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ECCLEZIASTICAL AUTHORITY AND IMPERIAL POWER  
IN LATE ANTIQUITY:  
SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM AND THE BLESSED AUGUSTINE

PhD Thesis

Abstract

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**Keywords:** ecclesiastical authority, imperial power, original sin, self-determination, definitive corruption, artificial dominion, divine law, human law, monasticism, imperial court, moral integrity, *libido*, classical tradition, Christian tradition, *civitas Dei*, *civitas diaboli*, *respublica*, Christian emperor, donatism, coercion.

## ABSTRACT

The Gospel according to Matthew says that, in an attempt to discredit Jesus, the Pharisees sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, to tempt him with the following question: “It is right to pay taxes to Caesar or not”? The answer of our Saviour will have, for the huge Roman Empire in which Christianity will be proclaimed and spread, the impact of a revolution: “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s”. Why the impact of a revolution? For answering to this question, we should start from the very beginning of the whole issue.

The religious politics of the Roman emperors was permissive enough to any kind of religion existent in the Empire, as long as it observed two conditions:

- a) it should not encourage subversive activities towards the State;
- b) it should grant to the other religions the same freedom and tolerance it enjoys from the State.

The first condition was considered fulfilled by the individual participation to the emperor’s cult; the second one was the sign of a “liberal” vision of the political authority, as well as an indication of a relativism regarding all forms of religion.

Christianity failed in the observance of both these conditions. First of all, the Christians could not worship the emperor as a god, because this would have meant idolatry. Then, the message of the Gospel was a universal message, addressed to everyone, no matter the race, the social class, age, sex. Thus, it was by definition intolerable to any other religious forms, parallel to the Church (*extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*). Strongly asserted in the public space, these two aspects brought the Church in the

situation of being persecuted and, during more than two centuries, it grew and strengthened itself through the blood of the martyrs.

The Edict of Milan, given in 313, by the emperor Constantine the Great, places the Church in a completely new situation in relation to the Roman Empire. Christians must now come out of the catacombs, must publicly define their identity, must “accommodate” themselves in a still pagan society, in which the Eschaton and the Final Judgment are not so imminent as they were thought to be. In the fourth century, once the emperor becomes a Christian, the Empire itself seems to become an ally of the Church or even a secondary instrument of redemption – according to the enthusiastic view of some –, firstly by allowing and favouring Christianity, then even enforcing it to everyone. A century earlier, Tertullian said that the idea of a Christian emperor is a contradiction; now, the circumstances are altogether different: through the conversion of Constantine, the Church has the possibility of cooperating with the Empire, and the Empire can rely on the Church for preserving its unity. At least theoretically.

Far from being a symphony, the cooperation between the Roman Empire and the Church faced, from the very beginning, great difficulties. The main reason of these difficulties lies in the encounter between the Christian teaching, on one side, and the classical tradition, inherited by the Emperor, on the other. For a pagan, the distinction between religion and politics had no meaning. The religious ceremonies were connected in such a manner to the service and the loyalty towards the Empire, that an ordinary pagan could not understand Jesus’ advice of delimiting the two spheres: the religious and the political one. From the political point of view, religion and politics were inextricably inseparable.

The most obvious expression of this identity between religion and politics was the cult of the emperor (the imperial cult). Initiated more than three centuries ago, by apotheosizing Caesar, the imperial cult provided the unity of the empire and was one of the richest sources of popular support. Neither Constantin, nor his successors wanted to give up this prerogative, but, on the other side, they didn’t want to present themselves as gods, in the competition with the only true God. This “conflict of interests” is, in fact, the revolution brought by Jesus.

Three historical episodes of the fourth century are symptomatic for the way in which Jesus' advice received a concrete expression. Each of these has, as a protagonist, an emperor:

1. Constantine the Great (306-337), during whose reign the conflict between the Empire and the Church regarding the delimitation of their activity's spheres bursts out. The emperor, tributary to his own tradition, doesn't understand that there is a sphere – especially that of the doctrinal problems of the Church – in which his interference may be baneful. Eusebius of Caesarea, by drawing up a Byzantine political theory in which the person of the emperor is central – he is the Vicar of God on earth, above the law and, in the same time, a living law – is not completely blameless for this conflict.

