Augustine's Hippo: Power Relations (410–417)

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WHEN THE VISIGOTH LEADER Alaric captured the city of Rome in 410, a shock ran through the entire empire. Jerome wrote from Bethlehem: "Rome, capturer of the world, fell captive" (*Letter* 127.12). Though Alaric was a Christian (Arian)-taking a Christian (Catholic) city, there was an ominous feeling that the world structure built by pagan Rome was disintegrating. Pagans claimed that Christians had destroyed the greatest human achievement ever contrived. Christians themselves, who had boasted that they saved whatever was good in ancient civilization, lifting it to new heights, now suffered a crisis of confidence. Catholics in and around Rome, uncertain of their fate under Arians, poured into Africa, bringing tales of breakdown at the center of things (though both Christian emperors, of the East and of the West, still ruled, from their courts at Ravenna and Constantinople). A need for new discipline and toughness was felt, to which Augustine would respond, showing a dark side to his teaching on the importance of the human will.

While working on his three concurrent masterpieces at the beginning of the fifth century,[1] Augustine had kept at his ordinary tasks—preaching, church reform (at frequent councils called by Aurelius in Carthage), and endless controversy with Donatists. Though Catholics were still asking for public discussion as late as 403, an increase in Donatist violence led Stilicho—the imperial minister at Ravenna who had been harsh on the Donatists since their participation in Gildo's African revolt—to issue an Edict of Unity in 405, punishing Donatists under the long-existing laws against heretics. Augustine had misgivings about Stilicho's policy, but he enforced it in Hippo, and his own attitude toward disorder and dissent was hardening.

A symptomatic after-effect of Rome's fall was the Pinian affair (411) in Hippo. The highborn and wealthy Albina, a devout Christian, left Italy with her daughter Melania and her son-in-law Pinian. They went to an estate in Thagaste, Augustine's birthplace, where his friend Alypius was now bishop. Albina wrote to Augustine hoping he would someday visit them. Since Augustine said he was unable to leave his church, Alypius took the three famous people to Hippo—where the congregation tried to induct the wealthy Christian celebrity Pinian as their priest, though Augustine had pledged that the visitor would not be pressured into that service. When Alypius tried to get his endangered guest out of the church, the people charged him with keeping Pinian to himself so he could control his vast holdings for Thagaste. Augustine told his congregation it could gain Pinian as priest only by losing him as its bishop. But his congregation was frenzied and he could not quiet it. He withdrew to the apse and drew its curtain shut. Pinian sent word to him that he would not be ordained, but that he would take an oath to live in Hippo and not to accept ordination elsewhere. After tense negotiations over the terms, Pinian took this oath—only to skip town the next day (*L* 126).[2] Alypius took the view that a coerced oath is not binding, but Augustine's strict line on deception, *especially* where religion was involved, made him write that Pinian must return to Hippo according to his word (*L* 125). Hard feelings all around were later assuaged, and Pinian went to the Holy Land, where he became a monk and Melania became an abbess. The story shows what a touchy matter it was for Augustine to control his volatile community, even after an early showdown over the drunken celebration of a martyr's day.

Augustine was a judge over property and other disputes, since the empire "farmed out" as much of its administrative tasks as it could, letting bishops hold ecclesiastical courts even for civil matters. These hearings were a time-consuming distraction for Augustine, but he felt obliged to conduct them daily,[3] since they gave him a chance to teach moral principles of equity and social concord. They also let him set an example of leniency in punishment, something he was always preaching to Roman officials. He was, he hoped, saving some people from the imperial judges, of

whom he had a low opinion: "Ignorance in the judge is often doom to the defendant" (*CG* 19.6).

Augustine's court arbitrations show how little we can speak of church and state as separate things in the fifth century. From the very time when Constantine recognized Christianity, the emperor held jurisdiction over matters of faith, calling councils, declaring what was orthodox, outlawing heresy. Arian emperors suppressed Catholic views, ousting Athanasius and other orthodox trinitarians from their episcopal chairs—and Catholic emperors did the same to Arians. It was generally conceded that heresy could be punished with fines, confiscation, torture, and even death. Ambrose denied churches to Arians and synagogues to Jews. Even the Donatists did not challenge the laws against heresy—they simply denied that they applied to schismatics like themselves, people who differed from orthodoxy only on matters of church discipline. There was religious intolerance all around. It was not an aberration but the norm. Augustine, however, supplied something that *was* new—a *theory* of suppression. It is a sign of the general acceptance of religious intolerance that no one had felt the need to justify it. Augustine, as Peter Brown points out, formed his theory as a matter of conscience, trying to reconcile his own acts with his own values. In the process he mitigated what were harsher measures, gave a didactic restriction to repression, and opposed torture or execution. But by putting his theory in express terms, he bequeathed a dangerous legacy to later ages. He, not others, is looked back on as the patron of repression—not Ambrose, for instance, who practiced it far more extensively and heavy-handedly than Augustine ever dreamed of doing.

