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**ARNAU DE VILANOVA'S INTERPRETATION OF
AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO'S ESCHATOLOGY IN THE
ANTIDOTUM CONTRA VENENUM EFFUSUM
*PER FRATREM MARTÍNUM DE ATHECA***

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Resum

En la polèmica apocalíptica que va enfrontar Arnau de Vilanova amb els teòlegs professionals durant els primers anys del segle XIV, la interpretació dels textos d'Agustí d'Hipona sobre la possibilitat de conèixer prèviament els darrers temps va jugar un paper molt especial. L'objectiu de l'article consisteix a analitzar aquesta polèmica en la darrera i controvertible obra d'Arnau de Vilanova, l'inèdit *Antidotum contra venenum effusum per fratrem Martinum de Ateca*. Tant Arnau de Vilanova com el seu adversari Martín de Ateca trobaren en l'obra d'Agustí d'Hipona arguments favorables a les pròpies posicions, però al capdavant d'aquesta polèmica s'amaga una altra qüestió: amb quina autoritat va anunciar Arnau de Vilanova els darrers temps? Si el seu anunci és resultat d'una revelació, com el pensador català proposa, els textos augustians es decanten a favor de mestre Arnau; si simplement és una especulació, com afirma Martín de Ateca, Agustí d'Hipona ja havia desqualificat qualsevol intent com aquest.

Paraules clau:

Arnau de Vilanova, Martín de Ateca, *Antidotum*, Agustí d'Hipona, escatologia

Abstract

In the apocalyptic controversy between Arnau de Vilanova and professional theologians during the first years of the 14th century, the interpretation of Augustine of Hippo's texts on the possibility of knowing the last days in advance played a very special role. The aim of this paper is to analyse this controversy in the latest polemical work written by Arnau de Vilanova, the unpublished *Antidotum contra venenum effusum per fratrem Martinum de Ateca*. Both Arnau de Vilanova and his opponent Martín de Ateca found arguments that supported their own positions within the body of Augustinian works, but behind this controversy there is another question: with what authority did Arnau de Vilanova make his prediction? If his prediction is the result of a revelation, as proposed by the Catalan thinker, the Augustinian texts lean in favour of Master Arnau; if it is a simple speculation, as Martín de Ateca claimed, Augustine of Hippo had already disqualified any such attempts.

Keywords:

Arnau de Vilanova, Martín de Ateca, *Antidotum*, Augustine of Hippo, eschatology

1. Introduction

The work of Augustine of Hippo played a very special role in the eschatological controversy that confronted Arnau de Vilanova with both the professors of Paris and the Dominicans of Catalonia and Provence in the early 14th century.¹ Indeed, both the Catalan physician and thinker and his opponents appealed to the authority of the bishop of Hippo in support of their respective theses.²

The aim of this article is to reconstruct and analyse Arnau de Vilanova's interpretation of the eschatology of Augustine of Hippo as presented in *Antidotum contra venenum effusum per fratrem Martinum de Atheca, praedicatorem* (hereafter *Antidotum*).³ Unfortunately, sources for this eschatological controversy are scarce and a more general study of this subject is not feasible at the present time. Some twenty treatises, pamphlets and diverse texts written by Arnau de Vilanova during the course of this confrontation have been preserved, but only a few scattered texts by his opponents have reached us. In addition, while the theological and spiritual works of Arnau de Vilanova are currently in the process of being published, a number of his most interesting treatises on the subject at hand remain unpublished.⁴ We have, therefore, limited our study to the *Antidotum*, the last controversial work of a doctrinal nature written by Arnau de Vilanova, for two reasons. Firstly, because the *Antidotum* offers what we could consider the final, most mature and complex, definitive version of the Arnaldian interpretation of the eschatology of Augustine of Hippo. And, secondly,

1. For biographical details of Arnau de Vilanova, see: SANTI 1987; PERARNAU, SANTI 1993; MENSA I VALLS 1997; McVAUGH 2004; GIRALT, MENSA 2013-2018. Here can be found the basic bibliography of this Catalan physician and thinker. See also: MENSA 1994; MENSA, GIRALT 2003. For the eschatological controversy, see: GERWING 1996; MENSA I VALLS 1998; POTESTÀ 2007.

2. Some years ago, Josep Perarnau (1988-1989: 73) underlined the importance of this issue: "Arnau's interpretation of Augustin's eschatology would be a worthwhile subject of study".

3. ARNALDUS DE VILLANOVA, *Antidotum*, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 237c-254c. For Augustine's eschatology and, concretely, on foreknowledge of the final days, see: EGER 1933; BOUHOT 1989; DOODY *et al.* 2014.

4. This edition of *Arnaldi de Villanova Opera Theologica Omnia* is project 9/5 of the Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi of the Union Académique Internationale. The Institut d'Estudis Catalans and the Ateu Universitari Sant Pacià are the publishing institutions. The following works have been published since 2004: *Introduction in librum De semine scripturarum*, *Allocutio super significatione nominis tetragrammaton*, *Alphabetum catholicorum*, *Tractatus de prudentia catholicorum scholarium*, *Tractatus de tempore adventus Antichristi i Interpretatio de visionibus in somniis dominorum Iacobi secundi, regis Aragonum, et Friderici tertii, regis Siciliae, eius fratris*. Previously, the pseudo-arnauian *Expositio super Apocalypsi* (1971) and *Tractatus octo in graecum sermonem versi* (2002).