2. Constantius II (337-361), who attempts to subordinate the Church to the imperial despotism. The image the emperor makes about his role inside the Church is suggestively expressed by his own words, at the Synod of Milan, in 355: “A canon is whatever I want”! But the riposte of the Church is much more vehement, expressed in the harsh words of Osius of Cordoba, Lucifer of Cagliari, Hilarius of Pictavium.

3. Theodosius the Great (379-395), during whose reign the ascendancy of the Church towards the Empire is obvious especially in the relation between the emperor and Ambrosius, bishop of Milan. As expressed in his own words, the emperor is son of the Church, not Master of it; his place is inside Church, not above the Church.

We have succinctly presented these three aspects, because they are representative for the way in which the ecclesiastical authority and the imperial power came into contact during the history of the Church. In the time of the Theodosian epoch, the political climate was favorable to the Church, and exactly in this climate the two bishops whose work we analyze in the present PhD thesis developed their activity: St. John Chrysostom and the Blessed Augustine.

John lived in a period of preponderant doctrinal peace, and this is one reason why he developed his view about the imperial power and its relation to the ecclesiastical authority in another direction, a moral one, concerning the correctness of behaviour. But this preference for morals is also a consequence of his own view of Christian life, made and fortified when he was still young. After a biographical chapter, which will illustrate the perseverance of living a life according to the divine law, we will deal with the



chrysostomic theorizations regarding the relation between the ecclesiastical authority and the imperial power. Because St. John Chrysostom – as the Blessed Augustine – is not a theoretician, there was a need for gathering the texts spread all over his works – a work facilitated by the secondary literature as well – than a need for systematizing them, in order to present a view as unitary as possible.

The same method was applied in the case of the Blessed Augustine: a biographical chapter, followed by a thematic one, containing the reflections of the bishop of Hippo on the same subject. The biographical chapter presents a character different from St. John Chrysostom. The Blessed Augustine is a “prodigal son”, not only morally, but also doctrinally. It is the search of the truth that will lead him, finally, to the Christian Church. Faced, as a bishop, with a powerful schism, he will develop the issue of the relation between the imperial power and the ecclesiastical authority especially in the direction of the possible/ necessary ways for bringing back the schismatic into the bosom of the *catholic* Church. As his life was not a linear one, so his political conceptions underwent some changes. Generally, there will be two different patterns for the political order.

The four big chapters of the thesis, in a form of a crossing rhyme – if we may say so – will be concluded by a comparison in which the similarities and the differences between the political views of the two Fathers of the Church will be rendered evident.

A few words about the title are needed. The two collocations – “ecclesiastical authority” and “imperial power” have been deliberately chosen, because they point out the view of both Fathers concerning the two institutions. The representatives of the Church have authority, because it is founded on the divine law and it is a consequence of the holiness of their lives. The representatives of the Empire, on the other side, have power, because it is enforced through coercive measures and with the agency of the law, no matter the quality of the moral life of those who enforce it.

In a society of perpetual transition, as the Romanian post-communist one, in which the dialogue between the State and the Church tries to find concrete forms of expression, the appeal to the Holy Fathers of the Church should be, for the representatives of both institutions, at least invigorating. Unfortunately, the situation is rather contrary: for clerics, the appeal to the sound Tradition of the Church may be

embarrassing, because it reminds them how a priest should behave in a city; for the representatives of the State, the appeal to the Fathers is rather obsolete, anachronistic, because religion does not have such an important role in the public affairs as it used to have – paradoxically, in a country in which more than 90% declared themselves orthodox Christians - but once in four years, during the electoral campaign. The discrepancy between the Christian declarations and the Christian deeds, in the case of the State officials – as well as in the case of many clerics – is very great, and the best proof of this is our status of a “country in crisis”, not only an economic and financial crisis, but also moral and humanitarian.

