

## Juan Luis Vives and the Organisation of Patristic Knowledge

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IN THE PERIOD of the Reformation, patristic knowledge became one of the most contested fields of erudition. Newly emerging theological problems prompted a quest for authoritative answers that derived legitimacy from ancient sources. Naturally the Bible held pride of place, but after that the works of the ‘fathers’ of the church formed an extremely important resource. With their biblical studies, doctrinal treatises, and polemical disputations, these early Christian thinkers had laid the foundations for the discipline of Christian theology.<sup>1</sup> Their authority had been used to settle disputes since the first ages of the Christian Church. It is not surprising, therefore, that the major figures in the Reformation debates tried to prove their arguments by means of patristic testimonies, as is reflected in the massive quantity of controversial literature.

Historians of the Reformation have long acknowledged the importance of patristic knowledge in the era’s theological debates.<sup>2</sup> They have highlighted in particular the central role of Augustine. Martin Luther felt a particular connection to the later, anti-Pelagian works of the North African bishop, dealing with the nature of divine grace. As an Augustinian monk, Luther possessed a thorough knowledge of the church father’s works. But so did his Catholic opponents, who sought to prove Luther wrong via Augustine, drawing for example on his earlier,

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<sup>1</sup> See Irena Backus (ed.), *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, 2 vols (Leiden, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> The study of Pontien Polman, *L’Élément historique dans la controverse religieuse du XVI siècle* (Gembloux, 1932) is seminal; recent contributions include Irena Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)* (Leiden, 2003); Leif Grane, Alfred Schindler, and Markus Wriedt (eds), *Auctoritas patrum: Contributions on the Reception of the Church Fathers in the 15th and 16th Centuries*, 2 vols (Mainz, 1993–8); Jean-Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of a Confessional Identity in the 17th Century* (Oxford, 2009).

anti-Donatist works about obedience to the church and the sacraments. For this reason, some historians have understood the entire Reformation project as an Augustinian venture, whether as ‘a new statement of Augustine’s ideas on salvation’ or even as ‘just the ultimate triumph of Augustine’s doctrine of grace over Augustine’s doctrine of the Church’.<sup>3</sup>

Most of these studies, however, are confined to the intellectual influence of patristic authors on individual theologians in the Reformation debates. Historians have generally been less interested in the spread of patristic erudition beyond the main actors in the debates. In fact, patristic knowledge circulated much more widely. Sermons and catechisms, textbooks and anthologies all helped to disseminate those areas of patristic knowledge that were deemed useful for the correct understanding of the faith. Patristic literature thus offered generations of believers an inexhaustible rhetorical resource of authoritative witnesses of the truth (*testes veritatis*).

The prolific published editions of the church fathers indicate the wide dissemination of patristic knowledge. Modern bibliographies suggest that Augustine alone appeared in almost five hundred 16th-century editions, produced all over Europe.<sup>4</sup> The numbers of less prominent fathers are equally impressive: 194 editions of Basil, 115 for Cyprian, and even 69 titles were published under Ambrose’s name.<sup>5</sup> For Jerome or John Chrysostom (figures representing the whole of Europe are not yet available), more than one hundred editions of each appeared in the 16th century in the German-speaking lands alone.<sup>6</sup> That these editions were not restricted to the academic elite can be seen by the number of translations. For the French-speaking market, for example, sixty-five editions of Augustine were published, forty-eight of Chrysostom, and thirty-seven of Jerome before 1601.<sup>7</sup> To this we should add, moreover, the hundreds of editions of patristic anthologies. Clearly, there was an extensive market for patristic knowledge in the 16th century.

<sup>3</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe’s House Divided, 1490–1700* (London, 2003), p. 110. B. B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia, PA, 1956), p. 332, also quoted by MacCulloch, *Reformation*, p. 111.

<sup>4</sup> *Index Aureliensis: Catalogus librorum sedecimo saeculo impressorum* (Baden-Baden, 1962–), 1.i: 396–445, \*110.067–\*110.553 (hereafter cited as *Index Aureliensis*).

<sup>5</sup> *Index Aureliensis*, \*114.398–114.591 (Basil); \*149.022–\*149.136 (Cyprian); \*104.628–104.696 (Ambrose).

<sup>6</sup> *Verzeichnis der im Deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 16 (Stuttgart, 1987), H3582–H3592 (Jerome, 111 editions) and J395–J517 (Chrysostom, 123 editions).

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Pettegree, Malcolm Walsby, and Alexander Wilkinson (eds), *French Vernacular Books: Books Published in the French Language before 1601* (Leiden, 2007), nos 2206–60 (Augustine), nos 30928–64 (Jerome), and nos 31131–76 (Chrysostom). Both Cyprian and Lactantius received twenty-five editions (nos 14965–89 and nos 32416–41, respectively). These statistics are not unequivocal or unproblematic. They include, for example, a considerable number of works that would now be regarded as spurious. The numbers are relatively modest, moreover, compared to classical authors such as Cicero, whose list numbers almost three thousand editions in the 16th century, or Ovid, whose circulation in French translation counts nearly 150 editions. Despite these caveats, however, the statistics undeniably reveal that there was a large and lively market for patristic texts. See *Index Aureliensis*, \*137.204–\*140.066 (Cicero); Pettegree, Walsby, and Wilkinson (eds), *French Vernacular Books*, nos 40120–267 (Ovid).

Together, the contested nature and extensive dissemination of patristic texts raise intriguing questions about the forms in which these texts were transmitted to their readers. In what ways, for instance, did editors and publishers help their readers to appropriate patristic authors? What was the imprint of the interests and perspectives of particular confessional parties on editions of patristic texts? To what extent, in other words, did patristic scholarship undergo a process of confessionalisation, and with what impact?

This chapter will address these questions by focusing on one particular case: the edition of Augustine's *City of God* by the Spanish-born humanist Juan Luis Vives (1492–1540).<sup>8</sup> Now best known for his pioneering works on education, including that of women (*De institutione feminae christianae*, 1524; *De disciplinis*, 1531), and poverty relief (*De subventionem pauperum*, 1525), Vives was also an astute philologist.<sup>9</sup> In editing *City of God* he became the guide to one of Augustine's most daunting and enduringly influential works. Written in the wake of the sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410, Augustine's comparison of classical and Christian history was meant to ward off Roman traditionalists who saw this disaster as a punishment by the gods for being neglected in favour of the God of the Christians. Yet the result was much greater than a work of Christian apologetics. It offered an encyclopaedic investigation of pagan and Christian history, philosophy, and theology, and it was written in an elaborate, complicated style, crammed with classical and biblical references.

Vives' edition of *City of God*, including an extensive commentary, was first published in 1522. So it was prepared when the primary debates of the Reformation were just beginning to take shape. Yet it enjoyed a remarkable success for more than a century. The Latin version was reprinted approximately twenty-five times in the 16th century, eighteen times in the century that followed, and was translated into French, English, Dutch, and Spanish.<sup>10</sup> Vives' edition was clearly the dominant version of *City of God* in the 16th and 17th centuries. This makes it an attractive case for studying the impact of confessional divisions on the transmission of ancient ideas.

<sup>8</sup> First published as *En habes optime lector absolutissimi doctoris Aurelii Augustini, opus absolutissimum. De Civitate dei, magnis sudoribus eme[n]datum ad priscae venerandaeq[ue] vetustatis exemplaria, per virum clarissimum & undequaq[ue] doctissimum Ioan[nem] Lodovicu[m] Vivem Valentinu[m], & per eundem eruditissimis planeq[ue] divo Augustino dignis commentariis sic illustratum, ut opus hoc eximiu[m], quod antehac & depravatissimum habebatur, & indoctis commentariis miserabiliter cofu[taminatum, nunc demu[m] renatum videri possit ...* (Basel, 1522). The edition used in this article is the one published by the Froben firm in Basel as part of the collected works, 1540–3 in volume 5: *Quintus tomus operum D. Aur[elii] Augustini Hipponensis episcopi, XXII libros de civitate Dei, diligenter recognitos per eruditiss[imum] virum Ioan[nem] Lodovicum Vivem, ac eiusdem Commentariis denuo ab autore revisis illustratos, continens* (Basel, 1542).

<sup>9</sup> For an introduction to Vives' life and works, see Charles Fantazzi (ed.), *A Companion to Juan Luis Vives* (Leiden, 2008); Carlos G. Noreña, *Juan Luis Vives* (The Hague, 1970). For an introduction to his reception of Augustine, see Charles Fantazzi's entry about Vives in K. Pollmann and W. Otten (eds), *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine* (Oxford, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> French translation by Gentian Hervet, *De la cité de Dieu ...* (Paris, 1570); English translation by John Healey and a preface by Thomas Thorpe, *Of the citie of God ...* (London, 1610); Dutch translation of selected notes by Vives by Johannes Fenacolijs, *Van de Stadt Godts ...* (Delft, 1621).

