

have to start from an understanding of mass political behavior, political parties—and the different organizing logics between Democrats and Republicans—and the changing nature of judicial appointments, constitutional hardball, and the role of the Senate confirmation hearings. This kind of analysis would have been a welcome epilogue to *The (Un)Written Constitution*.

This leads me to my second big-picture question: Where is politics in all of this? As far as I can tell, the first time politics enters the conversation in *The (Un)Written Constitution* is in the conclusion, as Thomas reminds “us” (that is, citizens of the United States) that our real power is to vote for elected representatives who hold the same ideas and values about the constitution as we do (33). While I appreciate this civic reminder, as a political scientist, I found myself waiting for Thomas to connect the dots between the unwritten ideas he analyzes, the politics of the judges who espouse them, and the politicians and interest groups and parties who benefit from them. Thomas starts to get there, again in the conclusion when he discusses the Republican-controlled Roberts Court’s partisan gerrymandering decisions—justified by the unwritten, judge-invented idea of the “political questions doctrine”—as having the practical effect of benefiting the Republican Party (132–35). I was looking for more of this kind of transparency around who benefits from the often-strategic deployment of competing understandings of *The (Un)Written Constitution* over time.

I say all this not to be dismissive of Thomas’s contribution in *The (Un)Written Constitution*. As I said, I think this book will be an excellent supplement for students working their way through the canon of constitutional law and trying to understand why and how the constitution and its meaning evolve over time, even when the text does not change. In my experience, the best reads are the ones that leave us with burning questions for future scholars and thinkers to resolve. *The (Un)Written Constitution* certainly accomplishes that.

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Veronica Roberts Ogle: *Politics and the Earthly City in Augustine’s “City of God.”* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021, Pp. x, 210).

doi:10.1017/S0034670522001140

While the study of Augustine has experienced a revival over the last two decades within theology and religious studies, most invocations of

Augustine within contemporary political theory reflect the assumptions of “realist” and “pessimist” accounts advanced in the 1950s and 1960s by thinkers such as Reinhold Niebuhr and Herbert Deane. Recently, an emerging group of political theorists has challenged this view by situating Augustine within his historical, rhetorical, and theological contexts and showing how his work subverts some of the assumptions anachronistically foisted upon him. Veronica Roberts Ogle’s *Politics and the Earthly City in Augustine’s “City of God”* is a major contribution to this effort. Offering a close reading of the *City of God* to elevate Augustine’s “sacramental” view of the world, Ogle challenges the common understanding of both “politics” and the “earthly city” in Augustine’s thought and opens important new vistas on his most influential treatise.

Ogle’s central argument is that the common equation of “politics” with the “earthly city” in Augustine’s thought is inaccurate and reductive. The “earthly city” is not the same as the state or political community. Rather, citizens in earthly commonwealths may be part of the “earthly” or “heavenly” city depending on whether they order their loves ultimately to self or to God (*City of God* 14.13, 14.28; Ogle, 44–45). Yet, unlike Robert Markus and other scholars who credit Augustine with positing a “neutral” public sphere, Ogle rightly recognizes that politics for Augustine is not neutral (9–11, 153–54). On the one hand, political life can be “sacramental,” which, like other “signs” in creation, should point beyond itself to the God who creates and sustains it (119–23). Since, on Augustine’s “participatory metaphysics,” all earthly goods and human communities participate in God’s being and goodness, they should be considered sacraments, signs that point to their ultimate source (92, 122–23, 145). For Ogle, the implication is that politics, when rightly conceived as a “natural” form of human social life and as a context for service and worship (*latreia*), is not necessarily as bound by “sin” as many pessimistic and realistic interpreters assume (146–58). Rather, as the example of Theodosius shows, it can be a form of “rightly ordered service” that orients human beings toward love of God and helps to “heal” the divisions that sin has effected (157–58, 166–83). By casting politics in terms of “communities” rather than “institutions” and showing how politics “is ontologically prior to its perversion” (146–49, 159, 156), Ogle challenges realists who offer a pessimistic view of politics as simply as an institutional remedy for sin. On her view, it can also be a relational form of service.

