

A CHURCH BUILT ON CHARITY: AUGUSTINE'S ECCLESIOLOGY

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A Paper Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Theology and Seminary of
Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota,
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Theology (ThM).

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND SEMINARY

Saint John's University
Collegeville, Minnesota

6 May 2016

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This thesis will undertake the mission of articulating the ecclesiological thought of Augustine with particular emphasis on charity as the fundamental component to church unity. Hopefully, this will further demonstrate his inclusivity, not exclusivity. The beginnings of this thesis will simply show his influences, and thus serve as a background to understanding the mind of Augustine. The next step will take the reader into the world of Augustine's theology of charity. Charity in the Christian life is the result of being gifted with God's grace; how charity works and how proper, authentic charity appears will be the topic of the section. The second section of this thesis will concern itself with Donatism and Augustine's ecclesiology. It will examine multiple complementary views of Church held by Augustine: mystical communion, Body of Christ, field hospital, etc., and demonstrate where charity exists and why its existence is crucial for church unity. The final chapter will explore Augustine's mature theology of nature and grace, in order to reflect his universal sense of a need for grace that sets everyone on the same level.

This thesis may be duplicated.

6 May 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Influences	2
CHAPTER I: CHARITY AS THE FUNDAMENTAL CHRISTIAN VIRTUE	7
The Heart Dwells Where It Loves	7
Twofold Love of God & Neighbor	12
Inauthentic Love	21
CHAPTER II: LOVE AS THE CATALYST FOR ECCLESIAL UNITY	26
North African Ecclesiological Context	26
Augustine's Ecclesiology: Mystical Communion/Invisible Church	41
Augustine's Ecclesiology: Body of Christ	48
Augustine's Ecclesiology: <i>Corpus Permixtum</i>	51
Augustine's Ecclesiology: Connections to His Sacramental Theology & Grace	58
CHAPTER III: GRACE AS INCLUSIVITY	65
Pelagius: Grace Simply Aids the Person	66
Augustine: Grace as Necessary	73
CONCLUSION	81
BIBLIOGRAPHY	84

Introduction

Unity is a classic hallmark of the Roman Catholic Church; this point cannot be easily denied. In the Nicene Creed, Roman Catholics profess a church that is “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.” These four marks of the Church resonate this theme of unity. “One” is relatively self-explanatory. “Holy” directs one back to God, who is ultimately holy. “Catholic” represents the universality of the Church, in that all members of the Christian community are one. Finally, “apostolic” refers to the concept that the Church goes back in time to the period of the original apostles and their successors; the Christian community is united to that original apostolic community. Throughout the centuries, people have noted this characteristic in the Church. It has brought comfort to many who could not (or cannot) find stability elsewhere. This is not to say that the Catholic Church is static and continues to operate mechanically forever, though. It is not unity with regard to a particular method of theology, nor is it unity to a particular form of governing the Church. The unity that is essential to Catholics is unity to the Church that is in Christ Jesus.

To be united to Christ Jesus and his Church entails living a life of charity. Unity without charity is a danger that humanity has witnessed many times throughout its history. The scent of totalitarian regimes is still quite strong after the horrors of the twentieth century. While totalitarian regimes are an extreme example, any genuinely Christian conception of unity cannot lack charity. It is this point that Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430) articulated throughout his prolific theological and pastoral career. In order to truly be united to each other, to the Church, and to God, Augustine argued that the manifestation of charity is the constitutive and continuous dynamic of an authentic Christian identity.

This thesis seeks to explore more fully Augustine's argument regarding the fundamental place of charity within the unity of the Church and life of the Christian as part of that Church. The first chapter will express Augustine's understanding of the notion of charity, and what that entails in daily Christian living. An in-depth look at such works as *De doctrina christiana* and his Tractates on the 1st Letter of John will provide much insight into this position. Chapter Two will discuss the Donatist controversy and Augustine's theological counter proposals to this movement. One will see his ecclesiological theology surface with charity at the forefront of his mind. The Donatist controversy aptly surfaces and illumines Augustine's viewpoint of the Church being an inclusive entity rooted in charity. Chapter Three will conclude the body of the thesis by articulating how Augustine's view of ecclesiology as requiring charity was further applied in his mature theology of nature and grace.

Influences

No theologian or Christian thinker operates within the context of a vacuum; all have people or movements that greatly influence how they think and act. Such is the case with Augustine. For the purpose of this thesis, it will be good to briefly mention three of his influences. It is also important to note that these influences are early intellectual influences, in contrast to later personal influences such as friendships. The first deep influence involves Cicero (106-43 BC), the famous Roman statesman and scholar, who was a catalyst in Augustine's youth that sparked his search for that which is higher. Augustine Curley, OSB, writes that Augustine would have read a great deal of Cicero's works simply due to the fact that he was classically educated in Roman North Africa.¹ In this educational model, the great works of Greek and

¹ Augustine Curley, OSB. "Marcus Tullius Cicero." As found in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999): 190.

Roman literature were taught to these students, and Cicero's predominant status meant that most would have held a certain level of familiarity with his thought and works. The first in-depth look of Augustine into Cicero's thought happened when he read Cicero's *Hortensius*.² This work would prove highly influential to Augustine. In his *Confessions*, he describes the effect:

In the customary course of study I had discovered a book by an author called Cicero, whose language is almost universally admired, though not its inner spring. This book of his is called the *Hortensius* and contains an exhortation to philosophy. The book changed my way of feeling and the character of my prayers to you, O Lord, for under its influence my petitions and desires altered. All my hollow hopes suddenly seemed worthless, and with unbelievable intensity my heart burned with longing for the immortality that wisdom seemed to promise. I began to rise up, in order to return to you.³

Through this autobiographical excerpt found in his *Confessions*, Augustine indicates the world-altering effect that Cicero's work had on him. In the *Hortensius*, Cicero writes about multiple concepts, including the notion of bodily pleasure distracting the mind from the pursuit of higher things: "...if the souls which we have are eternal and divine, we must conclude, that the more we let them have their head in their natural activity, that is, in reasoning and in the quest for knowledge, and the less they are caught up in the vices and errors of mankind, the easier it will be for them to ascend and return to Heaven."⁴ Augustine takes this notion and begins to shift from a conception of life as oriented toward physical satisfaction to a life devoted to reflection on moral and philosophical questions; this formative experience occurred when he was only nineteen.⁵

² The *Hortensius* does not survive in complete form today but fragments are noted below in Footnote 4.

³ Bk. 3, Ch. 7. Augustine. *The Confessions*. Trans. Maria Boulding. Part of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* series. Ed. John E. Rotelle. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1997): 46. In all future references, this source will be cited parenthetically as such: (*Conf.*, bk. #, ch. #, pg.).

⁴ Cicero. *Hortensius*, frgt. 97 (*Opera* IV, 3, ed. Müller, 1890, pg. 325.). As quoted in: Peter Brown. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967): 40.

⁵ Henry Chadwick. *Augustine*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986): 9-10.

Augustine begins to search for wisdom and meaning in the movement known as Manicheism. Chadwick characterizes Manicheism as being an “ultra-ascetic movement” founded by Mani (AD 216-277) in the third century.⁶ There was a dualist mentality regarding the human body; the good (or light) within man desperately seeks freedom in order to reunite with the “Kingdom of Light” and its original state. However, sin (which is equated with materiality and the body) constantly, though temporarily, overpowers and imprisons the good.⁷ Looking back to Chadwick’s labelling Manicheism as part of the ascetic movement, it is relatively easy to see how that is justifiable. Mani’s movement, however, is also rightly categorized as “gnostic” due to its dualist cosmology.⁸ If the body, or material world, is that which hinders spiritual progress and eventual reunion with the “Kingdom of Light,” it would make perfect sense to restrict and discipline the body in order to fight its sinfulness in life. A document from the Manichees survives in the form of the *Manichaean Psalmbook*, and it provides a glimpse into their worldview: “*I have known my soul and the body that lies upon it/That they have been enemies since the creation of the worlds.*”⁹ Augustine discovered Manicheism and saw in it a way to find wisdom and meaning; he would become a Manichee and remain part of the sect for ten years, first joining it while he was living in Carthage and then continuing in it after his move to Italy.¹⁰ His membership in this sect would not last, however, as

⁶ Chadwick: 11. To read more about the ascetic movement in the early Church in general, please see: *Theological Anthropology*. Ed./Trans. J. Patout Burns. Part of the Sources of Early Christian Thought series. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981): 3-6. For further reading on the person of Mani, please see: J. Kevin Coyle. “Mani, Manicheism.” As found in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999): 520-521.

⁷ Brown: 47.

⁸ Frederick Van Fleteren. “*Confessiones*.” As found in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999): 229.

⁹ C.R.C. Allberry. *A Manichaean Psalmbook, (Part II)*, (Manichaean Manuscripts in the Chester Beatty Collection, vol. II), 1938. As quoted in Brown: 47.

¹⁰ Chadwick: 14. I would like to note a small difference in sources. Chadwick claims that Augustine was a Manichee for ten years; Brown claims it was only nine in *Augustine of Hippo*: 46.

he eventually left the group. Augustine desperately sought rational answers to large questions that he thought the Manichees could provide; he later realized that “it {Manicheism} could not proffer the promised rational explanations.”¹¹ It is personal opinion that Augustine continued to be influenced by a certain, albeit not major, sense of dualism throughout his life. There continued to be, in his theological writings, a sense of nature (which would be sin in the material world) and grace (which would be a healing action on the part of God, simply put).

While in Italy, Augustine decided to renounce his Manichaean membership, and turned his mind toward the Neoplatonic writings of Plotinus (AD c.203-270).¹² In these writings, there is a large emphasis on the fact that God (labelled by Plotinus as “the One”) is truly transcendent.¹³ There exists a multi-layered cosmology in Neoplatonic thought. There is a downward-moving emanation into lower things, which are naturally inferior and derivative of the One.¹⁴ Similarly to Platonic thought, there is the notion in Neoplatonic thought of the individual soul seeking to move towards the One.¹⁵ To put this in Christian terms, it would be comparable to saying that God (who is changeless) gives humanity life. Humans, as created beings, are inferior to God who simply is. However, humans may move toward God as they progress through life. Augustine saw much good in these writings, as he states: “...those Platonist writings conveyed in every possible way, albeit indirectly, the truth of God and his Word” (*Conf.* 8, 3, pg. 139.) Augustine will take this multi-layered cosmology and write about

¹¹ Van Fleteren: 229.

¹² For further reading on the person of Plotinus, please see: Frederick Copleston. *A History of Philosophy. Vol. I: Greece & Rome.* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1946): 463-464.

¹³ Chadwick: 18.

¹⁴ Chadwick: 19.

¹⁵ Ibid. This relates to Augustine’s theology of signs, which can be further explored in: Michael Cameron. “Signs.” As found in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia.* Ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999): 793-798.

the ascent of the soul to God as taking several stages, “from the beauty in corporeal phenomena to the beauty in the beautiful.”¹⁶ This means that one will begin one’s journey to God by observing the beauty of God’s creation and progress in the pursuit of wisdom until one reaches the ultimate beauty of the universe, located in God.¹⁷ Most importantly for the sake of this thesis, Augustine believed that the soul, through progress, does not seek to leave the body but rather “to rule it with the charity imparted by the crucified Redeemer through his church.”¹⁸ Through this statement, one sees a turn away from the traditional Manichean dualism inherent in his earlier thought. Now, in the mind of Augustine, the highest quality of a person’s life is the exercise of charity. In the next chapter, the focus will shift to Augustine’s conception of Christian charity.

In summary, three of Augustine’s early intellectual influences would form him for the duration of his life. Through reading Cicero’s works, Augustine gained the view that worldly desires distract from the mind from the pursuit of higher things, which he would later term as God. In his membership with the Manichees, Augustine was challenged with a dualist cosmological view of material vs. immaterial, and this notion carries somewhat into his theology of nature and grace, through which all humanity is on the same level. Finally, in his exposure to Neoplatonic thought, Augustine came to the realization that God is truly transcendent; God is with humanity here in the material world as well as in the immaterial world with the soul.

¹⁶ Augustine. *De animae quantitate* 79. As quoted in Mark J. Edwards. “Neoplatonism.” As found in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999): 589.

¹⁷ It is from this line of Neoplatonic thought that Augustine will arrive at his theory of signs.

¹⁸ Edwards: 590-591.

Ch. 1: Charity as the Fundamental Christian Virtue

The Heart Dwells Where It Loves

For Augustine, charity, love, *amor*, *caritas*, etc. all mean the same thing. Augustine does not differentiate subtleties in the meanings of synonyms. Love, for him, is first and foremost a movement or a striving towards something beyond the individual person.¹⁹ Naturally, the Christian would ideally strive in love towards God as their end goal. Love would then become the “force of the soul and the life” of the Christian, and would determine the overall quality of that particular life as good or bad.²⁰ As will be seen later, the quality of the life is based on the object of love: all love must ultimately rise to God as the source of all goodness even as intermediate objects can also be loved proportionately. Augustine’s thoughts regarding love developed over time. In his early works, Augustine views love in a Platonic paradigm as ascending from the sensory world to the contemplative world. The soul must detach from sensory influences in order to attach to contemplative influences; this would result in less anxiety in life and greater independence from one’s passions. In time, however, Augustine realized the limitations in this view of love. He recognized that one cannot reach this type of perfection on earth because he saw how easy it was to fall back into old habits and allow sensory influences to reign. He also noticed that the Platonists, in their creating this paradigm, failed to mention any credit to the power of divine grace.²¹ To fully articulate Augustine’s concept of love, it is necessary to dive into several of his works: *On Christian Doctrine*, *Tractates on 1 John*, and his *2nd Tractate on the Gospel of John*.

¹⁹ Tarsicius J. van Bavel. “Love.” As found in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999): 509.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Martha Nussbaum. “Augustine and Dante on the Ascent of Love.” As found in *The Augustinian Tradition*. Ed. Gareth B. Matthews. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999): 64-66.

Augustine takes up the topic of charity in his work *On Christian Doctrine*, which was written in two phases beginning in the 390s and ending in the 420s. The purpose of this work was to elucidate proper biblical interpretation and, as will be shown in this chapter, Augustine viewed charity as the end of true exegesis.²² Therefore, it seems justifiable to work from this text in order to glean from it Augustine's views on charity. One might reasonably begin by asking Augustine: "What should people love?" He initially answers by noting a dichotomy in the world: things (*res*) and signs (*signum*).²³ A sign points to that which is a thing; all signs are also things, but not all things are also signs. One properly learns about a thing through using and being pointed along by that which is its sign (*On Chr. Doc.*, 1, 2, pg. 8-9). In Augustine's thought, all signs ultimately lead to God, who is true *res*.²⁴ The fundamental purpose of things and signs, then, is to direct one to God in and through all that God creates.

The question becomes, after realizing the difference between a sign and a thing: "What do people do with these things and signs?" Augustine answers that one must be careful in this regard, as he notes the difference between using a thing (*uti*) and enjoying a thing (*frui*). To use an object is to interact with the object in such a way as to allow it to assist and support the person in his or her pursuit of true happiness; to enjoy something is to interact with the object in such a way as to make it the source of true happiness. The danger in the case of enjoyment is the Christian stopping his spiritual journey upon reaching the object of love, and thus not continuing to seek God (*On Chr. Doc.*, 1, 3, pg. 9). The issue is knowing what to simply use and what is

²² James J. O'Donnell. "De Doctrina Christiana." As found in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999): 278-279.

²³ Book 1, Ch. 2. Augustine. *On Christian Doctrine*. Trans. D.W. Robertson, Jr. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1958): 8. In all future references, this source will be cited parenthetically as such: (*On Chr. Doc.*, Bk. #, ch. #, pg.)

²⁴ Barry Harvey. *Can These Bones Live?: A Catholic Baptist Engagement With Ecclesiology, Hermeneutics, and Social Theory*. (Grand Rapids, MI: BrazosPress, 2008): 33.

worthy of enjoyment. Augustine says: “If we...wish to enjoy those things which should be used, our course will be impeded and sometimes deflected, so that we are...shackled by an inferior love” (*On Chr. Doc.*, 1, 3, pg. 9). What is meant to be enjoyed, not simply used? The answer is God, (or as Augustine will say, the Trinity); He is to be enjoyed for his own sake, and all else is to be used in order to seek him and, thus, find true peace and happiness (*On Chr. Doc.*, 1, 5, pg. 10).

When one recognizes that only God is to be enjoyed for his own sake, and all else are signs and ways in which to strive towards God, one discovers that love is ultimately aimed at God as the totalizing object of desire and communion. However, this does not mean that love is only for God; rather, all love is directed to the ultimate love which is of love of God.²⁵

Augustine holds the position that the world has a role to play in the human journey to God. He notes:

Thus in this mortal life, wandering from God, if we wish to return to our native country where we can be blessed we should use this world and not enjoy it, so that the “invisible things” of God “being understood by the things that are made” may be seen, that is, so that by means of corporal and temporal things we may comprehend the eternal and spiritual (*On Chr. Doc.*, 1, 4, pg. 10).

