Et in hoc quidem libro, cuius nomen est apocalypsis, obscure multa dicuntur, ut mentem legentis dagentur cetera cum labore;. . . '.

[45] See e.g. Aug. *De ciu. dei* 10.24.

[46] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 22.24.1; CCL 48,847: 'ipsi quoque uitiatae damnataeque naturae contulit siue usque nunc confert'.

overcome them because his heart is set only on *that Supreme and Unchanging Good*. ... There is, first, this *capacity for the good life*, the ability to attain eternal felicity, by those arts which are called virtues, which are given solely by the grace of God in Christ to the children of the promise and of the kingdom.[47]

We find here the idea, repeatedly expressed in Augustine's works, that the ascent of the human soul towards God is gradually (*gradatim*) realised by the septenary steps: animation, sense perception, grasp of truth, loving of the good, wisdom, moral virtues, and the desire for the supreme good.[48] It is a matter for the soul to make a strenuous effort to discern its relation to the material and spiritual spheres and to undertake its purification. With all its upward movements, the soul learns to perceive spiritual realities and finally holds fast to the contemplation of the highest good. But, it is the mediator, of course, who enables it to accomplish its moving to the immaterial things defined as the universal way of the soul's deliverance. Dependent on the 'capacity for the good life' is the attainment of beatitude through the soul's septenary ascents which would be achieved finally by the grace of God in Christ. A belief in the importance of the mediator naturally figured in Augustine's thought on the ascent of the soul even in his early works.[49]

[47] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 22.24.3; CCL 48,848: 'Ipse itaque *animae* humanae *mentem* dedit, ubi *ratio* et *intellegentia* in infante sopita est quodam modo, quasi nulla sit, excitanda scilicet atque exerenda aetatis accessu, qua sit scientiae capax atque doctrinae et habilis *perceptioni ueritatis* et *amoris boni*; qua capacitate hauriat *sapientiam uirtutibusque* sit praedita, quibus prudenter, fortiter, temperanter et iuste aduersus errores et cetera ingenerata uitia dimicet eaque nullius rei *desiderio* nisi *boni illius summi atque inmutabilis* uincat. ... Praeter enim *artes bene uiuendi* et ad inmortalem perueniendi felicitatem, quae uirtutes uovantur et sola Dei gratia, quae in Christo est, filiis promissionis regnique donantur' (italics mine).

[48] The enumerations of the seven ascending degrees (*gradus*) of the soul appears often in Augustine's early works (e.g. *De quant. an.* 33.70–76; *De Gen. c. man.* 1.25.43; *De mag.* 8.21; *De uera rel.* 26.49, 50.98). For its evolution in his corpus, see C. van Lierde, 'The Teaching of St. Augustine of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit from the Text of Isaiah 11:2–3', in F. Van Fleteren *et al.* (eds.), *Collectanea Augustiniana. Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue* (New York: P. Lang, 1994) 5–110; K. Pollman, *Doctrina Christiana: Untersuchungen zu den Anfängen der christlichen Hermeneutik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Augustinus* De doctrina Christiana, Paradosis 41 (Fribourg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1996) 192–196; B. Neil, 'Neo-Platonic Influence on Augustine's Conception of the Ascent of the Soul in *De Quantitate Animae*', in P. Allen, W. Mayer, and L. Cross (eds.), *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church* 2 (Brisbane: Centre for Early Christian Studies, Australian Catholic University, 1999) 197–215; F. B. A. Asiedu, 'The Song of Songs and the Ascent of the Soul: Ambrose, Augustine, and the Language of Mysticism', *VChr* 55 (2001) 299–317; K. Pollman, 'Augustine's Hermeneutics as a Universal Discipline', in K. Pollman and M. Vessey (eds.), *Augustine and the Disciplines: From Cassiciacum to Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 206–231 at 225–229; B. Studer, *Augustins De trinitate: Eine Einführung* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005) 140–147; N. Kamimura, 'Friendship and the Ascent of the Soul in Augustine', in W. Mayer, P. Allen, and L. Cross (eds.), *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church* 4 (Strathfield NSW: St Pauls, 2006) 295–310; and Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, pt. 2: Ascent, esp. 128–133. This part of the *City of God* may have been written as the last in the series of his descriptions. See V. J. Bourke, 'Augustine of Hippo: The Approach of the Soul to God', in E. R. Elder (ed.), *The Spirituality of Western Christendom*, Cistercian Studies Series 30 (Kalamazoo MI: Cistercian Publications, 1976) 1–12, 189–191; G. Madec, 'Ascensio, Ascensus', in *Petites études augustiniennes*, 138 n. 5.

