

Contents

*Editorial: An “Unspeakably Narrow Discipline”: Martin Hengel and the Need
for Interdisciplinary Scholarship*

By: Coleman M. Ford and Shawn J. Wilhite 1–6

Ancient Figure Highlight:

Ignatius of Antioch: Bishop, Theologian, and the Apologist of Life and Death

By: Ian Clary 7–32

Articles:

Inspiration and Inerrancy in the Ancient Church

By: Michael A.G. Haykin 33–55

*Number Symbolism and the Feeding of the Four Thousand in the Gospel of
Matthew*

By: Patrick Schreiner 56–83

*The Holy Spirit, Caritas, and the Bond of Unity in Augustine’s Anti-Donatist
Writings*

By: J. Daniel McDonald 84–110

Book Reviews:

Brian E. Daley, S.J., and Paul R. Kolbet, eds. *The Harp of Prophecy: Early
Christian Interpretation of the Psalms*

Reviewed by: Wyatt A. Graham 111–113

*The Holy Spirit, Caritas, and the Bond of Unity in
Augustine's Anti-Donatist Writings*

J. Daniel McDonald
Boyce College

Abstract: Written over a period of twenty years, Augustine's *De Trinitate*, one of Augustine's greatest works, serves as the pinnacle of the development of Trinitarian doctrine in the ancient church. Found within his anti-Donatist writings, however, is a well-developed doctrine of the Trinity. Particularly in *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, *Contra litteras Petilianii*, and Letter 185 (works that were written before the publication of *De Trinitate*), Augustine links the Holy Spirit as *caritas* and the bond of unity in the Trinity as the source of unity within the Catholic church. Augustine would later develop an argument identifying the Holy Spirit as *caritas* and the bond of unity in length in *De Trinitate* Book XV.5. This indicates that Augustine already had a mature understanding of Trinitarian doctrine early on in his ministry.

Augustine's bishopric spanned nearly four decades during which he faithfully served the congregation of Hippo Regius and the Catholic churches in surrounding Numidia. In the midst of his numerous pastoral duties, Augustine produced nearly one hundred books, close

to three hundred letters, and six hundred sermons in addition to one hundred twenty-four sermons on the Gospel of John, and one hundred fifty sermons on the Psalms.¹ Augustine's major works (such as *De Civitate* and *De Trinitate*) and his deeply personal *Confessions* still garner attention by scholars and general readers today. Though these works give one a clear idea of Augustine's life and thought, his minor works and letters provide a fuller picture of Augustine's thought and his development over time.

The range of topics in Augustine's works is wide and varied, touching on issues ranging from the Christian life to contemporary theological and philosophical discussions. Of note are Augustine's letters and works of the first two and half decades of his ministry which are dominated the Donatist schism. The question on the nature of the church is at the forefront of these works as Augustine seeks to expose the Donatists' error and to bring them back to the true Catholic Church;² thus his anti-Donatist writings are an important source of his ecclesiology.

Thesis and Methodology

In Book XV.5 of *De Trinitate*, Augustine argues that the apostle John's claim in 1 John 4:8, that "God is love (*caritas*)," refers to the Holy Spirit,³ drawing support from 1 John 4:7-16, John 4:1-29, and Romans

¹ William Harmless, ed. *Augustine in His Own Words* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), xiii.

² In this paper, "Catholic Church" refers to the church universal as Augustine utilized the phrase in his writings; this is not to be confused with the Roman Catholic Church, which is sometimes shortened to just the "Catholic Church." Likewise, when referring to individuals of the catholic church, I will use "Catholics," but not to be confused with "Catholics" in the modern sense.

³ Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.27-31.

5:5, among others.⁴ Though his identification of the Holy Spirit as *caritas* in *De Trinitate* is argued formally in Book XV.5, Augustine's anti-Donatist writings—particularly *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*,⁵ *Contra litteras Petiliani*,⁶ and Letter 185 (*The Correction of the Donatists*)⁷—contain within them the idea of the Holy Spirit as *caritas* as well, which Augustine then uses as the basis of the church's unity.⁸ As such, this paper seeks to argue that in his anti-Donatist writings, Augustine already has a developed understanding of the Holy Spirit as *caritas* which he employs as the ontological basis of the universal church's unity. Based upon his view of *caritas*, Augustine can then label the Donatists as heretics because they are out of fellowship with the universal church and the Holy Spirit.

