

Review of the Central Themes of the Eschatological Thought of Augustine of Hippo

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Summary

In this paper, the author addresses the philosophical and theological thought of Augustine of Hippo, that is, St. Aurelius Augustine, in which he especially focuses on his eschatology, giving a short overview of the central themes of his eschatological thought. In the first part, the author gives Augustine's historical background by presenting his short biography. Also, in this historical overview, he presents Augustine's capital work "De Civitate Dei" upon which the paper is primarily founded. Before the actual engagement in Augustine's eschatology, the author briefly acquaints the reader with the development of eschatological thought until Augustine and then moves on to the central (selected) eschatological themes such as individual judgment, eternal life, purgatory, hell, the Last judgment and the resurrection.

Introduction

Considering the philosophical-theological thought of Augustine of Hippo, or Aurelius Augustine, I am under the impression (subjective as it may be) that Augustine is and has been somewhat neglected by Protestant theologians and he is often (un)consciously ignored due to beliefs that "he has in fact caused more confusion in the Christianity and in theology (for instance, little and big sins, the original sin, baptism of infants, purgatory), than contributing to its development." However, though he may have instigated some new theological concepts through his writings that could be understood by some to be "unbiblical" or without

ground – usually as a result of studying his interpreted, rather than original thought – Augustine argued each one of those concepts and found adequate (biblical) support. This paper will not deal with the sufficiency or insufficiency of his arguments. However, his extraordinary contributions to theology and apologetics must not be neglected, especially when it comes to their establishment and development.

With that in mind, as a Protestant, I would like to make a small contribution and encourage Protestants to consider a more profound study of Augustine's thought because it is truly valuable. This paper will be a short review of Augustine's eschatology; it is equally engaging to Christians of every denomination, and represents a kind of initial area which will be sufficiently engaging and intriguing to interest readers in Augustine's thought.

Therefore, this paper is a short review of the central themes of Augustine's eschatology that can give the reader an insight into Augustine's eschatological thought. In such a short review, it is not possible to include all of the eschatological themes that Augustine addresses, such as death, the Antichrist, the meaning of the millennium, the second coming of Christ, angels, etc., because dealing with them would surpass the scope of this paper. Therefore, after reading Augustine's writings, I have chosen the central eschatological themes I considered to be notable and valuable for deeper study and exposure.

In the first part of the paper, a short biography of Augustine is given and an introduction in his work *The City of God*; its main purpose is to introduce the reader to the person of Aurelius Augustine to place him in time and space, thus gaining a sense of the background in which the work *The City of God* originated. Besides the biography of Augustine, there will be a short review of the work itself, upon which this paper is basically grounded, so that the reader who might have met Augustine only superficially may be able to gain a sense of the extent and the value of this work; this is so in Augustine's thought, as well as for theology in general. In the second part, central themes of Augustine's theology (individual judgment, eternal life, purgatory, hell, the Last judgment, the resurrection) will be presented.

Special commendation goes to Marijan Mandac for his "Introduction" to Augustine's thought which can be found in the introductory part of the Croatian edition of Rukovet;¹ it served as a firm guide in my own study of Augustine as well as in the creation and writing of this paper.

1 *Rukovet* is a Croatian translation of part of *Enchiridion ad Laurentium sive De fide, spe et charitate*.

Augustine's Life and *The City of God*

Life

Aurelius Augustine (Aurelius Augustinus) was born to Patricius and Monique on November 13, 354 in Tagasta in Numidia (today's Algiers). His father was a state officer who became a Christian shortly before his death in 371, while his mother was a Christian from an early age (Bajsić, 1987: 348). His mother had a great influence on him, but Augustine was not interested in Christianity in his youth, mostly because he regarded it as inferior (Šagi-Bunić, 1996: XIV). He was more attracted to the Manichean teaching of salvation through knowledge.

After finishing his initial education in 371, Augustine continued his studies in Cartage. He led a very immoral life, so one of the consequences was Adeodatus, a son that was born to him, but who died in 390 (Bajsić, 1987: 348). In 373, he began to study intensively and contemplate Manichean teachings, but still he was not fulfilled intellectually, neither did he have peace in his heart.

