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4 Augustine on the Church

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Any comprehensive theological discussion of the church must address a fundamental problem: the church is confessed to be one, and yet there are many churches, existing in varying degrees of separation one from another. How is that reality to be understood? Is there one true church, surrounded by imposters? Or are the churches somehow one, despite their apparent division? Or is unity an ideal to be achieved only eschatologically, analogous to a perfect holiness in the saints to be achieved only in the Kingdom? The 'scandal of division' is not just a call for ecumenical action; it is a problem for any ecclesiology, and modern theologies of the church have addressed this problem in varying ways.

Modern Western discussions of this topic almost all share a basic feature: they are thoroughly Augustinian. This Augustinian character is less a matter of some particular answer to a disputed question and more a matter of the terms in which the question is asked and answered. On other topics – for example, grace and freedom – Augustine put forward views that have remained one powerful option in contrast to others. In discussions of Christian unity and division, however, Augustine is less one option and more the air the disputants breathe: taken for granted, invisible, yet ubiquitous. Modern Western understandings of the unity and apparent division of the church are variations on an Augustinian model.[1]

This essay will examine this Augustinian background. The primary focus will be on Augustine, particularly on the anti-Donatist writings in which his

[1] The Orthodox do not fit this mould, since they do not accept the decisive Augustinian starting point: a general recognition of the validity of at least some sacraments (most importantly, baptism) beyond their own communion. A good example of this alternative Orthodox outlook is the 2000 statement of the Jubilee Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, 'Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions' (online at http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/7/5/1.aspx. Accessed 9 September 2012). Many of the perennial difficulties of Orthodox involvement in ecumenical discussions are rooted in their distance from the Augustinian assumptions of most Western ecumenism.

ecclesiology was developed. After an analysis of Augustine's ecumenical theology, some modern variations will be discussed.

I. An Alternative – Unity as Simple

Augustine's influence on the topic of the church does not arise from his acute formulation of what was already a consensus when he wrote. On the topic of the church, Augustine found a conceptually and institutionally fluid situation. The North African Church was riven by a dispute over the nature of the church's holiness and the conditions under which the sacraments could be rightly celebrated and received. The dispute took concrete institutional form in the Donatist schism, already 75-years old when Augustine returned to Africa in 387. The Catholic side was handicapped by the influence of Cyprian, whose legacy was revered by all, but who advocated a position like the Donatists on the central question whether heretics and schismatics could truly baptize. Augustine's arguments drew on earlier North African theologians (especially Optatus of Milevis and Tyconius, himself an odd sort of Donatist), but the resultant synthesis was new and constituted a turning point in Western ecclesiology. This new understanding can be better grasped by first outlining what preceded him and its development in Donatist theology.

When we look at ecclesiology prior to Augustine, we sometimes find a picture of church unity as simple. At least in theory, the church is completely at one with itself; its boundaries are definite, and beyond them is only non-church. Ignatius of Antioch is clear. The one church is joined to the bishop, presbyters and clergy. 'Apart from these a gathering cannot be called a church.'[2] What happens outside the church might look like the church's sacraments, but they are not. As Tertullian said, since heretics do not rightly have baptism, they do not have it at all.[3] For such a view, there is no true ecumenical problem, no division of the church nor any division of that which pertains to the church. There is only inside and outside.

As attractive as such a well-defined position might be, is one willing to say that all ecclesiastical acts carried out during a perhaps brief schism – all baptisms, anointings, ordinations – must be counted as nothing and repeated when communion is re-established? The Western end of the Mediterranean saw a vigorous debate on this question in the third century, with a focus on rebaptism.[4]

[2] Ignatius, *Trall.* 3, in *The Apostolic Fathers* (trans. Bart D. Ehrman; Loeb Classical Library; vol. 1; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 259.

[3] Tertullian, *bapt.* 15.

[4] See Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 380–99.

The great councils of the fourth century (Nicaea, canon 19; Constantinople, canon 7) distinguished schismatic but Trinitarian baptisms (not to be repeated) from heretical baptisms (not true baptisms and thus to be repeated). Such a distinction became widespread, but not universal.[5] Most significant for Augustine, Cyprian and the North African Church resolutely defended the rebaptism of heretics and schismatics.[6] In none of these cases, however, were the ecclesiological implications of the varying practices thought through.

The Donatist schism, rooted in reactions to the Diocletian persecution at the beginning of the fourth century, was a complex phenomenon, with theological and non-theological factors intertwined in its history, but its theological focus was on the conditions needed for an authentic ecclesial act.[7] The minister of baptism or similar acts must not be in schism or heresy, but he also must be a *true* participant in the *true* communion of the church, that is, he must himself be worthy and the communion of which he is a part must not tolerate the unworthy. The Donatists said that the Catholic Church in Africa included *traditores* who had surrendered the church's books under persecution and were thus unworthy. The wider church beyond Africa remained in communion with the African Catholics and was thus corrupted. Only in the Donatist remnant did the true church survive; only there was true baptism or true ordination administered.

Two points should be noted about the Donatist position. First, at least some Donatist theologians not only seemed to go beyond making the status of the minister a necessary condition for an authentic ecclesial act, but also seemed to ascribe a sort of causal efficacy to that status. Petilian, a Donatist bishop whose defence of Donatist practice is quoted at length by Augustine, states in relation to baptism: 'We attend to the conscience of the giver, which cleanses that of the recipient' (quoted in *c. litt. Pet.* 2.3.6). For Augustine, this assertion fundamentally misunderstands the relation between divine and human agency in baptism (see, e.g., *bapt.* 3.11.16). As will be discussed below, issues of divine and human agency will be the hinge on which Augustine's argument turns.

[5] On the complexities of doctrine and practice at this time, see especially Francis J. Thomson, 'Economy: An Examination of the Various Theories of Economy Held within the Orthodox Church, with Special Reference to the Economical Recognition of the Validity of Non-Orthodox Sacraments', *JTS* 16 (1965), pp. 402–12; and Dorothea Wendebourg, 'Taufe und Oikonomia: Zur Frage der Wiedertaufe in der Orthodoxen Kirche', in *Kirchengemeinschaft – Anspruch und Wirklichkeit* (ed. Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, Dorothea Wendebourg and Carsten Nicolaisen; Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1986), pp. 97–103.

[6] See Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, pp. 388–94.

[7] For a brief account of Donatism and recent discussion of Donatism, see Robert A. Markus, 'Donatus, Donatism', in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 284–87.