for a reason that is more practical in nature. As a result of the preparatory work for a critical edition of the *Antidotum* for the *Arnaldi de Villanova Opera Theologica Omnia*, we have established the definitive text and believe that it is worthwhile making the hitherto unpublished excerpts relating to Augustine of Hippo public and to study them for the first time.⁵

Following this introduction, we will devote a section (2. *The “Antidotum”*) to presenting and contextualising the *Antidotum*. In the following section (3. *Martín de Ateca appeals to the authority of Augustine of Hippo*), we will attempt to reconstruct, as far as possible, Martín de Ateca’s arguments against Arnau’s theses extracted from his work on Augustine of Hippo. Since Martín de Ateca’s original text has been lost, our only source will be Arnau’s *Antidotum*. The central section of the paper (4. *Arnau de Vilanova interprets Augustine of Hippo*) is devoted, logically, to the Catalan physician and thinker. Section 5 (*Conclusions*), brings together our main conclusions and offers a critical evaluation of Arnau’s interpretation of the eschatology of Augustine.

2. The *Antidotum*

The *Antidotum* is the last doctrinal work relating to the eschatological controversy that confronted Arnau de Vilanova with the professors of Paris and Dominican theologians between 1300 and 1305 and, for this reason, on the one hand, offers a wealth of information regarding various aspects of the controversy, including historical news and characters, while, on the other hand, it provides us with the most developed, detailed and lengthy version of Arnau’s arguments. Furthermore, from a formal point of view, the *Antidotum* is a highly original work, unique in its genre, because it is presented as a theological “antidote” and brings us closer to the quintessence of Arnau’s thought: the use of typically medical concepts in the theological realm (cf. ZIEGLER 1998: 82, 93-95).

Although neither of the two surviving copies of the *Antidotum* is dated,⁶ we can be reasonably sure of when it was written: between 18 July 1304 (the date on which,

5. To make these previously unpublished texts on Augustine of Hippo available to scholars, we will cite them extensively in the course of this paper. It is worth mentioning that, in addition to the above-cited texts on prophetic-apocalyptic themes, there are two more references in the *Antidotum* to Saint Augustine, on what Master Arnau de Vilanova calls the rule of Catholic exposition: *Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 246a and f. 247c.

6. The two extant copies are: Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 237c-254c; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canon. Misc. 370, f. 193r-212v. We will use the first codex (BAV, Vat. lat. 3824), since it is a compendium of the spiritual works by Arnau de Vilanova, written in Latin until the summer of 1305. It was made under the supervision of Arnau de Vilanova himself, who offered it to Clement V.

in Perugia, Arnau de Vilanova made a list of his works, among which the *Antidotum* is not included) and 24 August 1305, probably after 5 June of the latter year.⁷

The *Antidotum* is addressed to Guillem de Vilanova, the Bishop of Majorca.⁸ At the beginning of the work (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 237c-238b), Arnau reminds Guillem de Vilanova of the difficulties they had in Perugia to obtain the treatise that Martín de Ateca had written against his “denunciations”.⁹ Indeed, they failed to do so. However, once they had returned to Catalonia, Arnau de Vilanova managed to obtain a copy of the treatise: an accomplice of his took advantage of the fact that one of the “custodians” of the work had fallen asleep to remove it and pass it on to Arnau. Once he had read the treatise, Arnau de Vilanova was able to see that the objections raised by the Aragonese friar had already been answered in previous works. As a result, Arnau de Vilanova decided not to address those objections systematically, from a global perspective, but rather to limit himself to displaying the passages in the treatise by Martín de Ateca “in quibus a rectitudine deuiavit” (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 238a), thereby showing their incoherence and contradictions, demonstrating, in other words, that the whole work was an example of “delirium”.

Throughout the *Antidotum*, Arnau de Vilanova never mentions, at least directly, the title of Martín de Ateca’s treatise.¹⁰ One can deduce that the treatise was made up of a prologue and a dozen chapters. In the first chapter, Martín de Ateca established the foundations of his work: “omnes homines indifferenter ignorauerunt et etiam ignorabunt finalia tempora, non solum quantum ad diem et horam iudicii, sed etiam [...] penitus quantum ad omnem temporis acceptionem” (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 238c-d). And this thesis is based on two proofs: a) “Dominus dixerit de illis: “Nemo scit, neque angeli in celo” [Mk. 13,32]” (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat.

7. The works in the BAV codex, Vat. lat. 3824, are ordered chronologically. The *Antidotum* was included in the list of works written by Arnau de Vilanova in the *Praesentatio facta Burdegaliae* on 24 August 1305 and in the Vat. lat. 3824 it was placed immediately before the work and after *Dancia Jacobi II cum commento Arnaldi de Villanova* (at the end of which we can read the date 5 June 1305).

8. Guillem de Vilanova was the Bishop of Majorca from 14 March 1305 to 1318. Cf. EUBEL 1913: 323.

9. For more on Martín de Ateca, see: KAEPELLI 1980: 106-107; MENSA I VALLS 1998: 221-222; AYALA 2001: 160-161; MENSA I VALLS 2014.