Earlier, Augustine had drawn on the Donatist Tyconius to defeat Donatist ecclesiology. Now he made an even more daring raid on the enemy's arsenal. Tyconius, in his treatment of Saint Paul's claim that grace abrogated the Jewish Law, had said that the Law was prescriptive, not redemptive, that it convicted men of sin but could not save them from it. Then what use was the Law in God's providential guidance of the Jewish people? It was like a pedagogue, forcing the child to go to school, where he could freely learn once he had been compelled to attend.

> At that time, the Law was compelling (*cogebat*) people to faith. Faith would not otherwise have sought out grace, since sin's power would not have been clear.
>
> We had to submit to the Law as our pedagogue who would compel (*cogeret*) us to embrace faith, compel (*cogeret*) us to Christ.
>
> Providence increased and guarded the seed of Abraham that, from the austerity and fear imposed by the Law, many might be compelled (*compellerentur*) toward faith.[4]

In Luke's parable of a wedding banquet (14:23), when invited guests do not show up, the master sends people into hedges and byways with the order: "Compel them to come in." Augustine used both verbs available in his versions of Luke—*coge intrare* (the African texts) and *compelle intrare* (the Vulgate). Augustine brought Tyconius' argument to the interpretation of that verse. Perhaps as early as 411, Augustine was preaching:

> Let the heretics be drawn from the hedges, be extracted from the thorns. Stuck in the hedges, they do not want to be compelled (*cogi*): "We will enter when we want to." But that is not the Lord's command. He said "Compel them to come in." Use compulsion outside, so freedom can arise once they are inside. (*S* 112.8)

Brown recognizes that this was not just an excuse cooked up as a cover for what was happening. Wrong by later and better standards, Augustine's view nonetheless grew out of deepening convictions at several levels. For one thing, it reflected his stress on the importance of the will. Faith was not simply an intellectual process. The will must be summoned. But the power of habit, of *consuetudo,* can imprison the will. The network of habit indurated by the Donatists' feuds with Catholics made it impossible for them to meet with, debate, or listen to inherited foes. To break that deadlock would be, Augustine came to hope, a way of freeing Donatists to hear, at least, what had been sealed out of their consciousness. That is why Augustine stressed that

the aim should be use of the laws for teaching the truth in love. The pedagogue's aim is "*instruction* under hardship" (*per molestias eruditio, P* 118.2). Forcing people to listen is only the first step in a *discipline* that stresses that word's etymology (*disciplina* from *discere,* to learn). Stubbornness and pride can create the kind of *socialis necessitudo,* the partnership in crime, that Augustine felt in his own youthful gang of the pear theft, or in Adam's solidarity with Eve. That bond must be broken to get a fair hearing from its prisoners.

Brown points out that few inquisitors are going to have Augustine's scruples and restraint; but Augustine came close to finding his ideal partner in Marcellinus, the tribune sent by the emperor Honorius to deal with Donatist resistance in 410. In response to heightened violence from the hut people,[5] Catholics had gone to Ravenna asking Honorius to deny violent people the sanctuary given them by Donatist bishops.

Marcellinus was given the task of bringing together the whole body of Catholic and Donatist bishops in a Confrontation *(Conlatio)* to decide which side, if either, was heretical under the old laws. Though a Catholic himself, Marcellinus conducted this great showdown—held at the Baths of Gargillius in Carthage—in an exemplary way. "Patient under every test, he moderated the debates with authority, never rude but also never weak, with a lawyerly respect for the rules and for everyone's rights."[6]

Before the Confrontation, Marcellinus restored to Donatists the churches taken from them by the Edict of Unity. He guaranteed their bishops personal immunity while traveling to and from the meeting. Augustine, writing for the Catholic bishops, entered into the spirit of Marcellinus' proceedings. He issued a public agreement that Catholics would surrender their churches and offices if the ruling went against them—but that they would let Donatists keep their churches and offices if they abided by a judgment forcing them to join the Catholics (*L* 128).

The Donatists knew that, no matter how fairly conducted, the laws under which the Confrontation would be heard were already tilted against them. If they had to attend, they would turn out as many of their bishops as possible. Even though their numbers were depleted when they excommunicated their own

dissidents, the "Maximianists," they wanted to show that they still made up roughly half of the population, more than could be oppressed. They tried to keep down the number of Catholic bishops on the scene by challenging the way some (including Augustine) had been consecrated. The Donatists showed up as a body well before the opening date, while Catholics straggled in and had to make a last-minute effort to equal the Donatists. The final number of those attending—which did not count those absent for reasons of age, illness, or distance—was 284 Donatist bishops, 286 Catholics.