Second, Donatism makes the unity of the church as simple as possible. Various elements hold the church together: a common life in communion, shared sacraments, a shared holiness. Donatist theory and practice make the unities created by these different elements as congruent as possible. The limits of a common life in communion are the same as the limits of any unity created by common sacraments, since outside that communion there are no authentic sacraments. The borders created by a shared holiness should coincide with the borders of communion (and thus the unworthy, such as the *traditores*, cannot be within the communion) and with the borders created by shared sacraments (and thus the unworthy cannot celebrate true sacraments). Donatism represents a fully non-ecumenical ecclesiology.

II. Exterior Unity in the Sacraments

For Augustine, a central Donatist mistake was a false understanding of who does what in baptism. Obviously, there is a human actor in any baptism who says the words and carries out the actions. But who performs the action of cleansing, renewing and forgiving the baptized? Or, as Augustine asks, whose baptism is it? A kind of baptism was truly given to John the Baptist; it was his and can be rightly called 'John's baptism' (*Jo. ev. tr.* 5.6). John is the agent. The baptism which John says will come after him and which Jesus brings, however, is not 'given' to human agents in the same way. 'The Lord kept to himself the power of baptizing (*baptizandi potestatem*) and gave to his servants the ministry (*ministerium*)' (*Jo. ev. tr.* 5.7). Paul spoke of 'my gospel' and 'my mission', but never of 'my baptism' (*Jo. ev. tr.* 5.9). Thus, 'those whom the servants of the Lord were to baptize, the Lord baptized, not they. For it is one thing to baptize as minister (*per ministerium*), another thing to baptize with power (*per potestatem*)' (*Jo. ev. tr.* 5.6). John the Baptist can thus say that the one on whom he sees the dove descend (i.e. Jesus) will baptize with the Holy Spirit (Jn 1.33), and yet the Gospel then later says that Jesus' disciples and not Jesus himself baptized (Jn 4.2). The solution to this biblical crux is the recognition of the mixed agency in baptism. 'He, and not he; He by power, they by ministry; they performed the service of baptizing, the power of baptizing remained in Christ' (*Jo. ev. tr.* 5.18).

Augustine believes that the Donatists are guilty of more than a technical philosophical mistake. They have misdirected the Christian's trust, away from the infallible action of God, to whom all glory should be given, and towards the fallible human. They have made the mistake of the Corinthians whom Paul rebukes for attaching themselves to whoever baptized them (*c. litt. Pet.* 3.5.6; *Jo. ev. tr.* 10.7). Even worse, they have made the mistake of Simon Magus (Acts 8.18–24), who thought that the apostles possessed as their own the power of granting the Holy Spirit and so could give it to whom they pleased

(s. 266.3). For the Donatists, the gifts given in baptism must remain uncertain, Augustine argued, for who can be sure that the minister of baptism is not perhaps a hypocrite, lacking the Holy Spirit and forgiveness of sins, who then, by Donatist theory, cannot give the Holy Spirit and forgiveness of sins (c. litt. Pet. 1.3.4)?

For Augustine, the standing of the baptizer is irrelevant to whether a true baptism has occurred. A drunkard, a murderer, even Judas himself can truly baptize (Jo. ev. tr. 5.18), for each is only the human instrument of the 'hidden grace, hidden power in the Holy Spirit (occulta gratia, occulta potentia in Spiritu sancto)' by which Christ works (c. litt. Pet. 3.49.59). The same holds true for the schismatic or even the heretic. If the Trinitarian formula is used in baptism, then an authentic baptism occurs. 'If we discern this [triune] name in it [baptism], we do better to distinguish the words of the gospel from heretical error and approve what is sound in them, correcting what is faulty' (bapt. 6.36.70; see also in the same text 4.15.23; 4.17.25; 6.17.29; 7.16.31). Even a Marcionite truly baptizes if the Trinitarian formula is used (bapt. 3.15.20; 7.16.31).

Thus, if a baptized heretic or schismatic seeks to enter the Catholic Church, not only is a new baptism not necessary, but also a new baptism is sinful (ep. 23.2), for it denies the nature of baptism and God's action within it. Even if Donatists wish to enter the Catholic Church, but have scruples whether their Donatist baptism is authentic and wish a new baptism, they are not to be accommodated (bapt. 5.5.5).

To say, however, that all baptism in the triune name is authentic is not to say that such authentic baptism always works salvation. For Augustine, baptism alone does not save. 'The sacrament of baptism is one thing, the conversion of the heart another; but that means salvation is made complete through the two together' (bapt. 4.25.33). Or, again: 'it [baptism] is of no avail for salvation unless he who has authentic baptism (integritatem baptismi) be incorporated into the church, correcting also his own depravity' (bapt. 4.21.29). If baptism is not accompanied by interior conversion, it is not redemptive.[8]

The conditions necessary for the saving reception of baptism are not found among schismatics and heretics. They have a legitimate (legitimum) baptism, but they do not have it legitimately (legitime), for they use it against the law (bapt. 5.6.7). They have the form of religion (forma pietatis), but not its strength (2 Tim. 3.5), because they lack the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4.3; s. 71.32). Since they are outside the unity of the Spirit, they do not receive the Spirit which works forgiveness: 'It follows that since the forgiveness of sins can only be given in the Holy Spirit, it can be given in that Church alone which

has the Holy Spirit' (s. 71.33).[9] Those baptized within heretical communions thus are not washed by Christ's baptism and are not incorporated into his unity (Christi baptismo non abluantur nec unitati eius incorporentur) (cons. Ev. 4.6.7). Baptism received within schism not only does not save, but also it does harm, since one is receiving the good in a bad way (s. 266.7). The schismatic baptism will serve as testimony against those in schism (s. 272). Augustine is no less rigorous than the Donatists or Cyprian in his insistence that extra ecclesiam nulla salus; those outside the communion of the church do not obtain eternal life (c. litt. Pet. 2.81.178).

Surprisingly, despite the rigour of his critique of schismatic baptism, Augustine advises persons facing possible death and who can receive baptism only from a schismatic to accept Donatist baptism. As long as they receive baptism 'in a catholic spirit and with a heart not alienated from the unity of peace' and do not identify with the attitude of schism, they then receive such baptism to the soul's health (bapt. 6.5.7; similarly 7.52.100). This possibility is an indication that for Augustine the defect lies in the schismatic heart, not in the baptism itself.

