

Maciej Jacek Wojcieszak

The Image of the Western roman Society According to Late Ancient Latin Patristic Literature

Summary

The main aim of my doctoral thesis was to analyse the image of society in the western part of the Roman Empire in the 4th and 5th centuries according to the selected texts of western christian writers. The declining period of antiquity was a turning point for the roman society; the moment when important political, religious and social changes took place. The christian cultural circle started to become important.

That subject in general has been discussed by many scientific researchers. But the above-mentioned topic concerning the vision of society seen by western roman patristic authors has not yet been elaborated in a holistic way. In my dissertation, I focused on three elements (each of these items corresponds to a chapter) forming the image of the western roman society: economic condition, religious relations and perspectives of the society.

The first chapter (Economic Condition) has been divided into two sub-chapters (upper and lower social classes – also divided into sub-chapters) illustrating various aspects of everyday life of individual social groups, which represented their economic condition. In the third sub-chapter, I have summarized the image of the economic condition of the late antiquity society in the western provinces of the Roman Empire.

The second chapter of the my dissertation concerns religious relations in the West according to the analyzed patristic accounts. In the sub-chapters, I present the images of all religious groups, including pagans, Jews, heretics and schismatics, orthodox christians, and Manichaeans. The analyzed texts reveal an interesting image of the complicated religious relations in the Roman Empire in the late antiquity.

The natural consequence of presenting the images of the economic condition and religious relations described in the dissertation was the transition from them to the perspectives of the western roman society, which was discussed in the third chapter. In that chapter I used a different division than in the previous chapters (sub-chapters based on the authors). In the vision of western christian writers, Romans of all social classes shall want a complete christianization and the creation of a fully Christian society. It was supposed to be a new and the only path awaiting people.

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In this dissertation, I wanted to approach the topic in a new way, focusing primarily on the patristic sources, which so far have not been used to a large extent by researchers, but are a valuable source of knowledge.