## 2.1 Humanism and Confessionalisation

In the past twenty years historians have increasingly become interested in the intellectual consequences of confessionalisation. In her seminal study, Erika Rummel described the impact of the Reformation on humanism in Germany as a more or less linear process of social discipline that steadily forced humanist scholars to adjust their work to the various confessional agendas.<sup>11</sup> In her approach, Rummel remained close to the original idea of confessionalisation as a model of state formation, as developed by the social historians Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling in the early 1980s.<sup>12</sup> In Rummel's view, confessionalisation was a top-down process, guided by the authorities of church and state. She saw it as a negative phenomenon, moreover, which curtailed intellectual freedom, in particular the development of Christian scepticism, and ultimately 'circumscribed the progress of humanism'.<sup>13</sup>

Since then, new studies in two fields of research have drastically complicated the picture. First, historians of religion have challenged the concept of confessionalisation, which has also had important implications for our understanding of intellectual culture. Instead of positing a linear, top-down formation of confessional identities, they saw a much messier, multipolar process, which also operated from below, or, more precisely, from the middle—for example, through the agency of educated urban elites, among whom humanists mostly belonged and for whom they had developed their educational services.<sup>14</sup> Studies of religious moderation and tolerance, moreover, have documented a much richer confessional diversity that had previously been discerned, highlighting in particular the significance of so-called middle groups who did not align themselves with one of the militant parties, and signalling the use of confessional silence as a communicative strategy, something that clearly also obtained in areas of the republic of letters.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Erika Rummel, *The Confessionalization of Humanism in Reformation Germany* (Oxford, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> Wolfgang Reinhard, 'Konfession und Konfessionalisierung in Europa', in Wolfgang Reinhard (ed.), *Bekennnis und Geschichte. Die Confessio Augustana im historischen Zusammenhang* (Munich, 1981), pp. 165–89; Heinz Schilling, 'Die Konfessionalisierung von Kirche, Staat und Gesellschaft: Profil, Leistung, Defizite, und Perspektiven eines geschichtswissenschaftlichen Paradigmas', in Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling (eds), *Die katholische Konfessionalisierung* (Gütersloh, 1995), pp. 11–49. For recent historiographical reviews of the concept see Ute Lotz-Heumann, 'Confessionalization', in Alex Bamji, Geert H. Janssen, and Mary Laven (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 33–53 and Thomas A. Brady, Jr, 'Confessionalization: the career of a concept', in John M. Headley, Hans J. Hillerbrand and Anthony J. Papalas (eds), *Confessionalization in Europe 1555–1700* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 1–20.

<sup>13</sup> Rummel, *Confessionalization of Humanism*, p. 151.

<sup>14</sup> Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines: Confession and Community in Utrecht 1578–1620* (Oxford, 1995); Trevor Johnson, *Magistrates, Madonnas and Miracles: The Counter Reformation in the Upper Palatinate* (Farnham, 2009); Howard Louthan, *Converting Bohemia: Force and Persuasion in the Catholic Reformation* (Cambridge, 2009); Judith Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt in the Netherlands* (Oxford, 2011).

<sup>15</sup> Luc Racaut and Alec Ryrie (eds), *Moderate Voices in the European Reformation* (Aldershot, 2005); Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England 1500–1700* (Manchester, 2006); Benjamin Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early*

Second, a small army of historians of scholarship has provided ample ammunition for the suggestion that religious tensions did not just restrict the humanist project but affected it in much more varied ways.<sup>16</sup> They showed, for example, that confessionalisation created new markets for historical scholarship and that polemical encounters refined philological techniques.<sup>17</sup> Even censorship, something which at first sight would appear to be purely repressive, could act as a spur to the *ars critica*, as shown, for instance, in studies of Thomas James' anti-Catholic collation projects or the Jesuit Antonio Possevino's bibliographic enterprise.<sup>18</sup>

Proceeding from this rich and complex understanding of confessionalisation and scholarship, we will investigate the making and fate of Vives' edition of *City of God* in this period. While the work largely preceded the period that has traditionally been regarded as the age of confessionalisation, Vives was particularly alert to contemporary religious tensions and their impact on textual scholarship. To what extent, then, one may wonder, did his commentary anticipate, accommodate, or avoid varied confessional perspectives? In which places did it trigger criticism, censorship, and, perhaps, provoke new scholarship? Since Vives' approach to Augustine's work and his way of organising its contents are important keys to answering these questions, let us focus first on the history of the project itself.

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*Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2007); Ute Lotz-Heumann and Matthias Pohlig, 'Confessionalization and literature in the empire, 1555–1700', *Central European History*, 40 (2007), 35–61; Arnoud Visser, 'Escaping the Reformation in the republic of letters: confessional silence in Latin emblem books', *Church History and Religious Culture*, 88 (2008), 139–67; and Dirk van Miert, 'The limits of transconfessional contact in the republic of letters around 1600: Scaliger, Casaubon, and their Catholic correspondents', in Jeanine De Landtsheer and Henk Nellen (eds), *Between Scylla and Charybdis: Learned Letter Writers Navigating the Reefs of Religious and Political Controversy in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2011), pp. 367–408.

<sup>16</sup> See the historiographical overview in Dmitri Levitin, 'From sacred history to the history of religion: paganism, Judaism, and Christianity in European historiography from Reformation to Enlightenment', *Historical Journal*, 55 (2012), 1117–60.

<sup>17</sup> Backus, *Historical Method*; Simon Ditchfield, *Liturgy, Sanctity and History in Tridentine Italy: Pietro Maria Campi and the Preservation of the Particular* (Cambridge, 1995); Anthony Grafton and Joanna Weinberg, *'I Have Always Loved the Holy Tongue': Isaac Casaubon, the Jews and a Forgotten Chapter in Renaissance Scholarship* (Cambridge, MA, 2011); Arnoud Visser, *Reading Augustine in the Reformation: The Flexibility of Intellectual Authority in Europe, 1500–1620* (Oxford, 2011); Ian Maclean, *Scholarship, Commerce, Religion: The Learned Book in the Age of Confessions, 1560–1630* (Cambridge, MA, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> On censorship, see Gigliola Fragnito (ed.), *Church, Censorship and Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge, 2001); For James, see Backus, *Historical Method*, and Paul Nelles, 'The uses of orthodoxy and Jacobean erudition: Thomas James and the Bodleian Library', *History of Universities*, 22 (2007), 21–70. For Possevino, see Luigi Balsamo, 'How to doctor a bibliography: Antonio Possevino's practice', in Fragnito (ed.), *Church, Censorship and Culture*, pp. 50–78.

## 2.2 Genesis of the Edition

Vives started his work on *City of God* at the instigation of Erasmus, most probably in January 1521. The project was part of Erasmus' plan to produce an edition of Augustine's complete works, and, by extension, of his larger humanist ambition to restore the works of all of the church fathers and make them accessible in reliable editions.<sup>19</sup> After publishing the collected works of Jerome (1516) and Cyprian (1520), Erasmus had turned to Augustine, but quickly realised he would not be able to complete the task alone.<sup>20</sup> He asked Vives to take care of Augustine's magnum opus, as well as deliver a biography of the saint. Vives accepted, not just because he was flattered by the invitation, but also because he was in search of patronage.

The job proved much more complicated than expected. The first problem was the work's overwhelming magnitude, as Vives reports in his preface to the reader. He does so at striking length, thus not only illuminating his contribution as an editor, but also introducing his readers to a humanist approach to Augustine. Initially, he writes, he had thought it would be an easy job. So he had 'most eagerly' accepted Erasmus' invitation, optimistically promising to deliver a full commentary within two or three months. He remembered he had already read 'several books of the work', which had seemed 'not much corrupted and fairly easy'.<sup>21</sup> Yet he soon bitterly regretted this 'juvenile thought'. He complains that Augustine's work was not only 'extremely long', but also contained an endless variety of subjects on which he was expected to shine his light: historical anecdotes and stories, natural history, rhetoric, mathematics, geography, moral philosophy, theology, 'and almost nothing of this lightly or moderately'.<sup>22</sup> Very problematic, furthermore, was the state of the text itself, which proved to have been corrupted by scribes to a much greater extent than he had expected. Vives used the edition of Amerbach's (1506)

<sup>19</sup> Arnoud Visser, 'Erasmus, the church fathers and the ideological implications of philology', *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook*, 31 (2011), 7–31; Jan den Boeft, 'Erasmus and the church fathers', in Backus (ed.), *The Reception of the Church Fathers*, II, pp. 537–72; Irena Backus, 'Erasmus and the spirituality of the early church', in Hilmar M. Pabel (ed.), *Erasmus' Vision of the Church* (Kirksville, MO, 1995), pp. 95–114.

