DISGUST AND THE DONATIST CONTROVERSY: EXAMINING THE ROLE OF DISGUST IN AUGUSTINE'S *LETTERS*

by

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ABSTRACT

Disgust and the Donatist Controversy: Examining the Role of Disgust in Augustine's *Letters*

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During Augustine's early years in ministry, he promoted the idea of using the pen rather than the sword when it comes to converting those who were not Christians. However, during the Donatist Controversy, Augustine advocated the use of violence to convince the Donatists to return to the Catholic fold. This dissertation argues that disgust played a crucial role in Augustine's change of heart. Emotions play a huge part in an individual's decision-making process. Studies on disgust discuss its role in interpersonal conflict and in religious violence. The dehumanizing language present in Augustine's letters when he describes the Donatists helps create an atmosphere where disgust's strong presence can be felt. The question of purity became an important question since both groups argued that they were the "true, pure Church." Both groups traced their spiritual lineage to Cyprian as proof that they belonged to the true African Church. By examining Augustine's *Letters*, one can see the shift in tone and characterization of the Donatists by Augustine. Over the years, the disgust felt by Augustine led to a shift in his attitude, leading him to sanction the use of violence against the Donatists. Initially, the role of

disgust was to prevent humans from coming into contact with harmful pathogens. As a result, humans developed a strong revulsion against harmful substances in order to protect themselves from harm. While disgust has this physical component, it also has a sociomoral component where it manifests itself against disgusting stimulus. Within this schema, anything that it deems as a moral transgression, especially as it involves question of purity, is considered as a stimulus to be avoided and rejected strongly and vehemently. While it poses no problem for a human to avoid what it deems as a disgusting stimulus such as a cockroach, it does pose a problem when another human being is seen and labelled as a cockroach. Disgust has the power to "other" human beings and creates a very strong us-vs-them mentality. Once this us-vs-them mentality is enforced, it is only natural to label another group as a "cockroach" and kill them as such. In examining Augustine's relationship with the Donatists, it is important to acknowledge disgust's role in this particular theological and historical event. This dissertation will conclude with a contemporary application of disgust in modern theological controversies, especially as it relates to homosexuality and the role of women in leadership. Disgust's ability to elicit such a strong and violent response in humans is a reminder of the strength of emotions to govern our actions.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

To say that Christianity has had its fair share of controversies and violence as a part of its history would be an understatement. There are numerous events in the two thousand years of Christian history that highlight this reality. The Donatist Controversy is one such event that had a long-lasting impact on the North African church. Primary knowledge of the Donatists comes from Augustine and his dealings with them. Yet, when Augustine joined the fray, he was already entering an eighty-year-old ongoing debate. What motivated and sustained the animosity between the two groups?

While the Donatist Controversy has been examined through theological and social lenses in the past, this dissertation explores the role of emotions in this historical theological event. This dissertation examines the role of disgust in Augustine's relationship with the Donatists. In the beginning of Augustine's ministry, he did not advocate the use of violence against those who believed differently from him, whether they were Jews or Donatists. Later in his ministry, he advocated for the use of state violence against the Donatists. This dissertation argues that disgust played a significant role in the development of Augustine's political and theological attitude against the Donatists. Disgust has been implicated in promoting moral and social barriers that seeks to clearly delineate who are the in-group and out-group members of the community. Those who form the out-group members are treated harshly, and in certain cases may even lead to expulsion and extermination. Examining Augustine's relationship with the Donatists during the Donatist Controversy can bring new insights as to how an

individual's embedded theology can be affected by the intersection of psychology and theology.

To better understand the Donatist Controversy, this chapter addresses the North African context, both from cultural and theological lenses. It addresses issues of theological diversity within the region as well as the cult of martyrdom that played a significant role in the North African church's identity. Lastly, it provides an overview of emotions and their role in the decision-making process. By establishing the important role of emotions in how humans make decisions, one can make a clear and direct association as to how disgust played a role during the Donatist Controversy. It will also show how disgust continues to play a role in modern theological controversies, especially as it relates to the issues of homosexuality and the role of women in leadership in the church.

The North African Context

J. E. Merdinger notes that "the North African church during the late fourth and early fifth centuries was the second most powerful church in the West."[1] From this land came great Christian thinkers like Augustine, Cyprian, and Tertullian. Christianity flourished. "At the height of the Roman period, North Africa had been a jewel in the imperial crown."[2] While it may be difficult to provide the exact time when the church in North Africa started, there is evidence that suggests that by 200 CE, there were established Christian communities in the land.[3] Hugh Kennedy states that "by the beginning of the fifth century

[1] Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, ix.
[2] Merrills and Miles, *The Vandals*, 1.
[3] Nickerson, *A Short History of North Africa*, 30.

North Africa was as firmly Christian as any other area of the empire."[4] The robust theological enterprise that happened within the North African church is further proof of its important role in the development of Christianity as it spread all over the world.

The theological vivacity that was exemplified by this region lies in complete contradiction to its current state. The Islamicization of North Africa has radically changed the North African theological landscape. "It was . . . in Alexandria, with its substantial number of Jews as well as Greeks, that an aberrant Judaic sect began to develop into the new religion of Christianity with its claim on a universal allegiance."[5] It is worth noting, and perhaps it cannot be adequately emphasized that "Christianity was firmly established throughout North Africa long before it made significant headway in western Europe."[6] The thought that Christianity is a distinctly Western religion is so markedly different from the truth. Christianity's roots lay in the Orient, and it is in the Orient where most of the theological controversies regarding Christianity arose. "Many of the most notable protagonists in the formulation of the new religion were Africans . . . It was out of the controversies in which they played such leading roles that there eventually emerged the major branches of the Christian church that remain to this day."[7] A quick examination of what would be considered as Christianity's orthodox beliefs and doctrines can be traced back to the councils that took place in Africa, by African Christians. "The idea that Christianity is more a religion of Europeans than of Africans would in fact have been totally impossible prior to the rise of Islam, the other great world

[4] Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests*, 202.
[5] Fage, "Introduction," 7.
[6] Fage, "Introduction," 7.
[7] Fage, "Introduction," 7.

religion derived from the Semitic peoples' attachment to monotheism."[8] Christianity, as it is currently practiced today, would not be where it is, nor would it believe what it believes, without acknowledging its enormous debt to the North African church as it engaged with questions that had and still continue to have theological ramifications to this very day.

What, then, is the story of North Africa? How did North Africa become a theological powerhouse? The history of North Africa is a history of colonization. The faces may change but the actions remained the same. The Phoenicians "were established on the coast of North Africa."[9] They "colonized a much greater area of North Africa than the Greeks, and their influence on Africa was probably more profound as well as being more widespread."[10] Carthage, a key North African city, was founded by the Phoenicians. This city would prove to be a centre of culture and learning in the Mediterranean world. "Carthage itself was a great city, with a population estimated by one ancient writer somewhat improbably as 700,000, more conservatively by modern scholars as perhaps up to 400,000."[11] However, with the downfall of Carthage, and Rome's reticence in extending her reach, "effective power in North-West Africa passed for a century and a half" to the Numidians and Mauretanians.[12] When Mauretania was annexed in 40 CE, it effectively brought "the entire coastal area of northern Africa . . . under Roman rule."[13] North-West Africa's Roman colonization started in 122 BCE when it became the proposed site to settle Roman citizens who did not own any land from Italy in previously

[8] Fage, "Introduction," 7.
[9] Law, "North Africa in the Period of Phoenician and Greek Colonization," 117.
[10] Law, "North Africa in the Period of Phoenician and Greek Colonization," 116.
[11] Law, "North Africa in the Period of Phoenician and Greek Colonization," 126.
[12] Law, "North Africa in the Period of Phoenician and Greek Colonization," 176.
[13] Law, "North Africa in the Period of Phoenician and Greek Colonization," 191.

uninhabited city of Carthage.[14] Instead of establishing completely new communities, Romans settled in existing Phoenician or native townships.[15] This form of colonization would gradually change the very culture of the land.

Rome had a very complicated relationship with Africa. Until the second century BCE, the Roman republic did not have a presence in Africa. Whatever contact Rome may have had with Africa was primarily due to its wars against Carthage. Once the military campaign was over, Rome left the city. This would be a pattern that would hold steady until the third Punic war in 146 BCE. After destroying Carthage, Rome decided to stay in Africa to solidify its position. Rome grew tired of fighting a never-ending war. Its decision to stay was for the prevention of yet another future war under a different leader but the same cause. Its annexation of Africa is less about the need to conquer another land but to safeguard itself against other enemies.[16]

J. D. Fage notes that

> under the impact of Roman colonization and assimilation, the civilization of North-West Africa lost the Phoenician character which it had acquired under Carthaginian domination. Latin gradually replaced Punic as the language of the urban centres, though the population of the rural areas continued to speak principally Libyan (Berber). The North African townships adopted municipal constitutions of Roman type, and were reconstructed in Roman style with public baths, amphitheatres for gladiatorial shows, and aqueducts to supply fresh drinking water. North Africa even produced several of the leading figures of the Latin literary world, notably Apuleius of Madauros, author of the romance *The Golden Ass*. African dominance was still more marked in the literature of the Latin-speaking branch of the Christian church, beginning with Tertullian of Carthage in the early third century AD.[17]

Every colonizer seeks to display its power by supplanting the empire it has supplanted. Even the most powerful empire cannot completely eradicate a culture; however, it can try

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[14] Law, "North Africa in the Period of Phoenician and Greek Colonization," 201.
[15] Law, "North Africa in the Period of Phoenician and Greek Colonization," 202.
[16] Albertini, *L'Afrique Romaine*, 15–16.
[17] Fage, "Introduction," 202–3.

to replace it with its own. "The Carthaginian supreme deities Baal Hammon and Tanit retained their popularity in North Africa, only thinly disguised under Latin names such as Saturnus and Caelestis."[18] Slowly, but surely, Carthaginian religion was adopted and adapted by the Roman religion.

During the first half of the third century CE, the worship of Saturn and Caelestis was widespread in North Africa. Saturn "was not merely a tribal deity, nor the god of crops and field. These were among his attributes, but he was infinitely greater . . . Saturn is termed Eternal, the Lord, Holy, the Unconquered, or even Holy Spirit."[19] His origins cannot be tracked back to the classical Greek or Roman gods. "He belongs to religious concepts which were handed down from the remote past among the Berbers."[20] Worship of Saturn frequently involved the performance of a sacrifice, sometimes even of one's own children. However, modifications concerning child sacrifice changed over the years. "In a ceremony known as Mochomor, performed at night, a lamb was sacrificed in substitution for a human being . . . It was the Libyc-Phoenician version of the story of Abraham and Isaac."[21] It is within this particular religious context where the Christianity of North Africa was born. When the North African religious landscape was one where piety manifested itself in extreme ways such as child sacrifice, it was not surprising that the North African church's desire to obey the One True God manifested itself through violent means.

W. H. C. Frend comments that "the third and fourth centuries saw equally the collapse of official paganism and the ruin of the urban middle classes. . . . The places of

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[18] Fage, "Introduction," 203.
[19] *Actes de la Conférence de Carthage en 411*, 78.
[20] *Actes de la Conférence de Carthage en 411*, 78.
[21] *Actes de la Conférence de Carthage en 411*, 79–80.

the official religion was being taken by movements which expressed more fully the deep piety of the masses in town and countryside."[22] He continues, "all over the Roman Empire superstition, magic, and popular religious movements gathered strength as the decay of the Roman element became more pronounced."[23] In Britain and Gaul, this change took a Celtic and pagan flavour while in the Mediterranean basin, "it was Christianity that triumphed, and in Africa victory was won at the expense not only of official paganism but also of the great national cult of Saturn and Caelestis."[24] The rise of Christianity within the North African religious landscape signalled a change in the normal status quo. Usually, the practiced religion within the land was brought about through force via colonial powers. Christianity is unique in that its initial spread was more grassroots in nature rather than the formal imposition of it by colonial powers. Christianity's initial status as *religio illicita* was a testament to this truth. Eventually, Christianity would be officially proclaimed as the official religion of Rome, and with the proclamation bring about new sets of issues concerning the relationship between the state and the church; however, its prominence and pervasiveness in capturing the North African theological landscape came about not by the sword, but by the spirit. While Christianity's vision and purpose are very different from the Carthaginian and Roman religion, it did share some religious features that perhaps aided in its ability to spread throughout the region.

Although the particulars of how Christianity spread through North Africa may be hazy, it can be said that the story of the African church began with martyrdom.[25] On July

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[22] Frend, "The Donatist Church," 76.
[23] Frend, "The Donatist Church," 76.
[24] Frend, "The Donatist Church," 76–77.
[25] *Actes de la Conférence de Carthage en 411*, 87.

180, the North African church would produce its first martyrs. A group of Christians at Scilli refused to sacrifice to the gods and, as a result, they were put to death. This was the first instance of martyrdom in North Africa and it was not the last. The persecution of the Christians did not dampen the fervour of the church. It became a tool that the church used to maintain and sustain the movement. It is virtually impossible to understand the North African church without acknowledging the centrality and importance of martyrdom. Martyrdom captured the theological imagination of the North African church. It played an essential and defining role in the story and spread of Christianity in North Africa. The next section will explore the topic of theological diversity in North Africa.

Tertullian and Cyprian: Their Theological Legacy in the North African Church

It is very difficult to understand the Donatist Controversy without understanding the long-lasting influence and legacy of Tertullian and Cyprian in the North African church. These two theological luminaries were instrumental in helping create and form the theological milieu that Augustine and the Donatists were situated and lived in. This section will briefly look at key works by both Tertullian and Cyprian that impacted the formation of North African theology.

Tertullian[26]

In *On Idolatry*, Tertullian wrote a treatise that categorically condemned idolatry and the many forms it can take within the church. In it, he displayed theological deftness as he

[26] For more information regarding the life and times of Tertullian, please refer to Osborne, *Tertullian*; Barnes, *Tertullian*; Dunn, *Tertullian*.

navigated between the Old and New Testament to prove his point that idolatry was an egregious act against God and must never be tolerated, condoned, nor accepted within the church. His treatment of the subject was both thorough and meticulous. He discussed the problem of idolatry as it applied to various professions. By doing so, he made the point that idolatry was not an abstract idea, but that it had tangible consequences. He was intent in making sure that idolatry was not something a Christian participated in, directly or indirectly. In addressing the issue, Tertullian wrote:

> We must also ask about schoolmasters and the other teachers of letters, though their affinity with all manner of idolatry is really beyond question. . . . They are bound to praise the gods of the heathen, rehearse their names, genealogies, stories, and all their ornaments and attributes. . . . The schools must be garlanded for Flora, the priests' wives and the newly appointed aediles bring their sacrifices, the school is bedecked for holy days. It is the same on an idol's birthday; the whole pomp of the devil is celebrated. Can you think this fitting for a Christian—unless you are prepared to think it just as fitting for a Christian who is not a schoolmaster?[27]

The fact that a schoolteacher would be forced, at times, to participate in ungodly activities as a part of their profession is enough for Tertullian to advise Christians against pursuing a career in this field. It is a testament to the breadth and depth of Tertullian's theology concerning idolatry that what may seem trivial to others becomes a central key to his understanding and praxis. Idolatry should be avoided at all costs.

Idolatry was an egregious act against God. It was one of the most sinful things an individual can commit against God. Yet, if there was something that can overtake idolatry's position as the top sinful act in an imagined hierarchy of sins, disrupting and destroying the unity of the church was the only sin that can trump idolatry. Tertullian notes, "Now its cruel havoc has increased, now the poisonous plague of heretical

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[27] Greenslade, *Early Latin Theology*, 92–93.

perversity and schism is beginning to spring up and put out new shoots. . . . One who separates himself from the Church is to be avoided and fled from. He is perverted, sinful, self-condemned. . . . He is bearing arms against the Church, fighting against the providence of God."[28] Heresy and schism were an affront to God. Tertullian gave the example of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Because they stood against Moses and Aaron, "the earth gaped deep asunder, and as the ground parted, the gulf swallowed them up alive where they stood. And it was not only the originators of this insane venture who were struck by the wrath of God's indignation. With speedy vengeance fire issuing from the Lord consume the two hundred and fifty more who shared in it, their partners in audacity, clear proof that all wicked efforts to destroy the ordinance of God by human wills are rebellion against God himself."[29] To rend asunder the church was to commit sin at the highest levels possible. The church was a representation of the body of Christ. To split it through either heresy or schism might as well be the same as dismembering a physical body. This was to be avoided at all costs. Any who would dare to do such a thing will be punished by God. Tertullian was clear that it was not only the leaders of a heresy/schism that will suffer the punishment of God; those who followed them are also punished in the same manner. Such a strong admonition is levelled at the church to ensure that such activities would be prevented at all costs. No good thing can happen when the church is split apart. Unity must be maintained, lest destruction shall fall on those who would dare to do the unthinkable.

A Christian must not only eschew idolatry and division within the church. A Christian must also be ready to face persecution boldly and enthusiastically. If Jesus

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[28] Tertullian, *On Idolatry*, 135–36.
[29] Tertullian, *On Repentance*, 136.

Christ, the Son of God, was beaten and crucified on the cross by the Roman government, then it is no wonder if his followers are treated like their master. Despite the impending torture and death associated with persecution, Christians are able to face it because of their faith and courage that can only be found in Christ. Tertullian comments, "Your cruelty is our glory. Only, see to it whether, just because we endure such things, we do not appear to burst out for this one purpose alone, namely, to prove that we do not fear these things, but willingly call them down upon ourselves. . . . We have no master but God alone."[30] He reminds them that the persecution that they levy against Christians in the hope of diminishing or destroying Christianity is actually accomplishing the exact opposite. Tertullian argues that "our religion . . . which you know is growing stronger at the very moment when it seems to be cut down, will never perish. For, whoever beholds such noble endurance will first, as though struck by some kind of uneasiness, be driven to inquire what is the matter in question, and then, when he knows the truth, immediately follow the same way."[31] This posture towards martyrdom becomes a very salient feature of the North African church.[32]

Cyprian[33]

S. L. Greenslade comments that "[t]heologically, Cyprian holds the unity of the Church to be axiomatic, or rather, biblically and divinely guaranteed. This does not mean simply

[30] Tertullian, *To Scapula*, 160.

[31] Tertullian, *To Scapula*, 161.

[32] It must be noted that fleeing persecution was acceptable for some church fathers. Cyprian (Stromata, 410) said that it was acceptable to flee persecution and should not bring down persecution needlessly. However one must also be careful not to conflate facing persecution with faith/courage and not fleeing persecution.

[33] For more information regarding the life and times of Cyprian, please refer to Sage, *Cyprian*; Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*; Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*.

that all Christians are inwardly and spiritually united (they may not be), but that there is only one concrete, visible body, only one communion, which is the Church, that true and only Church which the Lord established through the apostles. For Cyprian this unity is not ideal, but actual; it cannot be broken."[34] Cyprian wanted and guarded unity above all. This was what animated many of his writings concerning the church and the function of the church. In *On the Unity of the Church*, Tertullian comments that the enemy "invented heresies and schisms to undermine faith, pervert truth, and break unity. Unable to keep us in the dark ways of former error, he draws us into a new maze of deceit. He snatches men away from the Church itself and, just when they think they have drawn near to the light and escaped the night of the world, he plunges them unawares into a new darkness."[35] He continues, "If you abandon the Church and join yourself to an adulteress, you are cut off from the promises of the Church. If you leave the Church of Christ you will not come to Christ's rewards, you will be an alien, an outcast, an enemy. You cannot have God for your father unless you the Church for your mother."[36] For Cyprian, it is virtually impossible to claim the name "Christian" if somehow this individual is not recognized as a member of the church. This type of ecclesiological thinking can be found in the reasoning behind both Catholic and Donatist teaching. For the Catholics, the Donatists are in danger of the flames of hell because of their stubbornness and refusal to return back to the true church. For the Donatists, the reason behind their departure from the Catholic church is because they believed that their actions exempted them from being able to call themselves the true church. The only way to ensure their safety and ability to

[34] Greenslade, *Early Latin Theology*, 120.
[35] Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church*, 125.
[36] Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church*, 127–28.

truly embody the church's ideals is to separate themselves from those whose actions tainted the name of the church and betrayed her teachings and tenets.

Allen Brent notes that Cyprian's understanding of the "Church is organic and collective, to which one's existence, as an individual, is subsidiary."[37] In many ways, such a view of the church runs contrary to the more individualistic strain one tends to find in the Western church. The focus and concern in the modern-day church tends to revolve around the individual rather than the collective. Thus, Cyprian's way of thinking about the church as a collective is important to consider when he does make any pronouncements to those who are a part of the church. Cyprian warns the church in *On the Lapsed* against being "influenced by the recklessness or silly empty-headedness or silly empty-headedness of certain folk who, for all the gravity of their guilt are so blinded in soul that they neither recognize their sins nor repent of them."[38] This type of thinking permeated the North African church. This is the pervading and pervasive mentality present in both Catholic and Donatist teaching against one another. Both groups characterized the other in this acerbic and harsh manner. According to Cyprian, one must "[d]o all you can to break away from such men; as you value your salvation, avoid those who associate with such harmful connections. Their talk spreads like a canker, their conversation is as catching as an infection, their poisonous and pernicious propaganda is more deadly than was the persecution itself."[39] This is a suggestion that both the Catholics and the Donatists heeded with much alacrity and fervour. The Catholics continually warned against the Donatists whose refusal to join the true church marked

[37] Cyprian, *On the Church*, 29.
[38] Cyprian, *On the Lapsed*, 39.
[39] Cyprian, *On the Lapsed*, 40.

them as a stiff-necked people full of pride; the Donatists continually warned against the Catholics whose persecution of the Donatists marked them as those who allied and aligned themselves with the empire rather than be an example and reflection of Christ's body on earth. The North African church's view on ecclesiology and the role of idolatry within the church as a sin of the highest order is primarily shaped and moulded by Tertullian and Cyprian. Yet, as problematic and evil idolatry may be, the disunity brought about by schisms and heresies does not compare to it. Tertullian and Cyprian's teachings on persecution would also mark the North African church. Matthew Alan Gaumer states that "[t]he notion of the nature of the Church in North Africa had a long period of gestation, dating back to at least Tertullian and possibly before him."[40] Francine Cardman notes that "[t]he Donatist schism originated in Carthage during the Great Persecution of 303–311, but its roots reached back to controversies a half-century earlier."[41] This is a testament to how the theological legacy of Tertullian and Cyprian managed to affect the discourse of the Donatist debate.

Martyrdom: A Foundational Tenet of the North African Church's Identity

One of the striking features of martyrdom stories was the courage martyrs displayed in the face of difficulties. They are more willing to let their bodies be defiled by fire, sword, or beasts than defile their souls by committing a sinful act of betraying Christ or his church. Though their actions were righteous, they were severely punished by oppressive rulers. Through their words and deeds, they reflected the *vita Christi* (life of Christ) to the world around them. Martyrdom stories can be an effective tool that one can use to convey

[40] Gaumer, *The Evolution of Donatist Theology*, 206.
[41] Cardman, *The Praxis of Ecclesiology*, 25.

the particular Christian traits that a church community values and admires. A martyr became a likely candidate for their story to be told for it is the martyr who best exemplified the words of Jesus Christ found in the book of Matthew: "Take up (your) cross and follow me."[42] The death and crucifixion of Jesus Christ was an expression of his love and sacrifice for the world; in the same way, the martyr laid down their life as a demonstration of their love for Christ and his bride, the church.

The death of a martyr, like the death of Jesus Christ, was not considered to be accidental. It was intentional. It was filled with purpose and meaning. Someone who was killed by accident cannot be labeled a martyr. Someone who committed suicide cannot be labeled a martyr. To qualify as a martyr, one must be killed for the sake of Christ and his church. Of course, how this plays itself out can be problematic. However, what is important to note is that the way in which a martyr died played a vital role in defining one's martyrdom. Yet, even if an individual died under the normal martyrdom conditions, it would count as nothing if the life they lived did not mirror the life of Christ. The life of holiness and righteousness that Christ himself lived out while he walked the earth are the same qualities that are expected of a martyr. Anything else would disqualify them from such a noble name.[43]

The martyrdom stories are used as an exhortation for all believers to imitate Christ. Yet, the stories not only bear similar resemblance to the *vita Christi* found in the gospels, they are also similar in how both Jesus and the martyr challenged the current society's norms and mores. In the same way that Jesus's actions inverted the cultural

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[42] Matt 16:24, KJV.

[43] For more on martyrdom, see Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*; Jensen, *Martyrdom and Identity*; Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*; Riddle, *The Martyrs*.

norms, so a Christian's life must do the same. The death of the martyr can potentially become a means by which another individual might gain eternal life. The very life of Jesus exemplified this fact. This is the same motif found in the book of Acts when Stephen is martyred. The end of Stephen's life marked the beginning of Paul's ministry.[44]

Martyrdom stories have a unique way of flipping meanings upside down: what is up is considered down, and what is down is considered up. It is a topsy-turvy look at the world. The early Christians subverted the empire's narrative through their interpretation of the martyrdom stories. A government, whether it is tribal, democratic, or dictatorial in nature, will only seek to punish those whom it sees as rebels and criminals. It is not in their nature to punish its "good" citizens. What the government deems as criminal is perhaps the biggest question. Each government will create its own rules and regulations as to what criminality means. What martyrdom stories point out, however, is the fact that no matter how any government may define what is good and what is bad, the martyrs are beholden to one rule and one rule alone: God's rule. There was a strong belief among Christians that the world's kingdom was not the only kingdom present in the world; they believed that God's kingdom was the true kingdom that shall reign forevermore. Christians are foreigners in this alien land. Their true citizenship is in heaven.

This particular sense of self-identification among Christians, particularly the martyrs, guided their actions, even actions that may lead to their own death. As Michael Jensen argues, "Confessing 'I am a Christian,' as the martyrs have done, is also a refusal to accept alternative ways of finding and describing one's self by means of (for example)

[44] For further reading on the idea of martyrdom as imitation, see Heffernan, "Martyrdom, Charisma, and Imitation," 251–67.

security, pleasure, power, action, nationhood, ethnicity or honour."[45] A huge part of self-identifying as a Christian is accepting the narrative of two kingdoms: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. These two kingdoms are often in conflict with one another. This is not simply a spiritual battle; it also has a physical component. There is a cosmic battle that is being played out on earth. Each group has its soldiers, ready to wage war against the other group. However, one group is waging war in unconventional ways. The kingdom of the world readies itself in battle through the amassment of troops and the use of lethal weapons. The kingdom of God readies itself through prayer and its members willingly laying down their lives for the cause of the kingdom. Usually, in the normal scheme of things, death means loss. Yet, in God's kingdom, death means victory. The martyr readily believes this ideology since they are familiar with the victory that Christ gained on the cross. His death meant victory over Death itself. His resurrection is a symbol of the great reversal: his death means eternal life for him and his followers.[46]

Christian disciples, steeped in this ideology, found their identity in the life and work of Jesus Christ. In a world fraught with trials and tribulations, the Christian was forced, at times, to make a decision between following the way of the world or the way of Christ. When the worldly government demanded the Christian to renounce their faith in Christ or commit an act that was against the rules and principles that governed God's kingdom, the Christian was willing to defy the worldly authorities instead of defying

[45] Jensen, *Martyrdom and Identity*, 2–3.

[46] "In the face of the trials and temptations that are an inevitable part of human experience, it is an offering of one's self up to the providence of God as it is evidenced in the life, death, resurrection and promised return of Jesus Christ. For the Christian, therefore, human purpose and identity are fulfilled—and vindication received—in discipleship, even if discipleship results in martyrdom. This then stands as a question mark against other forms of self-identifying." Jensen, *Martyrdom and Identity*, 3.

God's authority.[47] By doing so, "[t]he martyr outwardly represents the Christian way of understanding both the world and the situatedness of that world."[48] The martyr understood the temporality of this present world and the eternality of the heavenly kingdom. Their eagerness to endure mortal death is informed by their notion of an eternal reward which awaited them in the afterlife.

Elizabeth Castelli opines that "[f]rom the earliest of sources onward, it becomes clear that early Christians positioned the historical experience of persecution almost immediately within a framework of meaning that drew upon broader metanarratives about temporality, suffering and sacrifice, and identity."[49] The story is not bereft of rhetoric; in fact, "the texts that remain for us to interpret from the early Christian world are overwhelmingly rhetorical in their character, and they require approaches that treat them in their textuality rather than approaches that presume their documentary status."[50] These texts are rhetorical in nature because they were created for a specific purpose: the creation and preservation of collective memory within the Christian community.

Maurice Halbwachs claim that "memory is a social construction, the product of the individual's interaction with his or her group—be this family, social class, religious community, or some other collectivity with which the individual is affiliated."[51] The only

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[47] On the contrary, Tripp York argues ("Early Church Martyrdom," 23–24) that the martyr's actions should not be seen as being against the empire, but *for* the empire. In reference to the death of Maximilian, he states, "Though the empire killed him for his refusal to worship their gods, his act, as any act of martyrdom was not against the empire—as if Christian witness is merely reactionary or defined by what it is against. Rather, his martyrdom and early Christian martyrdom in general was *for* the empire. Any act of witness is always a testimony to the good news that is the resurrected Christ, which gives those watching the ability to see the world as it really is: redeemed. Martyrdom is not an end in itself. It is a public bodily confession that hopes to transform all that is not of Christ into the mystical body of Christ. It is an act that seeks the good of the city, though not as the city might imagine."

[48] Jensen, *Martyrdom and Identity*, 6.

[49] Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 25.

[50] Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 26.

[51] Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 11.

way an individual can understand one's self is when the individual contrasts themselves against another individual. While the us–vs–them mentality can pose certain problems as it relates to greater issues such as discrimination and racism, this us–vs–them mentality is a key feature in the formation of self-identity.

Since individuals are embedded in a unique and peculiar social setting, "even the most personal memory cannot help but derive its sense from the collective context."[52] The most individualistic expression that can be expressed is bound in language, a cultural creation that necessitates the help of others in its creation and interpretation. The only reason why anyone can potentially understand the meaning of words in a certain language lies in the language's shared meaning within the people of a certain culture. If this was not the case, every language might as well be gibberish—it only works because of its shared understanding within a certain culture. However, unless a language is considered a dead language (like Latin), it is always in the process of evolution. Words accrue added meanings while simultaneously being divested of their original meaning. The task of interpreting the word in a particular way ultimately lies in how a community eventually defines that word.[53] The community is also responsible for maintaining a certain way of understanding that word—the preservation of the word's meaning within a particular ideological formulation is what can be considered as tradition.

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[52] Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 11.

[53] Sapir rightly notes the importance of language as a "guide to 'social reality.' Though language is not ordinarily thought of as of essential interest to the students of social science, it powerfully conditions all our thinking about social problems and processes. Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group." Sapir, *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir*, 162.

It is to the credit of the early Christians that they were able to influence and change the understanding of the word μάρτυς, "witness." Jensen notes that

> it is with Paul that the notion of witness becomes linked not only to the facts as such but also to the personal transformation wrought by an encounter with the risen Jesus himself. The story of Paul's conversion, as he is depicted narrating it in Acts 22, results in him being commissioned as μάρτυς to the Gentiles. Not only does the revelation of the divine truth to Paul transform him; it also results in his impulsion to witness to others as a matter of sheer conviction.[54]

The term μάρτυς is divested of its legal meaning and is instead imbued with a distinctly theological flavor. It also captures a particular concept of Christianity that is beyond its etymological understanding. Martyrdom stories, then, become a way to create and propagate a particular understanding of μάρτυς within the church community. "Through retelling—whether narrative, performative, representational, even liturgical—memory accrues meaning through discursive and embodied repetition."[55] In this way, the tradition of martyrdom is preserved and revitalized with every telling and re-telling.[56]

Workman speaks of how "the martyrs also were witnesses to a creed, simple it is true, but none the less definite and real. They did not lay down their lives for vague generalities, wider visions, or larger hopes.[57] This way of understanding martyrdom is one that has been passed on from generation to generation. Halbwachs refers to the fact that "social memory offers one important way for groups to situate themselves temporally . . . Individuals, as members of groups, generate their own sense of the past out of the

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[54] Jensen, *Martyrdom and Identity*, 4.

[55] Jensen, *Martyrdom and Identity*, 4.

[56] For a better understanding of martyrdom in the New Testament, see Glasswell, "Martyrdom and Orthodoxy," 287–96.

[57] Workman, *Persecution in the Early Church*, 141. He continues, "Faith is not a philosophy, but dwells rather on the central truths which to the martyr seemed so all-important that for them he would lay down life itself. Prominent among these was the belief in his own immortality as the result of the resurrection of his Lord." Workman, *Persecution in the Early Church*, 141.

different groups' accountings of the past."[58] This is in keeping with Castelli's remark that "the task of early Christian historians was the production of Christian collective memory."[59] Martyrdom stories became a tool to continue the task of reminding Christians how to live and act.

Candida Moss states that "when people use the term 'martyr' in our modern context, they do so to refer to lots of different ideas and concepts."[60] This term can be applied to "saints like Joan of Arc, who died for religious causes, but also to political or activist heroes like Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Yitzhak Rabin, and Matthew Shepard."[61] Even when the use of the term "martyr" is limited to people who died as a result of religious oppression, this definition still brings with it some areas of clarification. For example, when someone like Martin Luther King Jr. is called a martyr, it is to say that he was assassinated because of his religious beliefs rather than his role as a key leader in the civil rights movement. While he was very open about his religious beliefs, the cause for his assassination was not because he observed Christian beliefs; it was a result of his political role in the civil rights movement.[62] Killing a Christian does not immediately a martyr make.

Ferguson claims that martyrdom for early Christians invoked a multiplicity of meanings: it was "a baptism of blood, which brought forgiveness of sins to the martyr . . . a eucharist, in which one drank the cup of sufferings of Christ . . . an anticipation of the eschaton . . . in which the martyr brought the events of the last days to immediate

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[58] Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 12.
[59] Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 25.
[60] Moss, *The Myth of Persecution*, 25.
[61] Moss, *The Myth of Persecution*, 25.
[62] Moss, *The Myth of Persecution*, 25.

fruition for himself . . . [and the] defeat of Satan and the demons through identification with the victory of Christ on the cross."[63] He continues on to say that "the martyr was filled with the Holy Spirit, who gave words to say to the authorities, visions of the other world, and supernatural strength to endure sufferings."[64] It is clear from such a description that the martyr must be one whose life is marked by excellence and holiness—the martyr is one who is truly set apart. Their existence was rare, uncommon, and in some ways, anomalous. The world was not worthy of such individuals.

Previously, it has been noted that the martyrdom stories reflected the *imitatio Christi* motif found in the gospels. The martyr was someone who mirrored the life of Christ in the way that they lived their life. It must also be noted that the martyrdom stories played another role: evangelism. Apollonius claims, "the more they kill those who believe in God, so much the more will their numbers grow by God's aid."[65] Justin Martyr testified to the role that martyrdom played in his own conversion.[66] Ferguson stated that the idea that martyrdom was within God's providence serves as "a witness to the State of its subordination to the God of heaven."[67] This is yet another example of how martyrdom stories simultaneously encouraged the church to continue to persevere in light of hardships while serving as a rebuke to the temporal powers and reminding them that their powers have limits. The martyrs were a reminder that their obedience was to a higher power who easily dominated and subjugated whatever "power" earthly rulers felt they possessed.

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[63] Ferguson, "Early Christian Martyrdom and Civil Disobedience," 75.
[64] Ferguson, "Early Christian Martyrdom and Civil Disobedience," 75.
[65] Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 97.
[66] Ferguson, "Early Christian Martyrdom and Civil Disobedience," 76.
[67] Ferguson, *Conversion, Catechumenate, and Baptism in the Early Church*, 77.

Naguib asserts that "the act of the martyr made an ideological choice a question of life and death. By placing a belief before physical survival the martyr asserted the pre-eminence of culture on nature."[68] This is in keeping with Lacey Baldwin Smith's assertion that "choice and individuality [are] the two essential ingredients of martyrdom."[69] The martyr's willingness to use their body as a witness against the prevailing corruption and depravity of the ruling powers speaks volumes about what they believe is both important and unimportant. Their body was a sign of good amidst a world of evil.[70]

There is a recurring theme of a martyr's willingness to die for the sake of the gospel in the collected martyrdom stories. Martyrdom is not something that happens by accident. It is one that is entered into with courage. For some martyrs, there are glimpses of a certain *désir débordant*[71] upon the thought of the possibility of martyrdom. To be a martyr is to be counted worthy by God to share in his suffering. It is considered a great honour and privilege to be chosen for this task, one which is not afforded to every single Christian.[72] The idea of martyrdom, then, is one filled with hope and ambition, with that hope and ambition finding its truest fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ. This is an important feature that bears repeating: the martyr's *désir débordant* is not political,

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[68] Naguib, "The Martyr as Witness," 225.

[69] Smith, *Fools, Martyrs, Traitors*, 314.

[70] For examples of how martyr stories are used in different communities, see the following on the Mennonite community: Juhnke, "Shaping Religious Community through Martyr Memories," 546–56; Naguib, "The Martyr as Witness," 223–54.

[71] *Désir débordant* means overflowing joy or bursting desire.

[72] During the early years of Christianity, there was a trend of actively seeking to be martyred by certain individuals. Paul Middleton describes this as "radical martyrdom." Later Christians would eventually dissuade and argue against actively seeking martyrdom. For a detailed treatment of this phenomenon, see Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*; Weidmann, "'Rushing Judgment,'" 61–69; Middleton, "Early Christian Voluntary Martyrdom," 556–73.

cultural, or financial in nature. It is first, and foremost, a theological desire which finds its apogee in a theological solution.[73]

Hovey asserts that martyrs are those who "entrust themselves to the church's memory with no guarantee that the church will discern the meaning of their death in its continued existence."[74] They are not those who willingly seek martyrdom for the sake of being a martyr. To do so would be tantamount to pride in its desire to obtain the title as recognition of possessing a higher status. A true martyr does not seek the fame or honour attached to martyrdom. Sacrificing their life means nothing, and everything, to the martyr. It is the martyr's fervent hope that by laying down their life, they have chosen the better things of life. They lay down their life for there is no other way for them to function in a world where the earthly powers have restricted their ability to do justice. Their willingness to die is further proof of their allegiance to a higher set of rules than the earthly ones that promote injustice and oppression.[75]

In the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, there is the story of Germanicus who encouraged the beasts in the arena to attack him rather than betray Christ.[76] In the story, Polycarp refused to proclaim Caesar as Lord which stood against the wishes of the proconsul. When the proconsul threatened to throw him with the wild beasts if he did not recant, Polycarp responded by saying "Bring them in, for we may not change from better to worse. But to change from wickedness to righteousness is good."[77] When faced with the

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[73] Weiner and Weiner describe the martyr narrative through a different lens. See Weiner and Weiner, *The Martyr's Conviction*, 87–127.

[74] Hovey, "To Share in the Body," 51.

[75] Another interesting look at martyrdom is Erkman Tam's questioning of the martyr's psychological status. See Tam, "Are Christian Martyrs Abuse Victims," 458–67.

[76] *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 3.1.

[77] *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 11.1. "Said the proconsul, "I have wild beasts. I'll throw you to them if you don't change your mind!" "Call them," he replied, "for we cannot change our mind from better to worse." Eusebius, *Church History*, 133.

threat of being burned alive by the proconsul, Polycarp maintained his stance and loudly proclaimed, "You threaten a fire that burns for a time and is quickly extinguished. Yet a fire that you know nothing about awaits the wicked in the judgment to come and in eternal punishment. But what are you waiting for? Do what you will."[78] He refused to be nailed to the stake and instead willingly entered the heat of the blazing fire knowing that "he who strengthens me to endure the fire will enable me to remain unmoved at the stake without the help of your nails."[79] He looked up to heaven, prayed a prayer of thanks, and was lit on fire.[80]

During the story of the martyrdom of St. Carpus, it is mentioned that "[w]hile Carpus was being fastened he smiled at his executioners, and an astonished bystander asked him what he was laughing at."[81] He replied, "I saw the glory of the Lord and was glad."[82] In the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, after Hilarianus passed sentence that they were to be condemned to the beasts, they "returned to prison in high spirits."[83] The Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons spoke of "the blessed Pothinus" who "by reason of his intense desire for martyrdom, he was given strength from the eagerness of the spirit." Despite his old age and physical infirmities, he was "attacked . . . in every way with their (the bystanders) feet or their fists, without any respect for his old age; and those who were far away tried to hit him with whatever they had at hand."[84] Sabina, upon learning that she should be burned alive, smiled. When the verger asked her why she laughed, she

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[78] *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 11.2. Eusebius, *Church History*, 133.
[79] Attwater, *Martyrs*, 7.
[80] "When he had thus made his offering and finished his prayer with Amen, light was set to the pyre and a great flame blazed up." Attwater, *Martyrs*, 7.
[81] Attwater, *Martyrs*, 14.
[82] Attwater, *Martyrs*, 14.
[83] Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 115.
[84] Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 71.

answered, "If God so wills, I do. You see we are Christians. Those who believe in Christ will laugh unhesitatingly in everlasting joy."[85] The idea of laughing in the face of impending doom is best exemplified in the story of the martyrdom of St. Lawrence. The prefect, furious at Lawrence, said, "Christians say they long for a martyr's death. So you shall die—but slowly, by inches, over a slow fire. Then we shall see if you say that my fire-god Vulcan is nothing."[86] As he was being slowly burned by the prefect, "when one side had been charred away, Lawrence said, 'This part of my body has been burned enough; turn me round, and see your Vulcan's work."[87] After the prefect ordered that he should be turned, Lawrence said, "It is cooked enough. Eat, and try whether it be nicer raw or roasted."[88] These various examples demonstrated the stunning reality that in the face of death itself, the martyrs managed to maintain a certain *joie de vivre*.[89]

Eugene Weiner and Anita Weiner define the term "martyr" as "a member of a suppressed group who, when given the opportunity to renounce aspects of his or her group's code, willingly submits to suffering and death rather than forsake a conviction."[90] Their stories of unflinching resolve in light of extremely difficult and life-threatening situations are both admirable and awe-inspiring. This reaction is perhaps normal and exactly the reason why the biographer wrote the story in the first place. The martyr's story is a reminder of the passion of Christ, the One who endured enormous pain and

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[85] Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 147.
[86] Attwater, *Martyrs*, 35.
[87] Attwater, *Martyrs*, 35.
[88] Attwater, *Martyrs*, 35.
[89] The eagerness for death found among the martyrs can sometimes be seen as a form of suicidal tendency. See Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome*; Hooff, *From Autothanasia to Suicide*.
[90] Weiner and Weiner, *The Martyr's Conviction*, 10. Here McClendon and Smith's definition of the term conviction is particularly helpful: "A 'conviction' . . . is a persistent belief such that if X (a person or a community) has a conviction, it will not easily be relinquished and it cannot be relinquished without making X a significantly different person (or community) than before." McClendon and Smith, *Understanding Religious Convictions*, 7.

suffering for the sake of the world; it is also a reminder of Christ's love that enabled him to persevere despite being afflicted and enabled his followers to do the same. The martyrs are those who live lives that mirror the life of Christ. In the same way that Christ while on earth showed compassion, grace, and love to those who were undeserving of it, so the martyr endured the trials and the hardships, even death, to show others that it is in losing one's life that one gained it.

