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Continence, Consumption and Other Abuses:
Or Why an Augustinian Ethic is Worth the Bother

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[ABSTRACT:] “Love is the problem in ethics, not the solution,” notes Christian ethicist Margaret A. Farley. St. Augustine has probably done more to shape Christian teachings on love than any other theologian, yet he puzzled throughout his entire career over how to construct a unified account of love for God, neighbor, self, and temporal goods. Some of his ethical judgments helped the church of later centuries rationalize quite unloving policies of repression. Recognizing the role that continence played in Augustine’s understanding of love allows Christian ethicists both to critique Augustinian thought from within and to reappropriate it. In an age in which consumeristic culture is allowing, seducing, and training human beings to fine-tune their domination of one another and to dominate other creatures at an unprecedented scale, we need Augustine’s wisdom in more ways than we might have expected.

Why do we risk destroying the very biological foundations of life in order to live “the good life?” Prosperity should mean blossoming and flourishing, and consumption should mean diminishment and depletion, so why do we confuse the two? Why do we imagine we could ever have won ourselves security through the nuclear standoff of mutually assured destruction? Why, for a time, did top-flight stockbrokers call themselves “masters of the universe” even while on their way to personal burn-out and planetary ozone depletion? Why, in ever more global ways, do we “destroy this village in order to save it?”

Could it be for the same reason a possessive mother so nags her children about coming home for the holidays that she persuades them to grab any excuse not to? Or that a domineering father becomes so obsessed with perfecting his child’s curve ball that he drives that child from baseball to punk rock? Or that still other parents feel compelled to buy a house so large that long hours paying off the mortgage now preclude both baseball with their kids or hospitality in their new dining room? Could it be for the same reason S.U.V. ads so easily tempt us to fantasize that the way to get away and enjoy nature is to churn up the soil in four-wheel-drive easy chair?

Why indeed? This paper is <u>not</u> about Augustine’s doctrine of original sin. It is about the role of continence in the working of all right love. Still, we do well to begin by noticing how it is that human beings fall, according to Augustine. In gaining power, we acquire a propensity to grasp so hard, so incontinently, at the good, that we end up destroying precisely what we claim to love, or ourselves, or both. This claim in turn helps us comprehend another

claim — that “By continence we are gathered together and brought back to the One, from whom we have dissipated our being into many things.”[1]

In book twelve of his complex treatise On the Trinity, Augustine offered a kind of narrative psychology of the fall not as it first occurred in Adam and Eve but as each human soul recapitulates the fall in its own historical existence:

> What happens is that the soul, loving its own power, slides away from the whole which is common to all into the part which is its own private property. By following God’s directions and being perfectly governed by his laws it could enjoy the whole universe of creation; but by the apostasy of pride [superbia] which is called the beginning of sin it strives to grab something more than the whole and to govern it by its own laws; and because there is nothing more than the whole it is thrust back into anxiety over a part....[2]

Human beings, in other words, already possess all things through joint participation with all other created things in the common whole of the universe.[3] God has given the whole creation to each part, and especially to humanity, as a gift. Yet in their anxious pride, human beings want something more. In love with their own power, they want to grasp, control, and dominate the whole for their own private good, as though the universe itself were their own private possession. Obviously this is impossible,

> because there is nothing more than the whole..., and so by being greedy for more [the soul] gets less. That is why greed is called

> the root of all evils.[4]

Besides God, after all, nothing is larger than the whole. By seeking more than God has already given them as a gift, human beings inevitably end up with less and thus demean themselves. Since they, mere parts of the whole, have sought to find their joy in domination, their reward is their desire; fittingly, God allows them to care for a measly part [partilem].

All other sins follow from this basic sin, in Augustine's psychology. To care for a small part of the universe in humility and gratitude might yet be an act of praise and trust in God. But human beings continue to enjoy the illusion of power over the whole even though they do not really have it, and so manipulate other "bodily shapes and movements" that are near but external to them according to self-interests and fantasies that only alienate them further against the whole. Thus each one refers

> all its business to one or other of the following ends: curiosity, searching for bodily and temporal experience through the senses; swollen conceit, affecting to be above other souls which are given over to their sense; or carnal pleasure, plunging itself in this muddy whirlpool.[5]

What begins "from a distorted appetite for being like God" through human attempts to dominate the whole, instead makes human beings

> end up by becoming like beasts.... For man's true honor is God's image and likeness in him, but it can only be preserved when facing him from whom its impression is received [i.e., in

> relationship with God]. And so the less love he has for what is his very own the more closely can he cling to God.[6]

Of course, pity the poor beasts besmirched by Augustine's anthropocentric metaphors — we may say. Or decry the patriarchal abuses of women that Augustine helped pass on by tending (in the larger context of De Trinitate 12) to associate Eve with the "lower territory" of the soul that is charged with managing temporal and carnal affairs[7] — and well we may. Reading Augustine and retrieving the best of his wisdom can be an awful bother. Yet in an age in which consumer culture is allowing, seducing, and training human beings to fine-tune their domination of one another and to dominate other creatures at an unprecedented scale — even as it obscures the character of such domination with those finely targeted illusions called advertisements — we may need Augustine's wisdom more than ever. Surely we may need it in unexpected ways.

Love as puzzle, Augustine against himself

"Love is the problem in ethics, not the solution," Christian ethicist Margaret A. Farley has observed. "The question ultimately is, 'What is a right love, a good love.'"[8] Certainly love was a life-long puzzle for Augustine of Hippo, who as a fourth-century convert, philosopher, theologian and bishop arguably did more to shape Christian teachings on love than any thinker since the first century. The puzzle for Christian ethicists who recognize Augustine's influence and who seek to evaluate the claims it continues to make upon us ~(for good or for ill) is this: Can we appropriate the insights or even the

overarching structure of Augustine's rich complex of thought about Christian love without committing ourselves to all of his specific ethical judgments? Few have thought more deeply than St. Augustine about how the human person may relate rightly to all objects of human love — temporal goods, oneself, one's neighbor, and God. If the structure of Augustinian love proves cogent, the pay-off is a kind of unified-field theory of Christian love, which will help us, for example, hold together both right self-love and proper self-sacrifice on behalf of one's neighbor.[9]

Any retrieval of Augustinian ethics will need to be complex and discriminating. Why bother? I will suggest various reasons along the way, but wish to begin and end with this: At a time when the human propensity to overstretch ourselves and strain natural limits is taking on global consequences, an Augustinian recognition that love can only be right when it works through continence is not only eminently appropriate but urgent. Augustine's vision is not one of grim self-sacrifice. Augustinian continence not merely the heroic self-control, self-limitation, or enkratia of the ancients. Any notion of moral continence must retain a base-line definition of self-control, of course. But as Augustine integrated continence into his larger doctrine of Christian love it took on a far richer connotation. As the operative mode by which caritas respects others and trusts in God, Augustinian continence is the means by which human beings may enjoy the good without the egocentric control that so often destroys goods and inevitably destroys the good of right relationship.