10. The works of Martín de Ateca have not been preserved but are mentioned in the inventories in the Papal library from 1311 to 1339 in Perugia. EHRLE 1890: 33, núm. 68 (*recensio Perusina anni 1311*): “quidam libellus parvus super responsionibus contra ponentes certum tempus finis mundi editus a fratre Martíno de Ateca ordinis predicatorum illustris regis Aragonum confessore”; PELZE 1947: 61, num. 360 (*recensio Assisiensis 1339*): “Item quemdam tract. contra ponentes certum tempus finis mundi et adventus antechristi editum a fr. Martíno de Ateca ord. pred.”. These descriptions seem to allude more to the contents than to the title of these works.

lat. 3824, f. 239b-c); and b) According to Augustine of Hippo (AUGUSTINUS 1975: 107, lines 77-80), “etas ultima humani generis, que incipit a Domini aduentu usque in fine seculi, quibus generationibus computetur, incertum est” (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 239d). In line with this, as Thomas Aquinas had argued,¹¹ everyone should be prepared at all times to go to meet the Lord. The remaining chapters are constructed on this foundation. The second chapter is devoted to arguing against Arnau’s interpretation of Acts 1,7 and the possibility of having foreknowledge of the final days. The third chapter focuses on Arnau’s interpretation of the prophecy of Daniel and concretely on Daniel 12,11. The fourth chapter also criticises Arnau’s interpretation of Daniel (12,11), arguing that, if God had revealed the final days in this prophecy, the Apostles (to whom Jesus Christ had revealed scriptural truth) would have known of it. The fifth chapter is devoted to the eschatological sermon in chapter 24 of Matthews’s gospel. The sixth and seventh chapters address a supposed eschatological calculation by Augustine of Hippo and the years that had passed from Adam to Christ. The eighth chapter dealt with the prophecy of the Erythraean Sibyl. The ninth chapter returns to Arnau’s interpretation of Acts 1,7. The tenth chapter argues for the negative implications of having foreknowledge of the final days. The eleventh chapter outlines the incompatibility of Arnau’s calculation with those of astrologers. Finally, the twelfth chapter deals with the “weeks” in the prophecy of Daniel. The *Antidotum* follows the same order and therefore shares the same structure.

3. Martín de Ateca appeals to the authority of Augustine of Hippo

Martín de Ateca professed in the Dominican Convent in Catalayud. He was also confessor to King James II. He seems (DE LATASSA 1796: 268) to have been the author of the now-lost *Summa iuris*. He had also been a personal friend of Arnau de Vilanova, and even his confessor and *dux spiritualis*. He died in 1306. We saw in the previous section that Martín de Ateca devoted a number of chapters in his work (the first, sixth and seventh) to Augustine of Hippo.

11. Martín de Ateca and other Dominicans involved in confronting Arnau de Vilanova (Bernat de Puigcercós and Joan Vigorós) were followers of Thomas Aquinas. In this sense, we might recall the works that Arnau de Vilanova wrote a year earlier: *Gladius iugulans thomatistas*. In various works, Thomas Aquinas is concerned with the final days and not of the possibility of knowing about them in advance: *Quaestiones disputatae*, 2, *De potentia*, q. 5, a. 6 (THOMAS AQUINAS 1949: 146); *Commentum in quartum librum Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi*, IV, d. 43, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 2, s. c. 1; and IV, d. 43, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 2, co. (THOMAS AQUINAS 1958: 1063a and 1064b); *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 12, a. 8; and q. 8, a. 12 (THOMAS AQUINAS 1970b: 257-260 and 393-394); *Liber contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem*, c. 24 (THOMAS AQUINAS 1970a: 159-162).

Arguments against the possibility and desirability of foreknowledge of the end times

Martín de Ateca uses a number of arguments taken from the works of Augustine of Hippo to counter Arnau's prophetic-apocalyptic theses. What are those arguments?

a) Martín de Ateca appeals to the authority of Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XVIII, c. 53, in support of the hypothesis according to which it is neither possible nor desirable to have foreknowledge of the end times.¹² In effect, after stating that Jesus Christ would defeat the antichrist with his presence,¹³ Augustine of Hippo asks himself when that would happen. The answer is: "Importune omnino. Si enim hoc nobis nosse prodesset, a quo melius quam ab ipso Deo magistro interrogantibus discipulis diceretur?" (AUGUSTINUS 1955: 651, lines 5-7). Immediately after that, he points out that when the disciples had asked about the end days (not only for the day and time) (Act 1,6), Jesus replied "non es vestrum scire tempora" (Acts 1,7). Accordingly, the father of the church concluded "frustra igitur annos, qui remanent huic saeculo, computare ac definire conamur" (AUGUSTINUS 1955: 652, lines 12-13).

Those who, until now, had made calculations regarding the final days had always been mistaken because "coniecturis quippe utuntur humanis, non ab eis aliquid certum de scripturae canonicae auctoritate profertur" (AUGUSTINUS 1955: 652, lines 19-20). Therefore, "omnium uero de hac re calculantium digitos resoluit et quiescere iubet ille, qui dicit: "Non est uestrum scire tempora, quae Pater posuit in sua potestate" [Acts 1:7]" (AUGUSTINUS 1955: 652, lines 21-23). It is, therefore, undesirable, for people to have knowledge of that time and it will remain unknown since Jesus Christ himself denied us this knowledge.

b) The *Epistulae CXCVII*¹⁴ and *CXCIX*,¹⁵ *Ad Hesychium*, provide further rebuttals to Martín de Ateca. In the *Epistula CXCVII*, Augustine of Hippo responds to a number of questions put to him by Bishop Hesychius regarding the end of the world. In his reply, Augustine explained that the weeks that the prophet Daniel was referring to were in the past rather than in the future and could not therefore be used to calculate the time of the final days. Immediately after that, Augustine states:

12. Cf. *Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 240c-d, 242a.

13. The fact that Jesus Christ, with his very presence, puts an end to the persecution of the Antichrist meant for Martín de Ateca that between both events, that is, between the struggle of the Antichrist and the second coming of Jesus Christ, there would be no solution of continuity and that knowledge of one event implied, in fact, knowledge of the other. Cf. *Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 241c.