This essay begins with a discussion of Augustine's argument for the Holy Spirit as *caritas* in *De Trinitate*, Book XV.5. Here, attention is given to various Scripture and methods of argumentation Augustine

⁴ For instance, Psalm 68:18; John 7:37; Acts 2:37, 10:44, 11:15; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:7.

⁵ Augustine, *De Baptismo contra Donatistas* [*De Baptismo*], trans. J.R. King, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff, part 1, *St. Augustine: The Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists*, vol. IV (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), 411–514.

⁶ Augustine, *Contra litteras Petiliani* [*Contra Petiliani*], trans. J.R. King, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff, part 1, *St. Augustine: The Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists*, vol. IV (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), 519–628.

⁷ Augustine, Letter 185, trans. Roland Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, pt. II, *Letters*, vol. 3 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004), 178–206.

⁸ Another source for Augustine's anti-Donatist works is his sermons, particularly his *Tractatus in Iohannis epistolam ad Parthos* and *Tractatus in evangelium Iohannis*.

uses for support in order to serve as a point of comparison to his earlier views on the Holy Spirit and *caritas*. Books I–XIV are first summarized, followed by an outline of Augustine’s argument in Book XV.5, and concludes with a discussion on the dating of *De Trinitate* with Augustine’s anti-Donatist works. This section then serves as a backdrop to the thesis.

The argument for the thesis begins by discussing how Augustine understood the true point of contention between the Donatist church and the Catholic Church—the issue of unity. This is then followed by summarizing Augustine’s understanding of the connection between unity, *caritas*, and the Holy Spirit in his anti-Donatist works. Due to the constraints of space and time, focus is given primarily to Augustine’s *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, *Contra litteras Petiliani*, and Letter 185, with references made to other letters written in regard to the Donatist schism. Finally, the paper concludes by offering a summary of the argument and the relevance of Augustine’s doctrine of *caritas* for Evangelical churches in the 21st century.

Holy Spirit as Caritas: De Trinitate XV.5

The crux of Augustine’s argument for the Holy Spirit as *caritas* occurs in Book XV.5 of *De Trinitate*. This idea, though, also occurs in earlier sections of Augustine’s work on the Trinity as he either alludes to it or employs the idea as support for another argument for the Trinity. In what follows, a brief summary is provided on Augustine’s appeal to the Holy Spirit and *caritas* in earlier sections of *De Trinitate*, followed by a summary of his argument in Book XV.5. This section concludes with the significance of the dating of *De Trinitate* in light of Augustine’s anti-Donatist works.

The Holy Spirit and Caritas Prior to XV.5

Augustine touches on the theme of “God is love (*caritas*)” throughout Books I–XIV and foreshadows his argument in Book XV.5. In Book VI, Augustine discusses the perceived difficulty of predicating attributes of each Person in the Trinity while maintaining their unity. Here he alludes to the Holy Spirit as *caritas* when he discusses the Spirit’s distinct Personhood while being of the same substance as the Father and Son:

Therefore the Holy Spirit too takes his place in the same unity and equality of substance. For whether he is the unity of both the others or their holiness or their charity, whether he is their unity because their charity, and their charity because their holiness, it is clear that he is not one of the two, since he is that by which the two are joined each to the other, by which the begotten is loved by the one who begets him and in turn loves the begetter. Thus *They keep unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph 4:3), not in virtue of participation but of their own very being, not by gift of some superior but by their own gift.⁹

The Holy Spirit, then, is equal in substance to the Father and Son, and a distinct Person within the Godhead. The Holy Spirit serves as the bond of unity between the Father and Son and is also the love (*caritas*) between them. The distinctive role and nature of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity serves as the bases of unity between the believer and the Catholic Church.

Augustine goes on in the same chapter to make an explicit reference to the Holy Spirit as *caritas* when he states:

⁹ Augustine, *De Trinitate* VI.1.7, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2010), 212, Kindle. Italics in quote.

So the Holy Spirit is something common to the Father and Son, whatever it is, or is their very commonness or communion, consubstantial and coeternal. Call this friendship, if it helps, but a better word for it is charity. And this too is substance because God is substance, and *God is charity* (1 Jn 4:8, 16), as it is written.¹⁰

The charity found in the Trinity is not less than wisdom or any other attribute of the Godhead; rather, it is equal to God as wisdom is equal to God. Hence, the Holy Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son.¹¹ Whereas Augustine argues in Book XV.5 that *caritas* refers specifically to the Holy Spirit and generally to the Father and the Son, here in VI.1.7 it is *caritas*—a divine attribute—that proves the Holy Spirit’s divine equality to the Father and the Son.¹²

In Chapter 2 of the same book, Augustine quotes Romans 5:5 in his appeal to Christians to love God “with the charity that *has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*”¹³ Charity, then, is not only identified with the Holy Spirit, but it is also the love given to us by the Spirit to enable the believer to love God. Because the believer is able to love God with the love given him by the Spirit, he is also able to love his neighbor as commanded by God. Further, it is

¹⁰ Augustine, *De Trinitate* VI.1.7, 210. Italics in quote.