[49] See e.g. *De quant. an.* 33.76. In this respect, although he shares the feature of the exhortation to

And besides this there are all the important arts *discovered and developed* by human genius, some for necessary uses, others simply for pleasure. Man shows remarkable powers of *mind and reason* in the satisfaction of his aims, even though they may be unnecessary, or even dangerous and harmful; and those powers are evidence of the blessing he enjoys in his natural powers which enable him to discover, to learn, and to practise those arts.[50]

And yet, despite the emphasis on the role of the true mediator, Augustine thinks it necessary for the soul to serve the 'powers of mind and reason' as a capacity for having 'discovered and developed' the various arts (*artes*) which include language, music, philosophy, and so on.[51] This results from his conviction that the true aim of these arts is to become endowed with virtues and to fix desire on the good, whereby human souls will make themselves fit to attain beatitude. The exercises of the 'natural abilities of the human mind' cannot harm the soul's perfection, if souls are nourished by virtues.[52] This belief is expressed not only in the exercises of the mind itself, but on a wider scale when it intends to take the path through the spiritual ascension to the highest good.

Thus, while describing the features both of stressing the role of divine grace and of carrying out the exercises of the mind, Augustine focuses his attention on the state of the inquirer's mind, as he demonstrates clearly in Book 15,[53] in which divine anger is interpreted as a judgement of God.[54]

But if Scripture did not employ such words, it would not strike home so closely, as it were, to all mankind. For Scripture is concerned for man, and it uses such language to terrify the proud, to arouse the careless, to exercise the inquirer, and to nourish the intelligent;. . .[55]

spiritual ascent with his classical (Varro's encyclopaedic work and various doxographies) and Plotinian (*Enneads* 1.6: *On Beauty*) predecessors, a turning point comes when Augustine accepts the doctrines both of the resurrection of the body and of the assumption of human nature by the eternal and immutable son of God (*De quant. an.* 33.76). See also Neil, 'Neo-Platonic influence on Augustine's conception of the ascent of the soul', 210–213.

[50] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 22.24.3; CCL 48,848: 'nonne humano ingenio tot tantaeque artes sunt *inuentae et exercitae*, partim necessariae partim uoluptariae, ut tam excellens *uis mentis atque rationis* in his etiam rebus, quas superfluas, immo et periculosas periciosasque appetit, quantum bonum habeat innatur, unde ista potuit uel inuenire uel discere uel exercere, testetur?' (italics mine).

[51] For the significance of the bonae artes seemingly being Roman civic virtues, see J. Doignon, '« Les arts, appelés vertus, de bien vivre et de parvenir à une félicité immortelle » (Aug. *ciu.* 22, 24, 3). De l'usage de l'« exemple » des Romains', *REAug* 37 (1991) 79–86.

[52] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 22.24.3; CCL 48,849: 'natura mentis humanae'.

[53] The chronological setting for this book is not clear from the testimony of Augustine's own reference to the work. Cf. Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon*, 78 and n. 330.

[54] It is commonly assumed that he wrote this part of the work after 419, for in Books 15 and 16 he often made use of his own work *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum* which he did not start before 419. See Bardy, 'Introduction générale', 29; O'Daly, Augustine's *City of God*, 35.

[55] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 15.25; CCL 48,493: 'Sed is non utatur scriptura talibus uerbis, non se quodam modo familiarius insinuabit omni generi hominum, quibus uult esse consultum, ut et perterreat superbientes et excitet neglegentes, et exerceat quaerentes et alat intellegentes;. . .'.

