

**“On the Way to Truth
and Peace” (ep. 33, 6):
Augustine’s Anti-Donatist
Readings of John 14: 27a**

En el camino de la verdad y la paz.
Lecturas anti-donatistas de san
Agustín de Juan 14, 27a

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Abstract

This chapter traces the development of Augustine's discourse on peace in light of anti-Donatist polemics found in both his earlier letters and formal treatises. First, it presents evidence of Augustine's effort to secure peace in North Africa from his letters; and second, the author focuses on Augustine's appeal to the Latin text of John 14:27a in light of contemporary social and ecclesial unrest. Whereas the first point of departure asks how Augustine's thoughts on upholding the public order appear at the level of social and political reflection, the second dimension turns to examine the concurrent role of biblical interpretation to a similar, yet distinct end. Both were essential forms of expressing his disagreements with Donatist views. In this way, the chapter demonstrates how the anti-Donatist message of peace was delivered along at least two supporting avenues: 1. Of promoting social stability through networking and letter exchange; and 2. Of promoting ecclesial unity and fidelity to Christ via biblical support. For Augustine, the *pax Christi* as described in this verse of the Gospel of John—unlike the *pax Donati*—provided for an authentic common good within time and history, as well as in the light of eternity. A Donatist notion of peace would appear to rest upon undervaluing the secular order and limited interpretation of John 14: 27a. In describing the Johannine gift of Christ as *pax temporalis*, however, Augustine remained aware that any form of peace achieved in the present was to be regarded as a passing and imperfect anticipation.

Keywords: biblical interpretation, Donatism, letters of Augustine, religious polemic.



Resumen

Este capítulo describe el desarrollo del discurso de san Agustín sobre la paz a la luz de las polémicas anti-Donatistas presentes en sus cartas como en sus tratados formales. Primero, se estudia la evidencia de los esfuerzos de Agustín para asegurar la paz en el norte de África a partir de sus cartas; segundo, el autor se centra en la apelación de san Agustín al texto latino de Juan 14, 27a en relación al descontento social y eclesial contemporáneo. El primer punto de partida es analizar cómo los pensamientos de san Agustín sobre la defensa del orden público aparecen en el nivel de la reflexión social y política, mientras que en un segundo momento se centra en examinar el papel de la interpretación bíblica frente a un fin similar, aunque con elementos diferenciadores. Ambos aspectos eran formas esenciales de expresar los desacuerdos de Agustín con los puntos de vista Donatistas. De esta manera, el capítulo demuestra cómo se transmitió el mensaje de paz anti-Donatista en al menos dos vías de apoyo: (1) promover la estabilidad social a través de redes sociales y el intercambio de cartas; y (2) promover la unidad eclesial y la fidelidad a Cristo a través del apoyo bíblico. Para Agustín, la *pax Christi*, tal como se describe en este versículo del evangelio de Juan, a diferencia de la *pax Donati*, aportó un auténtico bien común dentro del tiempo y la historia, así como a la luz de la eternidad. Una noción Donatista de paz parecía menospreciar el orden secular y la interpretación limitada de Juan 14, 27a, sin embargo, al describir el don Juanino de Cristo como *pax temporalis*, Agustín era consciente de que cualquier forma de paz lograda en el presente debía considerarse como una anticipación pasajera e imperfecta.

Palabras claves: Polémica religiosa, Donatismo, interpretación bíblica, cartas de san Agustín.



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As many sources demonstrate, Augustine was a man of peace. Even when he later allowed for possible intervention of the Roman authorities, Augustine still sought a peaceful reconciliation with his Donatist opponents. In an early (395/396 A. D.) letter to the Donatist Bishop of Hippo, Procleianus, for example, written in the first years of his own ministry as the “Catholic” bishop of the city, Augustine spoke in conciliatory, even endearing terms, of how both men ought to guide and correct their flocks, so that “by our unfeigned charity, they may be recalled from error and dissension to the way of truth and peace (*in veritatis et pacis itinera*)” (*ep.*, 33,6, trans. Parsons). This pastoral ideal of appealing to his opponent’s humanity, however, was informed by a biblical, Christological principle found in the words of John 14: 27, which Augustine cites to the Donatist bishop in the opening of his letter:

Therefore, as far as the Lord will give me strength, I will search out and discuss with you the cause, the origin, and the nature of the sad and lamentable division which has arisen in the Church of Christ, to which he said, “My peace I give unto you, my peace I leave you” (*ep.*, 33, 2).¹

How, Augustine implies, could the followers of Christ nullify and revoke the gift of this peace even in their treatment of one another?

Clearly, the broken peace of the Church in North Africa was a pervasive problem of pastoral concern that threatened not only the integrity of those who identified as Christ’s followers, but also the stability of Roman society. In the same letter (*ep.*, 33, 5), Augustine laments,

You see with what wretched foulness the families of the Christian home are defiled. Husbands and wives agree about their bed and disagree about the altar of Christ. They swear by Him in order to have mutual peace, but they cannot have it in Him. Sons share one home with their parents, but they do not share the same house of God. They wish to receive the inheritance of those with whom they quarrel about the inheritance of Christ; slave and master tear asunder the common God who “took the form of a servant” (Phil 2:7) that He might free us all from slavery... what injury has Christ done to us that we tear His members apart?²

¹“Quod te multum gaudeo nostrae humilitati offerre dignatum neque ullo modo possum tantam occasionem benigni animi tui deserere, ut, quantum vires dominus praeberre dignabitur, quaeram tecum atque discutiam, quae causa, quae origo, quae ratio in ecclesia Christi, cui dixit: pacem meam do vobis, pacem meam relinquo vobis” (CSEL 34, 2; 19).

²“Vides, quanta et quam miserabili foeditate christianae domus familiaeque turpatae sint. Mariti et uxores de suo lecto sibi consentiunt et de Christi altari dissentiunt: per illum sibi

As unflattering as these details may be, for Augustine they were simply the symptoms of a deeper problem, which lay at the root of disagreement between “Donatists” and “Catholics.” The *causa, origo*, and *ratio* of the African schism was “a dispute about our very Head.”³ Yet the result, described briefly in this letter and explored at length in modern scholarship (Frend 1952; Shaw), was a state of disarray and conflict. Indeed, by the time of Augustine, what began as an ecclesial dispute in the early fourth century had reached such levels of intensity that imperial intervention became increasingly necessary.

