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From historical event to reflection upon history. St. Augustine and the birth of the Theology of history

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Abstract

St. Augustine founded the theology of history in his work *De civitate Dei* showing the work to the divine providence in the human history, which is also a history of salvation. The reflection upon the meaning of history was imposed to the Church Father after the challenge to answer the accusations coming from the pagan environment of the time. The opportunity was given by the invasion and conquest of Rome by Alaric's Visigoths in 410, event that terrified the Roman world, Rome being considered an impregnable fortress. The Christian God was compared to the myriad of protective gods of ancient Rome and accused of not protecting the Christian empire, while the Roman deities, worshipped previously, took care of the eternal city and the Roman Empire. The Church father did not deny the accusations, but will open new perspectives in the interpretation of history, later followed by other theologians and philosophers.

Keywords

St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, theology of history, divine providence, Roman deities, the city of God, the earthly city

I. Turmoil in the Christian world of the early fourth century

I.1. Christianity at the beginning of the fifth century

The work *De civitate Dei* (*City of God*) was written by St. Augustine between 413 and 426, when Christianity was a licit religion for almost a century now, even encouraged, by the Edict of Mediolanum (313) of St. Constantine, given together with Licinius,¹ the law of Constantius in 341 against those who gave sacrifices to the gods, by banning witchcraft and divination by Jovianus and the law of Theodosius the Great, during which, Christianity became the state religion, paganism being permanently banned.² Even if Christianity was favored, and a return to the Greco-Roman paganism was not to be imagined, even after the unsuccessful attempt of Iulin the Apostate, the Roman centuries-old religious tradition was still strong. On the other hand, the Roman law, mentioned above, has encouraged the Christianization of a large part of the population of the Empire, but not all new converted will live an authentic Christian life. The new converts could not be compared with those of the first three centuries, when, being a Christian was often synonymous with becoming a martyr. This fact it will displease some Christians who choose a stronger commitment and will prefer the lonely life far from the amorphous tumult of cities, thus appearing the early forms of Christian monasticism.

I.2. Protective deities or divine providence?

The unfortunate conquest of Rome by Alaric's Visigoths in AD 410, determined those Christians, who didn't live an authentic Christian life, to

¹ Saint Constantine the Great, took further measures in favor of Christianity, such as permission to pick places of worship and to adorn them, involvement in major doctrinal disputes, the access of the Christians in the state, the destruction of pagan temples, etc. See this Cuțaru Caius, *Christianity and Greco-Roman polytheism in the fourth century. The role of Emperor Constantine the Great in the imposition of Christianity*, in "Theology" 3 (2013), p. 74-89 and Idem, *From Deus Sol Invictus to Christ "Sun of Righteousness"*. *Religiosity Holy Emperor Constantine the Great* (306-337), the volume of international symposium "Mystery and confession" Caransebeș, 13 to 14 May 2013, the Diocese of Caransebeș Publishing, 2014, p. 128-146.

² Theodosian law provide for the punishment of the reconverted with the loss of the right to inheritance (law of 2 May 381), closing the temples of Asia Minor and Egypt etc.

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begin to sow confusion and disarray within the Christian world. To this, we add the rest of the pagan population, especially in rural areas, for whom Augustin will produce the work of *Liber de Catechizandis Rudibus*, and accused those who embraced Christianity of all the misfortunes of the Roman Empire. There appeared withdrawals, and, what's worse, accusations seemed to establish a sense of guilt to have left the faith in the Roman deities, protectors of the eternal city and of the Roman world in general. By tradition, the Romans blamed private facts and historical facts on the numerous protecting deities, from household gods to the gods of the city and the gods encharged with the protection of the universe.

At the beginning, the Romans had some religious beliefs that there were some mysterious forces of evil or beneficial ones in any being or object in nature. It was believed that each man had his spirit protector and from birth he is governed by the will of the deity. Even practical activities, especially those related to farming (plowing, sowing, harvest, etc.) had their protective deities. Later they gave birth to the proper deities under the influence of local beliefs of the Etruscan and Greek loan, achieving a religious syncretism, in which each deity had responsibility for a particular area of the real³. Jupiter was the god of light, the lightning, the rain, the latest victory, the lord of gods and men, protector of the Romans, and Rome in particular⁴. Juno, wife of Jupiter, was the protector of marriages and births, as Juno Regina was the protector of the entire Roman Empire, and Juno Caelestis was the patron of Roman Carthage⁵. Being a warlike people, a very important god was Mars, the god of wars. Janus was the god protector of the house, who looked to the past and to the future, being represented with two faces. Vesta was the goddess of the sacred fire, protector of Rome. Minerva was the goddess of crafts and wisdom, being equated with Athens of the Greek pantheon and Venus, goddess of the gardens and beauty stood for the Greek Aphrodite. There were then protective deities of cities, settlements and people, such as Fortuna – Goddess of Fortune, Genius – Roman deity protecting both immanent males each and every place (*genius loci*), structure, or institution. Retrieved from Greek

³ Cf. Gheorghe Vlăduțescu, *Studiu introductiv*, la Aureliu Augustin, *Despre Cetatea lui Dumnezeu*, I, Editura Științifică, București, 1998, p. 7.

