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City of God
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The Fathers of the Church translation is prefaced by a Foreword written by the noted historian of medieval philosophy, Etienne Gilson. His original essay runs to almost ninety pages and is a profound study of the meaning of the City of God for the modern reader. It has been possible to print a good part of this Foreword in the present volume. The elided portions are indicated by asterisks.


Vernon J. Bourke

From Saint Augustine's City of God.
Ed. Vernon J. Bourke.

**Foreword**

**Etienne Gilson**

The City of God (De civitate Dei) is not only one of St. Augustine's masterpieces, but ranks, along with the Confessions, among the classics of all literature. It is hardly possible to analyze the contents of this vast work, which, in spite of its overall plan, is marked by so many digressions. The purpose of this Foreword is to focus the reader's attention on Augustine's main theme, and to emphasize its historical importance. In his notion of a universal religious society it is to be sought the origin of that ideal of a world society which is haunting the minds of so many today.

Augustine, it is true, did not pose exactly the same problem; that is why we should not read the City of God in the hope of finding therein the solution. Nevertheless, the problem posed and resolved by Augustine is certainly the origin of ours, and, if we are failing to resolve our problem, it is probably because we are forgetting that its solution presupposes a solution of the problem resolved by Augustine.

Our contemporaries aspire after a complete unity of all peoples: one world. They are quite right. The universal society which they are endeavoring to organize aims at being a political and temporal society. In this regard they are again right. Perhaps their most serious mistake is in imagining that a universal and purely natural society of men is possible without a universal religious society, which would unite men in the acceptance of the same supernatural truth and in the love of the same supernatural good.

1. The Problem of a Universal Society

Christianity was born in the Roman Empire, which itself was merely a vast extension of the City of Rome, or, if the formula seems imprudent, which owed to Rome its laws, its order and whatever unity it possessed. But, first of all, what
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was Rome? Many and divers explanations of its origin have been proposed; and, since the specialists themselves have not as yet found a solution of the problem acceptable to everyone, it would be imprudent to make a choice for them, and still more imprudent to build upon any one of their hypotheses. 1 No one, however, doubts that Rome, as Athens, was one of the ancient cities, each of which was either a state or the center of a state. We are safe in admitting that these cities were, first of all, peoples, or rather, by the bond of common blood. 2 At the time of Pericles, 451 B.C., it was still the law that only the children of a legitimately married Athenian father and mother could be citizens of Athens. The division of the Greek cities into phratries and associations, a division found again in the familia and Roman gens, soundly confirms this hypothesis.

However, it is no way rules out the penetrating views formerly developed by Fustel de Coulanges in his classic work, *The Ancient City*. Therein, the family was described as already bound to religious beliefs and sacred rites, from which it was inseparable. In direct opposition to historical materialism, de Coulanges professed what might not too incorrectly be called an *historical spiritualism*. By this is meant simply that, if man is no longer governed in our day as he was twenty-five centuries ago, it is because he no longer thinks as he thought then. 3 Thence comes the basic thesis that history does not study material facts and institutions alone; its true object of study is the human mind; it should aspire to know what this

2 Willmowitz-Moellendorf, *Staat und Gesellschaft der Griechen*, in *Die Kultur der Gegenwart*, II, 4, 43, IV, 67, 100. Cf., also, Ernest Barker, *Greek Political Theory*. Plato and his Predecessors (London 1917), a complete revision of the same author’s *Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, published in 1906. Note the interesting remark in the Preface (p. viii) to the effect that the Laws are the most modern (or mediaeval) of all the writings of Plato.
3 Fustel de Coulanges, *La Cité Antique* (Paris 1844) 2–3. All quotations to this work are taken from the translation by Willard Small (Boston 1894). Haunted by the harm done to France in the attempt to imitate the ancient democracies during the revolution of 1789, Fustel de Coulanges wanted to prove above all else that they are inimitable.

mind has believed, thought and felt in the different ages of the life of the human race. 4

From such a viewpoint, it is religion which dominates from on high the family and the ancient city. Founded on the religious worship of the hearth, that is, of the household fire, which was not simply metaphorical but real, each family constituted first and foremost a closed society, which its own worship separated from all other families. Religion did not say to a man, showing him another man: That is your brother. It said to him: That is a stranger; he cannot participate in the religious acts of your hearth; he cannot approach your family’s tomb; he has other gods than yours, and cannot unite with you in a common prayer; your gods reject his adoration, and regard him as their enemy; he is your foe, also. 5 In order to constitute larger social groups it was necessary, first of all, to overcome the separation of families.