What critics such as Anders Nygren have chafed at in their worry about Christian eudaemonism, points to precisely the opposite of grim

self-sacrifice or merely heroic self-control: Augustine's conception of God's love, uniting all loves and relationships "in God," beckons us with a rich evocation of redeemed enjoyment of the good, celebrating the good gift of God's creation in wonder and praise. And that is something we might just desire! Augustinian love does still require a kind of self-denial in continuity with Jesus' hard Gospel sayings. But continence is the crucial mediating concept that holds self-love and self-denial together in Augustine's thought. For it argues that we can really only "have" the good by not having it through domineering, manipulation, and unlimited acquisition. Restraint, humility, respect, and trust may only seem negative to those who are impatient to seize the good or seduced into confusing it with glitter. But in the modern world, of course, that is most of us. To quote St. Paul only a bit out of context, the whole creation groans, waiting for humanity to learn this lesson before it is too late.

Let's be clear — the lesson is not just about sex. Augustinian continence would counter all lusts and sins, not least the lust for domination, love of control for its own sake, private hoarding without regard for any common good, and the drive to consume.[10] If Augustine had really been as preoccupied with the kind of carnal sensuality that his reputation as a sexual prude suggests, perhaps his teaching on continence would itself constitute a kind of abuse. But as Garry Wills has shown in his stunning gem of a biography, that is a misreading that says more about us than about him.[11]

Augustine's triad of carnality, curiosity, and conceit in the passage from De Trinitate 12.9.14 above alludes to the classification

of all sins in 1 John 2:16 — lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and prideful ambition — which Augustine regularly used to guide his probing of the human heart.[12] Sensuality primarily meant exclusive preoccupation with what the senses perceive — temporal goods, other people seen as objects we might master, and bodily pleasures. Finally, it is not so much the pleasures as the preoccupation that makes us like beasts, precisely insofar as we willfully allow ourselves to be driven like cattle, with nothing but felt needs and wants to define our order of values. Think a minute on those thousands of flickering fantasies we know as advertisements. Is there anything else to which they appeal as they offer us stimulating illusions, targeted at us by pollsters, approved by economists who know no other rationality, and designed to drive us to lives grazing endlessly on infinitely "changeable temporal things?"

So to learn to love, desire and want rightly we may benefit from Augustine's help more than we care to admit. Still, we should recognize from the outset that if he does offer us help, that is both because of and in spite of himself. Augustine's influence, after all, has not been merely doctrinal and theoretical. It has also come down to us through policies of religious repression, justifications for war, attitudes toward the body, and subordination of nonhuman creatures. Not all that Christians of later centuries have done in the name of Augustine actually warrants blame on Augustine himself. Yet enough of what Augustine did most questionably, he did in the name of love ~that we should not appropriate his doctrine of love at all unless we do so critically yet fairly.

I will argue that we can continue to appropriate Augustine's doctrine of love and even to structure Christian ethics accordingly, but only if we read Augustine against himself. To be sure, we must be as careful to read Augustine fairly as we find it all too easy to read him critically. Dead authors cannot argue back in their own defense. If we are going to appropriate their thought selectively, we must do so according to a principle of selection that they would recognize as their own, rather than to select anachronistically or even gratuitously ~— according to our mere likes and dislikes.

In this regard, however, reading Augustine can be fruitful for the same reasons that it can be tricky. Augustine was a man who was both extremely social and intensely interior. His theology comes to us via a lifetime of debates with friends, with opponents, and most of all with himself. Though a systematic thinker, he did not produce a system. Though there is unity to his thought, identifying that unity proves elusive. Though his lifelong conversation coheres, it does so around an abiding set of questions more than around a tidy series of answers. Augustine's thought thus opened itself up to abuse by centuries of scholars who knew it mainly through propositional snippets. Yet that thought also carried with it the possibility of self-correction, and this is what has made Augustinianism a living tradition.

My suggestion, then, is that we can continue to be part of the fruitful, self-correcting conversation that is the Augustinian tradition if we identify points where Augustine corrected himself, or at least anticipated his own failures. Once we notice the crucial role that continence plays in the operation of caritas or right love we

will have a principle of selection. The best case for the cogency of Augustinian love and continence will actually be that it diagnoses Augustine's own incontinence ~— the incontinence by which he grasped prematurely after the greatest of all earthly goods — the mutual love that binds together those who participate together in the trinitarian life of God through communion in Christ.

Augustine's quest to love rightly

One reason Christian thinkers keep coming back to Augustine despite reservations is that he has few rivals in the Christian tradition for offering a single integrated account of all possible human loves and fewer rivals still who do not bear marks of his influence. Throughout Augustine's career, first as a lay theologian and then as priest and bishop, he endeavored to work out the relationship between Jesus' two great commandments — to love God and to love neighbor — as well as the proper place for love of self and love of temporal goods. These were philosophical puzzles, to be sure — the stuff of his debates with Manichaeans, Stoics, and even the Platonists to whom he owed much. Yet they were more than that. Augustine grappled with the question of how to love rightly at every level of life and ministry. Exegetically, love for God and neighbor provided the key to correct interpretation of the scriptures. Pastorally, the great challenge of his career was to reinstate mutual love in the North African church. Psychologically, his analysis of the human will and its limitations rested on his discovery that he could not enjoy a stable love for God except as God healed and remade his will through grace. And existentially, he never stopped longing

passionately for a right and abiding love of friends and fellow Christians.[13]

Augustine's struggle to love his friends rightly provides entree into the structure of Augustinian caritas as a whole. What "madness," what foolishness, what futility, that we do "not know how to love human beings in a fittingly human way [humaniter]!" exclaimed Augustine as he looked back in Confessions 4 on his reactions to the death of a friend.[14] His bitter grief suggested a dispiriting lesson. Finding a certain solace in the experience of grief, Augustine noticed that even before his friend's death, the experience of friendship had been what he loved, more than the friend himself. In a pact of reciprocal instrumentality, they had used each other to create the experiences that they valued more than one another.[15] God alone, the only true "Lord," is able to "dominate over others without pride," he wrote in Confessions 10.[16] Yet so long as friendship is for us a strictly temporal good, dominate and manipulate each other we must. To make of any friendship what we hope and desperately need it to be, we treat one another as temporal goods. What madness! How inhumane!

Amid sin and futility, how then can creatures such as we learn to love rightly? Augustine's answer at first may seem merely pious. Or alternately, it may actually seem callous and inhumane, rather than "fittingly human." Amid the grief that had sharply focussed for him the problem of human friendship, "To you, O Lord, ought [my soul] have been lifted up, to be eased by you."[17] Augustine had not loved his friend rightly, he insisted, because he had not loved God in trust.

> But blessed is anyone who loves you, and a friend in you, and an enemy for your sake. For he alone loses no dear one to whom all

> are dear, in him who is not lost. But who is this unless our God, the God who made heaven and earth and fills all things because by filling them he made them. No man loses you except one who forsakes you....[18]

To love other creatures rightly a human being must relativize that love — devaluing its object in one way, yet rediscovering its true and stable value in another way. When we love friends or neighbors rightly, the value they lose is their value as a tool of our own egocentric self-interest; the value we then recognize in them is their value insofar as God, the source of all things, creates and secures them. To love one's neighbor rightly, in other words, Augustine's abiding conviction was that we must first love God, and then "refer" all other loves to God.

