'Ordinata imperandi atque oboediendi concordia'. Augustine's View on Disobedience in *De ciuitate Dei*

RESUMEN

'*Ordinata imperandi atque oboediendi concordia*'. La visión de san Agustín sobre la desobediencia en su *De ciuitate Dei*.

Tres de los cuatro contextos interpersonales que Agustín distingue para la paz y el orden en el capítulo 19.13 de su *De ciuitate Dei*, la familia, la ciudad y la relación con Dios, definen la paz sobre la base de la obediencia. El objetivo de este artículo es examinar cómo no sólo los amores de la *ciuitas Dei* y la *terrena ciuitas*, sino también su obediencia o desobediencia, distinguen entre ambas ciudades, y entre sus ciudadanos.

Se analizó una serie de pasajes del *De ciuitate Dei* identificados por palabras clave que hacen referencia al mandato o a la obediencia en cuanto a sus implicaciones, causas y consecuencias. Así, la obediencia se encontró como una característica para los contextos de paz indicados, pero también relacionada con la mayoría de los demás contextos. Tanto a nivel personal como en relación con la ciudad, existe un vínculo sorprendente entre la vida y la muerte, por un lado, y la obediencia y la desobediencia, por otro. La obediencia presupone una jerarquía y se debe más a quien está más arriba en la jerarquía. La obediencia más estricta se debe a una orden directa de Dios.

No sólo el amor sino también la obediencia distinguen a las dos ciudades de Agustín. El origen de la *ciuitas terrena* está en la desobediencia de Adán, exteriorizando el orgullo de éste. A diferencia de la situación natural de igualdad entre las personas, las instituciones humanas después de la Caída están marcadas por la jerarquía y requieren mando y obediencia. La *ciuitas Dei* sitúa la obediencia a Dios por encima de todo y se distingue así de la *ciuitas terrena*. Sin embargo, en vista de la paz terrenal y con respecto a los bienes terrenales compartidos con la *ciuitas terrena*, durante su estancia temporal en la tierra también está obligada a obedecer las leyes terrenales.

PALABRAS CLAVE : Obediencia, Paz, Ley, Civitas, Orden, Mandato.

ABSTRACT:

> Three of the four interpersonal contexts that Augustine distinguishes for peace and order in chapter 19.13 of his *De ciuitate Dei*, the family, the *ciuitas* and the relation with God, define peace on the basis of obedience. The objective of this article is to examine how not only the loves of the *ciuitas Dei* and the *terrena ciuitas*, but also their obedience or disobedience, distinguish between both cities, and between their citizens.

> A number of passages in *De ciuitate Dei* identified by keywords referring to command or obedience were analysed with regard to their implications, causes and consequences. Obedience was thus found as a feature for the indicated contexts of peace, but also related to most of the other contexts. Both on a personal level and in relation to the *ciuitas*, there is a striking link between life and death on the one hand, and obedience and disobedience, on the other. Obedience presupposes a hierarchy and is owed more to whoever is higher in the hierarchy. The strictest obedience is owed to a direct command from God.

> Not only love but also obedience distinguishes Augustine's two cities. The origin of the *ciuitas terrena* lies in Adam's disobedience, externalising Adam's pride. Unlike the natural situation of equality between people, human institutions after the Fall are marked with hierarchy and require command and obedience. The *ciuitas Dei* places obedience to God above everything else and thus distinguishes itself from the *ciuitas terrena*. In view of earthly peace and with regard to earthly goods shared with the *ciuitas terrena*, however, during its temporary stay on earth it is also bound to obedience to earthly laws.

> KEY WORDS: Obedience, Peace, Law, Civitas, Command, Order.

When Augustine defines order in *DCD* 19.13 as "the disposition of equal and unequal things in such a way as to give to each its proper place" [1], he prepares this definition by defining peace for different contexts. For three of these, the family, the relation to God and the city (*ciuitas*), Augustine's definition of peace is explicitly based on obedience. Focused on these three specific contexts, this article explores how Augustine approaches disobedience and obedience in *De ciuitate Dei*. The first section of the article discusses the terms that Augustine uses for obedience and how these appear in his oeuvre. The second part of the article discusses a number of

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1 See *DCD* 19.13; transl. R. W. DYSON (ed.), *Augustine. The City of God against the Pagans*, edited and translated by R. W. DYSON (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998 (repr. 2017), p. 938.

text passages in *De ciuitate Dei* where Augustine deals with disobedience and obedience, in particular for the three given contexts. Based on these, the third section presents a number of aspects of Augustine's thinking on disobedience and obedience.

OBEDIENCE IN AUGUSTINE'S OEUVRE

"Compared to love, he [Augustine] wrote little about obedience as an independent theme" [2]. It has also been noticed that he shows little specific attention to those biblical stories that deal with obedience [3]. Augustine did not dedicate a separate treatise to the concept of obedience, still less to disobedience, though the topic was tackled in a sermon of his, the *Sermo de oboedientia* [4]. This sermon was preached in Carthage, probably in the year 404 [5]. This sermon is a circumstantial treatment of the topic of obedience, rather than an elaborate presentation of Augustine's thought on the matter. It presents Augustine's direct reaction to the reception of his sermon from the day before, that had been interrupted by the

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2 SCHRAMA, M., «Oboedientia», in DODARO, R.; MAYER, C.; & MÜLLER, Chr. (ed.), *Augustinus-Lexikon,* Vol. 4, Fasc. 1-2, Schwabe, Basel, 2012, 268-274, c. 269. Schrama (c. 269, n. 3) adds that in *De ciuitate Dei* love is Augustine's "primary topic" [referring to *DCD* 14.28 as an example], and "obedience is presupposed".