Augustine believes that the world needs to be used as a way to lead one to God; the world is not to be discarded, but rather, it is to be used as a sign, not a thing to enjoy for its own sake. To briefly give an example to illustrate this point, it would be comparable to one looking to the natural world in order to see God. In nature, one sees order and beauty, and the presence of God is to be found throughout this world. However, one does not simply stop at enjoying nature but, rather, one uses the natural world in order to acquire a deeper sense of the presence of God.

²⁵ E.D.H. (Liz) Carmichael. *Friendship: Interpreting Christian Love*. (London: T&T Clark International, 2004): 63.

Misdirected love, a consequence of sin, constitutes the most significant obstacle in the Christian life. In Christian theology, sin is that which distorts vision and disorders desire. Original humanity would have easily seen God as the highest good; however, through sin, this vision was confused. Humanity began to seek other objects of enjoyment, not God. In his second tractate on the Gospel of John, Augustine phrases it as people seeking Creation instead of the Creator.²⁶ To give an example, one sees this phenomena frequently in the Bible, one case being the infamous Golden Calf incident in Exodus 32.²⁷ In moments such as these, one sees that man has come to idolize a material object instead of loving God who created the material object; this is improperly ordered love. Augustine called these world-loving people “the world” because “they live in the world with their heart” (*Tract. Gospel of John*, 2, 11, pg. 69). It is easy to see that, for Augustine, one dwells where one loves. Therefore, those who love the world first and foremost dwell physically and spiritually in the world. Their love does not reach God. The rationale for this dwelling-place of the heart regards the role of the intellect in the person. Todd Breyfogle describes the intellect as “the completion and highest power of the soul’s threefold activity... {it} finds things intelligible and evaluates their veracity and fittingness.”²⁸ As such, the heart will determine, through use of the intellect, whether or not some object is best for it. Given humanity’s distorted vision and disordered desire, due to the occasion of sin, the heart often confuses what is truly good for it eternally with what may simply be good for it temporarily.

²⁶ Tractate 2, ch. 4. Augustine. *Tractates on the Gospel of John 1-10*. Trans. John W. Rettig. As part of *The Fathers of the Church* series. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988): 62. In all future references, this source will be cited parenthetically as such: (*Tract. Gospel of John*, Tractate #, ch. #, pg.).

²⁷ All scriptural references will be made from the New American Bible, 1995 edition.

²⁸ Todd Breyfogle. “*Intellectus*.” As found in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999): 453.

In order to reach God as the highest object of love, a journey must be made. This does not necessarily have to be a physical journey but a spiritual journey, or, as Augustine phrases it, the exercise of “good endeavor and good habits” (*On Chr. Doc.*, 1, 10, pg. 13). It seems natural enough that the journey would begin when one gains the sense that there is a higher power in the world. As was said in the introductory section of this thesis, Augustine reached this point when he read Cicero’s *Hortensius*. This journey leads one on his or her path through seeking God both in this world and in the inner self; one never truly finds God completely but, rather, one continues to constantly seek and discover God increasingly through life. Naturally, this would require a great deal of effort. One does not typically convert overnight, nor does one persevere effortlessly and easily after making that decision. In his second homily on 1 John, Augustine speaks about this issue with the language of a vessel. He preaches to his audience that they are full vessels that should pour out what fills them (love of the world) in order that they may be filled with the love of God.²⁹ Nobody is a blank slate on which new habits can form; all lifestyle changes require a certain degree of purging old habits in order to fully embrace new ones. Augustine says that the soul must be purified so it can receive the divine light and rest in it (*On Chr. Doc.*, 1, 10, pg. 13). Purification is not in human hands, though. Humanity requires assistance and elevation in order to first purge itself from sin and then achieve the purification needed in order to properly love. There are three forms of assistance needed, and one is most important over all. The first two are objects to use on the journey to God: (1) things united with individual people in common relation to God, such as another human or an angel, and (2) things related to individual people that require God’s favor, such as their bodies (*On Chr. Doc.*, 1, 23,

²⁹ Homily 2, ch. 9. Augustine. “Ten Homilies on the First Epistle General of St. John.” Trans. John Burnaby. As found in *The Library of Christian Classics, Volume VIII: Augustine: Later Works*. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955): 274. In all future references, this source will be cited parenthetically as such: (*Homilies 1 John*, Homily #, ch. #, pg.)

pg. 19). Augustine had the advantage of having close friendships throughout his journey to seek God. In his *Confessions*, one reads not only of the intense relationship that he had with his mother, Monica, but also of the close friendship of Alypius, who converted with Augustine in Milan (*Conf.*, 8, 30, pg. 157). The body, also, can prove highly useful in yearning for and following God. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote: “Therefore, that I might not become too elated, a thorn in the flesh was given to me” (2 Cor 12:7). Through human limitations, one hopefully would be able to acknowledge a need for help and put trust in a higher power, i.e. God. The third, and most important, assistance needed is Jesus’ Incarnation: without the Incarnation, humanity would not have a pattern of a holy life with which to imitate (*On Chr. Doc.*, 1, 11, pg. 13). The Incarnation restores and elevates humanity so that it may once again begin to see life in the properly-ordered fashion. Jesus saw fit to become human so that the rest of humanity might see and learn the proper way to live a life of love for God and neighbor. This twofold love becomes tremendously important for Augustine’s theology, as it becomes the key to the Christian life in his mind.

Twofold Love of God & Neighbor

Christ sets down love of God and neighbor as the culmination of the divine law and the *telos* of Christian discipleship.³⁰ This simple categorization of love is not good enough for Augustine; for him, love is the fulfillment and end of Scripture.³¹ He states: “...it is to be understood that the plenitude and the end of the Law and of all the sacred Scriptures is the love

³⁰ Mt 22:34-40, Mk 12:29-31, Lk 10:27, Jn 13:34-35.

³¹ Augustine firmly believed that whoever interprets Scripture in a way that does not build up love does not truly understand Scripture (*On Chr. Doc.*, 1, 36, pg. 30). For example, he believed that the Donatists’ largest problem was that they did not approach the Pauline letters through the lens of charity, as is explained in: Matthew Alan Gaumer. “Augustine’s Feud with the Donatists & Pelagians: A Problem of Interpreting Paul?” *Annali di storia dell’esegesi* 30, no. 2 (July-December 2013): 447.

of a Being which is to be enjoyed and of a being that can share that enjoyment with us...” (*On Chr. Doc.*, 1, 35, pg. 30). Therefore, “the end of all the sacred Scriptures” is namely this: love of God (“a Being which is to be enjoyed”) and love of neighbor (“a being that can share that enjoyment with another person”). Naturally, love of God would be considered more important since Augustine believes in the notion of loving the Creator instead of Creation. This is the ultimate love, also, because all is centered on God; therefore, all human love should be directed to God (*On Chr. Doc.*, 1, 26, pg. 23).

For the sake of this thesis, though, special attention will be paid to the difficult yet fundamental concept of love of neighbor. Why should a Christian love his or her neighbor, especially if the neighbor could distract from movement toward full union with God? The answer that one will learn in most catechism classes is this: people love their neighbor because God loves all his people; also, it is what Jesus commanded in the gospels. This is exactly what Augustine preached. In his first letter, the apostle John wrote: “...God is love...Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another” (1 Jn 4:8, 11). Augustine would write in his seventh homily on this letter that if Scripture only contained the message that God is love and nothing else would have been written, that would have been sufficient (*Homilies 1 John*, 7, 4, pg. 314). This single message that God is love could suffice to help a Christian form his or her conscience and way of living a life of authentic Christian discipleship. Knowing that God is love also motivates one to love in order to seek union with God. To be united with one who is love requires the reciprocal action of loving. This further proves that love is the end and fulfillment of Scripture for Augustine.

As has been said before, in the Christian life, love is the cornerstone. St. Paul famously wrote in his first letter to the Christian church at Corinth:

If I speak in human and angelic tongues, but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing (1 Cor 13:1-3)

Augustine will raise this banner and continue in its message. He claims that faith without works does not save. To many modern Christian ears, this would sound questionable. Countless people believe that faith alone will achieve salvation. Augustine, however, taught that the work of faith is love. He preached: “The work of faith is love, according to the apostle Paul saying: ‘Faith which worketh through love’” (*Homilies I John*, 10, 1, pg. 339). It is not external signs or gestures but rather genuine charity directed at others. This is the work of faith because being genuinely charitable is never easy; it requires a certain level of faith to believe that Jesus became incarnate, ministered, suffered, died, and rose again out of love for his people. As was said before, Christians love their neighbor because first God loved them.

Due to the fact that God first loved all his people, it is the Christian (even human) obligation to love others. If one does not love, one does not know God, who is love (1 Jn 4:8). However, to love similarly to how God loves is not possible if humanity only relies on its own resolve and strength. Grace is required in order to begin the journey to love rightly, as God loved his people. St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, writes that: “...the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom. 5:5). This once again centers human love on God because it is ultimately from God that humanity received its ability to love. Its human nature cannot produce the type of love that is needed in the Christian life.³² Augustine even goes so far as to say that “there cannot be true love without the Spirit of God” (*Homilies I John*, 6, 10, pg. 309). Once this love is received, exercise or labor

³² Carmichael: 60.

becomes the next necessary step if one is to progress in love of God and neighbor. Exercise by itself is not enough, though. People on a diet or an exercise plan often relate that an important element in the potential success of their plan is that they need to want it; such is the case with progress of love. Augustine teaches that the whole Christian life, if it is a good one, is one of holy desire (*Homilies I John*, 4, 6, pg. 290). Through this desire, the Christian will gain the determination to exercise his virtues, indeed, re-order the desires through exercising the will, in order to journey towards God as the highest good. Augustine mentions that in order to be filled with the love of God, one must first empty one's self of love of the world; this *kenosis* and re-filling of love of God requires great determination and exercise in order to bear fruit. Love of neighbor becomes, for Christians, the great arena in which to exercise the fundamental virtue of love.

To exercise the virtue of love, one must begin to love others. Augustine encourages that if a person begins to love, he will be perfected since, by loving authentically, God will dwell in him. This is indicative of the infusion of grace that will further build up the charity in a person. He states: "Make a beginning of love, and you shall be made perfect. For if you have begun to love, God has begun to dwell in you: love him who has begun to dwell in you, so that by a more perfect indwelling he may make you perfect" (*Homilies I John*, 8, 12, pg. 326). In Christian theology, God commands that all persons be loved selflessly because there is the belief in the dignity of the individual person. How, then, are people to love equally all men? Augustine answers by saying that one cannot perform good deeds to all people in the world. This is simple fact because the only Being who can universally do good to all is God. The emphasis for human beings, in Augustine's answer, is that they must pay special regard to those people whom they meet by circumstances (*On Chr. Doc.*, 1, 28, pg. 23-24): those living around them, those people

at church with them, poor people on the streets, etc. These are the neighbors whom Christians are to love most immediately by their deeds.

There is a high level of emphasis placed on the word “deed” in Augustine’s notion of Christian love or charity. In his eighth homily on 1 John, Augustine spends a great deal of time talking about charitable deeds being higher in importance than charitable words. He says:

Love is a sweet word, but sweeter the deed. To be always speaking of it is not in our power: for we have many things to do, and various businesses draw us in different ways, so that our tongue has not leisure to be always speaking of love: as indeed our tongue could have nothing better to do. But though we may not always be speaking of it, we may always keep it.³³

This is typical of life: words carry some weight but actions carry a greater weight. The maxim “Actions are stronger than words” rings true for many people. As will be shown later in this chapter, Augustine is very sensitive to inauthentic love, or love for an ulterior motive and/or love only in word; he wants people to manifest it in their actions, not simply profess it by their words. People cannot always talk about love but they can always act charitably. This is not to say that one is always out actively performing the corporal works of mercy, though. Augustine seeks an interesting combination of moderation yet consistency:

Then, brethren, this I would say, this I do say, this if I might I would not leave unsaid: Let there be in you now these works, now those, according to the time, according to the hours, according to the days. Are you always to be speaking? Always to keep silence? Always to be refreshing the body? Always to be fasting? Always to be giving bread to the needy? Always to be clothing the naked? Always to be visiting the sick? Always to be bringing into agreement them that disagree? Always to be burying the dead? No: but now this, now that....Let charity within have no intermission: let the offices of charity be exhibited according to the time. Let “brotherly love” then, as it is written, let “brotherly love continue” (Heb. 13:1)³⁴

³³ Interestingly enough, the regular source that I am using for Augustine’s homilies on 1 John does not contain the entire text of his 8th homily. This particular quote is from Homily 8, Ch. 1 as found on New Advent. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/170208.htm> Accessed 3 February 2016.

³⁴ Ibid: Homily 8, Ch. 3.

Augustine therefore demands that charitable actions must be directed to the circumstances as persons encounter them in their lived experiences. Unless one is a doctor, one cannot always be with the sick. However, when one knows a person who is sick or encounters a sick person, one is thus able to manifest true Christian charity in that interaction, if one is diligent. Throughout one's entire life, though, there needs to be a consistent spirit of authentic, manifested charity.

Consistency of charity flows outward into various groups of people. Geographically, the Church is spread out throughout the nations. This is evident in Acts of the Apostles when Jesus is about to ascend: "...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The apostles were given prime opportunity to witness at Pentecost, when the apostles were presented with the gift of tongues in order to preach the Word to people of all groupings present in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-13). Augustine recalls these two scenes to mind and preaches Christian global communion, not sectarianism. He exhorts his audience that, if a person is a Christian, he must be in communion with the Church that has as its root the city of Jerusalem: "...he {Jesus} loved that city and had compassion on it: therefore he said that the preaching of himself should begin from Jerusalem" (*Homilies 1 John*, 2, 3, pg. 271).

One thus sees both a call to a global Catholic communion with a particular emphasis on charity to those whom are encountered in daily living. Augustine has yet another piece of the puzzle: the flow of love. He preached: "It {love} must needs, like fire, first seize upon what is nearest, and so extend to what is further off. A brother is nearer to you than any chance person...Extend it to the unknown, who have done you no ill. Pass even them: reach on to love of enemies."³⁵ Augustine knows that his followers might naturally pose the question: "Why do

³⁵ Homily 8, Ch. 4, as found on New Advent. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/170208.htm> Accessed on 10 February 2016.

we have to love our enemies?” It is certainly not an easy thing for people to accept and even harder for them to manifest in their daily lives. Even love of neighbor can, at times, prove difficult to bear.³⁶ In history, movies, literature, etc., there is the relatively common occurrence of the enemies becoming friends. This is what Augustine hopes for enemies in this life. He exhorts that Christians should love their enemies and wish that they would become brothers in the Christian faith. One need not love the enemy for what he is; rather, one ought to love him for what he should be, which is an equal sojourner in the Christian faith on the road to salvation.³⁷

Augustine makes the analogy about a doctor:

How do physicians love them that are sick? Is it the sick that they love? If they love them as sick, they wish them to be always sick. To this end love they the sick; not that they should still be sick, but that from being sick they should be made whole. And how much have they very often to suffer from the frenzied! What contumelious language! Very often they are even struck by them. He attacks the fever, forgives the man. And what shall I say, brethren? Does he love his enemy? Nay, he hates his enemy, the disease; for it is this that he hates, and loves the man by whom he is struck: he hates the fever. For by whom and by what is he struck? By the disease, by the sickness, by the fever. He takes away that which strives against him, that there may remain that from which he shall have thanks. So do thou.³⁸

In this way, Augustine instructs his congregation never to hate the sinner, even as one must reject the sin that creates the wall (that is, a lack of communion) between them. If only this wall could be destroyed (i.e. false concepts of Christianity destroyed, idols destroyed, miscommunication restored to true communication, etc.), then enemies could (and should) become brothers in the faith. Augustine equates sin with a fever; it causes the sinner (or sick person) to become that which he is not originally: frenzied, striking out at others, etc. One must patiently heal, not

³⁶ Joshua Marshall Strahan. “An Ecclesially Located Exegesis Informed by Augustine’s *De Doctrina Christiana*.” *Journal of Theological Studies* 6.2 (2012): 223.

³⁷ Homily 8, Ch. 10, as found on New Advent. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/170208.htm> Accessed on 10 February 2016.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Ch. 11.

violently react or condemn. Christ came and healed humanity patiently and humbly; in this way, Christians should bear with the faults of others and be “humble healers.”³⁹

Everything mentioned before (love of God, love of neighbor, love of enemies) occurs gradually on the journey called the Christian life. Augustine viewed it in these terms, and frequently called charity the nourishment along the way. He refers to Christians as the Israelites wandering in the desert, who needed nourishment from God if they were to survive and make it to their promised land. In his seventh homily on 1 John, Augustine preached that “..if you would not die of thirst in this wilderness, drink charity. It is the fountain which God has been pleased to place here that we faint no in the way: and we shall more abundantly drink thereof, when we have come to our own land.”⁴⁰ Love is that which nourishes wayfarers on their journey to God. Why is love “the fountain” and not faith or hope? One reason is that, more than faith and hope, love unites people to God since, as John wrote, “God is love.”⁴¹ The exercise of charity also trains the intellect which further informs the will to desire charity as a way toward God. This is evidenced in the fact that Augustine believed that love is the work of faith. Without that work, faith would be limited in its power; love gives it strength. As one progresses, one should always seek to increase in charity: “By love the heart’s eye must continually be cleansed and strengthened for the sight of that changeless Being, in whose presence the lover may ever delight...” (*Homilies 1 John*, 9, 10, pg. 337).