Marcellinus laid down rules meant to seem fair as well as efficient (though Brent Shaw argues that the hearing was, of its very nature, rigged). To guarantee equal speaking rights, and prevent a general shouting, Marcellinus told each side to choose seven speakers, backed by seven advisers or researchers, and four men to make sure an accurate record was being kept. But on the opening day, when the Catholics sent the required team of eighteen, the Donatists arrived en masse, demanding that all be admitted. Once inside, they refused to be seated with sinners, so Marcellinus, a layman who did not want to be seated while bishops stood, had to conduct the whole day's proceedings on his feet. Then the Donatists demanded that every bishop be credentialed individually, proving that he authentically represented his local church, with rights of challenge from the opposite side. Some bishops proved to be illiterate (Monceaux 4.423). The Donatists demanded that records not be taken in shorthand, so they could see instantly, on the spot, if the proceedings were being accurately reported.

Tensions ran high. Augustine had preached in Carthage beforehand that Catholics should stay far away from the baths, so as not to be drawn into scufflings (*S* 358.6). The Catholic bishop from Macomades tried to defuse hostility with "gossipy interventions, recognizing and greeting everyone from Numidia" (Monceaux 4.424).

When the debate on substance finally began, the origins of the *traditor* controversy were explored. The Catholics had documents to show that some condemned as *traditores* had been cleared—Augustine had supplied some of these to the other side

ahead of time (*L* 88). But the Donatists seemed to have no strategy but obstruction. Frend describes their disarray:

> In contrast to the Catholics, who leave the impression of abiding by a well-thought-out scheme of attack, the Donatists prepared their case indifferently. They even included documents which could help their opponents, and, as already mentioned, they seem to have been unable to decide until the last moment whether to include their [proconsular] primate [Primian] among the delegates chosen for debate. Perhaps they felt that Primian was too vulnerable on the Maximianist issue [as the suppressor of another religious body]—perhaps there were other grounds [old age].[7]

The skill of Augustine, the organizing discipline of Bishop Aurelius, and the trained lawyer's talent of Alypius—these were a hard combination for the Donatists to match.[8] It is fascinating to read the stenographic account of the debates. When Augustine was giving his argument for a mixed Church, where wheat and weeds grow together, Emeritus of Caesarea, the best exponent of the Donatist position, showered him with Scripture passages setting an evil world (*mundus*) against God. Augustine, with his total command of the Bible, was ready with answering *mundus* citations: "that *the world* may believe" (John 17:20), "that *the world* would be saved" (John 3:17), "reconciling *the world* to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Frustrated, the Donatists tried to shout him down. "As he was trying to speak, he was heckled" (*streperetur*). Alypius struck in: "Let the record show they are interrupting him."

Paul Monceaux (4.425) reads the musical "score" of the proceedings this way:

> There is enjoyment to be found in the plot-twists of this imposing pageant—in the strategies, for instance, of either side, the clear and concerted plan of the Catholics, the inventiveness of the Donatist obstructors. Above all, the mobile features are limned of some great orators. In the schismatic ranks, the headlong Petilian of Constantine, imaginative, rasping, unbending, slippery, almost always elo-

> quent—or Emeritus of Caesarea, unbending too, but high-minded, often wordy and drawn-out, but at times sparkling and witty. On the Catholic side, in a circle of outstanding speakers, all of these his friends, the clear winner of the Confrontation was Augustine, the verbal technician of his age, impassioned, wary, discriminating, and deadly.

After the third plenary session broke up on June 8, Marcellinus did not go to bed before making his decision, which was formalized in an edict on June 26—the heretic laws were said to apply to the Donatists, who thus lost their churches, were forbidden to hold meetings, and were fined for not attending Catholic church. Enforcement, as Brown notes, was bound to be uneven, depending on the willingness of local landowners to make trouble for themselves by cooperating with the decree.[9] Fines were even harder to collect than taxes (that perennial problem of the empire). Ordinary people would not be pursued. Leaders were more vulnerable—they lost their church holdings and their power to protect the hut people (who responded with another wave of suicides). But a leading Donatist bishop, Gaudentius, held his church for nine years at least, and perhaps for his whole life, despite a blistering attack on him by Augustine. Violent resistance to Marcellinus' edict led to the prolongation of terrorism. One of Augustine's priests had his eye put out and a finger cut off. Another was murdered. Enforcement of the law outside major cities was virtually impossible. According to Frend (299), "In the countryside, archaeologists have yet to find clear evidence for the transformation of a Donatist church into a Catholic one."

Augustine was preaching concord to the Donatists:

> Nothing in you do we hate, nothing detest, nothing denounce, nothing condemn, except human error. We repeat, we detest human error from regard for divine truth, but we acknowledge all of God's graces [sacraments] in you, while whatever in you has gone astray we would correct. . . . The stray is the one I would seek out, find, admonish, approach, take by hand, and lead, correcting the deserter, not defacing his divine image. (*S* 359.5)

He told Catholics not to crow over Donatists like victors (*L* 78.8). Any Donatist bishop who joined the Church could keep his office, even though that violated the rule against two bishops in a single town. He personally would alternate service in his basilica with the Donatist bishop of Hippo.