Let us suppose that families were grouped into gentes or associations, gentes into tribes, and tribes into cities. There, also we shall meet with worship: that of another group of diversities, such as Zeus or Heracles, whose origin is uncertain, but whom we know to have been placed above the worship of the household gods, without, however, eliminating this latter worship. The recognition of gods common to several families alone made possible the birth of the city. Society developed only so fast as religion enlarged its sphere. We cannot, indeed, say that religious progress brought social progress; but, what

4 ibid. II, 9, 103–104; Small, p. 123.
5 That is doubtless why love played a secondary role in the ancient family. The members of the ancient family were united by something more powerful than birth, affection or physical strength; this was the religion of the sacred fire, and of dead ancestors. (ibid. II, 140; Small, p. 51). To guarantee a continuous worship of the dead, marriage was necessary, since children were necessary to perpetuate it. Whence, the sacramental formula pronounced in the marriage contract: *duceo uxorem liberaquor domus causae* (ibid. II, 3, 52; Small, p. 65). ‘Everything in the family was divine’ (ibid. II, 9, 109; Small, p. 129). Then a man loved his house as he now loves his Church’ (ibid.). Even the slave was made a part of the household of the family by a religious ceremony analogous to that of marriage, and took part in the worship of the hearth. He was buried in the burial ground of the family whose lares had been his gods (ibid. II, 10, 127; Small, p. 150).
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... certain is that they were both produced at the same time and in remarkable accord.9

* * * *

On August 24, 410, Alaric entered Rome, and, although a Christian, pillaged the city for a period of three days. On the fourth day, his troops left the city, carrying off vast booty and leaving behind a mass of corpses and ruins. Thus, for the first time, an empire fell at the very moment the Church was hoping to find a support in it. This was not, however, to be the last time. Nevertheless, out of many similar experiences, this one remains, in a sense, the most striking; for, it seemed at first glance that the fall of Rome would bring about that of the Church. However, it was the body of the faithful united only by the faith of Christ, rather than the political Colossus united by arms, which survived.

Such a lesson is not easily forgotten. The capture of Rome by the barbarians made a deep impression upon the entire Empire. The endless polemics between Christians and pagans increased in violence and bitterness.2 To analyze all the arguments of both sides would be a task both long and detailed, and, like the polemics themselves, would not bring us to any goal. On the pagan side, there were two principal and simple arguments from which all the others directly or indirectly stemmed. First of all, Christian doctrine taught renunciation of the world; consequently, it turned the citizen away from the service of the state, a fact which brought about the fall of Rome. Secondly, the destiny of Rome was always bound up with the worship of her gods. When the Christian religion first began to spread, the pagans proclaimed that their betrayed gods would visit terrible punishments upon the Empire. No one would listen, but the turn of events finally had justified their prophecy, and to such an extent that it was no longer possible to refuse them a hearing. The Empire had become Christian and it was during the reign of a Christian emperor that Rome, for the first time in her long history, was conquered and sacked. How could anyone fail to understand a lesson so tragically clear?

8 Ibid. III, 3, 147; Small, pp. 172–173.

These objections were set down, as clearly as one could want, in a letter from Marcellinus to the Bishop of Hippo. In 412, the pagan Volusianus had addressed these objections to Marcellinus, who in turn immediately begged Augustine to write a reply. According to Marcellinus, Volusianus raised the objection that the preaching and teaching of Christ was in no way compatible with the duties and rights of citizens; for, to quote an instance frequently alleged, among its precepts there is found: 'Do not repay injury with injury,'8 and, 'If a man strikes thee on thy right cheek, turn the other cheek also towards him; if he is ready to go to law with thee over thy coat, let him have it and thy cloak with it; if he compels thee to attend him on a mile’s journey, go two miles with him.'9 Now, it seems clear that such moral norms could not be put into practice without bringing ruin to a country. Who would suffer without retaliation the seizure of his goods by an enemy? Would anyone, thenceforth, refuse to punish according to the laws of war the devastation of a Roman province? These are arguments with which we are familiar, and which are constantly being revived by 'conscientious objectors.' They are based upon the deepest convictions of a Christian conscience, whose strength it would be wrong to ignore. It is worth noting that the Christian Marcellinus, and not the pagan Volusianus, raised the last and most formidable argument, namely, that 'it is manifest that very great calamities have befallen the country under the government of emperors practising, for the most part, the Christian religion.'10

The objection was urgent, and St. Augustine was not slow to reply. He had been asked how it was possible to live in the State as a Christian, and how it was possible for a State composed of Christians to endure, since the practice of the Christian virtues would infallibly bring about the ruin of the State. To this St. Augustine makes an unexpected reply, namely, that the pagans themselves have already preached the same virtues for which the Christians are being blamed. It was scarcely necessary to recall this fact to such a cultured