Rather than rehearse the so-called Donatist controversy in broad outline, I propose instead to build upon Augustine’s comments in *ep.* 33 to Proculianus, as a point of departure for his thought on peace in the historical context of North African religious polemics. Jennifer Ebbeler has recently provided an able and insightful point of departure for studies of Augustine’s use of letter writing in relation both to polemical concerns and biblical exegesis.⁴ With the principles established by her work in mind, in the first section I aim to indicate the various audiences to which Augustine wrote as he was administering, instructing and intervening in the midst of the religious and social conflict.⁵ As he addressed individuals from distinct social backgrounds, Augustine adapted his message about peace and presentation of the many concerns arising in light of the Donatist-Catholic schism. The evidence seems to point toward the early development of his thought on *bellum iustum*, although I make no remarkably new claims; yet my reason for introducing this material is rather to situate Augustine’s rhetoric about peace and violence within his own social milieu, thus further anchoring his exegesis appropriately.

iurant, ut inter se pacem habeant, et in illo habere non possunt; filii cum parentibus unam domum habent suam et domum dei non habent unam; succedere in eorum hereditatem cupiunt, cum quibus de Christi hereditate rixantur; serui et domini commune deum diuidunt, qui formam serui accepit (Phil 2:7), ut omnes serviendo liberaret; honorant nos vestri, honorant vos nostri; per coronam nostrum nos adiurant vestri, per coronam vestram vos adiurant nostri; omnium verba suscipimus, neminem offendere volumus; quod nos solus Christus offendit, cuius membra laniamus?” (CSEL 34, 2; 22).

³ “Non de auro, non de argento, non de fundis et pecoribus, pro quibus rebus cotidie submisso capite salutamus, ut dissensio hominum terminemus, sed de ipso capite nostro tam turpis inter nos et perniciose dissension est” (*ep.*, 33, 5) (CSEL 34, 2; 22).

⁴ See especially in relation to Donatism her chapter on the controversy as it appears in selected letters of Augustine (151-189).

⁵ Here, I also have in mind work on textual communities and social identity, as found especially in the chapters of the volume edited by Richard Miles: Miles, “Textual Communities and the Donatist Controversy” (249-283), and Rebillard, “Augustine in Controversy with the Donatists before 411” (297-316).

In the second section, I transition to consider Augustine's exegesis of a single verse—John 14: 27, which he had already identified in the mid-390s as a key biblical locus for discussion with Donatist leaders. This study, in contrast to the somewhat expansive overview of the previous section, offers a detailed account of how Augustine processed his mediation efforts in light of the testimony of the scriptures, and the light of Christ, by reference to a single Johannine saying of Jesus. In line with much of his anti-Donatist argumentation elsewhere, for example in the early tractates on John (*Io. ev. tr.*, 1-16), Augustine's sacramental theology, in particular his doctrine of baptism, is entirely Christ-centred.⁶ This feature shines forth clearly in his readings of John 14: 27a, frequently joined with favourite Pauline passages such as Ephesians 2: 14, in which we witness a consistently anti-Donatist, polemical use of the Latin text. My modest purpose here is simply to suggest how Augustine's discourse on peace as a secular virtue dove-tailed with his engagement with Donatist positions on ecclesial communion and self-definition. Does Augustine present a uniform teaching on this "Johannine"/anti-Donatist peace; or could one detect possible waves of diachronic variance and (subtle) shifts of opinion?

Peace and Violence in the Anti-Donatist Letters of Augustine⁷

Early evidence from Augustine's episcopal career, when he first encountered Donatism and engaged in debate with Donatist bishops, may appear to suggest just how friendly his efforts of correction and reconciliation were. Although he remains sensitive to the significant division among so-called "Christians"

⁶ For example, "Now whereas John had received a baptism that would properly be called John's, the Lord, Jesus Christ, however did not wish to give his baptism to anyone, not that no one might be baptized with the Lord's baptism, but that the Lord himself might always be baptizing. This was done so that the Lord might baptize also through ministers, that is, that those whom the Lord's ministers were going to baptize, the Lord, not they, would be baptizing. For it is one thing to baptize in the role of a minister; another to baptize with power" (trans. Rettig). "Quoniam ergo acceperat Iohannes baptismum, qui proprie Iohannis diceretur; dominus autem Iesus Christus noluit baptismum suum alicui dare, non ut nemo baptizaretur baptismi domini, sed ut semper ipse dominus baptizaret: ita actum est, ut et per ministros dominus baptizaret, id est, ut quod ministerium domini baptizaturum errant, dominus baptizaret, non illi. Aliud est enim baptizare per ministerium, aliud baptizare per potestatem" (*Io. ev. tr.*, 5, 6, 1) (CCSL 36; 43).

⁷ While writing this chapter, I presented a draft of the following section at the 52nd International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, for M. Djuth's pre-arranged session, "Augustine's Correspondence: Networking from North Africa."

in North Africa, Augustine nevertheless regards his Donatist counterpart, the bishop Proculianus, as something akin to a co-worker in shepherding the people of God, “on the way to truth and peace” (*ep.*, 33, 6). Yet this conciliatory nature was not always evident, whether in Augustine’s letters or anti-Donatist treatises, especially in view of the much-studied question of his changing positions on religious coercion (Brown 1964). In this section, I wish to outline in broad fashion the contours of this difficult area of interpretation for scholars of Augustine, in order to ask the question of how his reading of John 14: 27a may have changed ever so slightly over the same period. Is it possible to index a growing frustration on the part of the (Catholic) bishop of Hippo, even when he turns to explain an otherwise benign verse of the Scriptures? Any possible suggestion I might venture in this direction will require an initial survey of how Augustine’s thought on peace and violence may have evolved over the course of his role in the Donatist controversy.

Status Quaestionis

At least two studies on the relation between Augustine’s letters and the City of God have been undertaken: the more significant being that of Prete, who in 1968 demonstrated a broad connection along the lines of “good and evil, and the two cities”, “the city of God and the Roman empire”, “the earthly city and the state”, “pagan and Christian religion”, “eschatology”, and “the superiority of divine peace to human peace” (Morán 169-170). Courcelle (264-265) summarizes the study’s results, as identifying a profoundly spiritual vision of “truth”, “happiness” and “God”, as well as the deeply human concerns for “death”, the “fall”, “prayer” and the nature of “time.” Of course, as another scholar writes, “the correspondence of Saint Augustine constitutes, as we know, an irreplaceable resource for knowledge of the man, his life, his activity, and his thought.” Yet, I would like here to highlight ways in which these personal letters on coercion seem to anticipate a particular, widely discussed element of the City of God, that of the “just war” (*civ.*, 19, 15)—a work dedicated to Flavius Marcellinus, who figured prominently in Augustine’s anti-Donatist letters on religious coercion.

