

## Presentation proposal:

### Augustine and *De civitate Dei* in the Oeuvre of Coluccio Salutati

Despite the fact that Florentine humanist Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406) is regularly presented as a Janus-like figure, split between his Christian loyalty on the one hand and his admiration for the pagan classics on the other, comparatively little attention has been paid by scholars to the influence of Saint Augustine on the chancellor's writings. Often, Augustine is simply thought of as a Christian authority that legitimises Salutati's interest in the ancient poets. Such an approach obscures the essential role the Church Father plays in the ideas formulated by Salutati: even beyond the sheer number of citations – Augustine is among his most frequently cited authors, his seminal *De civitate Dei* being particularly prevalent – the conceptual foundations of his thinking are derived at least in part from the writings of St. Augustine. The project at hand aims to remedy this critical blind spot by zooming in on precisely this strand in the Late-Medieval reception of the bishop of Hippo. After a broader consideration of the ways in which 'Augustinianism' and the *De civitate Dei* circulated in the early Renaissance, in addition to an in-depth study of Salutati's manuscripts, which offer unique access to his reading and appropriation of the *De civitate Dei*, the focus will shift towards a comparative examination of a number of fundamental themes or issues in Salutati's oeuvre and Augustine's *De civitate Dei*. These include the pursuit of the active vs. the contemplative life, a prominent subject in many of the humanist's works, most notably and problematically in the *De seculo et religione*; the defence of one's reading of ancient poetry as explicated in the *De laboribus Herculis*; the intricate notions of fate, fortune and divine providence, as laid out most conspicuously in the *De fato et fortuna*, but also in some of his smaller works; and, in a more political sphere, the imagery of the two cities, often used in Salutati's production as chancellor of Florence and eminent propagandist in the republic's conflicts with the Pope and Milan. These analyses will be based on a new inquiry into the (in)direct references to Augustine found in the chancellor's oeuvre, as well as cases of clear, if less explicit, structural or thematic inspiration. All the while, particular attention will be paid to the apparent 'ambivalence' of Salutati's humanism and the coherence (or the lack of it) between the viewpoints voiced by the 'personal' and the 'public' Salutati. A recurring notion in the literature is that of the many-sided, constructed nature of St. Augustine's reception, due to the wide spread of manuscripts of his works. Much like certain religious orders had 'an Augustine', or Petrarch had 'an Augustine', so too must Salutati have had a particular Augustine – the present aim is to find out which Augustine that was, and to assess the ways in which this construction inspired and shaped Salutati's thinking.