³⁹ Carmichael: 59.

⁴⁰ Homily 7 is also selectively placed in the standard source. This quote is from a chapter not found in the source, but is from: Homily 7, Ch. 1, as found on New Advent. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/170207.htm> Accessed on 7 February 2016.

⁴¹ Van Bavel. “Love”: 510.

In Scripture, Christ personifies the perfection of love: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:13). Not only did Jesus give humanity these words and this teaching, but he also provided an example to imitate. Augustine wrote that, by dying for humanity, Christ taught his disciples ultimate (and radical) charity. He wrote: “Because Christ came in the flesh in order that he should die for us, and he died for us because he taught the height of charity” (*Homilies I John*, 6, 13, pg. 311). In his time, Augustine would have been well aware of the witness and radical love for God produced by Christian martyrs. They manifested true radical Christian love of God to the point where they were willing to forsake their earthly lives in order to fully witness to Christ and his Church. Due to its status as “perfect charity,” it is relatively self-evident that it takes much labor and exercise in order to attain this level of charity. Augustine says that perfect charity is not present at birth; on the contrary, it needs to be perfected, or completed, during life through constant nourishment (via “the fountain” mentioned earlier) and strengthened (through charitable deeds in everyday circumstances) (*Homilies I John*, 5, 4, pg. 297). These everyday circumstances direct back to Augustine’s theology of signs that should be utilized in order to point the Christian on the path to God. However, humanity is sinful due to the Fall and requires the grace of God in order to be healed and elevated. This naturally means that the whole of Christian life requires constant movement, seeking, and exercise of virtue. Perfection of charity will only come through strengthening that comes from grace. One is not to despair if he is not quite at this level, though. Augustine says that, “Perhaps it {willingness to die for your brother} is already born, but not yet grown to perfection,” and exhorts the people to continue to strengthening it through good works of charity (*Homilies I John*, 5, 12, pg. 301). Radical charity ultimately brings with it salvation, though, so all Christians should aim for that level of progression. Augustine preached: “...to

receive the saving cup, and to call upon the name of the Lord, is to be filled full of charity – so full that not only will you not hate your brother, but you will be ready to die for him” (*Homilies I John*, 5, 4, pg. 296). However, there are many Christians who do not reach, or even aim to achieve, this level of perfect charity. The attainment of perfect charity is an impossibility without union with God. Human nature, weakened by sin, constantly misinterprets what it views as truly good. In this way, humanity cannot completely acquire charity until it realizes firmly that its true *telos* is God as the object of enjoyment.

Inauthentic Love

Augustine expended a great pastoral energy in his homilies, writings, and pastoral work warning against inauthentic love and urging people to reflect on their own lives to see if their love was genuine or self-seeking. What motivates Augustine’s zeal for this topic such that he not only urges people to love but then cautions them about their motives for loving others? The apostle John, as has already been noted, wrote that God is love. To be loving, then, is to be in line with God. The Christian needs to love similarly to how God loves in order that union with God can become effected. This means that the reverse would also be true: to act against love (or simply to not love) is to act against God (*Homilies I John*, 7, 5, pg. 314). Naturally, to act against God would be the most serious sin one could commit. One might not think that, in not loving one’s neighbor, one would be sinning against God; Augustine wants to make sure his congregation is aware of this reality. In the Scriptures, several passages reflect this notion that a failure to love is a sin against God. In Genesis, Cain’s lack of charity results in not only the death of his brother but also the punishment by God (Gn 4). Adam and Eve, likewise, through their disobedience to God, showed lack of love for God through that disobedience (Gn 3). This further shows that sin is also a failure to exercise charity in the proper way.

Charity is a root disposition or virtue from which other virtues flow. For example, an effort to love a person may give way to growth in mercy, patience, or perseverance. In a similar and inverse way, the absence of charity – especially as it becomes a vice – acts as the gate through which other sins are practiced. Thus a lack of charity leads to absences in mercy, patience, or perseverance. This central dispositional quality of love occupies Augustine’s interest and theological commitment. For example, Augustine argues that charity is the sole virtue that can extinguish sin but also notes that pride can extinguish charity (*Homilies 1 John*, 1, 6, pg. 264). Pride is arguably the sin that causes the greatest concern for Augustine (as will be seen in the next chapter) because it distracts from God. Scripture seems to agree with Augustine in his hatred of the vice of pride. The author of the book of Sirach wrote: “The beginning of pride is man’s stubbornness in withdrawing his heart from his Maker; for pride is the reservoir of sin, a source which runs over with vice.. (Sir 10:12-13). This biblical passage makes it clear that that pride derives its origins from man loving that which is not God. Loving that which is not God directly contradicts scripture, Christ’s example, and Augustine’s theology. Augustine draws a direct line from pride to avarice: “For in this the proud soul has passed bounds, and, in a manner, became avaricious.”⁴² The rationale behind this statement is that when one becomes proud, one grasps at that which will allow him to remain at his self-perceived height. In most cases, this inevitably will involve money. The author of the first letter to Timothy wrote: “For the love of money is the root of all evils, and some people in their desire for it have strayed from the faith...” (1 Tm 6:10). Therefore, to briefly use the transitive property of mathematics, if pride leads to avarice, and avarice is the “root of all evils,” it is safe to say that pride will lead to all other sins. Augustine has a solution to the potential intrusion of pride into the Christian soul:

⁴² Homily 8, Ch. 6, as found on New Advent. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/170207.htm> Accessed on 7 February 2016.

humility, which strengthens charity and thus exterminates pride and sin (*Homilies 1 John*, 1, 6, pg. 264). Being humble will allow greater charity to enter into one's life, as he will not seek what is good for himself but what is good for another.

In preaching on the first letter of John, Augustine faced the biblical passage which read: "Children, it is the last hour: and just as you heard that the antichrist was coming, so now many antichrists have appeared. Thus we know this is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not really of our number; if they had been, they would have remained with us" (1 Jn 2: 18-19). The very nature of the word "antichrist" indicates someone who is contrary to Christ; for Augustine, this would take the form of not loving in opposition to Christ's loving nature.⁴³ The frightening nature of this passage from 1 John 2 is that these antichrists emerge from the Christian community, so all should be on their guard. There is also an indirect call to self-reflection. Augustine says that: "...before their {the antichrists} going out, they were not of us; and if that be so, there may be many within who have not gone out and yet are antichrists" (*Homilies 1 John*, 3, 4, pg. 280). Knowing that there could potentially be more antichrists within the Christian community, it seems to be an indirect call to individually reflect and see, not if one is an antichrist, but if one is living a life that is not in accord with the life and teachings of Jesus. Augustine urges people to "question our own heart in the sight of God" (*Homilies 1 John*, 6, 9, pg. 307).

If the fulfillment and end of Scripture is the commandment to love God and neighbor, it can be said that, if one wants to evaluate the quality of one's Christian life, one could reflect on how charitable one has been. Love, or lack of love, will prove whether one is "an antichrist" or a

⁴³ Augustine makes the distinction that the antichrist is simply one who is contrary to Christ. He says that it does not say "ante-Christ," in answer to those whose understanding of the antichrist was one that would come immediately before Jesus's Second Coming. This is found in: Homily 3, Ch. 4, pg. 280.

child of God. Augustine holds the claim that many confess Jesus with their mouth but deny him by their lives. He says that “if we have known, let us love” (*Homilies I John*, 3, 8, pg. 273). It makes sense to argue that, if God is love, and one knows God, one should love in order to align with God. To simply know God is love but not manifest charity in one’s life is nothing. Paul writes to the Corinthians that “...if I have the gift of prophecy, and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge...but do not have love, I am nothing” (1 Cor 13: 2). The interesting part of this verse is the fact that, if one does not have love, Paul does not simply say that one is a bad person; rather, Paul states that the person is “nothing,” that he has no existence. This must mean that authentic existence occurs only in the love of God.⁴⁴ Knowledge of Jesus without love of God is found in another part of the New Testament, particularly in the gospels. Augustine warned that if one has a mind to confess yet not love, that person is comparable to the demons in the gospels (*Homilies I John*, 2, 8, pg. 274).⁴⁵ These demons were well aware of the identity and nature of Jesus, but still they chose to oppose him. Augustine, by making the comparison, reminds people of the gaping danger that accompanies a lack of genuine charity; salvation hangs in the balance. His comparison also justifies his exhortation to interrogate “our own heart” in order to judge how well one loves his neighbor and ultimately God. Augustine further says that the only difference between children of God and children of the devil is the presence of love (*Homilies I John*, 5, 7, pg. 298).

The human heart can sometimes distinguish between loving God as necessary and the neighbor as unnecessary. Augustine refutes this claim because “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is still in darkness” (*Homilies I John*, 1, 11, pg. 267). To truly love God,

⁴⁴ Jerome Murphy-O’Connor. “The First Letter to the Corinthians.” As found in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Ed. Raymond Brown *et al.* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990): 811.

⁴⁵ One finds these demons in Mt 8:28-34, Mk 1:21-28, Mk 5:1-20, Lk 4:31-37, and Lk 8:26-39.

one must love others. Jesus gave humanity the commandment in the Gospel of John: “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (Jn 13:34). God loves all of humanity; so must Christians, if they are to claim to love God properly. This is a commandment to love all Christians, not simply some Christians. God is seen particularly through love because God is love (*Homilies 1 John*, 9, 10, pg. 337). Through this statement, Augustine holds that if one does not love, one is not seeing God. If one does not love his brother, whom he can see, how can he love God, whom he cannot see (*Homilies 1 John*, 5, 7, pg. 299)? Now that Augustine’s theology of proper love has been extensively covered, particularly as it unfolds in the individual, we may now turn to the ecclesiological or corporate implications of love.

Ch. 2: Love as the Catalyst for Ecclesial Unity

Augustine makes the argument that charity is that which builds and strengthens ecclesial unity. This chapter examines his anti-Donatist writings and other ecclesiological texts in order to extract his vision for the nature and mission of the church. This chapter will be divided into two sections: (1) placing Augustine within his North African context and introducing his anti-Donatist positions relating to schism as lack of charity and, as such, unity, and (2) articulating Augustine's ecclesiological thought regarding charity's proper place within the church and the resulting inclusivity it brings to ecclesiology.

North African Ecclesiological Context

The geographical context for most of Augustine's life was Roman North Africa, which had a reputation of its own in both the pagan and Christian worlds. Peter Brown describes it in these terms: "By the third century A.D., the high plains and valleys of the plateau – the old Numidia – where Augustine was born, had been planted with grain, criss-crossed with roads, settled with towns."⁴⁶ Roman civilization had extended into this region and brought affluence. Brown also notes that there were certain features that would characterize it as "Roman": an amphitheater, public baths, etc.⁴⁷ The introduction of Roman civilization also brought a certain level of tension. Brown states: "Yet, even the fully Latinized African of the fourth century remained somewhat alien. The opinion of the outside world was unanimous. Africa, in their opinion, was wasted on the Africans."⁴⁸ In the Christian realm, North African held another reputation, not one of second-class status or unworthiness, but of rigor. Eric Plumer writes that

⁴⁶ Brown: 19.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid: 22.

the Church in North Africa was particularly known for its “intense concern for practical matters of Church discipline.”⁴⁹ For the sake of this thesis, North Africa’s ecclesiastical reputation bears more weight. The theologians Tertullian and Cyprian will be briefly introduced in order to place Augustine in a trajectory of North African ecclesiological thought.

Tertullian (c. AD 150-220) was born in Carthage (what is today Tunisia), and was classically educated and trained in Roman law. Tertullian was born into a non-Christian family and converted later in life. History remembers him as a strict moralist. It also remembers him for his joining the Montanist schismatic group in the last part of his life: their belief in an imminent return of Christ led them to a mentality of ethical rigorism, with which Tertullian sympathize.⁵⁰ He truly believed that the Church was holy (as Augustine also believed, as will be shown later). The difference between the two is that Tertullian believed that all members of the Christian community should also be perfect. Jaroslav Pelikan writes:

There was no controversy over the absolute requirement that the church be holy; that was universally assumed and unanimously asserted, by catholics, schismatics, and heretics alike, as can be seen from the witness of Tertullian. Writing as a catholic, Tertullian boasted that the members of the church alone were without crime; writing as a Montanist schismatic, he scorned the moral compromise which supposed that a member of the church could become superior in holiness through self-indulgence; and he quoted Marcion the heretic as demanding celibacy for sanctity in his church.⁵¹

Tertullian viewed individual ethics as affecting the holiness of the Church, which must be and remain holy. Any sort of “moral compromise” would, as such, compromise the status of the

⁴⁹ Eric Plumer. “The Development of Ecclesiology: Early Church to the Reformation.” As found in *The Gift of the Church: A Textbook on Ecclesiology*. Ed. Peter C. Phan. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000): 28.

⁵⁰ James L. Papandrea. *Reading the Early Church Fathers: From the Didache to Nicaea*. (New York: Paulist Press, 2012): 97-98. Further biographical reading on Tertullian can be found in: John Anthony McGuckin. “Tertullian,” as found in *The Westminster Handbook of Patristic Theology*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004): 324-325.

⁵¹ Jaroslav Pelikan. *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*. Part of his series *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971): 157.

Christian community; hence his strong insistence on required celibacy in order to achieve sanctity. This does not appear to be any kind of field hospital; one rather gets the impression that, for Tertullian, the Church was a boot camp of sorts for saints-in-training.⁵²

Overlapping the last several years of Tertullian's life was the early life of Cyprian (c. AD 200-258).⁵³ Also a native of Carthage, Cyprian was a rhetorician before converting to Christianity around the year 245. Several years later (c. 248), Cyprian was elected as the bishop of Carthage. During the last decade of his life, during which he was the bishop, he witnessed both persecution of the Church and factionalism which resulted from those persecutions. These factions centered around the issue of: "Can the Church readmit those Christians who apostatized during the persecutions?"⁵⁴ Cyprian abhorred schisms and factions within the Church, thinking that the Church mandated unity in and of itself.

In his treatise "On the Unity of the Church" (c. AD 251), Cyprian articulates his thoughts on Church disunity in very strong language. He views the origin of Church unity being the establishment of Petrine supremacy in the gospels: "...He {Jesus} arranged by His authority the origin of that unity, as beginning from one {Peter}."⁵⁵ For Cyprian, the Church spread widely throughout the nations yet was rooted in one place, which was Peter (and by association, the rest of the apostles). Cyprian writes: "Assuredly the rest of the apostles were also the same as was Peter, endowed with a like partnership both of honour and power; but the beginning proceeds

⁵² Plumer: 28.

⁵³ Further biographical reading on Cyprian can be found in: John Anthony McGuckin. "Cyprian of Carthage," as found in *The Westminster Handbook of Patristic Theology*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004): 92-93.

⁵⁴ McGuckin: 92-93.

⁵⁵ Cyprian. "On the Unity in the Catholic Church." As found in *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume 5, Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian, Appendix*. Ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995): Ch. 4, pg. 422. In all future references, this source will be cited parenthetically as such: (*On Unity*, ch. #, pg.)

from unity” (*On Unity*, 4, pg. 422). This is something like what Roman Catholics continue to believe today: the unbroken apostolic succession of the bishops that traces its way back to the original apostolic community. This allowed the Church to spread widely yet remain one in unity. Cyprian referred to this phenomenon in multiple ways: “As there are many rays of the sun, but one light; and many branches of a tree, but one strength based in its tenacious root; and since from one spring flow many streams,...yet the unity is still preserved in its source” (*On Unity*, 5, pg. 423). This is his view of the Church: as being found in many places yet having a common root or source. What, then, happens when people break from this common root?

Cyprian answered this question by continuing his metaphors:

Separate a ray of the sun from its body of light, its unity does not allow a division of light; break a branch from a tree—when broken, it will not be able to bud; cut off the stream from its fountain, and that which is cut off dries up. Thus also the Church, shone over with the light of the Lord, sheds forth her rays over the whole world, yet it is one light which is everywhere diffused, nor is the unity of the body separated. Her fruitful abundance spreads her branches over the whole world. She broadly expands her rivers, liberally flowing, yet her head is one, her source one; and she is one mother, plentiful in the results of fruitfulness: from her womb we are born, by her milk we are nourished, by her spirit we are animated (*On Unity*, 5, pg. 423).

As such, Cyprian makes the argument that those who break from the Church are not animated by its Spirit, they are not “able to bud,” etc. Those who break away will not be able to produce the fruits of the Spirit and grow in charity. In speaking to the Ephesians, Paul says that, in order to preserve unity, the Christian community must live as “one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism...” (Eph. 4:1-6). It is clear that, for both Paul and Cyprian, one cannot truly be Christian if one is separated from the main Church community, either by individual choice or group affiliation. Cyprian made several statements about this: one cannot claim to hold the Christian faith if he does not also hold the unity of the Church (*On Unity*, 4, pg. 422); whoever is

separate from the Church is likewise separated from the promises of the Church (*On Unity*, 6, pg. 423); one cannot call God “Father” without simultaneously calling Church “Mother” (*On Unity*, 6, pg. 423); and finally, “He who does not hold this unity does not hold God’s law, does not hold the faith of the Father and the Son, does not hold life and salvation” (*On Unity*, 6, pg. 423).