8 Rom. 12:17.
9 Matt. 6:39–42.
man as Volusianus. Did not Sallust praise the Romans for having chosen to forget injuries rather than punish the offender? Did not Cicero praise Caesar because he was wont to forget nothing but the wrongs done to him? If we are to judge from the history of Rome, the observance of these laws has not worked out too badly. Again, it is necessary to understand what the Gospel teaches. There are no commandments compelling Christian soldiers to lay down their arms or to refuse service. In fact, no one is forbidden to give himself generously to the service of the State. On the contrary, rather, let them give us such husbands and wives, parents and children, such masters and slaves, such kings and judges, such taxpayers and tax collectors, as the Christian religion has taught that men should be, and then let them dare say that it is adverse to the State's well-being: rather, let them no longer hesitate to confess that this doctrine, if it were obeyed, would be the salvation of the Empire. But, how explain the fact that these calamities have befallen Rome at the hands of certain Christian emperors? Simply by denying the fact. It was not the Christianitv of the emperors which brought ruin upon the Empire; rather, it was the vices within the Empire itself. For, whether might not men have been carried away by the flood of appalling wickedness, had God not finally planted the Cross of Christ there? Read Sallust and Juvenal, and the lengths to which immorality had gone will readily be seen. Nascent Christianity is being blamed; the blame, however, should fall upon dying paganism. Christian revelation had two distinct ends: first, to save human society; second, to build up a society which could be divine. It is difficult to see what the State could fear from this twofold endeavor; but, what the State could gain thereby is readily apparent, for Christianity will achieve the first in striving after the second.

First, to save the political, human and natural society from the inevitable ruin whither its corruption was ineluctably leading it. It is not ignorance of the virtues required to secure happiness and prosperity which is endangering Roman society. Its members are very well aware of the obligations imposed by a merely natural love of the Empire, whose greatness was due to its past virtues, but which its citizens have not the courage to put into practice. But, what they did not have the strength to do out of love of country, the Christian God demands out of love of Himself. Thus, in the general breakdown of morality and of civic virtues, divine Authority intervened to impose frugal living, continence, friendship, justice and concord among citizens. Henceforth, everyone professing Christian teaching and observing its precepts will, out of love of God, perform whatever the welfare of the country demands out of self-interest and on its own behalf. Augustine was already enunciating the great principle which is to justify, always and everywhere, the penetration of the Church into every human city: Take to yourselves good Christians and you will be given good citizens. Of course, the exigencies of the Gospel will never be fully satisfied in this way. But, neither will those of the world be satisfied in any other way, since the most ardent followers of the Gospel are resigned to live in it; and whose goods, in spite of everything, it is difficult to enjoy without ever making any return. On the supposition that Christ did not expressly reserve for Himself the things that are Caesar's there still remains the problem of moral equity, concerning whose correct solution there could be no hesitation.

Let us admit that the Christian virtues are useful to the good order and prosperity of the commonwealth; still, it is no less true that this order and prosperity cannot be their proper end. This fact makes it quite clear that, to the extent the State can be sure of the practice of the natural moral virtues, of itself it can secure its own prosperity. Such was eminently the case in the early days of Rome, whose virtues St. Augustine, following the best traditions of the Latin historians, did not hesitate to praise. Did not ancient Rome owe its great success to the frugality, strength and purity of its way of life? Again, do not the origins of its decline date from the decadence of its way of life, described so often by its historians and poets?

13 The City of God 2.19.
Far from being embarrassed by the memory of a prosperous, although pagan, Rome, St. Augustine sees in this prosperity the signs of a providential plan. If God allowed this temporal greatness, which was obtained through mere civic virtues, it was precisely in order that no one might be deceived about the proper end of the Christian virtues. Since the world cannot enjoy prosperity without the Christian virtues, then, certainly, they do not exist in the view of the world. For in the most opulent and illustrious Empire of Rome, God has shown how great is the influence of even civil virtues without true religion, in order that it might be understood that, when this is added to such virtues, men are made citizens of another Commonwealth, of which the king is Truth, the law is Love and the duration is Eternity. The sufficiency of the political virtues in their own order testifies to the supernatural specification of the Christian virtues both in their essence and their end.