In 374-375, he finished his studies and found a rhetorical school in Tagasta, and in 375, he returned to Cartage where he taught rhetoric (Šagi-Bunić, 1996: XIV). He went to Rome the same year, but he did not stay there long because he accepted a position as a teacher of rhetoric in Milan in 384 (Šagi-Bunić, 1996: XVI). There he met the Bishop of Milan, Ambrose, who thrilled him by his kindness and modesty (contrary to the Manichean Bishop Faust who had disappointed him by his prattling and swaggering); so Augustine began to attend his services regularly and listen to his sermons.²

He became more and more disappointed with Manichaeism, so he soon began to wander from skepticism to Neo-Platonism, only to finally understand by studying the Scriptures, that Christ is the only way to salvation. In 386, he left his position as a teacher and truly decided to be baptized (as a young boy he had expressed his desire when he was severely ill, but when he became well, gave up the idea). He was baptized by Ambrose in Milan on the night of April 24th or 25th, 387. Along with him, his son Adeodatus and his friend Alypius were also baptized (Bajsić, 1987: 350).

After he was baptized, he decided to return to Africa, but on the way, in Ostia near Rome, his mother died, so Augustine postponed his return to Africa for a year (Šagi-Bunić, 1996: XVII). In 388, he finally returned in Tagasta where he lived as a monk. Soon his scholarship and devotion became known among the people and the church leadership, so the Bishop of Hippo ordained him in 391

2 *Life of St. Augustine of Hippo*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02084a.htm>, accessed March 26, 2007.

to be a presbyter of his bishopric. Soon after that, in 395, he was ordained as a bishop, and when the Bishop Valerius died shortly after that, Augustine took his position as the Bishop of Hippo.³

In his ministry, he solicited for the poor, he often preached and he fought against the heresies of his time (especially against Manichaeism, Pelagianism and Donatism).⁴ Many details from the time of his bishopric ministry remain unknown, but it is known that he wrote prolifically and he participated in several Synods (in Cartage in 397, 403, and 407, and in Mileva in 416), as well as in the main African councils in Cartage in 418 and 419. In 404, he had a great debate with the Manichean Felix in Hippo, and in 418 he had a debate with the Donatist bishop in Mauritania. He died on August 28, 430 in the city of Hippo where he had served for the last 35 years of his life.⁵

Augustine was an exceptionally productive writer who wrote more than 90 works and over 230 books, without counting his sermons or his numerous letters (Bajsić, 1987: 352). He was an exceptional connoisseur of the Scriptures and an extraordinary preacher. He is one of the greatest theologians and philosophers of all time, and maybe more than any other church father, he has formed theological thought, especially in the West (Küng, 1994: 71).

In this paper, only one aspect of his theology will be tackled – eschatology, but this is only a small part of his ample theological thought. His masterpiece *The City of God* certainly is a jewel of his intellectual creativity, thus, it is now time to see some of the main characteristics of that primary source of Augustine's theological thought.

The City of God (De civitate Dei) – A Primary Source of Augustine's Theological Thought

It is impossible to discuss the “life and work of St. Augustine” because his work is so ample and rich that it is impossible to summarize it and place it in a classical review such as a life's work of an individual. Therefore, *The City of God*, certainly the most important work of Augustine's intellectual legacy and one of the foundational works of (western) theological thought, has been chosen as a representative of his life's work. In addition, of his works, *The City of God* most clearly outlines Augustine's eschatological thought, and that is relevant for this paper.

3 *Life of St. Augustine of Hippo*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02084a.htm>, accessed March 26, 2007.

4 *Life of St. Augustine of Hippo*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02084a.htm>, accessed March 26, 2007.

5 *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Augustine (354-430)*, <http://iep.utm.edu/a/augustin.htm>, accessed March 26, 2007.