Cyprian’s solution to countering the threat of schism was a rigorous lifestyle for Christians. In this type of Church, “sinful members were to be shunned as well as a host of personal behaviours were to be practiced...sobriety of speech, courage against the world...a life of charity...”⁵⁶ This moral rigor closely aligns with the views of Tertullian, yet opens itself to a life of charity which will be extended by Augustine. Through discipline, the individual Christian would know the identity kept by the church. Discipline also would inhibit the emergence of moral controversy.

During his own time as bishop of Hippo, Augustine had to engage with certain people (i.e. Donatists) who, much like those factions in Cyprian’s time, were concerned with “who is in and who is out” of the Church. The origins and historical narrative of the Donatist controversy can prove convoluted but the main points are relatively uncontested. At approximately AD 311, the church in Africa became divided after a time of imperial persecution.⁵⁷ During this persecution, and persecutions in general, the church consisted of several groups of people.

Robert Markus describes it as such:

Christian people and their pastors had reacted to the measures taken against them by the authorities with differing degrees of determination. There were more and less rigoristic factions, fanatics and prudent compromisers, in many churches. The surrender of copies of the Scriptures to the authorities (*traditio*, “handing over”) by the clergy was generally regarded as apostasy, but a wide range of

⁵⁶ Gaumer: 443.

⁵⁷ Brown: 213.

attitudes existed toward “collaborators,” or those who had failed to make a sufficiently determined stand in the resistance.⁵⁸

This mixed group of Christians and Christian leaders would cause tension in the aftermath of the persecution, as some groups would view other groups as *traditores*, or traitors to the church. The bishop of Carthage during and immediately after the persecution was a man named Mensurius; he had not sought “unnecessary confrontation” with the authorities but had sought peace. As a result of this, he was accused of *traditio*.⁵⁹ Following his death in AD 311, one of his deacons, Caecilian, was consecrated bishop of Carthage, which provided its own set of problems. First, he was ordained bishop by a certain Felix of Abthunga, who, like Mensurius, was accused of *traditio* by the more rigoristic group.⁶⁰ For reasons which will be shown later, the ordination of a person by a supposed *traditore* has severe implications according to the Donatists. Furthermore, as deacon to Mensurius, Caecilian himself had agreed with the measures taken by Mensurius to not provoke more imperial action against Christians. His assent to the conciliatory measures of Mensurius also made Caecilian suspect. Therefore, due to the combination of these two factors, a council was called and Majorinus, a member of the rigoristic camp, was elected bishop of Carthage. This created two bishops for one episcopal region, and schism was born.⁶¹ In AD 315, Majorinus passed away, and Donatus was elected to succeed him. Donatus would serve as the Donatist bishop from 315 until his death in 355. Since he was the first long-term bishop of his faction, the group became identified by Catholics as “Donatists.”⁶²

⁵⁸ Robert A. Markus. “Donatus, Donatism.” As found in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999): 284.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Jae-Eun Park. “Lacking Love or Conveying Love?: The Fundamental Roots of the Donatists and Augustine’s Nuanced Treatment of Them.” *The Reformed Theological Review* 72, no. 2 (August 2013): 106.

⁶¹ Markus: 284.

⁶² Park: 106.

Augustine would not become bishop of Hippo until the end of the fourth century, meaning that Donatus himself had been deceased for roughly forty years by this point. Donatism was a relatively established part of the church in North Africa. However, it had changed. Peter Brown describes the Donatist sect as having withdrawn from the larger world. They refused to be in communion and contact with impure people (*traditores*) and the larger impure society.⁶³ Brown also mentions that the Donatists viewed the church as the “unique source of holiness” with no room for sinners; therefore, radical pruning of the true vine was essential.⁶⁴ By the time of Augustine, the Donatist position had moved from defensive withdrawal to partial offensive pruning. Park writes: “As time went by, such psychological doubt {suspicion of others} was turned into physical behavior; specifically, violent conduct by the most zealous of the Donatist separatists, the Circumcellions or *agnostici* (‘soldiers or fighters for Christ’).”⁶⁵ It might suffice it to simply say for the time being that the Donatists concerned themselves with maintaining a position that only their small group was pure enough to be Catholics, while others (who might have apostatized during persecution) were not true Catholics. Further aspects of this will be articulated at further points in this chapter. However, at the center of the Donatist faction, Augustine saw a lack of charity.⁶⁶

Church unity is fundamentally rooted in the gospel tradition. In the gospels, repentance and the remission of sins was preached throughout the lands and, as Augustine makes clear, this began at Jerusalem (*Homilies 1 John*, 2, 2, pg. 271). In the Gospel of Luke, when he appears to the disciples in Jerusalem, Jesus says: “Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise

⁶³ Brown: 222.

⁶⁴ Ibid: 213.

⁶⁵ Park: 106.

⁶⁶ Ibid: 104.

from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem” (Lk. 24:46-47). This is not a complicated teaching: the Church will begin and go out from the city of Jerusalem; its roots will be in that particular city. To briefly return to Cyprian, the concept of apostolic succession, whereby the bishops trace their spiritual lineage to the original apostles, must mean that the episcopate is rooted in Jerusalem. Communion with this city, then, would become incredibly crucial to the unity of the Church.

The Donatists refused to resume communion with the universal Church, rooted in the city of Jerusalem. Augustine goes so far as to say that the Donatists believe that Jesus only speaks in two languages: Latin and Punic. His rationale for making this claim comes after his exposition of the apostles’ reception of many tongues at Pentecost, indicating that the church speaks in all nations and through all tongues (*Homilies 1 John*, 2, 3, pg. 271). Meanwhile, Christians are well aware that, at Pentecost, the apostles were given the ability to preach in many tongues, indicating that the message of Jesus Christ was (and is) meant for all nations (Acts 2). Lack of communion necessarily means lack of charity, for Augustine. The Donatists were blinded by the darkness due to a certain lack of love by which they no longer can see the mountain that is the Lord and his Gospel (*Homilies 1 John*, 1, 13, pg. 268-269). The mountain, referring to Jesus and the message that he gave in the gospels, rests largely on charity, which brings forth unity. Whenever a person goes out from himself and reaches to another, a unity is created. Through loving neighbor and God, one creates a sense of unity. By saying that the Donatists are blinded, Augustine essentially is saying that they are unable to fulfill the gospel message, which is to be charitable. By isolating themselves in their North African region, the Donatists have separated themselves from the rest of the Christian world; by so doing, they are not tolerating the peace

that comes through communion and charity (*Homilies I John*, 1, 13, pg. 269). Intolerance implies lack of charity in all cases; it is the lack of understanding of another that would otherwise lead to cooperation and charity. Through separating from the universal Church and proving intolerant, the Donatists committed a “most serious evil,” since love and unity are inseparable.⁶⁷

Much like the factions in Cyprian’s time, the Donatists in Augustine’s time were intolerant out of a sense that they were morally superior and purer Christians. Park says that under the pretense of maintaining holiness, they {the Donatists} ignored the most vital Christian virtues of love, unity, and peace.⁶⁸ Augustine would have agreed with this statement wholeheartedly, as he claimed that factions and schisms arose from this very phenomenon. Schismatics like the Donatists claim to be righteous, and also claim to be able to sanctify the sinners. Their claim to be able to sanctify others comes through their insistence on a rigid moral discipline; through their moral structure, people can be sanctified. By this very mentality, it creates a tiered system in the Church structure when all are truly equal in their sin. All saints and apostles claimed to be of the people, not above the people, and they allowed Jesus to intercede for them all, without interceding for “the sinners” themselves (*Homilies I John*, 1, 8, pg. 265). The self-righteous Christian is never to be trusted, according to many people, because he always points out the faults of others without reflecting on his own faults. This serves to not heal but to harm others. Augustine exhorts his congregation: “Be not led astray by those who pretend to justify but in fact mutilate” (*Homilies I John*, 1, 8, pg. 266). In the next chapter, Augustine’s theology of grace will be examined in order to show that all Christians are equal in their sin and, as such, they are all “in this together” throughout the Christian life; nobody should claim to be

⁶⁷ Park: 108.

⁶⁸ Ibid: 109.

above another Christian. That relationship is the pride of which Augustine worries and exhorts against.

In any relationship in which one party views itself in a superior position to the other, there is not love, or if there is love, it is not the proper kind of love that seeks the common good. Augustine makes the claim that a person must love the members of the Body of Christ (i.e. one's fellow Christians), if the believer confesses that love for the Head (i.e. Jesus) (*Homilies 1 John*, 10, 3, pg. 342). It is not a case of "either-or" but rather "both-and." Scripture underscores and makes Augustine's argument plain. One sees in the Gospel the John this verse: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life (Jn 3:16). Why would one confess to love God and not also love that which God loves? For Augustine, and for many Christians, it makes sense that one loves others in order to love God better. Another reason for the "both-and" claim is that Christians are part of what is truly Christ. Maarten Wisse and Anthony Dupont explain it in this fashion: "This identification of Christ with all Christians is a *topos* in Augustine's conception of the Total Christ: head (Christ) and members (Christians, the Church) together form one total Christ."⁶⁹ It not only does not make sense to love God without loving others; it actually bears no fruit whatsoever. Augustine holds that it is useless to praise God as the Head if one are stepping on his fellow Christians as members of that same Body (*Homilies 1 John*, 10, 9, pg. 345). If one returns to the notion in "*On Christian Doctrine*" in which all proper love should direct back to

⁶⁹ Maarten Wisse and Anthony Dupont. "Nostis qui in schola Christi eruditi estis, Iacob ipsum esse Israel: Sermo 122, In Iohannis euangelium tractatus 7 and the Donatist and Pelagian Controversies." *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum/Journal of Ancient Christianity* 18, no. 2 (November 2014): 316.

God, and love of others strengthens love of God, then one sees an interdependence of love that is necessary.

...every man should be loved for the sake of God, and God should be loved for His own sake. And if God is to be loved more than any man, everyone should love God more than himself. Again, another man is to be loved more than our own bodies; for all of these things are to be loved for the sake of God, and another man can enjoy God with us while our bodies cannot do this, for the body has life only through the soul by means of which we enjoy God (*On Chr. Doc.*, 1, 27, pg. 23).

Thus one sees that love of another person not only directs love back to God, but it also furthers and strengthens that love. It is reminiscent of a pilgrimage scenario in which one person might not find the motivation to participate in a pilgrimage alone; it is in the company of a fellow pilgrim that will provide the impetus and courage to continue to the end goal. This is what Augustine means when he said that “our bodies cannot do this” because if humans solely relied on their own strength, that would result in people looking inward, not outward, and love would be directed inwardly, as well.

When referring to the Donatists, Augustine observes not a total lack of charity by members of the movement, rather, they lack a commitment to universal charity. Augustine asserts that the Donatists love those who are in their party, but they do not seek unity (which implies charity) with the universal Church. Loving simply a section of the Church is as equally dangerous as not loving, or valuing, the members of the Body. Augustine suggests that loving only a part of the Church divides it as a consequence. The person who cannot love universally finds himself or herself separated from Body, and if a person no longer resides in the Body, he or she cannot claim Jesus as Head. Augustine writes: “If your love is for a part only, you are sundered: if sundered, you are not in the Body: if not in the Body, you are not under the Head”

(*Homilies I John*, 10, 8, pg. 345). This progression of thought contains harsh language but it is true and necessary. It links back to the previous thought regarding loving the members as part of loving the Head; one cannot love Jesus as Head without also loving his members. To divide from the members is ultimately to divide from the Head who is never separate from his members. In his treatise, *The Correction of the Donatists*, Augustine writes that the Donatists recognize Christ but refuse to recognize His Church as it is proclaimed by Christ (i.e. universal). He says:

They recognize Christ together with us in that which is written, ‘They pierced my hands and my feet. They can tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They put my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture;’ and yet they refuse to recognize the Church in that which follows shortly after: ‘All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee. For the kingdom is the Lord’s; and He is the Governor among the nations.’”⁷⁰

Therefore, the Donatists do not view Christ in a different fashion from the Catholic Christological perspective; their difference occurs in their ecclesiological vision. The Donatists do not view the church as Christ has deemed it: a universal church.

Augustine sees Scripture as guiding believers through the process of viewing the Church as universally-present. In the Pentateuch, God frequently promises to various patriarchs of the line of Abraham that he will grant abundance to his descendants. One example is God’s promise to Isaac: “The Lord appeared to him {Isaac} and said: “...I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and give them all these lands, and in your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessing...” (Gn 26:1-4). God does not simply state that Isaac’s

⁷⁰ Augustine. “The Correction of the Donatists.” As found in *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume 4, Augustin: The Writings Against the Manichaens and Against the Donatists*. Ed. Philip Schaff. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995): Ch. 1, pg. 634. In all future references, this source will be cited parenthetically as such: (*Correction*, ch. #, pg.)

descendants will flourish in Israel; rather, they will bless all nations with their presence. Later in the Old Testament, the author of the book of Malachi maintains that position that the descendants have, in fact, gone to dwell and become the nations: “For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, my name is great among the nations; And everywhere they bring sacrifice to my name, and a pure offering; For great is my name among the nations, says the Lord of hosts” (Mal 2:11). By this point, the people of God have moved to all the nations, where they “bring sacrifice to my name.” Much like the old saying of the British Empire, Malachi holds the position that the sun does not set on the people of God; they are dwelling in the nations, not merely Israel. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul makes it clear that the Church is universally spread through his statement: “..Just as in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing, so also among you, from the day you heard it and came to know the grace of God in truth” (Col 1:6). In Paul’s time, not only is the Church present in the nations, but it is also “bearing fruit and growing.”

One of the most fundamental Scriptural passages to argue for Church universality could be found in the Acts of the Apostles. Before his ascension into Heaven, Jesus told his disciples: “But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Through saying this, Jesus makes it clear that the Church is to be spread throughout the world, if it is not already in other nations. The Church was and is not meant to be contained within a single nation in a single community (much like the Donatists envisioned the Church). Augustine told his congregation that this message of Jesus is weightier than most of his messages because it was his last message before his ascension: much like a dying person’s final wish, Jesus’ last will and testament held a great amount of weight (*Homilies I John*, 10, 9, pg. 346). However, faith in the gospel message is not the only Christian characteristic that is to be spread; charity is also to be

spread among other nations. The commandment to love is a broad one, and charity needs to extend over the entire world in order to reach the universal Church entirely (*Homilies I John*, 10, 8, pg. 345). Augustine views the Donatist position as explicitly opposing this teaching of Jesus to spread faith and charity to all nations. He states: “The word of Christ, the word of the Psalm, that is, of God’s Spirit, proclaims: ‘Thy commandment is exceeding broad.’ And there are men who set the boundary of charity in Africa!” (*Homilies I John*, 10, 8, pg. 344-345). With this line, Augustine shares his view that the Donatists refuse to spread charity among others, but rather keep it to themselves within their faction.

The Church is to be present throughout the nations of the world. It is to be found, as Jesus said, “in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). One sees the geographical dimension of the Church; what about the individual members of these nations who call themselves Christians? Should the Church involve only certain types of people? The Donatists claimed to be sinless members of a church without spot nor wrinkle (*Correction*, 9, pg. 647). As will be seen later, Augustine did not share in this ecclesiological view, nor did he believe the Donatists were sinless. Augustine believed that the Church is present for and as a result of the remission of sin:

Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is the Church. If you ask why, it was to the Church that the word was spoken: ‘I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.’ Where then is this forgiveness of sins extended? ‘Throughout all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’ There is Christ’s word for you to believe (*Homilies I John*, 10, 10, pg. 347-348).

Briefly, the reason for Augustine’s rejection of the Donatist claim about being sinless is that, if one is sinless, one will not think that he needs God (*Correction*, 9, pg. 647). This mentality

would be the one of the ultimate forms of pride and would not result in either charity or unity. Charity comes in the form of humility, and through these two virtues, unity can be achieved through the reaching out to others in love. Humility would also bring one to the realization that one needs God in order to grow in virtue. Through claiming to be sinless, the Donatists reflect a prideful mentality which inhibits moral progression and unity.

Through viewing itself as sinless and superior to other Christians, the Donatists set themselves apart from the universal Church and separate themselves from the Body of Christ. Through their rejection of the universal and institutional Church, the Donatists reject Christ, since Christ is the Head of the universal Church. As such, the institutional Church cannot be said to be different from Christ. After attempting words and writings, Augustine promoted the use of force in order to achieve Christian unity with the Donatists. Park states: “Augustine’s treatment of the Donatists was not based on a destructive or punitive coercion, but on a therapeutic coercion or a nurturable discipline.”⁷¹ However, Augustine was not content to resign himself to division in the Church. He sought reconciliation with the Donatists, and this was a tense part of his life.⁷² Augustine always exhorted this message: “Let us not depart from the way, let us hold the unity of the Church, hold Christ, hold charity” (*Homilies I John*, 9, 11, pg. 338). After having spent a large amount of time articulating how Augustine viewed the Donatists as having an inaccurate ecclesiology, it is now time to examine Augustine’s own ecclesiological view.

⁷¹ Tarsicius J. van Bavel. “Church.” As found in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999): 174.

⁷² Park: 117. The full narrative of Augustine’s attempted reconciliation efforts with the Donatist can be found in Park’s article: 103-121.