Thenceforth, two cities would always be present to the thought of St. Augustine. To free the Church from all responsibility for the evils which had befallen Rome was, for him, something else than to plead a losing cause after the fashion of a shrewd lawyer. Since, as the Roman writers admit, the decadence of the Empire and the causes of the decadence antedate the advent of Christianity, responsibility for the decadence cannot be laid upon Christianity. Nevertheless, the disaster of 410 faced them. Moreover, the pagans never feared of using this argument to the full, an argument which, if it must be agreed, was clothed in the garb of apparent truth. That is why, in 413, St. Augustine took upon himself the task of writing a reply. In his Retractations, St. Augustine writes: ‘When Rome was devastated as a result of the invasion of the Goths under the leadership of Alaric, the worshippers of the many false gods, whom we are accustomed to call pagans, began, in their attempt to blame this devastation on the Christian religion, to blaspheme the true God with more bitterness and sharpness than usual. Wherefore, fired with zeal for God’s house, I determined to write my book, The City of God, against their blasphemies and errors.’

Of the twenty-two books which make up this work, the last twelve are principally dedicated to a retracing of the history of the two cities, the City of God and the city of this world, from their beginnings until their end which is yet to come. If the work is entitled The City of God, it is only because he has chosen the title from the more noble of the two; nevertheless, it contains the history of both cities. Augustine was not deceived about the real object of his work, an enterprise dictated by the pressure of circumstances and perhaps suggested by a question of Marcellinus, to whom the work was dedicated. The work actually contains a great deal more than a vindication of the Church from the accusation of a given moment. The drama, whose vicissitudes the work aims at relating and interpreting, is literally of cosmic significance, because it identifies itself with the history of the world. The message which the Bishop of Hippo addresses to men is to the effect that the whole world, from its beginning until its final term, has as its unique end the constitution of a holy Society, in view of which everything has been made, even the universe itself. Perhaps never in the history of human speculation has the notion of society undergone a change comparable in depth, or provoked such an enlarged perspective in view of the change. Here, the City extends more than to the very limits of the earth or world; it includes the world and explains even the very existence of the world. Everything that is, except God Himself whose work the City is, is for the City and has no meaning apart from the City; if it is possible to have faith in the ultimate intelligibility of the smallest event and the humblest of creatures, it is the City of God which possesses the secret.

II. The City of God and Universal Society

What is a city, considered not in the material, but in the social, sense of the term? In vain would we search The City of God, vast as its scope is, for an abstract and general dis-

10 St. Augustine, Retractations 2.43.8.

cussion of the problem as the philosophers envisaged it in their attempt to define the nature of the social bond. St. Augustine pursued his proper objective through innumerable digressions, which can be called, not improperly, apologetic. In more than one discussion, however, he does come to grips with the problem, where philosophy as such is judged from a Christian point of view. This is precisely the case with the notion of the term 'city.' He does not discuss the nature of the city as a philosopher indifferent to Christianity, nor as a Christian indifferent to philosophy, but as a Christian who judges, if necessary, reshapes its elements in the light of faith.

When St. Augustine speaks of a human city, he is first of all thinking of Rome and its history, such as the Latin writers had described it to him. If he was able to refute the charge that the Church had caused the ruin of Rome, it was, as we have seen, because Sallust himself had considered Rome to be in ruins as a result of its own vices, and that even before the advent of Christ. When St. Augustine asked himself at what moment of its history Rome merited the name of city, it was to a pagan definition of a city that he appealed. Thus, in passing judgment on pagan society according to the laws set down by that society, he drew his inspiration from rules which pagan society itself had to admit.

As St. Augustine saw it, the dominant feature in the pagan concept of the city, which is both a political and a social body, was the notion of justice. As Cicero, for example, conceived it, every society should resemble a symphonic concert, in which the different notes of the instruments and voices blend into a final harmony. What the musician calls harmony, the politi-

18 H. Scholz, Clausae un Unglaube, v. The author contradicts those who see in The City of God a philosophy of history. In this, he is quite correct; however, it does not exclude the possibility of a philosophy of history being derived several centuries later from The City of God. According to Scholz, the central theme of the work is the struggle between faith and infidelity (p. 9). This is a quite reasonable conclusion; however, the simplest view, it would seem, is to admit that the central theme of The City of God is, precisely, the City of God.