The City of God is organized in 2 parts, in 5 sections and in 22 volumes. The first part is polemic (from volumes 1-10), and its goal is to refute paganism by revealing its deficiencies in relation to Christianity. The other part is expository with the purpose of presenting and defending Christian doctrine by introducing and discussing the history of salvation (from volumes 11-22; Trape, 1995: XIII).

These 22 volumes were not written in one sequence; neither were they presented to the public in a collection as it is today. They were written in a span of more than a decade (413-427), but the collection was completed only three years before Augustine's death. The first three books were printed and presented to the public inquiry right after they were written, probably because of Augustine's goal to offer an answer to the accusations against Christianity as soon as possible. After that he again published the first five books, then the first ten, later adding the next four to that number making fourteen volumes all together. Augustine worked on the last eight volumes for years, but it is not certain if they were published as a whole or in parts as they were completed (Trape, 1995: XI).

The basic concept of *The City of God* is a tension between the standing state of God and the worldly state. The state of God is created by love toward God and it tends to praise God, whereas the worldly state is created out of love toward self and it seeks the praise of others in its existence. In the state of God, its citizens serve one another and God is their strength, whereas in the worldly state, every person strives toward governing and they seek strength in their power-wielders (Augustine, 1995b:14, 28). Therefore, simply said, the state of God is the kingdom of God, whereas the worldly state is all the things that do not belong in it. The state of God will experience its fullness after the Last judgment, whereas the worldly state will burn in fire. There will be more about this in the second part of this paper; let us return now to the work itself.

The work is intended for Christians and non-Christians (pagans). To the non-believers, he wants to prove that their accusations against the Christians, their beliefs and lifestyle, are groundless and unjust. Augustine advocates the idea that Christianity gives solutions to many problems to which non-Christians fail to provide adequate solutions. He particularly emphasizes two problems: the social and the religious problems that occur in people's earthly lives which relate to their eternal life that begins after death. To Christians, on the other hand, he wants to give an apologetic weapon for fighting against the attacks of non-believers (Trape, 1995: XI, XII).

Moreover, the most significant thing for this work is that it represents the locus where Augustine incorporated his "most serious, most diverse, and highest eschatological thought" (especially in the volumes 20-22; Mandac, 1990:104). This thought will come up later in the paper; for now, a short review of the development of the general eschatological thought till Augustinian time will follow.

Review of the Central Themes of the Eschatological Thought of Augustine of Hippo

A Short Review of the Development of Eschatological Thought till Augustine

Augustine played a very important role in the development of eschatology because it had already begun with the apostolic fathers, but gained its real expression only with Augustine. Namely, the apostolic fathers did not leave anything that would be of specific eschatological value, but at least they made an acceptable move away from Jewish eschatology,⁶ especially regarding conclusions about the individual judgment which follows a person's death (Clement of Rome, 1997:11; Ignatius, 1997: 4; Polycarp, 1997: 17; 19). However, there are no clear eschatological ideas in their texts, only a kind of nucleus of eschatology (Mandac, 1990:105,106).

Neither did Christian apologists have a better developed eschatology. They merely tackled the concept of individual judgment in a more detailed way, but they still strongly relied on Jewish eschatological thought. Something more concrete comes in only with Justin who considered it wrong to teach that a soul goes directly to heaven upon death, rather Justin believed there to be a kind of payment after death. He says that after death the souls of the godly abide in a "better place", whereas the souls of the ungodly go to a "worse abode". Still, every person will receive his or her reward or punishment after the second coming of Christ at the Last judgment (Justin the Martyr, 1990a: 18; 1990b: 5).

Irenaeus writes, "After death the souls go to an invisible abode ordered by God where they abide waiting for the resurrection" (Irenej, 1990:5, 31). Thus, he holds that there is a certain judgment of individuals which follows right after death where the reward or the punishment is affirmed; the individual carries it until the Last judgment. Before the Last judgment, there is a bodily resurrection similar to Christ's, and the souls of the righteous do not go directly upon death into heaven, but instead, they abide in "Abraham's bosom", and they go into complete bliss only at Christ's Last judgment (Mandac, 1990: 107).