Still, what "first" means here was difficult even for Augustine to say. Clearly love of God was ontologically prior — first in ultimate importance according to both logic and Jesus's statement of the greatest commandments. Yet if we must suspend our love for human beings until we enjoy a stable and perfect love for God, then love of neighbor might actually prove less rather than more stable, as it awaits insecurely the completion of this elusive goal. On the other hand, if love for neighbor is a "step" toward, or "cradle" to nurture love for God, it seems we are merely using our neighbor to reach God.[19] In book one of On Christian Doctrine, where Augustine explored most systematically the question of whether we are to use or enjoy human beings, he eventually concluded that although we may, in a philosophically rigorous sense, use one another to enjoy God, we do

better to say that we are to enjoy our neighbor for God's sake,[20] and enjoy one another in God.[21]

Augustine's reflections on the relationship between love for God and for neighbor consistently stabilized around this love for friends or neighbors for God's sake and in God. To love any creature "in God" was to benevolently desire that he, she, it, or oneself find the place God intended that creature to dwell within the ecology of mutually loving relationship with all other creatures. The phrase allowed Augustine to suspend the perplexing search for a lexical priority, and instead to orient all loves according to a single Gestalt, a single theocentric vision of love-as-a-whole-in-coordination-with-its-parts. Against this Gestalt vision of parts abiding in a whole, Augustine explained:

> If you find pleasure in bodily things, praise God for them, and direct your love to their maker, lest because of things that please you, you may displease him. If you find pleasure in souls, let them be loved in God. In themselves they are but shifting things; in him they stand firm; else they would pass and perish. In him, therefore, let them be loved, and with you carry to him as many as you can.[22]

Carry them to God with you. In practical terms, this was the way to love one's friend or neighbor as oneself. One was to say to one's neighbor what one now knew to be true for oneself: "Let us love [God], for he has made all things, and he is not far from us. He did not make all things and then leave them, but they are from him and in him." The message in Confessions 4 was not just for virtuous friends whom one

might love because goodness was already obvious in them, but rather for sinners, enemies, and “transgressors” whom one must urge to return repentantly and cling to the God who made them. To do this they must recognize that they had no good as an independent possession, but rather the very goodness of their life was God’s gift, which they could only rightly return: “The good you love is from him, but only in so far as it is used for him is it good and sweet.”[23]

Once one sees Augustine’s doctrine of love in a single Gestalt — once one sees with him a single theocentric vision of love-as-a-whole-in-coordination-with-its-parts — there can be no question about the proper place of right self-love in the moral order of the universe, as he envisioned it. Critics of Augustine such as Anders Nygren have misconstrued Augustine’s notion of right self-love as egocentric because their analysis has itself been egocentric, technically speaking.[24] The self Augustine would have us love is never the self in itself but always the self “in God.” The self that would love itself rightly would turn its own attention not to itself but to God. It would will what God wills. It would love what God loves. It would love itself but indirectly, only by way of refraction through its love for God. It would discover its good nowhere except “in God.” And in God, as a gift of God’s love, it would will to “find itself in the place just right.”[25] Insofar as I participate in the Gestalt unity of love as a whole, then, I cannot help but desire for myself exactly what I desire for my neighbor and for every creature — namely, that each one together fulfill its part within the whole common good of the universe, of which the Supreme Good or Summum Bonum is none other than

God. Thus, “There can be no separation of love: you may choose for yourself what you love, and all the rest will follow”[26]

To desire the good of one’s own thriving according to this vision was to seek it through relationship not possessive domination, and though Augustine can surely strike moderns as other-worldly is vision might actually bode well for creatures in the nonhuman world he sometimes described as “below” us. One sign of how thorough-going was Augustine’s vision of love’s embrace is the way it eventually drew in what love for God had first seemed to rule out — a careful love of temporal goods. The “things of the world” that Augustine had first taught Christians to “despise” or at most “use,”[27] and that 1 John itself presented as a competitor to love for God, would recover a certain dignity once Christians rediscovered their place in God, in relation to God, according to God’s will. Genesis 1 taught that all God had made was good. John himself spoke of God’s love for the world.[28] One might thus acknowledge the goodness of all creation, yet not love creatures to the abandonment of their Creator, if one treated them as a fiancee should treat an engagement ring. A woman would be guilty of infidelity if she loved the ring in place of her betrothed (or ingratitude if she trashed it, we might add) yet certainly she could love his gift rightly if she saw in it a sign and pledge of his love. “Even so, God has given you all these things: therefore, love him who made them. There is more that he would give you, even himself, their Maker.”[29]

Of course, we human beings cannot possibly see God’s will for all creatures as one coordinated whole. What we can do is glimpse the character of that will in the canonical narrative of God’s saving

actions in history, and preeminently in the person of Jesus Christ. By showing us what God loves, and how God loves, Jesus Christ fills up the content of love for God, and all other loves "in God." For the will of God is that we love what God loves; we cannot love God if we despise God's commandment.[30] The preeminent revelation of that commandment is Christ's fulfillment of the law through Christ's own love.[31]

Specification of the content of love for God also begins where the first fruits of a new creation begin to appear in the community of mutual love. Here too we are to see what God loves. For if believers are members of the body of Christ, and even enemies of Christ could yet become brothers and sisters in Christ,[32] then it would be impossible not to love Christ when we love the brother or sister, suffering and rejoicing together as each member suffers or rejoices. "Loving the members of Christ, you are loving Christ; loving Christ, you are loving the Son of God; loving the Son of God, you are loving the Father."[33] In turn, love for God necessarily included love for others. "None may make one love an excuse from another. Christian love is altogether of one piece, and as itself is compacted into a unity, so it makes into one all that are linked to it, like a flame fusing them together."[34] The people of believers living as a community of mutual love is itself the eschatological appearing of God's own mutual, trinitarian love in history.[35] For "thus the end will be one Christ, loving himself; for the love of the members for one another is the love of the Body for itself."[36]

Why continence

A soaring vision; eloquent words. But a tragic irony lurks here too. The greatest and most tragic irony of Augustine's doctrine of love, in fact, is that some of his clearest and most eloquent teaching on Christian love emerged in the very context of his controversy with the rival Donatist Church of North Africa. Rigorists at least in sacramental practice, the Donatists had been claiming the region's true lineage of untainted apostolic succession for nearly a century. Augustine initially opposed imperial measures against Donatism, he always opposed harsh measures such as torture or execution, and his personal relations with some Donatist bishops were often surprisingly warm. Eventually, however, he not only consented to anti-Donatist sanctions but penned rationales for coercive "fraternal correction." Rationales such as those in his letter to the Roman official Boniface On the Correction of the Donatists lived an especially tragic afterlife defending practices of inquisition and conquest that were far more gruesome and violent than any Augustine had endorsed.[37]