19 City signifies society: 'exitus quaesitit litorum est quam hominem multitudine aliquid societatis vincendo colligit' (The City of God 15.8).

can calls concord. Without concord, there is no city; but, without justice, there is no concord. Consequently, justice is the first condition required for the existence of the city. That is why St. Augustine felt justified in concluding that, in spite of appearances to the contrary, Rome had ceased to exist at the moment when, according to one historian, Rome had lost all justice. It was not enough to declare, along with Sallust, that Roman society was then corrupt; it was necessary to affirm even as Augustine did, in the words of Cicero, that, as a society, Rome had totally ceased to exist.20

But, was that going far enough? If we recall the thesis already maintained by Augustine, namely, that the republic of Rome had prospered because of its virtues, it would seem quite possible to grant that it was a society worthy of the name. The reason was, as St. Augustine had written to Cæcilius in 412, that God wished to make manifest the supernatural ideal of the Christian virtues, by permitting ancient Rome to prosper without them. He thereby granted a certain temporal efficacy to the civic virtues of the pagans, and to Rome itself the character of an authentic society. Certainly, Augustine would never completely deny it. For certain reasons, whether divine or human, ancient Rome was, in its own way, a true society. The republic was certainly much better administered by the more ancient Romans than by their successors; but, in the final analysis, and in its own way, it was a society. However, in the very context where Augustine made this admission, he added that it was not a society; this fact

20 The City of God 2.21. St. Augustine somewhat forces the text of Cicero which he quotes.

21 Cf. pp. 19–21 above.

22 The City of God 2.21. Rome 'never was a republic, because true justice never had a place in it. ... But, accepting the more probable definition of a republic, I admit there was a republic of a kind, and certainly much better administered by the more ancient Romans than their successors. But true justice exists only in that republic whose founder and ruler is Christ; if anyone sees fit to call this a republic, since we cannot deny that it is a commonwealth. If, however, this name which has become a commonplace in other contexts is considered foreign to our way of speaking, we can certainly assert that there is true justice in the City about which Sacred Scripture says: Glorious things are said of Thee, O City of God' (Ps. 88.3). This eloquent text settles several points. First, the
single man. In fact, it was precisely to secure this unity that God first created a single man, from whom all others are sprung. In itself, this was not necessary; the earth could be peopled today with the descendants of several men, simultaneously created at the beginning of time, to whose stock each and every one would belong. Even so, the unification of mankind would still be both desirable and possible; but, through the one ancestor, from whom all men are sprung, this unity is not only a realizable ideal, it is a fact. It is a physical fact, since all men are related. Likewise, it is a moral fact, for, instead of considering themselves bound together by a mere likeness of nature, men are conscious of a real family bond. None of the faithful could doubt that all men, regardless of race, color or appearance, have their origin in the first man created by God, and that this first man was alone of his kind.24

There was no doubt in St. Augustine's mind that God Himself had created the human race in this way so that men might understand how pleasing unity, even in diversity, was to God,25 nor could they doubt that their unity was a family unity.26 Thus, men are naturally brothers in Adam even before being supernaturally brothers in Christ; of this we are assured by faith.27

24 The anti-racism of St. Augustine embraces all men whatever their state, even the pygmies, if there are such creatures; St. Augustine was not sure if there were. He even included the Scipio, who sheltered themselves from the sun in the shade of one foot, and the Cynocephali, who had dogs' heads and barked. Whoever is rational and mortal, regardless of color or shape or sound of voice, is certainly of the stock of Adam. None of the faithful (suisfjedeiiium) is to doubt that all the above originated from the first creation. God knew how to beautify the universe through the diversity of its parts. Cf. The City of God 16.8.

25 The City of God 12.22.

26 'God, therefore, created one single man, not, of course, that he was to be deprived of all human society, but rather that in this way the unity of society and the bond of concord might be more strongly commended to him if they were joined together, not only through a likeness of nature, but also by a family affection.' (The City of God 12.22.)

27 The fact that there is a natural unity in the human race is shown only by faith; Christians believe that God created a single man and took from him the first woman, and that from this first couple all humanity is sprung. The Creator could have done other-
Nevertheless, two kinds of men appear at the very dawn of human history: Cain and Abel. They were reasonable beings, born of the same father, from whom their own mother also came forth. They were both equally men, but of two radically different wiles, in which there is portrayed the possibility, at least, of two radically distinct societies. Accordingly, as men follow the example of Cain or Abel, they place themselves within the ranks of one or the other of two peoples; of which, one loves the good; the other, evil. The first has as its founder, Abel; the second, Cain. From this beginning the history of the two peoples is identified with universal history; rather, it is universal history. Saint Augustine has reviewed the highlights of this history; others after him have repeated and enlarged it. It is not our purpose to follow in the same path, but to examine how Augustine himself envisaged the two societies of which he speaks, and which we have to define.