14. Cf. *Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 240d, f. 242d.

15. Cf. *Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 249a-b, f. 250c.

“nam de salvatoris adventu, qui expectatur in fine, tempora dinumerare non audeo nec aliquem prophetam de hac re numerum annorum existimo praefinisse sed illud potius praeualere, quod ipse dominus ait: «Nemo potest cognoscere tempora, quae pater posuit in sua potestate [Act 1,7]” (AUGUSTINUS 1911: 31-32).

And the father of the church made yet another observation regarding the “tempora”. Arguing against those who identified the “tempora” with the “day and time” of Mk. 13,32 (“De die autem illa et hora nemo scit”) and interpreting them in a completely literal sense, Augustine points out that, in Acts 1,6, the apostles asked about the “end times” in general. Therefore, in his replies, Jesus Christ (Acts 1,7) did not only refuse knowledge of the day and time, but also in any unit of time.¹⁶

In the *Epistula CXCIX*, which is much more extensive than the previous work, Augustine of Hippo provides additional information on this last aspect. Martín de Ateca seems to have quoted two passages from this epistle. In the first, the Father of the Church responds to Hesychius’ conviction that God revealed to the prophets the end times (not the day and the hour, but “the times”) (AUGUSTINUS 1911: 235-236 and 248). In his response, Augustine states that, “Quanto maiore admiratione plenum est, si ea, quae prophetae hominibus sunt locuti, haec apostoli uel scire sunt prohibiti uel docere!” (AUGUSTINUS 1911: 248). In the second text quoted by Martín de Ateca, Augustine of Hippo wonders if one can know, not the day and time, but the month or year of the Lord’s second coming. And he goes on to remark that, “Si autem neque hoc te comprehendisse praesumis, hoc sentis, quod ego” (AUGUSTINUS 1911: 257).

c) According to Martín de Ateca, in the works mentioned in the previous points (*De civitate Dei* and *Epistulae CIXCVII* and *CXCIX*), Augustine of Hippo discards the possibility that the last days can be known through revelation.¹⁷

d) According to Martín de Ateca, Augustine also denies that the last days can be known in *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* (question 58, no. 2).¹⁸ Indeed, the world was supposed to last six ages, said the bishop of Hippo, but then added that “aetas igitur ultima humani generis, quae incipit a domini aduentu usque ad

16. In the *Epistula CXCVII*, Augustine of Hippo (1911: 232-233) notes that the “tempora” and “momenta” of the Latin version of Acts 1.7, are in the Greek original, the plural accusatives χρόνους and καιρούς. Augustine states that the “right time” will not come until the gospel has been preached throughout the earth. In the work of Arnau de Vilanova, and in much of the Latin tradition, this nuance is lost and the “tempora” are equivalent to the major time units and the “momenta” to the minor units.

17. Cf. *Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 252c.

18. Cf. *Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 239d, f. 249c.

finem saeculi, quibus generationibus computetur incertum est” (AUGUSTINUS 1975: 107, lines 77-80).

e) Conclusion: there is therefore no doubt that, according to Saint Augustine (and Christ), the end times will remain unknown to the whole of humanity (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 242c-d).

Against the supposed calculation by Augustine of Hippo

In *De tempore adventus Antichristi* (ARNALDUS DE VILLANOVA 2014: 276, lines 1.646-1.648), Arnau states that the “assertio Augustini vicessimo *De civitate Dei*” agrees with his calculation. In *De mysterio cymbalorum* (PERARNAU 1988-1989: 81, lines 494-498), he specified Augustine’s “assertio” as follows:

Nam Augustinus, innitens auctoritatibus sacre Scripture, XX, *De civitate Dei*, aperte sub certo numero annorum huius seculi consummationem prenuntiat, dicens quod omne opus creationis complebitur seu finietur in sexto millenario durationis mundi.

Martín de Ateca reacts against the calculation that Arnau de Vilanova attributes to Augustine.¹⁹ The Aragonese friar argues that Augustine of Hippo only mentioned that calculation as an example of an opinion, of a precedent, but that it was not his own calculation nor did he assume it to be true. In the text mentioned (*De civitate Dei*, book 20, ch. 7), after stating that the 1,000 years of the Apocalypse (20,1-2) can be understood in two ways, Augustine establishes that, according to the second interpretation, “in ultimis annis mille ista res agitur, id est, sexto annorum miliario tamquam sexto die, cuius nunc spatia posteriora uoluuntur, secuturo deinde sabato, quod non habet uesperam” (AUGUSTINUS 1955: 710, lines 57-60). Martín de Ateca emphasizes that this interpretation, for Augustine, is a simple possibility. Arnau de Vilanova, therefore, is wrong to draw the conclusion that the African church father had predicted that the world would end in the sixth millennium. In addition, Martín de Ateca adds, according to Augustine of Hippo (*De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*, quaestio 58, num. 2), that the last age, this is, the senectitude of both the word and in personal terms “posse tam longam esse quam omnes priores aetates” (AUGUSTINUS 1975: 107, lines 76-77).²⁰

19. Cf. *Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 249b-c, f. 250c-d i f. 251a-b.

20. This idea can also be found in *De vera religione*, XXVI-XXVII, 48-50 (AUGUSTINUS 1962: 217-220). For the six ages of the world and the Fathers of the Church, especially Saint Augustine, see: LUNEAU 1964. Cf. and ROTH 1986.