3 SCHRAMA, «Oboedientia», c. 269. In *De ciuitate Dei*, in the context of obedience, Augustine pays attention to Gn 22 (The binding of Isaac, the obedience of Abraham), Gn 3 (The story of the Fall, the disobedience of Adam), and Phil 3:8 (Christ's obedience unto death).

4 *Sermo de oboedientia* (*Sermo* 359B / Mayence 5 / Dolbeau 2). The Latin text of the sermon with an introduction, is contained in F. DOLBEAU, *Nouveaux sermons de saint Augustin pour la conversion des païens et des donatistes (III)*, in *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 38 (1992) 50-79, and in F. DOLBEAU, *Augustin d'Hippone. Vingt-six sermons au peuple d'Afrique*. Retrouvés à Mayence, édités et commentés par François DOLBEAU (Collection des études augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 147), Paris, Institut d'études augustiniennes, 1996, p. 316-344.

5 Based on the data in the sermon, F. Dolbeau narrowed down the year of the sermon to 404, and placed the sermon in the *Basilica Restituta*, see DOLBEAU, F., *Nouveaux sermons (III)*, pp. 57 and 55.

people present during the church service [6]. Additionally, at different places in his oeuvre, Augustine does refer to obedience, and to its characteristics, but not in a systematic way. He also deals with disobedience, as the opposite of obedience, with its own specifics.

Keywords that Augustine uses to refer to obedience are *oboedire*, *obtemperare*, and sometimes *obsequi* [7], without there being a significant difference in use between these terms [8]. In general the use of *oboedire* dominates over the use of *obtemperare* and *obsequi* [9]. There is, however, a chronological evolution. In Augustine's earlier work, *oboedientia* is not or hardly used [10]; *obtemperantia* is used almost exclusively [11]. In later works *oboedientia* dominates over the alternative *obtemperantia*.

In *De ciuitate Dei*, *oboedire* is found in 32 chapters, *oboedientia* in 16, *obtemperare* in 16, and *obsequi* in 2 chapters; *inoboedientia* occurs in 16 chapters; *inoboedire* is found in 8, five times in the same chapter as *inoboedientia* [12].

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6 For the circumstances of the sermon of the day before, see BROWN, P., *Augustine of Hippo. A Biography*. A New Edition with an Epilogue, Berkeley – Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2000, pp. 446-7. An overview of the contents of the sermon is contained in *ibid*., pp. 455-7.

7 See VIRT, G., *Der Gehorsamsbegriff bei Augustinus*, in K. HÖRMANN *et al.* (ed.), *Verantwortung und Gehorsam. Aspekte der heutigen Autoritäts- und Gehorsamsproblematik*, Innsbruck, Tyrolia, 1978, 9-54, pp. 32-33.

8 See VIRT, *Der Gehorsamsbegriff*, p. 33: "Ein signifikanter Unterschied zwischen dem Gebrauch von 'obtemperare', 'oboedire' und 'obsequi' konnte nicht festgestellt werden, außer der bereits eingangs erwähnten Schwerpunktverlagerung von 'obtemperare' zu 'oboedire' ".

9 According to M. Schrama (*Oboedientia*, c. 268-269): "*Oboedire* is found more than 700 times in Augustine's complete oeuvre, *oboedientia* more than 310 times (its antonym *inoboedientia* ca. 200 times), *obtemperare* about 370 times, *obsequi* about 120 times".

10 According to G. Virt (*Der Gehorsamsbegriff*, p. 33), apart from two exceptions, *oboedientia* was only used after Augustine had become a priest in 391. M. Schrama (*Oboedientia*, c. 268) indicates that "the terms *oboedientia* and *oboedire* occur only sporadically in the pre-391 works; *fides, credere* and *auctoritatem sequi* are the more common terms".

11 See VIRT, *Der Gehorsamsbegriff*, p. 33.

12 Virt (*Der Gehorsamsbegriff*, p. 33) further gives an inventory of striking examples of this ratio in post-396 works, with their dates: occurrences of '*oboedire*'/'*obtemperare*': in *De doctrina Christiana* (after 396) 15/2; in *De natura boni* (401)

AUGUSTINE'S TREATMENT OF DISOBEDIENCE AND OBEDIENCE IN DE CIUITATE DEI

Obedience as a building block for peace and order

When defining peace and order in *DCD* 19.13, for three of the contexts that Augustine distinguishes there, [13] he uses the term obedience:

> peace between mortal man and God is an ordered obedience, in faith, under an eternal law […] . The peace of a household is an ordered concord, with respect to command and obedience, of those who dwell together; the peace of a city is an ordered concord, with respect to command and obedience, of the citizens [14].

Obedience and disobedience to God

Abraham's exemplary obedience

The ultimate example of obedience is Abraham when he is prepared to sacrifice his only son at God's command. This history from Gn 22 is treated by Augustine in *DCD* 16.32.

An impossible request

The command given to Abraham by God involves an impossible task. Abraham is to sacrifice the life of his son, but God does not

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28/4; in *In Joannis Evangelium* (after 406) 28/4; in *De ciuitate Dei* (after 411) 103/18; in *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* (412) 42/0; in *De dono perseverantiae* (428) 48/0, in *Contra secundam Juliani responsionem opus imperfectum* (428) 60/0.

13 These contexts are (1) the relationships within man, and, the relationship of the human person (2) to God, (3) to other people in general; (4) within the family; (5) within the (institutions of) society; (6) within the city of God. A last context is (7) the relationship between things or objects. Within the first context Augustine distinguishes four sub-relationships. The seventh context counts more as a container term, used as the prelude to the definition of order that follows in the next sentence.