For the modern interpreter, Augustine appears to be using a standard distinction between the validity of a sacrament and its efficacy. The logic of his response to the Donatists significantly furthers the development of such a distinction, but the modern interpreter should be careful not to import later terminology, which perhaps rounds off the edges of what for Augustine is not yet a settled matter (and I have thus avoided using the language of validity). When Augustine does move towards a more technical explanation of the defect in schismatic baptism, he makes use of a distinction between sacramentum and res: 'they possess the sign (sacramentum) outside the Church, but interiorly (intus) they do not possess the reality (rem) of which it is the sign (sacramentum)' (correct. 11.50). Or, partially echoing the passage already cited from 2 Tim. 3.5, he will say that schismatic have the form (forma) but not the fruit (fructus) of the sacrament (Jo. ev. tr. 13.16). Even with these explanations, however, one should not think that Augustine has a full theory of sacraments that he is applying to particular cases. Technical terms are not being used arbitrarily, but Augustine's language still has a somewhat ad hoc character.

What does Augustine's understanding of authentic baptism and ordination outside the communion of the church imply for an understanding of the church's unity? Most decisively, it means that the simple unity envisioned by the Donatists, in which the limits of unity constituted by different uniting elements all coincide, is broken. Unity becomes complex; different uniting

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[8] For Augustine, the baptism of adults is still the paradigm. With infants, God's grace makes up for the conversion of heart that they lack through no fault of their own (bapt. 3.24.32).

[9] In De baptismo, Augustine is unsure whether one who receives baptism in schism receives forgiveness, but then has that forgiveness immediately cancelled by participation in the sin of schism, or never receives forgiveness at all. Since the result is the same, Augustine feels no compulsion to settle the question and leaves it open (bapt. 1.12.18–19; 3.13.18).

elements will posit different boundaries. No longer must an individual or a community be either simply inside or outside; they might be inside in one sense and outside in another. The problem presented by schism and some forms of heresy is now precisely ecumenical; it concerns a division, if not in the church itself, at least a division in something truly ecclesial.

For Augustine, any social body is bound together by some 'bond of association' (*societatis vinculo*) (*civ. Dei*. 15.8.2). More specifically, every religious society has some visible sign of unity (*c. Faust.* 19.11). For the church, the sacraments are elements that bind the church into a unity. 'By a very small number of sacraments [or signs] . . . the society of the new people [the church] was bound together (*Sacramentis numero paucissimis . . . societatem novi populi colligavit)' (ep.* 54.1.1).

The Donatists thus are not simply unconnected with the church:

If they observe some of the same things, in respect of these they have not severed themselves; and so far they are still a part of the framework of the Church (*ex ea parte in texturae compage detinentur*), while in all other respects they are cut off from it. Accordingly, any one whom they have associated with themselves is attached to the church in all those points in which they are not separated from it (*ex ea parte nectitur Ecclesiae, in qua nec illi separati sunt*) (*bapt.* 1.8.10).

Or again: 'Where they do not differ from us, they are not separated (*disiunguntur*) from us' (*bapt.* 1.13.21). As Augustine tirelessly repeats, he detests in the Donatists only that which makes them schismatics and heretics. Catholics should acknowledge and embrace in the Donatists their sacraments and the name of God they bear (*ep.* 61.1).

Schismatics are not the equivalent of 'pagans'; they are wandering sheep over whom the church should grieve and whom the church should seek (*ep.* 61.1). More strongly put, they are brothers and sisters: 'Bad brother, quarrelsome brother, still my brother is what you are' (*s.* 357.4).

Schism thus brings about a true division in an ecclesial reality. Augustine most often uses verbs of rend (*conscindo*) or divide (*divido*) with 'unity' as the object of the verb (e.g. *ep.* 43.8.21, 24; *Jo. ev. tr.* 13.15; *bapt.* 1.8.10). On occasion, however, he will speak of the church itself being divided by schism. 'You divide the Church by schisms, you rend the Body of Christ (*dividis ecclesiam per schismata, dilanias corpus Christi*)' (*ep. Jo.* 6.13; similarly at 6.14 and 10.10). By their quarrels, 'Christians divide the Church (*christiani Ecclesiam dividunt*)' (*Jo. ev. tr.* 13.13).

In passages such as this, Augustine lays out the foundation of the attitude that shapes an ecumenical outlook: the sense that either the church or something genuinely ecclesial has been divided and that those divided remain

deeply connected despite all division. G. R. Evans in *The Church and the Churches*, an ecumenical ecclesiology from an Anglican perspective, finds in Augustine already a theology of 'partial communion'.[10] To rightly understand Augustine, however, it is important to see why Evans's reading goes one step too far.

Augustine will speak of various sorts of connections between the Donatists and the Catholic Church, but as far as I can tell, he avoids describing that connection with the decisive verbs *communico* or *participo*, the verbs that describe the communion of the church. If shared authentic sacraments create a 'partial communion', that communion is partial in not just a quantitative sense, but in a qualitative sense. The connection is not of the same *kind* or *sort* that exists in the church.

Similarly, those in schism are not, for Augustine, partially or in some sense within the church. They are wholly outside the church, despite the presence of authentic baptism. Many unworthy are in some sense in the church, but not the schismatics: '*Multi intus, quasi intus sunt; nemo autem foris, nisi vere foris*' (*ep. Jo.* 6.13). The heretic and the Catholic have one baptism but they do not have one church (*bapt.* 5.21.29). Thus, when the schismatic leaves, the church is not divided, but remains whole: 'Woe to those who are cut off! But she [the church] will remain entire (*integra*)' (*Jo. ev. tr.* 10.8).

Augustine's insistence that his Donatist opponents truly baptize, truly anoint, truly ordain, opened the door to a more nuanced and complex understanding of the unity of the church and of the relations between 'churches'. Beyond the church, there are genuinely ecclesial, even divine elements, creating 'brothers'. Nevertheless, for Augustine those ecclesial elements beyond the church do not mean that the church exists outside the church or that the church is genuinely divided. To understand that qualification, one must ask what sacraments do and how they mediate the deepest reality of unity: unity in Christ, charity and the Spirit.

III. Interior Unity in Charity, Christ and the Spirit

For Augustine, baptism (or, mutatis mutandis, ordination) is not an end in itself. Again echoing 2 Tim. 3.5, he says that 'the power of piety (*virtus pietatis*) is the end (*finis*) of the commandment [to baptize], that is, love from a pure heart and a good conscience and unfeigned faith.' The outward rite is at the service of the inward action of Christ and the Spirit, cleansing, purifying and forgiving. The water that washes the body signifies (*significat*) the action of

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[10] G. R. Evans, *The Church and the Churches: Toward an Ecumenical Ecclesiology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 35. Evans discussion of Augustine on these matters runs from pages 28 to 43.

the Spirit cleansing and feeding the soul (*ep. Jo.* 6.10). This internal divine action and what it brings is the power or fruit or root or *res* (Augustine uses all these terms) of which the external action is the sacrament. The sacrament, the outward rite, achieves its end only when this inner action achieves its end in the baptized.