The present subject is so ample, that a *mea culpa* is required for not being able to analyze it but from a specific perspective, using the method of the textual analysis, pointing out the historical influence on their view, whenever is necessary, analyzing the inward motives which determined a certain attitude instead of others. This subject may be analyzed from a biblical perspective, by underlining the influences of the Holy Scripture on the political views of the two Fathers, but also from a perspective of civil and canonic law. We make use of these perspectives only tangentially.

## **CHAPTER I: THE ACTUAL STAGE OF RESEARCH**

Concerning St. John Chrysostom, there is a traditional view, inaugurated by Palladios, John’s biographer, and taken over by the most part of the modern researchers, with distinct tinges. According to this view, St. John was an apolitic bishop, totally devoted to his pastoral mission, deposed through the conspiracy of some imperial officials from the imperial court, headed by the empress Eudoxia, helped by some clerics, enemies of John. Regarding the relation which should exist between the political power and the ecclesiastical authority, St. John is not a follower of the Eusebian pattern, but supports the ideas of Ambrose. In the first part of this chapter, we have shown how this traditional view was developed by the modern research and what authors refused this view, by substituting another.

As regarding the actual stage of research in the case of the blessed Augustine, there are two main directions which concern the present subject:

a) the issue of the two cities (the possible sources of this conception, the definitive crystallization of this conception in *De Civitate Dei*, its foreshadowing in the previous works);

b) the issue of the intervention of the secular power in repressing schisms and heresies. This is a delicate problem, elaborated by the Blessed Augustine only for the Church of North Africa in the fourth century, but subsequently taken over and theorized at a general level.

In the second part of this first chapter, we presented the main researchers of these analysis' directions of the Augustinian works, which helped us in our own work of research.

There is a huge discrepancy between the modern foreign research and the Romanian research, the last one trying to cover a scientific *vacuum* caused by the sterile years of communist dictatorship. From this perspective, such ample subjects as the present one are quite appropriate, if we wish to reach a scientific level comparably, at least from the informative point of view, to the foreign one. On the other side, we must understand that such approaches have their limits, the Romanian researcher having the task of offering an image as unitary as possible, leveling the asperities, indicating the polemics, but without analyzing them in depth.

## **CHAPTER II: THE LIFE AND ACTIVITY OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM**

The second chapter, as the fourth one, is a biographic chapter, presenting the life and activity of St. John Chrysostom. The main reason for the existence of these extensive biographical chapters is the wish of contextualizing the political view of the two great Fathers of the Church from the geographic, historical, theological and social point of view.

There are biographical elements which deeply influenced John's thinking. His ascetic period (371/372 – 378), in the surrounding mountains of Antioch, corresponds to the exile of the bishop Meletius, the one who baptized him, ordained him as *anagnostes* and later as deacon. Meletius' exile was a consequence of the imperial interference. If we add the fact that, until this time, John lived under the reign of some emperors who either

supported Arianism (Constantius II, Valens) or tried a revival of paganism (Julian the Apostate), we understand why, in the early works of John dealing with the emperor, he is portrayed in a negative manner.

Regarding John's election as bishop of Constantinople, the traditional view is that John, as the entire Antioch, was taken by surprise by this option of the imperial court. Some newer researchers<sup>1</sup> doubted this view, proving that, even if John was ignorant in this episode, Antioch always played a very important role in the previous elections as bishop of Constantinople, therefore, from this perspective, it was absolutely impossible to stay aside.

There are differences between the traditional view and the modern research regarding the motives which determined this choice, too. From the traditional point of view, it was the virtue and the oratorical qualities of John which lead to his election. The modern researchers try to find political motives, as well. Thus, Kenneth G. Holum<sup>2</sup> is of the opinion that John was elected to be an instrument of the imperial court; by his oratorical skills, he should intensify the popular attachment to the Theodosian dynasty. Chrysostomus Baur<sup>3</sup> thinks that John's election was determined by the wish of restraining the influence of Alexandria. John was elected at the proposal of Caesarius, an imperial officer sent by Theodosius in Antioch, in 387, when John was a priest, to investigate the riot concerning the imperial statues. Caesarius saw how John handled the crisis, therefore he suggested to the court that he should be elected as bishop of Constantinople. Last, but not least, J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz<sup>4</sup> claims that the main reason of John's election was the imperial desire of continuing the battle against Arianism, started by his predecessor, Nectarius. Through his qualities and virtues, John could easily captivate the masses, thus preventing any conversion to heresy and converting, in his turn, the heretic to orthodoxy.