14 *DCD* 19.13 (DYSON, *City*, p. 938).

want human sacrifice. In addition, God had predicted a great posterity for Abraham in Isaac, but when Isaac dies, this becomes impossible. Abraham must therefore, on God's command, do something impossible. Abraham acts purely on God's direct command, without further hesitations: "he [Abraham] knew that when the thunder of a divine command is heard, we must obey without question" [15]. This is not only a sign of obedience, but also a sign of faith. Abraham's faith is so strong that he believes he will have an offspring in Isaac, despite God's command to kill Isaac. The only way this can happen is that Isaac will not really die, that he will be resurrected. Augustine uses this explanation from the Letter to the Hebrews [Heb 11:17-19] to explain how Abraham could have still proceeded to kill his son [16].

Isaac compared with Christ

The story continues with the rescue of Isaac. At the moment that Abraham wants to kill his son, his hand is stopped, and he finds a ram in a bush which he can sacrifice in Isaac's place. Augustine sees many parallels with Christ here: the wood that Isaac had to carry up the mountain is a sign of Christ's cross. The bunch of branches of the bush is a symbol of the crown of thorns, and the animal entangled in it is a reference to Christ, the lamb of God, taking on death for the people. The fact that Isaac meets his death and yet does not die is a sign of the resurrection of Christ. Just like Jesus, God's son, fulfilled the will of his father by dying on the cross, so too Isaac was to undergo death by the will of his father Abraham [17].

Adam's disobedience to God

In *DCD* 14.15, Augustine deals with the Fall of Adam and its consequences. Adam had ignored a command of God and, against God's command, had eaten the forbidden fruit on advice of the woman who had been deceived by the serpent.

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15 See *DCD* 16.32 (Dyson, *City*, p. 745); "[Q]uamuis diuino intonante praecepto oboediendum sit, non disputandum" (CCL 48, 536).

16 See *DCD* 16.32.

17 See Augustine's treatment of Gn 22 in *DCD* 16.32.

Aggravating factors

When Augustine analyses Adam's act, he finds the following aggravating factors: first, God's command was very simple, only the prohibition not to eat from one tree in paradise, while the other trees remained available for consumption. This was an easy order, compared to what was asked from Abraham, who was commanded to sacrifice his son, which would have resulted in Isaac's death and deprive Abraham of the possibility of an offspring. Abraham obeyed, believing that God would still fulfil His promise of an offspring in Isaac and that, Isaac, even when sacrificed, would live. Abraham believed that Isaac would not die for good, but would be resurrected. A model for this obedience unto death is Christ [18]. Christ voluntarily entered his death on the cross, but because of this he was able to resurrect and redeem all people from death. Second, the punishment for disobeying God's command was terrible: the transgression of God's command not to eat from the tree was punishable by death. Adam knew this, yet he violated the prohibition. The worse the punishment, the worse the guilt in case of a transgression. Third, by disobeying, Adam violated the highest authority, namely God's. Moreover, Adam had been created by God and had received life from God, as well as all other good gifts. Disobedience is therefore the worse the higher the authority that is denied. Moreover, Adam's disobedience showed his ingratitude [19].

Cause of Adam's disobedience

Augustine finds the cause of Adam's disobedience in pride. This pride meant that Adam actually did not want to accept that God had the right to exercise authority over him and to forbid him to eat from that one tree. By eating from the tree anyway, Adam disrespected God's authority and made it clear that he did not want to accept that God occupied a higher place. Thus Adam wanted to become equal to

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18 See Phil 2:8.
19 See *DCD* 14.15.

God [20]. Pride, which at first was only internal, in Adam's heart, became external and visible with disobedience [21].

Consequences of Adam's disobedience

After eating the forbidden fruit, Adam suffered the punishment that God had promised: death became the inheritance of Adam and of all humankind that would descend from him. After Adam's transgression, all human beings have become mortal [22].

In yet another way, Adam's transgression was punished: disobedience resulted in disobedience, a pedagogy, as it were, to confront Adam with the consequences of his transgression [23]. After this disobedience to God, the human being was now marked with an internal disobedience: the body was no longer fully subject to the spirit; the actions of the sexual organs in particular, were no longer controlled by the will. Within the human mind, irrational emotions occurred, beyond control of reason [24]. Furthermore, humankind had become faced with limitations: in knowing, not being able to know everything that one needs to know, and in acting: not being able to do what one wants and doing what one does not want. Human sinfulness was thus also a consequence of this first sin: the impossibility of fully knowing what is good and the impossibility of fully acting in accordance with what is good.

Obedience in the household

The Roman household (*familia*) was a legal entity comprising the *pater familias* and all the people under his authority, namely, a wife, their children, the families of the sons, and the servants (slaves) who

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20 This can be compared with the fall of the devil: that happened because of the pride of the devil who also wanted to make himself equal to God. Sin began with the devil's pride (see *DCD* 11.15) and " 'pride is the beginning of sin' [Sir 10:13]" (*DCD* 14.13).

21 See *DCD* 14.13.

22 See *DCD* 13.3.

23 See *DCD* 14.15.

24 See *DCD* 13.3.

owe obedience to this *pater familias* [25]. Peace within this family is based on an ordered harmony of command and obedience [26]. In *DCD* 19.14 and *DCD* 19.16 Augustine presents his view on the authority structure within a Roman family, and commands. Four elements are dealt with: (1) the charity on which commanding (and obeying) in a good family should be based; (2) the role of the *pater familias* in relation to those over whom he has responsibility; (3) the duty to react in case of disobedience; (4) how the rules that apply within the household should be oriented towards what is valid within society.