<sup>20</sup> For Erasmus' edition of Jerome, see Hilmar M. Pabel, *Herculean Labours: Erasmus and the Editing of St. Jerome's Letters in the Renaissance* (Leiden, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> Praefatio, col. 9: 'Ac, ut verum fatear, arripui opus ab Erasmo oblatum avidissime, pollicitus me postremam commentariis imposituru[m] manum ante secundum mensem aut tertium. Nam memineram me olim aliquot eius operis volumina legisse, quae mihi nec admodum erant visa mendosa, et satis facilia: ac eiusmodi, in quae non parum eius notitiae antiquitatis, quam iugi paravera[m] lectione, possem effundere, ut eodem labore simul exercerem stylum, atq[ue] ingenium meum: simul aliis mea studia nonnihil afferent fructus, simul aliquam ingenii atq[ue] eruditionis gratiam pararem.' Unless indicated otherwise, all translations are my own.

<sup>22</sup> Praefatio, col. 9: 'Et fuit illa profecto iuvenilis quaedam cogitatio, quae longe aliter experie[n]do processit, quam ipse mecum eram ratiocinatus: nam opus praeterquam quod est longissimum, habet in se miram rerum omnium varietatem, historias, fabulas, naturalia, rhetorica, mathematica, geographica, moralia, theologica: & horu[m] nihil prope, vel tenuiter, vel mediocriter.'

as his base text, but also provides specific information about the other manuscripts that he had access to in correcting the Amerbach text.<sup>23</sup>

But apart from the job itself, the circumstances were far from ideal. Vives mentions three reasons in particular why Augustine's work proved more difficult than he had anticipated. First, he was unprepared, having previously read 'only four or five books' of the work (out of twenty-two). Second, he had failed to make indexes. 'And those who have indexes', he knows, 'are truly lucky in scholarship, because these save a big part of the effort.' The third obstacle was the 'shortage of Greek texts, astonishing for this area'. While writing the commentary Vives lived mostly in Leuven, where he taught at the university. Yet apparently none of his colleagues there could help him obtain the Greek texts of Aristotle, Demosthenes, the Old Testament (in translation), Pausanias, Isocrates, Julius Pollux, or Eustathius. He could not even buy them from booksellers.<sup>24</sup>

Despite these obstacles, Vives impressively managed to complete the project within eighteen months. At Vives' request, Erasmus arranged for the work to be published separately in 1522, so that readers interested in *City of God* need not buy the complete works.<sup>25</sup> He had by then abandoned the idea of writing a biography of Augustine, which meant that his involvement in the project was now finished. He dedicated the work to Henry VIII in an attempt to extend the patronage relationship he had developed with Catharine of Aragon.<sup>26</sup> Despite the successful completion of the edition, he was critical about the experience: 'nobody will quite believe how exasperating and repulsive it was', he writes, and concludes with the hope that the

<sup>23</sup> Two of these manuscripts were kept in Bruges: Vives borrowed one from Marcus Laurinus, dean of St Donatian's, and was allowed to read another at the Carmelite monastery in Bruges. The third manuscript, sent by Erasmus, came from Cologne, and was supposedly written by St Ludger (c.742–809), the first bishop of Munster. Praefatio, col. 10 and in his comment to 15.1. Vives is the first editor of the early printed editions to provide detailed information about his manuscript sources, as shown by Bernhard Dombart, *Zur Textgeschichte der Civitas Dei Augustini seit dem Entstehen der ersten Drucke* (Leipzig, 1908), pp. 43–5. For his handling of the text, see Charles Fantazzi, 'Vives' text of Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*', *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch*, 11 (2009), 19–33.

<sup>24</sup> Praefatio, col. 12: 'Et hoc mihi tanto fuit difficilium, ac plus te[m]poris extraxit, quod et imparatus ad hoc opus accessi, quu[m] antea quatuor aut quinque tantum in eo volumina legissem, nec indices ullos mihi ex lectione confeci: vel in hunc vel in similem aliquem usum: quos qui habent, nae hi felices in literis sunt, quibus haud exigua laboris demitur pars. His angustiis et difficultatibus inopia Graecorum voluminu[m] accessit, quae est in hac regione mira. Nam quum passim doctis fias obvius, si Aristotelem Graecum, aut Demosthenem, aut vetus testamentum, aut Pausaniam, aut Isocratem, aut Iulium Pollucem, aut Eustathium utendum petas, negant se habere: nec apud bibliopolas venales invenias.'

<sup>25</sup> Vives to Erasmus, 19 January 1522, P. S. Allen (ed.), *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, 12 vols (Oxford 1906–58), v (Oxford, 1924), p. 12.

<sup>26</sup> Dedicatory letter on cols 5–8, with Henry's reply, dated 24 January 1523, printed on the reverse of the title page. Vives mentions the financial support he receives from Catharine in a letter to Erasmus of 10 July 1521. Here he also hints at his plan to move to England. See Allen, *Opus epistolarum*, no. 1222, lines 17–21.



commentary will prove as useful to its readers as it was ‘onerous and annoying for the writer’.<sup>27</sup>

The project also soured Vives’ relationship with Erasmus. Two years after its publication Erasmus complained that the edition had barely sold. Since it was he who had persuaded Froben to publish the work separately, he now felt guilty about the publisher’s losses, which he blamed on the length of the commentary. Had Vives adhered to ‘the brevity that [he] once recommended’, the book would have been easier to sell. He asked Vives to help boost sales by using the work in his teaching.<sup>28</sup> A few years later Vives slightly revised his commentary in light of the publication of the collected works, but due to miscommunication this never appeared.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, when the *Opera omnia* was finally published, in 1529, the version of Vives’ edition of *City of God* contained no commentary at all, nor any of the other preliminary materials. Vives rectified these omissions by turning to the Paris printing house of Claude Chevallon, who published a revised edition of *City of God* as part of the collected works of 1531. Significantly, the section in which Erasmus was praised was reduced to a few formulaic lines. But the transmission of Vives’ edition was ensured. From 1530 onward, publishers in Basel, Paris, Lyon, and Antwerp increasingly battled for their share in the rapidly growing market of patristic editions, spurred by contemporary religious debates.<sup>30</sup> In the case of Augustine, such competition culminated in a new *opera omnia* by the Leuven theologians, published by Christophe Plantin in 1576–7.<sup>31</sup> Yet even this edition still included Vives’ commentary, albeit in a censored form to tone down its more aggressive, humanist elements.

### 2.3 Humanist Ambitions

Besides illuminating the editor’s scholarly practices and working conditions, Vives’ preface signals to the reader a new approach to Augustine. He saw the edition as a means to emancipate Augustine from the ecclesiastical community that had so long

<sup>27</sup> Praefatio, col. 13: ‘Nobis certe haud sane credat quisqua[m], quam taediosum fuerit ac fastidiorum plenu[m]: quo fit, ut prima illa, quae me in opus stimulabat, perficiendi facilitas plane perierit. ... Illud modo precari possum, si quid optando proficitur, tam utile ut sentiant opus legentes, quam mihi grave ac molestum fuit scribenti.’

<sup>28</sup> Erasmus to Vives, 27 December 1524, Allen, *Opus epistolarum*, no. 1531: ‘Frobenius mihi serio questus est se ne unum quidem opus De Civitate Dei vendere Francfordiae; idque eo vultu dixit ut plane credam hominem nihil fingere. Vides etiam in Musarum rebus regnare fortunam. Ego illic nihil non suspicio, nisi quod brevitatis quam tibi olim commendavi, reddidisset librum vendibiliorem. ... Si Civitatem illam vel praelegendo vel alia quapiam ratione posses vendibiliorem reddere, sublevares hominem.’

<sup>29</sup> See the letters of Vives to Erasmus from 20 September 1525, Allen, *Opus epistolarum*, no. 1613, lines 9–12 and 30 August 1529; no. 2208, lines 6–10.

<sup>30</sup> Pierre Petitmengin, ‘Le match Bâle-Paris au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle: Éditions princeps, éditions revues des pères latins’, in Mariarosa Cortesi (ed.), *‘Editiones principes’ delle opere dei padri greci e latini* (Florence, 2006), pp. 3–39.

<sup>31</sup> About this edition project, see Visser, *Reading Augustine in the Reformation*, pp. 47–60.



determined how his works were to be interpreted. This community included scholastic theologians, but also the many powerful orders living according to Augustine's rule (the Augustinian Hermits and Canons, but also, for instance, the Dominicans). Vives also wanted to offer an edition that would be attractive beyond the circle of theologians, appealing as well to readers with humanist interests: accordingly, there is an emphasis on the labours involved in restoring the text, as well as criticism of the prevalent intellectual climate, in which ancient sources were neglected.

