CHAPTER FOUR

SOURCES OF AUGUSTINE’S DOCTRINE OF THE TWO CITIES

A. MANICHAEISM

1. ‘Manichaeism’ as an accusation

For Augustine world history was one uninterrupted linear process, directed towards a final destination: the total separation of the two cities. Eternal blessedness awaits the citizens of the city of God; eternal damnation those of the city of the devil. In this present age, the period between creation and the end of the world, the Church as the community of the children of God is in peregrination; she is looking forward to her definitive homecoming in the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

A number of investigators have referred to Manichaeism as the source of Augustine’s clear-cut duality of the two cities and of various concepts more or less related to it. This is not surprising. For nine years at least, the future bishop was an adherent of this gnostic religion, in the very period which is often regarded as being of critical importance for one’s later view of life. Much of his first work seems to be imbued with Manichaeian modes of thought. Seeing that Augustine composed, towards the end of his life, a major work in which he placed the theme of the two kingdoms or cities in a central position and strongly emphasized the absolute antithesis between these two societies, and stressed moreover the idea of the citizen of God’s city sojourning as an alien here on earth, the question of possible reminiscences of Manichaean ideas cannot be sidestepped.

Furthermore, it is known that in his lifetime Augustine was already accused more than once of being a Manichaean. Objections were made against his ordination as (Catholic) auxiliary bishop of Hippo Regius. Megalius of Calama, the primate of Numidia, refused at first to ordain him. Particularly from the Donatist camp

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the accusations did not cease. In the eyes of many Donatists Augustine was a crypto-Manichaean and friends of his such as Profuturus, Fortunatus and Alypius, now Catholic bishops, were also seen this way. Finally, during the last years of Augustine’s life, it was Julian of Eclanum who vigorously attacked the supposed Manichaean remnants in his theology.

Were Julian and the other opponents right? A comprehensive answer to this question is not necessary in this framework. It suffices to indicate the extent to which his contemporaries suspected or even claimed to have evidence for Augustine’s adherence to Manichaeism. It must be said that Julian turned out to be an acute critic and was able to put forward cogent reasons. Most of the others, however, could do no more than produce unfounded accusations.

In this context it should be realized that in those days ‘Manichaeism’ was already becoming a technical term for any form of suspected dualism and even for heresy in general. Not only was the former Manichaean Augustine charged with it, but Jerome and, for instance, Ambrose too. And for his part Ambrose accused his opponent Jovinianus of adherence to Manichaeism. It was becoming customary to label others in this way for a real or supposed deviation. In later centuries, for example Patriarch Nikephoros of Constantinople considered the adversaries of the veneration of icons to be inspired by Manichaean writings. It is common knowledge that in Western Europe the accusation ‘Manichaeism’ was heard through almost the entire medieval period.

This was still true at the time of the Reformation: Luther, Melanchthon and Calvin were each in turn labelled as *Manichaeus redivivus*. The importance still given then to Mani’s doctrine is ap-

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4 E.g. *Opus imp. c. Iul.* II, 31-33; in IV, 42 the venomous remark: ‘Si mutabit Aethiops pellem suam aut purdus varietatem, ita et tu a Manichaeorum mysteriis elueris’.