Augustine of Hippo and the Erythraean Sibyl

In *De tempore adventus Antichristi* and *De mysterio cymbalorum*, Arnau had stated that Saint Augustine accepted the Sibyl's calculation.²¹ Specifically, in the former work, he had said: "A cuius [that is, regarding the Erythraean Sibyl] dictis, Augustinus et ceteri sacri doctores acceperunt particulariter plenitudinem signorum iudicii" (ARNALDUS DE VILLANOVA 2014: 222, lines 833-834). In the latter work, he stated that "cuius carmina [those of the Sibyl] in toto approbat Augustinus» (PERARNAU 1988-1989: 94, lines 781-782).

Martín de Ateca points out to Arnau de Vilanova that Augustine (*De civitate Dei*, XVIII, chpt. 23) does not lend complete support to all of the calculations of the Sibyl and that the prophecy quoted by Arnau de Vilanova could contain many apocryphal elements. Indeed, in the work of Augustine the prophecies of the Sibyl only refer to the first coming of Jesus Christ.

4. Arnau de Vilanova interprets Augustine of Hippo

God will reveal even the day and time at the right moment

Arnau de Vilanova's entire interpretation of Augustine of Hippo's eschatology rests, ultimately, on a fragment of the *De Trinitate*, I, XII (AUGUSTINUS 1968: 61-62, lines 1-13). Saint Augustine comments on the meaning of the words of Mark 13,32 ("De die et hora nemo scit neque angeli in caelo neque Filius nisi Pater") regarding the end times: the son does not have knowledge of the 'day and the hour' in the sense that, he observes, God did not wish them to be known at that moment. But the fact that he had not made them known at that moment does not mean that they will not be revealed in the future. Indeed, they will definitely be made known. That is why, in the Gospels, Jesus Christ states that "omnia quaecumque audivi a Patre meo, nota feci vobis" (Jn. 15,15). The verb tenses used are past, as if the action had already happened since, even if it is a future action, it will certainly be carried out. Indeed, Jesus revealed to his apostles that "multa habeo vobis dicere, sed non potestis portare modo" (Jn. 16,12). Among the things that Jesus Christ must explain to them, says Augustine of Hippo, is the final day

21. Cf. *Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 251c. According to the testimony of Augustine of Hippo, Isidore of Seville, and other late-ancient authors, the Erythraean Sibyl was a native of Babylon and a contemporary of the Trojan War and had foretold the coming of Jesus Christ and the most important events in the history of mankind. The Latin text that reached Arnau (there are actually two versions, a longer and a shorter one), is not a version, but an original text, written between 1240 and 1250 by a member of the pontifical curia who was close to Cardinal Juan de Toledo (JOSTMANN 2006: 344-368). For this prophecy and its use in the work of Arnau de Vilanova, see MENSA 2011: 163-168.

and hour (Mk. 13,32). Therefore, the time, the day and the hour, “dicturus erat discipulis tempore opportuno”, concludes St. Augustine. From the very beginning, Arnau de Vilanova makes it very clear that Augustine “expresse dicit quod “tempora, que Pater posuerat in sua potestate”, erat “temporibus oportunitis reuelaturus electis”, etiam, ut exprimit, “de die et hora” (Antidotum, BAV, Vat. Lat. 3824, f. 238d). And, shortly afterwards, he repeats that the Bishop of Hippo “dixit quod diem et horam iudicii erant per reuelationem cognituri electi” (Antidotum, BAV, Vat. Lat. 3824, f. 239c-d). This fragment of Augustine of Hippo is fundamental to Arnau de Vilanova because it makes sense of all the other prophetic-eschatological statements of Augustine.²²

Knowledge of the end times cannot be achieved by human effort

When Martín de Ateca cites a text by Augustine of Hippo in order to refute Arnau’s thesis according to which the final times can be known, Arnau always answers in the same way: Saint Augustine denies that the end times can be known through natural effort, however, as we have seen in the preceding section, God will reveal them, even specifying the day and the hour, when it is time.

a) Arnau de Vilanova disagrees completely with Martín de Ateca’s interpretation of the aforementioned fragment from *De civitate Dei*, XVIII, c. 53 (*supra*, section a). According to Arnau, in this passage, Augustine of Hippo denies that the end times can be known through conjecture or human reasoning, but does not discard the idea that knowledge can be obtained by divine revelation:

Simili modo patet bubulcaritas in eo quod allegat ex Augustino, ·XVIII^o· *De ciuitate Dei*. Nam, sicut ex uerbis Augustini patet, nichil facit ad propositum. Cum enim dicit quod Dominus «resoluit digitos omnium calculantium» tempus durationis mundi, per hoc quod dicit: «Non est uestrum», uerum quidem est, quia Dominus nichil aliud uult dicere nisi quod humana cognitione non possunt hoc facere. Et sic etiam exprimit Augustinus, ibi cum dicit: «Coniecturis humanis utuntur» (AUGUSTINUS 1955: 652, lín. 19), etc., quod nichil facit ad propositum, quoniam per me non asseritur quod finalia tempora possint prenosci per coniecturas uel rationes humanas, sed per reuelationem diuinam (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 240c-d).

Moreover, Augustine of Hippo does not state at all that it is undesirable to know the end times, but that it was to the people of his time for the simple reason that they did not have to experience persecution by the Antichrist:

22. In addition to the quoted fragments, in the *Antidotum* we can find four references to this Augustinian text (f. 239d, 242a, 249b, 252c).