Augustine's Ecclesiology – Mystical Communion/Invisible Church

In the midst of the Germanic invasions of the western Roman Empire, Augustine wrote one of his most famous works: *The City of God*. In this work, he describes a twofold sense of Christian cosmology, not quite dualist but close. The perfect society is known as the city of God:

Only in the city of God, whose life is one of total acquiescence in divine revelation, is true justice to be found. Because its pattern is laid in heaven and because its perfect state is achieved only in the afterlife, the city of God is sometimes called the heavenly city; but insofar as, by adhering to Christ, human beings now have the possibility of leading virtuous lives, it already exists here on earth. For that reason it is not to be confused with Plato's ideal city, which has no existence other than in thought and speech.⁷³

Augustine thus acknowledges that part of the city of God is to be found on earth due to humanity being able to adhere to Christ and lead virtuous lives as a result of that adherence. This is what Augustine means when he contrasts the city of God with Plato's realm of the Forms which only exists in the immaterial sphere of existence. The perfect state of the city of God, however, is not on earth but will only be completed at the end of time. The church on earth contains less-than-reputable characters as well as saints, and this slows the progression to perfection. There is movement toward perfection, though. Eugene TeSelle describes the heavenly city as that "from which the cosmos is administered and toward which the faithful strive during their earthly pilgrimage."⁷⁴ One thus sees the notion that the city of God is split between the divine and earthly realms. Many people, misinterpreting Augustine, view his ecclesiology as reflecting a certain sense of "ultraspiritualism," in which the visible Church is ignored in favor of what

⁷³ Ernest L. Fortin. "De Civitate Dei." As found in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999): 199.

⁷⁴ Eugene TeSelle. *Augustine the Theologian*. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970): 269.

would philosophically be known as the Platonic ideal.⁷⁵ However, this particular interpretation is inaccurate; Augustine views the ecclesial reality as being in the two realms, not simply in heaven.

The imperfect society is labelled as the earthly city:

In contrast to the city of God, the earthly city is guided by self-love and lives according to what Scripture calls the flesh. The term “flesh” in this context is not to be taken as referring only to the body and bodily pleasures. It is synonymous with natural man and embraces all of the human being’s thoughts, actions, and desires to the extent to which they are not ordered to God as to their supreme end. It applies not only to the voluptuary, who looks upon bodily pleasure as the highest good, but to all those who place their trust in themselves rather than in God.⁷⁶

The earthly city, as such, operates under the improper love that is directed inward to self instead of outward to others. Love such as this does not fulfill the commandment of Jesus to love God above all else or the neighbor selflessly. The earthly city also is described as the city “into which the evil angels were thrown and in which men satisfy themselves with earthly values or allow themselves to be deluded by false ways of salvation.”⁷⁷ Since it seeks love of the flesh and of the world, its soul is to be found there; it is not directed to God. This is reminiscent of *On Christian Doctrine*, where Augustine discusses in detail the notion of ordering love properly. In the earthly city, there are people who remain disordered in their love, and they are “deluded by false ways of salvation” through which they cannot find God easily.

Many people, upon being introduced to the two cities described in *The City of God*, might optimistically consider the Church as being synonymous with the heavenly city. Augustine

⁷⁵ Michael C. McCarthy. “An ecclesiology of groaning: Augustine, the Psalms, and the making of church.” *Theological Studies* 66, no. 1 (March 2005): 28.

⁷⁶ Fortin: 199.

⁷⁷ TeSelle: 270.

provides a “yes-no” answer, believing that part of the Church was part of the heavenly city. Augustine believed that “the city of God is the Kingdom {of God}, which does not have the limits of time, place, and sphere that the church does. The church partakes both of the earthly city and the heavenly one.”⁷⁸ Naturally, the Church has elements of “time, place, and sphere” as it is located on earth in the course of human history. Augustine views the Church as that part of the heavenly city that is on pilgrimage to its fulfillment in the Kingdom of God. TeSelle describes it as the anticipatory embodiment of the heavenly city that is on an earthly journey.⁷⁹ As such, the Church is a mixture of elements that straddles borders: divine and human, earthly and heavenly, and, as will be noted later, sin and purity. Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ, wrote that the “earthly Church, for Augustine, is only the inferior part of the total Church.”⁸⁰ The Church on earth is, in fact, part of the Kingdom of God, but only in part.

In the writings of Augustine, the notion of pilgrimage is a frequently theme. In his *Confessions*, one reads about his personal pilgrimage to God that took him not only from North Africa to Rome and back to North Africa, but also through astrology, Cicero, Manicheanism, and Neoplatonism. In Augustine’s thought, pilgrimage is not purely geographical; it does not even appear to be primarily geographical. Pilgrimage deals with the soul’s journey, not the body’s journey, to God. In his homilies and treatises, Augustine wishes people to be moved in some way along their journey toward God as the ultimate end or *telos* of their lives. In a corporate sense, though, Augustine views the earthly Church, the Body of Christ and *congregatio fidelium* to following a collective pilgrimage. It is not fulfilled itself; there is still work to be done and

⁷⁸ *Understandings of the Church*. Trans. E. Glenn Hinson. As part of the *Sources of Early Christian Thought* series. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986): 17.

⁷⁹ TeSelle: 270.

⁸⁰ Avery Dulles, SJ. *Models of the Church*. (New York: Doubleday, 2002): 103.

ground to be covered. Only in the eschaton will the church become the church fully united to Christ (*ecclesia triumphans*). In the *City of God*, Augustine speaks of the Church on earth as “that part of it {heavenly city} which is a pilgrim in this condition of mortality...”⁸¹ He further goes on to explain what the Church being on pilgrimage entails:

Therefore, for as long as this Heavenly City is a pilgrim on earth, she summons citizens of all nations and every tongue, and brings together a society of pilgrims in which no attention is paid to any differences in the customs, laws, and institutions by which earthly peace is achieved or maintained. She does not rescind or destroy these things, however. For whatever differences there are among the various nations, these all tend towards the same end of earthly peace (*City of God*, 19, 17, pg. 946-947).

Contrasting the Donatists’ concern for individual purity, Augustine, in this passage, maintains the concept that the Church on earth is a mixture of peoples, in which differences are overlooked. Reading this through the lens of the rest of Augustine’s writings, one can say that the main notion here is charity: the peoples come together, work together, and journey toward God together in a Church built on love and unity. Augustine says that the differences “all tend towards the same end of earthly peace” through which unity is ideally achieved through the institution of Christian charity. Also, through this pilgrimage state, the Church has a definite eschatological nature, in which it is being transformed into the people God designed them to be.⁸² The Church’s purity (and the individual Christians’ purity) will come only through the transformative nature of the Church as it works its way towards God through grace. In the next chapter, Augustine’s theology of grace will reflect the concept of the Christian’s reliance on divine grace in order to justify.

⁸¹ Book 19, ch. 17. Augustine. *The City of God against the Pagans*. Ed. R.W. Dyson. Part of the Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought series. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 945. In all future references, this source will be cited parenthetically as such: (*City of God*, bk. #, ch. #, pg.)

⁸² McCarthy: 29.

The earthly Church is not the total Church. It is, as Dulles notes, only partially the total Church. The question arises as to why? One must first examine the respective natures of the heavenly city, which is the Kingdom of God, and the earthly Church. The main point for the sake of this thesis is that the heavenly city is the dwelling place of only the elect or righteous.⁸³ One can get away with speculating that it is rather difficult to achieve righteousness on earth due to both sin and worldly matters influencing humanity. H. D'Arcy Wood states:

The Church does not exhibit the glory and purity of the city of God because it is tarnished by constant influences from the earthly city with which it lives. This is not so much a defect in the Church as a limitation of its role: its purpose is to struggle with evil both within and without rather than to be a sign of God's final victory.⁸⁴

Wood's statement allows for some amount of consolation to Christians who lament the humanity of their Church, which they wish to be more divine than reality reflects. The earthly Church is not meant to equal the total Church and the Kingdom of God. The earthly Church is in the world, and it must engage the world as part of its purpose and mission.

Once again in contrast to those who view Augustine as an "ultraspiritualist," the truth of Augustine's theology reflects the idea of the Church as having a specific goal and mission in the world. The Church is not to set itself apart from the world and live in an isolated utopia, like many small communities have tried to do in the past, few with success. Rather, the Church is to actively engage and contribute in the world. The main purpose of the earthly Church is to recruit and restore people as citizens of the city of God and, through this recruitment and/or restoration, grant them a foretaste of the joy that is to come at the end of time.⁸⁵ One cannot effectively

⁸³ H. D'Arcy Wood. "The Church: Is It God's City?: An Examination of Augustine." *Colloquium* 3, no. 2 (May 1969): 145.

⁸⁴ Ibid: 146.

⁸⁵ Wood: 145.

engage with people in an attempt to bring the Good News if one lives in isolation from the world. The whole purpose of the Church, as articulated by Wood, requires a level of interaction and contribution on earth, among the peoples, in the cities, etc.⁸⁶ TeSelle explains it in this way:

Therefore the Church, which is allegorically Jerusalem (“vision of peace,” the city that still looks toward Zion, the full “contemplation” of God), is in exile within the earthly kingdom, allegorically Babylon (which means “confusion”). But the policy she follows in her life under exile – worth noting afresh in our own day, with its new Diaspora of the Church – is the one outlined by the prophet Jeremiah (chapter 29): to build homes and dwell in them, to plant gardens and eat their produce, to marry and have sons and daughters, and to seek the welfare of the earthly city, for Jerusalem also shares in its peace even though it is a mere earthly peace. And what Augustine had in mind was not a mere acquiescence in the necessities of sinful humanity. He thought of political life as a *good* – indeed, perhaps the greatest of temporal values, since it seeks to establish conditions of earthly peace based on earthly harmony and justice; the pilgrims toward the eternal City ought therefore to share in its earthly peace and contribute to it.⁸⁷

TeSelle’s interpretation of Augustine clearly articulates the position that the Church is meant to be a part of the earthly city. It is not to be in isolation to the world but is to actively participate in the promotion of “earthly harmony and justice.” However, the Church is not to think of this earthly city as its end, but rather, it is to view the earthly city as that which it can help to build up. Augustine describes the proper way for a Christian to view the interaction with the world:

By contrast, a household of men who live by faith looks forward to the blessings which are promised as eternal in the life to come; and such men make use of earthly and temporal things like pilgrims: they are not captivated by them, nor are they deflected by them from their progress to God. They are, of course, sustained by them, so that they may easily bear the burdens of the corruptible body which presses down the soul; but they do not in the least allow these things to increase such burdens (*City of God*, 19, 17, pg. 945).

One is reminded of Augustine’s theology of signs, as articulated in *On Christian Doctrine*, in this passage from the *City of God*; men of faith use the goods of the earth in order to help them

⁸⁶ Wood: 145.

⁸⁷ TeSelle: 274-275.

along the way to God. They are not to stop at these earthly goods as their final *telos*, but are to be sustained by them so that they may continue on their pilgrimage.

The interaction of the Church with the earthly city is due to its intermingling nature. As stated earlier in the chapter, Augustine believes that the church is to be found both on earth and in the heavenly realm. Therefore, the church must interact with the world since that is where part of it is to be found. Wood states: “Augustine uses as his tool the twin concepts of the city of God and the earthly city and affirms that the two, while opposed to each other, are entwined together in the present age in such a way that they cannot be disentangled or even fully distinguished by humanity.”⁸⁸ It is personal interpretation that the opposition of which Wood speaks refers to the respective teleological difference between the two. If the opposition were total, absolute, and irreversible, the Church would not have any directive or incentive to engage with the earthly city. Augustine himself states that it is advantageous for all people (even those who do not love God) on earth to have peace in the form of harmony and justice. This claim is due to the fact that the two cities intermingle on earth, and Christians can make use of the peace. This is why, according to Augustine, Christians are urged to pray for government officials in their worship (*City of God*, 19, 26, pg. 962). In Scripture, this notion of working to maintain earthly peace is mentioned in the First Letter to Timothy: “First of all, then, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone, for kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity” (1 Tm 2:2). In this way, through maintaining peace and contributing to the wider world, the Christian community would (and will) be able to better exercise its charity and therefore uphold its unity.

⁸⁸ Wood: 143.

Augustine's Ecclesiology – Body of Christ

This unity is ultimately rooted in the notion of the Church as the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ imagery is well-known in the Christian world as a model of the Church, arising as a primary icon for Church in Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 12:12). Augustine states that Christ is the church's Head, and that all Christians should all be one in His one body (Correction, 9, 36, pg. 646). Stanislaus Grabowski noted that "the term 'corpus' during and before the Saint's time, when referred to objects outside of the human body itself, signified realities that need not necessarily be corporeal or material."⁸⁹ The Body of Christ, then, refers to the visible and invisible parts of the heavenly city, the total Church. The essence of the Church is the reciprocal relationship of God and Church; this relationship can be defined through terms of interconnectedness with Christ.⁹⁰ Through the incarnation and passion of Christ, the Church is able to be better united to Christ through his saving action. Through taking on humanity and dying for that same humanity's salvation, Christ capacitated his people to become united to him in a way inaccessible before. Augustine noted in a work on the Psalms that Christ and the Church are "two in one flesh."⁹¹ Reflected in this is the Christological nature of the Church: Christ acts in the Church and, without Christ, the Church is nothing.⁹² While many people might emphasize the divinity of Christ, it is ultimately his assumed humanity that gains for him the title "head" of the Body of Christ; through his Incarnation, he became the head.⁹³ One needs only

⁸⁹ Stanislaus J. Grabowski. "St. Augustine and the doctrine of the mystical body of Christ." *Theological Studies* 7, no. 1 (March 1946): 74.

⁹⁰ Roger Haight. *Ecclesial Existence*. Vol. 3 in *Christian Communities in History*. (New York: Continuum, 2008): 79.

⁹¹ Augustine. *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 142, 3. As quoted in: *Augustinus: Das Antlitz der Kirche*. Trans. Hans-Urs von Balthasar. As part of the *Menschen der Kirche in Zeugnis und Urkunde* series. (Köln: Verlagsanstalt Benziger & Co., 1942): 115. This is my translation of Balthasar's statement: "Christus und die Kirche sind "zwei in einem Fleische."

⁹² Van Bavel. "Church": 170.

⁹³ Grabowski: 75.

look at his redemptive action through his earthly life in order to see this event. As a result of the humanity of Christ condescending in order to redeem the world, the divinity that is of God was also brought down and connected to the humanity of the Church.⁹⁴ Through this unity flows the charity that is of God and becomes fundamental to Christian ecclesiology. One cannot be of the same flesh as Christ yet not share in that love that Christ manifests perfectly.

The Scriptures provide the Church with a plethora of passages related to the Body of Christ imagery. In Paul's letter to the Romans, he writes: "For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another" (Rm 12:4-5). Paul's embracing of diversity through this passage rings clearly: there are differences among the members of the Body of Christ, and that is appropriate to the same degree that not all physical body parts are identical but differ according to function. One thus sees that there is not one particular type of gift or person called to be a Christian above all others; rather, all are called and welcomed when they approach God, and then their neighbor, in love.

In the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul dives deeper into what he views as the Body of Christ. In his letter to the Romans, he wrote briefly that there are varieties in the Body of Christ; in his letter to the Corinthians, he further articulates this point. Paul writes:

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit...But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body...But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have

⁹⁴ Grabowski: 76-77.

the same concern for one another. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy (1 Cor 12:13, 18-20, 24-26).

One sees the emphasis on the requirement, not suggestion, to maintain unity within the Church. The Church needs the presence of every individual Christian believer in order to fully be the Body of Christ; all are needed in the Christian community.⁹⁵ The powerful ending of this passage is reflective of the notion that the Body of Christ is truly interdependent: “If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.” The suffering of one part of the Church affects the rest of its members, since the Church, as a body, is interdependent.⁹⁶ The interdependence derives from the origins of the Church. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor noted: “Diversity is rooted in unity. The different members all share a common existence.”⁹⁷ This common existence naturally is of God; to truly be of God, one must not have division but should have unity rooted in the charity that also flows from God. Augustine took this concept of unity in diversity when he wrote: “God therefore created only one single man: not, certainly, that he might be alone and bereft of human society, but that, by this means, the unity of society and the bond of concord might be commended to him more forcefully, mankind being bound together not only by similarity of nature, but by the affection of kinship” (*City of God*, 12, 22, pg. 533). The unity of mankind comes from this common root in the creation of Adam, enacted by God in human history. Since Jesus has become known (among many other names and titles) as the New Adam who brought about the New Creation, it can be claimed that, just as humanity was rooted in the one person of Adam, humanity is also rooted (on a much deeper level) in the one person of Jesus who redeemed the world and mankind. Looking again at

⁹⁵ Maria A. Pascuzzi. “The First Letter to the Corinthians.” As found in the *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: New Testament*. Ed. Daniel Durken. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009): 531.

⁹⁶ Pascuzzi: 532.

⁹⁷ Murphy-O’Connor: 810.

Augustine's quote, that humanity is bound together "by the affection of kinship," the Christian community is encouraged, even commanded, to love and build unity as a result of this kinship to Jesus who was love and unity.