In the familia,

> commands are given by those who care for the rest – by husband to wife, parents to children, and masters to servants. In the household of a just man, however, [...] even those who command are the servants of those whom they seem to command. For it is not out of any desire for mastery that they command; rather, they do so from a dutiful concern for others: not out of pride in ruling, but because they love mercy [27].

To command thus amounts to love and care, and is an expression of the biblical commandment to love one's neighbour [28]. A special place in the family is reserved for the lady of the house, subordinate to her husband [29]. She is not the head of the family, but she com-

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25 See FUHRER, Th., «Familia (familiaris, familiaritas)», in MAYER, C. (ed.), *Augustinus-Lexikon*, vol. 2, Schwabe, Basel, 1996-2002, 1236-1240, c. 1236.

26 See *DCD* 19.13: "pax domus ordinata imperandi atque oboediendi concordia cohabitantium" (CCL 48, 679) and *DCD* 19.14: "hinc itaque etiam pax domestica oritur, id est ordinata imperandi oboediendique concordia cohabitantium" (CCL 48, 681).

27 *DCD* 19.14 (DYSON, *City*, p. 942), Augustine explaining the meaning of 'imperandi oboediendique concordia cohabitantium': "Imperant enim, qui consulunt; sicut uir uxori, parentes filiis, domini seruis. Oboediunt autem quibus consulitur; sicut mulieres maritis, filii parentibus, serui dominis. Sed in domo iusti uiuentis ex fide et adhuc ab illa caelesti ciuitate peregrinantis etiam qui imperant seruiunt eis, quibus uidentur imperare" (CCL 48, 681-682).

28 See *DCD* 19.14.

29 In *DCD* 14.22, concerning the relation between husband and wife, Augustine refers to governing and being governed: the bond between husband and wife could be compared to the natural order within a person, because in both cases there is

mands children and slaves [30]. In a good situation, commanding is not an abuse of power, nor does it result from the lust for domination [31], but rather from the duty that the *pater familias* has for the members of the household.

Slavery existed in Rome, and slaves could also belong to a Roman household. With the example in mind of the patriarchs, who also kept slaves, Augustine describes the situation of the Roman family. Concerning the care that a *pater familias* has for children and slaves, Augustine distinguishes between temporal goods on earth and eternal goods, and between the earthly situation and that in heaven. Equitable authority within the family means equal treatment of children and slaves regarding eternal goods, and preferential treatment of children with respect to temporal goods [32]. In the situation on earth, this care for temporal goods is still needed, but in the heavenly situation, "the duty of commanding mortal men will no longer be necessary because there will no longer be a necessary duty of caring for the welfare of

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a relation of controlling and being controlled. In *DCD* 14.21-22, the question is actually whether people could physically have conceived children before the Fall. According to Augustine, human rule over the earth corresponds to the soul that reigns over the body, and 'to multiply' corresponds to the soul that multiplies its virtues (see *DCD* 14.21, Augustine commenting on Gn 1:28). 'Male and female' (Gn 1:27) indicates the physical difference between man and woman, and thus Gn 1:27-28 refers to the physical conception of children by the first couple of human beings. Yet Augustine also discusses a reverse obedience, of a man to his spouse, when in *DCD* 16.25 he describes how Abraham, in obedience to his wife Sara, begets a child with her slave Hagar. By doing what his wife wanted, Abraham could remain faithful to Sara.

30 See *DCD* 19.14.

31 See *DCD* 19.14.

32 See *DCD* 14.16: "though our righteous fathers had slaves, and ordered their domestic peace in such a way to distinguish between the condition of their children and that of their slaves in respect of the temporal goods of this life; yet, in the matter of the worship of God – in Whom we must place our hope of eternal goods – they showed equal concern for all members of the household" (DYSON, *City*, p. 944); "Quocirca etiamsi habuerunt seruos iusti patres nostri, sic administrabant domesticam pacem, ut secundum haec temporalia bona filiorum sortem a seruorum condicione distinguerent; ad Deum autem colendum, in quo aeterna bona speranda sunt, omnibus domus suae membris pari dilectione consulerent" (CCL 48, 683). With the word '*etiamsi*', Augustine seems in some way to take a distance from slavery.

those who now enjoy the happiness of immortality" [33]. Augustine thus sees commanding as a direct consequence of the responsibility to care for others in the earthly situation.

It is the duty and task of the *pater familias* to punish disobedience. The reasons for this are to restore the peace in the household that was broken by the disobedience [34], to curb the sinfulness of the disobedient child or slave, and to deter further disobedience. In the case of disobedience, the *pater familias* maintains his authority by punishment: reprimanding with words, beatings, or other (unspecified) forms of just punishment allowed by society [35]. The objective is to bring the trespasser back to the situation of the original harmony where everybody obeys the *pater familias*. This remedying action is motivated by the duty to prevent or punish sin. Punishment also sets an example to deter others [36].

The rules that the *pater familias* enforces within the *familia* must be in line with the laws of society. As a smaller part of the larger whole that is society, what happens within the household has an impact on society. Unrest that prevails within the household spills over into society. So, on the one hand, peace within the household should aim at

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33 *DCD* 14.16 (Dyson, *City*, p. 944); "ubi necessarium non sit officium imperandi mortalibus, quia necessarium non erit officium consulendi iam in illa inmortalitate felicibus" (CCL 48, 683).