In order to sort out this fateful and potentially fatal question, we should notice a certain ambiguity in love itself, particularly love of neighbor. If the best that we can wish for others is that they live in right relationship with God, and thereby live in what we would now call an ecology of right relationships with all other creatures "in God," then it makes perfectly good sense to say that the way to love one's neighbors is to "carry them with you to God." If one has discovered as Augustine did that "for me to cling to God is the good" ~then such "carrying" is the preeminent way to "love one's neighbor as oneself." Don't just carry them, but seize and carry them! That is the

best way to convey the force of Augustine's admonition: "rape ad eum tecum."[38]

Rapeo can have both positive and negative meanings in Augustine's Latin, thus reflecting the complexity of paternalism in the practice of Christian love.[39] Some form of paternalism was necessary to Augustine's conception of love, and was even appropriate, for he did not so much invent it as bring its problematics to the fore. Anyone who has honestly wondered how to respond to the simple moral dilemma of a pan-handler shares a problem that may complicate or misapply Augustine's teaching on love but is finally unavoidable: Love argues both for intervention on behalf of what we judge to be others' true good, and for respect of their dignity as creatures of God who must appropriate that good for themselves. Shall I buy the pan-handler a hamburger because I smell alcohol on her breath, or shall I respect his right to make his own mistakes? If measured coercion is creating Catholics who are now grateful that imperial sanctions have freed them from a schismatic church, should I change my mind and approve of coercion as an act of love? Few of us who blame Augustine for supporting repression of the Donatists, allegedly for their own good, are likely to blame the person who buys a pan-handler a hamburger, for her own good. Even the Christian pacifist who follows Jesus' command in Matthew 5:44 to love enemies and pray for persecutors must at some point ask what to pray for; likewise, in heeding Paul's reminder in Romans 12:14 to bless persecutors the Christian must at some point ask how to do them good. In short, if love is to have content it cannot avoid the risks that have given paternalism a bad name. The real question is how to seek the good of others that they do not yet

recognize without violating their dignity, not whether to seek their good.[40]

That is why continence is so crucial for identifying how Augustinian caritas worked — or should have worked. The key to understanding the role of contience in his thought is a broader range of words he used for holding, carrying, having, and acquiring; fortunately many of the others fall into a far less ambiguous pattern than rapeo. The most frequent of these fall into two sets~~ — words for grasping that most often are formed from the root prendeo, and words for clinging that most often form from the root haereo. From the former we get words like “press” and “apprehend;” from the latter we get words like “adhere” and “cohere.” Space does not allow me to trace the evidence for a consistent pattern of usage in Augustine’s writings.[41] But what the evidence yields is the underlying grammar of Augustine’s thought concerning the actual operation of right love. If the overarching structure of Augustinian caritas orients all possible loves in the love of God, the specific operation or phenomenology of Augustinian caritas requires that one have or possess all rightful objects of love only by clinging to God as one’s highest good, and then receiving all other goods as gifts — gratefully and with trust — rather than through manipulation or control. Even the virtuous self-control required to resist temptation, battle vices, and tame disordered loves is finally and paradoxically not within the self’s control, for it requires God’s help and is in fact a gift of grace.[42]

This trusting, respectful, nonmanipulative way of relating to the objects of one’s love is Augustinian continence. Now, because the specific form of continence that renounces active sexuality had a

prominent place in Augustine's conversion, it has to some extent distracted scholars from noticing the importance that a broader or "higher continence"[43] of the heart played in Augustine's thought.[44] In the Augustinian phenomenology of love, cupiditas acts with concupiscence and attempts to grasp at the objects of its wrongful love, while caritas acts with continence and clings to God as the source of all good gifts. To simplify:

cupiditas	grasps	through concupiscence
caritas	clings	through continence

The operations of charity and continence are entirely coordinate; the two larger movements of cupidity and charity are mutually exclusive. For as Augustine once remarked, love is "the hand of the soul":

> Consider a man's love: think of it as, so to say, the hand of the soul.[45] If it is holding anything, it cannot hold anything else. But that it may be able to hold what is given to it, it must leave go what it holds already.... "Whoever loves the world cannot love God; he has his hand engaged." God says to him, "Hold what I give." He will not leave go what he was holding; he cannot receive what is offered.[46]

The one who loves rightly opens the "hand of the soul" in order to cling to God. In so doing, he or she also clings mutually with others who cling to God as their common good. Thus loving "in God," those who love rightly receive even temporal goods as gifts, as long as they receive them in the right ecology of interrelationship which

is the common good, rather than through strictly private possession of private goods. So then, “this whole rich world belongs” to the “person of faith, ... who, by [clinging] to [God] whom all things serve, is as one having nothing yet possessing all things.”[47] Those who love in this way surely possess much but they do so through a fundamentally non-egocentric, nonviolent way of acquiring. For they “acquire” by continently respecting. They do not grasp; rather, they “have” in one sense, by not having in another sense.

One could not even have continence itself except continently, as God’s gift. Fittingly then, and tellingly, Augustine portrayed the interior movement of his very conversion in the garden of Milan as a chaste embrace with a “virtuously alluring” woman whose very name was Continence.[48] Notice the logic of this image. To “have” a dignified, serene, and joyous woman named Continence in the “embrace” of a right relationship required that he not “have” her in a domineering, disrespectful way, for to violate her would risk stealing her name and marring the very beauty that he longed to enjoy. Continence, as I say, is a way of having by not having.

To be sure, continence is neither the center nor the whole of Christian love. It is hardly sufficient for right love — yet it is always necessary. As the operative mode of caritas, continence respects God’s gifts and allows them their rightful place in God’s ecological order. In other words, the movement whereby love, as “the hand of the soul,” clings to God is the same movement by which it continently refrains from grasping at all those smaller goods it might dream of closing in upon and manipulating for itself. Mundane grasping by the literal hand of the body is basic to temporal survival, of

course, yet even here, to grasp things as though they were anything other than temporal is illusory. Such grasping ultimately destroys both the thing grasped and the person grasping.

Meanwhile, some goods one may not "have" or "acquire" or "possess" at all through grasping domineeringly at them, but only through respectful continence: friendship, marriage, one's very life, a relationship with God, along with joys and pleasures appropriate to each. And now we might add: a clean and ecologically complex, stable, natural environment. To attempt to manipulate and control the friend, the spouse, the environment, the destiny, or the divine, inevitably means to treat the goods that one claims to love as something less than they truly are, thus degrading either the object of love, or the one loving, or both. Concupiscence or lust, after all, is the operative mode of cupiditas.[49] In Augustine's view, concupiscence must ultimately be self-defeating. While the grasping by which we attempt to possess things privately often chokes the object of our grasping, rejection of the common good always leads in the end to our own alienation and destruction.

Why bother

Once we uncover the fundamental role that continence plays in the working of right love or caritas, a deep and fateful fissure between Augustinian caritas and some of Augustine's policies starts to come clear. Even at its best the paternalism structured deeply into Augustine's conception of caritas was like a fuel tank hidden within a vehicle — potent and necessary, but explosive enough to destroy the whole construct.