⁴ See Anca Balaci, *Mic dicționar mitologic greco-roman*, Editura Științifică, București, 1966, p. 217-218.

⁵ See Manfred Lurker, *Lexicon de zei și demoni*, Trad. de Adela Motoc, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 1999, p. 157-158.

(*daimon*) and Etruscan the *genius* played an important role at the birth of each being. Horace says that each person receives at birth as a *genius* protector. The Romanian people have a *genius* whose goodwill be maintained and Augustus used in his religious reform the king *genius* (*genius Augusti*) for success, based on its importance from the fact that Roman citizens used to swear by the *genius* of the emperor⁶. Specialized protective deities were called *Lares* and *Penates*. *Lares* were worshiped as deities, protectors of Rome, but in late folk beliefs are considered as being multiplied souls of ancestors guarding (directly related to *Penates*) all the families to whom they belonged, as a larger human groups.⁷ *Penates* were initially protectors of the storeroom (*penus*), then of the whole house, associated to the *Veste* and *Lari* and having similar functions. There were public *Penates*, which protected the civic community seen as a big family. *Tiberinus* was the god protector of the Tiber, *Fides* – a protector of oaths, etc. At the time of Octavian Augustus, who reformed the Roman religion, Rome itself becomes a deity, which is dedicated statues, kings Caesar, Antony, Augustus being declared sons of gods during their lifetime, altars are raised, numerous statues in the Forum thus, reaching the dimension of a real imperial cult. From these examples, we can see that one of the characteristics of the Roman religion consists in the multitude of deities with protective function, even overlapping, with many gods protectors of individual, family and household members, of a city (Rome) and even the Roman people.

During St. Augustine, it was believed that, these divinities which were considered the founding of Rome and guardians of the Roman people during the entire historical existence, take revenge because their worship was abandoned in favor of Christianity. At the same time, the new Christian God of the empire did not prove to be a defender of Rome – claimed the enemies of Christianity. That argument was particularly dangerous for Christians and false as well, and the Father of the Church will dismount,

⁶ Cf. *Dicționar de mitologie greco-romană*, Coord. Zoe Petre, Alexandra Lițiu, Cătălin Pavel, Editura Corint, București, 2011, p. 176-177.

⁷ There were *Lares domestici* who took care of the household and the family home, *Lares praestites* who patronized the city, *Lares compitates* who protected neighborhoods and crossroads, *Lares permarini* who protected the sailors, *Lares militares*, worshiped by soldiers, *Lares rurales*, worshiped by peasants. In every house there is a shrine called *laralia* which Romans adorned with images of *Lares domestici*. See in this regard Victor Kernbach, *Dictionary of General Mythology*, Albatros Publishing House, Bucharest, 1995, p. 311.

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point by point, but before that, he will urge Paulus Orosius to write a history, with the specific tools of the historian. Consequently, will appear *Historiarum adversus paganos*, in which the author shows that, prior to the occurrence of Christianity, too many misfortunes have befallen the Romans, people protected by so many deities.⁸

From this period dates back several testimonies of pagan figures such as former prefect of Rome Rutilius Namantianus, stating that: “On Venus and Mars, we recognize our parents” to make Rome forget the “sad injustice”, and “scorning suffering”, “trail wound” to be wiped, hoping for a better future by honoring the gods: “In the midst of adversity you have hoped for better times / you’re like the sky: the losses make you richer”⁹ and Zosimos identifies and “guilty” of this situation: the “wicked Constantine” who, by action, encouraged the abandonment of paganism, and the banished gods take revenge.¹⁰ On the other hand, since the time of the late persecution, especially from the time of Emperor Constantine, under the leadership of Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, “the Christians claimed that leaving pagan superstition and defending true religion (Christian) will renew and sustain the empire. Emperor Theodosius the Great (379-395) tried to realize this program in practice”.¹¹

Finding the guilty ones or the scapegoats when facing natural disasters or historical disasters is a human constant that is found in almost all stages of human history. This was the context in which Augustine’s *City of God* appeared, which, in the tradition of previous centuries Roman apologists (Tertullian, Minuciu Felix) rejects the Greco-Roman polytheism as a religious conglomerate incapable of ensuring peace and happiness earth

⁸ The same type of argument used St. Augustine in *The City of God* II, 3: “So, to walk with us (history stages) before the Christ came in human flesh... the multitudes should know the calamities and what plagues have afflicted many times and in various ways the Roman Republic and to defend, if they can, their gods against them...” or *City of God* II, 22: “... where was this multitude of deities, when Rome was conquered and scorched by the Gauls?... Were they accidentally sleeping, although they were present?...”, suggesting as a title for a chapter, a true conclusion “Roman gods were never concerned about the republic, not to perish because of ill manners.”

⁹ Rutilius Namantianus, *Itinerariu* I, v. 67, 115-124.