34 This is the case, not only for a righteous *pater familias*, but also for a despotic *pater familias*, see *DCD* 19.12: the despotic *pater familias*: "is at pains to ensure peace in his own household, with his wife and children and whomever else he has there. Without doubt he takes delight in their obedience to his nod, and, if this does not happen, he is angry. He rebukes and punishes; and, if necessary, he employs harsh measures to impose upon his household a peace which, he believes, cannot exist unless all the other members of the same domestic society are subject to one head; and this head, in his own house, is himself" (*DCD* 19.12; Dyson, *City*, p. 934).

35 The requirement of justice and authorised punishment therefore imposes a restriction on what punishment is allowed. The criterion for this is what the city, the state or society tolerates: "quantum societas humana concedit" (*DCD* 19.16; CCL 48, 683).

36 See *DCD* 19.16: "Pertinet ergo ad innocentis officium, non solum nemini malum inferre, uerum etiam cohibere a peccato uel punire peccatum, ut aut ipse qui plectitur corrigatur experimento, aut alii terreantur exemplo" (CCL 48, 683). Disobedience is the family is thus also considered to be a sin.

peace within the society. On the other hand, the laws and regulations that apply within the household must be in conformity with those of the society [37]. In terms of punishment, only those punishments are permissible which society finds acceptable [38].

In these chapters, in a remarkable way, Augustine thus connected four of the seven contexts that he distinguishes for peace in *DCD* 19.13: the family, humanity (all people), society, and the city of God. To command within the family is an expression of loving care, and this is a putting into practice of the charity (love) that one is obliged to show towards all people. To command within the family is done with the right intention if it is done out of helpfulness and mercy as in the city of God. Rules within the family should be aligned with the laws of society, and punishments with what society allows.

Obedience in society (city, state, nation)

In *DCD* 19.13, Augustine defines peace within society in exactly the same words as peace within the family: an ordered unity of command and obedience [39]. A solid parallelism also seems logical in view of Augustine's statement that both the rules within the family and the sanctions for disobedience must correspond to the expectations of the society of which the family is a part. Whereas there is no natural relationship of authority between people (all people are in principle equal) [40], within a city or state, however, people do exercise authority

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37 See *DCD* 19.16: "domestic peace has reference to civic peace: that is, that the ordered concord of domestic rule and obedience has reference to the ordered concord of civic rule and obedience. Thus, it is fitting that the father of the family should draw his own precepts from the law of the city, and rule his household in such a way that it is brought into harmony with the city's peace" (Dyson, *City*, p. 945).

38 See *DCD* 19.16, and the discussion above on allowed punishments.

39 See *DCD* 19.13: "The peace of a household is an ordered concord, with respect to command and obedience, of those who dwell together" (Dyson, *City*, p. 938).

40 An indication for this may also be that in 19.13, for the context 'hominum' (all men), Augustine does not mention command and obedience (*pax hominum ordinata concordia* [*DCD* 19.13; CCL 48, 679]), whereas he does so for the other inter-personal relationships: the family and the city.

over others, and citizens owe obedience to the laws of their city. Augustine discusses military obedience as well: a soldier owes obedience to his commanding officer, and must carry out any order from him. The soldier's responsibility is only his obedience; the responsibility for the command itself rests entirely with the commander. Thus, the soldier is merely an instrument in the hands of his commanding officer. Augustine makes this clear by giving an example: a soldier who kills on his own initiative without being ordered to do so is guilty of murder, but a soldier who kills on orders is not a murderer at all: the killing in that case is the responsibility of the commander. More than that, a soldier is bound to obedience and must obey the commander's orders, including those to kill. Not to do so is insubordination and must be punished, in order to prevent the disobeying of an order from being followed [41]. In this context, Augustine presents the example of Torquatus, general of the Roman army [42]. In violation of his father's explicit military order not to engage with the enemy, Torquatus's son had allowed himself to be provoked into confrontation with the enemy, in which he had gained the victory. Torquatus, however, had his son put to death as punishment for the violation of the order, this to prevent that such an example of disobedience would be imitated [43]. The mitigating circumstance of his victory and the fact that the father had to condemn the son did not help. Torquatus felt obliged to have his son executed as punishment for disobedience, this to set an example [44]. The citizens of the *ciuitas Dei*, like the citizens of the *ciuitas terrena*, are also obliged to obedience to the laws of the society in which they reside. Augustine also gives the reason for this: for the

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41 See *DCD* 1.26.

42 See *DCD* 1.23 and *DCD* 5.18. These are few of the places in the first part of *De ciuitate Dei* where Augustine discusses disobedience.

43 See *DCD* 5.18: "There was another Roman notable called Torquatus, who slew his son. Hid did this, not because his son had fought against his country, but because, though he fought on his country's behalf, he did so in violation of the command which had been given by his father the general. Challenged by the foe, he fought with youthful ardour. Then, however, even though he conquered, he was put to death lest more harm should come from the example of authority disobeyed than good from the glorious deed of slaying an enemy" (Dyson, *City*, p. 219).

44 The situation is actually similar to Adam's case: death penalty for disobedience, and to Abraham's: a father who has to kill his son.

sake of temporal goods and the preservation of earthly peace among those who live together in this world [45].