When the murderers of his priest confessed, Augustine showed what he meant by discipline as a *teaching* instrument. He begged Marcellinus not to execute, maim, or flog the men (the customary Roman penalties).

> We agree that criminals should lose the freedom to commit more crimes. But we hope it does not go beyond this—that, while retaining life and sound limbs, they should be compelled by law away from their mad instability toward a sober steadiness, and be assigned some useful labor to repair the wrongs they have done. Even this much is called a punishment, but who can doubt that it should be deemed more a service than a severity when the rage to harm is precluded but not the prospect of a healing repentance? (*L* 133.1)

Augustine was very serious about this protection given to one he had most right to resent. He wrote to Marcellinus' brother, who was the proconsul of Africa, using a pragmatic argument:

> Men should read the court proceedings, to heal souls poisoned with seductive venom. Do you want, as we read to the point where a bloody severity is included in the sentence, that we should shrink from finishing? . . . As for us, if no lighter sentence were available, we should prefer to see them released rather than avenge our brother's murder by further bloodshed. (*L* 134.4)

Nor was this enough. When Augustine was not given a guarantee that the convicts would live, he informed Marcellinus he was instituting a plea for clemency to the emperor. No wonder some contemporaries criticized Augustine for being too lenient to Donatists (*L* 11.25–26).

Some have said that Augustine only wanted to prevent giving Donatists new martyrs they could rally to. That may have been one consideration, but he opposed any use of capital punishment—reversing Hamlet's calculus. Hamlet will not kill his uncle while he is praying, since he wants to catch him in sin, when death will take him straight to hell. Augustine feels that the criminal needs time to cool down, to consider, to repent, to pray. Augustine knew from his own case that God may have future uses for a sinner who renounces his sin. One must always correct out of love.

It is the corrective use of punishment that explains a dictum often criticized: *Ama et quod vis fac*—"*Act* as you desire, so long as you act with love." Some take that to mean that a profession of love frees one from constraint. But for Augustine love *is* the constraint. He first used the sentence when discussing the admonition of fellow Christians in his commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians (57):

> We should never undertake the task of chiding another's sin unless, cross-examining our own conscience, we can assure ourselves, before God, that we are acting from love. If reproaches or threats or injuries, voiced by the one you are calling to account, have wounded your spirit, then, for that person to be healed by you, you must not speak till you are healed yourself, lest you act from worldly motives, to hurt, and make your tongue a sinful weapon against evil, returning wrong for wrong, curse for curse. Whatever you speak out of a wounded spirit is the wrath of an avenger, not the love of an instructor. *Act as you desire, so long as you are acting with love.* Then there will be no meanness in what may sound mean, while you are acutely aware that you are striving with the sword of God's word to free another from the grip of sin. And if, as often happens, you begin some course of action from love, and are proceeding with it in love, but a different feeling insinuates itself because you are resisted, deflecting you from reproach of a man's sin and making you attack the man himself—it were best, while watering the dust with your tears, to remember that we have no right to crow over another's sin, since we

> sin in the very reproach of sin if anger at sin is better at making us sinners than mercy is at making us kind.

He also used the formula in a sermon on the First Letter of John, that broad treatment of love (7.8):

> Because of varying circumstances, we see one man looking harsh because he loves and another looking pleasant because of vice. The father gives a son blows, the whoremonger gives blandishments. Consider them in themselves, blows or blandishments—who wouldn't take the blandishments and duck the blows? But look at the motives—they are the blows of love, the blandishments of vice. You see my point, that human acts should be judged by their basis in love. Many things have a surface appearance of good, but are not based on love—like blossoms on a thorn plant. Other things look hard, look forbidding, but they instill a discipline informed by love. Once again, to put it simply: *Act as you desire, so long as you act with love.* If you are silent, be silent from love. If you accuse, accuse from love. If you correct, correct from love. If you spare, spare from love. Let love be rooted deep in you, and only good can grow from it.

This is hard teaching, not an excuse for repression. Even Alypius, as Brown says, seems not to have taken it entirely to heart.[10] But in Marcellinus Augustine had a tribune strong yet compassionate, a seeker after the truth, to whom Augustine dedicated the first installment of *The City of God*. It is tragic that, just as Marcellinus and Augustine were fashioning the corrective discipline needed after the Confrontation of 411, the tribune was caught up in a purge after an attempted coup and was executed in 413. Augustine set in motion all the appeals for clemency that he once directed at Marcellinus. Now they were deployed for Marcellinus. Augustine visited him in prison, and hoped for an amnesty that was precluded by a hasty execution.