¹⁰ See Ghe. Vlăduțescu, *Studiu introductiv*, la Aureliu Augustin, *Despre Cetatea lui Dumnezeu*, p. 6.

¹¹ Prof. Dr. Adolf Martin Ritter, *Dezvoltarea învățăturii lui Augustin despre cele două cetăți și structura acesteia*, susținut la Facultatea de Teologie Ortodoxă din Arad la 23.10.2012, p. 1.

(books I-IV) or heavenly salvation (books VI-X). He finds evidence even in the Roman history, especially of M. Terentius Varro, the work *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum*.

Bishop of Hippona shows that the multitude of god protectors did not protect the Roman state in the past nor helped improve the morals of the Roman society, quite the contrary, led to their degradation. This is the central idea of the first ten books of the *City of God*.

II. Two loves have founded two cities: *civitas Dei* and *civitas terrena*

In his *City of God*, St. Augustine trying to explain the coexistence of good and evil in the world, talks about the existence of two cities and two different kinds of love that founded them: “Two loves have founded two cities: self-love which generated the contempt of God made the earthly city; the love for God that generated the contempt of the self has made the heavenly city. One praises itself the other praises the Lord.”¹² History is mostly portrayed as a spiritual struggle between two antagonistic powers embodied by *civitas Dei* and *civitas terrana* and the first fortress representing the order of God (guarded by the spiritual descendants of Abel) and the other the earthly order (served by the spiritual descendants of Cain). Based on the stories of the Old Testament Scripture, Augustine believes that throughout history there were six historical periods: 1. from Adam to the Diluvium; 2. from Noah to Abraham; 3. from Abraham to David; 4. from David to the Exile; 5. from the Babilonian exile to Christ; 6. from the first coming till the second coming of the Lord, the two “cities” coexisting and evolving at different rates, being definitively separated after the Great Judgment.¹³ In this world the two cities are mixed as “the future citizens of the city of Christ are hidden in the middle of enemies... just as the city of God has

¹² *De civitate Dei* XIV, 28.

¹³ “The Christian is the man who lives in the ambiguity of the profane history, but with the precious treasure of a sacred history, whose sense it sees, and with the suggestions of the personal stories, in which it discerns between guilt and salvation. The Christian sense of history in this case is the hope that secular history is also part of this sacred history that is developing, there is ultimately only one history, that all history is ultimately holy.” See Paul Ricoeur, *Istorie și adevăr*, Publishing Anastasia, Bucharest, 1996, p. 108.

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among its many beings united in the communion of the same sacraments sacred... but they will not enjoy with her the eternal destiny of saints”.¹⁴

In the age to come they will be separated, because chaff mixes with the wheat until the harvest day “Surely, these two cities have their winding ways and will be indiscriminately mixed in this world, until they split in the Final Judgment”.¹⁵

II.1. The relevance of the Augustinian doctrine of the two cities in recent research

Lately, the works that were concerned with the Augustinian conception of the two cities were numerous, the theme representing the so-called political Augustinianism, constantly being a reference point in the Augustinian research.¹⁶ C. Andresen showed that research of the Augustinian work is not dependent on the relation with the celebration of the birth centenaries or his going to the Lord (1930 or 1954), but on the stringency with which “the questions must be asked and answered by an audience interested by St. Augustine that is ready to obey him.”¹⁷ Augustine continues to give relevant answers to a Church under the pressure of history, especially when this pressure is felt more acutely. It is the way in which the scientists have understood to relate to the work of the Holy Father

¹⁴ *De civitate Dei* I, 35.

¹⁵ *De civitate Dei* I, 35.

¹⁶ See this list of works which treat the theme of the two cities, as indicated by Prof. Dr. Adolf Martin Ritter in *The teaching about the two cities, in the latest research* at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Arad 23.10.2002; W. Kalmah, *Christentum und Geschichtlichkeit. Untersuchungen zur Entstehung des Christentums und zu Augustinus “Bürgerschaft Gottes”* 2. Aufl. Stuttgart, 1951; Robert A. Markus, *Seaculum. History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine*, Cambridge, in 1970; Ulrich Duchrow, *Christenheit und Weltverantwortung. Traditionsgeschichte Systematisch und Struktur der Zweireichenlehre*, Stuttgart, 1970, 2. Aufl. 1983; Johannes van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine’s City of God and the sources of His doctrine of the two cities*, EJ Brill, Leiden, 1991; M. Ruokanen, *Theology of Social Life in Augustine’s “City of God”*, Göttingen, 1993; Augustinus, *De Civitate Dei*, Hg. Von Horn, in “Klassiker Auslegen”, Band 11, Berlin, 1997. Augustinian concept of the two cities see and introductions to the work of O. Chadwick, *Augustine*, Oxford – New York, 1986; Kurt Flasch, *Augustine. Einführung in sein Denken*, Stuttgart, 1980, 2. Aufl., 1994; E. Dassman, *Augustinus – und Heiliger Kirchenlehrer*, Stuttgart, 1993.