The gift given in baptism is more than just an effect in the baptized person. First Jn 2.27 speaks of an anointing which abides in the Christian, which Augustine connects with the anointing that occurs in baptism. The external anointing brings with it a spiritual, invisible anointing. 'The spiritual anointing is the Holy Spirit himself, of which the sacrament is the visible anointing' (*ep. Jo.* 3.5). A few paragraphs later, he expands the gift further: 'The invisible anointing is the Holy Spirit; the invisible anointing is that charity which, in whomever it is, will be like a root in him' (*ep. Jo.* 3.12). To receive and abide in the Spirit means to possess that charity which is always a divine gift and which for Augustine is the centre of the Christian life.

This charity worked by the Spirit, inseparable from the Spirit, is not simply the end or telos of the sacraments; unity in the Spirit and the Spirit's love is also the end or telos of unity in the sacraments. Unity in the sacraments is not an end in itself; unity in the sacraments is a sign and instrument of unity in the Spirit and charity. Just as, for Augustine, the Holy Spirit is, in a sense, the society of the Father and Son (*societas est quodam modo Patris et Filii ipse Spiritus Sanctus*), so the unity of the society of the church is the proper work of the Spirit (*societas unitatis Ecclesiae Dei . . . tamquam proprium opus est Spiritus Sancti*) (*s.* 71.33). What the soul is to the body, the Spirit is to the church (*s.* 267.4), vivifying it and making it a unity.

Since the indwelling of the Spirit and charity are inseparable, so unity in the Spirit and unity in charity are inseparable. Augustine can thus move back and forth between saying that the Spirit constitutes the church as one and that charity constitutes the church as one. The 'harmony of charity (*concordia caritatis*)' (*s.* 229A.2) makes the church one. The unity of the church is constituted by 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph. 4.3) and this 'bond of peace' is charity (*c. litt. Pet.* 2.32.74; this passage from Ephesians particularly underwrites for Augustine the equation of unity in the Spirit and unity in charity).

A further aspect of this unity must be noted to grasp its true depth. To receive the Spirit and charity through baptism is to enter into unity with Christ, to become a member of his body. For Augustine, this Pauline language is not mere metaphor or simile. Christ and the church relate as head and body, but head and body from a true unity. Thus when we speak of Christ, our language can be understood in three ways (*tribus modis*): we might be speaking of the eternal Son prior to the incarnation; we might be speaking of the Logos in unity with human nature; or we might be speaking 'in a

certain way of the whole Christ in the plenitude of the Church (*quodam modo totus Christus, in plenitudine Ecclesiae*)' (*s.* 341.1). Christ and church together constituted 'the whole Christ, head and body (*Christus totus, caput et corpus*)' (*ev. Jo. tr.* 1.2).

The unity of church and Christ is so intimate that they can constitute a single agent, though an internally complex one. Actions of the church can be actions of Christ, so that Augustine can say that Christ is preached by Christ himself when he is proclaimed by the church (*s.* 354.1). Especially in Augustine's interpretation of the Psalms, the interpenetration of voices becomes an important hermeneutical tool. Augustine often reads the speaking voice in the Psalms as the voice of Christ. But then how is a passage such as Ps. 37(38).4 to be interpreted, where the Psalmist speaks of 'my sins', but Jesus has no sins? The speaker is 'the whole and full Christ (*plenum et totum Christum*)', here giving voice to the sins that belong not to the head but to the body (*en. Ps.* 37.6). Augustine does not efface the distinction between head and body; the head cleanses from sin, the body confesses sin (*en. Ps.* 37.6; cf. *en. Ps.* 63.1). Nevertheless, the unity of the church for Augustine is a unity of a reality internal to Christ, not merely an effect of Christ's presence, but an aspect of Christ's presence.

Unity in charity, unity in the Spirit, and unity in Christ are identical; they are all ways of speaking of unity in that which is most important, unity in the salvation which is participation in Christ and the Spirit. This unity of the church is indivisible. There is only one Spirit; Christ has only one body; charity unifies. The sacraments may be divided, like the clothes of Christ at the crucifixion divided among the soldiers. But among the garments is a seamless robe, which is not divided. It is described as woven from the top (Jn 19.23),

[A]nd thus from (*de*) heaven, thus by (*a*) the Father, by (*a*) the Holy Spirit. What is this tunic, but charity, which no one can divide? What is this tunic, but unity? . . . The heretics could divide the sacraments among themselves, charity is not divided. What they cannot divide, they leave; it remains whole (*integra*). (*en. Ps.* 22[2].19)[11]

Unity in the sacraments is subordinate to the unity it mediates when rightly received, unity in Christ, the Spirit and charity. Unity in the sacraments can be rent, divided, and Augustine, as we have seen, used strong language for such division. The unity which is end and not means, however, is indivisible. Division in not *in* this unity, but always *from* this unity.

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[11] The seamless tunic as the undivided unity of the church is a common theme in Augustine; see further *ep.* 23.4; *Jo. ev. tr.* 13.13.

Schismatics or heretics cannot be within this deeper unity. Decisive here is Augustine's interpretation of what lies at the heart of schism: a lack of charity. It is of the nature of charity to work unity; to reject unity is, for Augustine, to reject charity. 'He is not a partaker of the divine charity who is the enemy of unity' (*correct.* 11.50). Other causes may also be at work, but the failure of charity is always decisive. 'None would create schisms, if they were not blinded by hatred of their brethren' (*bapt.* 1.11.15). Only in unity can charity be preserved. 'Christian charity cannot be preserved except in the unity of the Church' (*c. litt. Pet.* 2.78.172). On one occasion, Augustine does seem to imply that sufficient cause might exist for separation – schism is a sacrilege, 'if there is no cause for separation (*si nulla fuit causa separationis*)' (*bapt.* 5.1.1) – but this concession seems strictly theoretical. He is relentless in his insistence that the schism is grounded in a lack of charity.[12]

This lack of charity is what blocks orthodox faith or the sacraments from being effective outside the communion of the church. Augustine typically appeals in this case to 1 Cor. 13, especially verse two: without charity, I am nothing. All who forsake unity violate charity and are thus nothing (*s.* 88.21). Correct belief is of no profit if the soundness of charity is destroyed by schism (*bapt.* 1.8.11). To refuse charity is to refuse the Spirit, and thus the Spirit is refused outside the unity constituted by charity: 'those are wanting in God's charity who do not care for the unity of the Church; and consequently we are right in understanding that the Holy Spirit may be said not to be received except in the Catholic Church' (*bapt.* 3.16.21). *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* because *extra ecclesiam nulla caritas.*

This Pauline insistence, that all that is apart from charity is nothing, stands behind, I believe, Augustine reticence to speak of communion in the sacraments as a partial, but still genuine, communion. Shared sacraments are a real connection, but since they lack charity, 'the one thing necessary', they do not pass the decisive threshold that would constitute communion.