Tertullian thought that after death souls go to a mysterious place where Christ has been from the moment of His death until the resurrection. In the same way, the deceased are waiting for the day of resurrection. He says that already upon death the deceased get paid for the good they have done, and they are punished

6 The Jews believed that people went to the underworld (sheol) after death where they existed in darkness in some kind of blurred, slightly foggy state, waiting for the Last judgment when they would be punished or rewarded depending on the way they lived and the deeds they had committed.

for the evil. The righteous abide in “Abraham’s bosom” awaiting the resurrection, whereas the evil suffer in pain. After the Last judgment, the righteous go to eternal bliss (only the martyrs go to eternal life directly upon death), whereas the evil go to eternal fire. Interestingly, Tertullian argues that those who have not made full amends with the justice of God can do it after death while waiting for the resurrection. This is the first indication of that which Augustine calls purgatory (for more about Tertullian’s eschatological thought, see Tertullian, 1997a: 4, 34; 1997b: 55; 58; 1997c: 6; 1997d: 43; Mandac, 1990:107,108).

At the end of this short eschatological “pre-Augustinian” introduction, Lactantius and Jerome also need to be mentioned. Lactantius asserted that after death all souls abide in the same place where they await the Last judgment which will separate them forever (Lactantius, 1997:7, 21). Jerome was the first who clearly divided the individual from the general judgment. The individual judgment comes right after death, whereas the general comes on the Last Day judgment (Jerome, 1990: 2, 1).

As far as Augustine is concerned, he undoubtedly had a strong influence on the development of Christian eschatology from his time to the present. Many theologians after him built on his eschatological foundations, which is another proof of his contribution to the development, not only of the eschatological, but of the entire theological thought (Mandac, 1990: 2, 1).

Augustine’s eschatological system was formed under the influence of the Scriptures, the church fathers, philosophy and his own Christian/theological experience. Above all, he desired for eschatology to be first of all biblical and ecclesial because it is intended for the congregation (the church). Assumedly, many theologians would agree that Augustine’s general eschatological thought is “moderate, steady, profound and nearly complete” (Mandac, 1990:104.105). This becomes more obvious further along in the text by the presentation of certain central themes of his eschatology beginning with that which is, according to Augustine, awaiting every person after their death: the individual judgment.

Individual Judgment

Augustine’s predecessors announced the concept of the individual judgment which takes place right after a person’s death, whereas he broadened Jerome’s eschatology about the individual and the Last judgment; he did that by pointing to the necessity of two judgments as well as their mutual separation and difference (Mandac, 1990: 110).

In Augustine’s time, Plato’s idea about the separation of the soul from the body after death was popular and broadly accepted; the soul does not remain in that state for a long time, instead it is incarnated in another body. The wise men

are an exception because they are transferred to a particular star that suits them best, and after a certain time when they wish to experience earthly life again, they become incarnated in mortal bodies. On the other hand, the souls of those who have lived futile lives, which is according to Plato, obviously, a life opposite to the life of a wise man, are soon after death incarnated again into a kind of body they have earned by their previous life (human or animal body; Plato, 1995: 248a-249d).

Augustine opposes such a teaching and he argues that right after a person's death and until the resurrection, the human's soul leaves the body and undergoes judgment.⁷ After the judgment in the period from a person's death to its resurrection, the souls abide in "secret places" and they undergo what they have earned as an individual soul; some are at peace, and some suffer, depending on the way a person lived his or her earthly life (Mandac, 1990: 110), but it does not get incarnated as Plato argues (Augustine, 1995b: 13, 19).

It seems that in his understanding of the individual judgment, Augustine is not entirely clear and that he cannot offer answers to all the questions and problems. However, by summarizing his deliberation about the individual judgment, at least some basic conclusions can be made. Therefore, he absolutely rejects reincarnation or the hibernation of souls. Namely, after the soul leaves the body at death, it does not come back to another body neither does it die (vanish or be annihilated), rather it abides in its earned state (hell, purgatory or a blessed observance of God) which is not yet accomplished in its entirety, but will be enjoyed only after the Last judgment. From this it follows that a soul does not hibernate (sleep) after it leaves the body, instead it waits in a partial bliss or curse for the final resurrection into eternal life or eternal death. In the following section, Augustine's understanding of eternal life will be exposed briefly.