¹⁷ Carl Andresen, *Wege der Forschung*, Vol. II, Societatea Cărții Științifice, Darmstadt, 1981, p. 3, cf. A.M. Ritter, *Învățătura despre cele două cetăți...*, p. 2.

during the Augustinian congress held in Paris in 1954, immediately after World War II, when the participants were shown a tremendous willingness to dialogue, being aware they live “a new beginning which, consciously turns away from the past.”¹⁸ For Professor Henri Marrou Irénée, the great specialist in the work of Augustine, “the drama of salvation, which Augustine introduced it in “City of God” on a universal background was a guide along the past that had to be overcome, and at the same time, a guide to the future of humanity.”¹⁹ After the traumatic experience of the Second World War, which brought about the dehumanization of human relations and of the relations among states, Augustinian humanism became for H.-I. Marrou a sign of his time bringing about the spiritual rebuilding of Europe. Thus, Augustine’s work shows its permanent actuality, answering many of the issues raised by the dramatic history of mankind.²⁰

Professor Adolf Martin Ritter draws attention to another specialist, Robert A. Markus, who in his work *Saeculum. History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* attempts to extract from the Augustinian thinking the answer to the question: What is the meaning and purpose of the society in relation to the ultimate human purpose? Thus, he studied the theology of history at St. Augustine, his teaching about society and politics and the position of the Church and of Christians in this world and in the world history.²¹ The holy history for St. Augustine means salvation history of the human race as present in the Holy Scripture, the time of the Incarnation and Parousia is considered lacking clues about the crucial events of salvation history. It seems that the reign of the Emperor Theodosius the Great, from the year 390, left a good impression upon the Doctor of Grace, who learned under the influence of imperial Eusebians theology

«considers the Christianization of the empire as a phase in the history of salvation, as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. With this theology of history, Augustine justifies the religious coercion. However, when he wrote *The City of God*, Augustine had already rejected the importance on the history of salvation of the Christian empire and had “secularized” the Roman his-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁹ See *Augustinus Magister, Actes*, Band III, Études Augustiniennes, 1955, p. 202, cf. A.M. Ritter, *Învățătura despre cele două cetăți...*, p. 4.

²⁰ See C. Andresen, *op. cit.*, p. 8, cf. A.M. Ritter, *Învățătura despre cele două cetăți...*, p. 4.

²¹ Cf. A.M. Ritter, *Învățătura despre cele două cetăți...*, p. 4.

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tory. Even the notion of Church knew a “secularization”, as to the clean Church from “beyond” of the Donatists he opposes the Church which is part of the time – *saeculum* – that participates in the “mix” of good and evil». ²²

Under the influence of the Donatist Tyconius, he will place the Church “without spot or wrinkle” at the end of time. Thus, the Augustinian vision considers the society today as being relativized and the weight falls on the conclusion of history by bringing it into eschaton, in the age to come.

Analyzing the work *De civitate Dei*, Johannes van Oort, in *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine`s City of God* and the sources of his doctrine of the two cities, he supports the importance of catechetical character as well as the apologetic one of the work ²³ which made Augustine speak about the contradiction between the two cities.

There are many other studies published in recent years referring to the Augustinian work in general and to the view of St. Augustine`s theology of history, ²⁴ because, like any living thinking, the thinking of the Father of the Church continues to fertilize even the contemporary thinking. Even in the present “will be felt in Western theology two major directions of its chief representatives (Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, n.n.), speaking about neo-augustinism or neoscholasticism.” ²⁵

II.2. Genesis and evolution of Augustinian thought about the two cities

When they bent over to study the Augustinian theology of history, scientists have been concerned to show the sources that led to the dualism of the two cities, always antagonistic, and how that has evolved in the Augustinian thinking, and in the future, as well.

Researching the sources underlying the Augustinian doctrine of the two cities, ²⁶ J. van Oort reviews Manichaeic possible influences, those coming from Platonism, Stoicism and Philo of Alexandria, remembering

²² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²³ See J. van Oort, *op. cit.*, cap. III, p. 164-199.

²⁴ See in this regard, particularly the study of Philippe Curbelié, *Les études sur la Cité de Dieu*, in “Revue d’études patristiques augustiniennes” 50 (2004), p. 311-323.

²⁵ Caius Cuțaru, *Problematica timpului în metafizica augustiniană*, Editura Universității „Aurel Vlaicu”, Arad, 2010, p. 15.

²⁶ J. van Oort, *op. cit.*, cap. IV, p. 199-360.

him and the Donatists Tyconius²⁷ and end with Christian traditions, Jewish and Judeo-Christian. The conclusion reached is that in addition to influences coming from Manichaeism, St. Augustine was influenced by Jewish and Judeo-Christian traditions.

U. Duchrow is interested in the genesis and composition of the Augustinian doctrine of the two cities. He argues that, initially, Augustine would have been influenced by Stoic and Neoplatonic philosophy in formulating this theory which divides people into two groups: the wise and the foolish, the division overlapping the Pauline one, of the inner man, new or spiritual, and the exterior man, old or earthly.²⁸ Under the influence of the Donatist Tyconius,

“The two groups are put into the apocalyptic context by walking towards Doomsday ... Ulrich Duchrow rejects dualist Manichaeism as the origin of the doctrine of the cities (cf. A. Adam) as he rejects the origin in the personal reading of the Bible (cf.