The role of the martyr within North African ecclesiology cannot be over-estimated. The question of who the "true" church was consumed the theological imagination of the North African church. Paul Middleton notes that "martyrdom was at one time a sign, *par excellence*, of one's orthodox credentials."[91] Martyrdom, then, becomes a way of proving one's connection to the "true" church. The Donatist Controversy is rife with examples from both the Augustinians and the Donatists proclaiming that they belonged to the true church and offered proof of this very fact by revealing that their group possessed the most martyrs. The role of martyrdom, then, as ecclesial proof of purity and orthodoxy cannot be taken for granted.

Middleton states that "in the first and second centuries, readiness for martyrdom was interpreted as a sign of Christian 'proto-orthodoxy'. However, in the third and fourth centuries, loyalty to the church, through developing episcopal ecclesiastical structures, created an alternative means of constructing what it meant to be a faithful Christian."[92] This particular shift in how martyrdom was perceived by the early church would dominate the troubles present in the Donatist Controversy.

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[91] Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, 5.
[92] Middleton, *Enemies of the (Church and) State*, 161.

According to Augustine, God "occasions a miraculous transformation of death for the redeemed by turning the very punishment of sin . . . to the service of righteousness."[93] Winston Van Horne speaks of how, for Augustine, "God's transformation of death for the righteous makes true martyrdom possible."[94] Augustine states that

> In the case of the holy martyrs . . . the prosecutor proposes the alternative, apostasy or death. (But) the righteous prefer by believing to suffer what the first transgressors suffered by not believing. For unless they had sinned, they would not have died; but the martyrs sin if they do not die. By the *guilt* of the first, *punishment* was incurred; by the *punishment* of the second, *guilt is prevented.* Not that death, which was before an evil, has become something good, but only that God has granted to faith this grace, that *death,* which is the admitted opposite of life, should become the *instrument* by which *life* is reached.[95]

This type of mentality in the early church enabled so many to seek—sometimes provoke—martyrdom. Many church fathers from Origen to Augustine denounced this type of behaviour, even though it manifested itself regularly in the church. Martyrdom cannot be purposefully sought, the Fathers would say, but when it comes, one must pray for strength to endure till the very end. However, this advice often went unheeded. Martyrdom's role as the seal of orthodoxy in an individual's life greatly affected the early church, not only in the number of people who vainly and incorrectly put themselves in a situation where they could become martyrs, but also in the way the church treated the individuals who were martyred and the exalted position they gained as its result.

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[93] Augustine, *City of God*, 13.4.
[94] Van Horne, "St. Augustine," 42.
[95] Augustine, *City of God*, 13.4.

The Role of Emotions

Thomas Kazen notes that "religion has never been a matter for the head only; it is not primarily an intellectual exercise."[96] He continues on to say that "Christianity in the modern West has become very much a matter of the head . . . The body is apparently too important to be ignored. Religion without the body does not seem viable."[97] One of the difficulties when it comes to understanding religious acts is that there is a propensity to make a sharp division between the body and the soul. Yet, one of the main features of orthodox Christianity is the belief that the body and the soul cannot and should not be separated. To do so would be to align oneself with gnostic Christianity. However, the dualism present in Gnosticism has pervaded and coloured much of how orthodox Christianity is observed.

If it is true that "[t]he body is the locus of morality, the arena in which religion is practised, or the means by which moral or ritual action is carried out," then we cannot separate religion from religious acts.[98] Theology should not only be understood as a cognitive act but also understood as a physical act as well. One talks about practicing theology because theology is not merely an abstract idea but an idea that is lived out. It has physical ramifications. Theology is sensual in nature in that it only finds its truest form when the five senses are properly engaged and activated. Without this type of understanding of theology, it is virtually impossible to fathom the pervasive nature of how theology can affect one's life. The embodiment of theology should lead to the understanding that extricating the spiritual from the physical in matters of theology is not

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[96] Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 3.
[97] Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 3.
[98] Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 4.

only unadvisable, but also mistaken. The body "has also been conceived of as the seat of morality, the place where human morality is situated. . . . In some ways, morality is understood as involving the whole person."[99]

Much of Western thinking on morality is based on cognitive aspects with rationality being the primary way in which the individual is perceived to make moral judgments. Locating morality in the body instead of the mind is a drastically different way of interpreting religious acts. Antonio R. Damasio claims that

> it does seem sensible . . . to suggest that feelings may have been a necessary grounding for ethical behaviors long before the time humans even began the deliberate construction of intelligent norms of social conduct. Feelings would have entered the picture in prior evolutionary stages of nonhuman species and would have been a factor in the establishment of automated social emotions and of cognitive strategies of cooperativity.[100]

The primacy of rationality as the proper way of conducting one's self in society and culture has made it difficult to properly perceive emotions as a variable that needs to be adequately factored in when talking about morality or proper conduct. Emotions, then, are not simply an appeal to our base nature but the very thing that informs how one should think and act. The Cartesian dictum "cogito, ergo sum" (I think, therefore, I am) is reversed by Damasio who claims that "we are, and then we think."[101] By turning to neurobiological research, Damasio argues for "the importance of bodily sensations and emotions for a functioning rationality."[102] It seems that "their influence on the human brain is crucial; a disembodied mind cannot exist, and human consciousness is dependent on constant interaction with the sense-perceptions of the body."[103] The interaction that

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[99] Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 5.
[100] Damasio, "Looking for Spinoza," 160.
[101] Damasio, "Looking for Spinoza," 11.
[102] Damasio, "Looking for Spinoza," 11.
[103] Damasio, "Looking for Spinoza," 11.

happens between the bodily emotions and the resulting moral judgment is more complicated than once thought. Reason cannot be separated from emotions because "reason has no function apart from answering the needs that arise from the rich context of human desires and needs and passions. . . . we must see reason and emotion as physiologically related functions of a highly complex organism-evolutionary strategies with the same end."[104] Emotions play a larger role in reasoning and moral judgment than it was once accorded.[105]

While biology and morality are closely intertwined, the role of culture must also be taken into account as a major factor in shaping human ethical behaviour.[106] Kazen states that "not only does biological evolution depend on adaptive value in a particular context, but culture in a more qualified sense actually affects the biological default setting of the developing brain over a period of several years during human childhood and early adolescence."[107] He continues on to say that "cultural or custom complexes play an important role in the moral socialization of children. They are mainly transmitted not as cognitive beliefs or ideas, but rather by bodies, spaces, objects and behaviours that are structured according to rules of hierarchy, sanctity, purity and the like."[108] Morality then

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[104] Teehan, "Kantian Ethics," 54.

[105] Blasi, "Emotions and Moral Motivation," 1–19; Clore, "Psychology and the Rationality of Emotion," 209–22; Haidt, "Handbook of Affective Sciences," 852–70; Looy, "Embodied and Embedded Morality," 219–35; Marcum, "The Role of Emotions in Clinical Reasoning and Decision Making," 501–19; Pizarro, "Nothing More Than Feelings?" 355–75; Simon, "Motivational and Emotional Controls of Cognition," 29–39.

[106] Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 20; Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail," 828–29; Arutyunova et al., "Sociocultural Influences on Moral Judgments," 1–15; Bersoff and Miller, "Culture, Context, and the Development of Moral Accountability Judgments," 664–76; Jia and Krettenauer, "Recognizing Moral Identity as a Cultural Construct," 1–5; Kitayama and Markus, *Emotion and Culture*.

[107] Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 20.

[108] Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law*, 21.

is not only linked to biology but to cultural forces as well. This brings further complexity in the way that disgust should be understood as it relates to human beings.

Since the predominantly Western outlook tends to privilege rationality, it is easy to make the argument that morality is affected by biology and culture. However, there is a continuing trend within Western thinking to view emotions in either a negative or a pejorative manner. As Carla Bagnoli claims, "emotions are more often names of vices rather than virtues . . . When they are not regarded as vices in themselves, emotions are taken to represent a pervasive and persistent source of obstacles to morality, as in the case of self-love."[109] There is a basic worry that "emotions interfere with the deliverances of reason, and often provide motives that are in competition with morality. A more radical worry is that emotions undermine our status of rational agents insofar as we are not in control of them, but we are possessed by them. Emotions undermine autonomy, which is a requirement for rational agency."[110] As a result, emotions are seen as problems: they need to be either solved or eliminated because they serve no legitimate purpose since they are irrational in nature.

It important to note that "moral emotions, such as love and compassion, enable us to fulfill our moral duties. . . . Emotions . . . play a significant role in the practice of moral judgment."[111] Emotions, then, must be factored in as a viable factor that affects morality. They do not work against rationality. Rather, they work alongside it and properly inform it. Goldie defines an emotion as something that is

> complex in that it will typically involve many different elements: it involves episodes of emotional experience, including perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of various kinds, and bodily changes of various kinds; and it involves dispositions,

[109] Bagnoli, *Morality and the Emotions*, 1.
[110] Bagnoli, *Morality and the Emotions*, 1.
[111] Bagnoli, *Morality and the Emotions*, 10.

> including dispositions to experience further emotional episodes, to have further thoughts and feelings, and to behave in certain ways. Emotions are episodic and dynamic, in that, over time, the elements can come and go, and wax and wane, depending on all sorts of factors, including the way in which the episodes and dispositions interweave and interact with each other and with other aspects of the person's life.[112]

Emotions are intentional in that the emotions that an individual may feel are directed towards an object.[113] The object of an emotion is to be understood as "that onto which one's thoughts and feelings are typically directed, and to which they typically return."[114] It is also important to state that there exists a relationship between emotions and beliefs. Yet, the relation does not have to be seen as contingent to one another since "there are conceptual relations between an emotion and the beliefs which ground it."[115] Sufficient care must be made to ensure that one does not over-complicate or be reductionally simplistic in the treatment of emotions.

While the biological and cultural influences on emotions cannot be underestimated, for the most part when talking about emotions, it is the expression of emotions that is normally implied. "Expressions of emotions are like those bodily changes which are part of an emotion . . . But they differ in important respects . . . Bodily changes just happen to us . . . actions which we do out of the emotions can be explained by reference to appropriate combinations of beliefs and desires."[116] Goldie notes that "expressions of emotion are not only heterogeneous; it is also hard to draw clear lines between different sorts of expression of emotion, and between bodily changes,

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[112] Goldie, *The Emotions*, 12–13.
[113] Goldie, *The Emotions*, 16.
[114] Goldie, *The Emotions*, 17.
[115] Goldie, *The Emotions*, 20.
[116] Goldie, *The Emotions*, 124.

expressions of emotion, and actions out of emotion."[117] To call a particular emotion a genuine emotion is to mean that its expression is not done for the benefit of self or others. It must be done without any sense of ulterior motive.[118] Examining the genuineness of an expressed emotion brings with it much question for it is no easy feat to arrive at a reasoned conclusion.

Carolyn Price speaks of how "the intentionality of an emotional response is a complex matter."[119] According to Price, an emotional response "include[s] at least three different kinds of intentional state: i) the evaluation or evaluations that initiate and sustain the response, ii) the perceptions, thoughts, memories, imaginings and desires that arise in the course of the response, and iii) emotional feelings: that is, perceptions of the bodily and psychological changes that help to constitute the response."[120] This type of thinking is an attempt to ascertain how one should evaluate emotions. Should emotional evaluations be seen as judgments, meaning that there is a strong relationship between an event and its judgment? Robert Solomon defines judgment as "a kind of mental *act*—the act of forming a belief."[121] Price notes that "our evaluative judgments and beliefs do seem to be *bound up* with our desires in some sense. The things that we value are the things that matter to us—things that we may be inclined to want to foster, or defend, or uphold."[122] Emotions, then, can serve as the catalyst for individuals to commit certain actions. Thus, it is safe to say that emotions, although thought of and treated as an invisible, abstract concept, manifests in tangible, physical ways. These actions can be

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[117] Goldie, *The Emotions*, 125.
[118] Goldie, "The Emotions," 125–26.
[119] Price, "Emotion," 81–82.
[120] Price, "Emotion," 82.
[121] Solomon, "Not Passion's Slave," 110–12.
[122] Price, "Emotion," 85.

seen and perceived by the five senses. Although one may not be able to physically point at an emotion, one can definitely point to the action that one does under the influence of said emotion. Thus, in this manner, one can realize how important emotions are in affecting the actions and behaviour of an individual.

Eva-Marie Düringer asks the question, "How are emotions related to values?"[123] She attempts to answer this question by appealing to one of the proponents of the perceptual theory of emotions, Franz Brentano. She writes that we gain evaluative knowledge by having correct emotions."[124] Brentano attempts to "show that we have moral knowledge . . . [and that] this knowledge is conveyed via our emotions."[125] Since "[e]motions are revelatory of human persons," the "descriptions of the emotions attend not only to the meaning and structures of the particular experience in question" but also in "disambiguating them from related phenomena and identifying possible cross-cultural invariants."[126] This is a reminder of the complexity of emotions in animating and affecting an individual.

Previous Approaches to the Donatist Controversy

The Donatist Controversy from a Theological Perspective

303 CE marked the beginning of the systematic persecution of Christians under the emperor Diocletian. Under his reign, Christians were forced to recant their faith and give up their sacred scriptures under pain of torture and/or death. While Christians had been persecuted in the past, this was the first instance of an empire-wide systematic

[123] Düringer, "Evaluating Emotions," 8.
[124] Düringer, "Evaluating Emotions," 8.
[125] Düringer, "Evaluating Emotions," 9.
[126] Steinbock, "Moral Emotions," 11.

persecution. Many Christians capitulated to the Roman government's demands. 311 CE marked the end of the persecution, culminating in the signing of the Edict of Milan in 313 CE that promoted religious tolerance.

The question that the church needed to answer in face of this event was the treatment of the Christians deemed to be *traditores* (traitors) or *lapsis* (lapsed).[127] Should such people be accepted into the church after committing such an act against the faith? There was a sharp division in the church in its response. The Catholics argued that if the traitors were truly repentant, forgiveness should be offered. The Donatists vehemently opposed the acceptance of those who did not stand up for the faith when it truly mattered. These two disparate responses within the church eventually came to identify and define the Donatist Schism.

The following is a brief account of the events that led to the Donatist Schism. Caecilianus was elected and proclaimed as Bishop of Carthage. However, his appointment was contested by others who disputed the validity of his appointment based on the fact that Felix, the bishop of Aptunga, who consecrated him as bishop, was deemed a traitor. Since the words and acts of a traitor were invalid according to the Donatists, any appointments made by traitors were forfeited. As an alternative, Majorinus was elected and declared as the competing Bishop of Carthage. After his death, Donatus came to be their leader.[128] It is from him that the term Donatist comes.

The Donatists claimed that they were the true and pure church. This is the claim that animated and defined their thoughts and their actions. The Catholic church, with their refusal to agree with their theological convictions concerning impurity as evidenced

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[127] Wright, *Heretics*, 70.
[128] Frend, *Religion*, 142.

by their appointment of Caecilianus and acceptance of *traditores* and *lapsis*, forfeited their claim of being faithful Christians, and of being the true church, by their actions. Furthermore, the Donatists claimed that they were the true African church. They traced their lineage back to Cyprian, an African, and not to a foreign power like Rome. Their desire for purity informed the way they spoke and acted out against those who opposed them. Their particular theology demanded it.

The Donatist Controversy from a Cultural Perspective

When examining the theological debate during the Donatist Controversy, one can lose sight of the cultural aspect that undergirded this theological situation. The election of Caecilianus as Bishop of Carthage was contested by the bishops of Numidia because they were not invited to participate in the election that eventually proclaimed Caecilianus as bishop of Carthage. The election of a bishop involved the votes of both Carthaginian and Numidian bishops. In their haste to elect Caecilianus, the Carthaginian bishops voted without waiting for the arrival of their Numidian brothers. This act was seen as a perceived snub by the rural Numidians by the urban Carthaginians. It provided the impetus for electing Caecilianus' rival, Majorinus, as the Bishop of Carthage in an attempt to show the Carthaginians that they were not to be easily dismissed in theological matters.[129]

The appointment of Majorinus as the competing bishop had suspicious beginnings. Lucilla was a woman who possessed wealth and power, whose influence extended to theological matters. Because of her extreme devotion, she kissed a holy relic

[129] Wright, *Heretics*, 71.

with such reverence that it offended Caecilianus upon seeing it. Caecilianus rebuked her, and she was offended by his perceived meddling. As a result, she used her considerable wealth and power to finance the campaign of Majorinus as the Bishop of Carthage. Prior to becoming Bishop of Carthage, Majorinus was a slave in Lucilla's household.[130] It is impossible to view such actions without acknowledging that the theological dissent between the Catholics and Donatists was influenced by cultural elements.

It is important to note that "the question of which side deserved recognition as the Christian church in Africa also hinged, for example, on a clear demonstration that neither was just some fringe sect, but had a numerous and widespread representation from all parts of Africa."[131] Both parties went to great lengths to prove their legitimacy through the number of bishops they had and the extent to which Donatism had spread.[132] The Donatists claimed that they were the true North African church by tracing their lineage back to Cyprian, a North African church father while the Catholics traced their lineage back to Rome. Zablon Nthamburi asserts that "the Donatist church was the first church in the ancient world that was ready to challenge the social and economic order in the name of justice and religion. The peasant uprising of the circumcellions could be compared with the peoples' revolt against imperialism and colonialism in modern Africa. In both cases, religious and social aspirations cannot be separated."[133] While the Donatist Controversy was certainly a theological issue, understanding the cultural components

[130] Shaw, *Rulers, Nomads, and Christians*, 25–26.
[131] Shaw, *Rulers, Nomads, and Christians*, 26.
[132] Sundkler and Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 27.
[133] Nthamburi, "The Relevance of Donatism," 219.

surrounding it can help in fully understanding what the Donatist Controversy stood for and signified.[134]

Disgust Psychology

Disgust Psychology is the main methodology that will be employed in this dissertation. This section will offer a brief description of Disgust Psychology and how it can be used to examine the Donatist Controversy.

What is Disgust Psychology and why is it important? Disgust is a "powerful, visceral emotion" which, in many ways, cannot be controlled.[135] It is a universal, natural reaction. Richard Beck refers to an experiment in which he explains how disgust psychology works. He asks his readers to imagine a glass of juice. If it was offered to you, would you drink it? Chances are high that you might accept the juice. Imagine that someone drops a cockroach into that glass of juice. Would you drink it? Chances are pretty high that you would refuse it. After all, that is disgusting. What if the juice was filtered, boiled, and filtered again? Usually, people would still refuse to drink it even if it may be purer than the average tap water. One of the key concepts of disgust psychology is that it is irrational. Even if you may know that from an objective standpoint, the liquid you are about to drink is safe because of the various filtration process it has gone through, there is still a huge part that refuses to drink it because of one's feelings of disgust. Research by Paul Rozin suggests that "judgments of contamination play by their own

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[134] "Le schisme demeurait toutefois une affaire exclusivement africaine: il ne prit jamais racine hors de l'Afrique et ne fut reconnu par aucune Église d'Orient ou d'Occident." Personal translation: It is rather interesting that the Donatist Schism was a uniquely African event. It never took root anywhere else other than in Africa and was not recognized by either the Eastern or Western Church. Decret, *Le Christianisme en Afrique du Nord Ancienne*, 142.

[135] Clark, *Christianity and Roman Society*, 1.

rules. And these rules are very often contrary and impervious to logic and reason."[136] Disgust Psychology, by its very nature, resists the modern person's sensibilities that emphasize the importance of reason over emotions. Primal instincts continue to bypass higher cognitive functions.

When a human being comes into contact with something disgusting, there is an aggressive reaction of expulsion against the offending stimuli. Depending on the severity of the feeling of disgust, the individual can simply avoid it or violently expel it. If the stimulus in question were an inanimate object, there would be no problem with any violent expulsion of the disgusting stimulus.

It would, however, be more problematic if the disgusting stimulus being referred to was a human being. The exploitation of disgust in wars and conflicts is not an anomaly; it is the norm. There is an innate moral squeamishness in the act of taking someone else's life, even in situations where failure to do so could result in one's own death or the death of others. To circumvent this hesitation, which could mean the difference between life and death in the high-stakes, frenetic world of war and violent conflicts, a certain mentality must rule in the mind of the person who is tasked to kill the enemy. The individual must be forced to recognize the difference between them and the opposing group. They are the group who stands for righteousness, justice, freedom, or some other noble cause. The opposing group is the antithesis of everything for which they stand. Because there is such a disparity between the two groups in every possible way—morally, intellectually, physically, culturally—the other group is portrayed as lacking the necessary qualifications to be considered a human. Sometimes, the disparity

[136] Evers, "A Fine Line?," 23.

is so great that they are viewed as animals, not deserving of pity or mercy. To kill someone from the other group is to kill a random spider crawling on the wall. Sometimes, the disparity is not so complete as to relegate the other group into animal status, but enough to treat them as sub-human. In this case, the other group is not totally devoid of human characteristics but are often seen and categorized as having human-like, or undeveloped, features. By categorizing them as such, they may be treated less than a "normal" person but if they behave properly, they would suffer no dire consequences. This is done to instill disgust in the mind of the potential killer. The other group, even though they may "look" like you, is not like you. In fact, they are actually very different. They are unclean. Furthermore, they are disgusting. Since disgust is an aversive emotion, if it is elicited in the right amount, it could be enough to cause an individual to fire the fatal shot.

According to Colin McGinn, "touch is the strongest form of intimacy."[137] As a result, "we don't want to get intimate with what we find disgusting."[138] If this is true, then "the natural response to a disgusting object is thus to put it beyond the scope of the sense of touch."[139] Any fear of contamination can be eliminated through imprisoning or killing the disgusting stimulus. In highly charged emotional contexts, the elevated levels of fear and suspicion make it more efficient to kill the disgusting stimulus rather than seek ways to imprison it. By instilling disgust in an individual, the act of killing becomes a normal reaction to one whose very presence offends the senses.

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[137] Moll et al., "The Moral Affiliations of Disgust," 42.
[138] Moll et al., "The Moral Affiliations of Disgust," 42.
[139] Moll et al., "The Moral Affiliations of Disgust," 42.

Gordon Hodson and Kimberly Costello explore the role of disgust in predicting the attitudes of certain groups towards others who do not belong in their group. In particular, they "consider disgust sensitivity as a predictor of rejection of various out-group types."[140] A number of studies have failed to examine the "mechanisms through which disgust may affect intergroup attitudes."[141] They note that disgust signals two things: danger and feelings of superiority towards others.[142] Disgust "instigates withdrawal, removal, or avoidance responses to protect against contamination."[143] It "is therefore a relatively conservative environmental reaction prompting retreat from potentially offensive targets."[144] Hodson and Costello also speak of "how disgust reactions connote the sense that one is better, purer, and less offensive than the offending target."[145]

Disgust can serve as an ethnic or out-group marker in intergroup settings.[146] While "disease concerns seem most related to core disgust, a rudimentary disgust reaction that functions to guard the body from disease and infection and that is elicited by concerns related to eating, body products, and animals," it seems as if "interpersonal disgust serves the function of guarding the 'body, soul, and social order' and is elicited by potential contact with unknown (foreign) and socially undesirable other."[147] This dissertation highlights the pervasive nature by which disgust has the ability to influence

[140] Gordon and Costello, "Interpersonal Disgust," 691.
[141] Gordon and Costello, "Interpersonal Disgust," 692.
[142] Gordon and Costello, "Interpersonal Disgust," 692.
[143] Gordon and Costello, "Interpersonal Disgust," 692.
[144] Gordon and Costello, "Interpersonal Disgust," 692.
[145] Gordon and Costello, "Interpersonal Disgust," 692.
[146] Gordon and Costello, "Interpersonal Disgust," 692.
[147] Gordon and Costello, "Interpersonal Disgust," 693.

interactions with those who are deemed as foreign or an out-group. It also helps explain why social discrimination and ostracism takes place within the society.

Charles Darwin begins his exploration of disgust by centering it in the rejection of food and the sense of taste. He states that the term disgust

> in its simplest sense, means something offensive to the taste. It is curious how readily this feeling is excited by anything unusual in the appearance, odour, or nature of our food. In Tierra del Fuego a native touched with his finger some cold preserved meat which I was eating at our bivouac, and plainly showed utter disgust at its softness; whilst I felt utter disgust at my food being touched by a naked savage, though his hands did not appear dirty. A smear of soup on a man's beard looks disgusting, though there is of course nothing disgusting in the soup itself. I presume that this follows from the strong association in our minds between the sight of food, however circumstanced, and the idea of eating it.[148]

The etymology of disgust means unpleasant to the taste. [149] However, it also "involves—not just by extension but at its core—smell, touch, even at times sight and hearing. Above all, it is a moral and social sentiment."[150] It also plays a "motivating and confirming role in moral judgment in a particular way that has little if any connection with ideas of oral incorporation. It ranks people and things in a kind of cosmic ordering."[151] At its core, disgust reveals "a strong sense of aversion to something perceived as dangerous because of its powers to contaminate, infect, or pollute by proximity, contact, or ingestion."[152] Not only does this aversion result in physical acts of avoidance, it also manifests itself in

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[148] Darwin, *Expression of the Emotions in Mana and Animals*, 8.

[149] From the word dis (a negative prefix) + gustus (taste).

[150] Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, 2.

[151] Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, 2.

[152] Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, 2.; Disgust can also be "a deeply felt, direct, physical and mental response to a stimulus or it can be a calm act of internal or interpersonal speech, a label used to identify properties of a situation that one is assessing. In either instance, disgust serves to organize or divide experience in a number of important ways. In particular, it establishes the idea that experience can be divided into good and bad, inside the self and outside the self, and it states, by way of the spitting and vomiting actions intimately associated with it, that the boundary between inside and outside can be crossed so that whatever is bad can be got rid of, thus leaving the self in a purified and undisturbed state. The disgust experience and concept also can serve the individual's wishes to rid himself of *psychologically noxious* 'substances' in the way that the automatic vomiting of sickening food rids the body of noxious foodstuffs." Miller, "Disgust," 300.

social acts of ostracism. Avoiding the person contaminated by sin is analogous to avoiding the juice that was contaminated by a cockroach. Both acts serve to eliminate the idea of being polluted through having contact with something or someone impure.

The idea that contact with something impure can contaminate one's self is not limited to oral actions such as ingesting polluted food. When presented with a sweater that was identified as belonging to Hitler, most people refused to try to wear it. There were others who also refused to lie down in the same bed that had been previously used by a homosexual.[153] "What studies like this reveal is that people tend to think about evil as if it were a virus, a disease, or a contagion. So we stay away."[154] Contamination psychology becomes a helpful paradigm to assess how disgust can affect one's theological understanding of what is wrong and what is evil.

William Miller argues for "the importance of disgust in structuring our world and our stance toward that world."[155] He continues on to say that "the ideas of pollution, contagion, and contamination are not constrainable to the body; stenches begin to arise from sinful deeds and also from lowly positions in the social hierarchy."[156] His mission "is to demonstrate that emotions, particularly ones like disgust and contempt, make possible social orderings of particular stripes, and that it behooves social and political theory to care about these emotions and how they structure various social, moral, and political orderings."[157] Not only do emotions affect social, moral, and political orderings, they also affect theology. The role of emotions in theology is often treated superficially

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[153] Beck, *Unclean*, 25.
[154] Evers, "A Fine Line?," 25–26.
[155] Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, 18.
[156] Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, 18.
[157] Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, 18.

within the popular culture and is often silent in scholarship. Emotions play a crucial—and important—part in both the personal and communal theological narratives.

One of the important things to establish when creating a culture of purity is the erection of barriers to properly distinguish between what can be considered pure and impure. Contagion is an important concept to examine because it is intrinsically connected to questions of purity. How one can become impure is a question of utmost importance. Rozin et al. talk about the four principles of contagion:

> Contact: Contamination is caused by contact or physical proximity.
> Dose Insensitivity: Minimal, even micro, amounts of the pollutant confer harm.
> Permanence: Once deemed contaminated, nothing can be done to rehabilitate or purify the object.
> Negativity Dominance: When a pollutant and a pure object come into contact the pollutant is "stronger" and ruins the pure object. The pure object doesn't render the pollutant acceptable or palatable.[158]

Rozin's ideas concerning contagion provide a way forward in understanding how a culture of purity is built by particular groups.

The Donatists believed that associating with traitors could potentially contaminate them. As a result, they avoided any physical or social contact with them. A debate arose about how the word "traitor" should be defined. When threatened, some Christians surrendered Greek works such as medical treatises to the government, instead of handing over sacred scriptures. The Donatists went so far as to accuse them of being traitors because they chose to capitulate to the government's demands. According to the Donatists, a true Christian would not even give a hint of surrendering anything to government forces. As Rozin et al. noted, even just a small amount of dirt is enough to pollute the object. No amount of cleansing can make the object clean again. Dose

[158] Beck, *Unclean*, 27–28; Rozin et al., "Operation of the Laws," 703–12.

insensitivity and permanence of impurity play a crucial role in promoting and perpetuating the "impure" label.

Chen-bo Zhong and Katie Liljenquist state that "research on the correspondence between physical and moral purity has speculated that people are predisposed to use categories that are based on bodily experience (such as clean versus dirty) to construct complex social categories (such as moral versus immoral). For example, in English, words such as "clean" and "pure" describe both physical and moral states (e.g., he has a clean record)."[159] When someone commits an impure act, the physical act of washing can substitute for the spiritual version of cleansing that they are asking for and trying to achieve. Since there are "psychological, physiological, and neurological overlap(s) between physical and moral disgust, physical cleansing acts that mitigate physical disgust might also reduce social or moral disgust, thereby alleviating moral condemnation."[160] The baptism received by the Donatists and the physical act of washing their hands and body allowed the Donatists to prevent cognitive dissonance between their actions and the biblical tenets they were proclaiming to obey. This physical cleansing could be the means they employed to retain their violent tendencies without being in conflict with scriptural arguments that speak of showing love to others and being peace makers.

Magical thinking is the last feature of disgust psychology:[161] "The contamination appraisals involved in disgust are characterized by magical thinking, which overrides

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[159] Zhong and Liljenquist, "Washing Away Your Sins," 1451.

[160] Zhong and Liljenquist, "Washing Away Your Sins," 1451.

[161] Rozin et al. states that "the laws of sympathetic magic have two basic dimensions. First, the 'magic' can be positive or negative; thus, in contagion, contact of an object with a loved or respected person can enhance the value of the object (positive contagion), whereas contact with a disliked or despised person (or an offensive substance such as feces) can devalue the object (negative contagion). Second, transmitted essence can mediate effects either in its source or in its recipient." Rozin et al., "Operation of the Laws," 703.

reason and logic. Consequently, when disgust regulates moral, social, or religious experience magical thinking is unwittingly imported into the life of the church."[162] Beck argues that "the logic of contamination is called 'magical' because it makes causal judgments that defy the laws of physics."[163] Food coming into contact with a pollutant can make food dirty.

With dose insensitivity, even a minute amount of dirt is enough to contaminate an object. Permanence suggests that the object which has been polluted cannot be made clean. Roughly translated, "a teaspoon of sewage will spoil a barrel of wine, but a teaspoon of wine will do nothing for a barrel of sewage."[164] Once this type of thinking permeates a culture, it becomes difficult to view others in the image of God.[165] Instead, the Other is seen as unclean, impure, and will stay in that state of impurity forever.[166]

Daniel Kelly examines the complicated nature of disgust as it relates to human beings. He notes that "one interesting fact about disgust is that it is a piece of human psychology that does not sit easily on either side of the traditional nature-nurture divide."[167] He comments on the fact that "the variation evident in what different people find disgusting reveals a considerable role for nurture as well . . . people . . . learn what to

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[162] Beck, *Unclean*, 27.

[163] Beck, *Unclean*, 27.

[164] Hladky, "I Double-Dog Dare You in Jesus' Name," 32.

[165] In an experiment conducted by Sherman et al., they discovered that "disgust not only makes people want to avoid impurities, but also makes people better able to see them." Based on their findings, it could be assumed that one of the reasons why the Donatists had difficulty viewing Catholics as their brothers and sisters is due to their hypersensitivity to the Catholics' impurities. Sherman et al., "The Faintest Speck of Dirt," 1512.

[166] Hodson and Costello's experiment tried to address "a gap in the literature, exploring mechanisms explaining the relation between disgust and inter-group attitudes." Gordon and Costello, "Interpersonal Disgust," 696.They tried to "demonstrate that interpersonal-disgust sensitivity in particular relates to ideological orientations and de-humanizing out-group perceptions in ways that can effectively account for prejudicial attitudes." Gordon and Costello, "Interpersonal Disgust," 691. It could be argued that the de-humanizing (de-Christianizing) views of the Donatist Movement against the Catholics assured the perpetuation of their hostile attitudes against them.

[167] Kelly, *Yuck*, 11.

be disgusted by through individual experience, through social interactions with others, and through the type of education that constitutes the refinement of their moral and aesthetic sensibilities."[168] This attests to the intricate nature in which individuals' actions and perceptions are affected by their emotions. Yet, too often, the effect of the emotions, in particular, disgust, on the individual is either minimized or is not taken into proper account.

Things, however, are changing. Recently, disgust has received considerable attention in academia, especially in psychology and the humanities. Disgust is a fascinating subject to explore since "something interesting can be said about its character from nearly every level of analysis, from its associated patterns of neural activation to its role in large-scale cultural dynamics and most points in between."[169] Because of its ability to incite questions in broad academic categories, disgust has been a "hot" area for further academic studies. Its ubiquity makes it an ideal candidate for interdisciplinary studies.

One of the fascinating aspects of disgust lies in its pervasive aspect as it relates to an individual's life. Although disgust is an emotion, it has distinctly moral and social repercussions. Yet, this can also prove to be the difficulty in studying disgust. Since it is so multifaceted, how can one properly analyze and identify disgust in contradistinction to other variables? If the core response to disgust is universal and can be "found in all cultures and normally functioning adult humans," what should be the proper parameters to study it? Charles Darwin maintained that "all normal, mature humans have the capacity to be disgusted, and that facial expressions of disgust are recognizably the same

[168] Kelly, *Yuck*, 11.
[169] Kelly, *Yuck*, 12.

across cultures."[170] The problem lies in the question of what qualifies as "normal" behaviour. Kelly states that "among the many deficiencies alleged to be found in humans raised in extreme isolation is the lack of a fully developed disgust response and elicitor set."[171]

Lucien Malson argues that "children deprived too early of all social contact—those known as feral or 'wolf' children—become so stunted in their solitude that their behaviour comes to resemble that of the lower animals."[172] He further comments that

> [t]he problem of human nature is the problem of psychological heredity. For though it is perfectly plain that man can inherit biological characteristics, when one examines the area in which he displays his peculiarly human qualities—thought and emotion and their consequence, action – it is extremely doubtful whether there is anything here which is genetically transmitted. The natural in man is due to inborn heredity, the cultural to his acquired heritage. . . . Even in the purely organic sphere it is difficult to draw the line between what is natural and what is cultural . . . In the domain of psychology it becomes frankly impossible to make any sharp distinction between nature and culture. Nevertheless, it is clear that the conditions for the existence and development of biological life are physical and external whereas the forces which shape man's psychological life are social ones.

An individual's range of actions is "limited by a fixed set of physical dispositions, yet by themselves . . . are quite meaningless" because "[t]hey are only given a sense by the image . . . which [the individual] takes from [their] cultural milieu."[173] Thus, it is imperative that one recognizes the impossibility of being able to easily untangle, or determine the exact source of an individual's problem, by examining the biological factors while glossing over the power of cultural factors in shaping and directing an individual's mental and moral faculties. Disgust, then, cannot be properly examined from

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[170] Kelly, *Yuck*, 15.
[171] Kelly, *Yuck*, 15.
[172] Malson, *Wolf Children*, 10.
[173] Malson, *Wolf Children*, 14.

a biological perspective without acknowledging the cultural variables that also affect and shape how it is manifested in an individual.

The Donatist Controversy in Light of Disgust Psychology: A New Perspective

One of the four things that make up Disgust Psychology is the fact that it is "a boundary psychology: Disgust is a system that monitors boundaries. Disgust regulates the act of incorporation and inclusion."[174] The appointment of Caecilianus by Felix, a traitor, meant that Caecilianus' appointment was null and void since a traitor conferred the position onto him. Any action by Felix, or Caecilianus, is non-binding and functionally irrelevant since it held no weight. The Donatists decided that the baseline for every Christians' purity is the one that they have created.[175] Those who agreed with them were right. Any dissenters were viewed as traitors.[176]

Disgust Psychology speaks of how "disgust is a violently expulsive mechanism. In mild forms disgust simply prompts withdrawal and avoidance. In stronger forms disgust involves violent rejection, expulsion, or elimination."[177] The verbal and physical violence committed by the Donatists, especially by the circumcellions, demonstrate the extent to which Disgust Psychology played into the Donatists' cultural mindset. They were accused of committing grave violence against Catholics by violating the churches and stealing prized possessions. All of these actions were done with a pure conscience.

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[174] Beck, *Unclean*, 26.

[175] They wanted "everything in the church to be spiritually lined up, ordered, walled-in, and purified. They made their way in a struggle of wills and became a self-appointed in-group which ruled out everyone else." Marty, *The Christian World*, 58.

[176] Sundkler and Steed note that "in modern terms one would characterize the Donatists as a holiness movement. According to them the true church consists of holy members." They are also responsible for creating a holiness code of conduct that everyone must adhere to. Sundkler and Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 26.

[177] Beck, *Unclean*, 26.

There was no experience of inner conflict in the disparity between their actions and the righteousness they espoused. Verbal and physical aggression against others was justified by their belief that since they were righteous, even the violence they perpetrated was deemed righteous and necessary.

Optatus spoke of the barbaric treatment suffered under the Donatists. Of the Donatists' actions, he says

> [y]ou came raging; you came full of wrath, rending the members of the church; subtle in your deceits; savage in your slaughters, provoking the children of Peace to war. A large number you banished from their homes. Approaching with a hired band, you rushed upon the Basilicas. Many of your party throughout numerous districts (which it would be too long to mention by their names) worked massacres so bloody, that the judges of the time sent a report to the Emperor concerning deeds of such atrocity.[178]

These are both egregious and grievous charges against the Donatists by the Catholics. The third feature of Disgust Psychology can speak to this situation. Disgust is by nature promiscuous: "disgust is often found regulating moral, social, and religious experiences."[179] In North Africa, Constantine consistently showed preference to Catholic Christians over the Donatists. He "distributed money and favors only to those bishops in communion with Caecilianus, the Catholic bishop of Carthage."[180] Not only did he favour the Catholics with gifts, he also gave civil and military authority to Caecilianus.[181] This was not viewed in a positive light by the Donatists. "Traditionalist North Africans who would later form the Donatist movement scorned those who opted for exterior conformity to the edicts of the State."[182] They viewed the Catholics as the "Christians who left the

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[178] Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, 96.
[179] Beck, *Unclean*, 26.
[180] *Donatist Martyr Stories*, xxxi; Eusebius, *Church History*, 10.6, 10.7.
[181] *Donatist Martyr Stories*, xxxi.
[182] *Donatist Martyr Stories*, ix.

true church and became members of the church affiliated with the Empire."[183] In light of such a perspective, the fact that Catholics were awarded all of these favours by the State only reinforced the perception of corruption present in the Catholic church. Since the Catholics' wealth was ill-gotten and undeserved, the Donatists were justified in seizing their wealth, even if it was done through violent force. Their disgust at the Catholic church's actions moulded and shaped their interactions with both the church and the state.

J. Patout Burns comments on how "communities often differentiate themselves from their surrounding culture by defining a boundary which identifies them in opposition to it, separates them from it, and thus establishes a certain level of unity among their members on the basis of what they all reject."[184] The Catholics and the Donatists showed extreme proficiency in employing this community-building tactic. Both groups hurled insults at each other at every turn. Both groups resorted to violence against one another. These actions solidified their prospective faith communities, but both groups were unable to change the other groups' minds despite the various strategies they used to bring about unity in the fractured church.

Disgust, Violence, and Augustine: Exhortation and Lament

The way in which stories are created and the connections that are made between seemingly inconsequential dots in history can affect the way in which others understand how the world works. Emilien Lamirande writes,

> as an historian of Christian thought, it is not my specific duty to underline the relevance of our topic. It is not for me to either condone nor condemn attitudes of the past, nor shall I ask of history to provide solutions for State or Church today. Some of the positions supported by Augustine would not be acceptable now, but

[183] *Donatist Martyr Stories*, ix.
[184] Burns, "Establishing Unity in Diversity," 382.

> on the other hand, it is far from sure that all of our contemporaries are perfectly consistent in their affirmation of tolerance or freedom. It may help everybody, even if just a little, to take part in what I propose as a mere exercise in understanding.[185]

This exhortation is a reminder of the historian's role in helping others understand the events of the past. It is of utmost importance, then, for the historian to do this work honestly and with integrity. Every attempt should be made to ensure objectivity in the way information is handled.

Too often, in theological debates, there is an underlying implication from both sides that the "other" side harbours a malicious desire to pervert the truth in order to serve their purpose. If only the other would accept the "truth" they would change their mind. The truth is something that is both absolute and malleable. It is absolute in the sense that there is only one "acceptable" reading of the matter. It is malleable in the sense that others can take this absolute truth and twist it for their own purposes and re-package the new version as "the" truth. Both sides cannot both be right; however, it is possible for both sides to be wrong. It is this complex relationship that an individual has with the abstract concept of truth that is often the cause of so many bitter rivalries in many faith communities.

Yet, what can often be forgotten during these debates is the role of disgust in creating and maintaining moral boundaries. Emotions can predispose individuals to a particular reaction. What is important to note when it comes to disgust is the fact that one's awareness of disgust can only be known after the fact. After experiencing the reaction to expel or avoid a particular stimulus, one is able to recognize that a disgusting event has happened. It is not a pre-cognitive event. There was no prior knowledge that

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[185] Lamirande, *Church, State, and Toleration*, 5.

what was happening or is about to happen is in the realm of disgust. If this is the case, then, what if the theology one espoused is disgusting not because it was willfully committed, but because it has already gone through one's system without prior knowledge and the results are nothing but a reflection of an event that has already happened, without one's knowledge or consent? This means that theological responses can be tinged with disgust without one knowing that it is in one's system.

Further complicating this issue is the fact that in theology, disgust often hides under the theological term "impurity." Since the theme of purity and impurity runs from the Old Testament to the New Testament, and into the church age, it is very easy for many Christians not to realize or understand that the term "impurity" can create situations that are identical to the situations engendered by the word "disgust." In both cases, boundaries are being created and maintained to ensure that no contamination can take place. In both cases, repulsion and revulsion are the effects of seeing/interacting with the person or object deemed to be impure. Because the language of impurity is so pervasive in the sacred scriptures, it is not surprising that Christians use this particular language to demarcate and define who they are against the "other." In addition to this particular phenomenon, the conception of the "holy" as being "set apart" colours the way in which Christians understand and embody the word "impurity." Because holiness means to be set apart for God, the word "holy" often becomes a substitute for the word "pure." The conflation of "pure" and "holy" can lead to the conflation of "impurity" with "profane/evil." Unfortunately, these are not merely abstract ideas. Theological ideas are embodied and are translated into tangible actions.