We say that societies are divided according to the division of loves. When Saint Augustine speaks of a "city," it is in a figurative sense, or, as he himself states, a mystical sense, that he does so; and it is in this sense that the term must be understood. There is, on the one hand, the city of all men, who, loving God in Christ, are predestined to reign eternally with God. On the other hand, there is the city of all those men who do not love God, and who are to suffer eternal punishment along with the demons. Saint Augustine has, therefore, never conceived the idea of a single universal society, but of two, both of which are universal—at least in the sense that every man whatsoever is necessarily a citizen of one or the other. In this sense, it is true to say that two loves have produced two cities: one, in which the love of God unites all men; a second, wherein all citizens, regardless of time and place, are united by their love of the world. Augustine has differentiated the two societies in several ways: love of God or love of the world; love of God to the point of self-contempt or love of self carried to a contempt of God; love of the flesh or love of the spirit. In every case, however, they are distinguished by love, which is their very root. Yet, by whatever name they are designated, it is still true to say that two loves have produced two cities. While The City of God was still a project, and long before he wrote its history, it was thus that Saint Augustine conceived it. After he had distinguished between a distorted love of self and holy charity, he immediately added: These are two loves, the one of which is holy, the other, unholy; one social, the other individualist; one takes heed of the common utility because of the heavenly society, the other reduces even the commonwealth to its own ends because of a proud lust of domination; the one is subject to God, the other sets itself up as a rival to God; the one is serene, the other tempestuous; the one peaceful, the other quarrelsome; the one prefers truthfulness to deceitful praises, the other is utterly void of praise; the one is friendly, the other jealous; the one desires for its neighbor what it would for itself, the other desires of lording it over its neighbor; the one directs its effort to the neighbor's good, the other to its own.

These two loves were manifested in the angels before they were manifested in men: one, in the good angels; the other, in the bad. These two loves have created the distinction between the two cities, the one the City of the just, the other the city of the wicked. Established among men in accordance with the wonderful and ineffable providence of God which governs and orders all His creatures, and mingled together, they live out their life upon this earth, until separated at the last judgment: the one, in union with the good angels, to enjoy eternal life in its King; the other, in company with the...
bad angels, to be cast along with its king into everlasting fire.81. In this historical sketch of the two loves, there is contained universal history itself, as well as the basis of its intelligibility. Tell me what a people loves and I shall tell you what it is.82

What, exactly, are these two cities? They are, as we have said, two peoples whose nature is determined by the object of their love. The term 'city' is already a symbolic mode of designation, but there are terms still more symbolic: Jerusalem, that is, vision of peace; and Babylon, that is, Babel or confusion.83 No matter the name, it is always the same thing referred to, namely, two human societies.84

To examine the notion still more closely, the surest method is to describe the members of which these two societies are composed. This St. Augustine has done in so many ways that the reader's hesitations on the point are quite excusable, as are some of his interpreters who have become lost in their task. However, there is a guiding thread which leads us securely through the labyrinth of texts. It is the principle, several times enunciated by St. Augustine, that the two cities of which he speaks recruit their citizens in accordance with the law of the divine 'predestination' alone. All men are partisans of one or the other society because they are predestined to beatitude with God, or to eternal despair with the Devil.85 Since there is no conceivable alternative, it is possible to assert without fear of error that the quality of the citizen of one or the other society depends, in the final analysis, on the divine predestination, whose object every man is.

It is in this sense that we must interpret the terms used by St. Augustine to designate the two cities. Some of the terms offer no difficulty, as, for example, the City of God, or of Christ and the city of the Devil,86 or, the family of men who live by faith and the family of men who do not live by faith; the body of the faithful and the body of the unfaithful; the society of religious men and the society of the irreligious, that is, of those whom love of God unites and those united through love of self.87 On the other hand, doubts arise when St. Augustine contrasts the earthly city and heavenly City, the temporal city and the eternal City, or even the mortal city and immortal society.88 Both cities are in fact immortal; the predestined who live in time are, nevertheless, members of one of two eternal cities, and even on this earth it is possible to be a member of the heavenly City by the very fact of being predestined.89 Sometimes, St. Augustine uses formule which are precise; sometimes, not. In case of doubt, the first should serve as a rule of interpretation of the second. Every city, regardless of how it is called, is reducible to that whose King is God, and to that wherein the Devil reigns. The different terms of designation never signify other than that.