J. Ratzinger), although the influence of the Psalms is visible.”²⁹

There are also other authors who state that the vision of the two cities of the work *City of God* was due to joining the Manichees doctrines of Augustine during youth and later denied. Among them are: Prosper Alfaric,³⁰ Ernesto Buonaiuti,³¹ Alfred Adam and Alexander Böhlig. Carl Andresen see Augustine under the influence of Manichaeism and Neoplatonism in the formulation of the doctrine of the two cities.³²

²⁷ About its influence on the Blessed. Augustine speak the following authors: Étienne Gilson, *Introduction à l'étude de Saint Augustin*, Paris, 1929; Joseph Christopher, *St. Augustine. The First Catechetical Instruction*, Westminster, Md. – London, 1955 and Arnold Ehrhardt, *Politische metaphysic von Solon bis Augustin III*, Tübingen, 1969. The latter has a special opinion considering Tyconius was in turn influenced by the Manicheans. The same opinion has Jakob Obersteiner, *Augustinus "Civitas Dei" und die Geschichtstheologie der Bibel*, Ciudad, I, p. 313-350 and Johannes Spörl, *Augustinus, Schöpfer einer Staatslehre?*, The “Historisches Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft Görres” 74 (1955), p. 62-78. There are authors who exclude any influence upon St. Augustine except that of Tyconius. Among them are: Norman Baynes, H. T. Karsten, Paul Monceaux, William Freund, Antotnio Quacquarelli, Robert Markus Ulrich Duchrow etc.

²⁸ To see terminological distinction operated by St. Paul see work of Deacon Dr. Grigore T. Marcu, *Pauline Anthropology*, Arhidiecezana Printing House, Sibiu, 1941.

²⁹ A.M. Ritter, *Învățătura despre cele două cetăți...*, p. 5.

³⁰ See the work *L'Évolution intellectuelle de saint Augustin*, Vol. I, Paris, 1918.

³¹ See *Gesichte des Christentums*, I, Berna, 1948.

³² C. Andresen, “Erlösung”, în “Reallexikon für Antikeund Christentum” (RAC) 6 (1966), p. 54-219.

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St. Augustine was a man of his age, well rooted in the culture of his time. Thus, he suffered from the cultural influences from both pagan culture from people such as Amianus Marcellinus, Claudien,³³ Rutilius Namatianus, but also from Western Christian theology, historical theology precursors, such as St. Ambrose of Milan, Prudentius, Paulus Orosius, and can indicate possible influence of Eastern bishop Eusebius of Caesarea through Optatus as J. Ratzinger suggests.³⁴

From the vastness and diversity of St. Augustin's work comes the difficulty of the Augustinian exegesis. Therefore, there were specialists who treated the development of the Augustinian doctrine of the two cities, seeking clues in previous works. In this way, studies have appeared such as the Abbe's Bardy,³⁵ RR P.P. Rondet and Lauras,³⁶ who strive to redraw the framework in which were born the notion of *civitas Dei* and *civitas terrena* in previous Augustinian work or the work of Maurice Pontet, who stressed the importance of the commentary St. Augustine provides in his *Enarrationes in Psalmos* for contemporary exegesis.³⁷

If we consider only the vastness of the work *De civitate Dei*, the analysis of such works would require a serious group of authors that give us a really scientific review, book by book, a comment that would take philological advantage of the advances in the knowledge of Christian Latin, an exegesis through rhetoric and grammar, the study of facts, of the sources and of the ideas of the work.³⁸

The specialists in the study of Augustinian work were concerned with the meaning of the two cities in the vision of St. Augustine. Thus J. Ratzinger showed that when the "Doctor of grace" speaks of "City of God", the word city should not be understood in a literal sense, but rather it comes from the Greek word meaning πόλις, that is, community consisting of

³³ Claudius Claudianus which St. Augustine expressly states that is "enemy of the name of Christ" (*De civitate Dei* V, 26).

³⁴ See Henri-Irénée Marrou, *La théologie de l'histoire*, in "Augustinus Magister", vol. 3, p. 194-195.

³⁵ See the studies of Abbe Bardy din *L'Année théologique*, t. XII, Paris, 1952, p. 5-19, 113-129.

³⁶ Studies of R.R. P.P. Rondet și Lauras din „Études augustinienes, coll. Théologie, t. 28, Paris, 1953, p. 99-160.

³⁷ Maurice Pontet, *L'Exégèse de S. Augustin prédicateur*, Aubier, Paris, 1945, 636 p.