If Christian theology contains elements that promote disgust, it also contains elements to help counter disgust. This is one of the most intricate parts of the relationship between Christianity and disgust. In Christianity, one can find both the seeds that promote disgust and the seeds that seek to eliminate disgust. The individual, then, is put in a particularly difficult conundrum. Both paths are open. There are precedents for both ways. However, both have very different outcomes. The Gospels give us the example of the woman with the issue of blood. Normally speaking, at least from the religious and cultural perspective, this woman was "other" because of her condition. She was deemed impure and anyone who came into contact with her became impure as a result. This type of thinking can be categorized under the term "contagion" in Disgust Psychology. As a result of disgust, this woman was socially ostracized and functioned in the margins of society. When this impure woman touched the hem of Jesus' garment and Jesus loudly asked "who touched me?," it was normal for her to experience fear. It was both a relief and a miracle that the words that Jesus uttered after her admission of guilt were words of affirmation and love. Suddenly, the roles were reversed: that which was unclean was made clean. This is the power of redemption in Christ: the normal expectations of how things are supposed to happen in the world are turned upside down.

Disgust: How Is It Any Different from a Disagreement?

The ability to be disgusted is common to every human being. However, disgust comes in many forms. What one culture defines as disgusting could be completely different in another. What one individual defines as disgusting could be completely different in another individual as well. This is what makes disgust so simple and yet so complicated

at the same time. Since disgust can be cultural and also learned, this makes disgust an especially sophisticated emotion to define and explore.

After all of the information is laid out concerning the relationship between disgust and actions that are elicited by disgust, one must address the question concerning the necessary delineation between what is considered disgust versus what is considered a disagreement. It might seem as if every act of disagreement with another person should be seen as an act of disgust. This is not so. It is possible to disagree with other individual(s) without the disagreement verging into disgust territory. A key component that needs to be understood when it comes to disgust and how to interpret the presence of disgust is complicated by the fact that the only way in which it can be predominantly understood and exercised is through the "necessary *contextual grounding* for lexical meaning" within each scenario.[186] As Jerome Kagan notes,

> All conclusions about emotional states based only on verbal descriptions have distinctive meanings that usually do not apply to inferences that are based on biological or behavioral data. Most English terms for emotions do not name natural kinds but, rather, families of states whose members assume a different form in varied contexts or to different incentives. Americans use the word *fear* to name worry over possible harm to the body, loss of property, social rejection, task failure, unfamiliar situations, and being alone. . . . Feelings are dynamic, often fleeting, experiences that semantic concepts freeze-frame into static categories . . ."[187]

Any particular word can be understood in a denotative sense or in a connotative sense. Likewise, disgust cannot be understood devoid of its cultural context. For example, the term "heresy" can be employed within a situation where it can be viewed as a disagreement between two people concerning a religious concept or a situation in which the term is used to elicit disgust. According to Canon Law 751, heresy is defined as "the

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[186] Spencer, "Mixed Feelings and Vexed Passions," 11.
[187] Kagan, "Once More into the Breach," 12.

obstinate post-baptismal denial of some truth which must be believed with divine and catholic faith, or it is likewise an obstinate doubt concerning the same."[188] This is the denotative sense in which the word "heresy" is used. After the seven ecumenical councils, the early church was able to designate the results of these ecumenical councils as the baseline from which anyone can claim to be a part of orthodox Christianity. Those deliberations became the guideline for how orthodox beliefs were defined in Christianity. Anything that deviated from that understanding were defined as "heresy." Within Augustine's context, the use of the term "heretic" does not simply mean that someone has veered away from the traditional understanding of key Christian tenets. While it does retain its denotative sense, there is also a connotative sense of a heretic being someone who not only holds doctrinally incorrect ideas in their head, they are also viewed as one who is spiritually damned for holding incorrect beliefs. The delineation between a disagreement and disgust lies in the distinction between someone referring to a particular situation's treatment of the other as somehow motivated by ethical or ontological concerns. There is something foundationally different when you see someone as having committed a mistake versus seeing that person as a mistake. A disagreement is a comment on an individual's actions, while disgust comments on the very individual.

When the term "heretic" is used in disgusting terms, it brings with it a belief that the person does not only hold wrong beliefs but that the very being of the person is, *ipso facto*, wrong. This is one of the most problematic parts of disgust. Because of its ability to function in the liminal spaces between action and being, the ability to extricate it in its purest form is virtually impossible. This, in turn, is a reminder of the complicated role

[188] Coriden, James A., et al.,, eds. *The Codes of Canon Law*, 547.

that emotion plays in the way individuals think and live. Simone Schnall, Jonathan Haidt, Gerald L. Clore, and Alexander H. Jordan comment,

> when making evaluative judgments, people attend to their own feelings, as if asking themselves: How do I feel about it? Thus, consistent with Hume's statement, people generally like what they feel good about and dislike what they feel bad about.[189] . . . This is but another strong reminder of how emotions play a huge part in our decision-making. While traditional Western thinking concerning the role of reason and logic in decision making may be prevalent and pervasive in our Western culture, it does not and cannot change the fact that emotions does affect the way we act towards each other.[190]

Peter Brown notes that "human beings are difficult to understand at the best of times."[191] He continues on to say that "it is alarming and at times a source of obscure anger, that people can be so different from ourselves."[192] This merely states the obvious: the human individual is a complex, fascinating creature who in so many ways, is unable to fully comprehend the profundity of this statement: Emotions play a huge role in how the individual live their life.

To be disgusted is to be human. One of the complicated relationships with disgust and violence is that while disgust played a key role in enacting violent acts against another, alone, it is not enough to be the trigger for committing violent acts. Violence is a complicated topic and it would be completely dishonest to even implicitly suggest that disgust is the only emotion that plays a factor in committing violent acts. There are other reasons, emotional and otherwise, that also contribute in the violent act. In trying to create a better understanding between disgust and violence, specifically religious violence, caution must be employed so as to prevent disgust's overreach even as its role

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[189] Schnall et al., "Disgust as Embodied Moral Judgment," 1097.
[190] Schnall et al., "Disgust as Embodied Moral Judgment," 1097.
[191] Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine*, 20.
[192] Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine*, 20.

is being emphasized in violence. An individual may commit a violent act against someone as a result of being disgusted but it does not necessarily follow that every individual who is disgusted will commit a violent act.

The Problem with Disgust in Theology

Theology is not merely philosophical, nor is it merely intellectual; true theology at its core is practical. Christian doctrines and tenets are manifested in physical, tangible ways. It is through words and deeds that theology is revealed and manifested. In other words, theology is performative. "To regard theology as 'performative' is to say that theology in its primary form is a language of practice: enacted and embodied in the liturgical, evangelistic, sacramental and practical/caring actions of faithful communities."[193] Actions, then, are directly connected to the way one embodies one's theology.

The problem with disgust in theology is that it creates actions that are detrimental and an actual hindrance to practicing and experiencing true theology as it should be experienced. It also means that disgust in theology can often be an unnamed factor, albeit strong factor, in the display of power by its adherents. "Power exertion is perhaps the least studied and least understood—and yet most fundamental—process in social life. As with energy in the physical world, power pervades all dynamic social phenomena, yet it cannot be directly observed or measured."[194] Amos Hawley rightly notes that "every social act is an exercise of power, every social relationship is a power equation, and every social group or system is an organization of power. Accordingly, it is possible to transpose any system of social relationships into terms of potential or active power.[195]

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[193] Bennett et al., *Invitation to Research in Practical Theology*, 20.
[194] Olsen, "Power as a Social Process," 2.
[195] Hawley, "Community Power and Urban Renewal Success," 422.

This means that the performative nature of theology also translates in power-dynamics whose influence can be clearly felt by those who are in its vicinity. If power is not a thing to possess but something that happens within the context of two actors (whether individual or in a group), how then does the church exercise authority over others? According to Roger Olsen,

> [t]o use *authority*, an actor must first be granted legitimacy by those subject to his directions. . . . This grant of legitimacy then becomes the actor's resource base for employing authoritative power, so that we often speak of authority as the exercise of legitimacy. Legitimacy is sometimes given to an actor through direct procedures such as formal votes or informal agreements, but more commonly it is indirectly expressed as one joins an organization, remains a member, and supports the actions of those who claim legitimacy.[196]

This can lead to one of the most difficult questions in Christianity: Who is a Christian? Who can make the decision on who is a Christian? Who has the power to include or exclude an individual or a group from Christianity? These questions are re-visited by every generation and every generation is tasked with finding a solution to this persistent question. Tradition, in many ways, can become a bulwark against trying to find answers to these questions. It can often serve as a subterfuge for laziness to properly engage with the power and the pain that often undergirds these questions. The church then uses this authority that it has lorded over princes and paupers to help maintain the status quo.

While this may have been the reality for centuries, this is no longer acceptable for the church. Today, the church is often forced to come to terms with the realization that their refusal to engage with these difficult questions can no longer be tolerated. The day of reckoning has come, and the church has been found wanting. The power and authority

[196] Olsen, "Power as a Social Process," 7.

it wielded in centuries past is no more. As a result, it has changed the way the church is seen by others.

The story of the Donatist Controversy follows this trajectory. Donatists have often been viewed as heretics or schismatics across the centuries. However, with the rise of postmodernism, the status quo is now being challenged. Questions regarding power dynamics and biases need to be properly addressed. There is a reason behind the act of writing a letter. A letter is written for a specific purpose. It also has an intended audience in mind. Augustine was clear that the Donatists and the Catholics were not on the same level. Augustine went to great lengths to reach out to the Donatists and tried to change their minds. What caused him to advocate and endorse the use of violent force by the state to coerce the Donatists back into the "true" church? What prompted these divisions between people? How can violence so often flare up among those who call themselves children of God? This is not a merely esoteric question, but one that is grounded in the realities of life.

A main culprit behind such strife and animosity against one another was disgust. Humans are emotional beings. However, there is a strong and pervading belief that humans are rational and logical beings. It is easy to dismiss the effects that emotions play in the realm of decision-making. By highlighting the role of emotions, specifically disgust, should help to create an even playing field for both sides as they discuss and debate any topic or issue. Too often, when the word "heretic" is used by a group, there is an implication that the other group is purposefully twisting the scriptures to better suit their own needs and that the group who is making the allegation is the one portrayed as the group who "truly" understands the text and that the knowledge that matches up with

their own is somehow not beneficial for them. By making disgust a foundational factor that needs to be considered in a theological debate allows both groups to cease from committing acts where they would seek to privilege their theological opinion as better or truer than the other.

Doctrinal orthodoxy and heresy exist in tension. It is in dealing with heretics where disgust and theology collide. Disgust has a powerful way of influencing our beliefs and our judgments. It is important to acknowledge its power and its potential effects on us as individuals, especially as decisions are made concerning the sacred things of God.

Conclusion

This section has dealt with factors that affected the Roman North African believer. Martyrdom would play a crucial role in determining and defining one's identity as a Christian within the North African church. In many ways, martyrdom would affect the Christian's views on the church's orthodoxy, especially when the charge of heresy is levelled against her. Lastly, the role of emotions in an individual's life is often forgotten or trivialized. Emotions are intricately connected to an individual's decision-making process, even as it pertains to an individual's moral judgment. Further exploration of disgust shows how it played a crucial role in changing Augustine's attitude towards the use of physical and verbal aggression during the Donatist Controversy.

CHAPTER 2: CYPRIAN AND THE QUESTION OF PURITY

When it comes to North African church fathers, there is arguably no one who comes close to the power and prestige of Cyprian, especially as it relates to questions of church persecution and the importance of ecclesial unity. It is virtually impossible to fathom the intricacies and nuances of the Donatist Controversy without mentioning Cyprian. The Donatists' major claim is that it is the true African church because it traces its lineage back to Cyprian. Many of Augustine's claims against the Donatists would also revolve around interpreting (or re-interpreting) Cyprian's theology to the Donatists. In the same way that the Donatist Controversy arose in the aftermath of the persecution against Christians by the emperor Diocletian, so also the question of what to do with the *lapsis* (lapsed) within the church arose as the aftermath of the persecution against Christians under Decius. This chapter will primarily focus on the three common issues that Cyprian and Augustine dealt with: purity, baptism, and ecclesial unity. Cyprian's attitude towards these issues becomes the template by which one can foresee how, not only did it contain the germ of what would blossom into the Donatist Controversy, but also how the difference in social and ecclesial structure, lead to a scenario where the Donatist Controversy would never have happened. Even though Cyprian and Augustine dealt with questions that struck at the heart of ecclesial unity, their response to the problem led to different outcomes.

In 248 CE, Cyprian was elected as bishop by the Christian community in Carthage. Even though he had only been a Christian for two years and there is no record of his ascendancy to the position of bishop of Carthage through the traditional means by

which one typically comes to the position of bishop, Cyprian "became the leader not only of the bishops of Proconsular Africa but all of Latin Africa, as far west as the Atlantic. At his summons, eighty-five bishops would converge on Carthage; at his prompting, they would speak with a single voice."[1] Cyprian's leadership as a bishop was put to the test during the Decian Persecution.

On December 249, the emperor Decius made a decree that "every citizen should join him in offering homage to the immortal gods, whose graciousness secured the peace and prosperity of the empire."[2] Logistically speaking, this meant that each person had to go before a locally established commission to make the proper sacrifice to the Roman gods and goddesses whose favour was important in securing the well-being of the empire. "The requirement was for all free inhabitants of the Empire, men, women and children, to sacrifice to the gods of the Empire, pour a libation, and taste sacrificial meat."[3] It must be noted, however, that the edict only stipulated the need to sacrifice; it did not contain any stipulation that Christians must recant from their faith. They only needed to do the gesture, get their certificate, and it would have been considered complete. Some did not even have to sacrifice. They could prove their worth by offering incense.[4] This was not a problem for pagans; however, this was a problem for Christians. Offering sacrifices was problematic for any Christian since to do so is tantamount to committing idolatry, which is one of the most egregious sins. This persecution was perceived by the church as a test

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[1] Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 1.
[2] Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 1.
[3] Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution*, 302.
[4] "On n'exigeait pas des chrétiens une renunciation formelle à leur religion: il leur suffisait d'acoomplir un geste, ils obtenaient leur certificate, et on les tenait quittes. Certains même n'avaient pas besoin de sacrifier. En jetant quelques grains d'encens devant l'autel, ils avaient prouvé leur bon valoir." Moreau, *La Persécution Du Christianisme*, 95.

from God: who are the truly faithful who persevered until the end and who are the ones who fell away once they encountered a problem in their Christian life?

As the persecution progressed, certain issues started surfacing that demanded wisdom and discernment. How can one determine who would be considered a lapsed Christian? There were those who announced that they were going to sacrifice but did not actually sacrifice. Should their desire to maintain their property and way of life be a sign that they have failed to confess Christ or instead a sign that they have decided to follow the ways of the world? Is there any difference between someone who merely declared that they were going to sacrifice but did not sacrifice and someone who actually sacrificed? Are both to be condemned in the same manner? Or, is one to be shown more leniency because they have not committed the act of sacrificing but merely said it with their mouth? This became a pressing question in the church.

When the decree was enforced in January 250, Christian bishops were an early target. By April 250, torture and deprivation of food, water, fresh air, and light became incorporated by the state in an attempt to coerce Christians to comply. "Although none were executed, some died under this regimen, the first martyrs of the persecution. Others were worn down by the torture and reluctantly offered the required sacrifice."[5] The Decian persecution created numerous confessors and martyrs. Eventually, the position of those confessors and martyrs within the church caused a unique problem regarding ecclesiastic rules and powers.

Because of the high value accorded to confessors and martyrs, a unique situation arose within the church. Christians who were destined for martyrdom began writing

[5] Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 2.

letters, while still alive, to absolve the sins of those who were still alive. They traditionally did not have that power. Only the bishop had the power to make such a statement, and even that is based on an individual basis, instead of carte blanche. However, the rationale behind it was that if someone became a martyr, they would have the ear of Jesus Christ when they are in heaven, therefore, they can advocate for the person on earth while they are in heaven.[6] This would essentially bypass the normal ecclesiastical structure. Cyprian had to carefully navigate between showing adequate reverence to martyrs and also defining the line by which a martyr's actions cannot overlap with that of a bishop.

In 251, Cyprian wrote *On the Lapsed*, a treatise written to provide the proper discernment concerning lapsed Christians. First, Cyprian made a distinction between the certified and the sacrificers. The certified were those who announced they would sacrifice but, in the end, did not make the sacrifice. The sacrificers were those who ended up sacrificing. Cyprian gave a blanket absolution for those who certified. They were to be received back into the church as long as they continued to walk in the ways of the Lord. For the sacrificers, it was another story. If they were penitent and remained penitent until the end of the persecution, then the church welcomed them back into the fold. In 253, in light of the conflicts that the church had with Rome with regards to baptism, along with his African colleagues who demanded leniency, Cyprian no longer demanded a public act of penitence from the certified before they were accepted back into the church. The reasoning behind the softer tone was that there was a strong belief that the rigidity behind Cyprian's resolution might push others into the laxist camp. During this same time, the

[6] Burns, "On Rebaptism," 371.

laxist church seemed to grow in numbers and power. They were the rebel presbyters who supported the confessors and martyrs who gave letters of peace absolving those who lapsed. Novatian, along with other Roman clergy, initially supported Cyprian when he stood against the confessors and the martyrs who wrote letters of peace. However, "Novatian's party . . . not only rejected this lenient policy of reconciling the certified lapsed but refused to grant peace to penitents even at the time of death."[7] This rigorist approach would end with Novatian and find no support from Cyprian. Yet, this same rigorist approach is one that would be revived by the Donatist movement and adopted as if it was Cyprianic theology. In many ways, both the Donatists and the Catholics tried to position themselves as the true heirs of Cyprian, and yet both somehow missed out on the political deftness with which Cyprian navigated the Decian Persecution. Cyprian was neither rigorist nor laxist in his pragmatic approach. It does seem however, that on paper, Cyprian was a rigorist. When it came to policies, as the councils would show, Cyprian was a laxist (at least in comparison to the written Cyprian). For Cyprian, idolatry was the worst sin that an individual can commit against God. Yet, even idolatry can be forgiven, when compared to the act of breaking the church's unity. The unity of the church was of paramount importance to Cyprian. He was willing to soften his approach, even if his initial one may have been stricter, because he was so concerned with keeping the peace in the church; he was willing to negotiate and change his approach to ensure that the church would not be torn asunder under his leadership. Under Cyprian, the church was able to withstand the Decian Persecution effectively and in unity. It is also during this time that

[7] Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 7.

Cyprian would become a bishop-martyr, further enshrining his legacy in the North African church.

Carthage: A City of Resilience

Peter Hinchcliff notes that the city's original inhabitants were "fair-skinned Berbers, Numidians, Gaetani or Mauretanians, as they have been variously called. Linguistically and racially they seem to have been a single unit."[8] Carthage was

> founded as one of these trading cities in the middle of the ninth century B.C. It also possessed this two-decker structure as regards population. The Punic part of its population probably never exceeded a hundred thousand but its culture influenced a large part of the North African world. Indeed it became the most powerful of the Phoenician outposts and eventually the centre of a new sphere of influence. It established its hegemony over most of the western Mediterranean and so came into conflict with the emerging power of the city of Rome.[9]

After three Punic wars, the city came to its final destruction in 146 BCE. It was burned to the ground and salt was lavishly poured upon the soil to make it infertile. Curses were inflicted upon anyone who would dare to bring it back to life. Yet, not even such strong acts and pronouncements would stop the resurrection of Carthage in 44 BCE. Roman Carthage rose from its Phoenician ruins and once again became a powerful Roman city.

The disparity between the rich and the poor did not change. The ostentatious appearance of Carthage with its ornamentations and aesthetic that tried to mimic its sister city, Rome, was merely a façade that found its end as one entered more deeply into the city. "Again and again in Cyprian's letters there are remarks which suggest that the needs

[8] Hinchliff, *Cyprian of Carthage*, 6.
[9] Hinchliff, *Cyprian of Carthage*, 7.

of the Carthaginian poor were like a bottomless pit into which charity could be poured endlessly without making very much difference."[10] As Helen Rhee notes,

> In *On the Lapsed* (251), Cyprian sees the persecution (however evil that may be) rather as God's testing of his household, which had been growing complacent in the years of peace. Cyprian attributes a case for the persecution and mass apostasy to the rich Christians' greed (*cupiditatis*) and attachment to their possessions to the neglect of generous charity for the needy. Cyprian speaks of them as slaves to profit and money, tethered to the chain of their wealth. To them he proves the "apostolic solution": scorn worldly possessions and leave them for the kingdom of God and heavenly compensation. Cyprian frames both the problem and the solution in apocalyptic dualism with a sense of urgency, for the end of the world was at hand with the Judgment of Christ.[11]

For Cyprian, then, the persecution was seen as God's pronouncement against the greed that has overtaken the Christian church. The only hope that the Christian has, in light of God's harsh judgment, is to repent from one's desire to hoard wealth and renounce it that they may further the kingdom of God instead of their own kingdom.

During the beginning of the persecution, Cyprian, being someone who belonged to the upper echelons of society, fled from Carthage and led the church while he was in exile. This presented some problems when certain presbyters took the bishop's distance from the church as a way to further their own agendas. During this time, Cyprian experienced many problems regarding the dissident presbyters concerning their actions that threatened to usurp the powers usually accorded to the bishop. However, upon Cyprian's return to Carthage, this problem was remedied.

Carthage's relationship with Rome was fraught with difficulties. During this time, rigorist presbyters from Rome's side, led by Novatian, spoke out against Cyprian. Knowing that he fled, the rigorists maintained that Cyprian's actions were to be

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[10] Hinchliff, *Cyprian of Carthage*, 10.
[11] Rhee, "Wealth and Poverty in Early Christianity," xxvii.

overlooked, especially since he was a bishop who was not present for the very flock he was supposed to maintain and protect. The purpose behind the edict, at least on paper, was "to ensure uniformity and loyalty towards the gods of the Empire. This affirmation of loyalty and reverence towards the gods who guarded the Empire's existence accords well with what is known of Decian policy."[12] This was in keeping with his previous actions. "In a period of graver troubles, he reacted in a similar manner. When he reaffirmed the worship of the gods, he sought their help and pursued unity by supressing the religious diversity that (Cassius) Dio had viewed as a source of threat and cabal."[13]

Michael M. Sage notes that "[i]n the case of the Christians, the threat was not idle. The church of the third century had many of the markings of a state within a state. It possessed its own hierarchy, independent of government control."[14] Within Christianity, those who were in charge also gave freely of the resources they had, according to the needs of the community. They offered money and livelihood to those within the empire without them being a part of the empire, per se. This was a potentially problematic issue for an empire that was intent on creating cohesion amongst all of its citizens. If somehow, a significant part of the empire can function and thrive without the express blessing of the empire, it created an impression that the empire was no longer needed for its continued success. Anything that threatened this image was unacceptable. By forcing this edict upon the Roman population, it was a reminder to the whole empire that the Roman empire needed to be together if they were to be saved against calamities and protected by the Romans' pantheon of gods and goddesses. "In unifying the Empire, one of [the]

[12] Sage, *Cyprian*, 176.
[13] Sage, *Cyprian*, 177.
[14] Sage, *Cyprian*, 177.

objectives must surely have been the destruction of the hierarchical organization of the Christians, for they were potentially the most dangerous group of all and Decius must have known it."[15] Decius' plan was both so simple and yet so dastardly in its scope. It demanded nothing other than a simple libation and a *libellus* that stated that the offering was done. Yet, for the Christian, to do so was an acknowledgment that there was a ruler beyond the ruler of the universe. This was pure idolatry to the Christian mind.

Cyprian: To Rebaptize or Not to Rebaptize, that is the Question

Of utmost concern within the church was the belief that the church must speak with one voice. However, this does not mean that plurality of voices cannot occur under this important tenet. J. Patout Burns Jr. notes

> [i]nto the third century, the African church had followed a practice of accepting converts originally baptized in a separate community such as that of Marcion or Montanus with only the imposition of the bishop's hands. In a council held in the 230s, however, the bishops had decided that henceforth they would require such converts to submit to the baptism of the true church.[16]

In 256, a council meeting in Carthage composed of seventy-one African bishops discussed and confirmed the practice of rebaptizing. When relaying this stance to Stephen, the Roman pope, the council allowed for the possibility that this practice of rebaptism is an area where other bishops might act differently without damaging the unity of the church.[17] There may be uniformity in doctrine but diversity in practice without the unity of the church being threatened by this very diversity. The African bishops may hold to a different practice than their Roman counterparts, with both

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[15] Sage, *Cyprian*, 178.
[16] Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 9.
[17] Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 9–10.

churches still maintaining unity under the banner of Christ. Stephen, however, severely disagreed with their letters. "He rejected their decision as an innovation and claimed that his church's practice of receiving persons baptized in heresy as though they were penitent Christians, by the imposition of hands, had been established by the apostles themselves."[18] Cyprian responded by calling a meeting on 1 September 256 to unanimously affirm the rebaptism of heretics and schismatics.[19] The question of rebaptism, then, became a point of contention between the Roman and the African church. The African church, while respecting Rome's beliefs, stood firm in its conviction concerning rebaptism. This strong stance concerning rebaptism played a major role in the Donatist Controversy. The complicated nature of the relationship between Africa and Rome would also come to play, especially as it related to Augustine's rhetoric against the Donatists.

Until the time of Augustine, baptism remained as "the image of what distinguished the Christian; it contained, doctrinally, morally, eschatologically, symbolically, all that a Christian *could* be, and in that sense defined what a Christian was."[20] Peter John Cramer argues that "[i]n the progression to belief through revelation which is implied in the Apostles' Creed, the identity of the Christian is still an identity through transition."[21] It was the idea that the Christian was still in transition that made it possible for Cyprian to agree with the concept of rebaptism. Augustine's rhetorical vehemence against rebaptism seemed to come from a cultural context rather than the doctrinal one which he claimed his rhetoric was based on. Cyprian and Augustine's

[18] Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 10.
[19] Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 10.
[20] Cramer, *Baptism and Change*, 48.
[21] Cramer, *Baptism and Change*, 49.

vision for what baptism was were different. Whereas Cyprian came from a view where baptism was transitional, Augustine had the belief that baptism was static. Within the *Confessions*, Augustine's reticence to be baptized was based on his belief that sins prior to baptism would be forgiven but sins committed after baptism would be held against him. His previous comment of desiring "chastity, but not yet" is emblematic of this belief. Cyprian and Augustine's views were incompatible. While neither of their views should be held as heretical, the definition and significance they imparted on the sacrament of baptism led them to different conclusions when it came to the question of rebaptism.

Burns distinguishes the difference in how baptism was used by Cyprian and Augustine. His thesis statement is to attempt to "demonstrate why Augustine emphasized the ritual's effect as forgiving sins. . . . In the process, however, Augustine seems to have broken the link between the effect and the symbolism of the ritual."[22] He further notes how

> [i]n Africa, a similarly close connection between the ritual action of bodily washing and its effecting a spiritual cleansing from guilt can be found in Tertullian and Cyprian. However, subsequent disputes in Africa over the efficacy of the ritual performed outside the church or by an unworthy minister within the church seem to have separated the symbolic action of the ceremony from the effects attributed to it.[23]

When trying to explain the meaning of the ritual in Augustine's preaching, he closely linked baptism to the oath of fidelity to Christ. He also focused on the "crucifixion of Jesus rather than the death and burial of the Christian."[24] By so doing, even "[t]hough the ritual of pouring and immersion in water was its central action, the understanding of

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[22] Burns, "Baptism as Dying," 407.
[23] Burns, "Baptism as Dying," 408.
[24] Burns, "Baptism as Dying," 408.

baptism and its effects was no longer drawn from the symbolism of this action."[25] While baptism was held as an important sacrament by both Cyprian and Augustine, they had differing views on what baptism meant and accomplished. Even though the sacramental nature of baptism was never in jeopardy, the slightly different perspectives of baptism caused the rift in how both groups handled the question of those who lapsed during the persecution.

It can be said that "[t]he residue of centuries of conflict over the church's power to forgive sins had shaped Augustine's thinking and focused his attention on baptism as a moral transformation rather than a symbol of bodily dying and rising."[26] In so doing, "[h]e treated the resurrection of the flesh not as an effect of baptism or a means to moral renewal, but as the reward for living the Christian life."[27] This concept of what baptism meant shaped the very way in which Augustine understood and embodied baptism. There was a distinct difference between Cyprianic and Augustinian views on baptism and this difference illuminated how and why rebaptism became a major point of contention between the Donatists and the Catholics.

Augustine's ability to navigate the Donatist Controversy and emerge as a winner in the theological battle is a nod to Augustine's rhetorical ability to persuade, cajole, and finally assert his point-of-view to his audience. When it came to pedigree and legacy, the Donatist Movement was more aligned with Cyprianic theology than Augustine and the Roman church. Yet, it was Augustine who claimed the upper hand in the centuries-long battle. As Matthew Alan Gaumer comments, "[f]or Catholics and Donatists alike Cyprian

[25] Burns, "Baptism as Dying," 408.
[26] Burns, "Baptism as Dying," 409.
[27] Burns, "Baptism as Dying," 409.

was as quintessentially North African as apple pie is American. He was a Christian hero, home-grown, a bishop and a martyr."[28] Augustine's deft theological moves eventually overtook whatever theological leverage the Donatist church had against Augustine and the Roman church.

For Cyprian, "[t]he three most prevalent were his views that i) the church and the world are antithetical to each other, ii) the church's nature is pure and all steps must be taken to insure its integrity, and iii) sacerdotal purity is necessary for the celebration of sacraments to prevent the spread of contagion."[29] These Cyprianic theological views became the lynchpin of Donatist theology. Augustine's theological views concerning these theological tenets run counter to the Cyprianic model. Purity held an extremely important and crucial role in Cyprianic theology. It was the Donatist church that maintained the key role of purity within the church and how the church understood herself.

Cyprian's view that the world was "an antagonistic force against the church was aided by his reading of both testaments that the church is an association of God's elect. . . . The world therefore symbolized sin, corruption, and darkness. This led him to conclude that suffering and martyrdom were the proof and evidence of authentic Christian faith."[30] For him, the heretics and schismatics were to be feared the most because of their ability to poison the church. They introduced and spread contagion into a place that was supposed to be free from all stain and blemish: the church. He called upon the children of the ever-pure, beautiful church of Christ to life a life where they exemplify and embody

[28] Gaumer, "Augustine's Feud," 441.
[29] Gaumer, "Augustine's Feud," 442.
[30] Gaumer, "Augustine's Feud," 422.

these characteristics: i) sobriety of speech, ii) courage against the world, iii) moderate consumption of food and drink, and iv) a life of charity.[31] These commendations go back to the belief that Cyprianic theology was more aligned with the Donatists than with the Catholics.

At the very heart of the issue of rebaptism is the concern that sacerdotal purity, or rather impurity, is one that can be transferred upon another person. Imagine that a church that is called to a life of purity is suddenly unable to live a life of purity because of the actions of an impure priest who baptized them. Augustine shifted the attention by re-framing baptism not as a purity/impurity issue but an issue of how to comprehend God's sovereignty. What mattered now was not the state of purity/impurity of the priest but whether the sacrament was a gift imparted by the priest or by God.

The Catholics asserted that rebaptism was an affront to God himself. If rebaptism were to occur, does that mean that there was something deficient about the first time the person was baptized? The Donatists claimed that the baptism by a heretical or schismatic individual disqualified the baptism from being valid in the first place. Where does one locate the source and giver of the sacrament: *ex opere operato*[32] or *ex opere operantis*[33]? For the Donatists, the validity and legitimacy of the act is not based on the individual but based on their ecclesial affiliation. The church legitimized it. Even if a priest may be a murderer, the fact that the said priest belonged to the right church meant that their baptism was considered legitimate. The Catholics, on the other hand, while believing in the importance of the church, placed the validity of baptism in something bigger than the

[31] Gaumer, "Augustine's Feud," 441.
[32] "from the fact of the act which was performed".
[33] "from the act of the person who performs it".

church. For the Catholics, they placed the validation of the baptism on God himself. While someone may have been baptized by a schismatic or a heretic, the act of baptism was so fundamentally God-oriented that not even the gravest sinner can tamper with it. Adam Ployd opines that

> [i]n his conflict with the Donatists over the nature of baptism, Augustine repeatedly asserts that Christ, not the bishop, is the primary agent of the sacrament because it is Christ who always gives the Holy Spirit. Because of this, the relative purity or sinfulness of the bishop who visibly performs the ritual does not affect the validity of the baptism. It does not matter if a particular bishop has "lost" the Spirit because he is not responsible for imparting the Spirit to the baptized.[34]

To have framed it thus, Augustine sidesteps the purity issue which pervaded both Cyprianic and Donatist theology. By adjusting the audience's gaze from purity to sovereignty, Augustine gained the upper hand in managing the issue of rebaptism. The numerous attempts by the Donatists to appeal to Constantine and to other emperors would be for naught. In the same way that the Council of Arles in 314 signalled that the state was more amenable with Catholic leadership under Caecillianus, so the state would continue to support the Catholics. From the very beginning, Cyprian and Augustine had very different notions concerning baptism. Those differences, as minor as they may seem to the uninitiated, led them to vastly different conclusions on how to engage with the rebaptism controversy.

Baptism and the Church: Family, Community, and the Kingdom of God

Baptism is seen and recognized as a symbol that represents an individual's decision to follow God and is a public attestation of this allegiance. It is because baptism is nothing

[34] Ployd, "The Power of Baptism," 519.

but symbolic that it becomes easy to overlook how radically different this belief is to the Christian of late antiquity. For those living under the Decian Persecution, baptism had more gravitas than a mere signal to others of one's religious affiliation. Baptism was a means by which one identified with the church of Christ, and by doing so, a marker of their belongingness to that particular group of called-out ones.

In speaking of his own baptism, Cyprian wrote to Donatus,

> [c]onsidering my character at the time, I used to regard it as a difficult matter that a man should be able to be born again. . . . Or that a man who had been revived to a new life in the bath of saving water could be able to put off what he had formerly been—that he could be changed in heart and soul, while retaining his physical body. . . . For as I myself was held in bonds by the innumerable errors of my previous life, from which I did not believe that I could by possibility be delivered, so I was disposed to acquiesce in my clinging vices, and because I despaired of better things, I used to indulge my sins as if they were actually a part of me, inherent in me. But later, by the help of the water of new birth, the stain of former years was washed away, and a light from above-serene and pure was infused into my reconciled heart. Then through the Spirit breathed from heaven, a second birth restored me to a new man.[35]

Even though Cyprian used emotional and mystical language to explain his baptism and what happened during baptism, a crucial point to be made is that this act—this sacrament—is more than a symbol for Cyprian. This sacrament is a means by which people are transferred from darkness into light. The very status of human beings was also changed. Christians became co-heirs and partakers with Christ, the One who is to come to judge both the living and the dead. Baptism is a powerful act that fundamentally changed an individual's very make-up. It was a physical and spiritual manifestation of 2 Cor 5:17: "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" This made baptism an important facet in understanding Christianity in late antiquity. It can be difficult to understand the theological

[35] Cyprian, *To Donatus*, 276.

controversies of yesteryears from the modern view when the predominant theology is primarily understood from an individualistic point of view rather than a communal perspective. It is imperative that one seeks to understand these theological controversies from the mindset of the era. Otherwise, one will never be able to appreciate the theological nuance by which theological luminaries such as Cyprian tackled these unique and rather complicated theological problems.

Because of the foundational place of baptism in Christianity, it is not a surprise that baptism became a major point of contention between the African and Roman church, especially as it related to the question of rebaptism of heretics. Baptism in Cyprian's time functioned as an identity marker: to be baptized is to be adopted into the Body of Christ. This adoption is not simply a tag line or a pithy statement; rather, it had tangible repercussions. It meant that the church was ready to provide aid if the recipients were a widow, provide shelter if they were needy, provide food if they were hungry, and address conflict if there were any. How did baptism come to hold such a unique position? Cyprian

> often connected the forgiveness of sins with baptism. His characteristic way of expressing this relationship is that God (or Christ) forgives in baptism (only secondarily and loosely could it be said, as he does in various passages, that the water or the administrator of baptism effected forgiveness). . . . The cleansing or purifying effect of baptism was not like the bodily washing away of filth, but the contagion of sin was washed away and the mind was purified by the merit of faith.[36]

Not only was baptism connected with the forgiveness of sins, it was also connected with driving out the devil. Cyprian writes, "[i]n baptism the devil is driven out by the faith of

[36] Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 358.

the believer, and he comes back again if that faith should falter."[37] Thus, the power of baptism cannot be over-estimated.

Martyrdom: The Final Baptism

If being baptized in water had such great effect, to be baptized in blood would be another. It could even be argued that "martyrdom was even greater than baptism."[38] Cyprian wrote,

> [w]e give to believers a first baptism when God permits. We also prepare each one for the second; urging and teaching that this is a baptism (*baptisma*) greater in grace, more sublime in power, superior in honor—a baptism in which angels baptize (*baptizant*—a baptism in which God and his Christ exult—a baptism after which no one sins any more —a baptism in which the increase of our faith is consummated—a baptism which, as we withdraw from the world immediately associates us with God. In the baptism (*baptismo*) of water is received the remission of sins, in the baptism of blood the crown of virtues.[39]

A martyr identified with the death of Jesus Christ. For a Christian, there was no higher praise or glory one can attain or even yearn for than to share in the sufferings of Christ. In the same way that Jesus Christ was mocked, tortured, and left to die a brutal death, so the martyr's life echoed this very same process. Just as Christ was raised from the dead, so the martyr shall be raised in glory like the One whom they follow. It was because of this that the martyr played a huge role in the African controversy during the Decian Persecution. The letter of peace that were handed out during the Decian Persecution became a huge problem for Cyprian. To address the situation, Cyprian had to navigate the fine line of acknowledging the martyrs but also drawing a line of demarcation so that the martyrs' role within the church would not supersede that of a bishop. Cyprian, with

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[37] Cyprian, *Letters* 75.16.
[38] Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 360.
[39] Cyprian, To Fortunatus, pref. 4.

theological deftness, linked the Christian's identity so inextricably with the church that it would not be enough to profess Christ and die a martyr because that person would not be seen as a martyr because of their exclusion from the church. By making the church a crucial link between man and God, Cyprian was able to both respect and acknowledge martyrs and at the same time provide clear instructions concerning potential ecclesiastical overlap in certain theologically tricky situations. A martyr could only be considered a martyr if they were a part of the church. This further strengthened the role of baptism as an identity marker for the Christian because it was through this particular sacrament that an individual was welcomed and affirmed as one who belonged in the church, and thus, the kingdom of God.

Repentance as Reconciliation: A Story of God's Forgiveness through the Church

The difference between the rigorist approach (Novatian) and the laxist approach (confessors) demonstrate the two reactions to the Decian Persecution. The rigorist approach is a reminder that there will always be a strain of Christianity that will root its identity in issues of holiness and purity. The concern for holiness and purity was also tinged with a theology of disgust. Disgust plays an important role in forming and shaping an individual's moral and political ethics. When an emotion like disgust is intertwined with theological considerations like concepts of holiness and purity, the disgust is often subsumed under theological concerns without it being adequately acknowledged as a crucial part of what is actually happening. The laxist approach, on the other hand, is a reminder that issues of grace and forgiveness cannot be properly treated in a theologically

orthodox manner if it does not co-exist with issues such as repentance and penance. Cyprian is the one figure who was able to chart a *via media* approach between these two extremist views. Cyprian did not magically come to that decision; his was a decision marked by pragmatism as he factored in practical concerns as they related to theological matters.

One's beliefs concerning baptism and its connection to ecclesiology is highlighted by these two varied approaches. Novatian believed that baptism washed away the individual's sin. The reasoning behind the rigorist approach was that if you were made new in Christ and during the persecution, you recanted, then the only available option was martyrdom. Being forgiven for being a lapsed Christian was to bring a contaminated being into a pure setting. Can darkness and light co-mingle and subsist at the same time? Since this is a virtual impossibility, Novatian's rigorist approach leads the lapsed Christian to the inevitable conclusion: if they wanted to be saved from the fires of hell, the only way for them to escape it is through baptism by blood. The laxist approach, however, is an attempt to highlight the power of the blood of the martyr and the martyr's ability, because of their close position to Jesus Christ, to influence worldly affairs. In the same way that "what is loosed in heaven shall be loosed on earth" so the role of the martyrs in heaven has a direct impact upon earthly inhabitants.

During a council meeting in 251, Cyprian, along with other African bishops, stated that the certified people would be immediately accepted back into the church without a need for public penance and that those who had lapsed could return to the church should they be penitent now and remain in that state of penance until the end of the persecution. This was decided because there was grave concern that people would

lose hope and in so doing, be motivated enough to go to the laxist church. Cyprian's response, then, was markedly different from his initial response. Prior to this council, Cyprian stated that those who were certified should perform a public penance. Cyprian's pragmatism was not brought on by a sudden change of heart, as great as that narrative would have been. His change of heart was brought on by the political pressures he was feeling from the rigorist church by Novatian and the more compassionate approach of his fellow African bishops. As much as theological doctrines concerning baptism and ecclesiology helped shape the way Cyprian would deal with the lapsed Christians, political and theological pressures also played a part in one's theological construction.

Burns notes

> Cyprian seems to have assumed from the beginning that the sin of idolatry could be forgiven, at least by Christ, perhaps through the intercession of the martyrs, and that the penitent lapsed could be reconciled to the church. . . . As the subsequent controversy in Rome developed and Novatianist envoys argued their case in Carthage, he had to build an argument for the efficacy of the ritual of repentance and find a means to safeguard the purity of the communion.[40]

Purity was a major concern for Novatian and his adherents. And rightly so, since the concept of holiness is a recurring and sacred theme within the sacred scriptures. To be holy is to be pure: any sign of blemish, however small and minute it could be, is enough to tarnish and taint anyone or any thing. The sins that tarnished humanity were the very reason that caused the distance between God and humanity. However, the blood of Christ caused humanity, in all of its filth, to be washed clean and made pure. Those who are followers of Christ are adopted into this family. The church is a community of those not only called by God, but also those who are made pure by the blood of Christ. Entry into this community meant that those who enter it must remain and uphold the same virtues

[40] Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 57.

that the God who called them manifests. In Exod 34:6–7 (NRSV), YHWH defines himself as

> The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.

This is a cosmic being whose very identity is holiness. Not only does he define holiness, but the reverse is also just as true: holiness can only be defined by him, for he *is* holiness itself. Since Cyprian had such a high view of holiness, Cyprian's actions and reactions, as could be seen by the way that he reacted towards the lapsed during the Decian Persecution, signaled how deftly and adeptly he managed to navigate between idealism and pragmatism. He did not sacrifice one for the sake of the other.

Peter Cramer notes that in the story of Perpetua, "this might mean . . . that . . . baptism was the final act of defiance which would make punishment by death inevitable. However, that baptism was itself a kind of death, or a suffering towards death, was in early Christianity almost a commonplace."[41] Early Christian tradition understood baptism to serve two purposes: the first as a sacrament, the second as atonement. By Augustine's time, there was a type of Christianity that put forth the claim that unless a baby was baptized, the baby would not be able to enter heaven. However, by Cyprian's time, this tradition was not yet held as strongly. As a sacrament, the baptism became a way for the initiate to show that they belonged to the community of God. However, in times where a person may not yet have received the sacrament of baptism, the individual's martyrdom became a way for them to be baptized, this time with their very own blood. Baptism,

[41] Cramer, *Baptism and Change*, 78.

then, held a uniquely high position in Christianity. It was a way for others to show, and even prove, how much they truly belonged to the kingdom of God.