Et qui oppositum diceret aut predicaret, insanus esset procul dubio uel hereticus. Vnde, cum iste allegat pro se Augustinum, bubulcum aut nequam se monstrat, quia Augustinus non dixit quod nullis prodesset scire tempus persecutionis Antichristi, sed quod scire non proderat filiis sui temporis. Nam expresse dixit: «Si hoc nobis scire prodesset» (AUGUSTINUS 1955: 652, line 5), etc. Nec dixit absolute quod non prodesset, quia contrarius fuisset sibi in *De Trinitate*, ut patuit supra (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 242a).

Arnau also refutes Martín de Ateca's thesis that the times of the Antichrist and those of the second coming of Christ are, in fact, the same. This thesis of the Aragonese friar was based on the observation of St. Augustine that Christ would put an end to the persecution of the Antichrist with his presence. Indeed, nowhere, observes Arnau de Vilanova, is it said that this "presence" of Jesus Christ is his second coming to judge the living and the dead, nor that it is a personal "presence":

Nam Augustinus, quando dixit quod «ipse Ihesus extinguet sua presentia persecutionem Antichristi» (AUGUSTINUS 1955: 652, lines 1-2), nec expressit quod illa presentia esset aduentus eius ad iudicium, nec est necessarium quod per illam presentiam intelligatur personalis aduentus eius (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 241c).

b) Regarding the fragments from the *Epistulae ad Hesychium* quoted by Martín de Ateca, Arnau de Vilanova's response follows the above scheme. First of all, the Catalan thinker points to certain statements that Martín de Ateca attributes to the Bishop of Hippo. St. Augustine, in the text alluded to by Martín of Ateca, remarks de Vilanova, does not state that he "knows", but simply that he "adjudges" that no previous prophet or of his time has calculated the end of time. But Augustine of Hippo does not talk about the future:

Nec obstat, cum dicit Augustinus: «Nec aliquem prophetam de hac re numerum annorum estimo prefinisse» (AUGUSTINUS 1911: 31), tum quia non dicit assertiue, sed dubitatiue. Non enim dixit: «Scio», sed: «Estimo», tum quia dixit: «Prefinisse», quia nec ante suum tempus nec etiam suo tempore determinauit aliquis prophetarum sub certo numero annorum finalia tempora, sic scilicet quod eidem Augustino innotuisset (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 240d).

Secondly, adds Arnau, it is untrue that Augustine of Hippo (or Jesus Christ himself) stated that, as far as the end of the world is concerned, God has reserved knowledge not only of the day and the hour, but in general of any time, as the text of the *De trinitate* makes clear:

Quarto cecidit quando conatur probare per uerba Christi et Augustini quod Pater non solvm retinuerat sue potestati noticiam diei et hore iudicii, sed etiam totum

tempus. Nam etsi hoc ostensum sit in aliis operibus esse falsum, nichilominus est impertinens ad propositum, quia nec Christus nec Augustinus exprimunt quod noticia omnium finalium temporum fuisset a Patre sic retenta, quod nunquam esset eam communicaturus aliquibus, sed pro illo tunc, in quo loquebantur, prout supra est declaratum (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 242d).

Against the two claims extracted by Martín de Ateca from *Epistle CXCIX*, Arnau de Vilanova argues, first, that Augustine of Hippo does not refer to what the apostles knew or did not know, but wished to make it clear that Jesus Christ only forbade knowledge of the end times arrived at through human conjecture:

Sexto delirauit in allegando Augustinus, *Prima [sic! Secunda] Epistola ad Esicium*, quando dicit: «Magna admiratione plenum est, si ea, que prophete hominibus sunt locuti, hoc apostoli uel scire sunt prohibiti uel docere, quibus dicitur: “Non est uestrum nosse tempora”, etc.» (AUGUSTINUS 1911: 248). Nam Augustinus per hec uerba non asserit quod apostoli cognouerint uel ignorauerint finalia tempora, sed quod per illa uerba: «Non est uestrum nosse», etc., nullus debet intelligere Dominum uoluisse significare quod prohibitum esset illis absolute scire uel docere tempora supradicta, quia, ut supra fuit expositum, non significabat per illa uerba nisi quod eis prohibitum erat scire per coniecturas humanas. Per reuelationem autem, ut ipse Augustinus exprimit in libro *De Trinitate*, scituri erant. Hic igitur aduersarius aperte cognoscitur delirasse, cum allegauerit auctoritatem, que directe contrariatur suo proposito et conuenit meo (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 249a-b).

Also, regarding the second claim, according to Arnau de Vilanova, Augustine of Hippo actually states that neither he nor anyone else can arrive at knowledge through human conjecture:

Tercio delirauit replicando auctoritates Augustini, *Ad Esicium*, que nichil faciunt ad propositum, ut supra fuit ostensum, nec etiam illa, quam hic adiungit, scilicet: «Si non presumis te scire», etc. (AUGUSTINUS 1911: 257). Nam per illa uerba non exprimit aliquid nisi quod nec ipse nec alius scire possunt finem mundi per coniecturam humanam (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 250c).

c) Rebutting Martín de Ateca’s thesis that Augustine of Hippo (in *De ciuitate Dei* and *Epistolae ad Hesychium*) denies that knowledge of the end times can be arrived at through revelation, Arnau de Vilanova simply observes that Martín de Ateca’s interpretation is refuted by the text of the *Trinitate*, I, XII (AUGUSTINUS 1968: 61-62, lines 1-13, quoted *supra*):