To love other creatures “in God” was to wish and work for them to participate fully and rightly in their supreme good, through shared love for God. This formulation of neighbor-love could hardly have been any different within a doctrine of Christian love built upon the conviction that to love God was the highest good of any human being: “First see if you know yet how to love yourself [by loving God]; and then will I commit to you the neighbor whom you are to love as yourself.”[50] While the principle was defensible qua principle, it was fraught with dangers in practice. For as soon as human beings begin endeavoring to approximate now the ultimate good of communion with God and in God, their conceptions of how that good instantiates itself within history differ in fallible ways.

That alone need not be fatal for either Augustinian theology or the continued appropriation of his caritas doctrine, so long as other dimensions of his thought check the dangers: Augustine’s caritas theology may remain both coherent and practicable so long as his eschatological sense of the incompleteness of the best human projects obtains, and so long as his “hermeneutic of humility”[51] constrains those who would love their neighbors from violently and arrogantly coercing their neighbors to “enjoy” their ultimate good. By supporting imperial sanctions of the Donatists, however, Augustine laid aside and undermined both his humility and his eschatology.

In his youth Augustine had sought true friendship;[52] in his conversion he had shared the burning flame of love for God with enkindling friends;[53] in his mature theology he promised that when members of the body of Christ loved one another mutually they were already participating in the very life of the Trinity.[54] He longed for all of

these because he longed for the eschatological fullness of all love for God and neighbor — when “God would be all in all” and in loving God as their summum bonum all creatures would also be bonded together in mutual love for one another “in God.” For a passionate, forceful personality such as he, the great temptation was then to prematurely force the realization of an order of mutual love. When Donatists spurned Augustine's overtures and declarations of love, he seems to have taken their rebuffs personally.[55]

Arguably, then, Augustine’s Donatist policy was a realized eschatology out of synch with some of his deepest theological convictions.[56] Continence was precisely what should enable the Christian to resist present evil while patiently awaiting the gift wherein God would perfect all things.[57] Augustinian continence diagnoses and stands in judgment of Augustine’s own policies, therefore, at least insofar as he collapsed the eschatological tension, lost patience, forgot humility, and began to force the tarrying promise of an order of mutual love, in the name of Christian love. Whatever Augustine did to consolidate a so-called Constantinian synthesis of church and state, his doctrine of love and his theory of continence nonetheless diagnose what John Howard Yoder has called the “Constantinian temptation” at its very heart, the temptation to think it our duty to make history come out right.[58]

Augustine’s theory of continence should have yielded a prediction that grasping at the good prematurely would be his great temptation and potential failure. And in a way it did. For at the climax of his long prayer for continence that comprises most of Confessions 10, Augustine confessed that even as a bishop he still had great difficulty

knowing when he was loving his friends rightly and when he was succumbing to temptations of pride, passion for self-vindication, and love of praise. For Augustine, the problematics of friendship always provide a window into the problematics of society — for these are simply different levels of societas.[59] "Since by reason of certain official positions in human society, it is necessary for us to be both loved and feared by men,"[60] Augustine's temptations in friendship became his temptations as a bishop whose "official position" in the newly-Constantinian church had import far beyond the domain of strictly ecclesiastical affairs:

> Lord, you who alone dominate over others without pride, for you are the sole true God, you who have no lord, I ask you, has this third kind of temptation [ambition or pride of life] ceased for me, or can it cease throughout all my life, this wish to be feared and to be loved by men, for no reason than that from it there may come a joy that is yet no joy?[61]

By Augustine's own standard, the answer must be no; temptations of pride and power did not cease for him. Temptation itself is not sin, of course. But if only God can dominate without pride, the very effort to dominate righteously must itself involve the first of Augustinian sins, arrogation of God's place.[62]

Certainly the mature Augustine never expected any Christian to reach perfection in this life. Yet by his own standard of realism, continence did in fact remain a reasonable earthly goal; it was in fact the highest possible earthly perfection for those who knew they would be struggling against sin and temptation all their lives.[63]

His problems our problems

What is at stake, however, is finally not just an assessment of Augustine's historical record, but the question of whether and how we may appropriate his thought. That thought is still worth appropriating not just in spite of its problems, but because of its problems. What do I mean? In spite of its problems, the grandeur of Augustine's vision offers a most cogent way to unify all human loves around the love of God ~— love of self and neighbor, love for love of humanity and the natural world, love for one's own faith community and love for enemies. But because of the problems in Augustine's thought, and because his influence on Western Christianity has been so pervasive, learning to debate with Augustine on his own terms is one of the best ways to grapple with these, our own problems.

Of course, to debate within an Augustinian framework does require at least some acceptance of Augustine's brutal honesty and realism about the limits of human possibilities. That sense of limits may make us less confident we can achieve the moral virtues, the social justice, or the consistent biblical discipleship that we can imagine ourselves practicing. Perhaps because the anti-pacifist Reinhold Niebuhr sometimes made his own version of "realism" out to be the very essence of Augustinianism, all manner of peace church thinkers, social activists, liberation-minded Christians, and now environmentalists have tended to steer clear of Augustine's alleged pessimism. Yet some kinds of freedom and moral creativity spring precisely from the recognition of limits.

The most glaring present example of failing to recognize limits is human (mis)treatment of the natural environment. Consider a paradox: Environmentalist Bill McKibben has remarked that "environmental damage can be expressed as the product of Population x Affluence x Technology."[64] Each of these three components is in some way a success story.[65] Multiply all three together, however, and the result is a pending global catastrophe. Human efforts to control the natural world and thereby secure our destinies seem always to have unintended consequences. For example, the very success of the Green Revolution of recent decades has speeded the depletion of water tables, has decreased biodiversity, and has bound farmers around the world to chemical dependence on fertilizers, pesticides, and their agribusiness suppliers. The Green Revolution was well-intended, and it does not necessarily bespeak the sinful defiance of limits. Yet the failure of such successes should predispose us to recognize the kind of poignant reading of the human condition that drove Augustine toward his doctrine of original sin.[66]

For in fact many (if not most) of the purposes to which we are applying our technological prowess, in search of ever greater affluence and the well-guarded but elusive security that comes in isolation from the common good of all, exactly follow Augustine's portrayal of how we all recapitulate the Fall. We are in love with a control we finally cannot have, wanting to own privately what God has already given as a gift for all to share; thus we reach for more than is ours only to fall back into the pursuit of illusions and triviality.[67] Anyone could see this in advertisement after advertisement on television, except the illusions themselves offer

such blinding stimulation.[68] Meanwhile the soil erodes from under the construct of affluence, and even the poor struggle more for a share in our illusion than they do against our injustice.

Does Augustine tell us how to solve these dilemmas? No, he tells us that this may be the wrong question, reflecting as it does the very obsession with manipulative solving that may be our deepest problem — what feminist ethicist Sharon Welch has labeled our prevailing "ethic of control."[69] Instead, Augustine tells us a story that is both more biblical and more realistic than the modern one of unlimited progress through the triumph of human technique. He tells us that those goods most worthy of our love, which in our best moments we do somehow love, can only be had in a paradoxical way that is also describable as not having. He tells us that all right love — particularly love that is God-centered, embodied in Jesus Christ, and uniting us in the mutual love who is the Holy Spirit — always does its work through "continence." That is, it exercises self-control and does not violate limits, yet thus simultaneously opens us to the true wealth of richly human and ecological relationships that the glitter and glamour of consumer culture would deceive us into finding a bore.