For better or worse, Augustine of Hippo is often credited as a major player in developing the concept, made popular in Western political thought at least since the time of Thomas Aquinas, yet with clear precedent in earlier authors.⁸

⁸ For evidence of Augustine’s own literal mention of the phrase, see *civ.* 19, 15 (CCSL 48, 682): “Nam et cum iustum geritur bellum, pro peccato e contrario dimicatur; et omnis victoria,

A number of recent studies, which tend to view Augustine and the concept of “just war” unfavourably—blaming him and his “bad idea” for contemporary invasions, for example—seem to assume a more static view of Augustine’s own development.⁹ Yet even scholars of Augustine have been tempted to such a synchronic reading, failing to distinguish the context and growth of his thought and pastoral efforts.

The antecedent of what becomes perhaps his final expression of anything that would approximate a theory of *bellum iustum* in the *City of God* was, among other competing pressures, his thought on religious coercion—which, as Peter Brown’s important paper given at Oxford in 1963 pointed out, turned principally on his encounter with the “Donatist” Church in North Africa.

Yet, in contrast to any static view, Brown was quick to observe that on the topic of “coercion” (*correptio*, “rebuke”; not *cohercitorio*, “restraint” or “punishment”)—as with most any other topic of theological interest or otherwise—, “never appears as a ‘doctrine’ in a state of rest: it is marked by a painful and protracted attempt to embrace and resolve tensions” (Brown 107).¹⁰ Brown adds, that in addition to Donatism, the “sudden collapse of paganism” in the fourth century was a contributing factor to Augustine’s apparent “optimism” in the early years of his correspondence with Donatist leaders between A. D. 392-402, until his eventual transition to the more harsh view in support of any intervention after A. D. 405, and final attitude IN A.D. 420 as a “harsh and cold victor.”¹¹ Yet, this sharp distinction in the chronology of Augustine’s attitudes

cum etiam malis provenit, divino iudicio victos humiliat vel emendans peccata vel puniens.” On the inseparable relationship between “war” and “peace,” see above at *civ.* 19, 13 (CCSL, 48, 679): “Sic est quaedam pax sine ullo bello, bellum vero esse sine aliqua pace non potest.” Many studies on Augustine and *bellum iustum* are to be found; e. g., see Weithman “Augustine’s Political Philosophy (234-252); and “Augustine and Aquinas” (353-376).

⁹ See, for example, Bourgeois (449-474); Reed and Ryall; Messina and de Paulo; and Wynn. For a more contextual, historical approach, on the other hand, which I hope to develop here, see Markus; and Langan (19-38).

¹⁰ See also Gaumer (171-203); and Gaumer as well as Dupont (345-371). Henry Chadwick (113) remains correct in his statement that, “in later ages [Augustine’s] arguments came to be disastrously exploited by inquisitors, ecclesiastical and secular, who neglected his crucial proviso that the form of correction must be seen to be a loving familial chastisement, a minimal force, absolutely excluding torture or death even for cases of violence.”

¹¹ Brown writes (109), for example: “The historian of the Later Roman church is in constant danger of taking the end of paganism for granted. Yet the fate of paganism filled the imagination of the Christian congregations; and the place of the bishop in Roman society, indeed, the whole sense of direction of his church, was intimately linked with the fortunes of his traditional enemies—the pagan gods.”

on coercion and violence is largely external to the bishop of Hippo—since it was in A. D. 405 that imperial laws were established—the edict of unity, established by Honorius, identifying the “Donatists” as dissident Christians, and therefore criminals to the empire (Shaw 516).

Thus, rather than psychologise Augustine, as Brown may have done in his earliest work, including his biography on Augustine, the degrees of continuity amidst change, particularly on the issue of coercion and state-sponsored violence, may indicate not only the internal path of Augustine’s own thought, but also reflect the social realities in which he participated. In this respect, I wish to explore and contextualise a limited number of Augustine’s letters, especially those prepared after A. D. 400, during the phase of his most intensive anti-Donatist rhetoric, and before A. D. 427, by which time he had completed the final books of the *City of God*.

Overview of Relevant Epistolary Evidence

In addition to the nine letters written to opposing bishops highlighted in Brown’s early essay, Augustine would write on Donatism, in relation to the use of force—to other important audiences in the first and early-second decade of the 5th-century A. D.¹² These included fellow Catholic Christians, at least one pagan and one ex-Donatist, and, finally, Roman officials of his region. This last group was, in fact, the largest, and drew Augustine’s attention increasingly in later years surrounding the Conference at Carthage of A. D. 411, when Donatism was declared illegal by the imperial authority. It also offers another possible connection with “just war” and the thesis I would like to develop, in that presiding at the event was a certain Roman “tribune and notary” by the name Flavius Marcellinus, to whom Augustine would eventually dedicate his work, the *City of God*, and with whom he shared a correspondence on, following the successful verdict of A. D. 411 (*epp.*, 128-129, 132-139, 143, 151, 165). A relatively modern French dissertation has argued that “Donatism” was remarkably downplayed in letters between Augustine and Marcellinus, despite their value as evidence for exchange of Roman learning and civic virtue (Moreau 3-181).¹³ Nevertheless, the link with religious “coercion” and the question of “just” violence is unquestionable, as one finds also in the much later *ep.* 185 to Boniface; so how do these letters function within the three-fold scheme of Augustine’s

¹² For basic overview of the letters of Augustine, see the introduction and bibliography in “Saint Augustine Letters.”

¹³ See also Sabine (212).

audiences? What shades of continuity and difference may be found on the question of apparent sanctioned violence?

Though the three major audiences of Donatist bishops, fellow Catholics and Roman leaders overlap slightly in their chronology of when Augustine was actively corresponding with each, there is a clear developing line of preference to move from his religious rivals, to his religious friends, and finally the “secular” authority. Along the same trajectory, as scholars seem to agree, Augustine develops an increasing affinity for the use of violent means to achieve just ends, which at first glance might seem unexpected in light of the gift of Christ’s peace to his apostles described in the Gospel of John.