In the final Scriptural passage that will be analyzed regarding the Body of Christ imagery, one also sees the connection to Augustine's notion of the Church as eschatologically moving toward God. In Ephesians, the author (most likely not Paul) writes: "Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love" (Eph 4:15-16). The exhortation to "grow in every way into him who is the head" reminds one of Augustine's homilies on the First Letter to John, in which the Christian does not already possess the perfection of the Kingdom of God, but is on a pilgrimage of ascension through the exercise of charity. As was said earlier in this section, for Augustine, the Church was eschatological as it was continually being transformed through God's grace. He compared the Church to a winepress in his commentary on the Psalms by saying that the "sweetness of fruit may gradually emerge from its bitter skins."⁹⁸ Transformation indicates imperfection, and the earthly Church is full of both virtue and sin. In the theology of Augustine, this concept comes down through theological history as the Church as *corpus permixtum*.

Augustine's Ecclesiology – Corpus Permixtum

One of the life lessons that I recall well from my childhood was being told: "In every group of people, there are good and bad ones. This is why you should not discriminate against

⁹⁸ Augustine. *Enarrationes in psalmos* 8,1. As quoted in: McCarthy, 27.

any group.” This lesson can be applied to Augustine’s ecclesiology, as he also firmly believed that the Church contained both good, virtuous Christians as well as false Christians. In earlier sections of this thesis, Augustine’s thoughts regarding false Christians were articulated. To briefly re-iterate, he viewed these false Christians as confessing Jesus with their mouths but not with their hearts. These people did not keep to the commandments of Jesus, namely, loving God above all and the neighbor selflessly. Their hearts were directed at that which is not God.

Augustine was rarely an idealist; he saw the Church in its reality. He did not exhort his congregation or his readers to have high expectations for the Church to meet. His rationale was simple: if one views the Church as being highly virtuous or near-perfect, and then sees that it is, in reality, not in keeping with these expectations, one is likely to become disenchanted and not bother with the Church.⁹⁹ Augustine was able to accurately reflect on the history of the Church and realize the humanity of the Church. Roger Haight, SJ, described this history in the light of the legalization of Christianity. As a result of the fourth century legalization (or toleration) of Christianity, membership in the Church increased dramatically as people no longer feared the consequences of membership in the Christian community. However, only a small number of this large influx was genuinely Christian.¹⁰⁰ This appears to be typical of any human organization. In any forbidden or discouraged group, the members are few due to the serious consequences if discovered. With toleration and liberty to join a community or group, though, comes a larger membership, who might not have the depth of inner belief in the group, cause, faith, etc. of that particular group. If it is easy to be a member of something, many will participate. This also means that many will be lukewarm, as John would say in Revelation, because they only

⁹⁹ Van Bavel. “Church”: 172.

¹⁰⁰ Haight: 186.

participate because nothing is truly at stake. Augustine would perhaps view these people as false Christians because their love is not really directed at God; if it were, they would be members of the Christian community even if it was difficult and dangerous to do so.

The nature of the earthly Church accurately reflects the human condition. Just as each individual Christian has good and bad qualities, due to the presence of sin in the world, so does the earthly Church possess both good and bad elements. Tarcisius Van Bavel, O.S.A., describes the comparative approach employed by Augustine in relation to the mixed Church:

This mixture of good and bad in the church is sometimes described by means of very realistic similes. The church is the crippled Jacob with one leg strong and the other weak. The church is the city on the mountain, but also that one lost sheep that the shepherd was looking after in order to bring it joyfully back on his shoulders (*s.* 5.8; 37.2). In the story of Solomon's judgment between the two harlots (1 Kings 3:16-28), one can see two in one house as representing the two kinds of people in one church: one of them dominated by insincerity, the other ruled by love.¹⁰¹

The two aspects of the earthly Church are exposed clearly through the use of these similes. The Church is neither perfect nor without virtue, according to Augustine. Due to its eschatological nature, though, it seeks perfection which can only be found through the grace of God. McCarthy states that the Church groans due to the fact that sinful members are contained within its body.¹⁰² However, the perfection for which the Church seeks will only come at the end of time. The church continues to move toward God since, despite its mixed nature, it continues to have Christ as Head to guide and direct it through its pilgrim journey.

In the pattern of the Fathers of the Church, Augustine relied heavily on the Scriptures while formulating his theological principles. To better understand his concept of the Church as

¹⁰¹ Van Bavel. "Church": 172.

¹⁰² McCarthy: 26.

corpus permixtum, it is prudent to also see what the Scriptures have to offer. The Gospel of Matthew provides key passages for understanding the mixed nature of the Church, as well as for understanding the eschatological implications of this particular nature. In the third chapter, John the Baptist says: “His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire” (Mt 3:12). This image of the eschatological harvest does not need heavy explanation as it is relatively clear: at the end of time, the righteous will be separated from the unrighteous. Augustine himself preached that there must be both wheat and chaff on the “threshing-floor of the Lord” in order to maintain unity in the earthly Church (*Correction*, 4, 16, pg. 639).

A parable from the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew will further give witness to the nature of the mixed church. Jesus first shares this parable to the crowd surrounding him:

He {Jesus} proposed another parable to them. “The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off. When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. The slaves of the householder came to him and said, “Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?” He answered, “An enemy has done this.” His slaves said to him, “Do you want us to go and pull them up?” He replied, “No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, “First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn” (Mt 13:24-30)

This parable of the weeds among the wheat is a powerful expression of the mixed church. In his twenty-third sermon on the New Testament, Augustine explicates this parable to his congregation. He begins by noting who the major characters are in this parable. Jesus is the man who sowed the good seed in the field, which is the entire world.¹⁰³ For the Donatists, who

¹⁰³ Sermon XXIII. Augustine. “Sermons on New Testament Lessons.” As found in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Volume 6, Augustin: Sermon on the Mount, Harmony of the Gospels, Homilies on the Gospels*. Ed. Philip

claimed that the true Church only existed within their own boundaries, it is interesting to speculate how they would interpret this parable. However, Augustine, as well as the larger Catholic tradition, is clear and insistent that Jesus sent his disciples to spread his word throughout all the nations. Pasquale Borgomeo stated: “Elle consiste à dire que, dans le plan de Dieu, l’Église est répandue sur toute la terre,” or, “That is to say that, according to God’s plan, the Church is widespread throughout all the earth.”¹⁰⁴ The enemy who mixed weeds among the wheat, for Augustine, was Satan, who is the deceiver of souls on earth. Finally, the last major characters are the harvesters, which represent the angels that will come to sort the people in the eschaton (*Sermon 23*, 1, pg. 334).

Due to the role of the angels in sorting the wheat from the weeds, Jesus in his parable and Augustine in his sermon both exhort Christians not to take this role upon themselves. In today’s Church, with a multitude of controversial topics in the air, many people view themselves as the judges and the sorters. The Donatists, in their day, definitely considered themselves the standard by which others are to be judged. It is personal interpretation, by no means authoritative, that the slaves in the parable who were upset and wished to root out the weeds could be equivalent to those in the Donatist community who view themselves as righteous. However, once again, nobody is to sort but God and his angels by proxy. Why should Christians avoid the work of judging and sorting? Augustine reminds his congregation and his readers that nobody should consider himself righteous enough to judge others. He notes: “That time will come, may it only find you wheat!” (*Sermon 23*, 1, pg. 334). Augustine preaches here of the eschaton, and hopes

Schaff. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995): 334. In all future references, this source will be cited parenthetically as such: (*Sermon 23*, section #, pg.)

¹⁰⁴ Borgomeo, Pasquale. *L’Église de ce Temps dans La Prédication de Saint Augustin*. (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1972): 140. (My translation)

that his congregation will, at that time, be the wheat which is saved during the harvest. He hopes because he ultimately does not know the fate of anyone, even himself; the same is true of everybody, for nobody may be completely certain of his salvation. All rests on Christian hope which comes through the exercise of love in the world. The conversions of many people, including Augustine, came from “impulses of the Spirit.”¹⁰⁵ These impulses would be an external phenomenon and, as such, others would not be able to fully and accurately judge if and to what extent that Spirit-induced impulse occurred. Therefore, all should be patient, tolerating the bad and seeking to imitate the good until the winter passes away and the summer (eschaton) arrives (*Sermon 23*, 4, pg. 335). Seeking to imitate the good implies that one might not be imitating the good in the present. For Augustine, the present life is a time for repentance; the weeds of the present day can become the wheat of the eschaton. The notion of loving one’s enemies so that they may one day become one’s brothers, surfaced in the first chapter of the study, rings true here, as well. Furthermore, all are encouraged to exercise a level of introspection in which to discern how well one is living the Christian life according to the commandments of Jesus, which are to love God and neighbor (*Sermon 23*, 3, pg. 334-335). Otherwise, if a person does not look inside his soul to discern his current state, but instead looks outward as a judge, that person is inclined to fall prey to the sin of pride. For Augustine, as was seen in previous sections, pride constitutes the worst sin. Also, if one looks outward as a judge, due to human weakness, that person might pull a piece of wheat that he thought was a weed (*Sermon 23*, 4, pg. 335). Finally, the act of judging others threatens to compromise one’s charity and the regular habit of loving others selflessly. According to 1 John, if one does not love, one does not know God (1 Jn 4:8). In this way, people can be deceived quite easily into thinking

¹⁰⁵ Haight: 162.

they are wheat while others are weeds. Nobody can truly know while all need love and mercy from others and ultimately from God.

An important concept in many modern social justice movements is “coexistence.” This is the notion that all people possess basic human dignity; it is the notion that nature and human civilization equally need protection from the dangers of humanity, etc.¹⁰⁶ In Augustine’s ecclesiology as reflected in the concept of the *corpus permixtum*, there is also discussion of coexistence. As is the case with many words such as “coexistence,” there are categories of it. Augustine believed that physical coexistence was required; the good and the bad should live together in the world and work together so as to maintain unity in the Church.¹⁰⁷ As was seen in Augustine’s *Sermon 23*, it is neither a person’s job nor duty to judge others, for that is the role of God. If Christians would usurp this role, it inevitably leads to further division, tension, and even violence in the Christian community. These unfortunate circumstances would not promote Christian unity and certainly would not reflect the proper exercise of Christian charity, as is commanded by Jesus in the gospels. A second category of coexistence is that of spiritual coexistence. This is less encouraged by Augustine. Spiritual coexistence seems to mean the sharing of virtues and principles between peoples. Augustine exhorts his congregation to detach themselves from the evil in their hearts.¹⁰⁸ As such, the good people in the Christian community would certainly not want to take into consideration the values which the less good people hold firmly (i.e. love of the world).

¹⁰⁶ Modern social justice movements dealing with the concept of coexistence include migration, diversity, etc.

¹⁰⁷ Van Bavel. “Church”: 173.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

Augustine's Ecclesiology – Connections to His Sacramental Theology & Grace

The final aspect of Augustine's ecclesiology that promotes a loving and inclusive Christian community draws heavily from his sacramental theology, particularly regarding the sacrament of baptism. Through his sacramental theology, one will notice Augustine's concept of grace flowing through it, calling inclusivity to the forefront. During two periods of Augustine's life, his theology of grace was utilized clearly. The earlier, yet certainly not immature, phase of Augustine's thoughts on grace came through his anti-Donatist writings (390s-400s); the later phase came through his anti-Pelagian writings (410s-420s).¹⁰⁹ This present section deals with the first phase; the thesis's final chapter explores the later phase in order to get a sense of how Augustine's theology of grace continued to influence his ecclesial sense of unity and charity.

In the Donatist community, there was a strict view of the nature of sacraments, particularly baptism and orders. The Donatists believed that if a priest or bishop separated himself from the true Church during a time of persecution or through the event of a schism, he has lost the ability to properly exercise sacramental ministry.¹¹⁰ The implications here are vast, but they can be summarized in the point that, for the Donatists, individual purity was required in order to have a pure Church. However, this overlooks a vital point: it is almost impossible to be pure without the grace of God to elevate and motivate. Thus, one sees two "bed-rock principles" of Donatists theology being (1) salvation through membership in the pure Church and (2) the untainted minister being the one who "can confer positive sacramental actions."¹¹¹ The final

¹⁰⁹ Anthony Dupont and Matthew Gaumer. "Gratia Dei, Gratia Sacramenti: Grace in Augustine of Hippo's Anti-Donatist Writings." *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 86, no. 4 (December 2010): 307-308.

¹¹⁰ Maureen Tilley. "De Baptismo." As found in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999): 91.

¹¹¹ Dupont: 312.

point to be made about Donatist theology is their stance toward baptism. The Donatists did not believe that the Catholic Church “had” baptism since it contained sinners. In one of his anti-Donatist works, “On Baptism,” Augustine states: “That baptism exists in the Catholic Church, we {Catholics} assert and they {Donatists} deny.”¹¹² The implication here was that Catholics who joined the Donatist schism would be re-baptized upon entering. However, it was not viewed by the Donatists as “re-baptized” because, in their mind, these people were not validly baptized in the Catholic Church.¹¹³ If the Catholic clergy were incapable, in the minds of the Donatists, to properly perform the sacraments, there never was a valid baptism.

Against these Donatist positions, Augustine continued to develop a sacramental theology as well as an ecclesiological vision that countered and corrected the Donatist schism. With regard to the Donatist notion of the purity of the individual minister being a requirement for proper sacramental action, Augustine offered a firm refutation. He warned against putting too much trust and hope in man. He states: “Therefore, whosoever places his trust in man, even in one whom he knows to be just and innocent, is accursed” (*Petilian*, 1, 3, pg. 521). Naturally, one’s trust is to be placed in God, redeemer and source of the necessary grace for salvation. The Scriptures also encourages God’s people to place their hope in God, not man. The Psalmist writes, “Better to take refuge in the Lord than to put one’s trust in mortals” (Ps 118:8). The prophet Jeremiah gave this warning: “Thus says the Lord: Cursed is the man who trusts in human beings...” (Jer 17:5). Finally, Paul writes to the Corinthians in his first letter: “Was Paul

¹¹²Augustine. “On Baptism.” As found in *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume 4, Augustin: The Writings Against the Manichaens and Against the Donatists*. Ed. Philip Schaff. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995): Bk. 1, Ch. 3, pg. 413. In all future references, this source will be cited parenthetically as such: (*Baptism*, bk #, ch #, pg.)

¹¹³ Augustine. “Answer to Letters of Petilian.” As found in *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume 4, Augustin: The Writings Against the Manichaens and Against the Donatists*. Ed. Philip Schaff. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995): Bk. 2, Ch. 25, pg. 545. In all future references, this source will be cited parenthetically as such: (*Petilian*, bk #, ch #, pg.)

crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Cor 1:13). These three passages clearly expound the notion that God rather than the human person constitutes the locus of trust and hope for salvation. Due to sin (both original sin and on-going personal sin), human nature is too weak and damaged to be trusted with the enormity that is salvation. God is greatly needed in order to redeem the world.

Augustine writes that Petilian, the Donatist bishop of Constantina, made the claim that a person who has not led a life of innocence cannot therefore lead a life of holiness. As a result, Augustine asks the question of how Petilian received the authority to determine the holiness of a person, and further goes on to say that a person can, in fact, be holy without innocence. He says: "Here you see that Saul had not innocence, and yet he had holiness – not the personal holiness of a holy life (for that no one can have without innocence), but the holiness of the sacrament of God, which is holy even in unrighteous men" (*Petilian*, 2, 48, pg. 559-560). His rationale for this statement about Saul is that, if Saul were not holy in some way, David would not have had reverence for him (*Petilian*, 2, 48, pg. 559). One sees throughout Christian history men and women who were imperfect yet holy. Paul underscores this reality when he writes: "...for when I am weak, I am strong" (2 Cor 12:10). A section of this argument regards Christians who apostatize from the Christian community or split in a schism. The Donatists, as stated above, viewed these people as having lost their sacraments in these acts. Augustine compared the marks of the sacraments, such as baptism, to marks made by the Roman military upon its soldiers. William Harmless, SJ, describes this military action:

Second, Augustine claimed that baptism marked one as belonging to the flock of Christ in an indelible way, what he called the "dominicus character." The

analogy he often appealed to was a military one. Roman soldiers received a brand, known as a *stigma* or *puncta*, on the back of the right hand.¹¹⁴

This military metaphor was mentioned in *On Baptism* in the context of whether or not the Donatists practiced valid baptism; Augustine claimed that the sacramental mark can happen anywhere. This is why he also claims that the military mark can be made by those not in the military; it still is the same mark (*Baptism*, 1, 4, 5, pg. 414). However, one can also argue that Augustine would feel the same way about Christians who were baptized in the Church, apostatized, and later returned. Their sacramental mark would have remained throughout this time. He writes that even apostates retain their grace of baptism, just as ministers would retain their grace of holy orders (*Baptism*, 1, 1, pg. 411-412). If one sacramental mark remains, they all remain, even in apostates. Therefore, if they return to the Church, they are not re-baptized and re-ordained; they are simply welcomed back.