Only in the church as genuine communion and participation in charity, Christ, and the Spirit are faith and the sacraments effective unto salvation. Thus, when a schismatic returns to the church, the sacraments before frustrated in their intended effect now attain their goal. The limb which before was severed from the body and thus did not participate in the body's life (*s.* 267.4) now returns to the body and is taken into its life (*correct.* 9.42). Only with this return is the animosity inherent in schism replaced by the 'unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (*bapt.* 1.12.18).[13]

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[12] For more examples of this assertion, see *ep.* 61.2; 298.6; *s.* 88.21; *en. Ps.* 54.19; *ep. Jo.* 1.8,12; 2.3; 7.5; 9.10; *bapt.* 1.9.12.

[13] At times, Augustine will say that participation in the communion of the church itself forgives sins; see *bapt.* 2.13.18; 3.18.23; 6.5.7.

IV. A Middle Unity: In, But Not of, the Church

So far, the picture of church unity given by Augustine has two non-congruent levels: unity in the sacraments, an external, non-salvific unity, which does not constitute a truly ecclesial body, and unity in charity, Christ and the Spirit, participation in which is redemptive and which constitutes the church. The logic of the argument, shared by the Donatists and Augustine, implied also a third level of unity.

The Donatist argument that they alone had authentic baptism and ordination intertwined moral, subjective elements and ecclesiological, objective elements. If, as Petilian contended, the conscience of the baptizer cleansed the conscience of the baptized, then a moral judgement about the state of the baptizer was a necessary part of any consideration of baptism. Since communion with the corrupt was itself corrupting, thus negating the authenticity of baptism, the Donatist rejection of Catholic baptism had also an ecclesiological element.

Augustine's counterargument about divine agency in baptism (and anointing and ordination) rejected the importance of the moral, subjective state of the baptizer. Both the hypocrite within the church and the necessarily charity-deficient schismatic outside the church can authentically baptize. The objectivity of the sacrament bears the divine action. Augustine's argument that schismatic baptism is not redemptive, however, is less ecclesiological than moral. He does not directly argue that because a baptism takes place in schism, it thus cannot be saving (an argument that would be hard to square with his acceptance of schismatic baptism in case of emergency, as long as one rejects the schismatic spirit). Rather, he argues that a schismatic baptism is not saving because schism implies a refusal of charity, and a refusal of charity blocks the saving reception of the gifts of baptism. The moral, rather than ecclesiological, failure of the schismatic is the immediate cause of the breakdown in sacramental efficacy.

Schismatics are not the only persons who receive baptism but refuse charity, of course. Within the Catholic communion, many are similar. They are baptized, but remain essentially carnal.[14] Like the schismatics, they too are not redeemed. With them also, the sacraments do not attain to their end. Augustine regularly equates the situation of the 'carnal Catholic' with that of the schismatic. The carnal Catholic is outwardly, bodily, joined to unity (*in eius unitate corporaliter mixti*), but in fact separated by an evil life (*per vitam pessimam separantur*), just like the schismatics (*bapt* 1.10.14). The carnal Catholic has no real communion with the redeemed. 'There is no fellowship (*participatio*) between

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[14] The carnal do not include those who are advancing spiritually, but are still weak and fall back on occasion (*bapt.* 1.15.24).

righteousness and unrighteousness, not only without, but also within the Church . . . There is no communion (*communio*) between light and darkness, not only without, but also within the Church' (*bapt*. 4.13.20).

The carnal Catholic who does not truly love can no more receive Christ and the Spirit than does the schismatic. As a result, the carnal Catholic does not belong to that unity in Christ which is the authentic unity of the church. Those who bodily mingle with Christ's sheep, but have a false heart, do not belong to the church; they are not within the society of the Spirit (*s*. 71.32). The church is incorrupt, pure and chaste; the avaricious, thieves and usurers do not belong to her (*non ad eam pertinent*) (*bapt*. 4.2.2). If one does not depart from iniquity, one may name the name of Christ, but one does not belong to his Kingdom (*s*. 71.4).

The schismatic and the carnal Catholic, however, are not on the same footing in all respects. The carnal Catholic is in the visible communion of the church in a way the schismatic is not. Augustine adopts the language of 2 Tim. 2.20 to describe the place of the carnal Catholic: 'In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth; some unto honor and some unto dishonor.' Following Cyprian, Augustine takes the 'great house' to be the church. The two sorts of vessels are two ways of belonging to the house (*bapt*. 4.12.19). The houses subsists in the good and faithful, bound together by the unity of the Spirit. The good and faithful *are* the house, just as they *are* the body of Christ. The 'others' may be said to be *in* the house, but they do not belong to its structure (or constitution), nor to its fellowship of fruitful and peaceful righteousness (*Alios autem ita dico esse in domo, ut non pertineant ad compagem domus, nec ad societatem fructiferae pacificaeque iustitiae*) (*bapt*. 7.51.99). The carnal and the spiritual both belong to the church, but in different senses. The spiritual are *in* the church and they *are* the church; the carnal are *in* the church, but they *are not* the church. One might say that the spiritual are in and of the church, while the carnal are in but not of the church, although this is not Augustine's typical phrasing.

Augustine does not, however, give a detailed description of this middle unity, the unity of the visible communion of the church. Neither the controversies of his time nor the inner conceptual exigencies of his theology required him to do so. His references to the Eucharist as the 'sacrament of unity', however, makes clear that this visible fellowship is realized in a commonly celebrated Eucharist (e.g. *s*. 272). 'The supper of the Lord is the unity of the body of Christ' (*correct*. 6.24). This unity has an inner aspect, constituted when the sacrament of unity achieves its end, true unity in Christ, and an exterior aspect, communing bodily, *corporaliter*, in the Eucharist. When Augustine says that some are in the church, but are not the church, he is referring to those who receive the Eucharist (and thus are within this common life) but are not truly regenerate. They do not share in righteous deeds, but they do share in

Christ's altar (*non factis eorum, sed altari Christi communicant*) (*ep*. 43.8.21). The Eucharist is the focus of a more comprehensive common life, for example, a shared episcopate. The Catholic and Donatist communities in Augustine's Africa were competing groups of bishops, but they are competing in that they constitute separate Eucharistic communities.