Such is the way Augustine defines the scriptural narrative as making the various impacts on the widest possible audience: 'it would not strike home so closely, as it were, to all mankind'. In adding a creative process of the audience to his view of biblical exegesis, he makes it a more dynamic connection between the narrative and the reader's mind than in the general impression. This element is of course paralleled by the humility of the scriptures for they read the texts because the scriptures 'did not first bend down and, as we may say, descend to'[56] the audience despite their arrogance. Although they may be terrified because they are proud of themselves, they are encouraged in order that they might be virtuous.

The connection between Augustine's view of the exercises and that of the emphasis on the virtues may be illustrated by some passages from the work. It is made explicit not only in the spiritual advice and consolation for the sufferings and death caused by the sack of Rome, but also in the enumeration of absurdities in our daily lives. Although two passages mentioned below are separated by about thirteen or fourteen years, he consistently refers to the relationship between the adversity in this life and the exercises by which people are stimulated to put forward virtues as the basis of their own humanity.

> But if the absence of the necessities of life, such as food and clothes, although causing much misery, does not shatter the good man's courage to endure with patience, and does not banish devotion from his soul, but rather fertilizes it by exercise,...[57]
>
> those who were not to suffer eternal torments would be either afflicted by temporal ills in retribution for whatever sins, however small, they had committed, or would be trained by them to bring their virtue to perfection.[58]

When faced with adversity these people are expected to receive training in their tolerance and intelligence. It might provoke and aggravate the sufferings, but the appropriate attitude to the misfortune is highly encouraged. His thinking has the mental provision of advice to deal with serious difficulties, either in the disaster of Rome, which was circulated through the exchange of letters and the refugees,[59] or in the seemingly unjust cases in which the good suffer and the wicked prosper. However, none of these provides any insight into the actual realities of these adversities. It is a discourse that attempts to address the repercussions for the victim, thereby regarding these affairs as those which may well happen continually and inevitably in the course

[56] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 15.25; CCL 48,493: '...non se prius inclinaret et quodam modo descenderet...'.

[57] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 1.13; CCL 47,15: 'Sed si ea, quae sustentandis uiuentibus sunt necessaria, sicut uictus et amictus, quamuis cum graui adflictione desint, non frangunt in bonis perferendi tolerandique uirtutem nec eradicant ex animo pietatem, sed exercitatam faciunt fecundiorem:...'.

[58] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 20.2; CCL 48,701: 'qui non erant passuri aeterna tormenta, temporalibus uel pro suis quibuscumque et quantiscumque peccatis affligerentur uel propter implendas uirtutes exercerentur malis'.

[59] For the initial reaction of Augustine to the sack of Rome, see P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, rev. edn. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000) 288–289.

of human history. It may be that at this point of these descriptions Augustine has in mind the ubiquity of adversities themselves.

The inclination to acknowledge the ubiquity of adversity in general terms rather than explain specific cases is evident through the work. Not only does Augustine express the concern to articulate the importance of the exercises in this life, but also in the scriptures he discerns the necessity to realign attitudes to absurdities. In the commentary on Genesis 9 (25–27) of Book 16, Augustine attempts to interpret the historical narrative from the viewpoint of its prophetic elements.[60]

> The evil brother, however, in the person of his son—that is, through his actions—is the slave, the servant, of the good brothers, when the good make skilful use of the wicked for their own training in endurance or for their own development in wisdom.[61]

Again at the beginning of Book 17, he interprets the same kind of texts and confirms that the prophecies given to Abraham about the temporal prosperity of his descendants were fulfilled in the ages under these kings, David and his son Solomon.

> But since God knew that they would not do so [*scil.* obey the laws of the Lord their God], he also imposed on them temporal punishments, for the training of the few faithful men in that nation, and for a warning to those who were to come in future times among all nations, a warning needed by those in whom he was to fulfil his second promise by the revelation of the new covenant through the incarnation of Christ.[62]

When he engages in biblical exegesis in the *City of God*, Augustine does not make a distinction between prophecy and history within the scriptures. Divine purposes are revealed to human beings as temporal realities. Since in his early writings he held the view that history would be confronted by prophecy, the prophetic texts are related to the future and the historical to the past within the sacred texts.[63] However, interpreting the scriptures in the *City of God*, he equates the former with the latter, thereby converging into one common heading: 'prophetic history'.[64] It is therefore

[60] With regard to the significance of his reference to the biblical writings as the 'prophetic history' (*De ciu. dei* 16.2.3; CCL 48,501: 'prophetica historia'), see R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) 187–196, esp. 191.