We can also detect a humanist agenda in Vives' policy of annotation, which has little room for traditional theological analysis. Vives argues that it was not appropriate for a layman 'to define or discuss' sacred issues, and that, moreover, biblical history would be relatively familiar 'to those who read Augustine and similar authors'.<sup>32</sup> For the same reason, he announces that he will keep silent about the theological controversies surrounding Augustine's thought, explicitly distinguishing the role of interpreting Augustine from that of defending his ideas.<sup>33</sup>

With this he did not, of course, seek to exclude the clergy from his readership. Rather, Vives hoped to educate them by broadening their intellectual horizons. A case in point is his extensive explanation of the history of Platonism accompanying books 8 and 10. As Vives candidly writes to Erasmus, this was meant to help 'our theologians' to obtain at least some basic knowledge of this philosophical movement, and he hoped to teach them that Platonism was equally valuable as Aristotelianism.<sup>34</sup>

Yet Vives knew that refraining from theological debate would not safeguard him from criticism. He was already well aware that theologians and clergymen were apprehensive about his work, if not plainly dismissive. He mentions the example of a theologian who, after hearing of Vives' edition, denounced it as 'completely useless', since *City of God* was 'more than sufficiently clear' in itself. When asked why he would think so, given its variety of historical, mythological, philosophical,

<sup>32</sup> Praefatio, cols 10–11: 'Narrandae fuerunt fabulae et historiae: describendae regiones et urbes, tum consulendi Platonici pene omnes, et reliquae philosophorum nationes, et theologica tractanda, in quibus parciore quam in profanis aliquot de causis fui. Primum, quod non decebat, profanum hominem, nec natu grandem temere de sanctissimis rebus vel definire, vel disputare. Deinde quod historia sacrarum literarum notior solet esse lecturis Augustinum, et huiusmodi authores, quam ut opus sit eam per me repeti, quae indicatis locis ex sacris libris fusius et apertius cognosci potest, quam ut a me hic pluribus videretur explicanda.'

<sup>33</sup> Praefatio, col. 11: 'Nec putavi fore interpretis aut controversias illas movere, quas nostri Theologi in scholis magnis animis agitant: quanquam iis prima aetate fuimus imbuti, quae ab instituto, a mente ratione[ue] Augustini plurimum dissident: aspernatus[ue] fuisset illas, atque indignatus operi suo admistas, velut tritico lolium, quacumque coeli parte purus ille ac sanctissimus animus res hominum despectat. Itaque nec disputandum mihi censui vel cum hoc hominum genere, vel cum antiquioribus quicumque alieni a sententia Augustini essent: nam hoc iam non esset interpretis, sed defensoris ac patroni: quu[m] non modo mea, sed nec ullius defensione aut patrocinio ille indigeat.'

<sup>34</sup> Vives to Erasmus, 1 April 1522, Allen, *Opus epistolarum*, no. 1271, lines 11–18: 'Incurrerunt quidam loci in quibus id praestari non potuit, ut quum erant res non admodum theologis nostris cognitae; sicut historiae, fabulae, philosophica, praecipue Platonica. Ideo in octavo et decimo libris longior fui forsitan quam oportebat; tum ut recondita illis aperirem et proferrem, tum ut Platonica prorsus non ignorarent, viderentque haec nihil Aristotelicis cedere, et inciperent alios quoque magnos authores velle cognoscere.'

geographical, and mathematical information, the theologian replied with a simple question: ‘What use does that have for the theologian?’<sup>35</sup>

Vives expected similar scepticism from many Dominicans in particular. His commentary was meant to replace the scholastic version, produced by two members of their order, Thomas Waleys (fl. 1318–1349) and Nicholas Trivet (c.1258–c.1335). Most printed editions of *City of God* offered this commentary together with explanatory notes by Jacopo Passavanti (1302–c.1357) and summarising ‘veritates’ by the Franciscan theologian Francis of Meyronnes (Franciscus de Mayronis, c.1285–c.1328). That these old guides were still widely used is clear from reprint editions as recent as 1515 and 1520. So to forestall criticism from these institutional protectors of Augustine and his Dominican commentators, and encouraged by Erasmus, Vives addressed the subject squarely in a separate section, entitled ‘About the old interpreters of this work’.

Vives’ rhetorical tactics here relied on an aggressive type of humour. As he wrote to Erasmus, he would make his predecessors ‘most wonderfully laughable’ to the reader by highlighting their linguistic mistakes and lack of classical knowledge. He points out, for example, how Waleys and Trivet—according to Vives ‘as like as one egg to another’—confuse the word ‘germanus’ (genuine, faithful) with the tribe of the Germani. So when Augustine praises the spirit of the Romans as ‘*faithfully* Roman’ (2.13), using the adverb ‘germane’ to qualify the Roman-ness of the mentality at the time, Waleys and Trivet annotate the word as meaning ‘immensely’ (*immaniter*), since ‘the Germans have immense and tall bodies’.<sup>36</sup>

In the case of Passavanti the name says it all, Vives argues, alluding to the meaning of the French words ‘pas savant’ and suggesting that it was probably a nickname given to him by his fellow monks. For Vives this confirms his impression of Passavanti as an intellectual lightweight, who mostly fails to add any information about the sources. ‘These additions’, he notes, ‘are flippant, meant to make his brethren laugh.’<sup>37</sup> He is similarly scathing about Meyronnes’ summarising ‘veritates’, ‘as if the rest were false’. And how should these truths be judged, Vives wonders, in the chapters dealing with history: are the episodes before or after

<sup>35</sup> Praefatio, col. 13: ‘Alii hoc totum nec visum, nec iudicatum qualicunque censeatur nomine, reiicient, et damnabunt, ut proxime quidam Theologiae licentiatius, quum audisset me in libros De civitate dei scribere, magno fastidio operam meam tanquam inutilem prorsus vanamq[ue] aspernatus est. Et quid, inquit, opus est libris illis illustratore plus satis ex se perspicuis et claris? ... Caeterum mirari, qui audieba[n]t vel ingenium hominis, vel eruditionem, vel certe impudentiam. Nam imperitissime loquebatur, et rerum omnium veterum erat omnino expers ac rudis, rogavitq[ue] ex his, qui audierant, unus, cur sic censeret, quum essent tot historiae, tot fabulae, tot philosophica, tot geographica, tot mathematica. Quid, inquit, illa ad theologum? Deinde sint, a vel b, non sum sollicitus.’

<sup>36</sup> ‘De veteribus interpretibus huius operis’, col. 20: ‘Exclamat Aug. lib. II. O animos germane Romanos. Germane inquit, id est, alte, vel immaniter: nam Germani habe[n]t immania & alta corpora.’ Vives seems to have cited Augustine’s place by heart, since Augustine’s exact wording is: ‘O animum civitatis laudis avidum germaneque Romanum.’ Vives again digresses on the mistake in his commentary to the passage, 2.13.

<sup>37</sup> ‘De veteribus interpretibus huius operis’, col. 21: ‘Ioculares sunt additiones istae, ad risum fratribus movendum paratae.’

not true?<sup>38</sup> Moreover, in Vives' view Meyronnes tends to bend his interpretations in a Scotist direction, making Augustine seem an adversary of Aquinas. While Vives does not provide concrete examples of such scholastic infighting, he keenly continues to correct historical errors in Meyronnes' 'truths'.<sup>39</sup>

By thus rendering the scholastic commentators to *City of God* ridiculous and incompetent, Vives joined Erasmus' public battle with the theological establishment, which had begun with the latter's edition of Jerome. Erasmus explains how the plan to edit Augustine had also immediately provoked criticism:

[W]hen certain brethren of the Dominican fraternity got wind of this audacious enterprise, it was not only at drinking-parties, but even in public sermons that clamour broke out: it was insupportable, and a thing that public opinion could no longer stand, that Erasmus should now proceed to correct the text of Augustine as well, of whose works he did not understand one jot. They even called it heresy to assert that there could be anything in the great man's books that was erroneous or spurious or misunderstood by theologians.<sup>40</sup>

Vives clearly realised that with such messages coming from the pulpit, it would be useless to try to convince his clerical critics. As the preliminaries show, he aimed instead to broaden his readership, using his edition as a means to emancipate Augustine from his traditional ecclesiastical keepers. The edition achieved this goal in the long run, but not because of its polemical preliminary materials. The first sustained project of expurgation, the Antwerp *Index expurgatorius* (1571), ordered the deletion of Vives' entire preface to the reader, as well as the section 'About the old interpreters of this work'.<sup>41</sup>

Yet the humanist programme had also shaped the presentation of patristic knowledge in the commentary—as can be seen, first, in the way Vives aimed to help his readers cope with the overwhelming amount of information contained in the work.