For Augustine, then, there are not two, but three levels of unity: a unity constituted by common sacraments, a unity constituted by visible communion in the Catholic Church, and a unity constituted by true communion in charity, Christ and the Spirit. Schismatics participate only in the first form of unity; they are neither in nor of the church, but they are in a real but limited sense brothers and sisters through baptism in a way Pagans are not. Carnal Catholics belong to the first two unities, but not the third; they are in the church, but they cannot be said to be the church. Spiritual Catholics belong to all three unities; only of them can it be said that they are the church, the Body of Christ, the spotless Bride. These three unities thus form three concentric circles, each within the other. Most importantly, the redeemed are all (at least after the incarnation) among the communion of the baptized[15] and within the communion of the church.

V. An Invisible Church?

The distinction between the outward, visible communion of the church, including both the inwardly spiritual and the inwardly carnal, and the true communion of those in charity, Christ and the Spirit, including only the inwardly spiritual, gives rise to one of the most important questions in the interpretation of Augustine's ecclesiology, a question of profound historical importance for the history of the theology of church unity and division. What is the relation of the outward, visible communion to the interior, spiritual communion and what is the ecclesial status of each?

Augustine has two ways of identifying the referent of the term 'church'. Sometimes, he uses 'church' to refer to the outward communion constituted by the visible life of the church. This body is the 'great house' of 2 Tim. 2.20 referred to above, in which there are noble and ignoble vessels. It is the field of the Lord, where both wheat and tares grow until the final harvest (*c. litt. Pet*. 2.46.108). It is the threshing floor of the Lord, where wheat and chaff are both to be found (*s*. 88.19). Inevitably, this church is a *corpus permixtum* and must remain so until the divine winnower comes to separate the wheat and the chaff in the final judgement (*correct*. 2.47.110). Augustine's language in his argument with the Donatists only makes sense if this visible body is 'church'

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[15] For Augustine, a catechumen is not yet redeemed; salvation only comes with baptism (*bapt*. 4.21.29).

in a strong sense. It is this visible body which the Donatists have left and, having done so, have left the church; it is from the visible body that they are demonstrably in schism. The vast majority of the time, when Augustine is speaking of the church, he means this visible, mixed body.

Nevertheless, Augustine will at other times insist that only the communion of the spiritual is truly the church. Properly speaking, the good are the body of Christ (*boni, qui proprie sunt corpus Christi*) (*c. Faust.* 13.16). A distinct set of biblical terms describing the church applies to this body alone. It alone is the spotless Bride of Christ, without stain or wrinkle (Eph. 5.27; *bapt.* 5.27.38). It alone is the house built on the rock (Mt. 7.24; *bapt.* 6.24.44). It alone is the 'one perfect dove' (Cant. 6.9; *bapt.* 4.3.5).[16]

Unlike membership in the external communion of the church, membership in this 'one dove' is invisible. In this life, we cannot see who truly has a repentant heart (*s.* 71.21). The evil may *appear* (*videntur*) to be within, but they are severed from the invisible bond of charity (*bapt.* 3.19.26). 'They appear to be in the Church, but they are not (*videntur esse in Ecclesia, sed non sunt*)' (*bapt.* 4.3.5).

Alternatively, Augustine will understand this membership eschatologically. The church which is the spotless Bride is made up of the elect who will be manifest on the Last Day. Christ's 'enclosed garden' (Cant. 4.12; another term for the church comprised only of the regenerate) is made up of 'the number of the just persons who are called according to his [God's] purpose, of whom it is said "The Lord knows those that are his" (2 Tim 2.19)' (*bapt.* 5.27.38). In Augustine's later writings, the eschatological perspective will become more prominent. In the *Retractationes*, the church with spot or wrinkle is less the present hidden church of the regenerate than the future church of glory (*retr.* 2.18). Even prior to the Pelagian controversy, however, Augustine will occasionally identify true church membership with the number of the elect who will appear as such on the Last Day (*Jo. ev. tr.* 26.15). Just who constitutes this number is unknowable, not just because regeneration is not always indicated by outward behaviour, but also because we cannot know who may either convert or fall away prior to death (*bapt.* 5.27.38).

Does Augustine have a twofold or double concept of the church: an external, visible church, constituted by the church's total life and also an interior, invisible church, united only by charity, Christ and the Spirit? As noted, Augustine's language can suggest such a duality and some interpreters have understood his ecclesiology along such lines.[17] The discussion above should

show, however, that Augustine is speaking of only one church, but a church with interior and exterior aspects; a visible, exterior life in the service of a common union with Christ and the Spirit in charity. Each side can be prioritized from different angles. On the one hand, Augustine holds that there is normally no entrance into the internal fellowship except through the external. For Augustine, Jn 3.5 – 'Unless one is born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God' – admits of exception only through an external obstacle that makes baptism impossible (*bapt.* 4.22.30). The external, sacramental fellowship of the church is the necessary medium of salvation. On the other hand, as noted, the internal fellowship is the end, the telos, of the external fellowship. This spiritual unity is what truly matters and in the future it, and it alone, will be the church in glory.

As Yves Congar notes, the external and internal aspects of the church relate for Augustine as *sacramentum* and *res*. The *sacramentum* exists for the sake of the *res*, but, with few exceptions, the *res* is available only through the *sacramentum*.[18] The *sacramentum* is not infallibly effective; it can fail to attain its end of renewal and in such a case, the recipient of the sacrament is not truly incorporated into the church as the communion of salvation. Thus, the church as the Body of Christ exists within the church as an external communion.

Adolf Harnack argued that Augustine's understanding of the visible church was 'full of self-contradictions'. Augustine combined but did not integrate elements pushing towards visibility and invisibility. Harnack attributed these internal tensions to Augustine's need to defend church practice.[19] Harnack is right that Augustine's language is not always consistent. His ecclesiological writings were occasional, usually prompted either by the concrete argument with the Donatists or by the exegetical pressures of explaining particular texts. He wrote no ecclesiological equivalent of *De Trinitate*. Nevertheless, as the above analysis has tried to show, his ecclesiology, while complex, is internally consistent and embodies a coherent vision of the church as a social body in the world which, through God's work in and through that body, fosters a spiritual reality that transcends this world and which will survive this world.