Like Christ, who did not grasp even at his rightful good (Phil. 2:6-7), continence does not blink at risk or suffering yet does sight down a path to the joy set before us (Heb. 12:2). Yet again, loss may be gain. While continent love will do many things and cannot simply be quietistic, in its very recognition of limits it already does do something. It nurtures less illusory freedoms, a creativity grounded in mutual relationship rather than autonomous technique, and a reordered scale of values. After all, a reordering that values

relationships over materialism, and simple pleasures over stimulating excess, may be our best hope for thriving as human beings without foolishly consuming the good gifts of creation that are the very basis of temporal life.

Notes

1. The Confessions of St. Augustine, trans. John K. Ryan (New York: Doubleday, An Image Book, 1960), 10.29.40. Unless otherwise noted, translations are from Philip Schaff, ed., (A select library of the Nicene and post-Nicene fathers of the Christian church). However I have sometimes updated the nineteenth century prose in these translations without comment.

2. De trinitate 12.9.14. Translation: The Trinity, vol. I/5 of The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, ed. John E. Rotelle, introd, trans, and notes by Hill Edmund, Augustinian Heritage Institute (Brooklyn, N.Y.: New City Press, 1991). Though this passage echoes Neoplatonic thought by suggesting that pride once provoked the soul's prehistorical fall into the body, there are also strong hints to the contrary. For Augustine's claim was that "all that [the soul] tries to do on its own against the laws that govern the universe it does by its own body [per corpus proprium]" — i.e. not in a prior bodiless existence. De trinitate 12.9.14; emphasis added.

3. Cf. De trinitate 12.10.15, the paragraph that follows.

4. De trinitate 12.9.14.

5. De trinitate 12.9.14, emphasis added. Note that Augustine has followed the threefold categorization of temptations and sins in 1 John 2:16, but has altered the order of presentation according to an order of increasing degradation: the alienated soul first responds to mere curiosity about the possible uses of its own power according to the "desire of the eyes." It then becomes increasingly alienated from other people through the "pride of life." Finally it descends into

what Augustine would call a merely bestial existence in pursuit of the "desires of the flesh."

6. De trinitate 12.11.16.

7. Cf. De trinitate 12.7.9 - 12.8.13 before and 12.12.17-19 following the passages cited above. Augustine did express a certain dissatisfaction in 12.13.20 with the gendered commonplaces he had been using, but this may offer small comfort to skeptics.

8. Margaret A. Farley, "An Ethic for Same-Sex Relations," in A Challenge to Love: Gay and Lesbian Catholics in the Church, ed. Robert Nugent (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1983), 93–106.

9. See especially the opening chapter of Gerald W. Schlabach, For the Joy Set Before Us: Augustine and Self-Denying Love (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000).

10. G. I. Bonner, "Libido and Concupiscentia in St. Augustine," Studia Patristica 6 (1962): 303–14; George Lawless, "Auaritia, Luxuria, Ambitio, Lib.Arb. 1.11.22: A Greco-Roman Literary Topos and Augustine's Asceticism," Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 62 (1998): 317–31; Nello Cipriani, "Lo schema dei tri vitia (voluptas, superbia, curiositas) nel De vera religione: antropologia soggiacente e fonti," Augustinianum 38 (1998): 157–95; Peter Brown, The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity, Lectures on the History of Religions, vol. 13 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 418.

11. Garry Wills, Saint Augustine, A Penguin Life (New York: Viking, 1999), xvii-xix, 129–36.

12. James O'Donnell has suggested in his commentary on the Confessions that Augustine had followed the threefold desires of 1

John 2:16 as he structured the narrative of his moral dissolution and reconstitution in those first nine books. O'Donnell's suggestion is this: In recounting his dissolution in books 2-4, Augustine's narrative proceeds in the Johannine order; in recounting the beginnings of his moral reconstitution in books 6-8, Augustine reverses the order. James J. O'Donnell, Augustine: Confessions, latin text with English commentary (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1:xxxv-xxxxvi, 2:65, 2:136, 3:44, 3:202–8.

13. "The most characteristic anxiety of Augustine," biographer Peter Brown has written, "was the manner in which he still felt deeply involved with other people.... Augustine has hardly changed in this: in middle age he remains delightfully and tragically exposed to 'that most unfathomable of all involvements of the soul — friendship.'" Peter Brown, Augustine of Hippo: A Biography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 180.

14. Conf. 4.7.12; my translation of "O dementiam nescientem diligere homines humaniter!"

15. Augustine did not say this in quite so many words, but many things in book 4 conspire to produce this conclusion. In an intriguing parallel, Augustine had first described the relationship with the mother of his son as a similar kind of "pactam libidinosi amoris" (4.2.2). Later, he portrayed a new circle of friends in Carthage that rejuvenated him as an adulterous reciprocity in which they reinforced one another's illusions (4.8.13). Above all, when his now-baptized friend seemed to recover, Augustine was more concerned to restore the joviality they had once had with each other, than he was for his friend's true and eternal good (4.4.8).

16. Conf. 10.36.59: "...domine, qui solus sine typho dominaris, quia solus verus dominus est, qui non habes dominum...."

17. Conf. 4.7.12.

18. Conf. 4.9.14; translation altered.

19. De moribus ecclesiae catholicae 26.48, 26.50; Cf. Anders Nygren's objection to this effect, in Agape and Eros: The Christian Idea of Love, trans. Philip S. Watson (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 552.

20. De doctrina christiana 3.10.16: "fruendum ... se atque proximo propter Deum." Translation used: On Christian Doctrine, translated with an introduction by D. W. Robertsonn, Jr., The Library of Liberal Arts (New York: Macmillan, 1958).

21. De doctrina christiana 1.32.35; 1.33.37 also suggests that when we do this we are enjoying God in our neighbor, rather more [potius] than we are enjoying even the neighbor.

22. Conf. 4.12.18.

23. All quotations in this paragraph are from Conf. 4.12.18.

24. The accusation is of course a methodological not a moral one.

25. Shaker hymn, "Simple Gifts."

26. Tractatus in epistolam Joannis 10.3. Translation used: Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of St. John, in Augustine: Later Works, ed. and trans. John Burnaby, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. 8 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), 251–348.

27. De moribus ecclesiae catholicae 20.37. Cf. De civitate Dei 10.14, with Augustine's more moderate and considered notion of despising temporal goods in comparison with eternal ones. For classic statements on the use of temporal goods see De doctrina Christiana

1.35.39 and De civitate Dei 19.26.

28. On the various uses of “the world” as Augustine discerned them in the Johannine literature, see Tractatus in epistolam Joannis 4.4, 5.9.

29. Tractatus in epistolam Joannis 2.11. Augustine’s attitude toward temporal goods here is quite other than the indifference or exploitation of the natural world that some environmentalists allege Augustine to have legitimated. The faithful and loving financee will not worship the engagement ring — but neither will she trash it. Rather she will care for it respectfully and gratefully in a way that honors her beloved.