<sup>38</sup> 'De veteribus interpretibus huius operis', col. 21: 'Istis omnibus accedit Franciscus de Maronis non quivis doctor, sed illuminatus, et veritates colligit, quasi caetera essent falsa.'

<sup>39</sup> 'De veteribus interpretibus huius operis', col. 22.

<sup>40</sup> Erasmus to the reader in the 1522 edition of the *City of God* (August 1522), Allen, *Opus epistolarum*, no. 1309, lines 42–9: 'Atque huius tam impii conatus odor simul atque permanasset ad quosdam Dominicani sodalitiis fratres, iam non in symposiis tantum verum etiam in publicis concionibus vociferari coeperunt, indignum facinus nec diutius orbi tolerandum, Erasmum tantulum intelligeret: atque haeresim etiam vocabant, asseverare quicquam esse in huius viri libris mendosum, adulterinum aut non intellectum theologis.' *Collected Works of Erasmus*, trans. R. A. B. Mynors, vol. 9 (Toronto, 1989), p. 170. Erasmus mentions another example of Dominican preaching against the edition project in a letter to Marcus Laurinus, 1 February 1523, Allen, *Opus epistolarum*, no. 1342, lines 115–32.

<sup>41</sup> J. M. de Bujanda (ed.), *Index des livres interdits*, vol. 7 (Sherbrooke, 1988), p. 728.

## 2.4 Overcoming Information Overload

Since late antiquity, Augustine's formidable output frequently posed problems for even the most diligent readers. Even Isidore of Seville, who authored several encyclopaedic works himself, admitted it was simply impossible to read the complete Augustine. 'Anyone', he wrote with a mix of frustration and envy, 'who claims to have read all of his works, simply lies.'<sup>42</sup> On a smaller scale, *City of God* presented the reader with similar problems. It was an extensive and difficult work, crammed with arcane historical facts and dense philosophical arguments. Apart from its ambitious scope, the work was written in a complicated style. Erasmus somewhere characterised it as 'dark with heavy mist'. His keenness to hand over the editorial responsibility to Vives was partly a consequence of the work's formidable nature. As he admitted later, Erasmus found 'nobody more troublesome to read than Augustine'.<sup>43</sup>

Vives realised that *City of God* could overwhelm its readers and tried to offer help in several ways.<sup>44</sup> First, he acknowledged its challenging nature. His report of his struggle with the size and complexity of the text, for example, presents *City of God* as a text that defies normal reading practises and instead requires advanced forms of information management and editorial guidance. In the same preface, he addresses his readers directly, warning them that they will not find 'any paved road' or place of relaxation, not even when he is treating topoi that would otherwise have offered the learned reader firmer ground.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> 'Mentitur qui te totum legisse fatetur, / Aut quis cuncta tua lector habere potest? / Namque voluminibus mille Augustine refulges / Testantur libri quod loquor ipse tui. / Quamvis multorum placeat prudentia libris / Si Augustinus adest sufficit ipse tibi'; Isidore of Seville, *Versus*, ed. José María Sánchez Martín, CCL 113A (Turnhout, 2000), 218–19. The epigram was part of Isidore's 'Versus in bibliotheca', which were probably meant to accompany portraits of authors on the library cupboards; for the practical use of these 'Versus in bibliotheca', see Charles Henry Beeson, *Isidor-Studien* (Munich, 1913), pp. 133–66, esp. 152–5.

<sup>43</sup> See Erasmus' epigram in praise of Bernard André's manuscript commentary to *City of God*, dating probably from April 1517: 'Doctor Augustine, sacrae celebris author paginae / Tua gravi scalebat antehac Civitas caligine / Et parum liquebat oculis impericioribus. / Ecce Bernardus labore plurimarum noctium / Luculentis sic retexit cuncta commentariis / Ut queant vel lusciosis perspicere dilucide.' See the edition of Harry Vredeveld in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 85 (Toronto, 1993), p. 344, no. 121. For Erasmus' aversion against writing a commentary about this work, see his letter to Justus Decius, 22 August 1534, Allen, *Opus epistolarum*, no. 2961, lines 31–6: 'Episcopus Lincolnensis [= John Longland, AV] in Anglia multis iam annis urget me ut aedam scholia in Civitatem Augustini. Hanc provinciam occupavit Vives Hispanus, et opus immensum est, et nemo lectu molestior quam Augustinus, praesertim in his quae scripsit per otium accuratius. Tentavi, quo gratificarer amico, sed animus abhorruit.'

<sup>44</sup> For the phenomenon of information overload, including the use of commentaries as a device to deal with it, see Ann M. Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven, CT, 2010).

<sup>45</sup> Praefatio, col. 12: 'Illic vero non stratam ullam viam invenias, nec quod recreet oculos, nec quo vel momentum divertas, ac ne ubi sedeas quidem fessus quum conferenda sunt tempora, quum diversitas inter auctores atque adeo adversitas ostendenda, quum saepenumero tollenda, quum quaerendum, et evolendum, et divinandum ubi sit locus, quem Augustinus affert ex scriptore aliquo: quem locum invenire multum ac diu quaesitum casus est saepius, quam eruditionis.'

Vives' edition is not the first to anticipate such a reading experience. Manuscripts and early editions of *City of God* had been enriched with devices to help readers find their way. The chapter headings that summarise the argument even date back to Augustine's days.<sup>46</sup> Later devices include lists of the chapter headings at the start of each of the books, key words and names in the margins, and alphabetical indexes that were meant to facilitate the navigation of the text. Another successful tool proved to be Francis of Meyronnes' anthology, mentioned earlier, with its synthesising 'truths' that again offered a shortcut to understanding Augustine's argument.

Vives' edition followed these conventions by providing tables of contents, indexes, and marginalia. He also helped readers keep track of the general structure in three transitional prefaces to parts of the work, illuminating the macro-structure of Augustine's argument and explaining his rationale as a commentator.<sup>47</sup> In doing so, he paid particular attention to the availability of historical information. Thus, in a preface to books 4 to 7, Vives explains that his commentary will necessarily be sparser here, since there were fewer extant sources about ancient religious life. Conversely, in a preface to books 8–10, Vives announces that his commentary will be more extensive than before. These books deal with Platonist theology, which, as already indicated, Vives felt deserved more attention, especially from those 'who dwell in the schools of philosophers and theologians'.<sup>48</sup>

The preface to book 18 discusses the problem of information overload explicitly in an attempt to apologise for the limits of commentary. Due to the immense scope and extremely varied subject matter in this book, Vives had to cover much ground 'in the dark', he admits, 'mostly gropingly instead of guided by the eye, without daring to place his foot before probing where it should be put, as it happens in dusky places'.<sup>49</sup> Vives gives a tantalising list of the type of subjects covered by Augustine, concerning not just Rome but the entire known world. These included the most exotic royal lineages from prehistoric times, which had barely been described in classical literature, and which sometimes 'practically even the rulers themselves wanted to forget about', as Vives suggests in the case of the Sicyonians, who did not allow their ancestors' names to be placed on their tombs. Apart from this, there were the mythological stories with which Augustine sprinkled his account, tales,

<sup>46</sup> Michael M. Gorman, 'Chapter headings for Saint Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram*', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 26 (1980), 88–104, at 99, n. 31, repr. in Michael M. Gorman, *The Manuscript Traditions of the Works of St Augustine* (Florence, 2001).

<sup>47</sup> Such prefaces are to be found at beginning of bk 4 (about bks 4–7), 8 (8–10), and 18.

<sup>48</sup> Preface preceding the commentary to bk 8, 'Vivis prooemium in tres sequentes libros', col. 430: 'Tribus in sequentibus libris disputatur cum viris acutissimis summa[ue] praeditis eloquentia, qui ex Platonis schola caeteris bonis artibus instructi religione sola carueru[n]t, quorum sententias ac in primis sectae principis Platonis fusius forsan explicuimus, q[uam] instituti nostri ratio videbatur postulare, veru[m] hoc consilio, quonia[m] a nostris hominibus qui in philosophorum scholis Theologorum[ue] versantur prorsus sunt ignoratae, cum sint tame[n] cognosci dignissimae.'