In Constantinople, John developed his entire activity with the ardent wish of establishing the divine law as criterion of all actions of his believers. Therefore, he sanctioned any violation of this law, an attitude which will bring him soon in conflict

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Wendy Mayer, "John Chrysostom as Bishop: The View from Antioch", in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 55 (2004), no. 3, pp. 455-466.

<sup>2</sup> *Theodosian Empressess. Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1982.

<sup>3</sup> *Der Heilige Johannes Chrysostomus und seine Zeit*, 2 vol., München, 1929-1930.

<sup>4</sup> *Barbarians and Bishops. Army, Church and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990.

with the imperial family, with the high officials of the imperial power, as well as with the powerful representatives of the ecclesiastical authority. This biographic chapter will largely present these aspects.

### **CHAPTER III: CHRYSOSTOMIC THEORIZATIONS REGARDING THE RELATION BETWEEN THE ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY AND THE IMPERIAL POWER**

According to John's view, the relation between the ecclesiastical authority and the imperial power is depending on two elements:

- a) the sin of Adam;
- the need for an order pattern.

The sin of Adam perverts – although it doesn't corrupts in a definitive way – the human nature. Each person descending from Adam has, in itself, the power of self-determination, of choosing between good or evil. But the majority of men incline towards evil. Therefore, the necessity of an outward order, in which some govern, the other are governed, is required. The political order was not meant by God from the very beginning. Man had dominion only upon animals, not upon his fellows. But the Fall gives birth to this kind of inter-human dominion. It resumes the social consequences of sin.

In the *XXIII<sup>rd</sup> Homily on Romans*, John develops this idea, showing that the dominion it itself is wanted by God, in order to avoid anarchy. The best is chosen in a position of dominion, for taking care of the public welfare. The disobedience to the political authorities is assimilated to the disobedience to God. There is a cooperation between the ecclesiastical authority and the imperial power, a successive one from the chronological point of view: the priest tries, through his advice, to prevent the perpetration of misdeeds; the emperor, on the other side, punishes the perpetrated misdeed. The imperial authority would be superfluous, if the priest's advices would be observed by everyone.

There is a limit of obedience to the imperial power, namely when faith is jeopardized. In this case, the citizen who, at the same time, is also a Christian, must adopt a passive form of disobedience, accepting even death, but keeping his faith intact.

*The Homilies on Statues* represent an example of positive cooperation between the ecclesiastical authority and the imperial power. The protagonists of this cooperation are the pious emperor Theodosius the Great and the bishop Flavian of Antioch. The Christian emperor is also a son of the Church and, by this, he is obedient to the ecclesiastical authority. John clearly states that whosoever is the keeper and the administrator of the divine law – in this case, the bishop Flavian – is superior to the man who issues and administrates the imperial laws – here, Theodosius the Great.

From thematic motives, we made, at this point of the third chapter, a turning back to the earlier treatises of John – *De Sancto Babyla contra Iulianum et Gentiles* and *Comparatio regis et monachi* – which are imbued with monastic characteristics and in which the emperor is negatively portrayed. We did that in order to prepare the Constantinopolitan period, in which John's destiny identified itself with that of Babyla.

This saint was bishop of Antioch in the third century. As a result of his refuse to let the emperor entering into Church, because he committed a crime, Babyla ended killed by imperial order. The behaviour of Babyla is an example of how priests and bishops faced with this kind of situations should act: the violation of the divine law must be pointed out and sanctioned, no matter the consequences of this act.

In *Comparatio regis et monachi*, John plainly asserts the necessity, for those who are in positions of government, to be masters of their own passions. Any civil career must start from a stage of inner purification.