30. Tractatus in epistolam Joannis 9.11.

31. Tractatus in Joannis evangelium 55.2; cf. 17.6. Cf. De doctrina Christiana 1.35.39.

32. Tractatus in epistolam Joannis 8.10 and 9.3; cf. 1.11 and 8.4.

33. Tractatus in epistolam Joannis 10.3.

34. Tractatus in epistolam Joannis 10.3.

35. Cf. Tractatus in epistolam Joannis 10.4: To bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2) “is the consummation of all our works — love. There is the end, for which and unto which we run our course: when we reach it we shall have rest.”

36. Tractatus in epistolam Joannis 10.3.

37. Evidence that Augustine only envisioned sanctions such as fines, confiscation of Donatist property, and exile, but not torture and capital punishment, appears in De correctione Donatistarum (=Ep. 185) 3.14, 7.26; Ep. 93.5.19; Ep. 133. While I agree with interpreters

such as Emilien Lamirande who insist that it is quite inaccurate to call Augustine the father of the inquisition (Church, State and Toleration: An Intriguing Change of Mind in Augustine, Saint Augustine Lecture 1974 [Villanova, Pa: Villanova University Press, 1975], 70–71), and although I note that Augustine opposed more violent sanctions, that does not absolve Augustine of all responsibility. I believe Charles J. Scalise identified the proper issue and struck the right balance when he wrote: "Augustine did not want to persecute the Donatists. He is personally no forerunner of the 'inquisition' of the medieval period or of our own violent era. He fashioned his coherent exegetical theory more out of a sense of reluctance and resignation than out of vengeance and hatred. Ironically, however, its very character as the 'kindly harshness' of a father's love or of a physician's remedy has rendered Augustine's view an infinitely more effective tool in the hands of later vengeful oppressors. The appearance of biblically warranted 'logic' has deceptively masked the hatred of Christian inquisitors throughout the history of the church." See “Exegetical Warrants for Religious Persecution: Augustine Vs the Donatists,” Review and Expositor 93 (Fall 1996): 502.

38. Clearly the logic of rapeo was paternalistic in Conf. 4.12.18, suggesting that one intervene for other people’s good even when they did not yet recognize the goal of the intervention as for their good. In the Confessions Augustine’s admonition to seize and carry one’s friends to God had initially involved only persuasive actions, and theoretically implied a relinquishing of egocentric control and manipulation. Still, the ambiguity and potential for abuse is obvious. Although Augustine did not initially intend the

appropriate paternalism of rapere ad Deum to encourage violence, its logic may well have prepared him to rationalize policies toward "schismatic" Christians that relied on the violent coercion of the state.

39. On one hand, a raptor was a thief (Tractatus in Joannis evangelium 5.17); Augustine sometimes characterized Christians as dove-like creatures who lacked a grasping, rapacious nature (Tractatus in Joannis evangelium 6.12). What Christ had not done was seize the equality with God that was in fact his own; but what the serpent of Eden had done, and tempted Adam and Eve to do, was seize what was not their own (Tractatus in Joannis evangelium 17.16, commenting on John 5:18, and quoting Philippians 2:6). On the other hand, the word also had more positive overtones. Thus, when the Roman orator Victorinus publicly embraced the Christian faith, according to Confessions 8, the jubilant Christian community was ready to seize (rapere) the new convert into its heart; its members clutched him (rapiebant) with the two grasping hands (rapientium manus) of love and joy (Conf. 8.2.5.)

40. Here I wish to register both my appreciation and dissatisfaction with the work of John Bowlin, "Augustine on Justifying Coercion," SCE Annual 17 (1997): 49–70. In most ways I find Bowlin's exegetical arguments and theoretical defense of Augustine's paternalism persuasive. However, Bowlin fails to address the critical point of whether violent coercion, and lethal forms of coercion especially, are forms of coercion that are appropriate to a Christian ethic. The Amish and other traditional communities in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition have fully recognized the need for community sanctions such as shunning (or "the ban"); such sanctions involve a

social forcefulness that surpasses mere discursive persuasion, are paternalistic insofar as they seek the repentance and reconciliation of the errant community member, yet are compatible with these communities' rejection of violence. Modern, socially active pacifists engaging in "nonviolent direct action" also impose a nonlethal form of sanctions.

41. Such a study is however available in Gerald W. Schlabach, "'Love is the Hand of the Soul': The Grammar of Continence in Augustine's Doctrine of Christian Love," Journal of Early Christian Studies 6, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 59–92; and chapter 3 of Schlabach, For the Joy Set Before Us, 59–91.

42. De civitas Dei 19.4.

43. Cf. De continentia 2.5, where Augustine noted that sexual continence is the kind "most chiefly and properly to be called Continence" even while working to shift the focus of his debate with the Pelagians to "the higher Continence, concerning which we have been some time speaking [and that is] preserved in the heart" ("Ac per hoc illa quae genitalibus membris pudicitia refrenatis, solet maxime ac proprie continentia nominari, nulla transgressione violatur, si superior continentia, de qua jamdiu loquimur, in corde servetur"). From this continence of the heart, argued Augustine in the treatise, proceeds every right thought and deed according to a desire for the good that is strong enough to refuse consent to evil desires; see De continentia 1.2-2.4, 3.8-9, 8.20, 13.28. Though scholars have largely ignored this and a companion treatise De patientia, the two works are among Augustine's clearest and most succinct statements of his case against Pelagian confidence in human ability to become righteous. For

the heart of the controversy became clearer when Augustine moved away protracted debates over sexuality and original sin: no one could produce a strong enough love of the good in themselves, and to claim otherwise betrayed a pride that was incontinent in its very claim to have continently resisted evil (De continentia 4.10-5.13, 7.17, 13.28-29; De patientia 12-20).

44. We should neither ignore nor be distracted by his sexual experiences. It is pointless to try to decide whether his experiences determined his theological insights, or whether his theology gave him insights into his experiences. Interpreters will do better to recognize something altogether fitting in their very inability to adjudicate here. For Augustine, sexual concupiscence exemplified the larger drive for control and domination that generated both the rich creativity and the harsh injustice of human society. It seemed such a fitting example precisely because that drive for power in turn could express itself so poignantly and inextricably in human sexuality.

45. "Intendite amorem hominis: sic putate quasi manum animae."