[61] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 16.2.2; CCL 48,499: 'Sed malus frater in filio suo, hoc est, in opere suo, puer, id est seruus est fratrum bonorum, cum ad exercitationem patientiae uel ad prouectum sapientiae scienter utantur malis boni'.

[62] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 17.2; CCL 48,552–553: 'Sed quoniam Deus nouerat hoc eam non esse facturam, usus est eius etiam temporalibus poenis ad exercendos in ea paucos fideles suos et admonendos qui postea futuri erant in omnibus gentibus, quod eos admoneri oportebat, in quibus alteram promissionem reuelato nouo testamento per incarnationem Christi fuerat impleturus'.

[63] See Markus, *Saeculum*, 188–189. For the similarities between *De uera rel.* and *De ciu. dei*, cf. Madec, 'Le *De ciuitate Dei* comme *De uera religione*'.

[64] See Aug. *De ciu. dei* 16.2.3 mentioned above n. 59, and 17.1; CCL 48,551: 'ipsa scriptura, quae per ordinem reges eorumque facta et euenta digerens uidetur tamquam historica diligentia rebus gestis occupata esse narrandis, si adiuuante Dei spiritu considerata tractetur, uel magis uel certe non minus praenuntiandis futuris quam praeteritis enuntiandis inuenietur intenta'.

essential to examine the biblical evidence to see how the scriptures are prophetically narrated and linked with any hidden and future realities in the design of divine salvific work and then to give creative and reflexive insight into the meaning of experiences and facts in our lives.

But if it is appropriate to realign our attitude towards adversaries and make reference beyond themselves to the future, then this may help to secure space for the exercises of virtues within the dispensation through which human beings are expected to renew and restore themselves to eternal life.

> Divine providence thus warns us not to indulge in silly complaints about the state of affairs, but to take pains to inquire what useful purposes are served by things. And when we fail to find the answer, either through deficiency of insight or of staying power, we should believe that the purpose is hidden from us, as it was in many cases where we had great difficulty in discovering it. There is a useful purpose in the obscurity of the purpose; it may serve to exercise our humility or to undermine our pride.[65]

It is in this very case that Augustine attempts to define training as the cultivation of the virtues. He is primarily concerned with a change of the attention in their minds, rather than defusing the trouble with which the people are faced, because he holds the belief that the universe, including its harmful components, is good and forms an ordered whole. Thus, this allows him to perceive the hidden meaning behind adversity, thereby reflecting on the necessity of the exercise. The sharp contrast between the limits of human knowledge and the atemporality of God's knowledge that knows temporal things always and timelessly serves to justify the absolute necessity for the exercise of pious humility, with which they will be led to wisdom and truth. The dispensation of divine providence for creatures permits any endorsement of its requirement.

4 CONCLUSION

Throughout the twenty-two books of the *City of God*, Augustine occasionally provides descriptions of spiritual training, all of which we have examined so far give a wide spread more or less over all of the period of its composition (413/414–427). It is generally admitted that, while in the first part of the *City of God* he mainly deals with the exercises from the viewpoint of its intellectual dimension, he directs attention towards the exercises of virtues and the problem of divine providence in the second main part. All the same, this transition would be due to the main thread of the argument in the work. During the period he engaged in the work, we have not been able to confirm a development in his thought.

[65] Aug. *De ciu. dei* 11.22; CCL 48,340–341: 'Vnde nos admonet diuina prouidentia non res insipienter uituperare, sed utilitatem rerum diligenter inquirere, et ubi nostrum ingenium uel infirmitas deficit, ita credere occultam, sicut erant quaedam, quae uix potuimus inuenire; quia et ipsa utilitatis occultatio aut humilitatis exercitatio est aut elationis adtritio;…'.