To adjust the parameters of Augustine’s development on religious coercion and violence as elements of what may be called “precursors” to a full-blown “just war” theory, I would also like to acknowledge and test a methodology and set of working assumptions already set in place by Brent Shaw and Éric Rebillard in their separate monographs, published in the past decade. These authors, in a relatively harmonious way, propose to view the various strata and layers of Roman society as multiple “identities”, which implies both individual and group identities. As Shaw rightly observes, “given the plurality of identities from which an individual might choose or have activated in a given situation, being Christian was only one (Shaw 772).” Thus, Augustine was both Roman and Catholic, and his correspondence with Roman officials and other Christians variously relies upon both of these identities, in addition to that of his being from North Africa; while in his approach, Rebillard wishes to suspend judgment about the objective fact of social identity or identities, in order to question, “when and how individuals do form groups, when attempts to form a group fail (5)” Thus, I will hold up three distinct social markers, and suggest how Augustine activates certain social identities depending on his audience—pagan or Christian, or “dissident.” These modes of discourse, however, may not be self-sustaining, nor entirely separate one from the other.

“Fellow Catholics”, “Fellow Saints”?

Letters to “fellow” Christians on the topics of religious coercion and the relationship between justice, apparent violence, and love are by contrast relatively fewer in number. The most prominent of which is likely letter 95, to Paulinus of Nola and Therasia, written in the second half of A. D. 408. Here, Augustine’s concerns also touch upon a deeply spiritual and existential question of death, resurrection, and eternal life. These probing meditations are designed

as response to the issue of punishment, which Augustine reminds Paulinus and Therasia is ultimately for the good of those punished. This element refers both to the purpose of punishment, as well as to the need for setting it within proper limits. Human life is rather difficult, Augustine acknowledges, and often seems like a constant struggle and even form of warfare (Job 7: 1). Yet in encounter with Donatists or pagans, Augustine develops a complete picture of the nature of temporal punishment, and its theological value, especially in relation to the practice of Christian charity and justice, as well as in relation to a more lasting, eternal punishment.

Educated pagans, former Donatists?

Augustine also wrote on the theme of coercion with educated pagans, as well as former Donatists. To Vincent, in *ep.* 93, Augustine wrote before A. D. 411, that love for one's enemy may include acts of violence against him, such as God's behavior toward Paul at his conversion. Similarly, to the pagan Nectarius in *ep.* 91, Augustine showed preference for the correction of punishment, over a false show of mercy: "There are ways in which evil men are open to punishment by Christians but only out of kindness and to their own benefit and improvement" (91, 9).¹⁴

Roman Tribunes and Proconsuls

The letters to Roman officials about Donatism and coercion are slightly more complex, in part since each correspondent occupied multiple social, political and religious identities, with overlapping or conflicting spheres of influence.

In *ep.* 89, to Festus, imperial representative (A. D. 406), Augustine's goal is to discuss the correction of non-Catholics, whether pagan or "Donatist", which he claims is "pleasing to God." To support himself, Augustine gives a history of the Donatist movement, and highlights that they have "separated themselves from the peace of the Church." Because of his audience, the imperial official Festus, Augustine gives priority to explanation of the "extra-ecclesial" reality of Donatism, and the need for a proper response on the part of ruling authorities. As a key element of this history, Augustine mentions the long-standing legal context and standing of the Donatist churches—in particular, their prior appeals to the emperor for judgment, dating back to the earliest years of the movement in the early 4th-century.

¹⁴ See Eno (309).

The measure of punishment is not directly addressed, as the purpose of this letter seems rather to be establishing the setting for religious conflict in North Africa, for a Roman representative less familiar with the social and political milieu, not to mention the inter-ecclesial discord. Though Augustine mentions baptism as a defining feature of the disagreement between Catholics and Donatists, and even indicates prominent biblical verses central to their respective baptismal theologies, Augustine's frame of reference is instead the "secular" and especially legal context: because the Donatists resist "reason" and "authority," Augustine must meet with Festus in person to prepare an improved response.

Brent Shaw highlights the need for such a form of explanation on the part of a local bishop for the sake of imperial officials: "Being a transient figure, the governor was not always well versed in local affairs. He often came from outside Africa and would face a myriad of local problems that were peculiar to the region and about which he would have to be educated (Shaw 499)." Yet a response to open conflict was called for, as Augustine had described in his *Contra Cresconuim*, written in the same year, on dissident practice of violence (521-522).¹⁵

Shaw describes four major cases of dissident violence in A. D. 403, which were attacks of "dissident Christians" on *servi Dei*: the Catholic bishop of Thubursicu Bure, Augustine the Catholic bishop of Hippo himself, Possidius, the Catholic bishop of Calama and Augustine's biographer, and Maximianus, the Catholic bishop of Bagaï. Another series of major cases involving Restitutus, a Catholic priest of Victoriana, Marcus, another Catholic priest from Casphaliana, and Marcianus, the Catholic bishop of Urga, occurred in the years immediately following, A. D. 405-406 (Shaw 522-531). Portions of these stories appeared in a dossier prepared for the imperial court at Ravenna, and Augustine would repeat them in his letter to Boniface, more than a decade later (Shaw 532).¹⁶

In letter 128, to Marcellinus, Augustine balances these two perspectives: that of the secular-legal context and sensitivity to a fellow Christian audience. Here, he speaks of the aftermath of the Conference of A. D. 411 in Carthage, and the need for protection against Donatists violently protesting the outcome. The legal history of appeal to Christian emperors, Augustine traces all the way back to the case of Caecilian, in the first part of the 4th-century. On the whole, the extended correspondence between Augustine and Marcellinus that

¹⁵ See *Cresc.* 3, 43, 47 (CSEL 52, 454-455).

¹⁶ See *ep.* 185, 29, 30 (CSEL 57, 27-28).

remains bears distinctive markings of a public letter, written for the benefit of all in the region, for the purpose of advancing the Christian peace. Likewise, letter 129 again refers to public records and the legal history of imperial intervention. Moreover, it solidifies the reader's impression of a clear alliance between Augustine and Marcellinus.

Written in the same year, letters 132 and 133 are increasingly diplomatic. In *ep.* 133 (late A. D. 411), again to *Marcellinus*, who was set as judge over *Circumcelliones* who had murdered a Catholic priest, Augustine argues that he should not apply the law of equal retribution. Rather, he argues for moderation and restraint: a Christian judge must respond as a loving father. The tone of this letter reveals the immense influence of Augustine had on Marcellinus as a bishop (*ep.*, 133, 3).