³⁸ Cf. H.-I. Marrou, *La théologie de l'histoire*, p. 195.

people and not the city walls and stones.³⁹ Cardinal J. Ratzinger then insists that *civitas Dei* is for St. Augustine legacy of ecclesiastical tradition, is about a concept belonging to the traditional traditional Christian interpretation of the Old Testament (typology Zion, “spiritual” Jerusalem). The question is: why Bishop of Hippo preferred this term over other terms, such as those of “the people” of God, “kingdom” of God, “house” or “temple” of God, terms more present in the exegetical tradition than “city”, especially the first two. The image of “City of God” is recurrent to St. Paulinus of Nola, but he does not start, like Augustine, from Psalm 86 verse 2: “*Gloriosa dicta sunt in te, Civitas Dei*” (“Great things been have spoken about you, city of God”), but from Psalm 45, 4: “*Fulminis rivi laetificat civitatem Dei...*” (“The water of rivers give pleasure to the city of God ...”). H.-I. Marrou believes that Augustinian thinking about the two cities and in the opposition between them, “*civitas Dei*” versus “*civitas terrena*” we should rather see the influence of philosophers such as Plato and Plotinus. He stated that:

«We can notice more happy consequences of this recognition of a nature not to say “ideal” or “idealistic” but more accurately “conceptual” (related to the world of ideas) of the Augustinian concept of “city”: this allows us to understand that it would be *hic et nunc* in the lived experience and that it manifests this eschatological tension within the historical experience that was so strongly highlighted by Kalmah... It’s the same impression that makes R.P. Gillet to say that the city is “while still on this earth, temporal and eternal”». ⁴⁰

We can not agree with H. Reuter who identifies *civitas Dei* with what he calls *die empirische Katholische Kirche*, that is with all the people who go to the Misa. For St. Augustine Church is “*civitas Dei*” *sine macula nec ruga* that he contemplates through faith and with the hope of eschatological fulfillment, the Church of the saints, but this Church is empirically achieved in history by God’s desired tool, the hierarchical and sacramental Church.

³⁹ Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *Herkunft und Sinn der Civitas – Lehre Augustins*, în *Augustinus Magister. Congres International Augustinien*, Paris, 21-24 Septembre 1954, Communications, vol. 2, Paris, Etudes Augustiniennes, 1954, p. 972.

⁴⁰ H.-I. Marrou, *La théologie de l’histoire*, p. 200.

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III. Augustinian reflection upon historical time and the beginning of the history of Theology

Moving from one's singular history to the universal, from the drama of personal life to the drama of all mankind, time is no longer a problem in psychological terms, but it (the time) will appear in its ontological dimension. This rearrangement is present starting with the *Confessions*. The time of the history of people and the time of the lonely man, integrated into the historical time, are subject of the divine providence, according to St. Augustine. God takes care not only of the lonely people, but the whole human race (*De vera religione* XXV, 46)⁴¹. If what happens to people as a single person is known by God and the people themselves, what happens to the human race as a whole, God wants to be recorded in history and prophecy.

In Augustine's view, time is based on the eternal, its unity lying in the divine eternity, consequently, the relation between time and eternity being impossible to be explained, and we do not intend do it here, we just mention it.

In his *De civitate Dei*, Augustine wants to fix the meaning of human adventure, wants to make intelligible the entire history of humanity. However, this story takes place in time, it is built and dispersed in time "as if in the very heart of time it is revealed a double direction: one that departs it from eternity, and that makes it wander in multiplicity, another that adds it to the eternity and collects the moments in their unity."⁴² This is what Henri-Irénée Marrou called by a phrase that would become a title *The Ambivalence of Historical Time in St. Augustine's Work*.⁴³ If for Plotinus, who exercised an important influence upon St. Augustine, the movement goes from the One to the multiple, remaining a circular motion, for St. Augustine, time after the double fall (of the angels and of the humans) and the salvation that saves us, runs in two directions, up and down, each direction supporting a city: "The city of sin and evil" that will delve into the shadow and the "Fortress of good, of God" that will shine in the light of eternity.⁴⁴

⁴¹ See Aurelio Agostino, *La vera religione*, Dir. Giovanni Reale, Introduzione, traduzione, note e apparati di Onorato Grassi, Rusconi Editore, Milano, 1997, p. 91.

⁴² Jules Chaix-Ruy, *Le problème du temps dans les Confessions et dans „La cité de Dieu”*, in „Giornale di Metafisica” 4-5 (1954), p. 469.

⁴³ H.-I. Marrou, *L'ambivalence du temps de l'histoire chez Saint Augustin*, Librairie J. Vrin, Paris, 1950, 84 p.

⁴⁴ Cf. J. Chaix-Ruy, *op. cit.*, p. 470.

The proper subject of the Augustinian theology of history is the economy of salvation, salvation history, *Heiligeschichte*. The two cities are the two poles of an electrolysis device between which reality decomposes and recomposes, the world, under the shield of divine providence. Mgr. Journet shows that in the Augustinian conception of history there are three fundamental aspects: the two opposing fortresses and the third element consisting of the historical datum which appears as a mixing (*commixtio*) of wheat and tares, of good and bad fish of the great catch. The economy of salvation, the salvation history of humanity is the core of the Augustinian theology of history, while we, the modern ones, do not ask the “Doctor of grace” to guide us in understanding this central drama of humanity, but we are interested in the marginal aspects of history. Therefore, we ask St. Augustine to give the interpretation of some problems such those related to: the rights and duties of the State, the Church and the civil relations, to explain why civilizations flourish and disappear, why the relations between classes evolve, etc. It is what is called political Augustinianism.