On the other hand, Ogle rightly resists seeing Augustine’s view of politics as purely positive. A primary refrain of the book is how, on Augustine’s view, the earthly city “besieges,” “parodies,” and “perverts” political communities for its own purposes. As Ogle argues, the earthly city “covets the political sphere and frequently dominates public life,” seeking to co-opt human beings and turn them toward the love of self rather than love of God (11). Refusing to acknowledge its limits, the earthly city is “parasitic” on creation, distorting the truth about reality in order to turn human beings away from God and enlist them in its own “political coup” (125, 169). As Ogle writes

in a pithy formulation, “the earthly city is the original pyramid scheme,” and fallen human beings who desire power and glory are all too easily tempted by its trappings (33). In Augustine’s context, Rome is the earthly city’s primary instantiation, an “imposter city” that tries to imitate the true eternal city by claiming its own eternity (69–70). According to Ogle, Augustine’s aim in *City of God* is to help readers escape “the seductive clutches of the earthly city” and thereby “see politics anew,” as “wounded” and “stunted by antisocial love, but nonetheless capable of being improved by rightly ordered service” (18, 14, 171). This view of politics as a potential form of healing challenges those who invoke Augustine to advocate a politics of “necessity” that encourages Christians to do evil to achieve a greater good as well as those who discourage Christians from participating in public life. Instead, Ogle shows how, for Augustine, engagement in public life can be a way to love God and neighbor.

Ogle builds a compelling case through an impressive close reading of parts of *City of God* that many political theorists overlook in their exclusive focus on book 19. In chapter 1, she analyzes books 11–14 to offer a helpful account of the “earthly city” and its “parasitic quality” (38). Her analysis of Augustine’s account of the devil as a “tyrant” rather than “liberator” is especially illuminating (*City of God* 14.11; Ogle, 32–33). Chapter 2 offers an insightful analysis of book 1’s attempt to situate the history of Rome within the history of the heavenly city to help readers see Rome’s prideful distortions of reality, while chapters 3 and 4 present a perceptive account of Augustine’s critical engagement with Roman historians, philosophers, and statesmen in books 1–9 to deconstruct Roman history and thereby chasten readers’ identification with it. With this deconstruction in view, Ogle turns to Augustine’s more constructive aims in chapter 5. In one of the most original contributions of the book, Ogle draws on Augustine’s influential account of “signs” from *De doctrina Christiana* to offer a new interpretation of his sacramental vision of the world and, by extension, of politics, showing how his semiotic theory casts new light on his critique of Porphyry’s cosmic metaphysics in book 10. Here Ogle shows the value of reading the *City of God* through Augustine’s other works, including more explicitly theological texts that are often neglected by political theorists. Finally, in chapter 6, she offers the most explicitly political payoff of her careful interpretative work, highlighting how this new semiotic and sacramental account of politics allows a more capacious and nuanced interpretation of book 19 not as a mere catalogue of pride’s political effects but as an invitation to humbly seek justice, mercy, and peace during the *saeculum*.

Ogle’s close reading reveals her deep familiarity not only with *City of God* but also with other texts of Roman history, literature, and philosophy that Augustine engaged in his *magnum opus*. Ogle’s effort to situate *City of God* intertextually within Augustine’s Roman philosophical and historical context is one of the book’s most valuable contributions, although at times I would have been interested to know more about how other aspects of

Augustine's context—including his correspondence with political officials, sermons to Christian audiences, and engagement with religious critics (especially Donatists and Pelagians)—shaped the contours of *City of God*.

Another strength is Ogle's emphasis on Augustine's rhetorical strategy. Following Pierre Hadot and others who have illuminated the rhetorical features of ancient texts, Ogle rightly highlights the "psychagogic purpose" of *City of God* to offer a new interpretation (41; cf. 3–5, 12, 19, 69). Ogle briefly mentions the "art" or "application of contraries" (4, 97), or what Augustine calls "antitheses" (*City of God* 11.18), but she focuses more on Augustine's overall rhetorical strategy than his specific rhetorical methods. While I would have been interested to know more about how his use of specific rhetorical devices affects the interpretation of *City of God*, the coherence, elegance, and efficiency of Ogle's argument is admirable.

Since Ogle focuses more on the contextualized interpretation of *City of God* than on contemporary applications of its ideas, scholars looking to discover the direct implications of Augustine's thought for contemporary politics will not find precise policy prescriptions in these pages. But as Ogle occasionally implies, the Augustinian insights she presents here might inform, for example, environmental accounts of the "ecosystem" (133), theological and political reflections on the "gift" economy (32, 134, 143, 163), ethical analyses of the dangers of victim-shaming (60–66), and accounts of humility and service in political leaders and citizens (157–83). After decades of scholars appropriating (and misappropriating) passages of Augustine to advance their own political proposals, Ogle's close and careful reading of *City of God* offers an insightful corrective to much of the "political Augustinianism" currently on offer. This book is a must-read for understanding the complexities of Augustine's political thought.

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Lisa Jane Disch: *Making Constituencies: Representation as Mobilization in Mass Democracy*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021. Pp. 200.)

doi:10.1017/S0034670522001164

Making Constituencies is about questions that are both timeless and very recent. Disch's concern for who comes first, the representative or the represented, is at least as old as the French Revolution. As she states towards the end of the book, 1789 is a watershed for the history of representative democracy and for theorists reflecting on the possibilities and limits of