Cyprian and Augustine: Similarities and Differences

It is interesting to note the many similarities that Cyprian and Augustine share. They both came from a pagan background. They both advanced rapidly in the church hierarchy. Both had no aspirations to become a bishop, yet both became a bishop because of the people's raucous consent. Both became theological luminaries of their time. Both had to deal with the repercussions of an empire-wide sanctioned Christian persecution. Yet, despite these similarities, they differed greatly in terms of their conclusion regarding the lapsed.

During the aftermath of the Decian Persecution, the African and the Roman church came to different conclusions about rebaptism. There was a long tradition in the East about rebaptizing heretics. Rome, however, did not have this same tradition. When Pope Stephen received news concerning rebaptism, he expressed anger and bewilderment that the African church would dare to stand against the tradition of the Apostles. Cyprian reacted in the same way and argued that the Roman church's acceptance of heretics was unacceptable. Cyprian's original letter emphasized that each bishop was responsible for their flock. The Roman church could disagree with their verdict, and it was acceptable and fitting for them to do so, but they could not impose their beliefs on the African church for that would be tantamount to tyranny. As fellow bishops, no one is higher or lower than the other. They are all equal. This, however, would run counter to Rome's thinking, especially as it sought to be the primary influence in church-related issues.

Augustine followed in Stephen's footsteps. He agreed with him wholeheartedly. Though they were generations apart, their response to the issue of rebaptism followed along the same trajectory. The African church found no merit in the baptism by a heretic or schismatic person; meanwhile the Roman church allowed for the baptism by a heretic or schismatic. The African church valued purity while the Roman church valued unity above all.

Conclusion

Because of the unique and important place of baptism in Christianity, it is not surprising that it became the locus of much controversy over the centuries. Cyprian's response to those who lapsed during the Decian Persecution became the framework and the guiding principles of those in the Donatist church. As a North African figure, Cyprian's light shone bright and his import cannot be underestimated or overstated. The Donatists firmly aligned and traced their lineage back to him, and most importantly, his theology. The North African church is a reminder that diversity, both in methodology and ideology, are to be expected within the Body of Christ. Diversity does not *ipso facto* mean heresy or even schism. However, it seems that intolerance is a bigger source for such evils as heresies and schisms, than diversity itself. Rome's response, as seen through Stephen's treatment of Cyprian, shows how power can lead to desire of uniformity in thought and deed within the church. The obsession with power, and its constant wielding of that power, did not detract or frighten the North African church. In spite of their differences, Cyprian stood firmly against Stephen when it came to the issue of rebaptism. He refused

to acquiesce to Rome's desires. Instead, he invited his colleagues to come together, and together, stand against Rome.

It is no small matter that Cyprian and Augustine held vastly different views regarding baptism. Their approaches to baptism and what it meant, symbolically and theologically, determined their trajectory concerning rebaptism. Due to their varying emphasis and even conceptions of baptism, power, sacrament, and even ecclesiology, their divergent views eventually come to a head. What is unfortunate, however, is that their "competing" theology did not warrant the schism that would later happen in the wake of the Great Persecution.

CHAPTER 3: THE DONATIST CONTROVERSY

Jane Nickerson claims that "North Africa was one of the earliest provinces where Christianity spread."[1] During the late fourth and early fifth centuries, the North African church was the second most powerful church in the West.[2] To understand the North African church is virtually impossible to do without taking into account its unique geography. Martin Marty comments that

> Africa was not isolated from the rest of the Roman Empire. The seas we call Mediterraneum—Mare Tyrrhenum, Mare Africanum, Mare Phenicium, and Mare Internum—were busy commuting lines, and Roman-style government and military life dominated there while older African cultures lived on. Christian people and events in Africa influenced and were influenced by those on two other continents.[3]

Those influences had an impact on the North African church and its adherents. Chris Botha states that the "first documentary evidence of the existence of Christians in Africa is the Acts of the Scilitan martyrs of 180 CE."[4] This is an important fact to consider when examining the relationship between Augustine and the Donatists in that it speaks of the firm establishment of Christianity in North Africa by the time that their theological dispute took place. It speaks volumes concerning the richness and the vibrancy of the Christian faith in North Africa.

In Greek mythology, Athena was a goddess who was born fully formed from the head of her father, Zeus. When tracing the birth of the North African church, it seems that

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[1] Nickerson, *A Short History of North Africa*, 30.
[2] Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, ix.
[3] Marty, *The Christian World*, 52–53.
[4] Botha, "The Extinction of the Church," 25.

its story is rather similar. By the time that Christian churches "first appear in our surviving written records, around 200 CE, they are already fully developed communities.[5] The faith of the adherents, coupled with their sincere desire to establish the kingdom of God in North Africa, meant that the North African church thrived and flourished. With such theological luminaries like Tertullian and Cyprian, the North African church did not lack intellectual rigour nor pastoral leaders in its midst. Although Christianity flourished in North Africa, it was not spared from hardships and pain.

To gain the proper insights concerning the Donatist Controversy, it is virtually impossible to do so without referring to the persecution of Diocletian in 303–312 CE, with 303–305 being the most intense periods of the persecution. To help explain how this came about, one must look to the man, Diocletian, and the various influences that led him to this fateful event.

Diocletian: His Beginnings

Diocletian was born on 22 December. Competing accounts of his birth makes it difficult to pinpoint the exact year; however, it has been posited that he was born either in 243, 244, or 245.[6] He was originally named Diocles but later changed his name after becoming emperor.[7] He was born in Illyricum. There is a general conjecture that his father was a scribe while some claim that he was a freedman of the senator Annulinus.[8] According to Timothy D. Barnes, "[n]o valid evidence attests Diocletian's career before 284, when he was *domesticos regens* or *kones domestikon*, i.e. commander of a special corps which

[5] Greenshields and Robinson, eds., *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Religious Movements*, 9.
[6] Barnes, *The New Empire*, 30–31.
[7] Barnes, *The New Empire*, 31.
[8] Barnes, *The New Empire*, 31.

always attended the emperor."[9] His wife's name was Prisca and their daughter's name was Valeria.[10] On 20 November 284, Diocletian was proclaimed emperor at Nicomedia.[11] As Pat Southern notes, "[s]oon after becoming Emperor, Diocles changed his name to Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus, rounded down by modern scholars to Diocletian, the name by which he is known to history."[12]

The growth and spread of Christianity meant that Christians became the frequent targets of different emperors who sought to humiliate, decimate, and severely punish them for their beliefs. In 284, Aper was stabbed by Diocletian, paving the way for him to be the next emperor of Rome. Aper was charged for murdering Numerian. Normally, this would herald the rise of Aper to the title of emperor; unfortunately for him, the troops favoured Diocletian.[13] "Diocletian [gave] the empire a new constitution, revamp[ed] its civil service, reorganize[d] its army, beg[a]n stabilizing its frontiers, and briefly rejuvenate[d] its economy."[14] His reign left a tangible mark on Christians as he decided to change the quiet, unmolested lives of Christians for the past forty years since Gallienus' Decree of Toleration in 261.[15]

Paul Keresztes speaks of how "[t]he long peace of Gallienus was a truly extraordinary phenomenon, and about eighteen years of its approximately forty years fell under the rule of Diocletian before what is usually referred to as the Great Persecution."[16] There was a considerable time lag between the time of Diocletian's accession as emperor

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[9] Barnes, *The New Empire*, 31.
[10] Barnes, *The New Empire*, 31.
[11] Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 17.1.
[12] Southern, *The Roman Empire from Severus to Constantine*, 134.
[13] Byfield, ed., *By This Sign,* 95–96.
[14] Byfield, ed., *By This Sign,* 96.
[15] Byfield, ed., *By This Sign,* 96.
[16] Keresztes, *Imperial Rome and the Christians*, 2:95.

and the proclamation of his edict that heralded the persecution against the Christians. In the beginning, Diocletian showed favour towards Christianity. His wife and daughter—Prisca and Valeria—were catechumens. They were not the only ones who professed Christianity; a number of his court officials were also Christians. The early part of his reign displayed his tolerance towards Christianity.[17]

Herbert B. Workman comments on the fact that in Nicomedia, "the capital of Diocletian, the most conspicuous edifice in the city was the great Christian basilica, which towered up on an eminence in full sight of his palace windows."[18] Such a symbol of the success and growth of Christianity made it easy for Diocletian to be convinced about the potential problems that Christians brought to the Roman society. While waiting to hear about the results of Galerius' second expedition against the Persians, the soothsayers remarked that there were profane persons whose presence interfered with the rites. "Diocletian, in a rage, gave orders that all who were present should be made to sacrifice, and sent messages that the same test should be applied to the troops."[19] After Galerius' success, Diocletian's rage gave way. However, in hindsight, this particular incident laid the seeds of rage and anger against Christians that later came to its fullest culmination in 303 CE when Diocletian's edict was proclaimed throughout the empire.

It is telling that "the accession of the Emperor Diocletian is the era from which the Coptic Churches of Egypt and Abyssinia still date under the name of the 'Era of Martyrs.' All former persecutions of the faith were forgotten in the horror with which men looked back upon the last and greatest."[20] W. H. C. Frend notes that "[f]or nineteen

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[17] Workman, *Persecution in the Early Church*, 106.
[18] Workman, *Persecution in the Early Church*, 106.
[19] Workman, *Persecution in the Early Church*, 107.
[20] Mason, *The Persecution of Diocletian*, 1.

years . . . his government had been engaged in the long uphill task of restoring the army, the administration, and the economy of the Empire. Germanic and Persian enemies had been defeated."[21] Under such conditions, the promulgation of an edict against Christians seems like it came out of nowhere. Many of Diocletian's servants were Christians; many in the army were Christians; Diocletian's own wife and daughter were catechumens. There seemed to be no valid reasons for the edict.

Yet, despite its unreasonableness, the edict was enacted when "the two princes agreed upon the 23rd of February" to seal the deal.[22] To herald the start of this empire-wide persecution, the Jovian guards marched to the cathedral church of Nicomedia "in fighting order, to the spot, with axes and hammers; and in a few hours had defiled that high dwelling place even to the ground."[23] With great effect, many Christians were cowed into submission. Yet, many also refused to capitulate to the emperor's demands. These treacherous acts were punished by torture, mutilation, and in some cases, death. The severity of the punishments, coupled by the breadth of the effects of the edict, clearly hobbled and negatively affected the Christian community in the Roman kingdom.

The Great Persecution: 303–313 CE

Christians, from the time of Christ onwards, had suffered under the hands of numerous Roman emperors. However, there were also times when they experienced a reprieve from the persecutions. Before Diocletian issued his edict, Christians enjoyed forty years of peace from the Roman government. Under the emperor Gallienus' rule, the persecution

[21] Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 351.
[22] Mason, *The Persecution of Diocletian*, 101.
[23] Mason, *The Persecution of Diocletian*, 103.

abated. Yet, it must be said that one of the early church's most famous apologists, Tertullian (155–240 CE), commented on how "Christ's Name is extending everywhere, believed everywhere . . . reigning everywhere, adored everywhere, conferred equally everywhere upon all."[24] There was relative peace until the Great Persecution of 303 CE.

Frend notes, "[e]xactly why, on 23 February 303, Diocletian signed an edict aimed at outlawing the Christian church may perhaps never be known. . . . Eusebius could find no rational explanation, except that God's chastisement was necessary for the church which had grossly abused the long period of toleration."[25] It is rather curious that Diocletian let the first nineteen years of his rule pass if the supposed reason behind the edict was to please the Roman gods and goddesses. "When one considers how strongly traditional was the religious basis of the Tetrarchy, it is even difficult to understand why Diocletian took nineteen years to make up his mind that Christians were beyond the pale and must forcibly be brought back."[26] During the time of the "Great Persecution" there was "no recorded case of defection among the authorities required to carry it out."[27] During this time, paganism still had a very strong hold on the empire and anti-Christian sentiments were still culturally pervasive. As Frend notes, "despite neglect of observances . . . the educated pagan could still be counted upon to rally to a defence of his religion against Christianity, if given a lead."[28] Christianity was not in a position to be seen as a valid threat to the empire.

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[24] Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, 7.
[25] Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 351.
[26] Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 354.
[27] Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 355.
[28] Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 355.

The manner in which the persecutions took place differed depending on the location. The east and the west experienced the persecution in slightly different ways. The western emphasis seemed to be more concerning the enforcement of the law, whether targeted against church property or against people.[29] The eastern persecution

> was part of a long-drawn-out battle for the minds of the provincials, the final bloody act of a great tragedy. There was propaganda and counterpropaganda, acts of judicial cruelty balanced by acts of anti-pagan fanaticism; repression on the one hand, and rebellion on the other. It was real 'war' as Eusebius described it. In Egypt it was in the end civil war.[30]

Needless to say, the persecution under Diocletian, and even its purpose, was no different from the persecution that Christians faced under Trajan and Decius.[31]

In the attempt to understand the reasoning behind Diocletian's edict of persecution against the Christians, a prevailing theory throughout the years posited by certain scholars is the fact that although Diocletian may not have had the desire to issue such an edict, he was either persuaded or intimidated by Galerius to enact it. However, this theory would suggest a degree of power disparity between the two leaders, with Galerius having the upper hand against Diocletian. Yet, the reason and the very foundation of the Tetrarchy was that each leader maintained their own power completely, but only as it applied to their area of control. This theory suggests that Galerius had the ability to coerce or make Diocletian do his bidding, for the sole purpose of seeing Galerius' own vendetta against the Christians spread like wildfire. Galerius' mother, Romula, was a key person in Galerius' life who in many ways helped shape his attitudes and beliefs against the Christians. However, looking at the relationship between Galerius

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[29] Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 368.
[30] Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 368.
[31] Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 369.

and Diocletian, there was no indication that there was a power disparity between the two. "Rather than Galerius' zeal, it is Diocletian's passivity towards Christianity for 18 years, and his reservations even then, that need explaining."[32] Stephen Williams argues that "[t]he improbable idea that he was inhibited because his wife Prisca and daughter Valeria were secret Christians, certainly will not do."[33]

M. J. Nicasie remarks that

> when Diocletian came to power after a brutal civil war in 284, the Roman Empire was just beginning to emerge from a protracted phase of total anarchy. From the violent death in 235 of the last scion of the Severan dynasty, Alexander Severus, to the accession of Diocletian almost fifty years later, the Empire witnessed a continuous stream of civil wars, foreign wars and barbarian invasions, as well as the secession of sometimes large parts of the Empire, economic decline and social unrest.[34]

It is helpful to situate the Great Persecution within this particular social setting. It happened in a land rife with social tension, where the threat of war hangs upon the whole land like the sword of Damocles. By calling the people back to the worship of the Roman gods and goddesses, the emperor can once again use religion as a powerful force to bring about social cohesion from disparate groups. There is nothing that can unite a whole empire like a common enemy.

Christianity had quickly spread within the Roman empire. Key events were necessary for the rapid spread. The *pax romana* allowed for greater travel within the empire. The length and breadth of the empire was massive. Roads enabled greater facility and ease of travel due to the safety of traveling in the empire. There was no longer fear of bandits hiding in the bushes because the peace in Rome made sure that long-term

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[32] Williams, *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery*, 173.
[33] Williams, *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery*, 173.
[34] Nicasie, *Twilight of Empire*, 2.

travelling was now safe. When that safety and security was compromised, it was only natural to do everything within one's power to ensure that the situation did not suffer any further degradation. If the Christians' refusal to offer to the Roman gods and goddesses angered them and as a result, they turned their back on their role as protectors of Rome, then inciting and forcing all Christians to offer was not that problematic. It was a solution to the troubles that plagued Rome.

While it may be true that Galerius' anti-Christian feelings and attitudes had an effect on Diocletian and his pronouncement of the edict against Christians, it must be said that "Diocletian was very strongly influenced by Imperial counsellors, who were often anti-Christian, in his decision to issue edicts of persecution. It is also obvious that there was an anti-Christian clique around Diocletian."[35] Being in constant company with many who harboured anti-Christian tendencies, along with the societal pressures brought on by an empire under constant attack, it was imperative for the emperor to seek ways in which he could pacify his subjects and ameliorate the empire's conditions. As Paul Keresztes remarks, "the date was to be fixed for the start of the persecution and this was done in the style of true believers in paganism. The momentous day was to be 23 February 303 CE, the feast of the *Terminalia*, a day they thought most fitting for the occasion in that it expressed their faith that it signified the termination of Christianity."[36] Thus began the Great Persecution.

[35] Keresztes, *Imperial Rome and the Christians*, 2:98.
[36] Keresztes, *Imperial Rome and the Christians*, 2:98.

The Edict of Diocletian

G. E. M. de Ste. Croix provides a brief summary of what the edict of Diocletian entailed. On 23 February, Diocletian's first edict involved the following:

> I. (a) All Christian churches (and, it appears, any house in which the Scriptures might be discovered) were to be destroyed.[37] (b) All copies of the Scriptures and other liturgical books were to be surrendered and burnt, and all church plate and other such property was to be confiscated.[38] (c) All meetings for Christian worship were prohibited.[39]
> II. Persistent Christians were apparently deprived of bringing actions in the courts;[40] those who possessed juridical privileges were to lose them[41]; and οι εν οικετιαις (probably imperial civil service who were not technically soldiers and would mostly have been imperial freedmen) were to be reduced to slavery.[42]

Lactantius spoke of how unsatisfied Galerius was with the first edict.[43] As a result, he caused fires in the Imperial palace at Nicomedia with the hopes that this act would cause Diocletian to escalate the persecution against Christians. The first fire pushed Diocletian to torture the Christians within his household. The second fire pushed him to order all members of his household to sacrifice. This forced some powerful Christian officials within his household to refuse to obey his order and as a result, Gorgonius, Dorotheus, and Peter became the first martyrs under Diocletian's edict. His rage extended beyond his household. Many Christians, including the Bishop Anthimus of Nicomedia, priests, deacons, and many others were also cruelly martyred. After hearing of news of revolts in Syria and Melitene, Diocletian issued a second edict that implicated all church leaders. Under the second edict, all Christian leaders were to be imprisoned. Because of how well the second edict was enforced, the prisons were full of clerics along with criminals.

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[37] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* 8.2.
[38] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* 8.2.
[39] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* 9.10.
[40] Lactantius, *De Mort. Pers.* 13.
[41] Lactantius, *De Mort. Pers.* 13.
[42] de Ste. Croix, "Aspects of the "Great" Persecution," 75–6.
[43] Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 14; 15.

While there is no consensus concerning the specific date for when the second edict was issued, it is generally assumed to have been issued during the Spring or early Summer of 303 CE.[44]

Robert M. Grant notes that "most of these provisions seem to have been based on the old edicts of Valerian. . . . There were two innovations: the destruction of Christian buildings and, as in the case of Egyptians and Manichees, the burning of literature."[45] There was also a difference in enforcing these edicts in the east and in the west. "In Gaul and Britain Constantius Chlorus demolished a few churches in 303, but there were no martyrs in his territories, and he must never have published the fourth edict."[46] "In the east, on the other hand, all four edicts were enforced, and the sacrifices made by many Christians later presented difficulties."[47] By 305, there was a growing sentiment at least to Diocletian that neither he nor Maximian could find the proper solution to solve the empire's problems. He abdicated his throne at Nicomedia on 1 May 305 and proudly proclaimed that he had saved the world.[48] "Maximian retired at Milan; the two Caesars became Augusti, Galerius in the east and Constantius in the West. Galerius' nephew Maximin Daia became his Caesar, but Constantine, the son of Constantius, was passed over in favor of an Illyrian soldier named Severus."[49] With this new configuration of power, an informal détente on the persecution also happened.

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[44] Keresztes, *Imperial Rome and the Christians*, 2:100.
[45] Grant, *Augustus to Constantine*, 230.
[46] Grant, *Augustus to Constantine*, 230–31.
[47] Grant, *Augustus to Constantine*, 231.
[48] Grant, *Augustus to Constantine*, 231.
[49] Grant, *Augustus to Constantine*, 231.

In 309, Maximin Daia issued a new edict "providing for the rebuilding of pagan temples and for compulsory participation in public sacrifices."[50] However, by 311, as Galerius' final edict before he died, he says

> Among all the other arrangements which we are always making for the advantage and benefit of the state, we hard earlier sought to set everything right in accordance with the ancient laws and public discipline of the Romans and to ensure that the Christians too, who had abandoned the way of life of their ancestors, should return to a sound frame of mind; for in some way such self-will had come upon these same Christians, such folly had taken hold of them, that they no longer followed those usages of the ancients which their own ancestors perhaps had first instituted, but, simply following their own judgment and pleasure, they were making up for themselves the laws which they were to observe and were gathering various groups of people together in different places. When finally our order was published that they should betake themselves to the practices of the ancients, many were subjected to danger, many too were struck down. Very many, however, persisted in their determination and we saw that these same people were neither offering worship and due religious observance to the gods nor practising the worship of the god of the Christians. Bearing in mind therefore our own most gentle clemency and our perpetual habit of showing indulgent pardon to all men, we have taken the view that in the case of these people too we should extend our speediest indulgence, so that once more they may be Christians and put together their meeting-places, provided they do nothing to disturb good order. We are moreover about to indicate in another letter to governors what conditions they ought to observe. Consequently, in accordance with this indulgence of ours, it will be their duty to pray to their god for our safety and for that of the state and themselves, so that from every side the state may be kept unharmed and they may be able to live free of care in their own homes.[51]

Maxentius, the de factor ruler of Italy, also issued an edict of toleration and church property was restored to the bishop Miltiades. In 313, Constantine issued the Edict of Milan. The edict states,

> Therefore, your Worship should know that it has pleased us to remove all conditions whatsoever, which were in the rescripts formerly given to you officially, concerning the Christians and now any one of these who wishes to observe Christian religion may do so freely and openly, without molestation. We thought it fit to commend these things most fully to your care that you may know that we have given to those Christians free and unrestricted opportunity of religious worship. When you see that this has been granted to them by us, your

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[50] Grant, *Augustus to Constantine*, 232.
[51] Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 34.

> Worship will know that we have also conceded to other religions the right of open and free observance of their worship for the sake of the peace of our times, that each one may have the free opportunity to worship as he pleases ; this regulation is made that we may not seem to detract from any dignity or any religion. Moreover, in the case of the Christians especially we esteemed it best to order that if it happens anyone heretofore has bought from our treasury from anyone whatsoever, those places where they were previously accustomed to assemble, concerning which a certain decree had been made and a letter sent to you officially, the same shall be restored to the Christians without payment or any claim of recompense and without any kind of fraud or deception, Those, moreover, who have obtained the same by gift, are likewise to return them at once to the Christians. Besides, both those who have purchased and those who have secured them by gift, are to appeal to the vicar if they seek any recompense from our bounty, that they may be cared for through our clemency. All this property ought to be delivered at once to the community of the Christians through your intercession, and without delay.[52]

If the Edict of Serdica by Galerius in 311 effectively stopped the Christian persecution and allowed them to be treated benevolently by the state, the Edict of Milan in 313 established Christianity as *religio licita* in the empire. Christians now had the empire's support not only to survive as Roman citizens without impunity but to thrive as members of a religion that the empire acknowledged and protected.

The Great Persecution: What Happened to the Christians?

Jacques Moreau comments on the inherent difficulties in talking about this historical event. There are numerous obstacles, both intellectually and affectively, when writing about the history of the various ways in which the Roman government exerted their powers to limit the spread of Christianity or to radically exterminate this religion in the empire.[53] Candida Moss argues that those who died under Roman rule were not martyrs. They were being prosecuted, not persecuted. The distinction between the two is as

[52] Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 48..
[53] Moreau, *La Persécution Du Christianisme*, 1.

follows: “A persecutor targets representatives of a specific group for undeserved punishment merely because of their participation in that group,” while “[a]n individual is prosecuted because that person has broken a law.”[54] However, when religion and politics are so tightly intertwined, it is rather difficult to figure out where one ends and one begins.[55]

Ted Byfield comments that “[t]he persecution began with a purge of the armed forces. During his campaign in 286, Maximian demanded that his Theban legion, which had many Christians, swear a pagan oath in preparation for the fight against the Gallic Bagaudae, many of whom were Christian.”[56] Because the legion’s commander, Maurice, and some of his officers refused to swear the oath, the emperor ordered them killed. This type of behaviour ensured that many Christians would either recant their faith or if they did not recant, they would at least hand over sacred scriptures.

There are five categories of lapsed Christians: i) *thurificati*—those who burned incense to escape persecution, ii) *libellatici*—those who gave attestations or bribed an official to get a formal attestation that states that they have already sacrificed to escape persecution, iii) *sacrificati*—those who offered a sacrifice to escape persecution, iv) *acta facientes*—those who did an act of some sort to escape persecution, and v) *traditores*—those who handed over sacred scriptures to escape persecution. The last category, the *traditores*, is one that presented a problem in terms of how one should understand what it meant to hand over sacred scriptures. Because the majority of the soldiers were not

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[54] Moss, “The Myth of Persecution,” 14.

[55] Michael P. Jensen remarks that Christian martyrdom should not be seen as “a designation of perpetual subversiveness. However, it *is* an enactment of the belief that authority on the earth has a dual mediation—the ruler has his commission to judge and restrain, whereas the disciple has her commission to witness.” Jensen, *Martyrdom and Identity*, 83.

[56] Byfield, ed., *By This Sign,* 106.

educated, there were priests who handed over Greek medical treatises instead of the Bible. While technically, the priests did not hand over sacred scriptures, this act would later be questioned and condemned as a morally reprehensible act. For the morally rigorous Donatists, they did not differentiate between someone who gave a medical treatise with one who handed over the real scriptures. By handing over the fake scriptures, they were able to escape the persecution that the "real" Christians did not shirk from, but rather welcomed wholeheartedly. This particular view of what it meant to be a traitor is fraught with complications and difficulties. When judging a particular act, is adherence to the letter of the law or the spirit of the law that must be taken into account? According to the letter of the law, the Greek treatises are not the scriptures so handing them over should not be deemed nor condemned as a traitorous act; yet, if one takes into account the spirit of the law, then individuals who handed over Greek treatises used deception to escape the persecution that was their right and privilege as Christians. By suffering persecution under the hands of the state, they identified with the sufferings of their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who himself underwent the same hardships and pain. If they persecuted their Master, why should his followers be treated any differently?

It is no coincidence that the Donatists viewed themselves as the "church of martyrs" since they viewed martyrdom as the highest honour and privilege that a Christian can participate in. What could be more satisfying as a Christian than to be counted as worthy to partake in the sufferings of Christ as Christ offered himself up for his bride, the church? The Donatists aligned themselves with the Christians of yore who willingly gave their lives for the furtherance of the kingdom. Like Jesus Christ who surrendered willingly and meekly to the government who sought to take his life as a

sacrifice for the sins of the world, so the Donatists believed that laying down their life for the sake of the gospel and for the furtherance of God's kingdom was the highest goal a Christian achieved in this lifetime.

The Donatist Controversy

After years of Christian persecution, the Edict of Milan brought peace between the church and the empire. Yet, with Christianity being a sanctioned religion within the Roman empire, the church now had to face a question that seemed like a déjà vu, a question that was once faced by Decius' persecution and Cyprian, had now come back in a different form with the question that would lead to the Donatist Controversy. At its basic core, it asked the question "can those who lapsed enter back into full communion with the rest or their brothers and sisters at church?" Can Christians who dared to deny Christ when it was difficult follow him be given the chance to be welcomed back into the churches and the faith they once abandoned? This became the question that needed an answer during the Donatist Controversy.

Donatist Controversy: The Beginning

It began with a question. When the Roman government decided to persecute the Christians in the land, many were made martyrs. When forced to commit idolatry or to surrender their sacred scriptures, many Christians decided that to do so would be to betray the faith and the one whom they served. It was better for them to give up their lives than to stray from the faith that sustained them. However, there were some Christians who, under the same duress inflicted upon them, valued their lives, succumbed

to fear and potential torture, and recanted. After the persecution ended, these Christians would then be labelled as *traditores*, "those who have handed over", from which we get the word "traitor".[57] The question hung in the air: how should we treat the *lapsi,* the lapsed Christians who were spared because of their traitorous acts? Should they be welcomed back in the fold of Christianity or should they forever be excommunicated?

There were some in the church who decided that forgiveness should be extended to the *lapsi*, in the same manner that Christ Himself displayed forgiveness to Peter who betrayed Jesus Christ three times. Depending on the severity of their sin, they could perform acts of penance and then be accepted back into the church. Yet, some were not afforded the same luxury. Their sin was so grave that they might as well be deemed as non-Christian. In such cases, they needed to be re-baptized if they wanted to be welcomed into the fold once more.[58] However, there was also a faction of the church who held the belief that if the priest who offered the sacraments was one of the *lapsi*, then the very sacraments he offered were tarnished by his own sin.[59] The effectiveness of what the sacraments had to offer the Christian was now made null and void by the sins of the priest. This faction of Christians also held to the belief that those who betrayed the faith, the *traditores*, should not be welcomed back into the church. Those who did not stand for Christ in times of trial should not be allowed to bear the name of Christ in times of peace. These were the beliefs of those who would later be called Donatists.

History, like the lives of the people it describes, is complicated. Who is a traitor? The Donatists said that whoever handed sacred scriptures to the Roman government was

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[57] Wright, *Heretics*, 70.
[58] Daniélou and Marrou, *The First Six Hundred Years*, 244.
[59] Marty, *The Christian World*, 58.

a traitor. The Catholics would agree with them on this issue. If a Christian offered a book to the officials which, on technical grounds, was not the Bible as a way to escape persecution, was that Christian a traitor? The Catholics decided that this was not grounds for treason charges because the Christian did not actually hand the Bible to their persecutors. The Donatists, on the other hand, disagreed. According to the Donatists, "he should have preferred death to even the appearance of giving up his Bible . . . Both agreed that delivering up the Bible made a man a traitor to Christianity. The real issue, often obscured, centered in a precise definition of the charge. Did it include the giving up of other books in place of the Bible in order to preserve the Bible?"[60] While both groups agreed that being a traitor is unacceptable, defining what a traitor was only begins to reveal the problems both camps must have had in resolving the issue.

Not only is it difficult to respond to the nuances and subtlety involved in determining what constitutes a traitor, there are also other forces at play once we take a closer look at the Donatist schism. The beginnings of this movement started with the dispute that arose concerning the appointment of Caecilianus as the elected bishop of Carthage. The Donatists disagreed with this decision because they deemed him to be a traitor. During the ordination of Caecilianus as bishop of Carthage, Felix of Aptunga ordained him as bishop. Rumours were swirling that Felix was one of the *traditores* and when news came that Caecilianus was ordained by one of the rumoured *traditores*, a faction of the North African church was not willing to honour the newly ordained bishop. Another variable that must also be recognized is the role of the perceived snub against the Numidian bishops. The Numidian bishops were an integral part of the ordination

[60] Lewis, "Violence in the Name of Christ," 105.

ceremony and yet in the haste to proclaim Caecilianus as the bishop of Carthage, the Carthaginian bishops did not wait for their Numidian brothers. This did not ameliorate the situation concerning the legitimacy of Caecilianus' ordination as the bishop of Carthage. As a form of protest, the Numidians backed their own candidate for the position of bishop of Carthage, Majorinus. An interesting fact concerning Majorinus was that he was known as Lucilla's slave. Lucilla was a wealthy, powerful woman. She was also a devout Catholic. After seeing her ardent display of love towards one of the relics, Caecilianus rebuked her. This created tension between these two powerful figures. In order to nominate Majorinus as a rival to the seat of bishop of Carthage, Lucilla donated generously to the Numidian bishops who supported Majorinus' campaign against Caecilianus. The seat became a hotly contested prize between the two warring factions.

When Caecilianus was proclaimed bishop of Carthage, those who sided with Majorinus proclaimed him to be the real bishop of Carthage because Caecilianus' ordination was to be deemed null and void because of Felix's role as a *traditor*. By being a *traditor*, he forfeited the right to ordain Caecilianus since his sin condemned him and made him unworthy to ordain anyone. In his stead, the Numidian bishops elected Majorinus and called him the Bishop of Carthage. As a result, there were two groups who tried to claim to the honour of being recognized as the real church of North Africa. After Majorinus died, his successor, Donatus, came into power.[61] He "occupied a very privileged position in his movement, and was regarded as a miracle-working prophet and a great reformer. His leadership was a stereotype of the traditional African prophetism,

[61] Frend, *The Early Church*, 142.

and he was accepted as divinely ordained."[62] He was an esteemed leader and contributed greatly to advance the cause; thus, the movement was named after him.

The Donatist Schism: The Aftermath

To say that the relationship between the Catholics and the Donatists was frayed would be an understatement. Tensions between these two groups destroyed the collegiality of the church in North Africa. Each group was intent on casting the other in a negative light. In the Catholic camp, Augustine spoke out vehemently against the Donatists. In the midst of the church's alliance with the emperor, the Catholics were able to use the state's resources and wield it as their sword. The Donatist camp had no qualms in resorting to violent means in the same manner as that of the Catholics. Some threw vinegar in priest's eyes to blind them while some went so far as raping Catholic women and brutally murdering the men. No one from either camp is completely innocent or completely to blame.

The Donatists appealed to Constantine about the whole affair with Caecilianus. During the Council of Arles in 314, Constantine supported Caecilianus, much to the Donatists' dismay. In 316, Constantine formally supported the Catholic church by providing them with money and property, furthering the Catholic-Donatist divide. Because of the clear favouritism the Catholics enjoyed under the emperor Constantine, the Donatists used this to further their claim that they were the true church. The church was always persecuted by the dominant culture. The fact that the Catholics were not being persecuted, and instead being blessed by the empire so lavishly, was proof that the Catholics were tainted and no longer worthy to be viewed as the pure, true church.

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[62] Nthamburi, "The Relevance of Donatism," 218.

Baptism played a major part in the continuation of conflict between the two groups. The Catholics asserted that rebaptism was an affront to God. If rebaptism was to occur, did that mean that there was something deficient about the first time the person was baptized? The Donatists claimed that the baptism by a heretic or schismatic nullifies the baptism from being valid. For the Donatists, the validity and legitimacy of the act was not based on the individual but based on their ecclesial affiliation. The church was the one that legitimized it. Even if a priest may be a murderer, the fact that the said priest belonged to the right church meant that their baptism can still be considered legitimate. The Catholics, on the other hand, placed the validity of baptism in something bigger than the church. For the Catholics, they placed the validation of the baptism on God. While someone may have been baptized by a schismatic or a heretic, the act of baptism was so fundamentally God-oriented that not even the gravest sinner can tamper with it.

Christian identity was another factor that helped foster the conflict between the two groups. The Catholics identified themselves with the church of the martyrs while the Donatists identified themselves as the new Israel. The Catholics had a strong affinity with the martyrs. Martyrs became their main example in terms of how they should live the Christian life. The martyrs teach us what *imitatio dei* (imitation of God) looked like while living on earth. The martyrs tell us of the *vita dei* (life of God) as they lived out lives of holiness, faithfulness, and obedience to God. Donatists, however, saw themselves as the continuation of the Israel of old. When examining their biblical hermeneutic, Maureen Tilley opines that they are more literal and typological in their reading of the Scriptures. However, in viewing themselves as the new Israel, they were more concerned with the idea of separation from the world than living in the world. This mentality does not allow

them to be concerned with the idea of Christian unity that the Catholics would espouse for how can darkness mingle with light? By seeing themselves as the new Israel, they were more concerned with faithful living than living in unity with others under the banner of Christ.

With these distinct differences in terms of sacraments and Christian identity, the two factions continued their feud. The violence incurred by each other towards each other did not help in defusing the situation. With each year that passed, the animosity between the two groups grew. It is no wonder, then, that by the time Augustine dealt with the Donatists, he dealt with a group that was highly suspicious of the Catholics' attempt to engage them in any conversation. The problems that Augustine encountered with the Donatists were built over decades of rife debates and violent acts against one another.

CHAPTER 4: AUGUSTINE AND THE DONATIST CONTROVERSY

The relationship between Augustine and the Donatists would shift and change over the years. To be clear, it is Augustine's relationship with the use of violence concerning the Donatists that would shift and change over the years; his relationship with the Donatists as it pertains to calling them back to the fold of the Catholic church remained the same. This chapter will provide a brief biography of Augustine. It will also examine Augustine's letters concerning the Donatists. Specifically, it will provide a brief background and summary on these letters: *Letter 23*, *34*, *44*, *49*, *51*, *52*, *66*, *76*, *87*, *93*, *105*, *106*, *108*, *133*, *141*, and *173*. These letters give a brief glimpse into the evolution of thought in Augustine's theology regarding the Donatists.

Augustine: A Brief Biography

Augustine was born in 354 CE in Thagaste (modern day Souk Ahras, Algeria). His father was a Roman official and his mother, Monica, was a devout Catholic. As a young man, Augustine was the recipient of Romanianus' generosity, and was sent to Carthage to pursue his studies. During his time in Carthage, he found a woman who would later become his mistress. Their relationship would bring forth a son that Augustine named Adeodatus ("gift of God"). Monica greatly desired for his son to be saved and join the Catholic church as a faithful son of the church. Augustine, however, was reluctant and resistant. He briefly joined the Manicheans but later left after finding the sect and its leaders to be beneath his intellectual prowess. He later left Carthage and went to Milan after receiving a post as a professor of rhetoric in the imperial court. During his time in

Milan, he became acquainted with and heavily influenced by the Bishop of Milan, Ambrose. Ambrose, like Augustine, was well-versed in the art of rhetoric. Over time, Augustine not only viewed Ambrose as an excellent orator, but also as a spiritual father who gave him much guidance.

Augustine was initially attracted to Ambrose because of his reputation as a great speaker. Being a rhetorician himself, Augustine made it a point to visit Ambrose and hear his sermons. As he listened to them, he focused less on his style, and gave greater attention to the words he was speaking. The way that Ambrose spoke of Christianity attracted the sharp mind of Augustine. Through Ambrose, he discovered a Christianity that was philosophically fulfilling and intellectually appealing. Through Ambrose, he also saw the life of a Christian worth emulating. Ambrose was highly praised by many people and his reputation was widely recognized. His humility and desire to live an austere lifestyle made a strong impression in Augustine's life. His encounter and experience with Ambrose became a major catalyst for the change that would happen in his heart. Through Ambrose, Monica's prayers were answered for Augustine was baptized, along with his son, by Ambrose.

After Augustine's conversion, he decided that he would devote himself to studying Christianity and its scriptures. Eventually, through his writings, he became well-known within the church. He feared that he should suffer the same fate as his spiritual mentor, Ambrose, who became an unwitting bishop after being unanimously acclaimed by the people, even against his own will. There was no desire for him to assume any sort of ecclesial power or authority. He was content to live out his days in mindful contemplation. However, this was short lived. A Christian in Hippo Regius asked

Augustine a question and invited him for a visit. Knowing that they had a well-known bishop in the person of Valerius, Augustine decided that he could visit Hippo Regius without a problem. He steadfastly refused to visit places where there were no bishops in place because of his fear of being appointed to the office of bishop. While he was visiting Hippo Regius, he attended the church where the bishop Valerius "seized the opportunity to tell the people there was urgent need for a second ordained man in Hippo. At once the congregation laid hands on Augustine and brought him to the front amid general acclamation. There was no escape: he was caught, just as Ambrose had been, and ordained on the spot."[1] After the death of Valerius, he became the bishop of Hippo Regius. During his time as bishop of Hippo Regius, he wrote many letters and books that still remain with us to this day. His work has influenced western thought and Christian theology.

Gareth Sears notes that "Augustine's home town, Thagaste, was located at a nodal point of a road system that linked Carthage to the east, Hippo Regius to the north, and the capital of Numidia, Cirta, to the west."[2] Serge Lancel comments on the importance of understanding the African milieu in order to understand Augustine properly.[3] In fact, Augustine's African-ness plays a crucial role in the Donatist Controversy. A key argument that the Donatists had against the Catholics lay in tracing their spiritual lineage to Cyprian as opposed to the Catholics whose Roman-ness makes their version of Christianity suspect Augustine's North African roots.

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[1] Williams, *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery*, 57–58.

[2] Sears, "Augustine in Roman North Africa," 37.

[3] Lancel, ed., *Augustinus-Lexikon,* 1:182. "La connaissance du milieu africain est donc necessaire à une bonne comprehension d'Augustine et de son oeuvre; corrolairement, ses écrits constituent une source fondamentale pour l'histoire de l'Afrique antique." Lancel, ed., *Augustinus-Lexikon,* 1:182.

Thagaste's population "was never more than a few thousand people, if that. It was situated in the river valley of the Medjerda . . . the hills were heavily forested with oak and pine . . . wildflowers were sprinkled through the open ground . . . it was a land full of life."[4] In the fourth century, the Berbers (native North Africans) accounted for the dominant population in the rural areas. Also included in Thagaste's population were the Phoenicians and the Romans. Donald X. Burt speaks of how "[t]he people had a taste for wine, women and song. They were sociable and gregarious but given to violent anger when they felt abused."[5] The society had distinct social strata: the landowners, high government officials, and rich expatriates from Italy.[6] The lowest level in society belonged to the peasants, poor fishermen, and day-laborers who "lived a hard life . . . It was not unknown for them to sell their children so that both they and the children could get enough to live . . . they had a healthy suspicion of any alien people or alien ideas that threatened their historic culture."[7] Augustine's father was probably a mixture of Berber and Roman origins and his mother was almost certainly a Berber.[8] With such a unique parentage, Augustine's identity straddled those two unique cultural worlds.

Augustine and the Donatist Controversy

Brook Manville notes that "by the time Augustine became bishop of Hippo, the rival church possessed a great deal of land, had its own hierarchy of clergy, and had advanced from its origins of rural fanaticism to a popular, alternate form of Christianity in North

[4] Burt, *Augustine's World*, xvi.
[5] Burt, *Augustine's World*, xvi.
[6] Burt, *Augustine's World*, xvii.
[7] Burt, *Augustine's World*, xvii.
[8] Burt, *Augustine's World*, xx.

Africa."[9] The Diocese of Hippo was also one of the Donatists' strongholds. While the Donatists may not have the emperor's support, they were the major religious force in Africa. About eighty years had passed when Augustine joined the Catholic-Donatist debate and by that time, the two groups had already calcified their presumed assumptions upon the other. What Augustine wanted to do was resolve the conflict and bring back the Donatists into the Catholic fold. At first, he tried to do it without sanctioning the use of violence. However, he eventually changed his mind and advocated the use of coercive violent means to force the Donatists to turn back from their evil ways and return to the Catholic fold.

Augustine and the Use of Violence

The role of violence in Christianity is one fraught with complexity and nuance. Looking at the history of Christianity, one might be quick to notice the use of force for coercive means by Christians against any group who it deemed to differ or diverge from their orthodox beliefs. The long story of colonization by European invaders against indigenous populations all over the New World stands as an ongoing rebuke to Christendom's violent streak. The violence incurred by Western Crusaders even against their Eastern brethren is a further testament to this violent streak that seems to have defined the Christian DNA. Yet, this type of violence seems to be in distinct contradistinction to the actions of the God-man they profess to follow. Jesus was the recipient of violent acts, not its instigator. The use of violence, especially in Augustine's case, is both fascinating and a lesson in the art of nuance.