John's determination of making no compromise to the politics, once he was bishop of Constantinople, placed him in a delicate relation – although not from the very beginning – with important representatives of the imperial court, with the empress herself, with powerful clerics from the capital or from elsewhere. We have analyzed the relations between John and the eunuch Eutropius, the Gothic general, Gainas, and Eudoxia, the empress, and we have proved that the deposition of John would not have been possible – or, at least, very difficult to accomplish – if the imperial power would not have been supported by important representatives of the ecclesiastical authority, headed by the bishop of Alexandria, Theophilus.

All three “conflicts” above mentioned take place in the field of morality and have missionary-pastoral valences. The decline of Eutropius was seen by John as a

consequence of sin, and not as a consequence of some evil political circumstances. The claim of the Gothic general Gainas to receive a Church inside the walls of Constantinople for his heretic soldiers is firmly rejected by John, who advises the emperor Arcadius to refuse this claim as well, no matter the consequences of his refusal. It is better to be deprived of kingship than to be guilty of impiety.

Later on, after Gainas left Constantinople and was in Thrace, John goes on an embassy to him, to intercede for three prisoners, important characters from the imperial court. Although the embassy is purely political, John assumes it from pastoral reasons: he is the spiritual father of all and he must take care for the salvation of all the members of his community.

Finally, the conflict with Eudoxia may be seen either as a conflict of two strong personalities, or as a conflict of authorities, if we take into consideration the fact that Eudoxia was given the rank of *Augusta* in 400, although John seemed never to acknowledge this rank.

The greatness of John consisted in his determination of remaining, at any costs, the keeper and the guarantor of the divine law, of sanctioning any violation of it, no matter the social position of the “wrongdoer”. By doing this, he became a credible testifier of Christ, giving a strong testimony for the truth of the Christian teaching, like the martyrs during the persecutions. John clearly demonstrated that only a testimony in deed becomes “contagious” for the others, and even if he was, apparently, defeated, his victory is beyond any doubt.

#### **CHAPTER IV: THE LIFE AND ACTIVITY OF THE BLESSED AUGUSTINE**

As in the case of the biographic chapter dedicated to Saint John Chrysostom, this chapter has the purpose of contextualizing the political view of the Blessed Augustine. The context is very different from that in which St. John lived. Augustine developed his activity in North Africa, away from the Western imperial court, in a region in which the prestige of St. Cyprian of Carthage was huge, and the taste for martyrdom, very powerful. Although romanized, this diocese was imbued with the native element, namely the Berber – especially in Numidia – and the Punic, with the center in Carthage. Augustine had to

deal with one of the biggest and strongest schisms in Late Antiquity – the Donatism – a schism founded not only on religious causes, but also political ones and pertaining to the class struggle.

Regarding his spiritual life, Augustine is far from the steadiness and the rectilinear character of John's life. From his autobiographical work, *Confessiones*, the modern researcher finds out that there is, nevertheless, one constant in the life of Augustine, namely that of continually searching the truth and wisdom, from the moment he read a book of Cicero, entitled *Hortensius*. This quest for truth meant a lot of years of spiritual wandering, from the Manicheans to the skeptics of the New Academy and neo-platonism, on one side, and a lot of years of moral promiscuity, on the other.

Once in the bosom of the *catholic* Church, where he finds the Truth, Augustine will try to share this Truth with everybody, even if this attempt was made by using means alien to the intimate nature of the Church.

## **CHAPTER V: AUGUSTINIAN THEORIZATIONS REGARDING THE RELATION BETWEEN THE ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY AND THE IMPERIAL POWER**

As in the case of St. John, there are here also two fundamental circumstances according to which this relation must be observed and analyzed:

- a) the African Donatism;
- b) the sack of Rome by the vandals of Alaric, in 410.