Letter 134, written at the same time (late A. D. 411) to *Aspringius*, brother of Marcellinus and a Christian judge of sorts—his official title was “proconsular governor” —, again qualifies the use of “torture” and discipline. In this instance, Augustine intercedes for the sake of preventing capital punishment, which he argues should—perhaps, *fortasse*—only occur in the most extreme circumstance. Instead, Augustine recommends the reading of court records which detail the legal history of public complaints by Donatists (*ep.*, 134, 4).¹⁷ Yet unlike the administration of a Christian church, Augustine remarks, a public State must revert to the use of fear as a deterrent against anti-social behavior (Shaw 504). Referring to the entire series of letters written by Augustine in the aftermath of A. D. 411, Shaw (715) claims that dissident (“circumcellion”) violence was the key reason for a Catholic bishop to consent to such penalty.

Preliminary Conclusions

As the progression through Augustine's career and various correspondents may well suggest, based on the evidence presented above, the Bishop of Hippo seems to have entered a sequence of connected phases of his thought on how Donatism itself was an affront to peace and stability in the Roman provinces of northern Africa. In the simplest of terms, Augustine came to favor the intervention of imperial authorities increasingly, especially after 400–402 A. D. when he began to prepare his key anti-Donatist writings. The nearly affectionate tone of address one finds in *ep.* 33 to the Donatist Bishop of Hippo in 395/396 A. D. has all but disappeared by the time of his appeal to Boniface

¹⁷ “Legenda sunt gesta ad sandandas animas.”

more than twenty years later, after the Conference of Carthage in 411 A. D., where Donatism received “final” imperial disapproval.

In the following section, I propose to address the concurrent development of Augustine’s Johannine exegesis, conditioned by his prolonged encounter with the Donatist party. It would be unfair and dishonest to map a steady decline in early optimism with respect to Augustine’s reading of John, yet it is true that John 14: 27a remained a constant ally which he summoned in his debate with the Donatists. In short, his early pastoral affection for Christ and his followers—expressed characteristically in *ep.* 33, 5–6—never wavers; though his sharp disagreement with Donatist ecclesiology and social praxis likewise remained firm and unmoving.

John 14: 27 in Augustine’s Anti-Donatist Writings

The appearance of this particular verse solely within a limited context of Augustine’s anti-Donatist polemic may not be possible to prove conclusively. Enough evidence exists, however, to indicate that even from an early date, the verse occupied a central position in the polemical exegesis of Augustine, and most likely also his opponents (Tilley 81). One is tempted to point out the irony of such a verse standing between opposing Christian parties; yet, doing so would possibly over-trivialize a grave situation in which violent means to violent ends was always a real possibility, and peace a fragile balance that was frequently threatened.

Overview of the textual evidence

Between his first arrival back to North Africa in the late 380s and his final days as bishop at Hippo in 430, Augustine left for his contemporary and future readers a wide range of citations for John 14: 27a, on the gift of Christ’s peace to the apostles. Recorded in his “Farewell discourse”, the words were firmly established in the Christian mind from an early stage, as even today they are accompanied by the giving of a “sign of peace” which they precede. While the form “peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you” (RSV) may be the most familiar today, and reflects the word order of Greek manuscripts for the New Testament, the Latin text of Augustine’s bibles was often given with the clauses reversed: “My peace I give you, my peace I leave you” (*pacem meam do vobis, pacem meam relinquo vobis, ep.* 33, 2). Like many verses of the Latin bible in the history of its transmission (Houghton 2016), however, variance at

times occurred—in the case of Augustine, as for other Latin exegetes, perhaps due to his use of a “mental text” or local copies of the bible (Houghton 2008).¹⁸ This feature affected the word order, including the presence or absence of key words, such as the absence of *meam* at *Io. ev. tr. 77, 4*—where, incidentally, the order of clauses is also reversed—which then offers Augustine opportunity for what is a form of *ex tempore* theological speculation about the precise wording of each clause, and why one should merit Christ’s use of *meam*, while the other should not.¹⁹ This type of variation seems to occupy Augustine’s attention only rarely.

en. Ps. 10, 6 (392 A. D.)

In one of the earliest available references to John 14: 27a, Augustine already conceives of the verse’s potential in Donatist debate. Here, he blames his rivals for violating the very peace of Christ through their “unspeakable dissent” (*quam vos nefanda dissension volastis*, CCSL 38; 79). From the first verse of this psalm, Augustine’s mind is fixed on the Donatists, the *pars Donati* (10, 5), against which he holds up the model of the imperfect Church, for which the moon is an allegorical figure. His mention of the minority group, the *circumcelliones*, in section 5 may stand out as the immediate focus of his attention in the following section 6, where he speaks of the division in the terms given above. To shift the blame entirely on this group within the Donatist party, however great their actual measure of guilt, would in the very least misrepresent Augustine’s positions here. “If Macarius or Caecilian have offended you, why do you destroy the peace of Christ,” Augustine asks his Donatist opponents.

en. Ps. 28, 11 (392 A. D.)

Writing at nearly the same time as the previous Psalm commentary, Augustine on a separate occasion turned to reference the same phrase from John 14: 27a. In this instance, as the first quotation which does not come from the text of the Psalm, the words of Christ giving his peace also close this reflection. When Augustine reads that “The Lord will bless his people in peace” (*dominus ben-*

¹⁸ For example, in his 400/403 A. D. work against Petilian (c. *litt. Pet.*, 2,49), Augustine includes a citation which instead reads, “*pacem meam do vobis, pacem meam dimitto vobis.*” The same occurs at *util. ieiun.* 13, written some years later in 408 A. D.

¹⁹ “*Sed quid est ubi ait: pacem relinquo vobis, non addidit meam; ubi vero ait: do vobis, ibi dixit meam? Utrum subaudiendum est meam, et ubi dictum non est, quia potest referri ad utrumque etiam quod semel et quaerendum, et ad quod pulsantibus aperiendum?*”