DCD 19.13 only discussed the obedience of the citizen to the authority of the state: its leaders and its laws. Augustine also deals with the obedience of a state to another state, or rather the loyalty of a city to its treaty with another city. The example he gives for this is the case of Saguntum. The city was an ally of Rome and bound to Rome by treaty. The city had received an ultimatum from Hannibal to surrender, but refused to do so in order to remain loyal to the treaty with Rome. The city was eventually destroyed and its citizens perished in a gruesome manner. The choice between life and obedience is a terrible dilemma, and Augustine points out that this is an earthly dilemma where loyalty and life are played off against each other, but in the heavenly city this dilemma no longer exists: loyalty and life coincide. The only obedience one owes there is to God. To be faithful to God, however, is always a choice for life [46].

Obedience in relation to the other contexts of *DCD* 19.13

The contexts of peace that Augustine did not directly connect with obedience in *DCD* 19.13 were the intra-personal dimension, the relations between all people, the context of the heavenly city, and of all things.

The initial human constitution was a hierarchical relationship where the body obeyed the spirit, and within the spirit, reason commanded emotion, and reason ultimately answered to God. These relationships had become disturbed after original sin: the spirit lost control over the body and reason no longer controlled all emotions. Human nature had become sinful, and, as a result, the mind no longer obeyed God. Thus, disobedience within a person was a punishment for Adam's initial disobedience to God. Between people, outside the natural context of the family, there is no natural obedience due be-

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45   See *DCD* 19.17.

46   This is actually comparable to Abraham's case: Abraham remained obedient to God, and in the end the life of his son was saved: Abraham actually did not have to sacrifice the life of his son for his obedience to God.

cause all people are basically equal, and man was not created to rule over other people. Within the heavenly city, the relationship is one of love rather than command and obedience: out of love, the citizens of the heavenly city will spontaneously and automatically comply with God's will [47]. The last category of peace was that of 'all things'. Obedience refers to the attitude of a reasonable being, and to things it does not really apply [48].

Augustine's view on disobedience

In the section that follows, some characteristics of obedience are given that Augustine indicated when dealing with situations of obedience and disobedience in *De ciuitate Dei*. These are often characteristics that extend over different configurations.

Definitions

Obedience

Obedience is a building block for peace and order within the family and within society. Obedience also characterises the relationship between man and God. In the *De ciuitate Dei*, Augustine does not really give a definition of what obedience is, but he does give its characteristics. Obedience is a quality of a 'reasonable creature'. Obedience means submission, especially to God. It is a good and a virtue [49]. Rea-

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47 Such as the example given by Augustine of the woman who obeys the will of her bishop. See also *DCD* 14.13 on humility as a characteristic of the city of God.

48 But one could also apply the relationship of commanding and obeying to the relationship between humans and animals. Augustine addresses this briefly when he indicates that man was not created to rule over other men, but rather over other lower creatures, such as animals, plants and inanimate objects, or that the latter are at man's service. See also *DCD* 19.14 on the relationship within the heavenly city, and the *ciuitas peregrina*.

49 See *DCD* 13.20: "They still took other nourishment, however, except from the one tree that had been forbidden – not because it was in itself evil, but in order to commend the good of a pure and simple obedience, which is the great virtue of the rational creature established under the Lord its Creator" (DYSON, *City*, p. 567).

sonable creatures benefit from their submission to God [50]. Obedience is not just any virtue; it is the "mother and guardian of all virtues" [51], the virtue from which other virtues derive. This idea is present in Augustine's oeuvre from 401 till his death [52]. All other virtues, according to Augustine, follow from obedience, and are preserved by obedience. A natural hierarchy is that of the family where the *pater familias* is at the head, above children and slaves. People also live in a non-natural hierarchy of persons in authority and their subjects: in a city or state the citizens have to obey their leaders, in an army the soldiers have to obey the commander. The obedience of citizens to the laws of the society in which they live also applies to temporary residents like the citizens of the *ciuitas Dei* on pilgrimage to their eternal goal in heaven.

Obeying a lower authority instead of the higher one cannot be called obedience [53]. One may not obey demons or idols. Offering to other gods, idols or demons testifies to a wrong obedience which according to Ex 22 is punishable by death [54].

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50 See *DCD* 14.12: "For man has been so made that it is to his advantage to be subject to God, and harmful to him to act according to his own will rather than that of the Creator" (DYSON, *City*, p. 607).

51 See *DCD* 14.12: "But God's command required obedience, and this virtue is, in a certain sense, the mother and guardian of all other virtues" (DYSON, *City*, p. 607).

52 See VIRT, *Der Gehorsamsbegriff*, p. 18, quoting [n. 218] *DCD* 13.20 (CCL 48, 403): "sumebant cibos praeter unam arborem, quae fuerat interdicta, non quia ipsa erat malum, sed propter commendandum purae et simplicis oboedientiae bonum, quae magna uirtus est rationalis creaturae sub creatore domino constitutae. Nam ubi nullum malum tangebatur, profecto, si prohibitum tangeretur, sola inoboedientia peccabatur" and [n. 219] *DCD* 14.12 (CCL 48,434): "oboedientia commendata est in praecepto, quae uirtus in creatura rationali mater quodam modo est omnium custosque uirtutum".

53 See *Sermo de oboedientia* 13: "Oboediens non esses, si obtemperando forte senius patri tuo contemneres dominum tuum. Hoc dico : si forte seruus esses, et aliud tibi pater tuus et conseruus tuus imperaret, contra illud quod tibi dominus imperauerat, et oboedires potius patri tuo quam domino tuo, nonne te inoboedientem dicerem et ordinis peruersorem ?" (DOLBEAU, *Nouveaux sermons (III)*, p. 73).

54 See *DCD* 19.21: "But, to say no more of the gods whom the Romans worshipped with sacrifice, it is written in the law of the one true God: 'He that sacrificeth unto any god save unto the Lord only, shall be utterly destroyed' [Ex 22:20]. He Who uttered so great a threat does not desire that we should sacrifice either to good or bad gods" (DYSON, *City*, p. 952).