46. Sermo. 125.7; the date of this sermon has not been determined.

47. Conf. 5.4.7, quoting 2 Corinthians 6:10; translation altered.

48. Conf. 8.11.27.

49. Concupiscentia and libido were almost but not entirely interchangeable, in Augustine's usage. Gerald Bonner has argued that while they were "virtually interchangeable" with reference to sexual desire, Augustine usually used libido to refer to other kinds of lust ("Libido and Concupiscentia in St. Augustine," 304, 308–12). In De civitas Dei 14.15, for example, Augustine listed lust for vengeance,

for possession of money, for victory at any price, for boasting, and above all for domination. Bonner's distinction did not prevent him from re-integrating the notions behind the two words, however, for his larger argument was that

> The importance of these considerations lies in this: that there has been in the past a tendency, in practice at least, to study Augustine's teaching on sexual concupiscence in isolation from his doctrine of the lust for power.... It is, however, apparent from the De Civitate Dei that Augustine did not envisage any division such as developed in later Christian thought, where preoccupation with sexual concupiscence assumed preponderant, and at times deplorable proportions, and where the will to power and domination has been, if not exactly baptised, at least treated with the same sort of respectful consideration which is accorded in modern society to usury, and financial speculation. (313)

Nothing in Bonner's linguistic study, therefore, prevents us from appropriating Peter Brown's more general definition of concupiscence as a shadowy "drive to control, to appropriate, and to turn to one's private ends, all the good things that had been created by God to be accepted with gratitude and shared with others. [Concupiscence] lay at the root of the inescapable misery that afflicted mankind" The Body and Society, 418.

50. Sermo. 128.5. Cf. Sermo. 90.6:

> Love the Lord, and so learn to love yourselves; that when by loving the Lord ye shall have loved yourselves, ye may securely love your neighbor as yourselves. For when I find a man that does

not love himself, how shall I commit his neighbour whom he should love as himself to him? And who is there, you will say, who does not love himself? Who is there? See, ‘He that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul.’ Does he love himself, who loves his body, and hates his soul to his own hurt, to the hurt of both his body and soul? And who loves his own soul? He that loveth God with all his heart and with all his mind. To such an one I would at once entrust his neighbor. ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

51. Gerald W. Schlabach, “Augustine’s Hermeneutic of Humility: An Alternative to Moral Imperialism and Moral Relativism,” Journal of Religious Ethics 22, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 299–330.

52. Cf. Conf. 2.2.2, 2.4.9ff, 3.1.1, 4.4.7ff.

53. Conf. 8.4.9, which is a clue to the whole of book 8.

54. Tractatus in epistolam Joannis 1.3, 1.9-13, 5.2f, 8.14, 10.3.

55. See Ep. 23.1 to the Donatist bishop Maximinus. Augustine began the letter by insisting on the authenticity of his salutation: "Seeing, therefore, that in this duty of writing to you I am actually by love serving you, I do only what is reasonable by calling you ‘my lord,’ for the sake of that one true Lord who gave us this command [to serve one another by love -- Gal. 5:13]. Again, as to my having written ‘well-beloved,’ God knows that I not only love you, but love you as I love myself; for I am well aware that I desire for you the very blessings which I am fain to make my own." Also see Ep. 33.1. Frend may have been sensing this personal dimension to the Donatist controversy when he wrote: "One has the impression that the triumph of the Catholics in 411 was a personal triumph of Augustine and his friends, and that this triumph did not outlast the death of their

leader." W. H. C. Frend, The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 229.

56. My reading here is not simply my own. Decades ago, amid long reflection on Augustine's religious vision, John Burnaby left unexplored clues suggesting that a fault line runs through Augustine's eschatology at precisely the points where he grew impatient with the Donatists: “Augustine constantly appealed against them ... to the scriptural promises of a world-wide extension of the Church, and he seems never to have considered the possibility that these promises may have to wait much longer for their fulfillment.” (John Burnaby, ed and trans, introd by, Augustine: Later Works, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. 8 [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955], 266, n. 18). As Burnaby had also observed already in Amor Dei, "Much ... of the passion with which Augustine longed for peace came from the weariness of spirit which the Donatist controversy must have caused him." Quoting a passage from Augustine's Expositions on the Psalms, Burnaby placed the object of that passion in the peace of the city of mutual love "`whence no friend goes out, where no enemy enters, where there is no tempter, no stirrer of faction, no divider of the people of God,'" but instead there is "`peace in purity among the children of God, all full of love to one another, beholding one another full of God, when God will be all in all... [and all have God] for our peace.'" (See John Burnaby, Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine, The Hulsean Lectures for 1938 [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938], 55; quotation is from Ennarationes en Psalmos 84.10.) As Oliver O'Donovan's study on Augustinian self-love and my own study on Augustinian self-denial have shown, however, eschatology was crucial

for the coherence of Augustine's entire theological project. On Augustine's eschatology, see Oliver O'Donovan, The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 130–36, especially p. 135 and Schlabach, For the Joy Set Before Us, 49–54. For a fuller argument that "Augustine's Donatist policy was a realized eschatology out of synch with his deepest theological convictions," see Schlabach, For the Joy Set Before Us, 132–42. It should be noted that O'Donovan has made clear in personal correspondence that he does not share my interpretation of Augustine's Donatist policy.

57. De continentia 2.5 - 3.7, 7.17-19, 13.29; Sermo. 125.9; Tractatus in Joannis evangelium 41.12.

58. John Howard Yoder, The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical, ed, with an introduction by Michael G. Cartwright, foreword by Richard J. Mouw (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994), 198, 252.

59. Cf. De bono conjugali 1: "Forasmuch as each man is a part of the human race, and human nature is something social, and hath for a great and natural good, the power also of friendship; on this account God willed to create all men out of one, in order that they might be held in their society not only be likeness of kind, but also by bond of kindred."

60. Conf. 10.36.58.

61. Conf. 10.36.58.

62. That effort to dominate righteously is at the heart of what John Howard Yoder has identified as the "Constantinian temptation" which in every competing version inists that it is the Christian's duty to make history come out right. Cf. Yoder, Royal Priesthood, 152–

57, 198–203.

63. De continentia 2.5 - 3.7, 8.19-20.

64. Bill McKibben, “A Special Moment in History,” The Atlantic Monthly, May 1998, 73, Http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/98may/special1.htm.

65. Technology has allowed human beings to open all kinds of bottlenecks in production and meet basic human needs more easily. Understood as any surplus that then moves human beings beyond mere subsistence, affluence is what allows for cultural development and the pursuit of a wider range of human values. Those include efforts to alleviate human suffering, and population growth has been one result. Demographers certainly do not agree on the exact reasons that human population has grown modestly in some centuries, declined in others, and grown exponentially in the last two centuries — but everyone agrees that improved medical care and agricultural production have contributed, and only a misanthropist could reject these out of hand.

66. The phrase “failure ... of success” echoes Wes Jackson, “The Failure of Success,” chapt. 2 in New Roots for Agriculture (University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 14–35.

67. Cf. De trinitate 12.9.14 - 12.11.16.

68. For a powerful deconstruction of advertising and expose of its cultural, social, and environmental effects — made by employing the very techniques of advertising — see Harold Boihem and Chris Emmanouilides, prods., Harold Boihem, dir., The Ad and the Ego, video (San Francisco: California Newsreel, 1996). For similiar work in print media, see Adbusters magazine published by the Adbusters Media Foundation, Vancouver, British Columbia.

69. Though deeply suspicious of Christianity and classical theism, Welch's critique of standard "ethics of control" coincides in surprising ways with critiques that my own retrieval of Augustinian continence opens up. See Sharon D. Welch, A Feminist Ethic of Risk (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 20–23, 74–78.