It might sound strange to some people that the sacramental signs of baptism and holy orders would remain in one who left the Church, even if that same person had returned at a later time. One might make the comparison to a legally married couple; if one or the other leaves and the legal bond is broken, one cannot simply come back, but re-marriage is required to re-instate a legal bond of marriage. However, this comparison operates in the world of man-made laws and customs. The sacraments, according to Augustine, do not operate solely in the realm of man but come from Christ himself. Augustine makes the claim that the Catholic Church acknowledges the presence of baptism within the Donatist schism (*Baptism*, 1, 3, 4, pg. 413). Given this affirmation of the presence of baptism, the Donatists had put the question to Augustine as to why, then, Catholics continued to urge Donatists to return to the Catholic Church. Augustine

¹¹⁴ William Harmless. "Baptism." As found in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999): 89.

provided a simple enough answer: the Catholic Church acknowledges the presence of baptism in the Donatist schism because baptism is ultimately from Christ, not the Donatists. Therefore, they cannot claim it as their own (*Baptism*, 1, 14, 22, pg. 421). This is the same answer that Augustine gives to Petilian when Petilian claims that Donatist baptism is valid while Catholic baptism is invalid; nobody owns the sacrament of baptism for it comes to mankind from Christ (*Petilian*, 2, 2, pg. 530).

Since the sacraments truly come from Christ, the sacramental life of the church necessarily involves inclusivity, love, and unity. The grace of God is able to flow into the Church regardless of the worthiness of either the minister or the members of the Church.¹¹⁵ Nobody is expected to be perfect, but all are expected to strive to love God and one another as Jesus commanded. It is through the grace of God, not individual human efforts, that believers are ultimately led to the road to salvation. Holiness and the “availability of grace” ultimately do not depend on external human acts but on “God alone and manifested in the charity given by God. It is the sign of charity that evinces God’s grace and salvific presence in the Church’s sacraments.”¹¹⁶ This recalls the words of John in his first letter, which Augustine commented on at length and was discussed in the first chapter of this thesis: “Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). Through authentic charity comes unity in the Church and the revelation that God dwells in the individual person. However, as is said, this charity does not come from the person but is part of the grace given by God. This grace-caused charity also is the proof needed in order to find God’s “salvific presence” in the sacraments. What, then, can be said of the Donatists, who do not have charity or unity? Do they properly have the sacraments

¹¹⁵ Dupont: 319.

¹¹⁶ Ibid: 318.

which they guard so fiercely from the rest of the Christian community? Augustine answers that they can perform the sacraments, but they are not able to receive the fruits of the sacraments due to their lack of charity.¹¹⁷ Augustine says that “it is one thing not to have {baptism}, another to have so as to be of no use” (*Baptism*, 4, 17, 25, pg. 458). One sees here the difference between the presence of the sacrament and its effectiveness. In the Donatist schism, the presence of baptism is there; however, outside of the Catholic Church, its effectiveness is lacking. To compare baptism again to the military mark, it would be comparable to one receiving the mark outside of the military; one has the mark but it does not mean one is in the military.¹¹⁸ This returns the focus briefly to the notion of Christ as the Head of the Church, which is his body. Christ is the head of the baptized, who brings grace and faith to them (*Petilian*, 1, 6, pg. 522). Christ also is the one who truly makes the sacraments holy, as has been seen. Since Christ is the Head of the Church, and the sacraments come from him, one cannot separate the sacraments from Christ or his Church.¹¹⁹

The minister, however, still retains an important function. If ministers were totally useless, there would be no need of them. Augustine views them as instruments of God through which grace is poured through the sacramental actions. The ministers do not own the sacraments so their individual level of purity does not matter; the only thing that matters is the presence of God in the sacrament.¹²⁰ Augustine compares it to the concept of light: “Would you indeed maintain that, while the light of the sun or of a candle, diffused through unclean places, contracts no foulness in itself therefrom, yet the baptism of Christ can be defiled by the sins of any man,

¹¹⁷ Harmless: 89.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Emmanuel Cutrone. “Sacraments.” As found in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999): 743.

¹²⁰ Tilley: 91.

whatsoever he may be?" (*Baptism*, 3, 10, 15, pg. 439-440). Augustine is saying here that the light produced its source does not become profaned when it flows through something else. Likewise, the grace of the sacraments, which is effected by Christ as source, cannot be profaned when it flows through the minister, regardless of interior spiritual disposition. The main lesson here is summarized in this line: "Wherefore, whether a man can receive the sacrament of baptism from a faithful or a faithless minister, his whole hope is in Christ..." (*Petilian*, 1, 6, pg. 521). Through this emphasis on Christ as the source of grace, charity and unity are welcomed and encouraged in the Christian community. Dupont and Gaumer state: "In reaction against the Donatist condemning, exclusivistic, elitist and nationalistic interpretation of *ecclesia*, Augustine developed his forgiving, inclusive, and universal view of the Church."¹²¹ In the next, and final, chapter, Augustine's later theology of grace, developed against the Pelagians, will further reflect his inclusivity and universality in the Body of Christ, the Church.

¹²¹ Dupont: 311.

Ch. 3: Grace as Inclusivity

The first chapter of this thesis introduced Augustine's theology of charity with its stress on the fundamental presence of charity in the life of the individual Christian as well as the wider Christian community. The second chapter laid out Augustine's ecclesiology in a way that reflected his conception of charity in the life of the Church as being not simply a suggestion, but a duty (*debitum*). The final chapter expositis Augustine's later theology of grace in order to show that his inclusive theology continued to develop as he proceeded to encounter new pastoral situations throughout his episcopate.

Augustine's theology of grace falls into two chronological categories. The previous chapter sketched his early theology of grace as it informed his anti-Donatist writings and the notion that the universal need for grace cancelled out the purification requirement of the individual Christian ministers. In the 410s and 420s, however, Augustine develops a more in-depth theology of grace through his interactions with a new interlocutor. His writings during this period largely were directed toward Pelagius and the related movement of Pelagianism. As a consequence, his theology of grace becomes less concerned with sacramental theology, and more concerned with anthropological issues in the Church. However, this mature theology of grace further informs Augustine's ecclesiological thought through providing a lens into the human person that shows true equality of being in nature and equality in a common need of divine grace.

Pelagius – Grace Simply Aids the Person

A brief overview of Pelagius’s theology of grace provides important context for understanding Augustine’s contrasting position. Relatively little biographical information survives on the person of Pelagius. It is commonly held that he was raised in Roman Britain, traveled to Rome as a young man, and stayed there for a large portion of his life. A life of ascetic practice coupled with intellectual activity was to be his vocation as a Christian; he was a layman but frequently spoke with travelling monks and priests about the major theological issues of the day.¹²² Pelagius’s writings focus heavily on issues related to free choice and human nature. A controversy in Rome regarding issues of “death, sin, and the purpose of baptism” took place in the early fifth century, and it is in the context of this controversy that Pelagius’ views took public form.¹²³

In his work *On Nature & Grace*, Augustine records some of the theological positions of Pelagius as he seeks to offer counter-positions.¹²⁴ Another source for the theology of Pelagius is to be found in his “Letter to Demetrias,” written in AD 413 to a young woman preparing to enter the celibate life.¹²⁵ For the scope of this thesis, these two works will serve as indicators of Pelagius’ thought regarding sin, grace, human nature, etc. After introducing that theology, the

¹²² Brown: 341.

¹²³ Eugene TeSelle. “Pelagius, Pelagianism.” As found in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999): 633-634.

¹²⁴ Augustine. “On Nature & Grace.” As found in *The Fathers of the Church: St. Augustine, Four Anti-Pelagian Writings*. Trans. John Mourant and William Collinge. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1992): 3-90. In all future references, this source will be cited parenthetically as such: (ONG, ch #, pg.)

¹²⁵ Pelagius. “To Demetrias.” As found in *The Letters of Pelagius & His Followers*. Trans. B.R. Rees. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1991): 29-70. In all future references, this source will be cited parenthetically as such: (Demetrias, ch #, pg.) This letter is being used in this thesis because of its specific agenda; Pelagius is exhorting Demetrias to look within herself for the strength needed to persevere in religious life, thus diminishing the role that grace would play.

focus will turn to Augustine where he will offer a counter-position that will inform his ecclesiological thought. With the issue of nature and grace, it is reasonable to begin the discussion with the topic of sin. For Pelagius, sin was not a substantial concern for the human condition. Augustine quotes Pelagius as saying:

First, he says, we must dispute the view which maintains that our nature has been weakened and changed through sin. I think, therefore, that before all else we must inquire what sin is. Is it some substance, or is it a name wholly lacking substance, by which is expressed neither a thing, nor an existence, nor some kind of body, but the action of doing something evil? Then he adds, I believe it is the latter, and if it is, he says, how could that which lacks substance have weakened or changed human nature? (ONG, 19, pg. 36)

Pelagius makes the argument saying that sin does not have any substance. Something without substance cannot harm anything else. To give an example, if a sword was only a name, it would not kill. A sword can only kill because it has material substance. Sin, for Pelagius, is merely “the action of doing something evil.” Therefore, since sin has not inflicted harm on humanity, Pelagius believes that humanity is not truly fallen. The implication here is that sin thus becomes simply an extrinsic reality, not an intrinsic one that would prove more damaging. Human nature remains good because God is good and his works, likewise, are good. Furthermore, mankind is especially good because he was created in God’s image and given dominion (*Demetrius, 2.2, pg. 37*). Pelagius essentially asks the question, “How can something created by a good God become bad?” His answer, as given above, is that humanity is not wounded internally by sin. Sin does not have a substantial hold on humanity since it is without substance or form; it is merely action. Through this answer, one clearly sees that, for Pelagius, there is a high and positive view of the doctrine of creation that reflects a high view of divine perfection.

Even though sin did not internally damage human nature, the presence and extrinsic effects of sin are still realities for Pelagius. He does not argue that sin does not exist; rather, he merely asserts that sin does not affect human nature. Original sin, for instance, is a theological position that came out of North Africa during Augustine's time. Pelagius and his followers believed that if infants were sinful, it was due to their own sin, not the sin of Adam.¹²⁶ This directly flows into Pelagius' view on how humanity is sinful if not by nature. Since God is good and his creation is good, Pelagius claimed that it would charge God with injustice if one spoke about humanity as having fallen into an incapacitated state of sin.¹²⁷ If humanity is fallen into a state of sin, one might argue that God either made a mistake or was not powerful enough to create a permanently good creation. Neither of these positions would be aligned with orthodox Christian theology, so the question of how humanity interacts with sin is an important one. Since one cannot justifiably charge God with injustice, his creation must remain good by nature, according to Pelagius.

Pelagius emphasizes the free choice of the will as central to human nature. A person has the natural and inviolable ability to will either to sin or not sin, making the act of sinning a voluntary action.¹²⁸ If something is voluntary, it is reasonable to claim that it is not inevitable. All good and evil actions are voluntary, as Pelagius writes: "The books of both Testaments are full of evidence of this kind, wherein all good, as well as all evil, is described as voluntary" (*Demetrias*, 7, pg. 43). Original sin, on the contrary, holds that sin is inevitable because humanity fell as a result of the sin of Adam. Pelagius said that the sin of Adam did not cause humanity to fall; rather, it instilled in humanity an inclination toward sin. However, this does not

¹²⁶ TeSelle. "Pelagius, Pelagianism": 634.

¹²⁷ Martha Ellen Stortz. "Pelagius Revisited." *Word & World* 8, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 136.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

entail that humanity is inherently sinful.¹²⁹ There is always the possibility for man to do either right or wrong (*Demetrius*, 8.1, pg. 43-44). The possibility to exercise the free will in such a way as to choose right or wrong, virtue or vice, is what elevates humanity. Pelagius states: “..this very capacity to do evil is also good – good, I say, because it makes the good part better by making it voluntary and independent, not bound by necessity but free to decide for itself” (*Demetrius*, 3.2, pg. 38). For Pelagius, the voluntary action of choosing the good is made even better by the simple fact that humanity can also choose evil. The free will of man is not lessened through necessity; the will is not forced by necessity to sin. Man thus has it fully in his own nature to choose not to sin. As stated above, though, the sin of Adam, while not wounding humanity, did incline humanity toward willing to sin. Sin thus becomes, not a necessity or inevitability, but a habit. According to Stortz, humanity encounters the “influence of forgetfulness and ‘carnal custom,’ a bondage one creates for oneself.”¹³⁰ Sin comes from the individual actions of the person, not the nature of humanity. Pelagius writes: “Nor is there any reason why it is made difficult for us to do good other than that long habit of doing wrong which has infected us from childhood and corrupted us little by little over many years and ever after holds us in bondage and slavery to itself, so that it seems somehow to have acquired the force of nature” (*Demetrius*, 8.3, pg. 44). In this passage from his letter, one sees that Pelagius can understand why Christians believe that sin has become an inherent part of human nature. However, he uses the verb “seems” to indicate that sin has, in fact, not infiltrated human nature. Sin only appears to have become part of nature through its frequent presence. The habit of sin for Pelagius does not equate with the permanent damage done to human nature in the theological doctrine of original sin. Augustine writes that the Pelagian position claims man is sinful by

¹²⁹ Stortz: 137.

¹³⁰ TeSelle: “Pelagius, Pelagianism”: 635.

choice, not nature, and this reflects the Pelagian position that man can be sinless through nature and proper exercise of the will (*ONG*, 7, pg. 27).

In the Scriptures, Pelagius saw reason to believe that humanity possessed the ability to exercise its free will in such a way as to choose the good, not the evil. In the Old Testament, he saw men praised for their uprightness and holy living. For instance, Abel was viewed by Pelagius as being without sin; this is the rationale by which God accepted his sacrifice and not the sacrifice of Cain. Pelagius writes: “Abel was the first to follow this mistress {sinlessness} and so served the Lord that, when he offered him a victim, his sacrifice was so gratefully received by God...” (*Demetrias*, 5.1, pg. 40). In *On Nature & Grace*, Augustine mentions this point made by Pelagius. He writes:

But perhaps even Pelagius observed this and for that reason went on to say: *Let us admit that in other times, because of the large crowd [of people who existed] , Scripture passed over the task of narrating the sins of everyone. However, in the very beginning of the world, when there were only four people, how do we explain, he asks, why it did not choose to mention the sins of all? Could it have been because of the great number of people who did not yet exist, or because it preserved the memory only of those who had sinned, and could not preserve the memory of him who had not indeed sinned?* He makes additional comments in order to explain more fully and clearly his thought: *Certainly, he says, it is written that first in time only four persons existed: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel born from them. Eve sinned – Scripture tells us that. Adam also sinned – the same Scripture makes this clear – and in like manner it also testifies that Cain sinned. And not only does it mention their sins, it also tells the nature of their sins. If Abel also had sinned, Scripture undoubtedly would have said so, but it has not said so; therefore he did not sin, but on the contrary it shows him to have been just. Therefore let us believe what we read and let us consider it wicked to add that which we do not read* (*ONG*, 37, pg. 55).

Through this quote, Augustine records how Pelagius interpreted these early chapters of the book of Genesis. He apparently had noticed that the Old Testament is rich with narratives recording the sins of people: Adam and Eve, Cain, Saul, David, etc. This led him to notice that certain

other men were not recorded along with their sins; the omission of their sins in the Scriptural narrative resulted in Pelagius claiming that these men were sinless. For example, he also believed that Noah and Lot were sinless (*Demetrias*, 8.2, pg. 44).

Abel, Noah, and Lot were all men from the Old Testament, as is common knowledge. Pelagius rhetorically asked the question: if these men are reported to have lived such holy lives before the time of Christ, how many more may live holy lives now that Christ came to his people? (*Demetrias*, 8.2., pg. 44). While Pelagius appears to have viewed Jesus as savior, he emphasizes Jesus' exemplarity regarding proper Christian living, but not necessarily as one who needs to assist his people. Augustine wrote: "But perhaps Pelagius thinks that the name of Christ is necessary so that we may learn by his gospel how we ought to live, but not so that by his grace we may also be helped to lead good lives" (*ONG*, 40, pg. 57). At this point, it becomes relatively clear that Pelagius views humanity as capable of choosing the good over the sin. Augustine claims that Pelagius glorified God as creator to the point that he undermined Jesus as Savior (*ONG*, 34, pg. 51). In his theology, God created humanity as good and it continues to be good; therefore, why does anyone need to assist that humanity in achieving what is already within its natural reach?¹³¹ However, Pelagius does believe that humanity can be "encouraged by his {Jesus} example to pursue perfect righteousness" (*Demetrias*, 8.2, pg. 44).

Pelagius holds that humanity is inherently good and is able, through proper exercise of free will, to choose the good in life. However, there is still a role for grace in Pelagian theology. Pelagius claims that humanity is as such that, due to the presence of free will, it does not need

¹³¹ In Stortz' "Pelagius Revisited," she makes the argument on page 136 that Pelagius emphasized God as Creator to the extent that he did in an effort to counter what he viewed as pagan pluralism and vestiges of Manichean dualism in the city of Rome.

ransomed. There is a natural sanctity in creation, according to Pelagius, given by God. Augustine wrote: “..for they {Pelagians} defend human nature in such a way as to say that free will might not need such ransom in order to be delivered from the power of darkness...” (*ONG*, 24, pg. 41). This is to say that Pelagius did not believe that grace was needed in order to capacitate humanity to choose the good; the presence of the free will already allowed for that decision-making ability. However, grace is needed when a person sins. When an individual person chooses to sin, divine grace is required. Augustine discusses this thread of Pelagian theology as follows:

Observe very carefully how Pelagius says, *No doubt God applies his mercy to this function, if at some time it should become necessary, because after sin man requires this kind of help, not because God wished that there should be a cause for such a need.* Do you not see how he says that the mercy of God is necessary, not in order that we should not sin, but because we have sinned? Then he adds, *In a similar manner, it is the duty of a physician to be ready to heal a man who is now wounded; however, he ought not to wish that a man who is sound should be wounded* (*ONG*, 26, pg. 43).