edicet populum suum in pace, CCSL 38; 171), he recalls that the Lord, that is, Christ himself, dwells in peace and gives it to his those who are his own. Like many of his meditations on the Psalms, here Augustine contemplates the person of Christ and his relation to his people. With no direct reference to Donatism, Augustine nevertheless references a common feature of North African ecclesiological typology, for which the followers of Christ in his “Church” were like the ark of Noah in the midst of the world. Commenting on Ps. 28: 10, Augustine remarks: “Dominus ergo primum inhabitat diluuium huius saeculi in sactis suis, tamquam in arca, ita in ecclesia custoditis.” Thus, when he turns to the final verse of the Psalm, Augustine recalls that, “the Lord will give power to his people in the midst of the storms of this world and whirlwinds of the battle” (author’s translation). Building upon the notion of an eschatological peace, Augustine explains that the Lord “has not promised peace to his people in this world”, in a probable reference to John 16: 33, and its mention of the *pressuram in mundo* to be faced by Christ’s followers. Nevertheless, turning back to the text of John 14: 27a, Augustine maintains that the Lord has given his peace as the words of the Latin verse make clear. A tension between the present and future continues, however, as Augustine only applies the words of Christ in John 14: 27a to a future tense verb of Ps. 28, 11b, “dominus benedicet populum suum in pace.” Here, Augustine does not spell out the meaning of a temporal peace which Christ gives to his followers to enjoy in this life, as he will explore in ensuing decades (*Io. ev. tr.*, 10, 4-7 and 25, 12, 3). It seems that Augustine is working out how to manage the imperfection of the present, in light of such passages in the Scriptures, as well as how to interpret John 14: 27a—or any other biblical reference to “peace”—in light of his developing theology of time, the fall, sin and grace, Christ, his Church, and the hope of salvation.

Io. eu. tr. 10, 4-7 (406/407 A. D.)

In another case, some years later, Augustine merely speaks of the “peace of Christ” (*pacem Christi*), meaning he does not directly cite from the words of John 14: 27a. Like the entire series of his first sixteen tractates on John, however, as a number of recent studies have pointed out (Drecoll; Ployd), Augustine has in mind a clear Donatist target. Here, the peace of Christ is the result of redemption by his blood, and is immediately contrasted with the temporal and transitory things “of this world” (*in hoc saeculo*, *Io. ev. tr.* 10.6, CCSL 36; 103). Yet Augustine applies this need for Christ’s redemption and peace directly to the “those in the church who seek their own [good], and not that of Jesus Christ.” He goes on to point out how each side of the Donatist debate had its

own primate, including for example Carthage, Mauritania, and Numidia. The immediate origin of the language of “peace” may in fact arise here from the text of the Psalm quoted by Augustine throughout (Ps. 34: 27), however the reference to John 14: 27a in light of his earlier association with Donatism and Christ’s peace in works mentioned above may well suggest that he has the same verse near to mind when launching these remarks. His evaluation of the Donatist episcopacy and view of the Church is profoundly dismissive, and held up in sharp contrast to the ideals Augustine draws from reference to Paul and the Psalms.

s. *Gulef.* 28, 3 (14 September 410 A. D.)

Only a few short years later, however, Augustine turns to the text of John 14: 27a with some noteworthy extended attention. Verses from Matthew and Paul’s letter to the Romans appear, as Augustine holds up the wonders of grace and (true) faith. He quickly names the *Donatistae*, who falsely claim—so Augustine writes—that the authority of Cyprian applies to their positions. In order to refute this claim, Augustine holds up the Latin text of Christ’s words in John 14: 27a, “*pacem meam do vobis, pacem meam relinquo vobis*” (MA 1; 537). “A disciple of Christ is neither a Donatist or heretic,” he explains, “just as a disciple of Christ is no enemy of peace.” Augustine then considers the example of Judas, whom Christ permitted to join him at the table on the night on which he was betrayed. The point seems to be that Judas was not pre-ordained to commit treason in this way against the Lord, but rather that he separated himself from Christ, “*Iudas se ipse separavit a domino*.” Thus, in line with the Christological hermeneutic of the voice crying out in the Psalms, “*cum his, qui oderunt pacem, eram pacificus*” (Ps. 119: 7), Augustine explains how Christ tolerated such an extreme action by one of his followers. In short, he did not will any separation, but rather desired unity and sought to protect his peace, as the words of the Gospel declare.²⁰ As Augustine tells his audience, he says these things for the sake of protecting the peace from the “*haereticos... qui se ab ecclesia catholica separaverunt*,” even daily, and yet are falsely calling themselves *catholica* (s. *Gulef.*, 28, 4) (MA 1; 537-8). In this context, writing in the immediate context leading up to the decisive Conference at Carthage of 411 A. D., Augustine goes on to proclaim that the Donatists, “are not *falsi christiani*, but are altogether not *christiani* at all! (s. *Gulef.*, 28, 4) (MA 1; 538).” In the round

²⁰ “*In illo ergo tolerate usque in finem vehementer commendavit dominus Iesus Christus, non esse faciendam separationem, sed unitatem esse diligendam, pacemque servandam*” (s. *Geulf.*, 28, 3 (MA 1; 537).

dismissal of Donatism that follows, Augustine holds in mind the peace (and passion) of Christ, with constant reference to the teaching of Cyprian. Delivered on the feast day of the saint, Augustine asks his audience to “keep in mind the teaching of Christ, and to hold the example of Cyprian in our hearts... so that we may not fear ‘such men’, nor remain silent in their presence about our faith and hope” (s. *Gulef.*, 28, 7 (MA 1; 541) author’s translation).

As a whole, the sermon is as much a praise of Cyprian and diatribe against the Donatist as it is a linked sequence of biblical citations brought to light in order to construct an ever-deepening case against the “heretics” of North Africa. With the imperial conference soon to be called at Carthage the following summer, mere months away, Augustine seems to have been at the height of his anti-Donatist polemic, and near the end of his patience! None of the fraternal spirit of charity evidenced in *ep.* 33 to Procleianus the Donatist Bishop of Hippo some fifteen years in the past yet remains; rather, Augustine’s audience is—presumably, at any rate—entirely made up of Catholic believers, whom he exhorts with the encouragement of Christ and the Scriptures and instructs with a profound anti-Donatist sentiment.

Io. eu. tr. 77.3-5 (410s A. D.)