<sup>49</sup> 'Ioannis Lodovici Vivis Valentini Prooemium in decimum octavum librum', col. 992: 'Volumine Operis huius duodevicesimo multa nobis inter tenebras spatia fuerunt conficie[n]da, usiq[ue] plerunq[ue] sumus manuum ductu pro oculis, nec pedem ausi figere prius q[uam] ubi figendus esset tentaremus, quod fieri obscuris in locis solet.'

according to Vives, ‘like the hardest nuts, walnuts, almonds, or even pines, which take a great effort to crack’. In view of all this, who would not pardon the reader who would ‘occasionally get lost’? Thus appealing to a shared sense of overload, Vives asks the reader’s forgiveness for his own shortcomings as a commentator.<sup>50</sup>

Vives’ strategy to help his readers overcome this overload was not necessarily to be concise, as he admitted in the preface to books 8–10. Indeed, his commentary here, as well as to book 18, offers nearly encyclopaedic historical and philosophical guidance to the text. Instead, Vives tried to enliven the reading experience by adding information that was entertaining as well as illuminating. Since Augustine was an ‘expansive’ writer and ‘his own exegete’, Vives considered himself free ‘to play’, for instance by including ‘a few digressions now and then’. For this reason he included some items as ‘refreshments and recreation of the mind’.<sup>51</sup>

This approach can be seen in allusions to Vives’ own experience or to contemporary events that bring Augustine’s text closer to the world of the early modern reader. We can see the preference for enlivening over teaching, for example, in several comments in book 14 on the nature of original sin, when Augustine discusses the will’s control over the body (14.24). As examples for his argument, Augustine lists men who possess exceptional abilities, such as moving one’s ears, imitating the voices of other men and animals, crying or sweating at will, or producing ‘at will, and without any odour ... a variety of sounds from their anus that they seem to be singing in that part’.<sup>52</sup> Supplementing this information, Vives reports how he himself had been able to sweat at will, when he was ill with a tertian fever at Bruges. He also provides the example of a flatulating musician that he witnessed at the court of Emperor Maximilian, for whom ‘there was not a song he could not sing’. Vives’ corroboration of Augustine on this point would later be cited by

<sup>50</sup> ‘Ioannis Lodovici Vivis Valentini Prooemium in decimum octavum librum’, col. 993: ‘Si quis adeo multas variasq[ue] gentes ac regiones lustra[n]s etiam subinde a peritis de via percontando tamen ab ea interdum aberrasset, quis huic non putaret ignoscendu[m], aut propterea minus industrie peregrinationem confectam arbitraretur? Nemo mea sententia. Quod si ita est, quanto aequius erit mihi venia[m] dari, si qua[n]do forte aut casu quopia[m], aut ignora[n]tia in aviu[m] aliquot co[n]cessi, aut villas aliquas et pagos ignobiles hominesq[ue] obscuros praeterii nec salutatos, nec visos, profectus per loca ut plurimu[m] deserta, nullis subnotata signis, inve[n]tis per q[uam] raris e quibus quaererem, aut quibus ducibus uterer.’

<sup>51</sup> Praefatio, cols 11–12: ‘Multa nunc mihi vera, certa, explorata videntur, quae, si diutius contingat vivere, non modo ambigua per aetatem videbuntur, sed forsitan etiam falsissima. Idcirco plerisque in locis delectare magis lectorem placuit, quam docere. Et si quid docerem non tam severe imperando volui persuadere, quam blande rogando monendoque. Adducti sumus nonnumquam ea causa, quoniam Augustinus fusus est plerunque, ac ipse interpret sui; ideo labore docendi adempto ludere libuit et lectorem in digressus aliquos interim non prorsus inamoenos ducere, simul et mei laboris quandoque partem levarem etsi non onere deposito certe frigida suffusa et per viam aliquanto munitionem et intersata cultaque spectatu iucunda commodiore. Nam haec omnia quae dixi, et si habent suas animi ceu reparationes refectioesque, habent nihilominus suas salebras, suos acclives colliculos, per quos non sine sudore agas onus: suos quoque descensus, per quos non sine lapsus periculo facias iter, ne fasce pressus in primum ferare.’

<sup>52</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 14.24, ‘Nonnulli ab imo sine paedore ullo ita numerosos pro arbitrio sonitus edunt, ut ex illa etiam parte cantare uideantur.’ Trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 626–7.

Montaigne in his essay ‘On the power of the imagination’.<sup>53</sup> As for crying at will, he refers to professional mourners in Italy, who could be hired for funerals, as well as ‘practically the entire female sex’.<sup>54</sup>

Part of the same strategy is Vives’ tendency to personalise his comments with references to his friends and family. He adduces a childhood memory about his mother Blanca March to enliven Augustine’s polemical argument against world cycles (12.21). He brings in a playful experiment made by his landlord (and future father-in-law) Bernardo Valldaura and his son, when Augustine grimly discusses incombustible materials in the context of eternal punishment (20.4). When Augustine defines the concept of ‘right’ (*ius*, 19.21), Vives summons the legal classes he took with his uncle Enric March and tells of his recent conversations about justice and legal practice with his Flemish friends Frans van Craneveld and Marcus Laurinus.

This personal style offered a bridge between Augustine’s worldview and Vives’ early modern readers. His regular interludes were meant to refresh them and thus help them cope with the richness of the work. Yet, simultaneously, Vives’ guidance here also muted the theological discourse of *City of God*.

## 2.5 Ideological Frame

Erasmus, in the preface to Vives’ edition, may have denied that editing Augustine was anything other than a purely grammatical procedure, but undoubtedly Vives’ humanist approach had distinct ideological implications. In assessing these, the silences are the most telling. The commentary, for all its copious information, also acts as a filter, sifting specific bits from *City of God* and placing them in particular contexts. Approached from this perspective, Vives’ commentary reveals a clear preference for ancient history and classical philosophy over theological analysis. Most lemmata in his commentary provide what could loosely be called historical context, for example by explaining personal names, locating ancient regions and cities, elucidating mythological stories, and generally providing rich references to relevant classical literature. Naturally the subject matter of *City of God* partly dictates this orientation. Yet even as he follows the author’s main subject matter, Vives also chooses *not* to pursue some important topics, most conspicuously those which bear on doctrinal issues.

A direct result of his anti-scholastic views, Vives’ silence about theology would serve the survival of his commentary very well. In many places where Augustine discussed topics that were to become highly controversial in the wake of the Reformation, Vives declines to comment or shifts his attention in another direction.

<sup>53</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais* (Paris, 1617), 1.20 ‘De la force de l’imagination’, p. 62.

<sup>54</sup> Vives to *City of God*, 14.24, col. 797: ‘Talis fuit memoria nostra in hac terra Germanus quidam in comitatu Maximiliani Caesaris, et Philippi eius filii, nec ullu[m] erat carmen, quod no[n] ille crepitibus podicis redderet.’ About crying at will: ‘Praeficae in Italia, et fere totum genus mulierum.’



In the context of Augustine's discussion of original sin, for instance, Vives explicitly indicates that he does not want to enter into theological debate. When Augustine argues that Adam's evil will caused him to minimise his own responsibility in the Fall, regarding himself as merely 'a venial transgressor', Vives notes he will not discuss the issue whether Adam sinned venially, as argued by Bonaventure and Scotus. 'I see that he sinned gravely and cardinally', he comments instead, 'and I am feeling awful.'<sup>55</sup>

Mostly, however, the selective nature of Vives' comments is more implicit. A case in point is offered by Vives' annotations to the first eleven paragraphs of book 5, where Augustine deals with astrology. Augustine's aim was to refute the notion of fate and its inherent determinism, and to replace it by divine providence. This subject would very soon be doctrinal dynamite for Vives' theologically trained readers. In line with official Catholic teaching, Augustine here defended the existence of free will, which he would more or less deny in his later works, to which the Protestants mostly appealed. For good reason, therefore, we find this section of *City of God* cited prominently as evidence of the Catholic truth in contemporary Catholic-leaning patristic anthologies.<sup>56</sup>

In Vives' commentary to these paragraphs, however, there is no such doctrinal analysis. Vives provides information about the Roman scientist Publius Nigidius Figulus (5.3), explains basic facts of biblical history (5.4) and astrology (5.5; 5.8), and clarifies late antique Latin idiom (5.6). When Augustine discusses the example of twins as a means to falsify astrological determinism (5.6), Vives explores biological problems such as superfetation. When Augustine argues that God's foreknowledge does not preclude free will, Vives admittedly criticises the tendency of scholastic theologians to debate this 'difficult question' for its own sake, which only makes the problem more complicated.<sup>57</sup> But he does not discuss the evolution of Augustine's thinking about predestination or mention later patristic controversies about this subject, such as the Gottschalk affair. For the Dutch translator Johannes Fenacolijs this was a bit too much to bear. Writing in the wake of the Arminian Controversy, in which the issue of predestination played a central role, he replaced Vives' note with a comment that sought to rescue Augustine's predestinarian authority. According to him, Augustine's statement on the freedom of the

<sup>55</sup> Vives to *City of God*, 14.13 (*Putaret se venialiter transgressorem esse*), col. 780: 'No[n] disputo potueritne Adam venialiter peccare, quod in controversia est Bonaventurae et homini eiusdem ordinis Scoto: graviter et capitaliter egisse video, et me miserum sentio.'

<sup>56</sup> See Hieronymus Torrensis, *Confessio Augustiniana in libros quatuor distributa, et certis capitibus locorum theologicorum qui sunt hodie scitu dignissimi, comprehensa ...* (Dillingen, 1567), fols 103r-v.