Quarto modo delirauit dicendo quod non fuit de intentione Augustini uel in uerbis suis, in ·XVIII^o· *De ciuitate Dei*, uel in *Epistola ad Esicium*, concedere quod finalia

tempora possint reuelatione prenosci, quia, ut supra fuit tactum supra deliramenta primi capituli, contrarium asserit Augustinus in *De Trinitate* ad literam et uerba eius in *Gladio* textualiter sunt iam scripta.²³ Et gramaticus, qui sciret construere uerba Augustini, que iste allegat, aperte falsitatem aut ruditatem cognosceret allegantis (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 252c).

d) Regarding the objection of Martín de Ateca based on Augustine's *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*, Arnau de Vilanova argues that it cannot be concluded from Augustine's words that it is impossible to calculate the time that will pass between the first coming of Jesus Christ and the end of the world. Saint Augustine simply states that the number of generations between the two events is unknown, and makes no mention of years, months, days, centenaries, or any other span of time. In addition, Augustine, in using the verbal form of the present, limits, always according to Master Arnau, his statements to his time:

Item patet similis bubulcaritas in eo quod ex Augustino consequenter introducit, qui ait in libro ·LXXXIII· *questionum* quod «etas ultima humani generis, que incipit a Domini aduentu usque in fine seculi, quibus generationibus computetur, incertum est» (AUGUSTINUS 1975: 107, lines 77-80). Ex qua auctoritate nichil iste potest ad suum propositum concludere. Quod patet primo per hoc, quia non dixit «quibus annis» uel «quibus mensibus uel diebus uel quibus centenariis annorum aut mensium uel dierum». Constat autem quod alia ratio est generationis et alia temporis. Secundo, quia non dixit: «Incertum erit», sed: «Incertum est». Vnde, qui ex presenti, quo in suo tempore loquebatur, uellet concludere futurum, caderet in inconueniens supradictum (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 239d).

e) Therefore, in conclusion, Arnau de Vilanova emphasizes that Augustine (and Christ) denies that knowledge of the end times can be arrived at by human conjecture, not by revelation:

Tercio cecidit in dicendo quod per Christum et Augustinum patet tempora finalia esse incognita hominibus absolute, quia, ut supra patuit, ipsi nusquam dixerunt esse ignota quantum ad reuelationem, sed quantum ad coniecturam humane rationis (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 242c-d).

And if one wanted to draw more general conclusion from the premise that “knowledge of the end times will not be arrived at by human conjecture”, and that “they will not be known in any way”, one would fall into logical and myriad other types of contradictions:

23. *Gladius iugulans thomatistas*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 189c-d.

Vnde, si iste aduersarius uel sui complices aut magistri uellent sic arguere: «Dominus uel Augustinus dicit quod finalia tempora non cognoscentur coniecturis humanis. Ergo nullo modo cognoscentur», indubitanter bubulci essent aut uerius belue, nisi per insaniam delirarent, sicut in isto est manifestum quando conatur elidere quod ex *Sacra Pagina* ei obstat (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 240d-241a).

A calculation by Augustine?

How does Arnau de Vilanova respond to Martín de Ateca's objections to the calculation he allegedly attributed to Augustine of Hippo? First of all, Arnau emphasizes that he has never argued that the world must end in the sixth millennium. Knowing that the calculation presented by Augustine of Hippo is problematic, he introduced it using the conditional:

Secundo, quia non erubuit mentiri dupliciter. Primo, cum dicit me asserere quod Augustinus determinat mundum esse finiendum in sexto millenario. Hoc enim nusquam in meis editionibus scribitur. Sed, sicut patet in secundo tractatu et in *Apologia* et in *Carpinatione* contra similem calumpniantem,²⁴ non introducitur dictum Augustini ad principalis probationem, scilicet ad determinandum finalia tempora, sed ad manifestandum falsitatem illorum qui, obuiando mihi, dicebant quod nunquam aliquis doctorum sacrorum docuerat uel expresserat modum determinandi per calculationem finalia tempora sub aliqua latitudine. Vnde etiam illud dictum Augustini introducitur in secundo tractatu sub conditione, dicendo: «Si uerum est quod dicit Augustinus»²⁵, etc. Secundo mentitus est in dicendo quod in illis tractatibus per me asseritur quod Augustino fuerit finis mundi reuelatus sub certo numero annorum, quia nulla mearum editionum continet hoc tacite uel expresse (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 250b-c).

Although Augustine reported the calculation “opinando”, Arnau de Vilanova argues, his mention retains all its value, because he had not cited it as a genuine,

24. The “second treaty” mentioned by Arnau de Vilanova is *De mysterio cymbalorum* (PERARNAU 1988-1989). The complete title of the *Apologia* is *Apologia de versutiis atque peruersitatibus pseudotheologorum et religiosorum* (PERARNAU 2001). Regarding the *Carpinatio poetrie theologi deviantis*, see the codex BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 193c-202a.