Disobedience

In *DCD* 14.12 Augustine indicates what disobedience meant in the case of Adam: disobedience is to do one's own will and not the will of God, who is man's Creator. The cause of all sin is pride [55]. It is a consequence of not accepting the hierarchy in which one is placed [56]. At first pride worked only internally, later it became visual through disobedience [57]. Disobedience is thus an external consequence of pride. To be proud means to exalt oneself because one is pleased with oneself. The consequence of doing one's own will, and thus of disobedience, is that man causes harm to himself [58].

An iconic example of Roman disobedience is the end of kingship and the beginning of the republic: the Romans no longer wanted to conform to the Etruscan rulers. Augustine describes this event in the first books of *De ciuitate Dei*, without condemning this disobedience. He does indicate that in the early period of the Republic, social relations were more just, and that unjust power structures gradually developed only thereafter as a result of a lust for power (*libido dominandi*).

An expression of human pride was also the construction of the Tower of Babel. That pride was punished by the loss of the common language. Language is an instrument of command, and wanting to command is an expression of pride. Through the resulting confusion of tongues man thus lost his common language, his natural instrument of command. Human pride in wanting to command was punished by the loss of the instrument to do so. The human wish to command was punished with a situation of no longer being able to command.

The opposite of pride is humility. Humility implies submitting oneself to God. This humility is a characteristic of the whole city of

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55 See Sir 10:13, quoted in *DCD* 14.13.

56 The natural hierarchy is a structure of angels above men above animals above plants above inanimate things. God as Creator is at the head of His creation.

57 See *DCD* 14.13: The first people were bad at first in secret.

58 See *DCD* 14.12.

God, both its heavenly and its earthly part. By submitting to God, the city of God shares in God's exaltation [59].

Gradation

The nature of the command makes disobedience worse or less bad. Disobedience is all the worse in the case of an easy command. What God asked of Adam was very easy: Adam was only not to eat of the one fruit, but all the other fruits in paradise were available to Adam as food (*DCD* 14.12). Abraham, on the other hand, was given a terribly difficult command, to kill his son, and yet Abraham obeyed (*DCD* 14.15). Christ was obedient to the extreme, to death on the cross (Phil 2:8, briefly discussed in *DCD* 14.15).

In *DCD* 14.23 Augustine indicates that it is more shameful for the mind that the body is not subject to the mind, than that within the mind reason does not control the emotions. Augustine also gives his reason for this: in the first case the spirit is the loser and the body the winner, in the second case the spirit is both winner and loser [60]. Something else plays a role here: the body is ranked lower than the spirit, and disobedience is all the worse the higher the authority that is defied. That is why Adam's disobedience was so bad: Adam defied the highest authority, namely God's [61].

Consequences of disobedience

Reaction by punishment

In the case of disobedience, the authority has the duty to act and punish the disobedience. Adam's transgression in the earthly paradise was punished with severe corruption, death, and emotional turmoil. At first sight, this is too heavy a punishment (death) for a light transgression (wrong food): human nature was seriously violated, whereas

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59 See *DCD* 14.13.
60 See *DCD* 14.23.
61 See *DCD* 14.15.

other sins are punished much less severely [62]. Augustine, however, argues that it was a grave transgression indeed: in order to strengthen human obedience, God had made only a small request, not to eat one fruit, but man, whose will was still in full control of desire, fell into disobedience. Augustine thus also indicates several aggravating circumstances which make the transgression more serious and consequently the punishment more severe: the ease with which man could have complied with this prohibition because it was an easy demand and because man, by his unblemished nature, still had full control over himself [63]. With this last point, Augustine does not so much indicate the severity of the punishment for eating the forbidden fruit, but rather gives a reason why other sins are punished less: a person who is not in full control of himself does not bear full responsibility.

In the household, the *pater familias* is obliged to punish disobedience, to end the situation of unrest, to counter sin and to prevent future disobedience. Punishments applied by the *pater familias* must be fair, in accordance with what society considers acceptable. A place where punishment for disobedience is certainly appropriate is in a military setting. A soldier who disobeys an order or acts on his own initiative is guilty of insubordination and deserves to be punished, such as in the case of Torquatus. A soldier is not held responsible for an order to kill, but a soldier killing on his own initiative is guilty of murder [64].

Punitive action in the case of disobedience therefore serves first and foremost to prevent imitation. Furthermore, punishments should be reasonable, allowed by laws and customs, and proportional, in accordance with the magnitude of the crime. The latter criterion can also be used in the opposite direction: the greater the punishment,

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62 See *DCD* 14.12: "Someone may be moved to ask why other sins do not change human nature in that way that it was changed by the transgression of the first two human beings. For, because of that sin, human nature was made subject to all the great corruption that we see and feel, and so to death also. What is more, man came to be distracted by turbulent and conflicting emotions, and so became very different from what he had been when he dwelt in Paradise before his sin; though, even then, he lived in an animal body" (Dyson, *City*, p. 607).

63 See *DCD* 14.12.

64 See *DCD* 1.26.

the more serious the offence. From the fact that God had foreseen that Adam would die, Augustine deduces the gravity of Adam's transgression [65].

Life or death as a result of obedience of disobedience

It is striking how often disobedience is linked to life or death. Adam's first disobedience led to death [66]. Abraham's obedience appeared to result in the death of his son Isaac, but in the end, Isaac was saved by God's intervention. Isaac's salvation foreshadowed the resurrection [67]. Christ was obedient unto death, but through Christ's resurrection humanity was delivered from death [68]. Torquatus's son received the death penalty for disobeying a military order [69]. On an individual level, these examples show how disobedience leads to death and obedience leads to life.