81 De genesi ad litteram 11.15.
82 The City of God 19.24.
83 Every kind of society, however numerous and diversified, is reducible to two. St. Augustine has derived the term 'city' from Sacred Scripture. He does not quote the texts, but he has already given an indication; cf. above, n. 5; also, Ps. 47.2; Jer. 14.5; H. Scholz, op. cit. 71.1, gives other references to the New Testament (the last reference he gives should read Apoc. 21.2). Cf. Scholz (pp. 71-81) for a fruitful discussion of the notion antecedent to St. Augustine. The texts borrowed from Ticonius are particularly important (pp. 73-81); Ticonius had already spoken of Babylon as the City of the Impious, and Jerusalem as the Church of the living God. Jerusalem means 'vision of peace'; Babylon, as Babel, means confusion. Cf. The City of God 18.2; 19.9.
84 St. Augustine remains faithful to the Greco-Roman tradition regarding city and people. He distinguishes three organic forms of social life (eis polis), the family, the city, the globe. Cf. The City of God 19.7. Scholz is correct in pointing out (pp. 88-89) that it is generally quite wrong to translate cities as 'state', even though in a few rare cases it would be correct.
The two cities are alike contained in a single universe whose head is its Creator, God. Contrary to the Stoics, however, St. Augustine did not conceive of the universe as a city. Nevertheless, he may have thought of the cosmos as the City of God in the same sense as a Stoic could speak of it as the City of Zeus. For Augustine, a society can exist only among beings endowed with reason. That is why we have seen him posit the universe as the stage on which the history of societies unfolds; and it is on more than one point the universe is affected by this history. It is not precisely its own proper history. In this sense, Augustine profoundly differs from the Stoics. When he speaks of a society, he has in mind not an order of things but a veritable society.

If we take into consideration the sum total of rational beings, including the angels, all appear to be subject to the same destiny, which was prepared from all eternity in the depths of the divine Providence and which began with the creation of the world and of time, and will finish only with the end of the first and the consummation of the second. Augustine, in fact, took up the task of writing a universal history; if he was not the last to do so, he certainly seems to have been the first. In what particularly concerns the nature of man, this project implied the preliminary recognition of the unity of mankind and consequently the unity of its history. That is what he meant when he proposed to treat all men as a single man whose history would be unfolded without interruption from the beginning till the end of time. Although the expression itself is lacking, the notion of a universal history is clearly implied in the work of St. Augustine.

When it is a question of philosophy of history, the problem becomes more complex, for then we must ask whether, from the point of view of St. Augustine himself, history was open to an overall and purely rational, yet true, interpretation, without the light of Revelation. It is certain, however, that St. Augustine never attempted to formulate such a philosophy. His explanation of universal history is essentially religious in the sense that it derives its light from Revelation. He was therefore, actually a theologian of history. The interpretation which he proposed gets its inspiration less from what we today call philosophy than from what he himself called Wisdom; by that he means the Wisdom which is not only from Christ, but is Christ. Had he been questioned on this point, which no one ever thought of doing, he would have been considerably surprised. But, would he have admitted that reason alone could take from universal history a sense which, within its proper limits, would be both intelligible and true? Since the case did not arise, the question has no historical meaning. And, if there are strong reasons for thinking that he considered that such an attempt would have been ruinous, there is no possibility of proving it.

Must we conclude, therefore, that St. Augustine has no place in the formation of a philosophy of history? This is still another question, quite distinct from the previous two; for, if he did not think about it because the question never occurred to his mind, there is no ground for saying that his work is not at the origin of the problem. On the contrary, everything invites us to believe that the diverse philosophies of history which developed after St. Augustine have been so many attempts to resolve, with the light of natural reason alone, a problem which was first posed by faith alone and which cannot be resolved without the faith. In this sense, the first theologian of history would be the father of all the philosophies of history, even if he had no such intention, and even if they were not recognized for what they are: the ruins of a vast edifice in which alone they could find a full justification of their own truth, taken in an authentic sense, of which they themselves were quite unaware.

It is a question here of theology in the sense of a speculative doctrine. The entire Old Testament, together with the interpretations which the New Testament gave to it, was already actually a universal history of the known societies treated from the point of view of Revelation. The history of the people of God was a history of the divine plan for all peoples. A sketch of this history can be found in Wisd. 10-19, which narrates how wisdom has directed the people from the creation of Adam. It is already a discourse on universal history.
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Thus, at the time, when it posed the faith as the frontier of any universal society, St. Augustine's teaching suggested an ever-increasing effort to push back this frontier to the very limits of the earth. In spite of mishaps, Rome already had Christian emperors and remained Rome. If, perchance, St. Augustine did not clearly conceive of a world united and at peace under a Christian emperor, who would find in the Christian faith itself the foundation of a kind of temporal peace in this world while awaiting the perfect peace of the next, he was not slow in pointing out to sovereigns that such a policy would be a mark of wisdom as well as their duty. With such a beginning, the changing circumstances of history could suggest still more. St. Augustine did not bequeath to his successors an ideal of a universal human city united in view of purely temporal ends proper to it; but it was enough that the City of God exist in order to inspire men with the desire to organize the earth into a single society made to the image and likeness of the heavenly City.