The starting point of our analysis was the sin of Adam and its consequences for humanity. Unlike St. John, the Blessed Augustine sees this sin as responsible for a human nature totally corrupt, unable to desire to do the good by his own powers. If there is an option left for the post-adamic man, this is the option of choosing between two kinds of evil, but not the option of choosing between good and evil. What characterized now the corrupt human nature is lust (*libido*): the lust for money or greed, the lust for domination, the lust for revenge, the sexual lust etc. The political order, in this case, is something absolutely necessary, for restraining the irresistible desires of this corrupt humanity.

Augustine oscillates between two conceptions about the political authority:



a) a conception from the youth, consonant with the classical tradition of Plato, Aristotle and the stoics, according to which the state has positive valences, it is the best form of organizing the humanity, the framework in which this humanity may become perfect;

b) a conception of maturity, consonant with the Christian teaching, according to which no form of earthly organization can achieve perfection for man, *hic et nunc*. The state has no positive valorizations, his only function is a negative one, that of restraining and punishing the evil.

Between these two traditions oscillates Augustin regarding the civil law, the functions and the purpose of the political authority, too. The civil law is a reflection of the divine law, according to the first tradition; according to the second, the civil law should conform itself to the divine law, but the lack of conformity of the first one to the second does not render void the validity of the first. In a corrupt human society, it can be valid, even it is in contradiction with the divine law. Then, if the scope of the state is, according to the classical tradition, that of achieving the earthly order, peace and harmony, its scope, according to the Christian tradition, is a negative one: that of restraining and punishing the evil.

The transition from the classical to the Christian tradition – a transition caused especially by the sack of Rome in 410 – makes Augustine asking himself what is the relation between the historical career of a society – the Roman one, for example – and the divine plan of man's salvation? Augustine answers to this question in terms of his theology about the two cities: the Roman Empire – as well as all human societies – oscillates between the earthly state and the celestial one; in other words, it exists in the sphere in which the two cities overlap. Because the state is essentially connected to the condition of the corrupt man, any social institution is a mixture of good and evil, any ideal of perfection is impossible to be realized *hic et nunc*.

The notion of *civitas* must be understand as *societas*: the two cities are, in fact, two societies understood in a mystical way; no earthly society can be seen as a perfect embodiment of these cities. The complete definition of them is to be found in *De Civitate Dei* XIV, 28: the whole humanity is divided into two, and this division is founded on two kinds of love: “Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the

love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. For the one seeks glory from men; but the greatest glory of the other is God, the witness of conscience”.

The two cities are and will remain inextricably mixed in this world until the end of time. Both make use of the same temporal goods and are afflicted by the same temporal evils, but with different kinds of faith, hope and love, until they will be separated at the last judgment.

As regarding the eschatological faith of these cities, *civitas Dei* consists of all those who are predestined to salvation, while the others, the doomed, will form the *civitas diaboli*.

A very important aspect of the political thinking of Augustine, which we have analyzed in detail, in connection to the Donatist schism, is that of the role of the imperial power in defending the true faith. In order to prove that the final solution adopted by Augustine in relation to the Donatists – that of the intervention of the secular power for constraining them to the unity of the Church – was one strictly aimed at these adversaries, without any claim of generalization, we have succinctly analyzed what was the conception of Augustine regarding the way in which the state should act against pagans and Jews. In their case, there is a mixture of tolerance towards them and indifference to the putting into practice the legislation against them, although, formally, he consents to the imperial laws against these religions.

Nevertheless, regarding the Donatists, the situation was very delicate. Starting from a categorical refusal of using force for bringing them in the bosom of the *catholic* Church, Augustine will end in approving and even urging the use of this method, being convinced by his fellow-bishops of the spectacular results of using coercion, the only possible in the case of men who obstinately refuses dialogue. After a concise presentation of the historic of this schism and of its principal teachings, we have illustrated the painful process endured by Augustine, from the appeal to dialogue to the exhortation of using coercion. The Donatists are the brothers of the *catholics*, although lost brothers, bad brothers. It is the task of the spiritual shepherd to bring them to the stable, even if the mean used by achieving this is alien to the Church. The use of coercion is, in fact, an aspect of the pastoral severity, a therapeutic mean.