This was a crushing blow to Augustine, one sensitively analyzed by Brown:

> At this crucial moment, Augustine showed that he was no Ambrose: he lacked the streak of obstinacy and confidence that he could control events that is so marked in the great ecclesiastical politicians of his age. The incident also marks, on a deeper level, the end of a period of Augustine's life. For, paradoxically, he had lost his enthusiasm for the alliance between the Roman Empire and the Catholic Church, at just the time when it had become effectively cemented. For now that he no longer needed to convince others. Augustine seems to have lost conviction himself: he fell back on more sombre views. (337)

Augustine was already moving toward those somber views before Marcellinus' death—in the new work he dedicated to him, *The City of God*. This book germinated from the disorientation felt by Christians over the capture of Rome. Rome had, for men of that time, seemed the organizing principle of all human history. Rome gone, what sense was to be made of the world? Augustine wrote, at a first level, to dethrone the *idea* of Rome from its place in people's minds. It was never the City that could satisfy human hearts. Only the City of God can do that.

Paradoxically, he began this systematic undermining of classical culture's claims by doing his own little raid on that culture's prizes. The use of philosophy to assuage grief had become formulaic with the Greeks and Romans. It was called the *consolatio*. Augustine composes a poignant *consolatio* for those who were killed, displaced, robbed, or raped in the fall of the ancient city. He uses the form's stoic commonplaces—death is common, natural, inevitable, a thing we all must share, must undergo at some time, so no time is better or worse for it (*CG* 1.11). He takes the pagan dictum that what happens to the body is not important, only the mind is precious, and gives it a Christian turn: women raped in Rome's fall do not lose their chastity, which is a virtue in the soul and does not depend on how others use the body. Even if the body responded, mechanically (he refers to the self-lubrication of a woman's stimulated genitals), that does not matter if the soul withheld consent (1.16–18). No one should seek suicide for any shame imposed on them. God

can forgive as well as console, but the suicide places a person beyond repentance (the same argument he uses against capital punishment). The Romans who glorified Lucretia for not living with the shame of rape were more interested in human pride than divine mercy (1.22–25). Her crime was worse than Tarquin's: "He took her body, she took her life. He raped, she murdered" (1.19).

In the second book of *The City of God*, Augustine begins what amounts to a long palinode, or "reverse song," undoing his own favorite poem, Virgil's *Aeneid*. Virgil described the gods' plan to make Rome an image of the divine order of justice. Augustine says Rome never became that, and never could have. No merely human institution can. Only the City of God has perfect order.

Then what was Rome? The polar opposite of the City of God? Augustine cannot say that, since good Christians were involved in Rome's workings—just officials like Marcellinus, powerful patrons like Melania and Pinian. Against the Donatists, Augustine had argued that the Church on earth is a mixed body, with some weeds growing amid the wheat. In the same way, worldly governments have some wheat growing among the weeds. If both are mingled, with the same two types living together, how are they to be distinguished, if at all?

Here again Tyconius comes to Augustine's aid. He too believed in the mixed Church. But he contrasted Christ's body (the Christian community with some sinners in it) with Satan's body (containing only sinners, though some are also mingled in with Christ's members). This is an eschatological vision of what is going on in human history—the growing toward a final harvest that separates saints from sinners.

Augustine could use this schema, but only very carefully. For one thing, it looked too much like the picture Manicheans created of two independent principles—one sheer evil, the other perfect good—at war with each other in the messy midground of human history. In his break with Manicheism, Augustine had denied that evil has any existence in itself. He held now that pure evil would erase itself—it must have a "carrier" of the good in order to exist.

So, instead of contrasting a Satanic ruler with the City of God, Augustine spoke of the City of (postlapsarian) Man, or the Earthly City—a city made possible by Adam's fall, and constituted as an actual society when Cain founded his town. Then Augustine applied to this city all the biblical symbols Tyconius had used of the Satanic realm—especially Babylon, contrasted with Jerusalem.

But this led to a problem which readers of the early books must have pointed out to Augustine. If the City of God is contrasted with the City of Man in human history, does that mean there *are four* polities, two of men and two of angels (the unfallen angels and the devils)? At the beginning of book 12, Augustine admits that there are only two cities, the good angels in the City of God, the bad ones in the Earthly City. But that takes Augustine back to his reluctance to use Tyconius' scheme of God versus Satan.

Augustine now sees that even the hell over which Satan rules is good in its way. Even robber bands, if they function at all, have perverted good things at the basis of their power to do bad—not only their God-derived existence, but sufficient concord to act as a group, to share common risks and rewards, to perdure on the basis of cooperation. Even self-love is a love of the good things God created in the self.