<sup>57</sup> Vives to *City of God* 5.10 (*Non ergo propterea nihil est in nostra voluntate*), col. 302: 'Ardua quaestio ... multi de schola recentiore obligationum arte accedunt ad disputatione[m] muniti, ut si aliquid tibi sumpseris, ipsis quod sibi retinea[n]t, non desit, ut si hoc ceperis, co[n]trarium sit tibi relinquendum: atque adeo, ut magis irretita magisq[ue] invisata tota re discedatur, quam cum accederetur ...'

will merely concerned ‘temporary and evil things’, but did not extend to a free will ‘in spiritual matters, which Augustine commonly denies in all his works’.<sup>58</sup>

That Vives keeps silent on doctrinal issues does not mean that he never voices his opinion. In the same section on astrology, for example, he is clearly sceptical about the value of the stars in predicting the future. Augustine’s suggestion that the remarkable successes of astrologers are thanks to demons who try to confuse humans seems unconvincing to him. ‘If one aims often’, he notes soberly, ‘one is bound to hit the mark every now and then. Few remember the astrologers’ answers that were wrong; the ones that proved right are praised as wonderful achievements.’<sup>59</sup>

Potentially more controversial, however, are those places where Vives goes beyond Augustine’s argument to express his ethical views on contemporary issues. In book 18, for instance, Augustine explains that before Christ’s revelation there had also been members of God’s city outside Israel (18.47). This prompts Vives to bring in a contemporary example, the inhabitants of the New World, arguing that among them could also be individuals who belonged to God, without knowledge of Jesus or the Bible.<sup>60</sup> The salvation of pagans was a very controversial issue, as it obviously did not sit well with existing practices of forceful conquest, which were partly sanctioned by religious arguments.<sup>61</sup> Although left untouched in the first censorship instructions, it was excised in many later Catholic editions, such as that of the Leuven theologians.<sup>62</sup> The passage survived not only in Protestant-leaning versions (however critical the majority of Protestant theologians were about the idea), but also in Gentien Hervet’s French translation. In a marginal note to the passage, Hervet admitted this was a ‘difficult issue’, pointing out that ‘several

<sup>58</sup> Fenacolijs, *Van de Stadt Gods*, note to 5.7, fol. 90v: ‘a. liberae voluntates: hy spreect alhier van de vrije wille niet in geestelijcke ding[e]n / dewelcke Augustinus doorgaens in alle zijne boecken ontkent maer van de vrije willen dewelcke wy onder de bestieringe Gods ende niet der sterre[n] hebben in tijtlijcke dinghen ende oock in quade dinghen’.

<sup>59</sup> Vives to *City of God 5.7 (Cum astrologi mirabiliter multa)*, col. 292: ‘Necesses est aliquando collimēt, qui frequenter iaculat[ur]: falsa Mathematicorum responsa pauci recordantur, vera celebrantur pro admirabilibus.’

<sup>60</sup> Vives to *City of God 18.47 (Neminem pertinuisse ad deum praeter Israelitas)*, col. 1118: ‘Potuerunt enim qui ex gentibus natura[m] sequebantur ducem, illam non pravis iudiciis opinionibusq[ue] inquinatam et corruptam, tam grati esse deo, q[uam] qui lege[m] Mosaicam servaverunt: quod enim hi co[n]sequuti sunt per legem, illi co[n]sequuti essent sine lege. ... Idem etiam nostro te[m]pore continget ei, qui quum nihil de Christo audierit in remotissimis Oceani terris natus, duo illa maxima servarit ma[n] data, in quis veritas ipsa lege[m] tota[m], prophetasq[ue] constitutos affirmavit, de deo, et proximo dilige[n]dis, huic sua co[n]scientia est lex. ... Et in hoc hominu[m] genere quid deest praeter aqua[m]? quu[m] spiritu[m] sanctum no[n] secus q[uam] Apostoli meruerint, et acceperint.’

<sup>61</sup> See John Marenbon, *Pagans and Philosophers: The Problem of Paganism from Augustine to Leibniz* (Princeton, NJ, 2015), esp. pp. 281–300; Yves Krumenacker, ‘Can we give the Gospel to those who have not heard of it? Reformed theological discourses about the salvation of pagans in the early modern era’, *Bažnyčios Istorijos Studijos* 6 (2013), 55–69; Don Cameron Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance* (Baltimore, MD, 1970), esp. pp. 1–20, 40–6.

<sup>62</sup> It is not listed in the 1571 Antwerp *Index expurgatorius*, see Bujanda (ed.), *Index*, pp. 728–30.

ancient authors', including Augustine, were of a different opinion.<sup>63</sup> It neatly illustrates the complexity and versatility of confessional responses to Vives' comment about this controversial subject.

Another example, particularly poignant, shows that some of Vives' views could be censored both in Catholic and Protestant editions. This happened to Vives' comments on the use of torture in legal processes (19.6). Augustine discusses the issue as an example of the difficulties that the wise man has to face in society, in this case when he would assume the responsibility of a judge. He is critical about torture as a questioning technique, since it can involve innocent witnesses, but also regards it as more or less unavoidable for pragmatic reasons. Vives, however, annotates the passage with this passionate condemnation:

I am surprised that Christian people hold fast to so many pagan practices, as if they were the most sacred rites, which are not only contrary to Christian charity and clemency, but also to any humanity. Augustine states that torture is applied out of need of human society, but who does not see that he is talking to pagans and about pagans? For what is that need, which so intolerable and lamentable, that it should be drained—if that were possible—in streams of tears, if it is of no use and can be abolished without harm to public life? How do all those people live, including in fact barbarian ones, according to the Greeks and Romans, who find it uncultivated and monstrous to subject man to torture whose crime is in doubt? We men, clearly gifted with all qualities of human nature, torture men to prevent innocents from dying, although we feel more pity for them, than if they would die. So much worse often are torments than death. Do we not daily see numerous people who prefer to suffer death, to torture? And who confess to a fictive crime of a capital nature, to be sure they will not be tortured. We truly have murderous minds, we who can endure the sighs and tears, expressed with such pain, of someone of whom we do not know if he is guilty ... I do not have space nor, indeed, do I like to speak more extensively about torture here—although I could—to avoid the idea that I am declaiming, rather than writing a commentary ...<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Hervet, *De la cité de Dieu*, p. 214 (to 18.47): 'Vives touche icy une questio[n] difficile ... . Mais plusieurs auteurs ancie[n]s sont d'opinion co[n]traire, et S. Augustin mesme en plusieurs lieux ...' In John Healey's English translation Vives' passage is strengthened by referring to those living 'in the faithlesse Iles of the Ocean', and marked with a marginal note exposing Catholic censorship: 'The Louaine copy defectiue in all this' (Thorpe, *Of the citie of God*, p. 739). Healey's version is of particular interest since his translation was used as a propaganda tool for American colonisation and missionary activity: see Mark Vessey, 'The Citie of God (1610) and the London Virginia Company', *Augustinian Studies*, 30 (1999), 257–81.

<sup>64</sup> Vives to *City of God*, 19.6 (*Et innocens luit pro incerto scelere*), col. 1156, 'Vere Superbi Tarquini, aut etiam tyra[n]ni hoc immanioris inventu[m] tormentis inquiri veritatem: quam nec qui pati poterit, proferet, nec qui pati non poterit. Nam ut ait prudens mimus: Etiam innocentes cogit mentiri dolor. Miror Christianos homines tam multa gentilia, et ea non modo charitati et mansuetudini Christianae contraria, sed omni etiam humanitati, mordicus tanquam religiosissima retinere. Augustinus necessitate societatis humanae dicit tormenta adhiberi: sed cum gentilibus eum, et de ge[n]tilibus loqui, quis non videt? Quae est enim ista necessitas tam intolerabilis, et tam plangenda, etiam fieri si posset, fontibus lachrymarum irriga[n]da, si nec utilis est, et sine damno rerum publicarum tolli potest? Quomodo vivunt tam multae ge[n]tes, et quidem barbarae, ut Graeci et Latini putant, quae ferum et immane arbitrantur torqueri hominem, de cuius facinore dubitatur? Nos homines omni videlicet humanitate praediti, sic torquemus homines, ne insontes moria[n]tur, ut magis eorum nos misereat, q[uam], si morentur: usq[ue] adeo