Eternal Life

What Augustine calls "a blessed observance of God" can be compared to what is also known as "paradise" or "heaven." It is obvious that even Augustine was not certain when this blessed observance takes place, be it right after the individual judgment or only after the Last judgment. It is hard to understand from his writings, therefore there are two opinions: one opinion advocates the thesis that Augustine thought that those who are saved go to a blessed observance of God right after the individual judgment; the other opinion argues that only the

7 It is entirely correct and life-saving to believe that souls will be judged after they leave their human bodies and before they come to the Last judgment when they receive their bodies back (Augustine, 1990a: 2,4,8).

martyrs go directly to heaven, whereas all others await the resurrection and the Last judgment (Mandac, 1990: 122).

My personal stand is that Augustine implies a kind of blessed observance of God in the state of the soul after the individual judgment which will be completely enjoyed only after the Last judgment. Thus, it can be said that Augustine's understanding of eternal life (the observation of God) extends from partial bliss in awaiting the Last judgment to the eternity that takes place with the resurrection of the body.

Augustine sees eternal life as a deserved seventh day of rest⁸ where nothing else will be done except giving thanks to God and praising His mercy and goodness (Augustine, 1996: 19, 13, 2). In that blessed abode, every person is happy and peaceful, but in this bliss there is still a certain gradation which Augustine does not explain, assuming that no human is able to comprehend it (ibid, 30.1-30.2); this gradation is conditioned by the smaller or greater merits of the earthly life. The most important thing in this is the fact that the souls of the righteous "enjoy in God and in their neighbor in God" (Augustine, 1996: 19, 13.2); in that, God's merciful gift to the individual to enjoy ceaselessly in God's presence can be seen, not only as an individual, but in fellowship with one's neighbors.

Augustine's understanding of eternal life is almost indescribable. From his texts, one can see Augustine's exceeding joy and thrill in the expectation of the day when he would leave this earthly life and join the angels and all the other saints (Augustine, 1996: 22, 29.1) in the eternal observance of God, given as a gift to all those who will endure in their life and awaken in the first resurrection (the resurrection of the soul; Augustine, 1996: 20, 9.4).

The further text will deal with what is probably the most controversial of Augustine's eschatological ideas regarding the issue of eternal life and eternal death, and that is, of course, the idea of purgatory.

Purgatory

Augustine is considered the first theologian to establish a clear teaching about purgatory; he did not doubt the existence of purgatory (Augustine, 1990c: 69; 1996: 21, 13.16.24.26; 1997: 37, 3 *De genesi adversus Manichaeos*, 2, 20, 30). He was not certain how one realizes purgatory, nor was he certain where that place

8 Augustine divided human history into seven days (ages): 1) from Adam to the flood, 2) from the flood to Abraham, 3) from Abraham to David, 4) from David to the Babylonian exile, 5) from the Babylonian exile to the birth of Christ, 6) from the birth of Christ to the present and 7) a rest in the blessed awaiting of the resurrection. The seventh day ends with the Day of the Lord by which all pass into the eternal rest of the soul and the body (Augustine, 1996: 22, 30, 5).

is. However, Augustine clearly states that there are “temporal punishments”⁹ which a person must suffer after death, but before the Last judgment because he assumed that every sin must be paid for to the last nickel (Mt 5:26; Augustine, 1996: 21, 16; Mandac, 1990: 111).

Purgatory takes place between the individual and the Last judgment, and that is still a time of mercy. Augustine holds that Christians can go to purgatory if they die in the sin of being tied to earthly goods (Augustine, 1996: 21, 26.4). True, they are in a sinful state, but because they are in small sins,¹⁰ by the grace of God, they are not under God’s permanent condemnation, therefore they will not suffer an “eternal punishment” (Mandac, 1990: 111).