[9] Manville, "Donatism and St. Augustine," 131.

Paul Weithman deals with Augustine's political philosophy by bringing to light the fact that in *De Civitate Dei*, Book 5, "Augustine does say that they (Christian rulers) are to 'make their power the handmaid of His majesty by using it to spread His worship to the greatest possible extent' (civ.dei. 5.24)."[10] This, however, should not be interpreted as if Augustine was giving Christian rulers a carte blanche to use violence whenever they saw fit to do so. Augustine was adamant in advocating for the use of the pen rather than the sword when it comes to dealing with groups that do not belong to the Catholics like Jews or Donatists. Yet, "[a]s a result of his involvement in the Donatist controversy in northern Africa during the closing decade of the fourth century, Augustine did abandon his opposition to religious coercion."[11] This shift in Augustine's attitude toward use of force against dissident groups needs further exploration. The concept of just war is rooted in Augustine's teachings. While it could be argued that the early church tended to have a pacifist view, Augustine took a different path concerning the use of violence by the state. According to Gillian Clark, for Augustine,

> it is not the use of force that matters, but the motive for using it. A soldier is morally in the clear if he kills, either in war or as an executioner, not in anger or in the desire for vengeance, but for the sake of peace and on the orders of the proper authority. The person who has that authority is morally in the clear if he is motivated not by anger or hatred but by the need to preserve the peace, and if he uses no more violence than is necessary for that purpose.[12]

The concept of power and how those in authority should wield it is one full of complexities. It would be impossible to give this subject a fair treatment when tomes have been written on this topic. The issue of power is one that played a crucial role in how Augustine treated a dissident group like the Donatists.

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[10] Weithman, "Augustine's Political Philosophy," 245.
[11] Weithman, "Augustine's Political Philosophy," 245.
[12] Clark, *Christianity and Roman Society*, 106.

Augustine's *Letters*: Background and Summary

Augustine wrote extensively against the Donatists. He wrote numerous letters, sermons, and treatises during the Donatist Controversy. This dissertation primarily focuses on his letters. For practical reasons, it would be difficult to address all of Augustine's writings against the Donatists. By focussing primarily on his letters, it provides natural limits to the corpus to be examined. These letters were chosen because in some way, shape, or form, they mentioned the Donatists. The selection was not made based on whether the sentiments were positive or negative. The only criteria for inclusion was that the Donatists were somehow mentioned in the letter. Jane Merdinger provided guidance into the letters which Augustine wrote against the Donatists, especially as it relates to exsufflation.[13] Various articles also led me to other letters where Augustine dealt with the Donatists. Among his other works against the Donatists, his polemical style is maintained and sustained throughout. There is no difference in terms of content or style from the letters to the treatises.

The translation used for this chapter is *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* by John E. Rotelle. This translation uses modern English to translate Augustine's works while also incorporating the most recent scholarship on Augustinian studies.

Letter 23 was written by Augustine to Maximinus, the Donatist bishop of Siniti in Numidia. Written between 391 and 395, the letter dealt with the issue of rebaptism along with his disbelief that Maximinus rebaptized a Catholic. As a result, he asked for a confirmation from Maximinus whether or not he rebaptized. He adjured him to put past

[13] Merdinger, "In League with the Devil?," 153–77.

wrongs aside in order to deal with the current issue. Maximinus had the ability to be an example to the rest of Donatist Africa and it was this belief that provided the impetus for Augustine to reach out and settle this issue. He told Maximinus that he was willing for his letter to be read out loud if only to help settle the case between them, even to be read when the military is not present so that it may not come across as a coercive act. He states

> And I will not do this when the army is present for fear that someone of yours might think that I wanted to do this with more violence than the cause of peace requires. I will do it after the departure of the army in order that all who hear us may understand that it is not part of my purpose that people be forced against their will into communion with anyone, but that the truth may become known to those who seek it most peacefully. Terror from temporal authorities will cease on our side; let there also cease on your side terror from bands of Circumcellions. Let us deal with the facts; let us deal with reason; let us deal with the authorities of the divine scriptures; as quiet and peaceful as we can be, let us ask; let us seek; let us knock that we may receive and find and have the door opened for us. For it may perhaps be possible that, with the Lord helping our single-hearted efforts and prayers, this great deformity and impiety may begin to be wiped out from our lands. If you do not believe that I want to do this after the departure of the soldiers, write back to me after the departure of the soldiers. For, if I choose to read my letter to the people when the army is present, you can produce my letter to prove that I violated my word. May the mercy of the Lord keep this from my conduct and from the aim with which he has designed to inspire me though his yoke.[14]

This letter expressed many recurring themes in most of Augustine's letters to the Donatists. It showed his strong desire for reconciliation with the Donatists. The issue of baptism, or more particularly, rebaptism, is one that will continually come up with his various correspondences. It is also curious to note Augustine's evolution concerning his treatment of the Donatists. Early on in his ministry, his letters emphasized the fraternal nature between the Catholics and the Donatists. His letters attempted to cajole the other back into the Catholic church by framing the Catholic–Donatist rift as one between two

[14] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 67–68.

bickering siblings. While the Donatists may be in the wrong, they were treated with patience and compassion rather than contempt and strife.

Letter 34 was written in 396 or 397 by Augustine to Eusebius. Eusebius was a Roman official in Hippo and a Catholic layman. He wrote about an instance where a young man beat and threatened to kill his own mother. Having done so, he was rebuked by his Catholic bishop. In retaliation, he converted to Donatism. Augustine tried to convince Proculeian, the Donatist bishop of Hippo, to address this issue with the young man whose crimes had not been censured nor dealt with by the Donatist church. Augustine asked,

> Do you, then, a man of sound judgment, approve of these goings-on? I would never believe this of you; I know how carefully you consider things. A mother according to the flesh is struck in the members by which she bore and nourished her ungrateful child; our spiritual mother, the church, forbids this, and she is struck in the sacraments by which she bore and nourished her ungrateful child. . . . What else should we expect, my honorable Eusebius, but that, now secure as a Donatist, he is armed against the poor woman, worn down by old age and all alone as a widow, whom he was forbidden to beat by the Catholic church?[15]

Augustine is clearly concerned that this young man had been given free rein by the Donatist priest. His murderous intent towards his mother, an attitude that was not tolerated by the Catholic church, was somehow unchallenged by the Donatist church and allowed to continue. This was absolutely unacceptable to Augustine. Many of his letters reflected his anger and concern about the great evils that the Donatists were either condoning through their silence or committing through their stubborn refusal to admit the truth that he was attempting to lay bare before them.

Letter 35 was written shortly after the previous letter was sent. Again, Augustine wrote to Eusebius for him to ask several questions to Proculeian. He also brought the

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[15] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 119.

issue of Primus, a subdeacon who was formerly Catholic but was later rebaptized by the Donatists. He left the Catholic church "because of penalties imposed for his improper conduct with certain nuns."[16] Augustine writes,

> I also add another point: After a subdeacon once belonging to the church of Spanianum, by the name of Primus, was forbidden an access to the nuns that was contrary to good discipline and after he showed contempt for the sound rules and commandments, he was removed from the rank of clerics. And angered at the discipline of God, he went over to those others and was rebaptized. Either he also brought with him two nuns, fellow tenants with him on an estate of Catholic Christians, or they followed him. They too were, nonetheless, rebaptized. And now along with gangs of Circumcellions amid roving bands of women who have shamelessly refused to have husbands for fear of having any discipline, he proudly exults in orgies of detestable drunkenness, happy that the freedom of an evil way of life has been opened up most widely for him, the very reason why he was excluded from the Catholic church.[17]

Yet, as Augustine noted in his letter, the Donatist church accepted him even though he did not come to them in a penitential state. Augustine was unsure if Proculeian was aware of the situation and so he asked Eusebius to bring it to his attention along with the "command that Primus be removed from his communion since he chose that communion only because he had lost clerical status in the Catholic church on account of his obedience and depraved conduct."[18] *Letter 35* exhibited another key feature in Augustine's letters towards the Donatists: he often spoke of situations in which the Donatists were shown to be complicit in tolerating or accepting inappropriate behaviour by either Catholic clergy or lay people. This fostered an environment in which Donatists were seen in a negative light.

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[16] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 122.
[17] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 122.
[18] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 122.

Letter 43 was written at the end of 396 or in early 397 CE. Written to a group of Donatist leaders, Augustine tried to engage with this group and asked for unity. As a rhetorical move, he refused to call them heretics. He notes,

> But people like yourselves should by no means be considered to be heretics. For you defend your view, though false and erroneous, without any stubborn animosity, especially since you did not give rise to it by the brazenness of presumption, but have received it from your parents, who were seduced and fell into error, and you seek the truth with a cautious concern, ready to be corrected when you find it.[19]

By his refusal to call them heretics, and instead, calling them men who can be reasoned with, Augustine displayed a willingness to remove the potential barriers to a fruitful conversation. The strong animosity between the two groups caused both groups to disengage from any fruitful conversation that sought to remedy their current situation. Since the charge of heresy was a strong and contentious allegation that the Catholics had often levelled against the Donatists, the response by the Donatists was to countercharge them with the same accusation. This tit-for-tat tactic was one that both groups were wont to use. Augustine went to great lengths to clarify to the Donatist bishops that he did not deem them to be heretics. This demonstrated a willingness in Augustine to change his rhetorical strategy against the Donatists. Instead of the iron fist, he used a velvet glove.

Augustine tried to position himself as a peacemaker.[20] He then provided a detailed account concerning the beginning of the rift that happened between the two groups. He spoke of "certain records [which] were brought forth by your side from which it was read out that almost seventy bishops condemned Caecilianus, then bishop of the Carthaginian

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[19] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 157.

[20] "This letter, then, will be a witness for my defense in the judgment of God, who knows with what intention I acted and who said, *Blessed are the peacemakers, because they will be called the children of God.*" Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 157–58.

church, who belonged to our communion, along with his colleagues and those who ordained him."[21] Augustine talked about the "ordination of Majorinus, whom by their wicked crime they elevated to the episcopacy in opposition to Caecilianus."[22] At this point, it must be noted that a slight imperceptible shift begins to creep in Augustine's rhetoric. In the beginning of his letter, it seemed as if he tried to go above and beyond in trying to persuade the Donatists that he believed that they are not heretics and that they are men of reason with whom he can engage in fruitful conversation. Through his use of language, he betrayed himself and his original purpose. He states,

> they (the Donatists) erected altar over against altar and destroyed the unity of Christ by frenzied discord, they asked Constantine, who was then emperor, for episcopal judges to act as arbitrators and to pronounce judgment on their questions that had arisen in Africa and destroyed the bond of peace. . . . But nothing could be proved against Caecilianus, and for this reason, after he had been confirmed in his episcopacy, Donatus, who was at that time his opposite number, was found guilty. After this happened, since they all remained in the stubbornness of their most wicked schism, the same emperor later had the same case examined more carefully and brought to an end at Arles.[23]

He may not call them heretics, but in his description of the events that led to the rift between the Catholics and the Donatists, he accused them of breaking Christian unity and in more pointed language, called what they did an act of schism. As a Donatist reader, his account of what happened in the past did not engender any feelings of love. If anything, it had the potential of once again stoking the flames of vitriol that both groups had for each other.

Perhaps sensing that his strong words elicited a strong reaction among his Donatist readers, Augustine tried to remind them that everything that he said can be

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[21] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 158.
[22] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 158.
[23] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 158.

verified if they would but read the records. By appealing to the records, Augustine tried to reason with his Donatist readers to evaluate his claims by looking at objective facts. The records are a matter of public record and are also legally binding documents. Though one may be able to dispute the facts, for sure, these records provided an assessment of the situation that was removed from the charges of rumours or hearsay evidence. He reminded them that they

> did not delay to send for those records, which we promised to read . . . First there was read the part where Secundus of Tigisi did not dare to remove from the college of bishops the traditors who confessed, thought afterward with them he dared to condemn Caecilianus and his other colleagues, who had not confessed and who were absent. Then we read the proconsular proceedings where Felix was proved innocent by a most careful examination. You remember that these were read to you in the morning. . . . finally, we read the letter of the emperor, Constantine, which showed that everything was fully attested to the highest degree.[24]

Expressing his frustration, Augustine asks "[w]hat more do you want, you people? What more do you want? We are not dealing with your gold and silver. It is not your land and estates, not even the health of your body that is at stake. We are challenging your souls about acquiring eternal life and escaping eternal death."[25] Augustine's exasperated tone is so visceral it can almost be felt. This letter not only tried to address the objective aspects that needed to be properly considered by the Donatist readers, but it also tried to address something beyond the legalities and perceived trivialities of the nature of the conflict: it addressed the spiritual nature. The multi-pronged rhetorical attack foisted by Augustine against his Donatist foes were done for one singular purpose: to persuade, cajole, and invite the wayward Donatists back to the Catholic fold. Since Augustine believed that the

[24] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 159.
[25] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 159.

Catholic church was the true mother of all Christians, he was incredibly pained by the division in Christian community brought about by the Donatists. In order that the Donatists may turn back from their erroneous ways, Augustine was willing to be friend or foe in order to either lovingly receive them back or to violently compel them to join the true faith once more.

For the Donatists, the ordination of Caecilianus by Felix was deemed null and void because they believed Felix was a traitor, and since he was a traitor, any ordination by his hands was not deemed to be truly sacramental in nature. The Donatists' desire for purity and their decision to separate themselves from those whom they deemed impure or lacking in righteousness was challenged by Augustine. Augustine appealed to many biblical heroes of the faith who had to tolerate sinners, but in so doing, were not made impure simply by association. Augustine notes

> Aaron tolerates the many people who demand, build, and worship an idol. Moses tolerates so many thousands who murmur against God and sin against his name so many times. David tolerates Saul who persecutes him, who abandons the things of heaven with his wicked conduct and seeks the things below by the arts of magic; he avenges him when he is slain, and even calls him the anointed of the Lord on account of the mystery of his holy anointing. Samuel tolerates the wicked sons of Eli and his own evil sons; because the people would not tolerate them, the people were accused by divine truth and rebuked by divine severity. Samuel, finally, tolerates the people who are proud and contemptuous of God. Isaiah tolerates those whom he accuses of many true crimes. Jeremiah tolerates those from whom he suffers so much. Zechariah tolerates the Pharisees and scribes who scripture testifies existed at that time. I know that I have passed over many; let those who want read; let those who are able read the heavenly words; they will find that all the holy servants and friends of God always had those whom they needed to tolerate in their people. Sharing with them, nonetheless, in the sacraments of that time, they were not only not defiled, but they also endured them in a praiseworthy manner, *eager*, as the apostle says, *to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*.[26]

[26] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 169.

This seemingly belaboured point from Augustine showed the extent to which the Donatists' conduct concerning their separation from the Catholics was not only extremely wrong, but also extremely unbiblical. If the heroes of the faith were able to tolerate sinners, then who were the Donatists that they should be so intolerant of them?

Another point of contention between the two groups was the treatment of the circumcellions by the Donatists. Circumcellions were known for their violent, marauding ways. Augustine asks his Donatist readers, "[d]o they not tolerate the slaughters and fires of the Circumcellions, those people who venerate the bodies of others who willingly throw themselves over a cliff, and the groaning of the whole of Africa under the incredible evils of the one Optatus?"[27] Augustine was flabbergasted by the fact that the Donatists continued to support such attitudes and behaviour. If the Donatists were so obsessed with righteousness and purity that they were willing to refuse communion with the Catholics for the perceived impurity they committed by associating with Caecilianus, a cleric deemed a traitor, then why would they continue to associate themselves with the circumcellions, a group who arrogantly displayed their violent and impious attitudes? The Donatists' refusal to repudiate the actions of the circumcellions was further proof, in Augustine's mind, that the rift between the two groups was less about the official reasons the Donatists flaunted, namely righteousness and purity; instead, it was about the stubbornness of heart by the Donatists to reconcile with the Catholics. For Augustine, this schismatic attitude was more problematic than tolerating sinners amongst their midst. Augustine comments

> [w]e deplore and grieve over the violated peace, the sundered unity, the repeated baptisms, and the abused sacraments, which are holy even in wicked persons. If they consider these of little importance, let them look at the examples that show

[27] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 171.

> how important God considers them. Those who fashioned an idol were slain by the customary death of the sword, but the leaders of those who chose to cause a schism were swallowed by the earth, and the crowd who agreed with them were consumed by fire. The difference in their punishment reveals the difference of their merits.[28]

While it may be true that the actions that the Catholics were accused of may be grievous in the sight of God, according to Augustine, the sin of schism was the most grievous sin in God's eyes. Thus, even if Augustine were to concede that sins were committed by the Catholics, it did not come close to the gravity of creating, fostering, and maintaining schism in the church.

The end of the letter was an appeal to his Donatist readers to mend the broken relationship and join the true church, the Catholic church. The communion that the church was called to model and exemplify was rent asunder by the continued rejection of the Donatists to turn from their schismatic ways. After providing them with numerous reasons ranging from legal to social to emotional to theological, he wrote

> [y]ou see all this, and you know it, and you groan, and yet God sees that nothing forces you to remain in so deadly and sacrilegious a schism, if in order to attain a spiritual kingdom you would overcome your carnal affection and if in order to avoid everlasting punishments you would not be afraid to offend the friendships of human beings, which are of no help in God's courtroom.[29]

This extended letter attempted to give his Donatist readers the tools they needed to be able to overcome previous biases and prejudices which they may have harboured and offered instead clear, objective facts which, if considered properly, would lead them to the same conclusion as that of Augustine: the unity in the church of Christ must and should be upheld by all who claim to be Christians. Since they considered themselves

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[28] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 170.
[29] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 171.

Christians, they must not hold themselves apart from others who also called upon the name of Christ. Since they were men of reason, as Augustine addressed them in the letter's introduction, he was cognizant of the difficulty to stand up against their own friends and colleagues. However, in light of what is at stake—eternal damnation of their souls—they must make the difficult task of standing up for the truth rather than currying favour from their loved ones, for on the Day of Judgment, one was judged by their own words and deeds and not those of others.

In *Letter 44*, Augustine wrote to a group of Donatist laymen about his encounter with Fortunius. Fortunius was a Donatist bishop of Thiave who came highly recommended to Augustine by the group. Written in 396 or 397, Augustine recounted the story of his encounter with Fortunius. He states

> [w]hen I was traveling to the church of Cirta, I made the acquaintance of Fortunius, whom you have as bishop of Tubursicum, though most hurriedly, while passing through his city. And I found him to be exactly as you usually and most kindly promise him to be. When we reported to him your conversation regarding him, he did not refuse us who wanted to see him. We, therefore, went to him, for it seemed that we ought to offer that to his age rather than to demand that he first come to us. We set out, therefore, with no small number of companions whom the circumstances had by chance found gathered around us.[30]

When he finally had a chance to meet, their encounter was marred by the fact that a crowd that gathered around them were expecting a fight to happen between the two figures. Augustine recalls

> [b]ut after we had settled down in his home, no small crowd also assembled because of the rumor spread about. We, however, saw that there were very few in that whole crowd who desired that the issue be treated in a useful and salutary manner and that so important a question on so important an issue be discussed with wisdom and piety. But the rest had assembled for the spectacle of our quarrel, as it were, almost in manner of the theater rather than for instruction toward salvation with Christian devotion. Hence, they could neither offer us silence nor hold a discussion with us attentively or at least in modest and orderly

[30] Augustine, *Letters 1 - 99*, 173.

> fashion, except, as I said, for those few whose intention was seen to be religious and undivided. Therefore, everything was thrown into confusion by the noise of those speaking freely and without control in accord with the impulse of the mind of each person, and neither he nor we were able to obtain, either by asking or even at times by threatening, that they offer us a polite silence.[31]

The discussion lasted for several hours. To ensure that the discussion "might be more careful and moderate and also in order that" others who were absent could end up reading about what happened, Augustine asked that "our words be taken down by stenographers."[32] During the course of their discussion, certain recurring topics in Augustine's letters were addressed: the universal nature of the church, the charge of being false prophets, and persecution.

Augustine asked Fortunius whether the church "would spread over the whole earth or that one which a small part of Africa or of the Africans would contain."[33] Fortunius "first tried to claim that his communion was everywhere on earth."[34] However, when "asked whether he could give [me] letters of communion" called 'patent' so that the issue at hand could be easily settled, he was not able to provide said letters "because the claim was clearly false."[35] Fortunius also brought up Matthew 7:15-16 which stated, "beware of false prophets; many will come to you in sheep's clothing, but within they are ravenous wolves. From their fruits you will know them," with the implication that the Catholic church was the false prophet. Regarding this verse, he also used Matthew 5:10 which states "blessed are those who suffer persecution on account of justice because theirs is the kingdom of heaven." By closely connecting these verses, Fortunius was

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[31] Augustine, *Letters 1 - 99*, 173–74.
[32] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 174.
[33] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 175.
[34] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 175.
[35] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 175.

strengthening the argument that it was the Donatists who were the righteous ones for they were the ones who were suffering persecution. This gave Augustine the opportunity to delve deeper concerning this particular Donatist sentiment. He asked him whether there was unity within the church prior to the time of Macarius or if it was already seen to have been divided by schism. Under Macarius, the Donatists suffered systematic persecution that caused their numbers to dwindle, which became a never-forgotten traumatic event in Donatist history. They often spoke of "the time of Macarius" as a shibboleth for extreme persecution under state authority. Augustine reasoned that "those who want to see whether they suffered persecution on account of justice should consider whether they rightly cut themselves off from the unity of the whole world. If they were found to have done unjustly, it would be evident that they suffered persecution on account of injustice rather than on account of justice, and for that reason, cannot be added to the number of the blessed, of whom it was said, *Blessed are those who suffer persecution on account of justice*."[36] To further prove his point, Augustine examined the oft repeated claim that the "Council of Sardica had issued a letter to the African bishops who were in the communion of Donatus."[37] This was done to further his claim that the Donatist church's move to separate itself from the unity of Christ was unwarranted and was not done in accordance with righteousness and justice. Augustine highlights their relationship with the church across the sea as a reason why he thought that the Donatist church's view that they were persecuted was tenuous at best, considering the church across the sea seemed to not have had communion with Donatus. Fortunius' appeal to the Council of Sardica

[36] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 175.
[37] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 176.

became a much needed point of contention between the two since Augustine was given the chance to point out that the Council of Sardica was an Arian council, and so their judgment and recognition of Donatus actually worked against their favour in establishing themselves as the true and pure church.

Written between 396 and 410, possibly 398, *Letter 49* was written to Honoratus, a Donatist bishop. In his greeting, Augustine wrote of how he was "very much pleased" by his plan to "deal with each other by letters where no uproar from the crowds can disturb our agenda that we should take up and deal with in all gentleness and peace of soul."[38] Augustine's claim was that "the church of God that is called Catholic is spread throughout the world, as it was foretold it would be . . . And the Lord Jesus Christ says that his gospel will be preached among all nations."[39] The establishment of the Catholic church worldwide was seen by Augustine as the church's proof of authenticity. He then reminds him that "it is evident that we are today in communion with all these churches, just as it is evident that you are not in communion with these churches."[40] With what can only be perceived as a subtle dig against Honoratus, he speaks of "why it has come about that Christ lost his inheritance spread throughout the world and suddenly remained only among the Africans, and not in all the Africans."[41] He pled for Honoratus to "write back to us in order that we may know how it is possible that Christ lost his church in the whole world and began to have it among you alone."[42] Donatism, then, at least in Augustine's

[38] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 195.
[39] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 195.
[40] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 196.
[41] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 196.
[42] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 196.

mind, could not put forward the claim that it was the "true" church if it could not claim the universality of the Catholic church.

In *Letter 51*, Augustine wrote a letter to Crispinus, the Donatist bishop of Calama. In it, he discussed how the "sin of schism" was punished more seriously and severely than the sins of idolatry or even the burning of sacred books. He reminded Crispinus to "recall how the earth opened up and swallowed alive the authors of schism and how fire poured down from heaven and consumed those who had sided with it."[43] He continued on to say that "[n]either the construction and worship of an idol nor the burning of a sacred book deserved to be punished in such a way."[44] Augustine also turned the Donatists' objections against them. For all the condemnation that the Donatists had levied against the Catholics for turning away from the true and pure way, Augustine asked "Why, then, have you received back those whom you condemned for the crime of schism 'by the true words of' your 'plenary council,' as it is recorded there, in the very same episcopacy in which you condemned them?"[45] He argued,

> If they [Felician of Musti and Praetextatus of Assuri] were innocent, why were they taken back in that way? If they were criminals, why were they taken back in that way? If you prove them innocent, why should we not believe that innocent men could have been condemned on the false charge of surrendering the books by a much smaller number of your predecessors if three hundred and ten of their successors were able to condemn innocent men on the false charge of schism 'by the true word of a plenary council,' as it was so pompously stated? But if you prove that they were rightly condemned, what defense remains for why they were received back in to the same episcopacy except that, by emphasizing the benefit and salutariness of peace, you show that even these crimes should be tolerated to maintain the bond of unity? … You would, of course, see how the peace of Christ should not be violated by any slanders throughout the world, if it is permissible in Africa that men condemned even for sacrilegious schism are received back in the very same episcopacy to maintain the peace of Donatus.[46]

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[43] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 199.
[44] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 199.
[45] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 199.
[46] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 199.

Augustine also raised the objection brought by Donatists concerning the persecution by the Catholics of the Donatists through earthly powers. To which Augustine noted that

> if this is a crime, why did you fiercely attack the same Maximianists through judges sent by those emperors, whom our communion begot through the gospel, and why did you by the roar of controversies, by the power of ordinances, and by the assault of troops drive them from the basilicas they had and in which they were at the time of the division? What they suffered in individual places during that conflict is attested to by recent traces of events. The records show what orders were given; the lands in which the holy memory of that notorious Optatus, your tribune, is venerated cry out what was done.[47]

For Augustine, the objections that the Donatists levied against the Catholics were the very same actions that the Donatists had done to their co-religionists. Since they had done the same thing, they did not have the high moral ground in lodging their complaints against the Catholics, for to do so was hypocritical. They could not condemn the very same actions they enacted against the Maximianists.

Letter 52 was written in either 399 or 400 to Severinus. Severinus was a relative of Augustine and a Donatist. In his letter, Augustine expressed his sorrow "that we, who are brothers according to the flesh, do not live in the body of Christ in one society."[48] He reminded Severinus that the Donatists' action "slanders the world and does not consider that by that sterility, because of which it refuses to bear the fruits of peace and love, it is cut off from that root of the Eastern churches, from which the gospel came to Africa."[49] This decision to cut themselves from the Catholic church is a sign of their sin since it expressed their lack of desire for unity for the Body of Christ.

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[47] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 199–200.
[48] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 202.
[49] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 202.

Letter 66 was written shortly after 400 by Augustine to the Donatist bishop of Calama in Numidia named Crispinus. He expressed his anger for rebaptizing the people of Mappala. He accused him of wanting to "be feared as a man" but also urged him to fear God instead. He challenged him to allow the people of Mappala to choose between them without fear or coercion. Augustine issued a challenge: "If the people of Mappala went over to your communion of their own will, let them hear both of us so that what we say is written down, and after it has been signed by us, let it be translated into Punic. Then with fear of any master removed, let them choose what they want."[50] Crispinus' act of rebaptizing was not only an affront to the Catholic church, but it also dealt with soteriological issues. Rebaptism touched on issues concerning sin and Christology, key foundational issues that Augustine wanted Crispinus to deal with properly.

In *Letter 76*, Augustine wrote a letter that was vaguely addressed to the Donatists, rather than a specific Donatist leader. He asked them,

> Why have you divided yourselves from the unity of the whole world by your wicked sacrilege of schism? . . . You imagine that you escape the weeds before the time of the harvest, because you are nothing but weeds. . . . Why do you believe that the weeds have increased and filled the world, but that the wheat has decreased and remains only in Africa? You say that you are Christians, and you contradict Christ. He said, *Allow them both to grow until the harvest* (Mt 13:30); he did not say, "Let the weeds increase, and let the grain decrease."[51]

Augustine rebuked them and said that by breaking communion with the church at large, they were acting in a way that betrayed the very teachings of the Christ they claimed to serve. By referring to the Matthean parable of the wheat and the tares, Augustine based his arguments on the scriptures which the Donatists revered and sought to observe and obey more faithfully than the Catholics. If this was true, said Augustine, then their refusal

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[50] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 257–58.
[51] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 298.

to commune with the church at large was a sign of their unfaithfulness and disobedience based on Christ's teaching. Augustine reminded them of their own hypocrisy concerning this issue. He admonished them by saying "how has the Christian world offended you from which you have cut yourselves off in your wicked fury? And how have the Maximianists merited so well from you? They were condemned by you, and they were forced from their basilicas through the civil courts. But you again received them back in their dignities."[52] Their hypocrisy is blatantly on display and Augustine challenged them to change their wicked ways.

Letter 87 was written by Augustine to the Donatist bishop of Caesarea in Mauretania Caesariensis between 405 and 411. He began his letter with a commendation of Emeritus' reputation as "someone endowed with a good mind and educated in the liberal arts."[53] As such, he exclaimed that he "does not know why you are separated from the church. For it is certain that the sect of Donatus is unknown to a great part of the Roman world, not to mention the barbarian nations as well, to which the apostle said that he was under obligation and with whose Christian faith our communion is united."[54] He asked, "why, then, have you cut yourselves off by your sacrilegious schism from communion with countless Eastern churches, which have never known and still do not know what you either teach or pretend was done in Africa?"[55] After all, "no one can be contaminated by the unknown crimes of unknown people."[56] The decision to remove themselves from the communion of the greater church because of fear of contamination

[52] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 299.
[53] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 344.
[54] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 344.
[55] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 345.
[56] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 345.

was not only unbiblical but also theologically and practically illogical and a completely unnecessary reaction.

For Augustine, the initial objection against the Donatists was the crime of schism which they have "made into heresy by wrongly continuing in it."[57] He reminded them "how great this sin is considered in the judgment of God" by giving the example of "Dathan and Abiram [who] were swallowed by the earth's opening up and that all the rest who sided with them were consumed by a fire coming from the midst of them."[58] Even though Optatus was associated with Gildo's revolution and with the circumcellions, two despicable acts that most Donatists would not agree with, the Donatists, according to Augustine, "thought that Optatus should be tolerated in [your] communion rather than that such a split be accepted."[59] If this was the case, then why did they "remain in that evil that was committed by [their] predecessors in dividing the church of Christ."[60] It was clear to Augustine that the Donatists understood the severity and gravity of disunity within the Body of Christ, so much so that they were willing to somewhat excuse Optatus' evil actions because they deemed the splitting of the church to be a more severe sin than the sin of one individual. Since this was already being employed by the Donatists in the case of Optatus, why were they unable or unwilling to extend that same idea to the church at large?

Written in 407 or 408, Augustine wrote *Letter 93* to the Rogatist bishop of Cartenna in Mauretania Caesariensis, Victor. In it, he made known his positive assessment of the state's use of its own power so that the Donatists "be held in check and

[57] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 346.
[58] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 346.
[59] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 346.
[60] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 346.

corrected by the authorities established by God."[61] He argued that because of the correction provided by the state, some circumcellions returned to the Catholic fold.[62] According to Augustine, "[t]hey condemn their former life and wretched error, because of which they thought that they did for the church of God whatever they did in their restless rashness!"[63] He conceded that these types of corrective measures did not work on everyone.[64] However, it should not be completely discounted because there were those who were not affected by it. Augustine pointed to the Scriptures (Proverbs 27:6) to remind Victor that "[n]ot everyone who is merciful is a friend, nor is everyone who scourges an enemy."[65] After all,

> [i]t is better to love with severity than to deceive with leniency. It is more beneficial to take bread away from a hungry man in order that he might be led astray and consent to injustice. And someone who ties down a crazy person and who rouses a lazy person loves them both, though he is a bother to both. Who can love us more than God? And he, nonetheless, does not cease not only to teach us with gentleness, but also to frighten us for our salvation.[66]

This type of mentality allowed Augustine to view the state's use of force as a chastising rod used by God to correct and chasten the Donatists. This was reinforced by his scriptural understanding of key passages like Luke 14:23, "Whomever you find, force them to come in." He later used the story of Sarah and Hagar to further illustrate the possibility of using force in a loving manner. Augustine noted,

> Did not Sarah rather punish the rebellious serving girl when she was given the power? And she, of course, did not cruelly hate her since she had previously made her a mother by her own generosity; rather, she was subduing pride in her in a way conducive to her salvation. . . . Thus those who can may understand that the Catholic church suffers persecution from the pride and wickedness of carnal

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[61] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 376.

[62] "Oh, if I could show you how many sincere Catholics we now have from the Circumcellions!" Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 378.

[63] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 378.

[64] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 379.

[65] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 379.

[66] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 379.

> persons, whom it tries to correct by temporal troubles and fears. Whatever, then, the true and lawful mother does, even if it is felt to be harsh and bitter, she does not repay evil with evil, but applies the good of discipline to expel the evil of iniquity, not out of harmful hatred, but out of healing love. Since the good and the evil do the same things and suffer the same things, they must be distinguished, not by their actions and punishments, but by their motives.[67]

He made a distinction when it came to understanding how to understand persecution. For Augustine, the Donatists' appeal to the veracity of their identity as the true church was often predicated on their claim that they were the persecuted church. However, suffering persecution was not, by itself, a means to indicate a Christian's value or worth. Only if the one who was suffering persecution was just was it of any value. The just person who suffered persecution was considered worthy of honour; the unjust person who suffered persecution did not deserve such acclaim.

Letter 93 addressed the role of fear as imperial decrees were enforced against the Donatists as a way by which many turned away from their wickedness and returned to the Catholic church. Augustine reminded him of how "many cities were Donatist and are now Catholic."[68] How did this come about? They "became . . . Catholic on the occasion of [this] fear . . . through the laws of the emperor, from Constantine . . . up to the present emperors."[69] These examples were given by Augustine because he acknowledged that a radical shift happened when it came to his stance concerning the use of force by the state. He admitted that in his original opinion, he argued "that no one should be forced to the unity of Christ, but that we should act with words, fight with arguments, and conquer by reason."[70] He continues,

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[67] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 380.
[68] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 387.
[69] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 387.
[70] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 387.

> But this opinion of mine was defeated, not by the words of its opponents, but by examples of those who offered proof. For the first argument against me was my own city. Though it was entirely in the Donatist sect, it was converted to the Catholic unity out of fear for the imperial laws, and we not see that it detests the destructiveness of this stubbornness of yours so that no one would believe that it was ever a part of it. And it was the same with many other cities, which were reported to me by name, so that I might recognize by the very facts that one could correctly understand the words of scripture as also applying to this case, *Give a wise man a chance, and he will become wiser* (Prov 9:9).[71]

Letter 93 gives a glimpse into Augustine's shifting opinions concerning the state's use of force against the Donatists. While he may have been previously against such use of force, he no longer held that view by the time he wrote the letter.

The issue of rebaptism was also touched upon in *Letter 93*. The Donatists highly valued and traced their lineage back to Cyprian. However, Cyprian never administered nor asked those who lapsed during the Decian Persecution to be baptized upon their re-admittance to church. Augustine states, "But if at that time when people were admitted to her without baptism, there was still the church that gave birth to Cyprian and also gave birth to Donatus, it is evident that the righteous are not infected by the sins of others when they share with them in the sacraments."[72] If rebaptism was not deemed to be appropriate or necessary by Cyprian, then the Donatists were committing a grievous error by instituting such a practice that had no precedent in the church.

Augustine commented on a particular stance which Cyprian took regarding a disagreement concerning a particular issue within the church. Augustine notes:

> Certain bishops, our predecessors, here in our province thought that they should not grant reconciliation to fornicators and that they should completely exclude a place of repentance for adulterers. They did not, nonetheless, withdraw from the college of their fellow bishops or shatter the unity of the Catholic church either by the hardness or the stubbornness of their censure so that one who did not grant reconciliation to adulterers broke away from the church because others granted

[71] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 387.
[72] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 399.

> such reconciliation. While the bond of harmony remained and the sacrament of the Catholic church continued undivided, each bishop arranges and orders his own actions, for he will give an account of his conduct to the Lord. What do you say to this, Brother Vincent? You, of course, see that this great man, a bishop of peace, and the bravest of martyrs, worked for nothing with greater intensity than to avoid breaking the bond of unity."[73]

By referring to Cyprian's actions and attitudes towards a similar situation within the church where there were two differing opinions, both equally theologically valid, Augustine reminded Vincent that it was possible to have an opinion that was contrary to another's while still remaining in the bond of unity with others. Theological diversity did not have to manifest itself in ecclesial separation, to the point of withdrawing one's self from those who did not agree with another's theological stance. Cyprian puts the onus and burden on the bishop for it is he who "will give an account of his conduct to the Lord."[74] If they truly esteemed and valued the words and actions of Cyprian, then they must indeed follow in his call to maintain unity despite theological differences.

Letter 105 was written after August 406. In it, he mentioned how "the love of Christ . . . does not permit [us] to remain silent toward you."[75] Apparently, threats were made by the Donatists against the Catholics: "Withdraw from our people if you do not want us to kill you."[76] He addressed the issue of the imperial edicts against the Donatists. Initially, the Catholics wanted to "preach the truth in order that anyone might hear it in safety and choose it freely"; however, the Donatists "never permitted it by [their] acts of violence and terror."[77] Their complaints against the imperial edicts would have been

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[73] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 400–401.
[74] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 401.
[75] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 54.
[76] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 55.
[77] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 55.

justified if not for the systematic oppression they inflicted upon the Catholics. Augustine recounted various situations like the ones of

> Mark, a priest of Casfaliano, [who] became a Catholic by his own choice with no one forcing him. For this reason your people persecuted him, and they would almost have killed him if the hand of God had not subdued their violence through others who arrived on the scene. Restitutus of Victoriano came over to the Catholic church with no one forcing him. For this reason he was seized from his home, beaten, thrown into the water, clothed in grass, held for I do not know how many days in captivity. And he would perhaps not have been restored to his personal freedom if Proculeian did not see that he was about to be brought before a judge on account of this issue. Marcian of Urga chose the Catholic unity of his own will. For this reason, after he himself had escaped, your clerics attacked his subdeacon who was almost beaten to death with rocks, and their house was destroyed for their crime![78]

If the Donatists did not act with such wanton violence, the need for imperial edicts would not have existed. However, because of the violent aggressions they showed towards Catholics, the imperial edicts were warranted. If they did not show such violent tendencies and behaviours, the need to enforce the imperial edicts were not needed.

Augustine was clear in his condemnation of such attacks. Furthermore, he reminded them that the "persecution" they were suffering was not due to their righteousness, but because of their wickedness. He told them, "[y]ou see that you rise up in violence against the peace of Christ, and you suffer not for him but for your wickedness. What sort of madness is this? When you live bad lives, you do the actions of robbers, and when you are rightly punished, you demand the glory of martyrs!"[79] He accused them of filling "the whole of Africa with [their] lie" and explained that it was for this reason that the actions of the emperors in trying to keep the peace through what the Donatists felt like unfair reasons and means.[80]

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[78] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 56.
[79] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 56.
[80] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 56.

Despite the past aggressions and actions, Augustine exhorted them to focus on the now and "set all these arguments aside"; instead, "let us love peace, which everyone, both learned and unlearned, understands should be preferred to discord."[81] The past was neither here nor there for Augustine. He was willing to overlook the past so that everyone could instead focus on the present. He was more than willing to extend an invitation not only of welcome, but also of reconciliation, to the Donatists, whom he called his "brothers."[82] The question concerning the *traditores* that marked the beginning of the schism should no longer matter. Augustine had no qualms in saying that "whoever they were and whatsoever they were, let them bear their own burdens."[83] While the sin of schism may have been started by their predecessors, Augustine pled with them to make sure that it no longer continued. He asked, "[i]f you hold onto Christ himself, why do you not hold onto the church?"[84] This letter was a combination of Augustine's desire for reconciliation with the Donatists and his frustration and disgust at their actions that had prevented such reconciliation in the first place.

Letter 106 was written to Macrobius, the Donatist bishop of Hippo, in 409. In it, he addressed the issue of rebaptism. He begged the bishop not to repabtize the Catholic deacon. He gave the example of Felician who was condemned by Primian. When he was received back in communion by Maximian, he did not rebaptize anyone who was

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[81] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 59.

[82] "Be reconciled with us, brothers; we love you; we want for you what we want for ourselves. If you hate us more deeply because we do not allow you to go astray and to be lost, tell this to God whom we fear, when he threatens bad shepherds and says, *You have not called back what has gone astray, and you have not sought what was lost* (34:4) God himself does this to you through us by begging, by threatening or by rebuking, by fines or by penalties, through his hidden warning or chastisements or through the laws of temporal authorities. *Letters 100–155*, 60.

[83] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 64.

[84] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 64.

previously baptized by Primian.[85] Augustine asks, "[w]ith what right, then, do you think that you should still rebaptize someone after he has been baptized by us? . . . if you cannot resolve this question, spare the soul of another, spare your own soul."[86] Since there was no precedent for rebaptism, even among the Donatists, then Macrobius should find it fit not to rebaptize the Catholic deacon.

Letter 108 was written by Augustine to Macrobius between the end of 409 and August of 410. In response to *Letter 106*, Macrobius wrote, "I cannot but receive those who come to me and give them the faith they have asked for."[87] Augustine replied, "if someone baptized in your communion, who was long separated from you, comes to you and through ignorance thinks that he has to be baptized again and asks for it, after you investigate and learn where he was baptized, you receive the person who comes to you, but you do not, nonetheless, give him the faith he asks for."[88] He continues, "rather you teach him that he has what he asks for, nor do you pay attention to the words of a man in error, but you apply your zeal to correct him."[89] However, this was not how Macrobius handled the situation. Instead, he said that he "could not be a judge of the actions of [his] father (Proculian), but that [he] abide[d] by what [he] received from [his] predecessors."[90] If this was truly the case, Augustine posed an important question: "Why, then, do we not remain in the church that we have received from Christ the Lord through the apostles as beginning from Jerusalem and bearing fruit and growing throughout all the nations?"[91] Why are the Catholics being judged by "the actions of some fathers of ours that are said

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[85] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 65.
[86] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 65.
[87] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 68.
[88] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 68.
[89] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 68.
[90] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 68.
[91] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 69.

to have been committed almost one hundred years ago" when he (Macrobius) "does not dare to judge concerning [his] father who is still present in this life and whom [he] could question."[92] It was rather unfair for Augustine to be faulted for something that was done by someone one hundred years ago and was still made to feel the ramifications of said acts.