In the course of his *Tractates on John* (*Io. ev. tr.*), when Augustine turns to comment directly on the Latin text of John 14: 27a some years later, he perhaps surprisingly does not bother to mention the Donatist controversy at all. Nor does he indicate the importance of this passage to him in earlier years. Instead, in what is a more restrained manner, he cites the prophet Isaiah as the immediate echo of Christ’s words in the Gospel of John:

“Peace I leave you,” he says, “my peace I give you.” This is what we read in the prophet, “peace upon peace” (Is 57:19, LXX); he left us peace as he was on his way, he will give us his peace upon his return *in fine*. Peace he leaves with us in this world, *his* peace he will give to us in the world that is to come.²¹

As he expands this distinction, which largely turns on the lack of *meam* in the first clause of Christ’s words in John 14: 27a, Augustine trades heavily on the temporal form of peace received by Christians *in hoc mundo* (or *saeculo*), and

²¹ “Pacem, inquit, relinquo vobis, pacem meam do vobis. Hoc est quod legimus apud prophetam: pacem super pacem; pacem nobis relinquit iturus, pacem suam nobis dabit in fine venturus. Pacem nobis relinquit in hoc saeculo, pacem suam nobis dabit in futuro saeculo” (*Io. ev. tr.*, 77.3) (CCSL 36; 521).

its difference from the eternal peace to be enjoyed in the time that is yet to come. “We do not have that kind of peace now,” Augustine says, “which is why we must still pray in our hearts, ‘forgive us our debts’” (*Io. ev. tr.*, 77, 4 (CCSL 36; 522)).²² The peace enjoyed today is not complete (*sed non est plena*), because a perfect harmony does not exist—either within one’s own self, or between individuals of the community, as much as they seek to love one another.

Most likely, especially in this instance, the later words of John 14: 27, “*non quomodo mundus dat, ego do vobis*,” have informed Augustine—at least in part—as he formulated his shifting approach to the verse as a whole. The reality of lived experience, perhaps, after long debates with unrelenting opponents, was enough to convince Augustine that the peace he dreamed of, and which he so boldly upheld in his letter to the Donatist bishop of his own city, would never be realized completely, without additional future intervention. The peace of this world cannot be true peace (*pax vera*) without true harmony (*vera concordia*) (*Io. ev. tr.*, 77, 5) (CCSL 36; 522). Yet even the peace which Christ leaves his beloved family the Church, by whatever degree or grade more perfect, nevertheless remains only an anticipation of the eschatological peace. Augustine’s response is to trust, not in the peace which the world gives, which seeks the mere absence of war and disturbance, but in the peace of the one by whom the world was made (Jn., 1: 5), “so that we may live in harmony, with our hearts joined together, and so that we may lift up our heart as one, lest in the world it be destroyed.”²³ This clear shift of interpretation may mark a new phase of maturity in Augustine’s reading of John, and of his handling of the issue of Donatism, or it may simply signal a new turn of his attention toward the future, independent of his longstanding disagreements with his North African peers.

c. Gaud. 1, 27 (419 A. D.)

Finally, in his last major work written against the Donatists, Augustine again refers to the Latin text of John 14: 27a when quoting the words of his

²² Augustine continues: “Est ergo nobis pax aliqua, quoniam condelectamus legi dei secundum interiorem hominem; sed non est plena, quia videmus aliam legem in membris nostris, repugnantem legi mentis nostrae. Itemque inter nos ipsos est nobis pax, quia invicem nobis credimus quod invicem diligamus; sed nec ipsa plena est, quia cogitationes cordis nostri invicem non videmus, et quaedam de nobis quae non sunt in nobis, vel in melius invicem vel in deterius opinamur” (*Io. ev. tr.*, 77.4) (CCSL, 36; 522).

²³ “Nos ergo, carissimi, quibus Christus pacem relinquit, et pacem suam nobis dat, non sicut mundus, sed sicut ille per quem factus est mundus, ut concordis simus, iungamus invicem corda, et cor unum sursum habeamus, ne corrumpatur in terra” (*Io. ev. tr.*, 77, 5) (CCSL 36; 522).

addressee, Gaudentius, a Donatist bishop of Thamugadi who was present for the meetings of 411 A. D. at Carthage. This passage offers some of the clearest evidence in the Augustinian corpus of a pro-Donatist reading of John 14: 27a, and of Augustine's own direct response to such a challenge. The words of Gaudentius understandably contrast the *pax saeculi* with the *pax Christi*, in that each aims for separate ends through distinct means: the one, so that war may not exist between nations, established by a kind of mutual agreement; the other, as an invitation that does not compel those who are unwilling.²⁴ Augustine, taking some displeasure in this slight to his honor, explains that the Donatist bishop is misrepresenting facts, when he seems to imply that Augustine's reliance upon coercion was in fact at odds with the *pax Christi*, which never compels the unwilling (*non cogit invitos*). The fact that any Donatist would consider himself (or herself) compelled by the external agency of the Roman authorities, Augustine suggests, is proof that the opposing party "does not know the Scriptures, or the power of God" (c. *Gaud.*, 1, 28) (CSEL 53; 226). Turning to the text of the Gospel of Luke, Augustine recalls the parable in which the master tells his servant to "go out into the streets and hedges, and compel them to go in so that my house may be filled" (Lk. 14: 21-23). The use of the Latin phrase, *compelle intrare*, was a well-used point of reference for Augustine, by which to define his evolving views of coercion. As he says here, "We understand the 'streets' to mean heretics, and the 'hedges' as those in schism." Extending the Lucan parable of Jesus, Augustine asks his fellow North African, "Why should you be amazed, if not in the case of physical want of food but rather spiritual famine one comes to the table who is neither led in freely, nor compelled with undue force (*nec volenter impulsus*)?" Augustine is not willing to accept an accusation that his own pastoral model—developed over the course of the Donatist controversy, and outlined above—should deviate from the ideals of Christ. Yet neither does Augustine spend his careful distinction between Christ's peace "left" (*relinquo*) for his followers in the world and his peace that he "gives" (*do*) only upon his return. His effort, rather, is to argue, with apparent success on the merit of biblical precedent, against a view that the mere fact of being a freely entered arrangement entirely typifies Christian "peace."

²⁴ "Sed belliferae, inquit, pacis cruentaeque unitatis se incolas iactant. Audiant dominum dicentem: pacem meam do vobis, pacem relinquo vobis; non sicut saeculum dat ego do vobis. Saeculi enim pax inter animos gentium dissidents armis et belli exitu foederatur; domini Christi pax salubri lenitate tranquilla volentes invitat, non cogit invitos" (c. *Gaud.*, 1, 27) (CSEL 53; 225).