God’s righteousness, which is offended by sin, demands atonement through punishment, therefore the purpose of the punishments in purgatory is not healing for the sinner, but rather, they avenge God’s wrath (Augustine, 1996: 21, 13). Purgatory is to suffer the “purifying fire” and the “fire of atonement.” It seems that Augustine is not certain of whether this pertains to a real physical fire or whether the fire represents only a picture of the punishment and the suffering endured by those who have died in small sins (Mandac, 1990: 111).

In his deliberations about purgatory, Augustine often cites 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 (Augustine, 1990c: 68; 1996: 21, 26; 1997: 29, 9; 37, 3; 80, 21; *De fide et operibus* 16, 27). He asks himself whether the mentioned “fire” is some kind of earthly temptation or a flame of purgatory. It seems to him that it is more related to a Christian’s life before death, though he does not exclude the possibility that “fire” might represent the redemptive fires of purgatory (Mandac, 1990: 112).

Augustine believed that the “souls of the deceased” might relate to the “piety of their living relatives” (Mandac, 1990: 110). By such piety, the deceased may acquire “a complete remission” of the punishment. He divides the deceased into groups of those whose life was “quite good” so they do not need to be advocated upon death, those who lived an “evil life” so there is no help for them, and those

9 “All other punishments, whether temporal or eternal, depending on the divine providence for every individual, are imposed because of sin (whether from the past or those in which the punished person is presently involved) or because of testing and proving of virtue, or with the help of angels, or the good or evil. Thus, regardless of whether a person suffers because of atrocity or the delusion of another, whilst he sins, a person that commits such an evil or in ignorance or because of injustice, it is not God that sins by allowing such thing to happen according to His righteous, although secret judgment. But, these temporal punishments some suffer only in their earthly life, some after death, others now and then, but still before the most rigorous and Last judgment. However, all those who suffer temporal punishments after death, will not undergo the eternal punishments which come after that judgment” (Augustine, 1996: 21, 13).

10 It seems that in *The City of God*, what Augustine means by “small” and “big” sins is not clearly defined (cf. Augustine, 1996: 21, 27.4).

whose life was not entirely pure but who can make amends after death, and the living can help them in that through their piety (prayers, sacrifices at the altar, charity, good deeds, etc.). He saw proof of this in the biblical text of the Deuterocanonical book, 2 Maccabees 12:43 and in the church tradition where he saw room for mentioning the deceased in the priest's prayers offered to God at the altar (Augustine, 1990b: 1, 3).

"Also it can not be truthfully said of some that their sins will not be forgiven either in this world or in the world to come (Mt 12:32) if it were not for those who will be forgiven in the world to come, although they cannot be forgiven in this world" (Augustine, 1996: 21, 24.2). More will be said in the next lines of those who will go into eternal death – hell.

Hell

Augustine did not doubt the existence of hell and that it represents the worst punishment for an evil earthly life. He was uncertain about the moment when hell begins for the evil. He was not certain of whether hell begins right after the individual condemnation or after the Last judgment. But it seems from his writings (as also for the issue of eternal life), that he assumes that the condemned go to hell right after their death, but that their full punishment begins only after the Last judgment (Mandac, 1990: 117).

It is important to emphasize that Augustine argued that all the unbaptized go to hell without hesitation because their unforgiven original sin¹¹ separates them from God ultimately and forever. Similarly, those who are baptized but die in severe sin go to hell because they were not able to make satisfactory amends with God during their lifetime. That is why Augustine invited and warned Christians to live a serious and pure Christian life (Mandac, 1990: 117).

Augustine maintained that the amount of suffering in hell varies and it is different for every person depending on the weight of the sins they commit (Augustine, 1996: 21.16). He was convinced that hell is eternal (Mt 25:41.46). He disagreed with the Origenists who argued that every punishment must be limited because its purpose is the purification of the soul and the healing of the sinful wound. He also disagreed with the so-called "merciful" who claimed that the eternity of hell is inconsistent with God's goodness as a Father (Mandac, 1990: 118-120).