In case of a city, a different situation is encountered. The city of Saguntum was faced with a devastating choice: either remain loyal to its alliance with Rome and resist Hannibal, or surrender to the Carthaginian general. The city chose the first solution. Its obedience to its treaty with Rome thus led to its destruction by Hannibal [70]. According to Augustine, a choice between obedience and life such as that of Saguntum exists only in the earthly context. In the heavenly context and in relation to God this is not the case. There, loyalty and life coincide. Faithfulness to God means choosing life and God, Who is life [71].

Dilemmas of obedience

As in the case of Saguntum, obedience can lead to difficult choices to be made. Abraham, too, was faced with the difficult choice

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65 See *DCD* 14.15.

66 See *DCD* 14.12.

67 See *DCD* 14.15.

68 See *DCD* 14.15.

69 See *DCD* 5.18.

70 See *DCD* 3.20.

71 See *DCD* 22.6.

between the life of his son and loyalty to God. Abraham chose obedience (faithfulness to God) and in Abraham's case this ended well. Augustine also immediately gave the criterion for Abraham to act: God's direct command is to be obeyed without question [72]. God's direct command takes precedence over everything else, even over divine law, natural law or the laws of the city [73]. If one has to obey two conflicting commands, that of the highest commander in rank takes precedence [74].

Correlation between contexts

The purpose of taking care of obedience within the household is peace within the city and society. The household is a part of society; if peace is present there, this is also the case within society [75]. There is also a kind of commonality between the earthly city and the part of heavenly city on earth: the citizens of both cities use the same time and space. In order to make this coexistence possible and peaceful, it is necessary that all obey the laws of this common time and space. So the citizens of the heavenly city here on earth also obey the earthly laws as well [76].

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72 See *DCD* 16.32.

73 Augustine deals with this in *DCD* 1.21 when discussing suicide. A person does not have the right to take a life, especially not his own life, because it is against God's law not to kill (Ex 20:13). The only exception is an explicit command from God. For this Augustine gives the example of Abraham who was allowed to kill his son at God's command, but also Samson and possibly, if they acted on God's explicit command, the women who committed suicide to escape rape.

74 Augustine does not really deal with this in *De ciuitate Dei*, but he does in his *Sermo de oboedientia.* Obedience means following the orders of the one who has the highest legal authority. In the hierarchy of authority, God is at the top. See *Sermo de oboedientia* 13: «Ille enim magis audiendus, qui maiorem habet potestatem, ille qui legitimam. Non ergo dicerem oboedientem, si obtemperares curatori contra proconsulem, proconsuli contra imperatorem; sic non dico oboedientem obtemperantem imperatori contra Deum» (*Sermo de oboedientia* 13; DOLBEAU, *Vingt-six sermons*, 338). In an interesting way the same chapter also indicates that instituted authority prevails over the natural hierarchy: in case of conflicting commands, a slave should obey his master rather than his father *(ibid.).*

75 See *DCD* 19.16.

76 See *DCD* 19.17.

A breach of obedience between man and God leads to internal disobedience within the human person, of the body to the mind and within the mind of the emotions to reason. Within the heavenly city, the city of God in heaven, what counts is not so much obedience as love and unity with God.

CONCLUSION

Augustine defines obedience as a characteristic of reasonable living beings. Obedience is a building block for unity and peace within the family and within society. Peace of the human being with God is equated with obedience to the laws of nature, ordered by faith. Between people in general obedience plays no role, because all people are equal in principle, so there is no hierarchy that necessitates obedience. Within the heavenly city, obedience is translated into love and unity with God and in God with each other. The relationships there are different, and obedience is actually no longer required. Within the human constitution the various parts must work together in harmony in order to have internal peace. Obedience is not part of Augustine's definition of the harmonious intra-personal relationships, but disobedience is a symptom of the disturbance of these relationships after original sin. Finally, in preparation for his definition of order, Augustine also brings out the harmony or peace between all things: reasonless objects, to which obedience does not apply.

Several contexts that Augustine identified in his *De ciuitate Dei* for peace and order require obedience for harmonious coexistence. Not only is obedience an obligation of the subordinate, but guarding obedience and punishing disobedience is the duty of the superior. Disobedience is all the worse when it happens for a simple commandment, in the face of a higher authority, and with a more severe punishment in prospect. The worse the disobedience, the more severe the punishment must be. Punishment must be just and allowed and depends on the environment. In certain circumstances punishment might include punishment by death. This need to punish disobedience shows how fragile the relations between commanding and obeying are in the this-worldly contexts after the Fall. In relation to God, obedience

means life and disobedience death. The imperfect human situation on earth may require to trade in life for obedience. There is a hierarchy of authority and also of obedience. Obedience to a lower authority against the higher authority is actually disobedience. Obedience to God, and in particular to God's direct command, has priority over every other obedience.

In the heavenly city, obedience, between citizens and to God, is replaced by love. On earth, the love of God, characteristic of the city of God, manifests itself by showing obedience to God in the first place. During their temporary stay in this world, the citizens of the city of God, pilgrims on their way to their final destination in the heavenly city, also obey the laws of the this-worldly city where they reside, just as the citizens of the earthly city are required to do. In this way coexistence of all citizens remains possible, in view of earthly peace and concerning the use of the earthly goods common to the citizens of the earthly city and those of the city of God on earth.

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