Augustine is, as usual, reorienting classical thought, which based society on justice. Augustine early on calls Cicero's definition of a polity (*civitas*) mistaken. Cicero, like Plato before him, based society on its members' joint recognition of what is just (*juris consensu*, 2.21). Augustine bases society on a social agreement on "things one loves" (*rerum quas diligit*, 19.24). We see once again that Augustine gives primacy to the *will*, not the intellect, to love, not to theories of justice.

Some have taken the demotion of justice to mean a removal of justice. But Augustine always said man's actions should be just, no matter in what area. In his famous saying, "What is a political regime, when devoid of justice, but organized crime?" (*CG* 4.4). But remember that his definition of a society *extended* to gangs of crooks. It is broad enough to embrace relatively just and relatively unjust regimes—and to allow him to give quali-

fied allegiance to "earthly societies." Thus he could require Christians to be good citizens, or ask officials to be impartial, however spottily their political ideals were realized.

Indeed, his definition extends even to hell, where a perverted self-love creates a perverted society. To love the self is to love that image of God one finds in the soul (Augustine's teaching in *The Trinity*). It only becomes damning when it is a self-love that turns against ("hates") God. This is a far more complex picture than that given when various sayings are taken out of their place in Augustine's dynamic picture of social reality. When he condemns "the Earthly City," he is condemning the satanic city to which the damned are tending—as when Paul uses "the flesh" to describe sensual *principle,* not the mere physical body; or as when the Bible says the world (*mundus*) is condemned, meaning by "worldliness" that which fights God's "reconciliation of the world to Himself."

Though ultimate citizenship will be in the City of God or the City of Self-Love, we cannot at the moment identify people according to that citizenship. God foreknows. We do not. Today's sinner may be tomorrow's saint, and vice-versa. Visible members of the Church on earth will end up in hell. Those outside will end up in heaven. Till the final judgment, wheat and weeds grow together, often mistaken for each other. Augustine cultivates an agnosticism about the state of others' souls—which entails a reverent fear for his own safety.

Because he thinks in biblical symbols, the Augustinian analysis has a shifting, multidimensional, dynamic quality. Tyconius had shown that the same symbol—e.g., the daystar, or the mountain—can be used at times for Satan, at times for God. This frustrates those who want neat and static patterns, and who crudely hypostasize Augustine's two cities as church and state, or heaven and earth, or time and eternity. Time is shot through with eternity, invisibly, in the historic Rome or the historic Church. God and Satan have adherents jumbled through the mixtures of all society from robber bands to episcopal councils. Much of the real drama of souls takes place behind the curtains. Augustine had his own reason to say that the world is a place "where ignorant armies clash by night"—though Matthew

Arnold, when he wrote those words, was announcing God's death and Augustine drew his vision precisely from his theology of a hidden God, a providence that is not manifest. According to Augustine, saints and sinners can live together precisely because they do *not* share an ultimate orientation toward justice. What they have instead, in the criss-crossing of social ties, are sufficient concrete good things to protect and love in a joint way. What was a crippling love-bond in Adam and Eve (*socialis necessitudo*) can also be the desirable concord of society.

Post-Enlightenment liberalism has achieved a different, in many ways superior, approach to tolerance. Prescinding from social bonds, which are dismissed as irrational tribalism, it tries to achieve agreement on procedural rules and impartial equity. This has wrought great things, but at a cost. When faced with the intransigence of "irrational" social ties of religion, ethnicity, patriotism, or tradition, such liberalism can do nothing but condemn in frustrated noncomprehension. The liberal plan is superior as prescription, in situations where it can work; but Augustine can be superior in *description* of all societies, those that submit to the liberal project and those that do not. There is a kind of "existential" realism to an Augustinian analysis like Cardinal Newman's, who said that concrete societies have "a certain assemblage of beliefs, convictions, rules, usages, traditions, proverbs, and principles: some political, some social, some moral; and these tending to some definite form of government and *modus vivendi* or polity, as their natural scope" (*Who's to Blame?*). This Augustinian realism is found not only in a Catholic like Newman, but in an atheist like Hume, who describes "the social disposition of mankind, by which men are commonly much attached to their ancient government"—making it difficult, and sometimes dangerous, to end such ties ("Of the First Principles of Government"). Hume established government on societal assumptions to be called "opinion," which is much like Augustine's "predilection" (*quas diligunt*). The Augustinian analysis is not confined to conservatives like Hume (or Burke); it can be found in a republican like James Madison, who also embraced the practical role of socialized opinion:

> The reason of man, like man himself, is timid and cautious when left alone; and acquires firmness and confidence in proportion to the number with which it is associated. When the examples which fortify opinion are *ancient* as well as *numerous,* they are known to have a double effect. In a nation of philosophers, this consideration ought to be disregarded. A reverence for the laws would be sufficiently inculcated by the voice of enlightened reason. But a nation of philosophers is as little to be expected as the philosophical race of kings wished for by Plato. And in every other nation, the most rational government will not find it a superfluous advantage to have the prejudices of the community on its side. (*The Federalist* No. 49)