For him, hell is what the Scriptures call a "second death" (Rev 2:11; 20:6.14;

11 Under original sin, Augustine implies the initial sin of our ancestors Adam and Eve which every person inherits from them, and which can be "washed" only through baptism. For more detail, see: Aurelius Augustine, *De moribus Ecclesiae*, 1, 19, 35; 1, 22, 40; *De libero arbitrio*, 3, 20, 55.

21,8). The “first death” for him is that which happens after the soul leaves the earthly body at death, and it is impossible to avoid this death, whereas the second death can be avoided (Augustine, 1995b: 13, 2). The second death comes after the Last judgment when the body goes to eternal suffering in hell (Mandac, 1990: 120). He regarded it as an alienation of the soul from God’s life, and he wrote slightly fatefully that this is a death which cannot end even in death (Augustine, 1996: 19, 28).

Thus, “the first death drives the soul out of the body against its will, whereas the second death keeps the soul in the body against its will, and common to both deaths is that they cause the soul to suffer from its own body what it does not wish” (Augustine, 1996: 21,31). In his writings, Augustine points to the reality and the severity of hell and he does not wish for any person to go to that eternal death which comes after the Last judgment. More will be mentioned about this judgment later in the text.

The Last Judgment

At the Last judgment Christ will come and judge the living and the dead. The Last judgment is also called “Judgment Day” or “The Day of the Lord” because it is a day when Christ will judge and decide into which eternity an individual will go: into eternal death or eternal life (Augustine, 1996: 20, 1.2).

Augustine held that at the end of times all people would come under judgment but not under condemnation. Namely, those who did not obey the voice of the Lord during their lifetime and who did not pass from death into life upon the resurrection of the soul (Augustine, 1996: 20, 9, 4) – an issue to be discussed in the last theme – after the Last judgment and the resurrection of the body, go to a second death. The Last judgment represents a breaking point for each person where Christ-the-Judge decides the eternal destination of each individual depending on each person’s deeds (Rev 20:12).

At the Last judgment, not only people will be judged (most certainly angels too), but also the devil and his followers who will be condemned to an eternal perdition (Rev 20:10). Therefore, all the condemned people, along with the devil and his troops will be thrown into eternal fire, about whose nature Augustine does not specify.¹²

It is obvious that not only people will come to the Last judgment, but all of God’s creation when “the shape of this world will disappear in the burning of the world’s fires, as once was with the flood of the world’s waters” (Augustine, 1996:

12 “And what this fire looks like, in what part of the world or the universe will be, to no man – I think – is not known, unless the Spirit of God reveals it to someone” (Augustine, 1996: 20,16).

20, 16). After that, the “new heaven” and the “new earth” will come (Rev 21:1), and God’s city and its citizens will descend on the new earth and live together with those who have resurrected in their bodies. More will be said on resurrection in the next section. To close this section, a short review follows of Augustine’s teaching on the Last judgment expressed in his own words:

Thus, no one will deny or doubt that the Last judgment will be by Jesus Christ, exactly as it was foretold in the Holy Scripture, besides someone who does not believe, out of arrogance or blindness, in the actual holy writings which had proved its own authenticity to the whole world. Thus, on the judgment, or in connection to it, Elijah the Tishbite will come, the Jews will believe, the Antichrist will persecute, Christ will judge, the dead will rise, the good and the evil will be separated, the world will burn out and be renewed. It should be believed that this will happen; but on what way or by which order, we will learn more then by the experience itself, than even the perfect human understanding can bear now. But I think, however, that the things will happen according to the order I just mentioned (Augustine, 1996: 20, 3.5).

Resurrection

The resurrection does not have a central place only in Augustine’s eschatology, but in his entire theological thought. To him, nothing is more important than the resurrection of the dead because the Christian faith stands by it, and it falls without it (Augustine, *Sermones*, 241, 1; 234, 3; 361, 2). Only by resurrection does one find full blessing or curse. Until the resurrection, there is still time for salvation, but after the resurrection, a person finally passes into eternity. To Augustine, the resurrection is a doorstep into eternity which every person must cross over (Mandac, 1990: 115).