Peace in the John Commentaries and Anti-Donatist Corpus

Augustine would revisit the concern for Christian peace, and its relation to civil society's equal need for stability, any number of occasions within his anti-Donatist polemical corpus. It was in many ways one of the recurring themes of his episcopal ministry, and perhaps one might even say central to his vocation that he responds to the forms of ecclesial crisis threatening him and his contemporaries. There is a need for greater attention to the scope and depth of Augustine's interest in peace throughout his *Tractates on John*, as well as the entire anti-Donatist corpus, for many of the reasons I have sought to address here. The use of John 14: 27a, and various strands of Pauline ecclesial thought, served Augustine well throughout his preaching and polemical career, with some noteworthy directions of interpretation that may have been influenced by external factors or simply the passing of time and growing maturity of a young North African bishop. It does seem, on the basis of this limited study, that Augustine's readings of John 14: 27a may have grown increasingly eschatological, with hopes for reconciliation with the Donatists eventually pushed to the side. How this picture might look when fully fleshed out, and in dialectic with the eventual production of the *City of God* and its theological and social positions, requires far greater space and time that present circumstances will permit. Before reaching my general conclusions, however, I would like to point out two final Johannine references to "peace", which bear upon the foregoing discussion.

Io. ev. tr. 103, 3

First, in a reference to John 16: 33—a verse which I have not explored in detail here, precisely because it was not one that occupied nearly as much attention in Augustine's exegetical activity—found in one of his later *Tractates on John*, Augustine finally holds up the significance of Christ's words here. As the culmination of his "farewell discourse", verses of the preceding passage in the Gospel of John establish a context of hope in the midst of future suffering: "An hour is coming, when each one of you will be scattered to his own place, and you will leave me alone" (John 16: 31). Yet, Christ continues: "I have spoken these things to you, so that in me you may have peace. You will have trouble (*pressuram*) in the world; but take heart (*confidite*), for I have overcome the world" (John 16: 33; *Io. ev. tr.*, 103, 3 (CCSL 36; 600)). One might expect such a verse should hold Augustine captive with speculation, however that seems not to have been the case elsewhere. Here, his explanation is rather straightfor-

ward, explaining that although the disciples were separated, they nevertheless went in the peace of Christ, with him as their refuge and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Unlike previous interpretations of John 14: 27a, this reading of John 16: 33 does not qualify the present gift of peace, which here is accompanied by the gift of the Holy Spirit (*dato quippe illis spiritu sancto*), but rather upholds the sufficiency of Christ's presence even in his absence, for the trouble to be faced by his followers while still in the world. This apparent difference does not disqualify my suggestions about a developing reading of the Johannine peace of Christ, but may reflect either a distinct approach to this verse (John 16: 33), or the more pastoral approach of encouraging Christian believers to endure and carry on in the world, in the strength and peace of Christ. To diminish the efficacy, even in rhetorical terms, of that peace might leave his audience less than inspired.

Io. ev. tr. 25, 12, 3

Finally, by contrast, I would like to return to an earlier tractate, for the reason that I believe Augustine's insight is a valid explanation of the themes outlined above, and because I would like to suggest that this reference should also be included in a discussion of Augustine's anti-Donatist, Johannine concept of peace, in all the course of its development. In a passing turn of phrase, Augustine writes of Moses that through him the people of Israel were promised,

A kingdom, and a land flowing with milk and honey, *temporalis pax*, the abundance of daughters and sons, health of the body, and many other things—all of them temporal, however, as a figure for the spiritual things to come, because they were promised to the "old man" in the "old testament" (*Io. ev. tr.*, 25.12) (CCSL 36; 254).

As he goes on to explore the meaning of Christ's reference in John 6: 27 to the *cibus non qui perit, sed qui permanet in aeternum*, Augustine further develops the contrast—yet similarity—between Moses and Christ. In one respect, this image bears resemblance to the imperfect view of the peace left for Christ's followers in this world, imperfect because it signals something greater. In that way, the analogy also calls to mind the eschatological interpretation of John 14: 27a, for just as the people of Israel anticipated a fullness yet to be realized, even in the present world—according to Augustine—the experience of peace is not yet complete (*plena*). This sacramental and typological interpretation of Moses, and of the words of John 6: 27 and surrounding verses are, like John 14: 27a and John 16: 33, small yet significant parts of a larger net-

work of biblical references which Augustine drew upon in his own Scriptural imagination.

General Conclusions

In the first section, by discussing the anti-Donatist letters of Augustine, and those which otherwise addressed the troublesome area of violence, coercion and the need for peace, this chapter has offered one possible reading of the epistolary corpus on these issues. Yet its primary goal was to establish the personal network in which Augustine lived and wrote, as context for his developing interpretation and deployment of a certain Johannine verse. The words of Christ's gift of peace were at the heart of Christian liturgy and might be seen as a possible answer to the social "problem" of religious dissidence, difference and conflict. Although Augustine saw at an early stage the relevance of John 14: 27a for his discussions with Donatist leaders, and frequently launched rhetorical pleas against the *pars Donati* based upon these words of Christ, his approach at times could be seen as somewhat divisive. To be fair, a pro-Donatist reading of the same verse was previously in circulation, and even as late as the 410s continued to be put to use by the Donatist bishop Gaudentius. At times, Augustine seems to develop his own approach to the verse, featured especially in his later readings. On other occasions, however, he seems to recycle the old, exclusivist claim to Christ's peace which already existed a generation before, opposing the peace of Christ with the peace of Donatus. Such terms of comparison do not diminish Augustine's achievement, which becomes a rather complex interpretation that weaves his Christology and sober observations with a wide array of biblical allusions and references. It does leave open the question, what other possible voices from North Africa might have said about the verse, whether in the century before Augustine's ministry, or in those that followed.

On the one hand, distinguishing Augustine's audience in the first section allows one to identify specific features common to each group of addressee, such as the Roman officials, fellow Catholic Christians, or other dissident Christians, such as the "Donatists." For each of these three major categories, Augustine in general does display a unique form of argumentation about the use of violence and coercion, which establish the fundamental principles at work in the development of his thought through the *City of God*, which I have taken for granted rather than exploring exhaustively. At the same time, distinguishing these three major groups remains problematic, for the divisions are in fact

not exclusive: most Roman authorities addressed by Augustine self-identified as Christians, and the same is true of the Donatists, who rather viewed themselves as Catholic Christians, not criminals or schismatics.

Augustine himself, to a certain extent, also transcended those same boundaries—in virtue of his own commitment to social order as a Christian bishop. In his letters, both public and private, Augustine participates in a wider form of civic discourse, which he helped to create and promote in his dealings with Roman officials, the Donatists, and like-minded Catholic believers.²⁵ I would like to suggest that his biblical interpretation, as evidence in the second section above, also participated in such a form of discourse, yet remained situated on a boundary that included North African traditions of interpretation and social dialogue.

²⁵ See Shaw (512) on the relationship of Augustine to legal discourse in his many public trials held against the Donatists.



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