If Macrobius should try to deny his brotherhood with Augustine, Augustine was quick to point to scriptures to ascertain what defined true brotherhood. He cited Isa 66:5 (LXX) which states, "Listen, you who fear the word of the Lord. Say, 'You are our brothers,' to those who hate you and despise you in order that the name of the Lord may receive honor and may be seen by them in joy, while they are put to shame."[93] He reminded Macrobius that even his colleagues "paid attention to the truth where they wanted, and they thought not only the baptism that Primian administered in your communion but also that which Felician administered in the sacrilegious schism of Maximian was holy on account of the holy joy over the honor shown to the Lord."[94] There was a clear precedent, even within Donatism, of not rebaptizing a fellow believer. If there were people who were baptized by schismatics, and when those schismatic brothers had re-entered the fold and were not forced to be rebaptized as a condition of their acceptance, then why were the Catholics being treated in an unfair and unjust manner? While some Donatists cited Prov 9:18 which says, "Refrain from the water of another," the Catholic answer was "[i]t is not the water of another, though it is in the hands of another."[95] When it came to the topic of rebaptism, the ontological question at

[92] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 69.
[93] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 69.
[94] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 69.
[95] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 71.

stake for both groups was whether baptism was a practice rooted in *ex opere operato* or *ex opere operantis*.

Augustine dealt with the oft-given rationale that the Donatists were the true church because of the persecutions they suffered. He rightly asks whether it was the reason or the penalty that made one a martyr. Matt 5:10 not only says "Blessed are those who suffer persecution" but it also adds the qualifier of "on account of righteousness."[96] If this is the case, Augustine asks, "[d]o not the Maximianists easily surpass you in this claim to glory? After all, they underwent persecution not only afterwards with you, but earlier and at our hands."[97] He urged them to

> admit that the passages about the water of another and about the water of deceit and about the bath of a corpse and any other passage of this sort that there may be should not be understood as you usually do. Rather it should be understood in such a way that the baptism of Christ, which was given to the church in order that we might partake of eternal salvation, should not be judged foreign to the church when it is conferred outside the church and should not be regarded as belonging to others when others have it. Rather, in those outside the church and separated from the church it contributes to their destruction, but in those who belong to her and are her own it produces salvation. In the former, when they are converted to the peace of the church, their error is corrected, but the sacrament is not destroyed when the error is punished. Rather, what was an obstacle for those misguided people externally begins to benefit them internally once they have been corrected. And you will not interpret those passages about not sharing in the sins of others, about separation from sinners, about not touching someone unclean and polluted, about avoiding the corruption of a measure of grain, and other such passages, as you usually interpret them. Otherwise, you will be trapped in the case of Maximian with no way of getting out.[98]

In order to escape this wrong way of thinking, he advised them that they "should tolerate sinners so that the good are not destroyed" instead of "abandon[ing] the good in order

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[96] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 77.
[97] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 77.
[98] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 79.

that sinners be kept separate."[99] This was in keeping with the parable of the wheat and tares in the gospel of Matthew.

Letter 108 ended with an admonition to "recognize . . . the peace of Christ . . . and . . . together strive to be good and together strive, while preserving unity, to correct sinners with as much discipline as we can, and on account of this unity let us tolerate sinners with as much patience as we can."[100] Augustine's desire for unity can be felt throughout the letter. He truly wanted nothing more than the repentance and eventual reconciliation of the Donatists with the Catholics. The unity of the church was something he valued. To that end, he skillfully used the knowledge he gained as a rhetorician to cajole, persuade, and at times, even threaten the Donatists back to the fold.

Marcellinus was the imperial commissioner who was also Augustine's friend. He wrote him a letter toward the end of 411 and urged him to show leniency in the meting out of punishment against the Donatist cleric and circumcellions. In *Letter 133*, he notes that

> very many of them confessed to murdering Restitutus, a Catholic priest, and to beating Innocent, another Catholic priest, and to tearing out his eye and cutting off his finger. For this reason, a very great worry has come over me that Your Eminence might perhaps judge that they should be punished with such great severity of the laws that they suffer the sort of punishments they inflicted. By this letter I appeal through the mercy of Christ the Lord to the faith that you have in Christ that you do not do this or allow it to happen at all. For, although we can deny any responsibility for the death of those who are seen to have been handed over for judgment, not due to accusations of ours, but because of the indictment of those who have charge of the defense of the public peace, we still do not want the sufferings of the servants of God to be avenged by punishments equal to those sufferings, as by the law requiring an eye for an eye.[101]

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[99] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 80.
[100] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 82.
[101] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 203.

As a Christian judge, Augustine called for Marcellinus to act as a loving father.[102] It was right to be angry at wickedness, but it does not mean that one must forget to be humane in the process. The desire for revenge against sinners must be balanced with the desire to heal the wounds of sinners.[103] The letter finished with an exhortation to Marcellinus. Augustine reminded him that he was "sent . . . for the benefit of the church."[104] He also told him that if he does not "listen to a friend begging you, listen to a bishop giving you advice."[105] Augustine was not averse to using his position as a bishop to compel him to stay his hand against the Donatists.

Letter 141 was a letter that addressed what happened during the Conference of Carthage in 411 CE. Augustine began the letter by addressing some of the rumours "that the imperial commissioner was bribed with money so that he would pronounce sentence against" the Donatists.[106] To counter these rumours, he was willing to send the appropriate documents "from our council in order that you may, first of all, be advised that your bishops, who lost their case and were proven guilty, have spread these lies."[107] He gave them an account of what happened during the Conference:

> we assembled together . . . [t]here were chosen from us and from them seven from our side and seven from theirs in order that they might speak in the name of all . . . [t]here were chosen four on each side who would stand guard over the recording of the proceedings in order that it would not be said that anyone had falsified something. We and they also provided four secretaries from each side in order that in pairs they might alternate with the court reporters so that no one of us might complain that he said something that was not recorded. In addition to all this carefulness there was also the further provision that both we and they, as well as the judge himself, would sign our names to our statements in order that no one might say that something was altered in those proceedings even later.[108]

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[102] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 203.
[103] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 203.
[104] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 204.
[105] *Letters 100–155*, 204.
[106] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 290.
[107] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 290.
[108] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 291.

He explained how the Donatist bishops "tried as best . . . to prevent the case from being heard at all . . . and though every soul awaited anxiously the outcome of so great an assembly, those bishops fiercely tried to see that nothing would be done."[109] The rest of the letter repeats the litany of oft-cited arguments used by the Donatists against the Catholics concerning Caecilianus, Felix and their alleged treachery that, by this time, had been exonerated by the Council of Arles in 314 CE and now the Conference of Carthage in 411 CE. After a detailed explanation on the reasons why the Donatists were in the wrong, Augustine stated that if the Donatists were "willing to believe" then they should "together hold onto the unity that God commands and loves."[110] However, if they were "unwilling to believe," then he encouraged them to "read the proceedings" and "test for (themselves) whether what (he has) written is true."[111] If they continued to disagree, then he "will rejoice over (their) correction."[112] While he did not explicitly mention that he advocated for the state's use of violence to coerce them back in the fold, it was clear from the letter that this was the intended meaning of the word "correction."

Letter 173 was written by Augustine to Donatus between 411 and 414 CE. The content of the letter revealed that Donatus was a "priest of the sect of Donatus" who tried to commit suicide rather than be arrested and brought to the Catholic church. Donatus was "unhappy because [he was] being dragged to salvation."[113] Donatus, in Augustine's opinion, was someone who thought "that no one should be forced to do what is good."[114]

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[109] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 292.
[110] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 297.
[111] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 297.
[112] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 297.
[113] Augustine, *Letters 156–210*, 124.
[114] Augustine, *Letters 156–210*, 124.

However, "[i]f a bad will should always be left to its freedom, why was Paul not permitted to use the wicked will by which he was persecuting the church but was struck down so that he was blinded, blinded so that he was changed, changed so that he was sent, and sent so that he suffered on behalf of the truth the sort of evils he was committing in his error."[115] He urged him not to be "displeased with us because we call you back when you wander off and search for you when you are lost."[116] Even though he threw himself into a well to die, it would be sheer cruelty on the part of God's servants if he was abandoned to his bad will and sought not to rescue him from his desire to self-destruct.[117]

Augustine referred to the events that happened at the Conference of Carthage where "a very well-attended and large assembly" came together "to discuss among ourselves in a most orderly fashion the disagreement between us."[118] He told them that it was written down, accompanied by their own personal signatures to ensure the accuracy of the words that were written down, lest someone complain that the document was tampered with or a forgery. He encouraged the Donatists to read and examine the evidence before them. He gave the example of the "seventy disciples" who "abandoned the Lord and were left to the choice of their evil and impious dissent" while the other twelve disciples remained.[119] He argued that "the church uses greater power not only to invite but even to compel people to what is good."[120] By using the parable of the banquet, Augustine stated,

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[115] Augustine, *Letters 156–210*, 125.
[116] Augustine, *Letters 156–210*, 125.
[117] Augustine, *Letters 156–210*, 126.
[118] Augustine, *Letters 156–210*, 127.
[119] Augustine, *Letters 156–210*, 128.
[120] Augustine, *Letters 156–210*, 128.

> See now how it was said of those who came earlier, *Bring them here*; it was not said, *Compel them*. In that way he indicated the beginnings of the Church that was growing to the point that it might also have the strength to compel. Then, after its strength and greatness were already built up, since it was necessary that human beings be compelled to enter the banquet of eternal salvation, after it was said, *What you commanded has been done, and there is still room*, he said, *Go out into the roads and pathways and compel them to enter*. Hence, if you were living quietly outside this banquet of holy unity, we would find you on the roads, as it were. But now, because on account of the many evil and savage acts that you commit against our people, you are, so to speak, full of thorns and thistles, we found as if in the pathways and compel you to enter. One who is compelled is forced to go where he does not want to go, but after he has entered he eats willingly. Hold in check your wicked and wild heart, then, in order that you may find in the true Church of Christ the banquet of salvation.[121]

This rhetorical move by Augustine when it came to the idea of compelling the sinner unto good works enabled him to justify the use of force against the Donatists in order to be united once again with the Catholic church.

Letters to the Catholics

The letters previously examined in this dissertation are letters that Augustine wrote to those outside of his community. If disgust is present in these letters to the outside world, would the same disgust be found in letters that Augustine wrote to his own community? It seems as though the disgust present in letters written to outsiders would also find its way in the letters written to those within the Catholic fold. Augustine is rather consistent in the way he treated the Donatists. The following are a representative sample of letters addressed to his own community that demonstrates the same type of discourse as that found in his communication with those outside his community. (However, further research on his letters to his community goes beyond the focus of this dissertation.)

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[121] Augustine, *Letters 156–210*, 128.

In *Letter 2.2*, Augustine addresses the question of whether the church is with the Catholics or the Donatists. He reiterates the fact that "it is clear indeed that anyone who is not among the members of Christ cannot have Christian salvation."[122] This is very much in line with Augustine's general response to the question of who the true church is. Augustine points the Donatists to Genesis in *Letter 6.11*. In it, he says,

> O Donatists, read Genesis: By myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have carried out this word and have not spared your most beloved son for my sake, blessing I will bless you, and by multiplying I will multiply your offspring like the stars in the sky and like the sand on the seashore, and your offspring shall take possession of the cities of your enemies as an inheritance, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in your offspring, because you have obeyed my word. (Gen 22:16–18)
>
> What do you say to that? Are you contending with us in the perverse manner of the Jews by saying that Abraham's offspring is to be understood solely as the people born from Abraham's flesh?[123]

While it may be anachronistic to speak of the anti-Semitic language in this specific letter, one cannot deny that the anti-Semitic prejudice against the Jews is a sentiment that Augustine weaponizes freely against the Donatists. By equating Donatists with Jews, Augustine is able to create a strong false equivalency between the two. In the same manner that Jews are to be viewed in a derogatory light, so should the Donatists be treated in the same manner.

Letter 13.32 and *13.33* addressed a common argument by the Donatists regarding the purity of the Donatist church. Augustine categorically refuted this notion; not only does he refute it, but he also called those who believed and uttered such beliefs as anathema. He wrote,

> But the one who says that the Church perished from the rest of the world but remains in the party of Donatus in Africa alone is preaching another gospel.

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[122] Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, 607.
[123] Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, 618.

> Therefore, let him be anathema. Alternatively, let him read this to me in the Holy Scriptures and not be anathema. . . . 'I do read it,' [Petilian] says. 'For Enoch was the only one of all human beings who pleased God, and he was carried off, and afterwards, when the whole world was wiped out by a flood, only Noah, along with this wife and sons and daughters-in-law, deserved to be saved in the ark.' [The Donatists] also add Lot, because he was the only one, along with his daughters, who was saved from Sodom, and also Abraham himself and Isaac and Jacob, because they were the few who pleased God in a land given over to idols and demons. . . . With examples of this sort the heretics try to make much of their fewness, and they do not cease blaspheming the multitude of the Church spread out in its holy ones through the whole world.[124]

Darryl J. Pigeon comments, "[t]he tendency toward Donatist separation from the Catholic Church was caused by a concern for personal holiness. The only true church was fundamentally made up of the 'communion of saints.' Genuine holiness in a church's communion was the overriding characteristic which made unity possible and binding."[125] Thus, the Donatists' consistent appeal that they are the true church based on their purity is an argument that Augustine cannot abide. Augustine uses the parable of the wheat and the tares to remind that the Donatists that it is only until the end that one can realize and understand who the "true" Christians are. It is God who makes that judgment. The story of the sacred scriptures are full of godly men and women who are flawed and commit sins. If sin is enough to eliminate someone from the church, then the forgiveness of Christ offered to everyone would be for naught.

Augustine deals with the question of the legitimacy of Catholic persecution of the Donatists in *Letter 19.52*. He asks,

> "Do you still say, 'If the Church is with you, why do you force us into peace with it by persecuting us? Or, if we are evil, why do you seek us out? And if we are the weeds, let us grow until harvest.' . . . You accuse us in this way [by asking] why we seek you out if you are evil, as though you were not perishing because you are evil and should not be sought out because you are perishing, so that, having been lost, you may be sought out, and, having been sought out, you may

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[124] Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, 642–43.
[125] Pigeon, "Cyprian, Augustine, and the Donatist Schism," 37.

> be found, and having been found, you may be called back, as the sheep was by the shepherd, as the drachma was by the woman, as the son was who had been dead and returned to life, who had been lost and was found.[126]

For Augustine, persecution is acceptable if the final outcome is one that brings the Donatist back to their proper senses by converting back to Catholicism. Persecution becomes a way to discipline the wayward son back to the path of health and abundant life. Peter Burnell comments, "[t]he successful suppression of the Circumcellion terrorists and the spectacle of genuine conversions resulting from persecution had convinced him to reverse his political position and support religious coercion. He came to favor a certain bluff governmental pragmatism in dealing with heretics and saw this as precedented in the methods God himself had followed with the recalcitrant children of Israel, buffeting the chosen people with privations and testings: the Roman state was doing the same for the Donatists."[127] In the same way that the doctor must inflict pain on a patient when doing a surgery to save their life, so is persecution acceptable because of its ability to potentially save the soul.

In *Letter 25.73*, Augustine comments how "[the Donatists], in their rabid stubbornness, brought their most obstinate dispute to the point of sacrilegious dissent against the entire Christian world, and the situation became clear to the good faithful, whom a false accusation had alienated from Caecilian."[128] This type of language is consistent in Augustine's characterization of the Donatists. The disparity between the morally righteous Catholics is in stark contradiction against the stubborn rebelliousness among the Donatist camp. By highlighting the righteous/unrighteous dichotomy between

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[126] Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, 667.
[127] Burnell, "The Problem of Service to Unjust Regimes," 179–80.
[128] Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, 684.

the Catholics and the Donatists, Augustine's language allows the reader to have an image of the Donatist that is more of a caricature than a nuanced portrayal of their humanity.

Conclusion

These letters addressed to Donatists—along with a few addressed to his community—demonstrate Augustine's initial reaction towards the Donatists. In the beginning, he was very amenable to debating and conversing with the Donatists. However, their unwillingness to change eventually put a strain on Augustine. Since the normal treatment was ineffective, he endorsed and advocated for the use of state-sanctioned violence to help bring about their repentance. That change in his attitude was brought about by a theological shift in his thinking. His thinking, however, was also affected by disgust. Disgust is an emotion that has the ability to affect our decision-making process. Their unrepentant heart, along with their stubbornness of will, could only be changed by compelling them to return to Catholicism

CHAPTER 5: DISGUST PSYCHOLOGY AND THE DONATIST CONTROVERSY: AUGUSTINE AGAINST THE DONATISTS REDUX

The goal of the preceding four chapters is to give the historical background needed to discuss what is at the heart of this dissertation, mainly, the role of disgust in the formation of Augustine's theology. During Augustine's early years, he maintained that violence should not be used to coerce or compel non-Christians, especially the Jews, to Christianity. However, his stance on the role of violence in compelling someone to come to faith eventually changed. In his later years, he not only agreed on to the use of violence, but even went so far as to justify and endorse its usage. Whether the wielder of the sword is the church or the state, Augustine's endorsement for the use of force was a significant change from his initial position. This dissertation argues that disgust played a crucial and important role in Augustine's theological shift. Disgust is an emotion that plays a major role in the moral and cosmic ordering of the world. This chapter will deal with the three major issues that animated Augustine's rhetoric against the Donatists and aroused his disgust concerning the Donatists' refusal to return to the Catholic church: baptism, ecclesiastical unity, and martyrdom.

To provide some historical context regarding these letters, it must be noted that this period had been preceded by Augustine's opposition to the Manicheans. The Donatists would prove to be a different, and in some ways more complicated, debate compared to the Manicheans.[1] While the Manicheans were a group that Augustine debated with fervour, the Donatists proved to be more problematic. While it is understandable to have differing opinions with those outside one's faith community, in

[1] Le Nain de Tillemont, "The Life of Augustine," 210.

fact, almost inevitable to have them, the quarrels that happen within the family, so to speak, can be more vitriolic and hate filled. While going to war with another country can be a bloody affair, a civil war that rips apart families and friends can often be more devastating. In the same way, Augustine's relationship with the Donatists was filled with what could arguably be called contempt and a rather condescending, if not downright arrogant, attitude. This dissertation argues that disgust is a key factor that must be examined in his treatment towards the Donatists. By looking at the letters that Augustine wrote to the Donatists, the expression of disgust through his language and demeanour is very revealing.

In *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine*, Brent Shaw speaks of how

> [a] primordial evil lay at the base of the conflict: an act of betrayal. And no one doubts that deep perfidy generates irreconcilable hatred. Betrayal moves and it paralyzes. . . . And the betrayal at the heart of the sectarian conflict in Africa was not a personal betrayal of the usual kind. The betrayal was permanently branded by the handing over or *traditio* of the Holy Scriptures, the Words of God Himself, to secular authorities by Christian collaborators during the Great Persecution of 303–05. . . . The traitors, the *traditores*, were at the heart of their mutual hatreds and fears. The universal conviction was that certain detestable men had betrayed God Himself. In handing over His holy words to earthly officials to be destroyed, they deserved their notorious status as agents of the Devil and of the Antichrist. But real ambiguities about who precisely had done what meant that no one could let the question fade or slip from knowledge or from endless debate.[2]

What must be noted here is Shaw's insistence that the Donatist Controversy was fueled and maintained by an emotional component, namely betrayal. While betrayal does play a part in the Donatist Controversy, the feeling of betrayal engendered during this tumultuous process culminated in a feeling of disgust among the leaders and the members of both groups. The emotional component cannot simply be glossed over. It needs to be

[2] Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 66–67.

properly examined in order to give a fuller and richer understanding of the Donatist Controversy.

In many of Augustine's letters, he tried to reason, woo, and cajole the Donatists back to the Catholic fold. Yet, when the Donatists did not listen to his pleas, he took a harsher approach. He scolded them, denigrated them, and in the end, approved the use of violent force against them to compel them back to the Catholic church. Louis-Sébastien Le Nain de Tillemont writes that

> [a]fter an awkward beginning, the Donatists wielded power in Africa when Augustine appeared on the scene. . . . In Hippo Catholics were few. Donatists were in such control of Hippo that Faustinus, the Donatist bishop shortly before Augustine's arrival, forbade Donatist servants from serving Catholics. . . . When Augustine arrived in Hippo, the full force of his discourses had as its goal pointing out the despicable and pitiable nature of the custom of those who called themselves Christians, but re-baptized without problem.[3]

Jaclyn Maxwell asserts that "the letters . . . of Augustine and his contemporaries are particularly valuable for how they reflect the day-to-day life of a bishop: the guidance and discipline of the laity and clergy, as well as the administrative work of maintaining correspondence with a broad network of contacts."[4] Letters "were composed . . . for specific, immediate audiences, but . . . also reached secondary audiences because these texts circulated more broadly in this period and later on."[5] Since these letters were used as a way to interact with the Donatists, they were the primary means of communicating what Augustine deemed to be proper Christian doctrine. The attitude that Augustine displayed towards the Donatists, in many ways, became a sign of what could be considered as acceptable and proper Christian attitude against those who believed

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[3] Le Nain de Tillemont, "The Life of Augustine," 211.
[4] Maxwell, "Letter Writing and Preaching," 111.
[5] Maxwell, "Letter Writing and Preaching," 117.

differently from the dominant faith community. The shift in Augustine's treatment towards the Donatists had been primarily treated theologically; while one cannot discount the theological components in Augustine's thinking, it bears repeating the fact that disgust played a crucial role in Augustine's theological and practical shift against the Donatists.

It is imperative to note that disgust is a complicated emotion, especially as it relates to moral judgments and the attitudes it elicits. Added to the complexity of disgust, one must also factor in Christianity's ability to be both disgust-eliciting and disgust-subverting. It can be disgust-eliciting in that ideas of impurity can seep into one's theology to the extent that it transforms into an attitude that sees the person as unclean, and as a result must be someone who is to be avoided at all costs; yet, Christianity can also elicit disgust-subverting tendencies in that Jesus provided a tangible example of dealing with impure people and in the process, did not become contaminated by their uncleanness but made the one who was once deemed unclean into someone clean. This tension was present in Augustine's letters. One of disgust's key features is the concept of permanence: once deemed contaminated, nothing can be done to rehabilitate or purify the object. Under normal circumstances, the disgust that Augustine showed Donatists would mean that there would be no way for them to be rehabilitated. However, this is not the case. Even when disgust affected his actions towards the Donatists, at no point did he lose hope that the Donatists would return to the Catholic church.

Augustine's *Letters*: An Analysis

Chapter 4 provided a quick synopsis of each of the letters that contained Donatist references. Its purpose was to explore the development of thought in Augustine's *Letters*, especially as it related to the shift in Augustine's position concerning the use of violence against the Donatists. This section will primarily deal with the language that Augustine used against the Donatists. Augustine received training as a rhetorician; he was well versed in the art of argumentation. The purpose of this section is not to analyze his rhetorical strategies as much as it is to speak into how language can become a vehicle to incite and elicit disgust in others. In the same way that disgust has a contagious effect, disgusting language can be manipulated and weaponized as a quick and efficient tool to exacerbate potentially latent disgust tendencies in individuals to manifest itself as blatant aggressive actions against a particular target group. While Augustine may not have had the intent of inciting violence against the Donatists through his use of language, his choice of words and attitude did not help in de-escalating a precarious situation that was ready to explode simply by an errant spark.

Mary Parkinson and Ruth M. J. Byrne examined participants' reasoning concerning violations in the harm and purity domains. Their study showed that "violations that target another person . . . are judged to be worse than violations that target the self . . . Harm violations tend to target others, and purity violations tend to target the self."[6] It is this very thing that animated Augustine's disgust against the Donatists. The Donatists, according to Augustine, committed acts that not only affected their own souls, but the souls of others, especially as they created situations in which

[6] Parkinson and Byrne, "Judgments of Moral Responsibility," 9.

individuals could not convert to Catholicism under pain of severe economic and lethal punishments.

In *Letter 23*, Augustine extended grace towards Maximinus, the Donatist bishop on Siniti in Numidia. He says,

> [t]hough I express in the strongest words I can my hatred for the lamentable and deplorable custom of people in this region who, though they boast of the Christian name, do not hesitate to rebaptize Christians, there were some people who praised you and who said to me that you do not do that. I admit, at first I did not believe them. Then, considering that it is possible that fear of God entered the human soul reflecting on the future life so that it held itself back from a most evident crime, I gratefully believed that with such an intention you refused to be so far removed from the Catholic church.[7]

Throughout the letter, Augustine highlighted their perceived similarities and sought to flatter Maximinus' intellect and integrity. His tone is one of cordiality but with a barely hidden aggressive tone that was rather threatening. If one simply looked at the words Augustine used, one would never come to the conclusion that they were harmful nor hateful. Far from hatefulness, the words seemed to drip with praise. However, one is left with the impression that the kindness exuded and expressed in the letter could change if a challenge was made or a request remained unheeded.

In *Letter 93*, Augustine rebuked Vincent, the Rogatist bishop of Cartenna in Mauretania Caesariensis. Augustine tried to reason with him and notes that

> [i]f, then, we scorned and endured these people who were once our fierce enemies and who were attacking our peace and quiet with various sorts of violence and ambushes, so that we devised and did nothing at all that might be able to frighten and correct them, we would really have repaid evil with evil. For, if anyone sees his enemy out of his mind due to dangerous fevers run toward a cliff, would he not repay evil with evil if he allowed him to run in that way rather if he took care to catch him and tie him up? . . . But once he had recovered his health, he would obviously thank him more profusely to the extent that he had felt that the man had spared him the less. Oh, if I could show you how many sincere Catholics we now have from the Circumcellions! . . . They would, nonetheless, not have been

[7] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 64.

> brought to this healthy position if they were not bound, like men out of their minds, by the chains of these laws that you find displeasing.[8]

By addressing the renewed morality of the circumcellions, Augustine made an implicit argument that morality was intrinsically linked with proper doctrine or a proper state of the individual's soul. After all, it is only when the circumcellions converted to Catholicism that they were cured from their disease. This move to link the spiritual state of an individual's soul to the physical state of the individual's body is one that Augustine would constantly return to as an argument for the use of violence against the Donatists. Since the use of violence was acceptable when done to save the physical life of a patient, it was also acceptable to use violence in order to save the spiritual life of an individual. If great lengths are made to save the body, how much more should one do to save the soul of an individual from eternal separation from the creator of the universe?

This move to locate the morality in the soul by Augustine is challenged by a study conducted by Thalia Wheatley and Jonathan Haidt. The experiment involved giving a "posthypnotic suggestion to feel a flash of disgust" whenever highly hypnotizable participants read an arbitrary word. After being exposed to the posthypnotic suggestion, they were given vignettes that contained moral transgressions and were asked to rate the vignettes that contained or did not contain the disgust-inducing word. The studies demonstrated that "moral judgments can be made more severe by the presence of a flash of disgust. These findings suggest that moral judgments may be grounded in affectively laden moral intuitions."[9] If disgust can be induced by something as simple as hypnosis, how much more can it be induced by decades of constant rhetoric expressed in both

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[8] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 378.
[9] Wheatley and Haidt, "Hypnotic Disgust," 780.

written, aural, and oral forms of communication. Donatists were characterized by Catholics as heretics, schismatics, enemies of the faith, unrepentant, stubborn, and the main cause for the division of the church.

Thomas Kazen notes that "[s]ince culture pervades all human life, some measure of cultural construction is always present in disgust reactions, but the degree of visceral immediacy sometimes becomes quite acute."[10] Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the way in which Donatists have been treated and portrayed by Catholics ever since the beginning of the Donatist movement. Stanisław Adamiak mentions that while the Donatist movement may have died in Africa, the word "Donatist" took on new meanings over the centuries. It was able to provoke images of a "pure" church as much as it was able to elicit images of disunity and strife. The invocation of the word "Donatist" was enough to create certain ideas of purity or heresy in an individual's psyche depending on the individual's religious and cultural milieu.[11] Thus, when Augustine interacts with the Donatists, was he primarily dealing with the specific Donatist lay and clergy member or was he dealing with a caricature of who a Donatist was after eighty years of Catholic-Donatist tension?

In sections 5 and 6 of the letter, Augustine stated the reasoning behind his approval of the tacit use of violence by the state against the Donatists. He says,

> You think that no one ought to be forced into righteousness, though you read that the head of the household said to his servants, *Whomever you find, force them to come in*, though you read that he who was first Saul and afterwards Paul was forced to come to know and to hold onto the truth by the great violence of Christ who compelled him, unless you perhaps think that money or any possession is dearer to human beings than this light that we perceive by the eyes . . . Did not Sarah rather punish the rebellious serving girl when she was given the power? And she, of course, did not cruelly hate her since she had previously made her a

[10] Kazen, "Disgust in Body, Mind, and Language," 99.
[11] Adamiak, "When Did Donatist Christianity End?," 211–36.

> mother by her own generosity; rather she was subduing pride in her in a way conducive to her salvation. But you are not unaware that these two women, Sarah and Hagar, and their two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, symbolize spiritual and carnal persons. And though we read that the serving girl and her son suffered ill treatment from Sarah, the apostle Paul, nonetheless, says that Isaac suffered persecution from Ishmael, *But as at that time the one who was born according to the flesh persecuted the one who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now*. Thus those who can may understand that the Catholic church suffers persecution from the pride and wickedness of carnal persons, whom it tries to correct by temporal troubles and fears. . . . Since the good and the evil do the same things and suffer the same things, they must be distinguished, not by their actions and punishments, but by their motives.[12]

Charles Scalise comments that "[d]uring the early years of his controversy with the Donatists (392–404) Augustine clearly advocates a position opposing religious coercion."[13] Yet, by 408, Augustine's sentiments would completely change. By this time, he held the position, once foreign to him, that violence can be used to promote religious unity. Any change in thinking for Augustine necessitated a shift in his theological thinking. If it was appropriate to use violence in certain situations, he needed to ensure that he had a biblical basis for his change of heart. By looking at Sarah and Hagar's relationship in the Old Testament, Augustine had the exegetical proof text he needed to bolster his new position.[14] His exegesis of this passage provided him with the necessary theological foundation he needed to advocate the use of violence against those who opposed the ways of the Catholic church.

As Scalise opines, "through a clever exegetical reversal, which follows the pattern of Paul's interpretation of the Sara-Hagar story, Augustine manages to convert the Catholic church's sufferings from the Donatist schism into a *warrant* for persecuting the

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[12] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 380.
[13] Scalise, "Exegetical Warrants," 497.
[14] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 499–500.

Donatists."[15] While Augustine's change in attitude could be seen as being rooted in scripture and theology, one cannot dismiss the role of disgust in affecting this transition. The circumcellions' violent acts against the Catholics serve as an important backdrop to consider when examining Augustine's change of heart. "He alleged that these criminals mugged, blinded, and murdered clergy of the opposition . . . Augustine seasoned his narratives with sensationalist accounts of the circumcellions' felonies."[16] As Peter Kaufman argues, "[t]he circumcellions were key figures in Augustine's relentless campaign to show that Donatists were neither scrupulous nor saintly."[17] By "paint[ing] the blackest possible picture of circumcellion exploits," he was able to discount the Donatists' claims of holiness and purity. Even though "[l]eading Donatists disavowed responsibility for the circumcellions's crimes," this would not serve to change Augustine's mind. "He believed he possessed sufficient evidence to link Donatist prelates with their unruly partisans, and he knew the linkage was polemically advantageous."[18]

Valerie Curtis notes that "disgust underpins morality and altruism, but also . . . fuels some of the worst behaviour in our societies."[19] She continues on to say that "disgust lurks on the dark side of human nature . . . Disgust can all too easily be turned on others and used as a weapon."[20] Although the Donatists disavowed the violent acts committed by the circumcellions, Augustine's refusal to acknowledge this fact is one of the hallmarks of disgust. Winfried Menninghaus notes that "the defense mechanism of disgust consists in a spontaneous and especially energetic act of saying 'no.' Yet disgust

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[15] Augustine, *Letters 1– 99*, 499.
[16] Kaufman, "Augustine, Evil, and Donatism," 120.
[17] Kaufman, "Augustine, Evil, and Donatism," 120.
[18] Kaufman, "Augustine, Evil, and Donatism," 121.
[19] Curtis, *Don't Look*, xii.
[20] Curtis, *Don't Look*, xii.

implies, not just an ability to say no, but even more a compulsion to say no, an inability *not* to say no. As this quasi-automatic ('instinctive') form of nay-saying, disgust stands on the boundary between conscious patterns of conduct and unconscious impulses."[21] Disgust Psychology allows the possibility to further examine the polemical nature of Augustine's writings.

One "surprising but repeatedly observed feature of moral judgments is their susceptibility to influence by factors wholly extrinsic to the objects of judgment."[22] Feelings of disgust have been induced in participants of experiments through various means such as hypnosis, or through different sensory situations such as working in an unclean environment or drinking disgusting beverages. After the experiments, the participants were asked to rate different scenarios to determine if feelings of induced disgust can affect one's moral judgment.[23] The results of the study showed that participants gave harsher judgments when disgust was induced prior to being evaluated. This suggests that disgust can affect an individual without that individual's tacit acknowledgement of the role of disgust in shaping their moral judgment. If harsher moral judgments can be elicited when disgust is secretly induced through other means, how much more could disgust be elicited by a long-lasting history of antagonism, tension, and conflict between the Catholics and the Donatists.

In *Letter 88*, Augustine lodged his complaint against the Donatists. In his letter to the Donatist bishop of Casae Nigrae in Numidia and Donatist primate of Africa, Januarius, he argued that the Catholics had

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[21] Menninghaus, *Disgust*, 2.
[22] Rabb et al., "Truths About Beauty and Goodness," 493.
[23] Rabb et al., "Truths About Beauty and Goodness," 493.

> remained completely at peace . . . if your clerics and circumcellions had not disturbed and destroyed our peace by their monstrous wickedness and mad acts of violence and forced that those decrees be recalled and put into effect against you. For . . . they laid ambushes for our bishops on their journeys, struck our fellow clerics with the cruelest blows, inflicted upon lay people most serious wounds, and set their buildings on fire. Because a certain priest chose the unity of our communion of his own free will, they seized him from his home, beat him cruelly for his choice, rolled him in a filthy stream, dressed him with weeds, and put him on display in parading their crime, to be sorrowed over by some and to be laughed at by others. They led him off where they wanted and released him only after twelve full days.[24]

Knowing that the Donatists have engaged in such despicable acts can arouse negative emotions among those who are affected by their egregious actions. One of Augustine's recurring complaints was that the Donatists have torn asunder the unity of the church because of their decision to set themselves apart from the Catholic church. By doing so, they have done something that was both incredibly damaging to the body of Christ, but also something incredibly reprehensible and downright despicable. To further complicate the situation, the Donatists' proclaimed that they were the "true" church because of their decision not to be "tainted" by the traitors and those who aligned with them. Not only is the feeling of anger aroused under these circumstances, but also feelings of disgust. "Disgust is triggered by objects or behaviors appraised as impure, and research shows that that feeling disgusted by moral violations of purity . . . predicts harsher moral criticism of those actions."[25] In contrast, "[a]nger is associated with justice concerns, or the protection of individual rights, fairness, and autonomy."[26] Within the context of the Donatist Controversy, it cannot be emphasized enough that the question of purity is not simply one that was asked in a flippant manner but one that both sides treated seriously.

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[24] Augustine, *Letters 1–99*, 354–55.
[25] Horberg et al., "Emotions as Moral Amplifiers," 238.
[26] Horberg et al., "Emotions as Moral Amplifiers," 238.

As a result, purity issues became an integral and contentious issue for both sides. Both groups were adamant in their claim that i) the issue of purity is not a trivial issue, ii) their specific group is the "true, pure church" that reflects the teachings of Christ, and iii) this was a zero-sum game. Either the Catholics were pure and the Donatists were impure or the Donatists were pure and the Catholics were impure. There could be no third option that somehow recognizes both groups' ability to contain both pure and impure notions.

Sandra Graham, Bernard Weiner and Gail Sahar Zucker used attribution theory to shed further insight into the "processes that guide punishment-related decisions following social and criminal transgressions."[27] They note that

> [a]ttribution theory is concerned with phenomenal causality, or the perceived reasons why a behavior, event, or outcome has occurred. . . . The specific causes of these outcomes, conditions, and behaviors are almost inexhaustible. However, all attributions share a limited number of underlying characteristics, or causal dimensions. These include locus; stability; and controllability.[28]

If the individual judged the offender as one who had perceived controllability, then the likelihood is higher that the offender would be deemed responsible and would result in feelings of anger and that punishment should take place. However, if the individual judged the offender as one who had perceived uncontrollability, then feelings of sympathy are elicited and punishment would likely be withheld against the offender. Put another way, if the offender is believed to have complete control over his actions, then punishment is more likely to occur compared to an offender whose actions were deemed to be affected by outside factors. This is not entirely new. To judge an individual in a court of law, *actus reus* and *mens rea* must both be established to get a guilty conviction. A distinction is made between a man who robs a bank willingly and a man who robs a

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[27] Graham et al., "An Attributional Analysis of Punishment Goals," 332.
[28] Graham et al., "An Attributional Analysis of Punishment Goals," 332.

bank because of coercion or duress. While a criminal act is committed under both circumstances, an individual's state of mind is also factored in the severity of the punishment given.

Augustine, when speaking of the Donatists, called them "obstinate, obtuse, and pugnacious, as well as guilty of '*scelerata superbia*,' or alarmingly shameful pride."[29] Not only do the Donatists possess character traits that were not admirable in the least, Augustine believed they should be punished because their heresy should not be allowed to go unpunished. Terrance McConnell argues that Augustine justified the use of violence by the state because they "were committing acts of violence against Catholics. In punishing heretics, the state could at least protect its citizens against these acts of violence."[30] Augustine also "thought that there was some chance that the heretics themselves might be reformed."[31] As *Letter 93* attests, "[h]e was persuaded that as a matter of fact some heretics were converted to the true Christian faith because of fear of punishment. . . . Augustine believed that fear of punishment sometimes had the further consequence of inducing the heretic to seek out the true views and ultimately become a true believer."[32] McConnell posits that Augustine had two views on punishment: one is ideal and the second is a non-ideal theory of justice.[33] "The view that (punitive) justice is giving to each his due is an *ideal* theory. . . . this is an ideal that the state cannot fulfill. This leads Augustine to posit a second, non-ideal theory of justice, one which justifies the state's inflicting punishment on its citizens."[34] Because of this intellectual move,

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[29] Augustine, *Contra epistulam Parmeniani* 2.7.12–13 (CSEL 51)
[30] McConnell, "Augustine on Torturing," 488.
[31] McConnell, "Augustine on Torturing," 488.
[32] McConnell, "Augustine on Torturing," 488.
[33] McConnell, "Augustine on Torturing," 482.
[34] McConnell, "Augustine on Torturing," 482.

Augustine is able to remove any cognitive dissonance in the way he understands and embodies justice.

Jorge Moll et al. state that "[t]he diversity of the human disgust experience is grounded in cognitive and emotional mechanisms that give disgust the characteristics of a moral emotion. Moral emotions are distinguished specifically by their linkage to the interests or welfare of society as a whole or of persons other than the judge or agent."[35] He further notes that

> [t]he moral emotion of disgust spans a broad spectrum of attitudes, experiences, and behaviors that pervade common sense, politics, religion, art, and philosophy. It is within social and cultural contexts that disgust can be associated more with psychologic aspects than strictly with the sensory properties of the offending sources . . . Disgust arising in interpersonal situations typically induces behaviors that help break off contact, remove, harm, or destroy the offending agent(s), leading to restoration of a baseline of purity or normality.[36]

One of the difficulties in ascertaining the level of disgust in Augustine's interactions with the Donatists lies in the complicated nature of disgust and how it affects human behaviours along with moral judgments. Donald Lateiner and Dimos Spatharas comments on how "[d]isgust is indeed a reflexive emotion centering on particularly embodied cognitions. By virtue of its visceral nature, disgust canonizes behavior and constructs social hierarchies by imposing prohibitions."[37] He adds, "[b]y projecting aversive physical qualities upon morally or socially condemnable behavior, disgust serves as a mechanism to marginalize others."[38] In Letter 95, Augustine writes,

> What shall I say about punishing or not punishing? For we want all of this to contribute to the salvation of those who we judge should be punished or not punished. What a deep and dark question it is what the limit in punishing should be, not only in terms of the quality and quantity of the sins, but also in terms of

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[35] Moll et al., "The Moral Affiliations of Disgust," 68.
[36] Moll et al., "The Moral Affiliations of Disgust," 68.
[37] Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, 1.
[38] Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, 1–2.

> the particular strength of minds——what anyone might endure or what he might refuse—for fear not only that he might not make any progress, but also that he might give up! . . . What shall I say about the fact that it often happens that, when you punish someone, that person perishes, but if you leave him unpunished, someone else perishes?[39]

Disgust, then, is not simply an emotion that one feels; it is an emotion that is accompanied with physical behaviours and psychological attributions that accomplish the task of creating the concept of "other" in both individual and group settings. It is absolutely imperative that disgust is understood as an embodied emotion rather than an abstract feeling that is somehow detached from worldly expressions.

Carolyn Korsmeyer speaks of how "disgust manifests its own characteristic bodily changes. Negative emotions and withdrawal responses are controlled by processes on the right hemisphere of the cerebral cortex, and disgust activates this region."[40] The emotion of disgust has physical symptoms. "When disgust is aroused, the heart rate slows, and blood pressure drops."[41] This is yet another example of how disgust is not some abstract feeling that has no effect on the human body. It is an emotion that displays itself in specific physical symptoms. The embodied aspect of disgust is crucial to both understand and consider when one speaks of this particular emotion.

The emerging picture of disgust is that it is an emotion that not only has physical repercussions but also has moral effects. Because disgust is such a pervasive emotion in that it has clear cognitive, physical, and moral components, there is much breadth and the depth for this particular emotion to affect an individual. Adding to the complexity of disgust's manifestations is the curious fact that "disgust is enhanced through social

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[39] Augustine, *Letters 1 - 99*, 417.
[40] Korsmeyer, *Savoring Disgust*, 19.
[41] Korsmeyer, *Savoring Disgust*, 19.

interaction, and the emotion comes to act as an important means of socialization into community mores."[42] Paul Rozin, Jonathan Haidt, and Clark R. McCauley claim that "it is the only one of the six or seven 'basic' emotions that has been completely transformed in the human condition, making it a uniquely human emotion along with such emotions as guilt, shame and embarrassment."[43]

In *Letter 185*, Augustine wrote Boniface, the tribune of Africa, in 417 CE. In addressing the role of coercion during the Donatist Controversy, he says

> [w]ould anyone doubt that it is better to bring human beings to worship God by instruction than by the fear or the pain of punishment? But because the former are better, it does not mean that the latter, who are not such, should be neglected. For it has benefited many, as we have found and continue to find by experience, to be first forced by fear or pain so that later they may be instructed or may put into practice what they have already learned verbally.[44]

William Cavanaugh notes that "Augustine assumes the loose definition of coercion as the bringing to bear of force against one's will. Augustine acknowledges that no one can be compelled to be good despite her own will."[45] Augustine made a distinction between good coercion and bad coercion. For Augustine, the main difference between the two is the intended *telos* of the coercion. If the coercion is simply to force someone to obey for the sake of exerting control over someone else, then this is considered an unacceptable use of coercion. However, if the point of the coercion is to bring someone back into proper participation with God and consequently, the church, then it is deemed to be an appropriate and proper use of coercion. Since Augustine deeply valued the unity in the

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[42] Korsmeyer, *Savoring Disgust*, 34.
[43] Rozin et al., "Disgust," 589.
[44] Augustine, *Letters 156-210*, 191.
[45] Cavanaugh, "Coercion in Augustine," 285.