If we examine St. Augustine's own teaching more closely, we shall see why the notion of a temporal human society, endowed with its own unity and including the whole human race, could not present itself to his mind. The two cities which he describes are, as we have seen, mystical, that is, supernatural, in their very essence. The one is the City of truth, the good, of order, of peace; it is, indeed, a true society. The other, since it is defined as the denial of the former, is the city of evil, of disorder and confusion; it is, in fact, a mockery of society worthy of the name. Midway between these two cities, of which one is the negation of the other, there is situated a neutral zone where the men of the day hope to construct a third city, which would be temporal, like the earthly city, yet just in a temporal way, that is striving toward a temporal peace obtainable by appropriate means. Such an idea seems never to have occurred to St. Augustine at least, he never spoke of it.

It was not through any failure to foresee the beneficent influence that the City of God, by the very fact of its existence, can and ought to exercise on temporal societies, that the possibility of a unified temporal order, valid and justifiable in itself from the point of view of its proper end, did not suggest itself to St. Augustine; rather, it was due to the close association between the two notions of world and of evil, so spontaneously linked together in his mind. He neither excluded nor thought about such a possibility. He no more thought of that than of a philosophy which, through the purely rational methods at its disposal, would free itself from the confusion of thought of the ancients and correctly resolve the problems which belonged to its domain. He was prevented from doing so less from principles than from his personal experience, for the reading of Plotinus had sufficiently drawn his attention to the incapacity of unfaced natural reason fully to discover truth. Granting Christianity, everything seemed to take place for Augustine as if such a problem no longer existed, and ought nevermore to arise; or, perhaps, as if the transcendent importance of the building of the City of God relegated the temporal order to a place so clearly secondary that it was no longer worth the trouble to consider it for itself or to organize it in view of its own ends.

In pressing this point still further, we finally come to realize both the innermost meaning of The City of God and its historical significance.

III. Christian Wisdom and a World Society

The historical significance of The City of God can hardly be exaggerated. From the point of view of St. Augustine himself, it was a companion to the Confessions, whose final book deals with the history of Creation as told in Holy Writ. With Creation the history of man began; that is, the centuries-old tale of two cities, a tale which will end with the final triumph of the City of God, the ultimate end and true final cause of the divine work of Creation. Seen in the light of Christian wisdom, the evolution of world history is a no less striking confession of the love and power of God than the sight of His creation, and the awareness of the wonders wrought by God in the soul of His servant Augustine. Here all is of a piece, and no great effort is needed to discover in the Confessions the same general purpose as in St. Augustine's monumental City of God. The great Bishop of Hippo probably
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would never have written it except for the fall of Rome and the ensuing controversies to which that event gave rise; nevertheless, when the challenge came he was prepared to meet it.

To his successors, St. Augustine bequeathed the ideal of a society whose bond of union is the Divine Wisdom. Often forgotten, sometimes even for centuries, this ideal has always found men to bring it forth once more into the light of day to be their inspiration. Frequently, the price of revival has been the distortion of the ideal.

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The desire of the world-wide unity which fills the heart of man will, in all likelihood, never die. Since the time it was proffered them, even though in a mystical sense and on a supernatural level, it has never been forgotten. Generation after generation has honestly attempted to gather all men within the walls of an earthly city modeled upon the heavenly Jerusalem. They have studied everything except the Christian faith in order to find a common bond, but they have met with failure. Perhaps the time is ripe to recall the age-old metaphysical principle that the only force capable of preserving a thing is the force which created it. It is completely useless to pursue a Christian end except by Christian means. If we really want one world, we must first have one Church, and the only Church that is one is the Catholic Church.

Had we religious unity, we could peacefully enjoy all the other unities. Basically, there is nothing wrong in attempting to achieve philosophical unity by philosophical means, nor is it wrong to establish world unity through philosophical unity. Philosophy really is a unifying force, as are science, art, industry and economic forces. There is no single factor in human unity that we can afford to despise. But, just as every metaphysical undertaking is doomed to failure if secondary principles replace those which are primary, so also all efforts to unify mankind are bound to fail if the sole principle of unification is overlooked, especially when that principle is the unifying force of all the others. Philosophy, science, art and economics all can help in achieving the great work of unifying mankind, but neither individually nor collectively is it in their power to accomplish it. The besetting sin of all such undertakings is in the fact that they attempt, without Christ, to fulfill the promise made by Christ to men.

Such an achievement is quite impossible. It is conceivable that a number of men, more or less large, be unified under the domination of other men or even of one individual; however, if we are striving toward the unity of all men, we must look beyond mankind for the unifying principle. The only possible source of future unity lies not in multiplicity, but above it. One World is impossible without One God and One Church. In this truth lies the ever timely message conveyed to man by St. Augustine's City of God.