VI. Augustine and Ecumenism

Augustine's three levels of unity – unity in common sacraments, unity in a shared, visible communion and unity in Christ, the Spirit and charity – create

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[16] When Augustine invokes one of these biblical terms, he often brings in others, for example, *bapt.* 4.10.17; 5.27.38.

[17] Most forcefully, Hermann Reuter in the nineteenth century. See Hermann Reuter, *Augustinische Studien* (Gotha: F. A. Perthes, 1887).

[18] Yves Congar, *Die Lehre von der Kirche: Von Augustinus bis zum Abendländischen Schisma* (Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte, III,3c; Freiburg: Herder, 1971), p. 5. See similarly Stanislaus J. Grabowski, *The Church: An Introduction to the Theology of St. Augustine* (St. Louis: Herder, 1957), p. 239.

[19] Adolf Harnack, *History of Dogma* (trans. Neil Buchanan; vol. 5; Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1902), p. 163.

the template for an ecumenical outlook, in contrast to the simpler ecclesiology of the Donatists. This ecumenism is limited. One might say that it represents a pure 'ecumenism of return'. On the one hand, the Catholic Church (including at his time, of course, both the Western and Eastern churches) is the one church, within whose limits is to be found the communion of true saints. To this body all who claimed the name of Christian must return. On the other hand, beyond the church, among the schismatics and heretics, are to be found some of the elements that constitute the unity of the church – authentic sacraments and (at least if heresy is avoided) the true faith. These elements belong to the church, not to the schismatics, even when the schismatics administer them (*bapt*. 1.10.14), but that reality calls out more strongly for the church to reach out and reclaim what is its own. The church has a responsibility to seek out and correct these erring brethren precisely because they are in fact brethren.

Augustine's behaviour and language bears out this ecumenical attitude. The vigour of his theological argument with the Donatists can obscure his concrete action in seeking out forums for ordered and minimally polite conversation with the Donatist leaders.[20] He was initially reluctant to use state force to compel union (*correct*. 1.7.25) and, when he did come to support such action, insisted that this be done out of concern for those whose salvation the Donatist leaders endangered (*correct*. 1.6.23). He was in favour of bending disciplinary practice to permit reconciling Donatist clergy to exercise their ministry in the Catholic Church. 'This [permission] should not be (*Hoc non fieret*)', but to graft in a broken branch, one must cut, inflict a wound on, the mother tree so that it can receive the branch (*fit aliud vulnus in arbore, quo possit recipi*) (*correct*. 10.44). Normal discipline must be broken for the sake of peace and unity.

Almost no one today proposes an ecumenical theology precisely like Augustine's. How then can one say that his theology constitutes the air that much modern ecumenical theology breathes? The answer lies in the way Western ecumenical theology remains structured by the questions Augustine asks and the concepts he uses to answer those questions. Most notably, modern ecumenical theologies continued to be structured by the three levels or circles of unity Augustine posited. They depart from Augustine on concrete questions of how to understand the significance and interrelation of these unities.

One of the most important of modern ecumenical texts is *Unitatis redintegratio*, the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council.[21]

The ecumenical theology of the text is, in most ways, thoroughly Augustinian. There is only one church (§1). The unity of this church cannot be destroyed and is to be found in the Catholic Church (§4). The Dogmatic Constitution on the church, *Lumen gentium*, had already spoken of the communion of this church as both internal and external, 'a visible assembly and a spiritual community (*coetus adspectabilis et communitas spiritualis*)'.[22] As with Augustine, however, it is affirmed that 'some and even most of the elements and goods which together build up and vivify that Church can exist outside the visible limits of the Catholic Church' (§3). These include a valid baptism (§22).

The decisive variation from Augustine comes in relation to the effect of that baptism. For Augustine, baptism outside the communion of the church is authentic, but the gifts of baptism are not there received because schism implies a rejection of charity that blocks baptism's effect. A common baptism thus does not create a genuine communion between Catholic and schismatic for they do not share in the inner reality, the *res*, of baptism. This blanket assertion of a lack of charity is not obvious and becomes more difficult to maintain as second and third generations simply inherit division (and Augustine, despite his usual unqualified statements, himself occasionally qualifies his condemnation).[23] *UR* explicitly denies that all in non-Catholic communities are guilty of the sin of schism: 'those born into these separated communities and instructed (*imbuuntur*) in the faith of Christ cannot be accused of the sin of separation, and the Catholic Church embraces them as brothers, with respect and affection' (§3). Such baptism brings rebirth to divine life and incorporation into Christ (§22). Thus, a real, even if imperfect, communion exists between the Catholic Church and the truly baptized beyond its limits (§3). What Augustine does not quite assert – a true partial communion beyond the limits of visible communion – is now affirmed.

If these communities have not only valid, but also efficacious sacraments, can their communal lives be without ecclesial significance? Are they more than 'schisms', but in some sense 'church'? They do, after all, grant access to the communion of salvation (§3). In line with earlier tradition, *UR* recognizes the Orthodox Churches as church (§14)[24] and sees the communities that emerged from the Reformation in the West as 'ecclesial communities', communities

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[20] Geoffrey Grimshaw Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy* (London: S.P.C.K., 1950), pp. 36–92.

[21] Latin text and English translation in Norman P. Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), p. 910. References will be given in parentheses within the text, with section number indicated. The English translation will be altered to more closely reflect the original Latin.

[22] In Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, p. 854, par. 8.

[23] For example: 'But though the doctrine which men hold be false and perverse, if they do not maintain it with passionate obstinacy, especially when they have not devised it by the rashness of their own presumption, but have accepted it from parents who had been misguided and had fallen into error, and if they are with anxiety seeking the truth, and are prepared to be set right when they have found it, such men are not to be counted heretics' (*ep*. 43.1.1). This passage is quoted by Aquinas, *ST* II-II, q. 11, a. 2, ad. 3; cf. Augustine, *c. litt. Pet*. 2.97.221.

[24] The tradition for this recognition is given in the references listed in note 19 to chapter 1 of *UR*.

whose lives bear an ecclesial significance, even if they cannot be said to be church in the full sense (§22).

This variation on Augustine's scheme means that the distinctions among the three circles of unity begin to blur, though the basic structure remains. What does the real, but imperfect communion of the Catholic Church with those within the circle of authentic sacraments, but outside the circle of visible communion, imply? Does the truly regenerate member of an ecclesial community have a closer communion with the interior communion of the Body of Christ than does the unregenerate Catholic? For a theologian such as Yves Congar, whose theological work influenced *UR*, 'the personal case of the good dissident is plainly better than that of the bad Catholic, though both, in truth, are in an abnormal and irregular situation'.[25] Vatican II carefully avoids saying whether or not a faithful member of a non-Catholic community is a 'member' of the church.