There has been a long discussion concerning the fact that St. Augustine founded the theology or the philosophy of history. In this context, there has been said that the historical research did not have a continuous progress, a linear path, issues evolving according to the changes in the instruments used in the elaboration of concepts, etc. of the philosophical perspectives. H.-I. Marrou said that in the first half of the twentieth century the exploration of the Augustinian theology was stopped by the haunting influence of Hegel. Nothing was more curious than the work of Heinrich Scholz,⁴⁵ considered classical for a long time, who places the thinking of the author of the *City of God* into a Procrustean bed of the philosophy categories of *Geschichte* (logic, dialectic, etc.) and who discovers in a reductionist way, that Augustine is only a precursor of Hegel.⁴⁶ In counterbalance, Umberto Antonio Padovani in *La Città di Dio di sant'Agostino: teologia e non filosofia della storia*, published in 1931 wanted to demonstrate that the Augustinian doctrine of historical time should be defined as theology and not philosophy of history.⁴⁷ Michele Federico Sciacca has a similar opinion, he

⁴⁵ See Heinrich Scholz, *Glaube und Unglaube in der Weltgeschichte: ein Kommentar zu Augustins De civitate Dei*, J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, Leipzig, 1911.

⁴⁶ See H.-I. Marrou, *La théologie de l'histoire*, p. 193.

⁴⁷ See Umberto Antonio Padovani, *La Città di Dio di sant'Agostino. Teologia e non filosofia della storia*, în *Sant'Agostino*, supliment la „Rivista di filosofia neo-scolastica”, t. XXIII, Milano, 1931, p. 220-263.

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believes that we cannot speak about rational and philosophical knowledge of history in St. Augustine, but only about the theology of history. Bishop of Hippo hasn't got a full solution to the historical problem or an intelligible solution without referring to the facts of the Revelation. However, he does not deny the rational or philosophical moment, the possibility of metaphysics and logic of history.⁴⁸ More than that, it is the basis of the supernatural, of the theological. Therefore, M.F. Sciacca states that there is a human knowledge (*scientia*) of individual and social life of the people, with an order and a sense of development highlighted by the philosophy of history, but its fulfillment is achieved in the light that comes from the divine *sapientia* and it is connected to the theology of history.

The contingency of the world is the first metaphysical foundation of history. Even time is created by God, having a beginning with the creation and so is also contingent and not coeternal with God.

«The first “historical” event that is creation, involves an ontological bond between the Creator and the creature: the world and every creature in the world could not exist, but once they exist, they are from the Creator and for the Creator. This creation link has a dialectical movement: from the eternal One to the temporal one and from the temporal to the eternal One».⁴⁹

There is no history without time, but there can be no time without history, because the outside time of things has not a history; history begins with the first created man, Adam, and not with the things created before him. The surrounding nature does not create history, only man can create it through his conscience, through his conscious action upon the world and goal oriented action. So, time cannot be identified with history, because it is a non historical time, the time of the things lacking consciousness. For the “Doctor of grace” this concept was not very clear but it will be fully explained in modern times, but it has its beginning, it has as a parent St. Augustine, the one who will find the time of consciousness.⁵⁰

The content of the Augustinian theory of the two cities has the following aspects. God gave Adam a command, and he never fulfilled it. His free

⁴⁸ Michele Federico Sciacca, *Agostino*, în *Dizionario dei filosofi*, G.C. Sansoni Editore, Firenze, 1976, p. 19.

⁴⁹ *Agostinismo – Agostino*, in *Enciclopedia filosofica*, t. I (A-Eq), Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, Venezia-Roma, 1957, col. 106.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

will would not recognize the divine *sapientia* and love it; that is why he stood up. Will overcome by pride departed from God and scattered, dissipating in the things of the world. After Adam's fall into the sin of disobedience, two loves: the love of (the) God (*amor Dei*) and self-love (*amor sui*) will continually attract man, moment by moment, until the last moment of his life. This battle between true love and pride, between sin and redemption, between *scientia* and *sapientia* divine human, struggle proper to every man since his creation, is everyone's inner drama. St. Augustine makes us understand that the solution is not to cancel his own nature, as it would be the sign of an evil, nor in denying God's love, but to eliminate the evil and rejecting the desire to sin. The two love dwell in the soul, and therefore the conflict is an inner conflict, and the end is salvation or damnation.⁵¹

As God made mankind as a single man the two loves are found in the human history, as well, not only in the personal one. As, because of sin, there are people who love themselves and contempt God and not know how to love God to the point of despising themselves, there are people renewed by divine *sapientia*, who do the opposite. Thus, the two cities appeared, as the same dialectic that governs the history of each individual separately, governs human society. In this view, the criterion that divides human history is not represented by the ages or the centuries, but by the two loves, which give rise to two different mundane reality: society as we know it, with its injustices and inequalities and the Church as the image of the kingdom of heaven.⁵² The same mystery, the same drama and at the micro and macro level, and the same solution.