25. Arnaldus de Villanova (1988-1989: 88, lines 654-657): “Nam si verum est quod asserit Augustinus, scilicet quod finietur in sexto millenario et quod suo tempore uolvebantur posteriora spatia illius millennarii, probabili estimatione potest cognosci quod duratio huius seculi iam decurrit sub duobus ultimis centenariis”. However, in *De tempore aduentus Antichristi*, this «Nam si verum est quod asserit Augustinus» is simply “cum igitur Augustinus asserat»; and in the same *De mysterio cymbalorum* (1988-1989: 81, lines 494-498), a little later, the conditional also disappears.

authentic calculation, which was valid in himself, but as an example of an apocalyptic announcement similar to his, as a precedent:

Quarto delirauit dicendo quod Augustinus opinando et non asserendo, dicit quod scripsit super expositione mille annorum *Apocalipsis*, quia licet opinando dicat, nichilominus est certum quod secundum opinionem unam ponebat mundum esse finiendum in sexto millenario, et hoc sufficit ad ostendendum quod aliquis sacrorum doctorum attemptauerit iuxta *Scripture* auctoritates determinare finem mundi sub aliquo numero annorum. Quod per istum aduersarium et complices eius fuerat precise negatum (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 250c-d).

Moreover, earlier in the *Apologia*, Arnau de Vilanova had already acknowledged (PERARNAU 2001: 87-88, lines 435-447) that Saint Augustine's calculation is not true, since a maximum of only 4,052 years had passed from the beginning of the world to Christ, and therefore the bishop of Hippo did not live in the sixth millennium or age of the world:

Secundo delirauit nequiter in reprobando calculationem fundatam in uerbis Augustini, tanquam si ego per illam intendissem probare principale intentum. Nam, sicut in *Apologia* est declaratum, paragrafo: «Tercium uero adiunctum», positio Augustini, scilicet, quod suo tempore currebat sextum millenarium mundi, non est uera, nec per me introducitur ad probandum principale, sed solum ad exemplum ostendendi quod catholice potest calculatio inchoata a certo initio deducere calculantes ad noticiam finalium temporum sub aliqua latitudine (*Apologia*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 251a-b)

Augustine of Hippo and the Erythraean Sibyl

Arnau de Vilanova states that, according to Augustine of Hippo, the Erythraean Sibyl was part of the 'City of God' and was, for him, most definitely a true prophetess:

Secundo delirauit dicendo quod Augustinus in toto non approbat carmina *Erithee* et quod multa potest continere apocrifa. Quibus uerbis ostenditur uel fuisse bubulcus uel efrons mentitor. Quoniam Augustinus aperte dicit quod est de numero eorum, qui pertinent ad ciuitatem Dei, et sciebat quod ea, que denunciauerat, procedebant a prophetali reuelatione et non ab ystoriali speculatione. Que duo testari nichil aliud est nisi dicta eius totaliter approbare (*Antidotum*, BAV, Vat. lat. 3824, f. 251c).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Countering the apocalyptic calculation of Arnau de Vilanova based on biblical texts of the prophet Daniel (Dan. 12,11; Ezek. 4,6) and the New Testament (Mk. 13,32),

the professors of Paris and the Dominicans looked to the works of Augustine, and especially the two letters addressed to Hesychius (*Epistulae CXCVII* and *CXCIX*) and in *De civitate Dei*, for arguments that disqualify any attempt to calculate, even approximately, the end times. Augustine's words are unequivocal: Biblical texts offer no information regarding the end times and any calculation is condemned to failure.

In response, Arnau de Vilanova cites a text from *De trinitate* in which Augustine states unequivocally that Jesus Christ will reveal to his disciples even the day and hour of his second coming. However, this fragment allows Arnau de Vilanova to reinterpret the Augustinian texts cited by his opponents in the sense that Augustine of Hippo only denies the possibility of apocalyptic calculations based on human conjectures, but not those based on revelation. Secondly, Arnau de Vilanova adds that his own calculation, if it had been revealed to him by Jesus Christ himself, would not be affected by the words of Augustine as quoted by his adversaries.

In the case of the Erythraean Sibyl, modern criticism has shown that Martín de Ateca was right. The prophetic texts attributed to the Sibyl to which Arnau de Vilanova had access were not the same as those Augustine of Hippo had reported in *De civitate Dei*. As for the alleged calculation of Augustine of Hippo that Arnau de Vilanova had presented as coinciding with his own in his early controversial works, Arnau himself, in the *Antidotum*, leaves it in the background and accepts that it is lacking in a historical foundation. The controversy over this calculation stems from another debate: how many years passed from Adam to the first coming of Jesus Christ?

The interpretation of Augustinian texts on the possibility of possessing pre-knowledge of the end times raises another question: What is the prophetic-apocalyptic announcement made by Arnau de Vilanova? If this announcement was really revealed truth, as Arnau de Vilanova constantly claimed, the Catalan thinker was completely correct: Augustine of Hippo had already anticipated this possibility. If Arnau's announcement was simply the product of his reveries, as his opponents thought, this calculation would have been affected by St. Augustine's words disqualifying any calculation based on human conjecture. It is easy now, more than six centuries after the supposed end of the world, to agree with Arnau de Vilanova's opponents. However, set in its historical moment, the apocalyptic announcement of Arnau de Vilanova raised the question that all prophetic messages usually face: with what authority is it uttered? It does not seem, however, that the underlying concept of revelation in the text of *De trinitate* is the same concept of revelation that Arnau de Vilanova proposes for an apocalyptic calculation.

As Arnau de Vilanova's controversial works are published, it will be possible to trace the evolution of his interpretation of the eschatology of Saint Augustine, an interpretation that the Catalan thinker was elaborating in the wake of the attacks and counterattacks by professional theologians. In the meantime, in these pages, we wanted to make known the point of arrival, the final photograph, of that interpretation.

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