In itself, coercion is neither good, nor bad. Only its purpose makes it good or bad. A spiritual shepherd who, out of love for his lost believers, makes appeal to this mean with the only purpose of their salvation, acts in the spirit of fraternal love. “Love and make whatever you want”, says the Blessed Augustine, and immediately clarifies this advice with a second one: “Love and you cannot but do the good”. Although in the end, Augustine consents to coercion, he vehemently refused the death penalty: coercion must have a therapeutic function, not a vindictive and destructive one.

**The conclusions**, in the form of a comparison between the two Fathers of the Church, have the purpose of concisely pointing out the similarities and the differences of conception between these two. Thus:

1. the different contexts in which they lived, the different challenges to which they have been exposed, the life experiences, all these determined them to develop this subject of the relations between the ecclesiastical authority and the imperial power in different directions: Augustine emphasizes especially the role the imperial power has in defending and spreading the true faith, while John wishes mainly that the representatives of this power to have the souls as the monks.

2. the political order is founded by both on anthropology, more precisely on the teaching of original sin, of the corrupt human nature and the need for an external dominion, in order to avoid self-destruction. But while for Augustine, men are evil *by their nature*, for John, men *choose* to be evil. Therefore, if for Augustine, the political order is a consequence of an ontological datum, for St. John, it is a consequence of a collective volitional act. The State is a sign of the primary sin – because the domination of man by man was not intended by God from the very beginning – but, at the same time, it is a necessary remedy for sin – without the political order, the social human life would not be possible.

3. both St. John and the Blessed Augustine agree in seeing the preponderantly negative character of the political order. Contrary to the political pattern of Eusebius of Caesarea – who observes the synchrony between the *pax Romana* and the emergence of Christianity, on one side, and the providential character of the Edict of Milan, on the other side – a pattern according to which the great destiny of the Church is about to be

accomplished here, on earth, in the form of the Christian Empire, the two Fathers of the Church underline the necessity of the state for restraining evil instead of promoting the good. The fear of punishment constrains many to restrict their misdeeds only to the phase of a project, of intention, of thought. From the religious point of view, the state is neutral: it has neither a messianic character, nor a demonic one.

4. although the Blessed Augustine is the one who develops the conception of the two cities, St. John is not ignorant of a separation of men into two categories: those who do good and those who do evil. But while for Augustine, the *civitas Dei* consists of the society of those arbitrarily chosen by God to salvation, no matter their deeds, for John the eschatological fate of men is determined by the human will, too: it depends on man, too – although not in the same degree as it depends on grace – if he will be saved or not. If man wishes to be saved, God makes this will, by His grace, effective.

5. Regarding the relation between the Church and the political power, both Fathers of the Church acknowledge the superiority of the first, but none of them wants to impose any pattern of theocratic political organization. Both the Church and the State must remain between their limits and must not take upon themselves other's prerogative, although a cooperation between these two institutions must exist. The superiority of the Church is manifest at the level of its mission (the Church aims at eternity, the imperial power is preoccupied with time), of the means it uses (the Church makes use of advice, persuasion, love, while the State uses force, coercion, punishment), of the criteria according to which it exerts its authority (the Church uses the divine law, the State, the civil, human law). St. John wishes that the civil law be always anchored in the divine law, while Augustine acknowledges that, because of the definitive corruption of the human nature, some civil laws may be in disagreement with the divine law, and yet still valid. The representatives of the imperial power, headed by the imperial family, must be masters of their own passions, if they want to govern with wisdom.

6. the use of coercion, in the case of Augustine, is related to the priest's responsibility for all his parishioners, especially for the lost ones, or the Donatists were exactly the prodigal sons. In a period when the Last Judgment was still awaited with impatience, Augustine believed that he will be personally responsible, if he fails to bring the Donatists back in the bosom of the *catholic* Church. According to Augustine,

salvation was depending – although not automatically – on the belonging to this true Church.

7. even if some of their assertions could be today considered, by some liberal spirits, as totally or partially wrong, we believe that the plain proclamation of St. John in front of his community: “I live only for you and for your salvation” was valid for both of them.