“From Adam and Christ, from sin or grace of God, from the time of death or from the time of life: this is the origin of the two cities, they are the moments after that coexist and develop the entire historical and super-historical intrigue of the universal

⁵¹ Cf. M.F. Sciacca, *art. cit.*, p. 20.

⁵² Regarding the relationship between Church and State, St. Augustine shows that whenever state law respects the freedom of conscience, the church or the heavenly city is not worried about the diversity that exists in the manners, of laws or institutions... It does not destroy anything but preserves the social order which conforms (*De civitate Dei* XIX, 18). But even if states the rights of the state authorities in their own sphere of action, he supports freedom of conscience in front of the head of the state who would like to invade the sphere of religious manifestations. See acetate sense A. Vacant, E. Mangenot, É. Amann, *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, I/2, Librairie Letouzey at Ané, Paris – VI, 1976, col. 2440.

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history: either towards God or towards itself, against its own goals... world history is the history of the conflict between two loves, or rather the transformation of one of them, the one for the self and the hatred of the other.”⁵³

The parents of the two cities are Cain and Abel; *civitas terrena* remains over the centuries the enemy of the heavenly one, of the *civitas Dei*, an enmity that can go up to murder, the fratricide perpetuates for centuries and centuries, being born of the discord of the two loves. The earthly city is always trying to kill the heavenly city, following the model of the brothers from the beginning of human history, even if the event Christ meant the climax of human history. But above this earthly reality dominates the work of divine providence, highlighted by the Augustinian claim that God is “the right ordering of evil wills, so as, bad wills of evil use the good stuff, he uses to do good even the evil desires” (*De civitate Dei* XI, 17). Moreover, according to St. Augustine, God would not have created any angel or any person known to him as bad, if he knew at the same time, what good use it will serve.⁵⁴ The whole of human history, according to the “Doctor of grace” is set under the sign of God, says Francesco Adorno.⁵⁵

In time, the two cities have been embodied in different empires, such as the Assyrian– Babylonian or the Roman one, these being the signs of the earthly city, and Jerusalem, the heavenly sign of the heavenly city. Babylon, Rome and Jerusalem are only symbols or images of the two cities, which will be separated in the judgment of God.

Unlike modern philosophers of history, who claim to know everything and unlike the medieval ones, even St. Augustine is more reserved in the judgment issued on recorded history. One could easily recognise the limits of knowledge and reason and their causes. The Augustinian theology of history is a particular type of knowledge, being born from faith and, as such, is *per speculum et in aenigmate*, ie partial shadow mixed with putting certainties together with less secure ones. If V. Pöschl and R.P. Gillet, like J. Guitton evoked the provisions of the divine economy and pedagogy, H.-I. Marrou, talking about the mystery of history, shows that it is a triple

⁵³ *Ibid.* See *De civitate Dei* XIV, 28.

⁵⁴ See *Tempo* in *Dizionario delle idee*, (a cura del) Centro di studi filosofici di Gallarate, Sansoni Editore, Firenze, 1977, p. 1160.

⁵⁵ Cf. F. Adorno, T. Gregory, V. Verra, *Storia della Filosofia con testi e letture critiche*, Vol. I, a cura di Francesco Adorno, Editori Laterza, Bari, 1987, p. 388.

mystery, in fact: one of divine impenetrability, the mystery of human freedom and the mystery of time itself, because history not being complete, cannot be thought, cannot be judged with all its consequences.⁵⁶

IV. Conclusions

The last crisis of the Western Roman Empire saw *Roma caput mundi*, fallen into the hands of Alaric in 410, an event that began to attract a number of criticisms for Christianity. The criticism aimed at nurturing the absence of the Christian God and the pagan gods' wrath when left without the piety of the people and now, trying to take revenge. Or, from a Christian point of view, not only the Christian God cares for the world, but pagan gods are idols, "things made by human hands", so non-existent. But these truths had to be stated and proved. This is exactly what St. Augustine will do. Here's how a dramatic historical event, the fall of invincible Rome of that *civitas aeterna*, the Holy Father gives the opportunity to ponder the fate of the world, the fate of the universal history, paving the way to the theology of history. For, if the human drama of the descendant of Adam was present in the *Confessions* and in other main works concerning the destiny of the world in general, Augustine goes on in the monumental work *De civitate Dei* and concludes that the world is divided between two realities. Simplifying things a bit, Augustine speaks of two cities: *civitas Dei* and *civitas terrena* are in a constant battle for the starting point is different. If *civitas Dei* is founded on the love of God that goes up to contempt of himself, *civitas terrena* is based on self-love that goes up to contempt of God. Cain and Abel are the founders of these two cities and their descendants carry on through the centuries the two types of love. If now, the inhabitants of the cities are mixed, at the final judgment they will be separated and rewarded differently.

⁵⁶ See H.-I. Marrou, *La théologie de l'histoire*, p. 197.