Body of Christ, the use of coercion against the Donatists was deemed to be proper and recommended because it accomplished this important purpose.

John Bowlin notes "that politics for Augustine is never autonomous. It abhors a vacuum. If it is not transformed by grace, then more often than not it will be transformed by vice. If the proximate ends of temporal life that politics are designed to secure do not serve the just peace of God, then they will invariably serve the perverted peace of those consumed by lust for domination and love for private gain."[46] It is no wonder that Augustine's approval of state coercion seemed to be at odds with his previous comments concerning his refusal to use coercion, or even his act of demanding that rulers provide a more lenient punishment towards those who have transgressed against the law. Augustine's relationship with the state as it relates to power is part-idealist, part-pragmatic, but most of all, it seeks to be pastoral in nature. The conflicts that occurred with Augustine's treatment against the Donatists especially highlights the lack of a systematic response to coercion. If his response to coercion came from a pastoral perspective, this was a sign of how he dealt with issues on a case-by-case basis.

At this point, a more nuanced explanation of the role of coercion as it related to Augustine must be posited. Augustine was not a man who disapproved of coercion and had a sudden change of mind which meant he no longer had any reservations concerning coercion. Augustine, even in his tacit approval of coercion, was deeply concerned that coercion would simply be another instance of "*libido dominandi*, the arbitrary assertion of one will over another through sheer power."[47] He asked rulers to provide more lenient

[46] Bowlin, "Augustine on Justifying Coercion," 59; Augustine, *City of God*, 19.12.
[47] Cavanaugh, "Coercion in Augustine," 285.

punishment against the Donatists so that they may experience God's mercy and as a result, be drawn back to the Catholic fold.

The manner in which Augustine dealt with coercion—his initial disapproval that later changed to tacit approval—might be the same duality that Augustine would later exemplify and eventually manifest as the two cities in his epic tome, *The City of God*. In the same way that there are two cities, the city of man and the city of God, "so too there is a heavenly Augustine and an Augustine who is of the earth."[48] Of interest here is the earthly Augustine and how the earthly Augustine is affected by earthly things as it relates to heavenly things. The question must be asked: how was Augustine's theology affected by earthly conditions? Numerous books and articles have explored the socioeconomic, cultural, and political conditions that affected Augustine's actions. The earthly condition that has yet to be explored is the very human aspect of emotions, specifically disgust, in Augustine's life.

June Callwood notes that "[m]any emotions are accompanied by distinct physical changes; entire careers have been spent studying the physiology of emotions . . . Muscles tense, the mouth dries and the heart pounds as the frantic organism prepares itself either to fight or to run."[49] She continues on to say that "[p]hysiologists have learned that emotions have a life span, and that strong emotions live for months, even years . . . With repetition, such emotions as hate and fear become rooted in the brain's memory bank and will require massive determination to uproot."[50] Callwood's work is a reminder of how closely linked emotions are to an individual's actions.

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[48] Chappell, "Augustine's Ethics," 191.
[49] Callwood, "*Emotions*," 32.
[50] Callwood, "*Emotions*," 36–37.

Martha Nussbaum contends that "[e]motions shape the landscape of our mental and social lives" and are "intelligent responses to the perception of value."[51] She rightly argues that "[i]nstead of viewing morality as a system of principles to be grasped by the detached intellect, and emotions as motivations that either support or subvert our choice to act according to principle, we will have to consider emotions as part and parcel of the system of ethical reasoning."[52] Nussbaum's understanding of emotions, coupled with Callwood's analysis of emotions, gives us a better picture of the importance of emotions and how they can affect an individual's physical action and reaction.

Nussbaum defines disgust as "an especially visceral emotion. It involves strong bodily reactions to stimuli that often have marked bodily characteristics. Its classic expression is vomiting."[53] A curious feature about disgust is its lack of presence in infants during their first three years. Disgust is a learned behaviour: "it is taught by parents and society."[54] While this may not necessarily dismiss the evolutionary origins of disgust, it is an example of how "social teaching plays a large role" in disgust.[55] As Rom Harré and W. Gerrod Parrott comment, "[e]motions are at once bodily responses and expressions of judgements . . . They seem to have deep evolutionary roots, yet they are, among human phenomena, notably culturally variable in many of their aspects."[56] Disgust Psychology adds another facet in understanding the emotional motivation behind Augustine's thoughts and actions towards the Donatists. The psychological feature does not seek to replace the theological and social concerns of the Donatist Controversy;

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[51] Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 1.
[52] Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 1.
[53] Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 201.
[54] Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 204.
[55] Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 204.
[56] Harré and Parrott, *The Emotions*, 1.

instead, it seeks to provide a more nuanced and holistic understanding of how emotions affect and animate the words and deeds of individuals, in both autonomous and communal settings.

CHAPTER 6: DISGUST AND RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE

If disgust is, as has been argued, an emotion that is pre-cognitive, visceral, and can only be known as an effect of reacting to disgusting stimuli, does this mean that at any time that disgust is felt, violence will ensue? Is it possible to have a debate with someone who harbours an idea that one may find to be rather disgusting without violent acts being committed against the other? Humans are capable of harbouring disgust without resorting to violent acts. While disgust is a key component in the use of violence against another being(s), it is not the sole component. Religious violence involves more than disgust for it to be actualized. This chapter will look at the relationship between disgust and religious violence. While disgust is a necessary component in committing violent acts against others, this chapter will explore the role of power in providing us with a framework to help understand the complicated and intricate relationship between disgust and religious violence.

Religious Violence

Violence is a ubiquitous part of humanity's history. History is full of examples when religious armies committed violent atrocities against others. It is also full of examples of religious minorities being oppressed and forced to endure torture and/or death simply because they belonged to another religious group. From the Islamic invasion of North Africa, to the numerous crusades to reclaim Jerusalem by the Christians, to the tragic loss of millions of Jews during the Holocaust, one can see how prevalent religious violence is in the world. Living in the North American culture where individualism and rationalism

form part of the ideal ethos, "[t]he idea that religion has a tendency to promote violence is part of the conventional wisdom of Western societies, and it underlies many of our institutions and policies, from limits on the public role of churches to efforts to promote liberal democracy in the Middle East."[1] William Cavanaugh calls this the "myth of religious violence." It is "the idea that religion is a transhistorical and transcultural feature of human life, essentially distinct from 'secular' features such as politics and economics, which has a peculiarly dangerous inclination to promote violence. Religion must therefore be tamed by restricting its access to public power. The secular nation-state then appears as natural, corresponding to a universal and timeless truth about the inherent dangers of religion."[2] It is of utmost importance that one must recognize that violence is not inherently religious in nature. Religion does not have a strict monopoly on violence.

William Cavanaugh explores the question of how one defines the terms "secular" and "religious." He argues that "in what are called 'Western' societies, the attempt to create a transhistorical and transcultural concept of religion that is essentially prone to violence is one of the foundational legitimating myths of the liberal nation-state."[3] He further notes that

> [t]he myth of religious violence helps to construct and marginalize a religious Other, prone to fanaticism, to contrast with the rational, peace-making secular subject. This myth can be and is used in domestic politics to legitimate the marginalization of certain types of practices and groups labeled religious, while underwriting the nation-state's monopoly on its citizens' willingness to sacrifice and kill.[4]

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[1] Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 3.
[2] Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 3.
[3] Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 4.
[4] Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 4.

What this translates to is the unfortunate belief that when violence is committed under the guise of religion, it is barbaric, primitive, or irrational. However, when a secular nation inflicts violence against another group, it is seen as appropriate, measured, and rational. Anecdotally speaking, whenever the topic of the crusades occurs in the public arena, there is a lot of condemnation for the violent and sadistic acts that were committed by Christians as they sought to reclaim Jerusalem from Muslim rule. Yet, this very same group would excuse the despicable act of dropping an atomic bomb in cities that were targeted for maximum casualty rates as something that "had to be done" to ensure the Americans' success in World War II. The use of violence by one group is seen in negative and pejorative terms because it is committed by members of a certain religion and yet when violence is done in the name of the nation-state, it is not only excused, but also held to be an example of "being able to do the hard things that others do not have the stomach to do." It is this type of rift in understanding violence between the two groups that Cavanaugh's work challenges. The idea that religion is, at its very core, a violent institution must, and should, be abandoned.

Violence

John R. Hall notes that defining "violence has long been a vexed problem, and it is only exacerbated for a culturally freighted phenomenon such as religion."[5] For the purpose of this dissertation, violence is defined as

> actions that inflict, threaten, or cause injury; injuries may be corporal, psychological, material, or social; and actions may be corporal, written or verbal.

[5] Hall, "Religion and Violence," 361. He continues, "Conventional definitions center on the use of physical force to cause injury to persons and, sometimes, damage to property. These definitions pose neat objective standards, and they underscore the point that the exercise of force is not always violent. However, they do not hold up very well, either in objective terms, or when cultural issues are considered."

> This definition includes all actions that directly inflict injury as well as those that either threaten or result in injury. It specifies that injurious actions and outcomes may take many forms. The language also permits the injurious outcomes to be immediate or delayed, certain or probabilistic.[6]

This definition of violence, while more expansive than usual, is able to deal with the variegated ways in which violence can manifest itself. Also, it can account for the cultural aspects that can register no offense with one group while able to cause others to feel like a target of violent acts.

To be disgusted is to be human. One of the complicated relationships with disgust and violence is that while disgust played a key role in enacting violent acts against another, alone, it is not enough to be the trigger for committing violent acts. Violence is a complicated topic and it would be completely dishonest to even implicitly suggest that disgust is the only emotion that plays a factor in committing violent acts. There are other reasons, emotional and otherwise, that also contribute in the violent act. In trying to create a better understanding between disgust and violence, specifically religious violence, caution must be employed so as to prevent disgust's overreach even as its role is being emphasized in violence. An individual may commit a violent act against someone as a result of being disgusted but it does not necessarily follow that every individual who is disgusted will commit a violent act.

Lloyd Steffen comments that "justification for Christian involvement in violence is not found so much in explicit Scriptural sources . . . but in an interpretation of history."[7] Steffen's argument that the justification for Christian involvement in violence

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[6] Jackman, "The Psychology of Legitimacy," 433.

[7] Steffen, "Religion and Violence in Christian Traditions," 108. He continues, "Christianity, like Judaism and Islam, is a historical religion, meaning that the faithful believe history is the arena of divine activity where God acts to reveal the divine will. On this belief, Christians came to understand that their rise to power was an expression of God's will, the successful advance of Christianity evidence that God

is based on an interpretation of history surprisingly puts it in the same category as the secular reasoning for involvement in violence against others. There is no distinct difference between what could be seen as religious violence compared to that which could be called secular violence. Is not America's early attempts to annex Canada a result of manifest destiny? Is not "manifest destiny" nothing but a nation-state's understanding of its purpose in the world? With manifest destiny firmly entrenched in the country's DNA, the use of violence to conquer lands it does not own is now justified. In a twisted way, failure to use violence to expand American territory promotes an existential crisis for the nation-state; its very *raison d'être* is compromised if it does not engage in further territorial expansion.

According to Cavanaugh, "in foreign policy, the myth of religious violence serves to cast nonsecular social orders, especially Muslim societies, in the role of villain. They have not yet learned to remove the dangerous influence of religion from political life."[8] It is this type of critique that is helpful against the prevalent notion so common in Western thinking that religion is somehow ontologically violent and the cause of wars in our world. It is as if the disappearance of religion and its adherents would suddenly usher in a world with no wars, no conflicts, and unbroken peace. Sadly, not even the total disappearance of religion and its adherents would accomplish this. The religious do not have a stranglehold on violence. Secular individuals and societies are just as good, if not better, at maximizing casualty loss in order to gain control and authority over others.

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was authorizing Christians to seize the power of the sword in order to use it to God's greater glory. On this understanding Christians were authorized to use coercive power to maintain the supremacy of Christian faith against all adversaries, be they from within the faith or external to it."

[8] Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, 4. Cavanaugh continues, "Their violence is therefore irrational and fanatical. Our violence, being secular, is rational, peace making, and sometimes regrettably necessary to contain their violence. We find ourselves obliged to bomb them into liberal democracy."

Having provided a definition of violence, it is also imperative to have an operational definition of religion as it is used within our discussion. Religion is defined as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them."[9] Following in Durkheim's footsteps, John R. Hall argues that "a potential for violence lies in specific religious structures.[10] He adds, "crucially, the sacred and profane are culturally defined, and thus, it is well within the realm of religious possibility that violence—whether extreme asceticism, martyrdom, war, or some other act—can become sacred duty."[11]

Juergensmeyer explores the "dark alliance between religion and violence."[12] He does this by trying "to understand the cultures of violence from which such acts emerge."[13] He defines religious terrorism as "public acts of violence at the turn of the century for which religion has provided the motivation, the justification, the organization, and the world view."[14] For Juergensmeyer, even though "religion is not innocent . . . it does not ordinarily lead to violence."[15] Violence "happens only with the coalescence of a peculiar set of circumstances—political, social, and ideological—when religion becomes fused with violent expression of social aspirations, personal pride, and movements for political change."[16] His main contribution that needs further exploration is the notion that

> it takes a community of support and, in many cases, a large organizational network for an act of terrorism to succeed. It also requires an enormous amount of moral presumption for the perpetrators of these acts to justify the destruction of

[9] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, xxxv.
[10] Hall, "Religion and Violence from a Sociological Perspective," 365.
[11] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 365.
[12] Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, xi.
[13] Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, xi.
[14] Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 7.
[15] Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 10.
[16] Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 10.

> property on a massive scale or to condone a brutal attack on another life, especially the life of someone one scarcely knows and against whom one bears no personal enmity. And it requires a great deal of internal conviction, social acknowledgement and the stamp of approval from a legitimizing ideology or authority one respects.[17]

This is the necessary link needed to bridge the distance between disgust and violence. If disgust was a gun and the violent act is the firing of a gun, what could serve as the catalyst for a person to pull the trigger? It turns out that the old Beatles' lyrics are true: all you need is love. In this case, love looks like a supportive community that is able to provide the proper resources to facilitate committing the violent act.

During the Donatist Controversy, Augustine and the Catholics had state resources to fund their group endeavours. Constantine, in his attempt to bring the two groups together, decided to fully support the Catholics. By doing so, he thought that the Catholics would be able to eventually reunite the two warring factions. Not only does this not happen, Constantine's actions created a bigger wedge between the Catholics and the Donatists. One cannot forget that the Catholics and the Donatists, prior to 311 CE, considered themselves as members of the same church. With Constantine's overt favouritism going towards the Catholics, the Donatists felt marginalized and disenfranchised.

The Donatists appealed to the emperor—twice—and did not get the verdict they wanted. The theological rift between the two became a political one as well. The political also turned to personal. At one point, Augustine barely missed an ambush set for him. He mistakenly turned left and avoided those who sought to harm him.[18] The stories of violence between the two accrued over the years. Both sides had no problems in

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[17] Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 10.
[18] Hermanowicz, *Possidius of Calama*, 69.

committing violent acts against one another. Since the disgust they felt for each other definitely contributed to the commission of violent acts, what prompted these groups to actually enact violence against one another?

Both groups, in some way, shape or form, created an atmosphere where the violent acts committed by those in their tribe were neither called out nor condemned.[19] What is important to note in cases like these is the fact that silence is a sign of tacit approval. Toleration of the individual is also a sign of encouragement. It is not enough to condemn someone's acts publicly but still keep that individual as a group member. That is an indicator that their acts are actually appropriate and something the group endorses. This enabled many individuals from both sides to commit violent acts against their rivals. Their religious group's approval of their acts gave them the strength and the courage to act on their feelings of disgust towards the other.

Juergensmeyer notes how "[t]he very adjectives used to describe acts of religious terrorism—*symbolic, dramatic, theatrical*—suggest that we look at them not as tactics but as *performance violence*."[20] He continues, "in speaking of terrorism as 'performance,' however, I am not suggesting that such acts are undertaken lightly or capriciously. Rather, like religious ritual or street theater, they are dramas designed to have an impact on the several audiences that they affect."[21] There are certain kinds of speech where the mere utterance is both creative and transformative. For example, in Western marriages, the vows that are uttered by both parties create a new reality for them but also have the

[19] Both groups, through letters, made statements that condemned the use of violence. However, disavowing violence and purposefully and intentionally prosecuting it, even through informal means within the group, are two different realities. For all of the statements made by both sides, it did not amount to any true and tangible changes in terms of attitudes towards violence.

[20] Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 155.

[21] Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 156.

capability to presently transform their reality. Because of the words uttered in front of each other, and in front of people, the words "I do" signal the beginning of a new reality sparked by merely saying those words.[22]

The religious violence that both groups committed against one another can be seen as "both *performance events*, in that they make a symbolic statement, and *performative acts*, insofar as they try to change things."[23] For the circumcellions—the militant branch of Donatism—the violence they inflicted was both a political and religious statement. Because of the state's aggressive acts against the Donatists that resulted not only in religious persecution, but also social and economic persecution, their rebellion was a way to signal to the state that they were unwilling to obey or to be subjected to do the state's bidding. Their violent acts were an affront to the state's authority, a way to politically state their refusal to play by the state's rules and regulations. It was a means to signal their otherness as compared to the status quo. From a religious point of view, their rebellion against the state was a testimony of their belief in church purity. For the Donatists, the reason behind the persecution was the Catholics' unholy alliance with the state. The church, ever so true and ever so pure, always had trials and tribulations as a part of its history because the world was against it and everything it stood for. In the same way that Jesus Christ, their lord and saviour, was persecuted by the oppressive state, so would his followers follow in his footsteps. The servant was not greater than their master.

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[22] Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 156.
[23] Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 156.

Bruce B. Lawrence and Aisha Karim note that "violence always has a context. Context shapes not just the actors or victims but also those who represent them."[24] One cannot dismiss the fact that the violence committed by the Catholics and the Donatists against each other was fueled by the same fire: the desire to prove who was the best representative of what it meant to be a true church. For all the aggression committed by both sides, every single violent act was driven by what each group deemed as the result of theological orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthopathy. Both groups have deemed the other as having done grievous acts that by the very virtue of their acts, have defiled them and disqualified them from being considered as a church, let alone hold the claim to be the true church. The desire for purity, from both groups, made it easy for their mutual disgust for one another to be elicited. Their disgust facilitated the transition from violent emotion to violent action. Yet, what brings all of these factors together is the context that both groups inhabited and embodied.

David Pizarro, Yoel Inbar, and Chelsea Helion highlight how disgust and moral judgment are connected. They examine three various claims on the connection between disgust and moral judgment and discuss how one of the more popular views "is the one with the least empirical support."[25] The first claim looks at disgust as a consequence of moral violations. This view states that "disgust is experienced as a result of an appraisal that a moral violation has occurred. For instance . . . that disgust is uniquely experienced in response to moral 'purity' violations or other 'taboo' moral violations."[26] The second claim "regarding the relationship between disgust and morality is that disgust amplifies

[24] Lawrence and Karim, *On Violence*, 1.
[25] Pizarro et al., "On Disgust and Moral Judgment," 267.
[26] Pizarro et al., "On Disgust and Moral Judgment," 267.

moral evaluations—it makes wrong things seem *even more* wrong."[27] The third, and more popular claim,

> is that morally neutral acts can enter the moral sphere *by dint* of their being perceived as disgusting. . . . In these cases the presence of disgust appears to be neither a consequence of the moral appraisal, nor does it appear that disgust is simply amplifying a moral judgment that would have been made in its absence. Rather, the feeling of disgust seems to be taken as evidence by the participant that the act is wrong.[28]

As Pizarro et al. argue, disgust is not a moralizing emotion since disgust can judge certain acts and behaviours as "disgusting" even they were not immoral. It would seem, then, that "disgust exerts a moralizing influence only on behaviors for which there already exist nonmoral proscriptive norms . . . the pairing of disgust with (or the tendency to be disgusted by) the behavior might cause it to be 'pushed' into the moral domain."[29] It is very difficult to elicit the feeling of disgust for certain disgusting stimuli, then, unless disgust has already been formed within the individual. The individual must first already harbour a certain understanding of an activity as a transgressive act for disgust to elevate the feeling of the transgressive act into feelings of disgust. Without this previous experience, one cannot prompt feelings of disgust in an individual; it can merely exacerbate feelings of inappropriateness or transgressiveness in a person.

It is important to know this about disgust and how it works, especially as one can see how it relates to the Donatist Controversy. From the very beginning, Christianity was a religion that constantly assessed and re-assessed what it meant to be a true follower of Christ. Whether through words or deeds, the early Christians had the desire to provide identity markers, sometimes of the visual kind, to ascertain who belonged to the body of

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[27] Pizarro et al., "On Disgust and Moral Judgment," 267.
[28] Pizarro et al., "On Disgust and Moral Judgment," 268.
[29] Pizarro et al., "On Disgust and Moral Judgment," 268.

Christ. In Acts 15, the first council was convened in Jerusalem concerning the importance of circumcision as an identity marker for Christianity. Since the dominant culture of many Christians at the time was Jewish, they expected and determined that circumcision was an act that was expected and required of recent Gentile converts. At the time of the council, there had been no mention by Jesus, nor by any of the remaining disciples, of the importance of circumcision as it pertained to belonging to the body of Christ. However, the Christians of Jewish origin were convinced that circumcision should be an integral and crucial part of living out one's Christian identity. In Jewish culture, circumcision was a sign of the covenant between the children of Israel and YHWH. If the Gentile Christians wished to also belong to this new covenant, they must also participate in this ritual act. Circumcision then became an identity marker of who belonged to the new covenant. Furthermore, there was also the lived-out norm that Gentiles were impure. To enter into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, one must be pure. Circumcision was a visual marker of one's purity. The uncircumcised were viewed as impure and unworthy of God's love and favour.

What happened in Acts 15 would repeat itself over and over in Christian history. Two groups come together and both groups claimed that they were the ones in the right and that the other group is wrong. However, it was not merely a question of who was in the right or who was in the wrong. It was also a way for each group to assert their own dominance over another group; this means that whoever "wins" the argument became the arbiter of who was right and who was wrong. Within Christianity, tradition played a huge role in the movement. Ever since the first council in Jerusalem, the question of whether Gentile Christians should be circumcised or uncircumcised ceased to exist because the

council's deliberation on the matter stood the test of time. Any group that claimed to be a part of orthodox Christianity maintained the claim that a male adherent did not need to be circumcised to be a part of Christianity. Any group that claimed otherwise was to be considered as a heretical group, potentially anathema, and potential grounds for being refused to partake in communion with those who were a part of the orthodox church.

One of the difficulties when examining the role of emotions, in particular, disgust, in theological conflicts is the incredibly nuanced way in which this emotion manifests itself. To disagree with someone is not an indicator of disgust. To argue vehemently against someone is not an indicator of disgust. The problem is, however, that when disgust enters a situation, it can manifest itself through disagreement and vehement argumentations. To gauge whether disgust is present or absent in a situation, one should be aware of how much othering is taking place in the situation. It is one thing to say that what you are doing is wrong; it is completely different to say that who you are is wrong. Phrased differently, one says that you are wrong because of your actions while the other says that you are wrong because of who you are. It is when the latter statement happens that one can detect the difference between whether disgust is present or not. Since emotions can be amplifiers for moral reasoning, disgust has a way of exacerbating previously held norms to a new level. While it may be wrong to have and hold heretical ideas, disgust can exacerbate this into feelings of revulsion and expulsion. To have disgusting ideas is enough to promote social laws or norms that target people who hold such views. One cannot reason with said people because of fear of contamination. Any attempt made to try and cajole the other into the "right" understanding is futile. Even if such attempts were made, they were bound to fail. The only way to ensure that such

people can recognize the error of their ways is through the use of either force or coercion. This is in line with disgust's role as a boundary marker and as a guide in an individual's cosmic ordering of the world. Violence becomes the natural outcome of disgust's mechanism of expulsion and revulsion when coming into contact with disgusting stimuli.

David C. Rapoport mentions how "most people have been greatly astonished by the violence attending religious revivals of recent decades for it was commonly believed that religious revivals were associated with rekindling earnest passions for peace."[30] After all, "the eschatologies of the revealed religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) presume peace as the ultimate destiny of humanity, and a major theme or preoccupation of these religions is that one should seek peace whenever one can."[31] If this is truly the case, how then can religion inspire actions that are the very antithesis of what it purports to lead and believe? Here, Rapoport provides some general observations regarding religion's ability to both be a catalyst for violence and non-violence.

Rapoport examines religion's capacity to inspire ultimate commitment. As he rightly points out, "no major religion eschews violence under *all* conditions."[32] Religion's ability to provide group cohesion has been exploited by those in power, from the Greeks to the Romans to the modern-day countries of the twenty-first century. Religion has been wielded to inculcate rules and regulations (usually amenable to the same rules and regulations the state endorses) and used to summon people to fight for their country. "Religion, then, could reduce violence and produce violence."[33] Applied specifically to Christianity, one need not look too far to see how the name of Christ has

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[30] Rapoport, "General Observations," 118.
[31] Rapoport, "General Observations," 118.
[32] Rapoport, "General Observations," 119.
[33] Rapoport, "General Observations," 119.

been invoked to wage war, from the crusades to the second world war. When war, or the threat of war, is at the Christian's door steps, even the Christian nation of the Middle Ages did not hesitate to use the banner of Christ to summon its citizens in the fight against the others. This speaks, yet again, to religion's ability to control people as the goals of religion and the state are firmly intertwined.

Religion's ability to generate powerful emotions among its adherents is not surprising. Even the very language to describe certain people or events highlights the way in which religion's effects have been transmitted to our secular culture. People with heightened emotions towards certain causes are labelled as fanatics "which itself comes from the Latin word for temple—*fanum*."[34] In certain cases, individuals who demonstrate an extreme love for a sport are often mentioned as that particular person having "baseball as his religion" meaning that "he is committed to the game in an absolute fashion."[35] These vernacular statements are a firm reminder of how society acknowledges and recognizes religion's effect on certain individuals. This is helpful in giving a better glimpse into how someone whose emotions are heightened by religion can end up committing acts of violence. Leo Kuper concluded that in "virtually every case of genocide religious differences were an element."[36] This is sad, yet not surprising, information regarding religion's capability to enact violent acts against others.

Because of religion's ability to generate intense emotions and unswerving loyalty, it can be used to elicit and manifest itself through violent means. Time and time again, history has shown this to be true. During the Donatist Controversy, the emperor forced

[34] Rapoport, "General Observations," 120.
[35] Rapoport, "General Observations," 120.
[36] Rapoport, "General Observations," 121.

the seizure of the Donatist churches, to be transferred into the hands of the Catholics. The Donatists did not acquiesce to these demands. In a letter addressing these concerns, the emperor Constantine writes these words to the bishops of Numidia:

> I have learnt by the receipt of the letter of your Wisdom and Dignity, that the heretics or schismatics, with their accustomed wickedness, determine to seize the basilicas belonging to the Catholic church, which I had ordered to be built in the City of Constantine, and that, though they had been often warned, both by us and by our judges at our comment, to give up what was not theirs, they have refused to do so, but that you, imitating the Patience of the most high God, with a calm mind relinquish to their wickedness what is yours, and ask instead for another site for yourselves in exchange, namely the Custom House. This petition of yours I gladly welcome.[37]

From Constantine's letter, it is clear that the Donatists not only refused to give up their own churches, but they also attempted to seize the basilicas that belonged to the Catholic church. This type of seizure did not come without violence being enacted against the Catholics by the Donatists. However, it is not as if the Catholics have not wrought violent acts against the Donatists. During the Macarian persecution in 347, Donatist bishops and adherents were massacred under his command.[38] For both the Donatists and the Catholics, religion enflamed passions that leaders and adherents alike have used to assemble people and caused them to commit grievous acts of violence against one another.

While a violent emotion such as disgust can lead to acts of violence, this is not always the case in human history, nor in daily human life. It is very possible to be severely disgusted without it resulting in a violent act against the disgusting stimuli. If this is the case, what is the missing necessary ingredient that must be factored in for the formula to work? The necessary ingredient is one that is both pervasive and yet so subtle:

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[37] Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, 257.
[38] Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, 82–83.

power. As Bertrand de Jouvenel states, "a man feels himself more of a man when he is imposing himself and making others the instruments of his will, the means to the great ends of which he has an intoxicating vision."[39] As Hannah Arendt states,

> power needs no justification, being inherent in the very existence of political communities; what it does need is legitimacy . . . Power springs up whenever people get together and act in concert, but it derives its legitimacy from the initial getting together rather than from any action that then may follow. Legitimacy, when challenged, bases itself on an appeal to the past, while justification relates to an end that lies in the future. Violence can be justifiable, but it never will be legitimate.[40]

Power, then, is an invisible force that can often be a catalyst for violence, especially when disgust has already been elicited within a subject. A subject's willingness to enact violence is inextricably linked to the individual's willingness to adhere, and enhance, their status within their particular social context. Social power becomes a major contributing factor to an individual's action.

Serge Guimond, Michaël Dambrun, Nicolas Michinov, and Sandra Duarte attempted to understand "the social, cognitive, and motivational processes that contribute to intergroup perceptions and intergroup conflict."[41] In particular, they were interested in examining how social dominance orientation (SDO) was "an important variable in the explanation of prejudice."[42] Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto define SDO as

> the degree to which individuals desire and support group-based hierarchy and the domination of "inferior" groups by "superior" groups. As a general orientation, SDO pertains to whatever group distinctions are salient within a given social context. These group distinctions may involve sexes, genders, races, social classes, nationalities, regions, religions, estates, linguistic groups, sports teams, or any of an essentially infinite number of potential distinctions between groups of human beings.[43]

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[39] Jouvenel, *Power*, 110.
[40] Arendt, *On Violence*, 52.
[41] Guimond et al., "Does Social Dominance Generate Prejudice?," 697.
[42] Guimond et al., "Does Social Dominance Generate Prejudice?," 697.
[43] Sidanius and Pratto, *Social Dominance*, 48.

According to Sidanius and Pratto, there are at least four factors that significantly affect SDO:

i) One's membership in and identification with arbitrary, highly salient, and hierarchically organized arbitrary-set groups. In general, and everything else being equal, one should expect that dominants and/or those who identify with dominants will have higher levels of SDO than subordinates and/or those who identify with subordinates have.
ii) One's level of SDO is also affected by a series of background and socialization factors, such as one's level of education, religious faith, and a whole set of other socialization experiences.
iii) There is reason to believe that people are born with different "temperamental predispositions" and personalities. . . . there is reason to believe that the greater one's empathy, the lower one's level of SDO.
iv) One's level of SDO depends on one's gender. Everything else being equal, males will have significantly higher average levels of SDO than females will.[44]

SDO, as it was applied to the Donatist Controversy, can shed further light as to how disgust, violence, and power can come together to create a violent atmosphere.

In *Letter 105*, Augustine complained about the violence committed by the Donatists against Catholics, especially former Donatists who converted to Catholicism. He gave the example of

> Mark, a priest of Casfaliano, [who] became a Catholic by his own choice with no one forcing him. For this reason your people persecuted him, and they would almost have killed him if the hand of God had not subdued their violence through others who arrived on the scene. Restitutus of Victoriano came over to the Catholic church with no one forcing him. For this reason he was seized from his home, beaten, thrown into the water, clothed in grass, held for I do not know how many days in captivity. And he would perhaps not have been restored to his personal freedom if Proculeian did not see that he was about to be brought before a judge on account of this issue. Marcian of Urga chose the Catholic unity of his own will. For this reason, after he himself had escaped, your clerics attacked his subdeacon who was almost beaten to death with rocks, and their house was destroyed for their crime![45]

[44] Sidanius and Pratto, *Social Dominance*, 49.
[45] Augustine, *Letters 100–155*, 56.

The Donatists' use of violence in this instance was facilitated by the fact that the Donatists showed their commitment by punishing the Catholics through violent means. Optatus of Milevis highlighted the various violent and egregious ways in which the Donatists, during the beginning of the controversy, acted against the Catholics. Almost a century later, that particular impulse had not subsided, but was fostered and maintained by SDO.

The Donatists' faith was nurtured by their identification with the persecuted church. When it came to the issue of martyrdom, Origen warned against seeking martyrdom as if it was a sure pathway to heaven. True martyrdom was not something one sought out for themselves. However, when the time came to profess their belief and allegiance to God even at the cost of life and limb, then the Christian should pray that they would be blessed with strength that only comes from God to endure the pain and torment that will surely follow. The circumcellion had no qualms instigating a Catholic to commit a violent act against him in retaliation so that they would be seen as a martyr. This is analogous to the "death by cop" scenarios that those who are trying to commit suicide might undertake. Because they cannot kill themselves, they put themselves in a position where they may feign a violent attack against a police officer to induce the officer to use lethal force to subdue them.

When a particular group is targeted by others, it has the ability to strengthen the bonds within the group. Because they are going through a particularly traumatic and dangerous situation, the level of belongingness within the group increases. The socialization experience of persecution from the dominant group helps create feelings of proximity and affections among members of a targeted group. It creates the space to feel

that what happens to one happens to the many. The tight knit group that this creates further strengthened the Donatists' levels of SDO. If violence, especially violence where Catholics are the targets, are viewed within the Donatist community as acceptable, it is only normal for the disgust that has already been engendered and fostered by the community for the last century or so to manifest itself in violent acts.

Likewise, the Catholics' preponderance to use violence against the Donatists can be viewed in the same manner. The Catholics also viewed themselves as the targeted group of persecution by the Donatists. To protect themselves against the onslaught of violent terrorist acts by the Donatists, instead of committing violence through their own hands, they appealed to the state to use the sword against them. In this case, the state became a proxy for the Catholics' violent acts. When the state persecuted the Donatists, it was very difficult not to see their persecution as one and the same with the Catholics.

If SDO helped provide the context to ascertain and discern what values and actions are deemed as acceptable or exalted, how then was power enacted within such a situation? Michel Foucault defines how power is enacted. He says,

> in effect, what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future. A relationship of violence acts upon a body or upon things; it forces, it bends, it breaks on the wheel, it destroys, or it closes the door on all possibilities. Its opposite pole can only be passivity, and if it comes up against any resistance, it has no other option but to try to minimize it. On the other hand, a power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements which are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that "the other" (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up. . . . The exercise of power can produce as much acceptance as may be wished for: it can pile up the dead and shelter itself behind whatever threats it can imagine. In itself the exercise of power is not violence; nor is it a consent which, implicitly, is renewable. It is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions;

> it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions.[46]

The exercise of power, then, is based on acting on a previous action. Power is neither positive nor negative; it is neither right nor wrong. Power, *ipso facto*, is not concerned with questions of morality nor of ethics. Because of this, one's moral evaluation of how power is exercised is based on the subject's evaluation and perception of how said power is done rightly or wrongly. The beauty of conceptually conceiving of power in this way is that it does not vilify or prematurely defend the use of power as either right or wrong. The difficulty with this definition is that it allows for a multiplicity of opinions and ways of proper discernment as to whether the exercise of power in a particular context is done properly or improperly. This could lead to a more nuanced understanding and evaluation of individuals who participate in religious violence.

Power is not a thing that exists by itself but is something that can only exist within a relationship between two subjects. It means that power cannot be created or destroyed as if it is something that exists in a form that can be destroyed. However, power can be negotiated and wielded to cajole, coerce, or even imperil or endanger others. It does this through the actions of subjects towards other subjects' actions. It is this intricate play between a subject's relationship with another subject that is both intriguing and fascinating when dealing with the exercise of power. It is a dynamic interaction that could be constantly shifting or can remain in static rest, depending on how the subjects act and react to each other's actions.

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[46] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 789.

It is possible, then, to have and hold two simultaneously contradictory assessments regarding a particular situation depending on the context from which one evaluates how power is being exercised. It is entirely possible for the Donatists to view the violent actions of the Catholics as coercive and egregious acts of violence against its community. The Catholics' ability to strip landowners from their properties, forcefully eject members from their churches in order to take it for their own congregation, and using legal means to target Donatists as a means of forcing them to convert back to Catholicism were ways in which the Catholics abused their power.

In the same way that the Catholics were seen as the villains in the story of the Donatist Controversy, the Donatists' resistance to obey the true church's commands and by so doing, rendered asunder the unity within the church, was a cause of national concern. The early Christians were considered atheists and enemies of the state because they did not offer sacrifices to the Roman pantheon. The Donatists, by disobeying God's will and ways, were courting the displeasure of the Almighty God who can express His displeasure through natural calamities. To preserve and protect the country and the life of its citizens, the church, alongside with the state, decided to use that power to force, if need be, the Donatists from committing further acts. For the sake of security, they were tasked with ensuring that order was established in the land. As Emilien Lamirande notes, the "Donatists are the deserters who still wear the mask of their master. The church has for them a special concern, she is responsible for them. Recalling these errant sheep to the flock is therefore an integral part of the pastoral activity of the church."[47] From this

[47] Lamirande, *Church, State, and Toleration*, 33–34.

perspective, Augustine, being the pastor, must and should do anything and everything within his power to bring the Donatists back to the fold.

John Bowlin comments that "Augustine encouraged Christian bishops and magistrates to coerce and constrain religious dissenters; he participated in these activities almost from the start of his career as presbyter under Valerius; and he offered justifications for what he did."[48] The use of coercion by Augustine was another instance of how he exercised power against the Donatists. The Donatists claimed that they "[were] absolutely opposed to bringing anybody to their faith through violence."[49] They believed that each human possessed *liberum arbitrum* which is divinely given for individuals to choose between good and evil.[50] The Donatists believed that power should not be wielded when doing so infringed on another individual's free will.

Not only is it important to know how power is exercised, but also how it is defined. Power, as Foucault defines and delineates it, is understood thus:

> By power, I do not mean "Power" as a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state. By power, I do not mean, either, a mode of subjugation which, in contrast to violence, has the form of the rule. Finally, I do not have in mind a general system of domination exerted by one group over another, a system whose effects, through successive derivations, pervade the entire social body. The analysis, made in terms of power, must not assume that the sovereignty of the state, the form of the law, or the over-all unity of a domination are given at the outset; rather, these are only the terminal forms power takes. It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another.[51]

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[48] Bowlin, "Augustine on Justifying Coercion," 49.
[49] Augustine, *Contra litteras Petiliani*, 84.183.
[50] Augustine, *Contra litteras Petiliani*, 85.185.
[51] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 92.

To define power thus is to potentially change the normal paradigms concerning how power is understood, especially as it relates to religious violence. Because power is not necessarily something rooted *a priori* within the dominant culture, nor is it understood *a priori* as lacking within the non-dominant culture, it means that power is something that is constantly being negotiated between two entities. The dynamic nature of the relationship means that power is constantly in flux and in tension. Foucault's conception of power forces one to formulate nuanced understandings of power. It is not a totalizing aspect that controls everyone as if it existed outside the context of relationships and actions. Power is something that is constantly being negotiated; it is something that many seek to grasp and subdue only to realize that to take hold of it is akin to holding water in one's hands. As easily as water can seep through the cracks, so can power slip easily from one's grasp. After all, "power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations."[52]

Lorenzo Magnani comments on a common prejudice "that tends to assign the attribute 'violent' only to physical and possibly bloody acts—homicides, for example—or physical injuries; but linguistic, structural, and other various aspects of violence also have to be taken into account."[53] It is this very notion that can sometimes be forgotten when examining the interplay between disgust, religious violence and power. Each particular society has visible and invisible structures that undergird them. Too often, when discussing these complex issues, the focus tends to be individualistic in nature. To a certain degree, one cannot escape that analysis. When one looks at the number of mass

[52] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 94.
[53] Magnani, *Understanding Violence*, 2.

shootings in the United States, news reports identify the specific perpetrator of the crime. Yet, at a certain point, due to the sheer number of mass shootings that are happening, there has been some sort of a national soul-searching as to what and why these shootings are happening. The nation cannot allow itself to think that these shootings are happening in some sort of social vacuum. While talks about gun reforms fuel the current debate as to whether it is the best solution to combat this issue, it is but a reminder that violence not only needs to be addressed on an individual level, but must also be addressed at the societal level.

What makes violence so complex is that it resists a static definition. Magnani rightly argues that "violence is always perceived as such directly by an individual (who eventually derives that way of perceiving from the shared culture of the group(s) to which he belongs)."[54] As Slavoj Žižek says, "the same act can count as violent or non-violent, depending on its context; sometimes, a polite smile can be more violent than brutal outburst."[55] Thus, one cannot separate the act from the context. Nor can one provide such a rigid definition of violence that only acts that result in torture and/or death are included. Systemic violence is just as deadly as personal violence; both acts of violence have the power to kill, maim, and destroy, albeit in different ways and different means. Structural violence, however, cannot be dismissed as if it is not the imaginary hand that forces people to commit violent acts. To use Žižek's terms, there are two kinds of violence: subjective and objective violence. According to Žižek,

> subjective violence is experienced as such against the background of a non-violent zero level. It is seen as a perturbation of the "normal", peaceful state of things. However, objective violence is precisely the violence inherent to this "normal" state of things. Objective violence is invisible since it sustains the very

[54] Magnani, *Understanding Violence*, 10.
[55] Zizek, *Violence*, 180.

> zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent. Systemic violence is thus something like the notorious "dark matter" of physics, the counterpart to an all-too-visible subjective violence. It may be invisible, but it has to be taken into account if one is to make sense of what otherwise seem to be "irrational" explosions of subjective violence.[56]

This definition re-conceptualizes how to truly understand violence. The role of systemic violence cannot be easily glossed over or seen as a mere triviality. The structure is the very thing that gives the individual the means to understand the world; it is this very fact that makes systemic violence so frightening. It has the ability to normalize evils and label it as good. It is only in committing violence against the structures that one can even get a glimpse of how pervasive and how pernicious the structure has been in promoting and propagating violence. Failure to recognize systemic violence is like treating a patient's symptoms instead of its real cause. It may provide a short-term fix but it will not be able to heal the patient.

Erin Buckels and Paul D. Trapnell note that "outgroup dehumanization is arguably the most morally dangerous intergroup bias, having played a pivotal role in many wars and genocides throughout history."[57] They continue to say that "while the causes of these atrocities are complex, a notable commonality is the depiction of outgroups in a manner designed to evoke disgust.[58] During WWII, Jews were referred to as swine or vermin. During the Rwandan genocide, Tutsis were called cockroaches. In both instances, disgusting metaphors were used as a means to pair a disgusting stimulus with an outgroup. By doing so, the disgust that was elicited by these disgusting stimuli

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[56] Zizek, *Violence*, 2.
[57] Buckels and Trapnell, "Disgust Facilitates Outgroup Dehumanization," 771.
[58] Buckels and Trapnell, "Disgust Facilitates Outgroup Dehumanization," 771.

was strongly paired to the outgroup. Emotions are known to affect intergroup relations and bias outgroup judgments and information processing.[59]

Since disgust was elicited by the threat of physical or moral contamination, can this be also applied to intergroup relationships? Nilanjana Dasgupta, David DeSteno, Lisa A. Williams, and Matthew Hunsinger examined how ingroups and outgroups were rated when specific emotions such as anger and disgust were aroused in the participants. They incited anger and disgust in participants and asked them to rate members who they perceived as either part of the ingroup or the outgroup. To ensure that there was a difference between anger and disgust, they provided two different groups. The study showed that when pictures of Arab men were shown and anger was initially aroused, the participants showed a higher rate of labelling them as an outgroup. When disgust was initially aroused, pictures of homosexuals were deemed more disgusting by those who have been initially aroused by disgust, rather than those who were initially aroused by anger. This experiment demonstrated how prejudice, manufactured or real, can be exacerbated by emotions. Disgust is an emotion that can negatively affect the treatment of those who are considered members of the outgroup.[60]

Lasana Harris and Susan T. Fiske's research shows that members of extreme out-groups may be perceived as less than human, or dehumanized. The stereotypes engendered by different groups of people often colour the emotions each stereotypical group engenders. The SCM (stereotype content model)

> predicts differentiated prejudices. It incorporates a fundamental friend-foe judgment (warmth) plus a capability judgment (competence); the SCM proposes that societal groups are appraised as intending either help or harm (warmth) and as either capable or not of enacting those intentions (competence). . . . It posits

[59] See Bodenhausen et al., "Negative Affect and Social Judgment."
[60] See Dasgupta et al., "Fanning the Flames of Prejudice."