Peter Brown (*R and S* 43 and 16) finds an Augustinian view of the role of concrete predilections in empirical modern findings of the social sciences:

> So much of our modern study in sociology and social psychology has shown the degree to which political obedience is, in fact, secured, and political society coheres, by the mediation of a whole half-hidden world of irrational, semi-conscious and conscious elements that can include factors as diverse as childhood attitudes toward authority, crystallized around abiding inner figures, half-sensed images of security, of greatness, of the good life, and, on the conscious plane, the acceptance of certain values. These make up an orientation analogous to Augustine's *dilectio.*

Augustine spent fifteen years writing the twenty-two books of *The City of God*, that "great and trying labor" (*CG* 1 Pref.). They were years of increasing desire for some measure of temporal peace. Augustine's hopes for enlightened leadership, first lodged in Marcellinus, then cruelly disappointed, were partly revived when another Christian official, Boniface, came to Africa in 417 as commander (count) of the Roman military force. Augustine sent him a long statement of the Donatist policy he had created for Marcellinus (*L* 185). Since Boniface had important frontier duties, keeping out Saharan tribes from Christian

Africa, Augustine wrote for him in 418 a little treatise on military morality—war should be waged only when it is necessary to peace, and then with the minimum necessary violence; truth should be observed even toward the enemy; mercy to the vanquished precludes use of the death penalty (*L* 189).

Those who think Augustine took a purely negative view of earthly realms should reflect on the fact that the bishop, in his late sixties, traveled 120 miles from Hippo to meet with Boniface in order to *dissuade* the count from giving up power to become a monk. He said that preserving political order can be a godly vocation if it protects a Christian peace (*L* 122.3, 7). He would later be disappointed in Boniface, who was neither as intelligent nor as conscientious as Marcellinus, but Augustine's relation with him shows the kind of experience his theories of social organization were based on.

Power relations were also at the center of Augustine's ecclesiastical politics in this period. When Apiarius, an unruly priest excommunicated in Africa, went to Rome for reinstatement in 419, Pope Zosimus sent delegates to Africa in order to investigate. A special council was called in Carthage (220 bishops attending, which shows the gravity of the matter) to deny the pope jurisdiction. When the pope's envoys tried to defend his authority by quoting the canons of the ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325), Aurelius and Augustine showed their greater mastery of relevant documents, as they had in the Confrontation with the Donatists: Nicaea gave no authority for appeals by priests against their episcopal superiors. When the envoys challenged the Africans' documents, Augustine suggested that a special mission be sent to the East to verify the records' accuracy. The pope's delegates had to settle for that.

The Africans were courteous but firm. This was not the first time they had stymied Pope Zosimus. When, in 418, the pope exonerated Pelagius of charges of heresy, the Africans sent a secret mission to Emperor Honorius, who condemned Pelagius—a condemnation promptly echoed by a plenary council of Carthage. Zosimus was forced to back down and issue his own condemnation. Perversely, this defeat of Rome was later claimed as a

victory for papal supremacy. After the pope's second, compelled decision, Augustine told his congregation:

> In this proceeding (*causa*), two council findings were sent to the Apostolic See, and a report has come back. The proceeding is ended—I wish the heresy were. (*S* 131.10)

That message would later be transformed by papal apologists into: "Rome has spoken, the matter (*causa*) is ended."

The treatment of Pelagius involved a power struggle at a deeper level than this fencing between Rome and Carthage. Though Augustine joined the struggle at a late stage, in 415, it had been going on for decades before his intervention, creating enmities he fell heir to. Scholars are still sorting out all the factors at play, building on Robert Evans's pioneering book *Pelagius Inquiries and Appraisals* (1968). In Pelagius, Augustine inherited an enemy from Jerome. Though Augustine only glimpsed Pelagius in Carthage in 411, the two men had been in Rome at the same time (383–84, 387–88). That is when Jerome knew the British ascetic—well enough to ridicule his appearance later on, calling him "slantyhead" and "the fat man filled with Scottish porridge," who "waddles like a turtle."

Relations between Jerome and Pelagius worsened when Jerome heard, in Bethlehem, that Pelagius was attacking Jerome's pamphlet on Jovinian in 394. Jovinian had claimed that Christian marriage can be as meritorious as consecrated virginity. Jerome's intemperate response went so far as to call marriage evil, saying that even a later martyrdom could barely wash its taint from a woman. This effusion was too much even for Jerome's embattled Roman allies. As J. N. D. Kelly puts it:

> There was panic among Jerome's friends. His exaggerated claims and unbridled language, they were quick to see, were doing incalculable damage to the very cause he and they wished to uphold. Pammachus made valiant efforts to withdraw as many copies of the embarrassing pamphlet from circulation as he could.[11]

Pelagius in Rome had absorbed many of the ideas of Rufinus' circle of educated aristocrats. Rufinus was Jerome's ex-friend, who had taken away from him a rich and holy patron, Melania, the daughter of Albina (whose husband, Pinian, narrowly escaped forcible ordination in Augustine's church after the sack of Rome).