Augustine has shown the fertility of the 'exercises' by keeping the focus on scriptural interpretation. This focus, together with the belief that the exercises are directed towards the purification of the soul, explains his determination to encourage the audience in their exegetical attempts. This may be compared with some passages in his *Sermons* and *Letters* in which, on occasions, Augustine stressed the high rewards of the exercises, thereby admonishing his assembly and correspondents to interpret obscure passages. These exercises appear to be an exclusive endeavour and are not intended to reach beyond a few people, because they are not easily carried out by most people and require in fact some methodological skills. But, unlike Porphyry and the Platonists, Augustine reveals the indispensable role of the true mediator Lord Christ, so as to purify and realise the 'universal way' of the soul's liberation. In addition, comparing the view of the '*historialis cognitio*' between Porphyry and Augustine, it is clear that Augustine speaks of the essential feature of the scriptures as humble and familiar to all classes of people. By aiming for the widest audience possible, he also regards the scriptures as those which 'foretold and promised' all things indispensable to anyone striving for the fulfilment of divine promises.[66] Thus, all are encouraged to do it, in order that they might follow the universal way of the soul's perfection.

It is worth noting that Augustine, seeing his own thinking on divine providence and the practice of virtues in the work as if refracted in a prism, juxtaposed a scriptural passage (James 4:6) with a line from the *Aeneid* of Virgil at the very beginning.

'God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.'[67]

'To spare the conquered, and beat down the proud.' (Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.853)[68]

After pointing to the opposite words 'proud' and 'humble', Augustine directs the reader's attention towards the multiple functions of divine providence. For God's providence constantly uses war to correct and chasten the corrupt morals of mankind, as it also uses such afflictions to train men in a righteous and laudable way of life, removing to a better state those whose whose life is approved, or else keeping them in this world for further service.[69]

The view that the exercises of the virtues, especially of the humble attitude before God, are ensured by the temporal dispensation in this life is consistent in the *City of God*. Despite the suggestion that a variety of adversities causes pain and suffering, it

[66] See Aug. *De ciu. dei*, 10.32.

[67] Aug. *De ciu. dei*, 1 praef.; CCL 47,1: 'Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam'.

[68] Aug. *De ciu. dei*, 1 praef.; CCL 47,1: 'Parcere subiectis et debellare superbos'. For the contrast between the scriptural message and Vergil's *Aeneid*, see P. G. Walsh, *Augustine: De Civitate Dei, Books I & II*, Aris & Phillips Classical Texts (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 2005) 189; S. MacCormack, *The Shadows of Poetry: Vergil in the Mind of Augustine*, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 26 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998) 202 and n. 117

[69] Aug. *De ciu. dei*, 1.1; CCL 47.2: 'illi prouidentiae diuinae tribuere, quae solet corruptos hominum mores bellis emendare atque conterere itemque uitam mortalium iustam atque laudabilem talibus adflictionibus exercere probatamque uel in meliora transferre uel in his adhuc terris propter usus alios detinere'.

is firmly admitted that divine providence governs all created things beyond the scope of human knowledge, driving to the same goal of 'exercising our humility' and of 'overcoming our pride'.[70] And, within the biblical interpretation undertaken in the work, the scriptures are integrated into the 'prophetic history' in which all things are related with any future realities in divine providence. It can thus be seen how in his view of the exercises the expectation of human perfection comes to be more closely linked to the prophecy and promises revealed in the temporal dispensation rather than to present situations. The scriptures replace all other evidence and provide standards by which to measure all temporal things. Also, the exercise of humility may encourage the audience to realise the privileged status of the scriptures. Although the explanations given for the exercises are not the central arguments of the work, this does not mean that the exercises have only limited significance. Directly or indirectly, the 'spiritual exercises' show a clear appreciation of the authority which Augustine bestowed on the scriptural narratives and divine dispensation. It supplies crucial testimony to the submission of the human mind to divine authority.

Naoki Kamimura *is Research Fellow, Tokyo Gakugei University, and Lecturer in Philosophy, Tokyo Metropolitan University.*

[70] See Aug. *De ciu. dei*, 11.22.