Vives' reference to religion could easily lead his readers to think of the Inquisition and their interrogation practices. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that Vives did not think of religious persecution: as a member of a Jewish *converso* family he had experienced the threat of the Inquisition all his life, which would culminate in the conviction of his parents. His father died at the stake in 1524, while his mother, who had died in 1509, was punished posthumously, by having her remains disinterred and burnt publicly.<sup>65</sup> For similar reasons the censors of the *Index expurgatorius* ordered this particular clause to be deleted. Subsequent editions excised the passage completely, including the edition of the Leuven theologians and its reprints. Interestingly, it is also lacking in the 17th-century English translation by John Healey, which is normally keen to expose examples of Catholic censorship. And yet the passage survived uncensored in Hervet's French and Fenacoli's Dutch translations.<sup>66</sup> Its influence, in fact, went beyond the edition itself, thanks to Montaigne's use of it in his essay on conscience.<sup>67</sup>

From a confessional perspective, the censorship instructions provide an illuminating foil to the ideological frame of Vives' edition. In total the Antwerp *Index expurgatorius* (1571) counts almost thirty instructions for excisions from Vives' commentary, including the preface and the section on the earlier interpreters. These instructions were followed by the Spanish censors in 1584. In the commentary itself, however, they had relatively little to excise that concerned theological controversy. Most of their remarks pertained to small criticisms of ecclesiastical institutions and practices. This impression is confirmed by the comments of the Jesuit bibliographer Antonio Possevino, whose *Apparatus sacer* (1606) aimed to offer its readers a guide to safe instruments for religious studies. In Possevino's view, Vives would have corrected himself, 'had he still lived', to accord with what the Leuven theologians had later purged from his work.<sup>68</sup>

Together, these varied interventions allow us to understand another side of the survival of Vives' edition. Paradoxically, the polemical, anti-scholastic strategy of the editor had reduced the number of confessionally sensitive theological comments.

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graviora sunt saepe tormenta, q[uam] mors. An non freque[n]tes quotidie videmus, qui mortem perpeti malint, q[uam] tormenta? Et fatea[n]tur fictum crimen de supplicio certi, ne torquea[n]tur. Profecto carnifices animos habemus, qui sustinere possumus gemitus et lachrymas tanto cum dolore expressas hominis, quem nescimus sit ne nocens. Quid quod acerbam et perquam iniquam legem sinimus in capita nostra dominari, cum suspiciones tormentis armamus, et inimicis delationibus? Si vitas nostras, quas cupiunt non impendimus, saltem quod proximum est, intolerandis doloribus nostris non parum gaudii damus ac fructus. Mihi no[n] vacat, ac ne libet quidem de torme[n]tis hic loqui copiosius, quum possem, ne declamare magis videar, q[uam] commentaria scribere. Locus est apud Rhetores communis de tormentis, et contra tormenta. Fortissima sunt, quaecunque contra tormenta dicunt: quae vero pro tormentis, futilia et imbecilla.'

<sup>65</sup> Noreña, *Vives*, pp. 18–20.

<sup>66</sup> Hervet, *De la cité de Dieu*, p. 681; Fenacoli, *Van de Stadt Gods*, fol. 509v.

<sup>67</sup> Montaigne, *Essays*, II.5, without explicit reference to Vives.

<sup>68</sup> Antonio Possevino, *Apparatus sacer* ... (Venice, 1606), pp. 160–1: 'De Ludovico autem Vive, si hactenus vixisset, non dubito, quin seipsum correxisset, sive in laudibus, quibus eo tempore videbatur Erasmus extolli, sive in Commentariis in libros de Civitate Dei ...'

The few controversial passages that remained could be filtered out without diminishing the use of the commentary for a more general humanistically interested readership. Vives had always been convinced that *City of God* would appeal not just to theologians but also to other readers, in contrast to most of Augustine's other works. As he wrote to Erasmus, humanist readers 'read practically no other work of this author except this one'.<sup>69</sup>

Scattered evidence suggests that this was still the case during the confessional age. We have seen the influential example of Montaigne, whose use of Vives' commentary left a clear imprint on his *Essays*.<sup>70</sup> Studious readers such as Walter Raleigh and Gabriel Harvey relied on it extensively as a source of ancient history and politics, rather than as a moral-theological guide.<sup>71</sup> Fellow philologists also continuously used the work as a source of critical history. They picked up, for example, Vives' criticism of the books of Berosus, forged by Anniius of Viterbo, inserted in the editorial preface to book 18.<sup>72</sup> Significantly, subsequent Catholic editors, such as the Leuven theologians, did not redress the scarcity of theological analysis or replace the commentary altogether.<sup>73</sup> Consequently, at the height of the confessional conflicts the censored commentary offered its readers an Augustine who was thoroughly neutralised. While today the confessionalised use of Augustine

<sup>69</sup> Vives to Erasmus, 19 January 1522, Allen, *Opus epistolarum*, no. 1256, lines 137–42: 'Cura, rogo te, ut excudantur aliquot centena exemplarium istius operis a reliquo Augustini corpore separata: nam multi erunt studiosi homines, qui Augustinum totum emere vel nolent vel non poterunt, quia non egebunt, seu quia tantum pecuniae non habebunt. Scis enim fere a deditis studiis istis elegantioribus praeter hoc Augustini opus nullum fere aliud legi eiusdem authoris.'

<sup>70</sup> Jean Céard, 'La Cité de Dieu lue par Montaigne en compagnie de Jean-Louis Vivès', in Philippe Desan (ed.), *Dieu à notre commerce et société: Montaigne et la théologie* (Geneva, 2008), pp. 241–9. See also Ann Hartle's entry on Montaigne in Pollmann and Otten (eds), *Historical Reception of Augustine*, and Pierre Villey, *Les sources et l'évolution des Essais de Montaigne*, 2 vols (1908; New York, 1968), esp. I, pp. 72–3.

<sup>71</sup> For Raleigh, see Nicholas Popper, *Walter Raleigh's 'History of the World' and the Historical Culture of the Late Renaissance* (Chicago, 2012), pp. 135–6; for Harvey, see Arnoud Visser, 'Reading for reference: how Gabriel Harvey used his Augustine', forthcoming.

<sup>72</sup> On Anniius, see Anthony Grafton, 'Traditions of invention and inventions of tradition in Renaissance Italy: Anniius of Viterbo', in Anthony Grafton, *Defenders of the Text* (Cambridge, MA, 1991), pp. 76–103. Conrad Peutinger transcribed the passage from Vives' preface to book 18 in his copy of Berosus, now preserved at the Stadtbibliothek in Augsburg: see Paul Joachimsen, *Geschichtsauffassung und Geschichtschreibung in Deutschland unter dem Einfluss des Humanismus*, vol. I (1910; Aalen, 1968), p. 271, n. 24. There was also criticism of Vives' rejection, e.g. by Antonio Agustín, Bartolomé de las Casas, and Walter Raleigh. For Agustín, see Walter Stevens, 'When Pope Noah ruled the Etruscans: Anniius of Viterbo and his forged antiquities', *Modern Language Notes*, 119 Supplement (2004), S201–S223, at 208–9; for de las Casas, see his *Apologética historia in Obras escogidas*, vol. 3, ed. Juan Pérez de Tudela Bueso (Madrid, 1958), p. 377a; for Raleigh see Joseph M. Levine, 'Sir Walter Raleigh and the ancient wisdom', in Bonnelyn Young Kunze and Dwight D. Brautigam (eds), *Court, Country and Culture: Essays on Early Modern British History* (New York, 1992), pp. 89–108, at 99.

<sup>73</sup> A revised version of the opera omnia edition of the Leuven theologians (Paris, 1613–14) included a new commentary on the *City of God* by the Augustinian hermit Leonardus Coquaeus, which accompanied the one by Vives, rather than replacing it.

by Catholic or Reformed theologians is perhaps easier to trace, these examples show that there was also space to read the church father in an a-confessional light.

## 2.6 Conclusion

Confessional neutrality is, in a way, an ironic outcome for a project that started from an outspoken, even polemical scholarly ambition. Yet, as has become clear, the humanist goal to emancipate Augustine's thought from its traditional, scholastic keepers gave the edition a low theological profile, which would prove key to its survival in the confessional conflicts of the decades following its publication. Apart from this, Vives' edition also survived since it successfully served as a tool for knowledge management. In particular, the commentary effectively helped to organise an overwhelming body of information. Vives guided his readers through the Augustinian thicket with extensive explanations, illuminating classical history and philosophy in particular, but also indicating problems of interpretation and the limitations of existing sources. He did so, moreover, in a personal style, peppering his annotations with amusing anecdotes and his own views.

The most notable effect of the censors was to remove theologically sensitive elements, thus further reducing its confessional rapport. With its long life, despite various forms of censorship and adaptation, the edition therefore also urges us to consider the persistence of existing scholarly resources, besides recognising the more explicitly confessional tendencies in new scholarly initiatives in this period. It shows how confessionalisation could have a neutralising impact on the textual presentation of contested sources, resulting in scholarship that did not just confirm specifically Catholic, Lutheran, or Reformed perspectives, but could also serve non-confessional agendas.