Pelagius, like Albina, left Rome at the time of Alaric's invasion, going through Sicily toward Africa and then to Jerusalem, where Jerome renewed his attack on him in 414, calling him an "Origenist." Jerome had earlier helped begin what Brown calls the Church's first witch hunt, against Origen, the daring speculator whose Bible commentaries Rufinus had translated in Rome. When Albina, Melania, and Pinian also reached the Holy Land, Jerome won them back from Rufinus' memory—even though he had called Melania's grandmother and namesake "one whose very name reveals the depths of her black betrayal" (*L* 133.3, *melan* is Greek for "black").

Augustine was reluctant to get into this squabble—Brown thinks because he had heard Pelagius' virtue praised by such friends as Albina and Paulinus of Nola, who admired the Briton. Augustine may also have entertained some misgivings about having Jerome as an ally—one rarely needed enemies when Jerome was your friend. Pelagius had expressed his own sincere admiration for Augustine's earlier works, especially the dialogue *Freedom of Choice*, in a letter he sent Augustine from Jerusalem around 413. Augustine sent back a polite thank-you note, which Pelagius used two years later to show that Augustine supported him. Augustine, for whom the letter was short and perfunctory, felt Pelagius should have known he was being treated with caution.

Pelagius' less measured associate Caelestius had been condemned by the African Council in 411, for denying that Adam's sin brought death to mankind. When Marcellinus expressed concern about Caelestius' views, Augustine wrote two treatises for him in 413 to refute Caelestius' views without ascribing them to Pelagius (*What Sin Deserves* and *The Spirit and the Letter*).

But in 415 Augustine read Pelagius' own work *Nature*, which argued that Adam's fall did not cripple human nature. Pelagius'

exhaustive citation of Catholic authorities seemed especially dangerous to Augustine, and he at last opened fire on Pelagius himself, answering the Briton's book *Nature* with his own *Nature and Grace*. Jerome egged Augustine on, saying they should lay aside their differences to make common cause against Pelagius (*L* 172.1). In 416, Jerome peppered Augustine with four letters in quick succession (only one survives; see *L* 19.1).

In 415, Pelagius had been declared orthodox by a Palestinian council. Jerome wanted to get a condemnation from the West, since his own influence was not working in the East. Augustine wrote to Eastern prelates—John of Jerusalem and Cyril of Alexandria—trying to learn the council's grounds for exoneration. Convinced that the Eastern council had erred, he put into action the efficient conciliar system of Carthage, solicited Honorius' condemnation of Pelagius, and extracted the condemnation from Pope Zosimus: "The proceeding is ended—I wish the heresy were." Vain wish. Augustine had entered a quagmire in which he would thrash about for the remaining fifteen years of his life.

NOTES

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1. He began *The Testimony* (*Confessiones*) in 397 and was perhaps still polishing it in 401. He began *The Trinity* (*De Trinitate*) in 400 and *First Meanings in Genesis* (*De Genesi ad Litteram*) in 401—they were finished, respectively, in 416 and 415.

2. Works of Augustine are cited as follows:

CG	*The City of God (De Civitate Dei)*
L	*Letters (Epistolae)*
P	*Explaining the Psalms (Enarrationes in Psalmos)*
S	*Sermons (Sermones)*

3. Frederik van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop: The Life and Work of a Father of the Church*, trans. B. Battershaw and G. R. Lamb (London and New York 1961), 259–65.

4. *Tyconius: The Book of Rules*, ed. by William S. Babcock (Atlanta 1989), 30, 32. For the importance of Tyconius to Augustine: R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of Augustine* (Cambridge 1970), 105–32.

5. The Donatists' insistence on fidelity to death made the martyr's shrine the center of their cult. Pilgrims to these shrines included a violent wing of the Donatist movement, one ridiculed by its enemies as "hut people," *circumcelliones*.

6. Paul Monceaux, *Histoire litteraire d l'Afrique chrétienne*, 7 vols. (Paris 1901–1923), 4.423. Hereafter cited in the text as Monceaux.

7. W. H. C. Frend, *The Donatist Church* (Oxford 1952), 279. Hereafter cited in the text as Frend.

8. André Mandouze, *Prosopographia chrétienne du bas-empire: Afrique, 303–533* (Paris 1982), 671–84.

9. Peter Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine* (New York 1972), 309–16, 335–36. Hereafter cited in the text as *R and S*.

10. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Los Angeles 1967), 233. Cited in the text as Brown.

11. J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome* (New York 1975), 188.