UR's variation on Augustine derives from a shift on one central question: the efficacy of non-Catholic sacraments. Its ecumenism is more vigorous, for the ecumenical problem is deepened. Beyond the visible communion of the Catholic Church are to be found efficacious sacraments, genuine Christians, and communities with a true ecclesial character (in the case of the Orthodox, the church in its essentials). The ecumenical call becomes compelling.

A second, more radical variation on Augustine's ecumenical theology is more typical of much recent ecumenism, especially in Protestant circles. If efficacious sacraments and true Christian communities exist beyond the limits of any one church body, then the church as true spiritual communion becomes more closely tied to the presence of common sacraments (the first, non-ecclesial circle of unity found in Augustine) and separate from the visible communion of a common Eucharist and church life that constitute a distinct church (the second circle of unity for Augustine). The circles of unity are concentric, but their order is changed and the visible communion fragmented. The largest circle is constituted by common faith and sacraments. Within and smaller than that circle (since word and sacrament do not always work saving faith) is the circle of those united with Christ, who thus make up the one, indivisible church. Within that circle are then a variety of smaller circles of unity, constituted by a common church life, most notably a common Eucharist.

What Augustine held together as two aspects of the church, visible and spiritual, become discrete realities. As noted above, Augustine most often uses term 'church' to refer to the visible communion, existing as a *corpus permixtum*, but will also use the term to refer only to the true spiritual communion in Christ, to which alone are reserved certain theological predicates.

For this more Protestant ecumenical perspective, however, Augustine's less than consistent language becomes a systematic distinction. The visible and the spiritual pull apart, so that the spiritual communion in Christ is no longer the end achieved by the means of visible communion, the *res* attached to the visible sacramental communion, but becomes a relatively independent reality, which the visible communion only imperfectly realizes or expresses.

An example of such an outlook is the statement on unity from the 1961 New Delhi Assembly of the World Council of Churches. The assembly states: 'We believe that we share in this unity in the Church of Jesus Christ, who is before all things and in whom all things hold together.' A spiritual unity exists in which they participate, despite division. This unity seeks visible expression: 'We believe that the unity which is both God's will and his gift to his Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship . . .'[26] The ecumenical quest begins in an existent spiritual unity and then seeks expression in the life of visible communion.

While the end result is different from Augustine's refusal to find the church outside its visible communion, the questions and concepts are still recognizably Augustinian. The analysis begins in the recognition of authentic sacraments beyond one's own communion. Like *UR*, these sacraments are seen as not only valid, but also efficacious in the full sense. That recognition is radicalized into a recognition of a spiritual unity which is the true spiritual unity of the church and of multiple, equally authentic churches. The result is a separation of the church as spiritual communion in Christ and the Spirit from the church as shared life in a single visible communion. The ecumenical task so to bring the divided life of the church as visible, exterior communion into line with the reality of the ultimately undivided unity of the church as inward, spiritual communion.

V. Conclusion

Ecumenical theology always has an ecclesiological element, for the goal is always a closer approach to the unity Christ intends for those who love him. A greater self-consciousness about the assumptions that govern how we think about the church and its unity is thus a significant ecumenical desideratum. Awareness of the Augustinian background of much of our thought about the church and its unity will make us more sensitive to the possibilities and limits of the standard models of ecumenical theology. By seeing how different ways of thinking of ecumenism are variations of a shared background in Augustine,

[25] Yves Congar, *Divided Christendom: A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1939), p. 235.

[26] Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope (eds), *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), p. 88.

Catholics and Protestants can more clearly perceive what they do and do not share in their basic beliefs about the ecumenical task. Most especially, a sensitivity to these Augustinian assumptions can foster a deeper engagement with the Orthodox, who do not share those assumptions. East and West need to mutually challenge one another within a common pursuit of a deeper and more faithful understanding of the church. In that quest, careful thought about Augustine is an absolute necessity.

For Further Reading

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Augustine on Scripture

Tarmo Toom

You, my dear and revered brother, if you wish to be truly informed about these matters . . . take the trouble of reading Augustine's own tracts.

(Prosper of Aquitaine, *ep. Ruf.* 18)

I. Augustine's Way into Scripture

Augustine was aware of Christianity and its Scripture since his childhood (*c. Acad.* 2.2.5; *ep.* 137.3; cf. 2 Tim. 3:15, but see *conf.* 3.4.8), yet he lacked interest in these things. At the age of 19, he picked up Scripture once again, but to his disappointment, he discovered only contradictions and a mass of dubious, even offensive stories. He confesses, 'I was not in any state to be able to enter into [the Scriptures], or to bow my head to climb its steps' (*conf.* 3.5.9). Bishop Augustine assessed that the young Augustine had been 'a bitter and blind critic [who was] barking at the Scriptures' (*conf.* 9.4.11). Indeed, having refined his taste for eloquence (Cicero!), the adolescent Augustine remained deeply disturbed by the stylistic 'unworthiness' (*indignitas*) of the Word of God (*conf.* 3.5.9).

After becoming a Manichean 'hearer' (*auditor*), Augustine came to share his sect's interest in the writings of Paul.[1] Manicheans rejected the Old Testament though. Faustus says in his *Capitula*, 'I do not mix Christian newness with Hebrew oldness' (Augustine, *c. Faust.* 8.1), and adds, 'The testimonies of the Hebrews contribute nothing to the Christian Church [i.e. to the Manichean *ecclesia*]' (*c. Faust.* 13.1). Manicheans were disturbed by such things as the shameless behaviour of the Old Testament patriarchs and anthropomorphic descriptions of God. So was Augustine (*util. cred.* 16.13). Moreover, Manicheans accepted only the 'purified' gospels[2] and the letters of Paul. In

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[1] R. J. Teske, 'Augustine, the Manichees and the Bible', in *Augustine and the Bible* (ed. P. Bright; The Bible through the Ages 2; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), pp. 208–21; M. Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis* (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology; ed. D. C. Steinmetz; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 251–63.

[2] That is, purified from the alleged 'interpolations' which did not confirm the doctrines of Mani (Augustine, *c. Faust.* 11.2). However, Manicheans were unable to produce any manuscripts of the un-interpolated gospels or letters, which clearly showed that they were just making up their theories about interpolation-free originals (*mor.* 1.29.61).