CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND FINAL REMARKS

At the end of this investigation we shall give a résumé of the most important results and close with a few more general comments.

The introductory chapter presents a survey of the research carried out so far on aim, structure and central theme of the City of God. We concluded that particularly in respect to the inquiry into the origins of the concept of the two cities the results diverge.

Chapter II opens with a biographical sketch of Augustine. The author of one of the most influential works of world literature is portrayed first of all as a man from the Roman province of Africa. Although nothing can be said with certainty of a possible Berber extraction, his African descent does merit special attention. It may partly account for the fact that Augustine, in his magnum opus and elsewhere, often spoke in such negative terms about Rome, the earthly city. Augustine's thorough training in rhetoric explains his ability to quote extensively from Latin classical authors. His knowledge of Greek, however, was limited, not only in his early years, but later on as well. This, too, is ultimately important for the inquiry into the origin of his concept of the two cities: Augustine was only slightly influenced by Greek theological thinking. Of much more importance was his education as a catechumen in the tradition of the African Church. This education made a profound impression on him. The same can be said of his subsequent stay among the Manichaeans. For a number of years, at first in the spirit of total surrender, the later church father lived the life of a Manichaean auditor. After that a Neoplatonic form of Christendom was a veritable revelation to him. The high esteem in which he held the Platonists remained in later years. But in addition, the influence of the Bible and previous theological thinking became increasingly important, especially Latin theology and more specifically the theology of his African predecessors.

The account of Augustine's development provided substantial data in itself for an interpretation of the City of God and especially of his doctrine of the two cities. Augustine emerged as the man from Africa who was brought up as a catechumen of the Catholic Christian Church, received a thorough training in rhetoric, associated
with the Manicheans from his 19th till after his 29th year, was greatly influenced by Neoplatonism and ended up as one of the leading bishops of the Catholic Church in Africa.

Chapter II continues with a description of a few basic facts concerning the City of God. The sacking of Rome in 410 and the tremendous reaction this catastrophe provoked were an immediate cause but not the actual reason for the inception of the work. Earlier Augustine had already promised an exposition on the two cities. Despite its impressive scope and numerous digressions, the work testifies to a carefully planned design. The reason for its division into twenty-two books, however, is not easy to give. In any case the City of God is a compendium of Augustine's theology, his magnum opus in which previous thinking attains its maturity and serenity, the later guide for both pope and emperor, the bible of the Middle Ages.

Next the origin and the history of the two cities, especially as they are expounded by Augustine in the City of God, are considered. His periodization of history was to exert an important influence on later historiography. In his view of Heilsgeschichte Augustine shows a similarity with Old Testament historiography. There is a certain progression in the different stages of the Heilsgeschichte; its ultimate goal is the completion of the city of God.

An inquiry into the concept civitas revealed that it corresponds most to the Greek concept polis. Civitas can best be rendered as 'city', provided that we bear in mind that both cities are ruled by a prince. In the development of Augustine's doctrine of the two cities the influence of previous philosophical traditions can be seen. This fact, however, does not explain the actual sources of his doctrine. Even though the two cities are interwoven in this saeculum, they are radically different. This antithesis is described especially by Augustine as the antithesis between Jerusalem and Babylon.

Chapter II gives some other aspects of the doctrine of the two cities as well. The city of God and the Church were virtually identical for Augustine, for they are both first and foremost eschatological entities. The antitype of the city of God is the earthly city; it encompasses all those who live according to man, 'according to the flesh'. The Roman Empire is terrena civitas, but the earthly city does not coincide with it. A fundamental characteristic of the city of God in this world is its state of being an alien. An enumeration of all the passages in the City of God in which peregrinari, peregrinatio and peregrinus occur demonstrated this and in other writings it is also apparent. In