He differentiates two resurrections: the resurrection of souls which takes place now (knowledge of one’s own sinfulness and living a God-pleasing life), and the resurrection of the body which will happen after the Last judgment, upon which some go to eternal death, and some to eternal life (Augustine, 1996: 20, 6.2). Thus, all those who will not “resurrect” into new life during their lifetimes (during “the whole time when the first resurrection is taking place”), will, in the second resurrection, pass over into the second death (Augustine, 1996: 20, 9.4).

As far as the first resurrection is concerned, Augustine holds that souls have their death in the impiety and sins, and according to such death they are dead to those about which the Lord says: “and let the dead bury their own dead” (Mt 8:22). He saw a parallel in this resurrection to the resurrection of Christ who died for our sins, and resurrected for our justification so that all who believe in him can participate in the first resurrection. In the first resurrection, only those who will be blessed in eternity participate, whereas in the second resurrection, all

people participate (Augustine, 1996; 20, 6.1)

The second resurrection, the resurrection which takes place after the Last judgment, happens according to the example of the Lord Jesus Christ who was resurrected in his body three days after his death, and then shortly thereafter ascended into heaven. This resurrection is for those who have passed into life by the first resurrection which is equal to Christ's glorious resurrection by which He defeated death, whereas to those who have not resurrected in the first resurrection, the second resurrection will be eternal death (Jn 5:28.29; Augustine, 1996: 20, 6.2).

Therefore, Augustine's understanding of the resurrection is clear: the soul which is dead in sin needs to obey the Lord's call and resurrect in life so that in the second resurrection the body and soul might live forever. Still, Augustine warns that it is not enough to just pass the first resurrection in order to pass into life by the second resurrection; rather, a partaker of the blessing will be "not only the one who passes into life from death, which is in sins, but (the one who) will endure in the new life" (Augustine, 1996: 20,9.4). Therefore, the resurrection (of soul and body) truly must be one's main goal and ambition because the resurrection offers eternal meaning to a person (Mandac, 1990: 115).

Conclusion

The eschatological themes presented in this paper may seem well known, or like nothing new. However, it should not be forgotten that these eschatological themes which people tend to take lightly are actually initiated, shaped or established exactly by Augustine who was writing from the beginning of the ancient 5th century. It is precisely in this that the eschatological and general value and beauty of Augustine's thought can be found: namely, it is steady and relevant even after 16 centuries of historic storms.

The goal of this paper is for the reader who might not have yet been introduced to Augustine's theological, or to put it in more precise words, eschatological thought, to gain a concise insight into Augustine's eschatology and his chief work *The City of God*. Hopefully it is successful in intriguing and motivating the reader to begin reading Augustine and studying his writings, and to encourage the one who deals with his theological thought to endure with it. Augustine wrote worthy classics in philosophical/theological literature, and not knowing his thought leaves one deprived of an important part of the theological and ecclesiastic heritage which every theologian and philosopher, as well as Christian, should know.

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Pregled središnjih tema eshatološke misli Augustina Hiponskoga

Sažetak

Autor se u ovome radu bavi filozofsko-teološkom mišlju Augustina Hiponskoga, odnosno, sv. Aurelija Augustina, pri čemu se posebice fokusira na njegovu eshatologiju, dajući kratak pregled središnjih tema njegove eshatološke misli. Autor u prvome dijelu rada daje Augustinovu povijesnu pozadinu predočavanjem njegovog kratkog životopisa. Također, u ovome povijesnom pregledu predstavlja i Augustinovo kapitalno djelo „O državi Božjoj“ na kojem se rad primarno i temelji. Prije samoga bavljenja Augustinovom eshatologijom autor ukratko upoznaje čitatelja s razvojem eshatološke misli do Augustina te zatim prelazi na središnje (odabrane) eshatološke teme poput pojedinačnoga suda, vječnoga života, čistilišta, pakla, posljednjeg suda te uskrsnuća.