Through this thought, Pelagius articulates the position that mercy and grace are needed to heal the individual soul after choosing to sin, not restore humanity from a state of original sin.

What does all this Pelagian theology imply for ecclesiology? Due to the fact that the individual person carries great responsibility in the proper exercise of their free will, Pelagius appears to lay great weight on the potential for human beings to be fully righteous or sinless through their own free exercise of the will. Stortz notes that Pelagius held a perfectionist image of the Church in which Christ has already died for his people; therefore, sins have already been forgiven. As such, only the pure should be present in the Church.¹³² In proper Pelagian theology, Christians should naturally be able to choose the good, using Jesus as the ultimate

¹³² Stortz: 138.

example in their lives. In advising Demetria in how to successfully pursue the vowed life of a celibate woman, he exhorted her to recognize in herself her own natural strengths (*Demetria*, 2.1, pg. 37). In so doing, he was advising her to look inwards at herself in order to find the strength needed in order to find fulfillment in her vocational journey. Augustine would not view this positively; he saw much greater need for grace, both in individual Christians and in the Church. It is from this greater need of grace that love and unity flow in Augustine's ecclesiology.

Augustine – Grace as Necessary

Augustine's theology of grace counters, almost point-by-point, Pelagius' positions on matters of sin, nature, and grace. It will serve as a reminder that Pelagius believed that sin was an action, not a substance. Since sin was not a substance, he argued that it could not harm humanity. Augustine's retort to this argument is as follows:

Since we have already learned that sin is not a substance, let us consider whether abstinence from food is also not a substance. One indeed abstains *from* a substance, since food is a substance. But to abstain from food is not a substance – yet nevertheless if we abstain entirely from food, the substance of our body languishes and is so impaired by frailty of health, so exhausted of strength, and so weakened and broken with weariness... (*ONG*, 20, pg. 37)

Sin, therefore, is not a substance; on this point, Augustine and Pelagius are in agreement. Sin cannot be a substance because that would imply that God created it; sin is thus an absence of substance that deteriorates that which should be good by nature. The disagreement occurs over the issue of whether an action can harm. Augustine says that it can harm humanity, and he equates the effects of sinning with the damage abstaining from food can cause. Without food, the body cannot continue to live in a normal and/or proper fashion, even though the act of not eating is not a substance in itself. Rather, it is the body not receiving a substance that causes the

harm. With abstaining from food, the food is the substance which is rejected. What is the substance rejected when it comes to sin? Augustine answers: “Likewise, sin is not a substance, but God is a substance, the supreme substance, the only true nourishment of the rational creature” (*ONG*, 20, pg. 37). In the act of sinning, the individual person does not receive the “supreme substance” that is God. To give a brief Scriptural example, in the Book of Genesis, Adam and Eve are disobedient and sin against God; they refused the substantial teaching of God and were led into sin. This sin creates an absence of proper rationality and authentic charity, and corrupts that which God has created. The thought process behind the notion of sin being a disconnect from the source of nourishment can be traced, with regard to Augustine, to his Neoplatonic influences. In Neoplatonic cosmology, the universe is set up in an ordered set of hierarchical emanations: the inferior levels are always dependent on their superior levels for guidance, nourishment, aid, etc.¹³³ Likewise, humanity comes from God and is forevermore dependent upon God for guidance and nourishment.

Augustine adds another dimension to his treatment of sin when he discusses the reality of original sin, which Pelagius rejected wholeheartedly. Augustine writes: “In the beginning man’s nature was created without any fault and without any sin; however, this human nature in which we are all born from Adam now requires a physician, because it is not healthy” (*ONG*, 3, pg. 24). The original humanity was sinless, according to Augustine, yet is now sinful and in need of a physician (i.e. Jesus, divine grace). The Fall of humanity is narrated in Genesis 3, and its “primary manifestation” in human nature comes in the form of concupiscence, which is broadly

¹³³ J. Patout Burns. “Grace.” As found in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999): 391.

defined as the dislocation of desires.¹³⁴ As has been said throughout this thesis, the heart has been confused, due to sin, and does not know what is ultimately good for it. Its vision has been distorted and it often seeks the creature rather than the Creator. To refer back to Augustine's theology of signs, as found in *On Christian Doctrine*, this would indicate that humanity has enjoyed the signs that they were simply to use on the journey to God. For Augustine, this corrupted nature began with the Fall of humanity into sin that is recorded in Genesis. William E. Mann summarizes Augustine's theology of original sin succinctly when he writes:

Adam and Eve's fall ushered into the world *original sin*, which is not an event but rather a condition. It is the condition imposed by God as punishment on Adam and Eve for disobedience. According to Augustine the condition includes dispossession from a naturally perfect environment, the loss of natural immortality and the acquisition of susceptibility to physical pain, fatigue, disease, aging, and rebellious bodily disorders, especially sexual lust. The condition is not only pathological, it is inherited, infecting every descendent of Adam and Eve. The condition is innate, not acquired; as Augustine puts it, it is transmitted by propagation, not imitation. Augustine's view, then, is that our first ancestors squandered their patrimony and our inheritance and – as if that were not bad enough – thereby contracted a suite of infirmities that is passed on to all their progeny.¹³⁵

The first section of this passage is highly significant: “Adam and Eve's fall”, “condition imposed by God as punishment on Adam and Eve for disobedience.” From these two excerpts, one can argue that original sin, as such, is due to the fault of man, not God. Man brought this sin upon himself through his actions, and it spread to his descendants. Humanity was originally created with the intelligence and desire only for God as the ultimate object of love.¹³⁶ With the Fall, that intelligence and desire were distorted. However, it was not completely destroyed; there is still

¹³⁴ Peter Burnell. *The Augustinian Person*. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005): 73.

¹³⁵ William E. Mann. “Augustine on evil and original sin.” As found in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*. Ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 47.

¹³⁶ Burns: 396.

good within humanity. Augustine says that all good qualities (virtues, for example) come from God; all bad qualities (sin, vice, etc.) come from that original sin brought about by man (*ONG*, 3, pg. 24).

Pelagius argued for the possibility to be sinless by extracting holy men from the Old Testament such as Abel, Noah, and Lot. Since the Scriptural record did not mention their sins, Pelagius viewed this as evidence that these men did not, in fact, have sin. Augustine argued against this, saying that the only man to not know sin was Jesus Christ. He writes: “..no one is found who is said without sin except him alone of whom it is openly said, ‘him, who knew no sin.’” (*ONG*, 15, pg. 31). This line comes from Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, whereby Paul says: “For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor 5:21). The author of the letter to the Hebrews also writes: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15).

Since Jesus is the only person to have not known sin, the opposite is also true in that everyone else knows sin on some level. All have sinned in their lives at some point. Augustine writes: “For they {humanity} are not without sin, either that which they contracted originally {through Adam} or that which they added through their own misconduct” (*ONG*, 4, pg. 25). The question becomes: “Can humanity save itself?” Pelagius answered that individual persons could become sinless if they set their heart and mind to the task; grace was needed only as a means of forgiveness, not assistance. Augustine answered this question, counter to Pelagius, with a resounding “no.” He utilizes a heavy argument that would disarm most Christian thinkers: “If this could have been done or can be done {humanity saving itself}, I also say what the Apostle

said about the law: ‘Christ died in vain’” (ONG, 2, pg. 24). Simply stated, if humanity could save itself, then Jesus had no necessary reason for having died and resurrected to save humanity. Once again, the opposite must also be true: “But if he did not die in vain, then human nature can in no way be justified and redeemed...unless through faith and the sacrament of the blood of Christ” (ONG, 2, pg. 24). Pelagius also emphasized the role of free will in being capable of choosing the good and not the sin. Regarding the role of free will, Augustine says: “...however, to descend into sin, that free will, through which man corrupted himself, was sufficient, whereas to return to justice he needed a physician, since he was sick, he needed a giver of life, since he was dead” (ONG, 23, pg. 40). This means that humanity is not ontologically or naturally able to heal itself; it requires a physician. One also sees here that man chose to “descend into sin.” Augustine believed that the will was corrupted to the point of no longer being able to easily move towards that which is good.¹³⁷ Without the capability of the will to easily choose the good, one required help in order to progress to a state of sinlessness. Augustine writes: “For we do not deny that human nature can be without sin, and we ought not in any way to deny that it can become perfect, since we admit that it can make progress, but only by ‘the grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord’” (ONG, 58, pg. 75). Only divine grace can lead humanity out of its current state of sin, and this grace comes through Jesus Christ.

J. Patout Burns, in writing about Augustine’s notion of grace, defines grace as “that divine operation in angels and humans through which they are moved to know and love God.”¹³⁸ This definition alone shows that grace comes from God and enables humanity to begin its journey toward God in love and knowledge. Man cannot do this by himself. Grace is also not

¹³⁷ Marianne Djuth. “Will.” As found in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999): 883.

¹³⁸ Burns: 391.

earned by the merits of man; it is given freely as a gift, hence the term “grace” from *gratis* (*ONG*, 4, pg. 25). If grace could be earned in any way, then Pelagius would be correct in saying that the will is capable of choosing the good by itself, thus earning its reward. Eleonore Stump describes the impact of the law on the will, and how grace figures into that interaction:

In his controversy with the Pelagians, he {Augustine} emphasizes the point...that post-Fall human beings are unable to will not to sin unless their will is aided by grace; but he argues that God gives grace to the intellect and will of a person who desires it. By his grace God gave the law, so that people might know what they should do, and that, knowing it, they might ask God for help in doing it.¹³⁹

Through the giving of the law, God provided humanity with the ability to learn the proper way to live and love. In its current state, humanity is unable to live up to those expectations and commandments. Through grace, people should recognize their current status and seek divine assistance so that they may progress in the Christian life. Once a person desires this, as shown above, God grants the further grace needed to begin that journey to God and proper living. Grace, as such, first disposes the will and then moves it to desire for God. A natural outcome of this process is humility, as one comes to the knowledge of one’s own limitations and sins.¹⁴⁰ Through humility, people can grow in love of neighbor and God as they seek the ultimate good while being conscious of the reality that they need others for aid and elevation.

To those who are moved in faith to Christ, repent for their sins, and seek for that divine grace which can heal and assist them, God grants the “indwelling of the Spirit.”¹⁴¹ Through this indwelling of the Spirit, divine grace is able to transform the person through instilling love in the

¹³⁹ Eleonore Stump. “Augustine on free will.” As found in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*. Ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 134.

¹⁴⁰ Joseph Lam Cong Quy. “Revelation, Christology and Grace in Augustine’s Anti-Manichean and Anti-Pelagian Controversies.” *Phronema* 28, no. 2 (2013): 144.

¹⁴¹ Burns: 397.

heart.¹⁴² Divine grace thus reorders the intellect in such a way that it can see and desire what is properly good for it; charity is a natural part of this reordering of the will because grace elevates and heals the person's nature so that it can do what it was originally designed to do: love. This love given through grace is the essential component in Augustine's theology. Augustine quotes Romans 5:5 when he writes: "For this 'charity of God is poured forth in our hearts' not by the letter of the law, but 'by the Holy Spirit, who is given to us'" (*ONG*, 57, pg. 74). In the first chapter of this thesis, Augustine's notion of charity as the fundamental Christian virtue was discussed. This charity, an outcome of divine grace, comes to people through the Holy Spirit through which they are led to "moral progress and knowledge of God" as the ultimate source and object of love.¹⁴³

After having recognized one's limitations and desiring (and receiving) the grace which brings forth charity, the Christian begins the journey of faith toward God. This inevitably entails a lifelong struggle in which the person is constantly striving to do the good, not the bad.¹⁴⁴ In modern Christian theological terminology, one can say that the indwelling of the Spirit and the manifestation of charity are signs of justification; the lifelong journey of faith in which the person is challenged to be virtuous can be likewise defined as sanctification. It is the wish of God that all people achieve salvation; however, he does not seek to alter free will in order to cause that effect.¹⁴⁵ For this reason, sanctification through life is essential. Once the grace is given, the Christian has to choose to cooperate or not with the grace given by God. However, for Augustine, this cooperation does not equate with earning grace; the free gift of grace comes

¹⁴² Quy: 144.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Burns: 397.

¹⁴⁵ Burnell: 84.

before the need for cooperation. This cooperative element to God's grace can be best shown through acts of genuine charity, as was discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. Genuine charity is charity shown to God and to neighbor without ulterior motive and with God as the ultimate object of that love. It is the desire and effort, with the aid of grace, to re-order the desires after sin disordered them. Augustine writes:

And again, 'Love is the fullness of the law.'...The paths are hard for fear, easy for love. Thus the beginning of love is the beginning of justice; progress in charity is progress in justice; greater charity is great justice; perfect charity is perfect justice; but it is 'the charity from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith,' which in this life is the greatest...(ONG, 69-70, pg. 89).

Grace brings about the love that is needed in order to fulfill the law. Augustine above states that one's level of charity equals one's level of holiness in the Christian life. In terms of Augustine's ecclesiology, grace reminds Christians that they are all in need of divine help. Nobody is able to say to another, "You need more grace than I do" or even "You need grace but I do not."

Everyone is, to use a common phrase, "in the same boat." Augustine's theology of grace reflects the need for humble recognition of human limitations, the acknowledgment that God alone can save, and the realization that the Church as such cannot be expected to be perfect while on earth. Through grace, charity is instilled in the human heart; through charity, people seek God through unity with God and neighbor in the Church.

Conclusion

This thesis seeks to better articulate Augustine's ecclesiology, particularly focusing on the role of charity in building up unity, while also showing the role that grace has in reflecting Christians' common need of divine assistance in the Church. These were large issues for Augustine. Throughout his episcopate, Augustine was heavily involved in controversies with other parts of the Church. In the early part of his episcopate, he dealt with the North African Donatist controversy, in which he had to defend the universality and unity of the Church. Later on, he dealt with the more wide-spread Pelagian controversy, where he had to defend God as the sole Savior and giver of grace which is needed to elevate, not simply forgive. In these controversies, and also in his theological musings, often informed by these controversies, Augustine developed the notion of charity as the fundamental Christian virtue by which unity is better achieved. Charity is the gift of the Holy Spirit by which people progress toward God. This entails unity with God's Church through charity because unity with God comes through charity, and God is not separate from his Church. This unity, built up by the virtue of charity, is impossible without that gift of divine grace which re-orders the desires from creature to Creator, from idol to God. This sometimes complex interplay is key to Augustine's ecclesiology, and he defends this interconnectedness always. However, charity is the connective tissue that builds up the Church and the individual Christian. Charity is also open and inclusive, not self-seeking and inauthentic. The Church is much larger than the Donatist purist sect; Christians require grace much more than Pelagius thought. This can only mean one thing for Augustine: Church unity requires the recognition that the universal Church is a mixed body in which all members require grace, not judgment, and love, not hatred.

In the introduction to this thesis, the four marks of the Church were listed and briefly described: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. At this point, it can prove interesting to list them again, and describe how Augustine would perhaps speak about them. The Church is “one,” indicating its foundation in the person of Christ. Augustine believed in the image of the Church as the Body of Christ, the individual Christian believers as members with Christ as head. Christ as the head indicates that he is the guiding force in the Church, which reflects the notion that his teachings are the main guides for believers. Charity would naturally be one of the top virtues to be found in the teachings and parables of Christ, so it makes sense to say that charity would be a high priority in Christ’s Church. The Church is also “holy,” proving its dependence on Christ, not humanity, in order to maintain a level of holiness. Through sin, the intellect and will of humanity has been corrupted, meaning that sin has become a necessity. Christ’s grace is needed to both elevate humanity, re-order the intellect and will, and maintain holiness in the Church. “Catholic” is the third mark, and in this mark, one notices that universality of the Church. Christ commanded that the gospel message was to be spread among all nations. Augustine saw this as a clear ecclesiological reality, one which the Donatists did not acknowledge. Finally, the fourth mark is “apostolic,” in which Augustine held that the Church was firmly rooted in the city of Jerusalem, where the apostles ministered in the early days of Christianity. In order to be a member of the Body of Christ, one had to be in communion with the city of Jerusalem, where Christ said his Church would begin before spreading out to the other nations. These are the four marks of the Church, and Augustine argued these marks forcefully.

The Church, characterized by these four marks, becomes a field hospital in which divine grace is made manifest in charity. All Christian believers are in need of grace in order to be healed and elevated. This grace comes through the movement of the will to desire God, and

grace is subsequently found in the Church through sacraments, prayer, etc. Humanity can do nothing to truly merit this grace; it is freely given in the sacraments and by God. Through grace, the will and intellect may once again do what they were originally created to do, which is be charitable and love authentically. In the Church, this is the manifestation of Christian discipleship and identity. When one has received that divine grace which instils the virtue of charity, one begins a life of sanctification, in which the exercise of charity becomes a daily opportunity and duty. Through the exercise of charity, people build bridges among each other, and unity is built and strengthened. For Augustine, ecclesial unity is to be found in the exercise of charity, which is established through the giving of divine grace by God. Only charity can build up ecclesial unity; without charity, unity is not authentic.

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