> that the four combinations of the competence and warmth dimensions produce four distinct emotions toward social groups: pride, envy, pity, and disgust. Thus, not all groups provoke animosity.[61]

What is incredibly frightening on a moral, emotional, and theological level are the effects of disgust as it relates to other human beings. Harris and Fiske observe that "groups stereotyped as neither warm nor competent elicit the worst kind of prejudice—disgust and contempt—based on perceived moral violations and subsequent negative outcomes that these groups allegedly caused themselves."[62] Furthermore, "disgust is unique among the emotions predicted by the SCM because it can target either humans or nonhumans, making people functionally equivalent to objects."[63] D. M. Amodio and C. D. Frith note that

> social interaction in humans is exceedingly complex compared with that in other animal species: representations of internal somatic states, knowledge about the self, perceptions of others and interpersonal motivations are carefully orchestrated to support skilled social functioning. This complex set of processes . . . is broadly referred to as social cognition.[64]

When social cognition takes place, the medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC) is activated. It is activated "whenever people are thinking about a person, whether self or other."[65] Harris and Fiske assert that groups who are in the

> low-warmth/low-competence quadrant of the SCM might not significantly activate the mPFC. People dehumanize these groups, not perceiving them as human to the same extent that they perceive in-groups or moderate out-groups as fully human. Compared with the in-group and other out-groups, extreme out-groups may not promote significant mPFC activation if they are not processed primarily as human beings. Their mPFC activation might even be equivalent to that for objects in the same SCM quadrant.[66]

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[61] Harris and Fiske, "Dehumanizing the Lowest of the Low," 847.
[62] Harris and Fiske, "Dehumanizing the Lowest of the Low," 848.
[63] Harris and Fiske, "Dehumanizing the Lowest of the Low," 848.
[64] Amodio and Frith, "Meeting of Minds," 268.
[65] Harris and Fiske, "Dehumanizing the Lowest of the Low," 849.
[66] Harris and Fiske, "Dehumanizing the Lowest of the Low," 849.

From a purely physiological perspective, this study affirms what most people have said in the past based on outward behaviours. This means that this cannot be treated simply as an emotional conjecture but a truly terrifying physical manifestation of how disgust can dehumanize others.

Disgust, Theology, and the Twenty-First Century: A Glimpse into the Future

The previous chapters have attempted to demonstrate the way in which disgust played a role in the theological debate between Augustine and the Donatists. Disgust Psychology allows a richer and more robust reading of theological debates, and it is certainly not limited to the Donatist Controversy. This section will briefly demonstrate how understanding Disgust Psychology has the potential to help current theological controversies. In particular, it will explore the role of disgust in the issues concerning homosexuality and women in leadership. The point is not to solve the problems, but to demonstrate how disgust can intersect with contemporary issues, just as it did with the ancient issue in North Africa.

Within the last two decades, more and more churches are forced to deal with the LGBTQ+ issue. There is a growing trend of acceptance and allowance for those in the LGBTQ+ community to be in positions of leadership and authority within the church. This has caused rifts and splits in various denominations as various faith communities prayerfully discerned and deliberated over this issue. Disgust has played a key role in supporting and maintaining the traditional view espoused in many churches. This particular view maintains that homosexuality is a sin and is a valid reason for exclusion in church leadership and authority. There are some potential accommodations that some

churches may give to certain individuals in that even though they may identify as a homosexual, as long as they live out a celibate life and do not participate or live out an actively homosexual lifestyle, they are allowed to participate in church leadership and authority. The way in which this traditional view has been entrenched in the Christian worldview has much to do with Christianity's relationship with promoting and fostering disgust towards homosexuality and homosexuals.

Another issue that has caused much turmoil and distress within the church is in determining the role of women. Specifically, there is an ongoing debate as to whether women can occupy the main leadership role within the church. Traditional literal reading of the sacred scriptures seems to promote a message that leadership is and should be restricted to only men. However, the interpretation of these verses is being questioned. Egalitarians argue that when these verses are read within its proper context, it is not as restrictive as the traditionalists argue. Despite these arguments, complementarians are unswayed. In some cases, their belief in this idea is so strong that they would either turn their back or leave a sermon if the preacher happened to be a woman. This strong reaction against women is an indicator of how disgust has affected and aligned itself within this particular belief system.

Disgust and Homosexuality

Kelly D. Schuck and Becky J. Liddle ascertained that two-thirds of their subjects experienced intrapersonal conflicts as they struggled with their homosexuality. The participants generally felt condemned through their own denomination's teaching, scriptural passages, and congregational prejudice.[67] This is not atypical of the Christian

[67] Schuck and Liddle, "Religious Conflicts," 63–82.

experience. Most people in Christian circles tend to look down upon those who either espouse or actively live out a homosexual lifestyle. While the reasoning given is initially theological in nature, it fails to take into account the role of disgust in continuing the rejection and exclusion of homosexuals.

Disgust is implicated as an integral emotion when it comes to moral judgments.[68] Jonathan Haidt and Jesse Graham note that "conservatives have many moral concerns that liberals simply do not recognize as moral concerns."[69] Elliot Turiel describes the moral domain as "prescriptive judgments of justice, rights, and welfare pertaining to how people ought to relate to each other. Moral prescriptions are not relative to the social context, nor are they defined by it."[70] If the moral domain can be understood as being grounded as one that is closely related to either harm or justice, most liberals find it difficult to understand the conservatives' blatant denial of rights and/or services to certain groups of people. For the liberal, everyone should be treated in the same way. Yet, somehow, the conservatives' desire to maintain morality can sometimes be seen by the liberals as the refusal to extend justice to minority groups who are often victims of injustices. Jost et al. argue that "the core ideology of conservatism stresses resistance to change and justification of inequality and is motivated by needs that vary situationally and dispositionally to manage uncertainty and threat."[71] Conservative Christians believe that any change as to how homosexuality should be viewed will result in real, tangible and adverse consequences for the social cohesion and makeup of the society.

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[68] Rozin et al., "The Cad Triad Hypothesis," 574–86.
[69] Haidt and Graham, "When Morality Opposes Justice," 99.
[70] Turiel, *The Development of Social Knowledge*, 3.
[71] Jost et al., "Political Conservatism as Motivated Social Cognition," 339.

Martha Nussbaum describes an incident in which two friends, Jerry Volk and John Hamilton, each pretended to pose as gay prostitutes to entice and solicit a homosexual man in order that they could rob him. Their victim, Mr. Traetow, was later found shot dead in his own apartment and his hands and legs bound by tape. Volk's thumbprint was found on a broken vodka bottle. He eventually admitted to being present at the scene and being an accomplice in the homicide. According to Volk, when Traetow made a homosexual advance, Volk was so revolted by it that it caused him to kill Mr. Traetow. Volk was also described as being "pretty disgusted" by Hamilton.[72] This case is yet another reminder of how "disgust is constructive: that is, it is disgust at the mere thought of a homosexual act, not at anything that was actually taking place or inflicted upon the defendants."[73] It is this constructive nature of disgust that makes it particularly virulent and incredibly resistant to any logical or rational arguments.

It is the foundationally different outlook that most conservatives have compared to liberals that lends itself to maintain their traditional views. Among liberals, autonomy is prized above all else. The world revolves around the individual and it is the individual who garners all the attention. Richard Shweder rightfully calls this the ethic of autonomy, where the purpose of moral regulation is to "protect the zone of discretionary choice of individuals and to promote the exercise of individual will in the pursuit of personal preferences."[74] Conservatives employ a different kind of ethic. Instead of the ethic of autonomy, many conservatives have an ethic of community. Shweder describes the purpose of moral regulation within an ethic of community as "protect[ing] the moral

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[72] Justia US Law, https://law.justia.com/cases/minnesota/court-of-appeals/1988/c8-87-951.html
[73] Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity*, 132.
[74] Schweder, "Morality and Health," 138.

integrity of the various stations or roles that constitute a society or a community, where a society or community is conceived of as a corporate entity with an identity, standing, history, and reputation of its own."[75] This means that the community becomes the main focus. As a result, one's actions can never be seen as something autonomous. One's actions will affect not just one's self, but also everyone in the community.

What happens then when there is "sin in the camp," so to speak? In Josh 6:19, Joshua received a promise that the walls of Jericho would fall but he was given a command that "all silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are sacred to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD." In Josh 7, Joshua goes from Jericho to Ai. During the battle that ensued, Israel suffered massive casualties and losses. Israel lost because God's commands were not heeded. Achan confessed that he took "a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels" and hid it under his tent.[76] The story ended with Joshua, along with the whole nation of Israel taking Achan, his silver, robe, gold bar, sons and daughters, cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and everything he had to the Valley of Achor. There he was stoned, along with his possessions and burned.[77] This story highlights the fact that an individual is not only responsible for their own selves, but they are also responsible for their whole community.

The story of Achan has the ability to captivate and fascinate the individual and communal minds. This is not a mere story in the Bible. This is a pedagogical tool that the community can use to remind those within the community that their individual actions

[75] Schweder, "Morality and Health," 138.
[76] Joshua 7:20.
[77] Joshua 7:24–26.

have a direct impact on others. This can promote social cohesion, but it can also create a community that forces individuals who stray from the path to conform to the community's established values and mores. This is of utmost importance to the community because their safety is imperiled by any action that can potentially rouse God's wrath. On September 11, 2001, the world was in shock as two planes flew straight into the World Trade Center. This attack on American soil was unprecedented. Not only were there physical casualties, but the psychological trauma of this event would mark the entire nation. Two days after the attack, Jerry Falwell, a well-known conservative evangelical figure, went on air and said these words: "I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way—all of them who have tried to secularize America—I point the finger in their face and say 'you helped this happen.'[78] Because America strayed from the righteous path and was living a life of unholiness and debauchery by condoning homosexuality, God inflicted this punishment upon the nation. This type of message was not only declarative in that Falwell was stating that homosexuality was a cause for all the terrible calamity that has befallen the United States of America, it also functioned as an imperative to those who considered themselves Christians to eliminate the source of the problem for America's demise.

Hodson et al. claims that disgust plays a role in predicting negative outgroup evaluations. They note that

> Disgust-eliciting outgroups can . . . be psychologically threatening. Given the laws of similarity and contagion characterizing disgust, groups associated with

[78] PFAWdotorg, "Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson Blame 9/11 on Organizations like People for the American Way," https://youtu.be/kMkBgA9_oQ4.

> disgust-elicitors will be seen as disgusting and thus relevant targets for prejudice. In summary, outgroups can be considered as psychological "pollutants"; we can be disgusted by dirty and unhealthy others and by those with different and potentially "corrupting" values violating ingroup norms.[79]

Under the "magical" law of contagion, stimuli that have come in contact with something "dirty" will permanently remain dirty. When given the chance to wear the sweater of an individual who is known to be a homosexual, most rejected to wear it. Why? Because there is a strong belief that they would be contaminated by the sweater. It is as if homosexuality is something that can transfer from the sweater to the person. While this may not be rationally or logically possible, this does not inhibit people from thinking and acting as if it was true.

Inherent in the idea of contagion is the notion of permanence. It is this facet of disgust that enables it to maintain and support deeply held beliefs. It is also the reason why trying to dissuade anyone through logic or reason can be incredibly frustrating because disgust is impervious to reason. At the height of the AIDS epidemic, even though multiple sources attested that one cannot "get" AIDS through touch or proximity, many avoided AIDS patients out of fear that they would also be infected, even after scientific evidence proved that it was false. It is no wonder that Princess Diana's act of touching those who were afflicted with AIDS was seen as a bold and poignant move. By refusing to wear rubber gloves, Princess Diana signaled to the world that this marginalized group should not be "othered" by society. They need to be seen as normal people. Fighting against this tendency is difficult.

Those who hold conservative attitudes are more inclined to be disgusted than their liberal counterparts. Since "disgust is specifically associated with perceived violations of

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[79] Hodson et al., "The Role of Intergroup Disgust," 196.

purity-related norms important to conservatives, disgust sensitivity should be especially associated with conservative attitudes on issues related to sexual purity."[80] In an article by Laurie Goodstein, two days after the 9/11 attacks, she comments:

> Among evangelicals, the terrorist attacks have unleashed renewed calls for repentance, prayer and spiritual revival. A nationwide prayer vigil planned for Saturday is to be broadcast by satellite into 1,500 churches. Next week will bring newspaper advertisements by evangelical groups calling for the nation to unite in prayer.
>
> 'Many people are calling this a wake-up call, and yet it doesn't help us respond to God to somehow feel that we've been chastised by this,' said Steve Hawthorne, director of WayMakers, a prayer ministry in Austin, Tex. 'It might be wise for us to examine our lives and our hearts and our practices.'[81]

Disgust is "involved in the construction of moral systems and the categorisation of broad classes of behaviours as immoral."[82] It is not surprising that conservatives would blame homosexuality as a reason for why the United States of America was attacked by terrorists. If homosexuality is a grievous sin in the eyes of God, it only follows that the promotion of homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle in society is a sign of the corruption of the nation. Anything less than outright condemnation and forceful elimination of homosexuality is considered a tacit approval.

The current cultural *zeitgeist* tends to view disgusting acts as morally innocuous. However, this is a fairly recent phenomenon. Among many cultures, both past and present, purity played a major role in defining and understanding morality. "Behaviours that are seen as degrading, defiling, or unnatural reduce purity and are thus immoral even if they do not harm oneself or others. Therefore, disgust . . . is seen as morally relevant

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[80] Inbar et al., "Conservatives Are More Easily Disgusted than Liberals," 719.
[81] Goodstein, "After the Attacks," *New York Times*, Sept. 15, 2001.
[82] Inbar et al., "Conservatives Are More Easily Disgusted than Liberals," 721.

and informative."[83] For the majority of Christianity's history, homosexuality was seen and understood as a sin. The traditional belief concerning homosexuality is intertwined with a particular notion of how morality and cosmology interact. Conservative Christians may have a heightened sensitivity to disgust because they have a belief that purity is directly correlated to either reward or punishment. The Scriptures are full of conditional commandments from God; one's actions are either rewarded positively or punished severely. Under such conditions, it is difficult to dissociate the notion that one's situation in life is not related to God's expression of delight or anger towards someone.

Mark Schaller advances the idea that "a sort of behavioral immune system . . . serves as an organism's first crude line of defense against potentially harmful parasites and pathogens."[84] Specific stimuli trigger this behavioral immune system and as a result, specific emotions and cognitions would be activated. Once activated, they result in functional behavioral reactions like avoidance or social exclusion.[85] This system "motivates individuals to avoid situations that may lead to contamination. That is, disgust may be an 'evolved disease avoidance mechanism.'"[86] Schaller and Duncan argue that the behavioral immune system would lead individuals to prefer ingroup members over outgroup members. Ingroup members would possess the same antibodies and immunity. The shared norms and customs would also serve as a limitation in terms of transmitting the disease. Outgroup members are a threat to the group because of the possibility of exposing others to foreign diseases or contamination.[87] Prejudice against homosexuals

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[83] Inbar et al., "Conservatives Are More Easily Disgusted than Liberals," 715.
[84] Schaller, "Parasites, Behavioral Defenses, and the Social Psychological Mechanisms," 96.
[85] Schaller, "Parasites, Behavioral Defenses, and the Social Psychological Mechanisms," 97.
[86] Terrizzi et al., "Disgust: A Predictor," 587.
[87] Terrizzi et al., "Disgust: A Predictor," 587.

was found to be positively correlated to disgust sensitivity.[88] Not only are homosexuals seen to be a group of impure people who have caused divine punishment to be meted unto mortals because the ire of a cosmic being was roused, they are also a group of people who are already in the margins who threaten the dominant culture with their mere presence. These two forces acting in concert are harnessed and embodied by conservative Christians.

Shana Kushner Gadarian and Eric van der Dort speak of how "like other emotions, disgust is politically relevant. At its evolutionary core, it alerts individuals to the presence of toxicity and noxiousness in the world. . . . Its connection in maintaining physical purity is mirrored in the ways it helps to enforce and maintain various forms of social purity."[89] The language of disgust, along with images associated with disgust, can be used to communicate stigma to the public with the hope that it would shape public attitudes and policy.[90] By linking a terrorist attack or a calamity with homosexuals, conservative Christians are presenting a particular narrative to the public. According to this narrative, if you want to have peace in the land, then you must get rid of the homosexuals among you. If you want to gain God's favour and reward, then you have to eliminate homosexuality in the nation. Failure to do so would be to incur further punishments from God. When God looks down on the United States of America and sees nothing but abomination and debauchery, a calamity will be sent to frighten the nation back to its senses and cause the nation to return unto God the praise and worship that belongs to Him and Him alone.

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[88] Inbar et al., "Disgust Sensitivity," 435–39; Olatunji, "Disgust, Scrupulosity and Conservative Attitudes About Sex," 1364–69.

[89] Gadarian and van der Vort, "The Gag Reflex," 522.

[90] Smith, "Language of the Lost," 462–85; Nussbaum, *From Disgust to Humanity*.

Using disgust to depict sexual minorities is not new. Note the language used by Anita Bryant, a prominent anti-gay activist in the 1970s who said " . . . if [children] are exposed to homosexuality, I might as well feed them garbage."[91] Eating garbage is an act that is utterly degrading. Feeding someone garbage is even worse. There is a desperation and depravity to this act that puts this in the category of disgusting. Through Bryant's language and visceral imagery, it is only fitting that one would guess that not only does she disagree with homosexuality but is also revolted by how disgusting of an act it is.

It is impossible to fully understand the relationship between disgust and homonegativity without acknowledging the role of dehumanization. "Both dehumanization and disgust involve keeping 'othered' individuals or objects in their subordinate place and away from the ingroup."[92] This may look like "othering" people occurs by delineating a strongly defined boundary as to maintain an ingroup/outgroup mentality. The boundaries that help delineate the two groups are rooted in emphasizing the difference between the two and minimizing whatever similarities there may be between the two groups. Conservative Christians create an ingroup that does not and cannot tolerate anyone who does not believe that homosexuality is a sin. The language used by conservative Christians regarding gay men is often meant to provoke disgust. The Family Research Institute states

> The typical sexual practices of homosexuals are a medical horror story—imagine exchanging saliva, feces, semen and/or blood with dozens of different men each year. Imagine drinking urine, ingesting feces and experiencing rectal trauma on a regular basis. . . . Further, many of them occur in extremely unsanitary places (bathrooms, dirty peep shows), or, because homosexuals travel so frequently, in other parts of the world.[93]

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[91] Bryant, *The Anita Bryant Story*, 27.

[92] Morrison et al., "'We're Disgusted with Queers, Not Fearful of Them,'" 1022.

[93] Family Research Institute, http://www.familyresearchinst.org/2009/02/medical-consequences-of-what-homosexuals-do.

The use of such visceral language elicits disgust in those who hear it. The use of disgusting stimuli as a common part of the homosexual lifestyle is meant to invoke revulsion. These acts are abnormal. They are degrading. They debase themselves by participating in such behaviour. Any "good" or "normal" person should not associate themselves with these types of people. Thus, conservative Christians can maintain their purity by setting themselves apart from those who practice homosexuality.

Disgust and Women in Leadership

Charges of sexism have been levelled against the church for many years. The church's inability to move along with the times, especially as it comes to female leadership, has been seen as a big failure by many. A quick look at those who hold leadership positions in churches or other religious organizations shows that men hold the majority of the leadership positions. This does not mean, however, that women are not involved in the church. Many women are involved in the church, albeit in subservient roles. Traditional Christianity holds that women cannot and should not be in any leadership position when that would involve providing leadership to men. By using key verses, conservative Christians argue that the Scriptures do not permit a woman to teach.

Before going any further, a question still remains: which church? This is a valid question because the church is not a monolithic figure or structure. There are many denominations who allow women to be ordained and to freely minister. "As Ruether noted, it is a mistake to think religiousness is authentically represented only by patriarchal, misogynous religious traditions."[94] While there may be many different variants of Christianity, it is "the conservative and fundamentalist strains that most

[94] Burn and Busso, "Ambivalent Sexism," 412.

vociferously promote traditional roles for women."[95] This type of religious fundamentalism is closely linked to patriarchal control of women and their sexuality.[96] Those who hold such beliefs also tend to view gender inequality as divinely mandated.[97] As Burn and Busso note, "[r]esearch confirms the idea that fundamentalism is a stronger predictor than religiosity in discriminatory attitudes toward women."[98] Conservative Christians are more prone to vehemently maintain the stance that women are not allowed to be in a spiritual leadership role.

Margaret Lamberts Bendroth claims that "dispensational premillennialism embedded the principle of masculine leadership and feminine subordination in salvation history itself, and, perhaps more important, uplifted order as the highest principle of Christian life and thought."[99] In most settings where women are not allowed to be in positions of leadership and authority, there is a tendency for such churches to adhere to a dispensational premillennial outlook. According to this belief, "female subordination was traced to the Fall, which confirmed women's weak nature and legitimized their subordination."[100] Female subordination is a reminder that when women sought to take control over man, Adam, it led to the Fall. If she did not try to usurp the authority of her husband, the Fall would not have happened. The Fall makes one thing very clear when it comes to females: the natural order dictates that a female should be subordinate to the

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[95] Burn and Busso, "Ambivalent Sexism," 412.

[96] Pollit, "Introduction." ix–xiv.; Ruether, "The War on Women," 3–10; Rose, "Christian Fundamentalism, 9–20.

[97] Glick et al., "Education and Catholic Religiosity," 433–41.

[98] Burn and Busso, "Ambivalent Sexism," 412; Hunsberger et al., "Religon and Prejudice in Ghana and Canada," 181–94.; Mangis, "Religious Beliefs," 13–25.

[99] Bendroth, *Fundamentalism & Gender*, 41.

[100] Reid, "Unjust Signifying Practices," 154.

man and any deviation from this divine plan will only bring calamity to everyone involved.

These tenets are expounded by John MacArthur Jr. According to MacArthur, equality and submission in marriage are two differently unrelated issues. He states, "in recognizing believing women as the full spiritual equals of believing men, Christianity elevated women to a status they had never known before in the ancient world. In matters of rule in the home and in the church, God has established the headship of men, but in the dimensions of spiritual possessions and privilege, there is absolutely no difference."[101] From an ontological perspective, the spiritual nature of men and women is the same. However, functionally speaking, MacArthur argues that there is a fundamental difference between what a man and a woman can do for the kingdom.

Sarah Pulliam Bailey highlights how disgust and women in leadership played out as she assesses evangelicals' attitudes towards Hillary Clinton. She comments,

> from all sides of the political spectrum, evangelicals respond with a surprising amount of disgust upon hearing Hillary's name. . . . She symbolizes much that runs against their beliefs: abortion rights advocacy, feminism and, conversely, a rejection of biblical ideas of femininity and womanhood.[102]

The level of disgust displayed against Clinton manifested itself through slogans that sought to demean and debase her, with a clear target that her weakness is directly related to her gender. Slogans like "Life's a Bitch: Don't Vote for One" or "Trump That Bitch!" were plastered on T-shirts and other merchandise throughout the campaign. It is not surprising to learn that many still see leadership as a masculine pursuit and that females

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[101] MacArthur Jr, *Divine Design*, 42.

[102] Sarah Bailey, "The Deep Disgust for Hillary Clinton that Drives So Many Evangelicals to Support Trump," *Washington Post*, October 9, 2016.

should not aspire to any position of power.[103] Dominant females who attempt to exert or acquire leadership positions are seen as "gender deviants" who are cold and unlikable. Compared to those who conform to gender stereotypes, they are less likely to be hired or promoted, receive lower salaries, and obtain poorer evaluations.[104] These are often termed "backlash effects." Women who fail to act in gender stereotype-congruent ways are viewed and treated negatively.[105]

> According to Status Incongruity Hypothesis (SIH), women who
>
> possess or pursue power are de facto status incongruent, but particularly when their behavior violates status expectations. Given that agency is high in status, female agency is discrepant with women's low ascribed status, and this status incongruity elicits backlash. By exhibiting masculine competencies, agentic women undermine the presumed differences between the genders, and discredit the system in which men have more access to power and resources for ostensibly legitimate reasons. That is, agentic women should incur penalties because they threaten the gender hierarchy. As a result, women's perceived status violations (as opposed to any type of gender role violation) should account for backlash effects.[106]

Because women are seen in an inferior status, any woman who seeks to change the natural order of things is liable to receive punishment from those who are adamant in maintaining the status quo. Women in leadership tend to be rated more negatively than their male counterparts when expressing the same actions. A man would garner positive evaluation for being assertive while the same act committed by a woman would be negatively evaluated as domineering. An ambitious man is seen in a positive light because he is hard-working and career-oriented while an ambitious woman is seen in a

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[103] Koenig et al., "Are Leader Stereotypes Masculine?," 616–42.
[104] Okimoto and Brescoll, "The Price of Power," 923–36.
[105] Bowles et al., "Social Incentives for Gender Differences," 84–103; Heilman and Okimoto, "Why Are Women Penalized," 81–92; LaFrance, "Gender and Interruptions," 497–512.
[106] Rudman et al., "Status Incongruity and Backlash Effects," 166.

negative light as a manipulative schemer. The higher the perceived discrepancy, the more intense the backlash received by the woman.

It is rather jarring to know that "even when unequivocal evidence exists that a woman is successful in male gender-typed work, she faces career-hindering problems in work settings – problems of being disliked and interpersonally derogated."[107] This means that a woman pastoring a church could be, from an objective point of view, more skilled at preaching and leading a congregation than a male pastor but because of inherent sexism, will tend to be judged as incompetent. This finding is in line with how many conservative people tend to evaluate any woman they encounter in a leadership position. Personally speaking, I have heard of and spoken to a number of men and women who acknowledge that even if they deemed a woman to be technically competent, they would not want a woman to serve as their leader. This emotional decision against women in leadership can often be theologically disguised through the use of clobber verses. Yet, even when given exegetically sound reasons to combat their previously held beliefs, there is an emotional reluctance and revulsion to the thought that a woman can be in any position of authority.

Adding to the complexity of this problem of female leadership is the general implicit bias against women in leadership. Laurie Rudman and Stephen Kilianski suggest that

> negative reactions to female authority may stem, in part, from an implicit prototype for male leaders and the attendant belief that it is more natural for men to take control. Individuals may be comforted by male leadership for the simple fact that they are accustomed to viewing men as authority figures and women as subordinates.[108]

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[107] Heilman and Okimoto, "Why Are Women Penalized," 81.
[108] Rudman and Kilianski, "Implicit and Explicit Attitudes," 1325.

The only way to combat these implicit biases is by making sure that proper representation happens in our society. We need to see female doctors, female dentists, female lawyers, and female judges. We need to see female elders, female deaconesses, female bishops, and female pastors. However, it is not enough to tokenize women in these positions of authority. It is not enough to put one female pastor on a pulpit and somehow think that sexism has now ended because one female holds that position. When someone is no longer surprised that a female holds a position of power is when parity in society between males and females has been achieved. When the number of the faces of those in leadership positions does not primarily show male faces, then some advances may have been made.

Conclusion

These seemingly abstract notions of disgust, religious violence, and power can often be difficult to fathom and understand. However, these abstract concepts are not random invisible things that seemingly float in the air. Their abstractness is manifested in a tangible way as embodied and enacted by humans. While no one may see the invisible hand that moves the world, the lone figure standing against oncoming tanks in Tiananmen Square shows that systemic violence is not so invisible after all. Seeing the planes hurtling towards the Twin Towers is a visual manifestation of how systemic violence can turn to personal violence. Seeing the effects of Zyklon B on the Jewish population during the Holocaust is a reminder that disgust is not a mere feeling but one that can translate into horrific actions against others. When a human being is no longer a

human being but a pig, that is when disgust is able to do the most unbelievable magic act of turning humans into animals that can be easily killed and destroyed.

The complex interplay between disgust, religious violence, and power is one fraught with terrifying observations and realizations. The job of fully understanding how each and every single variable can come together in an individual is complex. However, the complexity and nuance involved in trying to understand the phenomena of religious violence as it relates to disgust should not be ignored simply because it is too difficult or unwieldy a subject. What is clear, however, is the notion that emotions such as disgust play a crucial role in our understanding of how violence was committed by both the Catholics and the Donatists during the Donatist Controversy.

Not only does disgust help us understand the Donatist Controversy, it can also help us re-view current theological controversies. The LGBTQ+ community's call for the conservative church to change its ways will not be a call so easily heeded. The church must deal with the implicit feelings of disgust they feel towards those who practice what they would call sexually deviant acts. Likewise, the implicit bias many conservative Christians feel towards women in leadership must be addressed and acknowledged. Whether or not such acknowledgement will lead to further reforms is beyond the scope of this project.

CHAPTER 7: (IN)CONCLUSION[1]

The purpose of this dissertation is not to eliminate previous ways of understanding historical events; instead, the goal is to add another variable that needs to be examined when looking at the historical past. It is amazing to see the insights yielded by examining how power, economy, and culture have affected the lives of so many people. The ultimate goal of this dissertation has been to provide an example of what insights can be gained when emotions, and in particular, disgust, is applied to a historical theological event. The historian can understand the past through various disciplines. As the eminent historian, Peter Brown, writes,

> to study Late Roman society . . . has meant facing the paradoxical manner in which change is observed to happen, both in individuals and in society. In trying to understand problems such as these, a large debt should be owed to some of the most exciting aspects of the culture of our age. The writing and practise of psycho-analysis, as far as it is readily available to the receptive layman; the disciplined and erudite study of living societies by the social anthropologist; the sense of perspective and of unexpected combinations in much sociological literature—these are there for him to use. . . . The historian has much to learn from many modern exponents of psycho-analysis, of social anthropology, of sociological theory.[2]

In the past, the Donatist Controversy was viewed theologically and culturally. This has yielded many paths for many scholars to explore. It has also opened up more questions that have never been asked. By adding another variable, disgust, to examination of the Donatist Controversy, the hope is that it will enlighten and emphasize the need to examine one's emotions whenever making a theological deliberation.

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[1] My thanks to my friend, Dr. Ekaputra Tupamahu, for reminding me that this is not a conclusion, in the sense that this dissertation has completely solved or resolved the question at hand. If anything, this dissertation is a reminder that there are more questions that need to be answered and more insights need to be pursued due to the breadth and depth that these issues cover.

[2] Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine*, 18–19.

Marcel Zeelenberg et al. speak of how "the importance of emotion for decision making is . . . apparent in the fact that decision making itself is often an emotional process."[3] He states,

> if we do engage in detailed weighing of the different courses of action and trading off their attributes this often appears to be a source of negative emotion. We tend to undertake elaborate decision processes only for important decisions, but precisely in these cases emotional trade-off difficulty will occur (not so much for trivial decisions). Emotions are also present after we have decided. After having made a choice and before the out-comes are known we are often in state between hope and fear. Sometimes we are eager to learn the outcomes of our decision, expecting the best. Other times we avoid this information as we fear the worst. When the outcomes materialize, they may again be a source of emotion, such as elation, happiness, surprise, regret and disappointment. These emotions influence how we evaluate our decision outcomes, and thus our well-being. When others are involved in our decisions, or in their consequences, emotions such as empathy, love, anger, shame and guilt may be evoked and play a role during the process. All in all, there is a plethora of emotions that are related to many different aspects of the decision-making process. We think there is a good reason for emotions to be so pervasive in all phases of decision making: they help us in making the right decision.[4]

The power of our emotions cannot be over-estimated. It helps us and guides us in making the "right decision." Theologically speaking, the right decision translates into picking a response that will not condemn someone to the fires of hell, or one that could invoke the wrath of a jealous and powerful God. Is it any wonder that theological debates inspire such high levels of emotional reactions? The questions that are being posed are literally life or death situations. The "right" response can save someone's soul from an eternity of punishment and torture. It is only fitting, then, that everything must and should be done to prevent such a soul from experiencing this level of torment.

The feeling of disgust that Augustine had towards the Donatists and vice-versa is a reminder of how emotions can affect the way we treat one another. However, it is

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[3] Zeeberg, "On the Specificity," 18.
[4] Zeeberg, "On the Specificity," 18–19.

important to note that even though Augustine felt disgust towards the Donatists, he did not feel the fullness of the disgust that one can feel towards them because the Scriptures are built to counteract the extreme disgust one is wont to have towards another. Christianity has the ability to temper and dampen the levels of disgust one can and may feel towards the other. It is virtually impossible to heed the words of Christ without affecting the level of disgust we may feel towards the Other. This is a beautiful reminder that even though disgust can affect our relationships with others, it is not so pervasive that it cannot create a space where the disgust felt is minimized by the ultimate commandment to love the other like we love ourselves.

The question that started this whole endeavour was "how do you other the Other when the Other is not an Other?" Too often, within Christianity, it takes but the smallest, slightest deviance from either methodology or ideology to start the process of othering the Other. How many times has the quotation "in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity" been used in conversations regarding theological differences as a way to emphasize how everyone needs to show charity despite the theological differences we may have with one another? Yet, the most difficult aspect of that quotation is in trying to discern what is considered "essential" and what is considered "non-essential." Especially when it comes to theological debate, emotions can reach an all-time high because both groups have a stake in the debate. Yet, the emotions elicited by such high-stakes events are often glossed over. Perhaps, it is because there is an anti-emotional belief that is both rampant and pervasive in evangelicalism which leads many to gloss it over. There is this notion that emotions are not important and should be overlooked because the head is privileged over the heart. However, when it comes to

Christian ethics, there is always a push to privilege the heart above the head. Actions are supposed to come from the outflow of the heart rather than merely doing it for the sake of doing it or in the hopes of trying to earn one's way to gain entrance into the kingdom of God. It is this very confusion that can lead one to discount or minimize the role of emotion in the Christian life, let alone in decision-making. Yet, this is the furthest thing from the truth. Humans are emotional beings. Emotions have a way of affecting actions towards self and others. Failure to acknowledge the role of emotion in an individual's life is a failure to achieve a holistic understanding of self and others.

Disgust has a unique way of affecting one's moral judgments. "Disgust links to concerns about the protection of physical and mental purity, or treating the body and mind as temples that ought to be kept free of entities that, although perhaps harmless, are degrading or unwholesome."[5] It is also "triggered by objects or behaviors appraised as impure, and research shows that feeling disgusted by moral violations of purity, such as unusual sexual practices, predicts harsher moral criticism of those actions."[6] The Donatist Controversy, at its core, was a question of who was the "pure" true church. This is why understanding how disgust works is such an important task when dealing with the Donatist Controversy.

Disgust not only has a moral component, but also a physical one. It is "often experienced as a particularly visceral feeling, possibly because it can trigger nausea, throat clenching, and the very physical process of food expulsion to protect the body from harmful contaminants."[7] This is a powerful, embodied, and very visceral reaction. It

[5] Horberg et al., "Emotions as Moral Amplifiers," 238.
[6] Horberg et al., "Emotions as Moral Amplifiers," 238.
[7] Schnall et al., "Disgust as Embodied Moral Judgment," 1106.

is no wonder that this emotion is capable of eliciting such strong, violent reactions from individuals. This is why when disgust is triggered in an individual, their ability to reason is impeded. It is also an emotion that can colour one's judgments, which makes it highly difficult to detect in our own selves. This emotion can legitimize the use of violence, especially when coupled with dehumanization.

When it comes to violence, Christianity is not lacking in stories of violence over the last two thousand years. Within the first few pages of the first book of the Bible, one encounters a story of deceit and murder. Cain raises his murderous hand against his brother, Abel. There is a story of a king who was so captivated by the beauty of a married woman bathing on a roof top that he abuses his powers as a king to make sure that her husband is killed in war so he could have her as his wife. Or, the most violent story of all, the story of a righteous man who was forced to wear a crown of thorns and carry his own cross. This man was nailed to a cross and his side was split open. Violence is not new to the story of Christianity.

The story of Augustine and the Donatists during the Donatist Controversy is a fascinating one. It starts with Augustine trying to cajole the Donatists back into the Catholic fold. Through words and through actions, Augustine pleads with the Donatists to listen to reason. However, when the Donatists are not moved by Augustine's pleas to return, Augustine advocates the use of violence against them. The church, in conjunction with the state, uses violent coercion to coax the Donatists to come back to the Catholic church. What drove Augustine to change his mind? This dissertation claims that disgust motivated Augustine's shift from a non-violent to violent approach with the Donatists.

Chapter 1 provided a general overview of Roman North African theological context and milieu to situate the Donatist Controversy. It looked at the important role of martyrdom in providing a sense of Christian identity. Martyrdom also became a pedagogical tool for the church to help them understand and emulate what true Christianity looked like in the face of persecution. Finally, it explored the role of emotions as it related to an individual's decision-making process and provided a definition of Disgust Psychology.

Chapter 2 explored the North African theologian, Cyprian, whose theology and presence had a huge impact on the Donatist Controversy. Cyprian's views on purity and baptism became a major point of contention between the Catholics and the Donatists. Cyprian had to deal with two issues that parallel the situation Augustine would deal with during the Donatist Controversy: state persecution and rebaptism. Both the Catholics and the Donatists trace their spiritual lineage to Cyprian. As a result, both groups claimed theological purity based on how closely they adhered to Cyprian's principles and ideology.

Chapter 3 explored the events that led to the Donatist Controversy. It examined the various theological, historical, and political issues that culminated in the eventual schism between the Catholics and the Donatists. Because of the actions of certain key figures, the conflict escalated and became a problem that involved the involvement of the emperor himself.

Chapter 4 examined the letters written by Augustine that addresses the Donatists. In the early years, the letters had more of a conciliatory and cajoling tone. As the years progressed, the tone shifted into a more forceful and sometimes even violent tone. There

is an escalation from a non-violent approach to one where threats of violence are either implied or made explicit. However, it is worth noting that the escalation of violence happened on both sides. It was not one-sided. The Donatists also increased the level of violence against the Catholics, especially as a result of the state's use of force against the Donatists, in collaboration with the Catholics.

Chapter 5 examined how disgust played a role in Augustine's interactions with the Donatists. By looking at Augustine's letters, the language that he uses against the Donatists shows how he creates clear boundaries as to who was deemed pure and who was deemed impure. The language he uses also highlights how violent language can also translate into violent acts against a particular group.

Chapter 6 examines the connection between disgust, religious violence, and power. It is difficult to commit religious violence without acknowledging the important role of disgust in catalyzing and empowering people to commit heinous acts of violence. Power, its acquisition and its enforcement, is intricately linked with disgust and religious violence. In many ways, an individual's negotiation of power dynamics is closely related to how disgust and religious violence can be manifested.

On the topic of violence, Jacques Ellul states that "the churches and the theologians, it is helpful to recall at the outset, have never been in unanimous agreement in their views on violence in human society."[8] In some ways, disgust occupies the same ambivalence that the role of violence played in the church. While this dissertation has

[8] Ellul, *Violence*, 1. He states, "Today most people believe that general opinion in the past accepted, and in one way or the other, blessed the state's use of violence and condemned any revolt against the ruling authorities. But it is a mistake to assume that it is only in our day that Christians have adopted a nonviolence stance or, on the other hand, have ranged themselves on the side of revolutionary violence." Ellul, *Violence*, 1.

continually tried to show the negative effects of disgust and its practice within a theological context, sufficient care must be taken in order not to erroneously communicate that disgust, *ipso facto*, is somehow inherently wrong or evil. The problem with disgust lies in determining the proper context in which it can, and should, be employed. When it comes to contemporary issues like homosexuality in which disgust has dominated the conversation regarding it, there is much work to be done in terms of dismantling the use of disgust embedded within our theological articulation concerning the subject. This does not mean that discussions and debates regarding homosexuality should be silenced or censured. The church must have healthy and lively discussions concerning homosexuality as it seeks to situate itself within the theological conversations surrounding such a controversial issue as homosexuality. However, when clobber verse after clobber verse has been used, and it ultimately ends with a statement like "at the end of the day, it's disgusting to see two men kiss each other," then there must be a general consensus that any type of argumentation that seeks to elicit disgust as a way to shut down conversation is both inappropriate and wrong. This particular theological move should be condemned and eliminated as an approach when it comes to such a sensitive topic. Disgust can hopefully provide the necessary impetus for people to rise up against injustice and condemn such villainous acts with strength and clarity of purpose. Within such a situational context, disgust becomes a way to help usher in the kingdom of God here on earth. When it comes to Christianity and its treatment of women, one cannot dismiss the fact the role that disgust plays in creating a barrier for women who seek to attain any formal position of authority within church structures. A woman is often judged as someone who, by virtue of their sex, are incompetent and unable to be a leader. If this

excuse is not given, a woman's lack of skills or incompetency in being an effective leader are brought to the fore as valid reasons for their refusal. Yet, studies show that when women are seen to aspire to any position of power, they are consistently viewed and evaluated negatively by both men and women. Since this is the case, any woman who would seek to be in a position of authority within the church is, *ipso facto*, disqualified as being godly because they want to be a leader. One of the added difficulties of this scenario is the addition of theological trauma being inflicted on women because they are consistently told that their desires are ungodly and unbiblical. Since theological rationale is invoked, disgust becomes a key component that lurks in these theological situations.

Disgust plays a leading role in the ways in which Christianity can either foster or diminish disgust within our lifetimes. There is a need to exhibit repulsion and aversion to disgusting stimuli such as sinful acts. However, it is important to distinguish the act from the person who committed the act. It is one thing to tell another human being that they have acted foolishly and another to tell another human being that they are a fool. One is judging an action while another is judging the person. When the judgment is being made concerning the person's character, that is the red line which disgust should never be allowed to cross.

Once the historian looks at the Donatist Controversy through the lens of Disgust Psychology, one cannot help but see a movement full of people whose hurts and pains have affected the way in which they saw themselves and the purpose of their church. This should alert us to the reality that our theological convictions can, and will, be affected (or viewed in a pessimistic way, tainted) by our own emotions. Theology happens when the divine and the mortal meet and participate in a unity that is both mysterious and divine.

Yet, theology is not something so abstract that it cannot be named nor felt. True theology is embodied. A theology that is embodied will also be one that is emotional. History is the story of humanity throughout the years. To fully and truly understand it, one cannot do so without acknowledging the integral role of emotions—including disgust—in the life of a human being.

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