¹¹ Augustine, *De Trinitate* VI.1.7, 210.

¹² See also IX.3.17—where Augustine seeks to argue that love, like wisdom, is begotten and therefore equal to the begetter—in which Augustine says: “This presupposes that truth itself has convinced us the Holy Spirit is charity, just as no Christian doubts that the Son is the Word of God” (Augustine, *De Trinitate* IX.3.17, 283). Up to this point, and eventually up to XV.5, Augustine has not formally argued his case for identifying the Holy Spirit specifically as *caritas*; however, based upon what he has said thus far regarding this matter, it should be plainly evident to the believer, according to Augustine, that the Holy Spirit is charity.

¹³ Augustine, *De Trinitate* VI.2.5, 225. Italics in quote.

necessary that one love his neighbor if he loves God “because if a man loves God it follows that he does what God has commanded and loves God to the extent that he does this; it follows that he loves his neighbor too, because God has commanded this.”¹⁴

The love of God, which is the Holy Spirit, given to the believer must necessarily flow from the believer to his neighbors—the believer is not a passive recipient, but just as God has given love to the believer, so the believer must actively give God’s love to his neighbor. In Book VIII, Augustine states:

Embrace love which is God, and embrace God with love. This is the love which unites all the good angels and all the servants of God in a bond of holiness, conjoins us and them together, and subjoins us to itself. And the more we are cured of the tumor of pride, the fuller we are of love. And if a man is full of love, what is he full of but God?¹⁵

Here Augustine employs in this passage the verb *diligo* for the word “love,” and throughout VIII.5.12 he switches between the use of *diligo* and *caritas* for “love.” For instance, when Augustine quotes from 1 John 4:8 “God is love,” the Latin for “love” is the form of *caritas*. However, in the passage just quoted above, Augustine uses the accusative singular form of *diligo* to speak of that “love which is God.” Augustine’s use of two different Latin words for “love” does not betray a tendency to distinguish different kinds of love in God; rather, according to Stanislaw Grabowski, Augustine uses “either charity or love indiscriminately for the same supernatural act or virtue.” Hence, Augustine’s use of *caritas* and *dilectio* (the verb form is *diligo*), and even

¹⁴ Augustine, *De Trinitate* VIII.5.10, 253.

¹⁵ Augustine, *De Trinitate* VIII.5.12, 255.

amor, are employed to designate the same supernatural act or virtue of love.¹⁶

The theme of “God is love (*caritas*)” runs throughout *De Trinitate*, and Augustine’s specific¹⁷ identification of the Holy Spirit as *caritas* is presupposed as a truth from the teaching of Scripture. In Book XV.5, Augustine presents a formal argument to this end.

The Holy Spirit and Caritas in Book XV.5

In Book XV, Augustine claims that the “holy scriptures” teach that the Holy Spirit is “the common charity by which the Father and Son love each other.” This truth, however, is such that “the divine word has made us search with greater diligence into things that are not set out in open display, but have to be explored in obscurity and dragged out of obscurity.” That is, Scripture does not say that “the Holy Spirit is charity;” rather, Scripture says in 1 John 4:8 that “God is charity.”¹⁸ What the believer must investigate, then, is whether 1 John 4:8 refers to God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit.

Augustine first rules out that “charity is a substance worthy of the name of God,” and instead claims that charity is God’s gift to the believer. Whereas patience is God’s substance given to us from Him,

¹⁶ Stanislaw Grabowski, *The Church: An Introduction to the Theology of St. Augustine* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1957), 352. Grabowski refers to Augustine’s *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 31:5 Part II where Augustine says: “Amor Dei, amor proximi, caritas dicitur,” or “Love of God, love of neighbor, charity is the same” (my translation). Again, Grabowski refers to *De Trinitate* XV.18.22: “Ipsa vero dilectio sive caritas (nam unius rei est utrumque nomen),” or “But if a man has this love or charity (they are two names for one thing)” (translation from *De Trinitate* XV.5.32, trans. Edmund Hill, 424).

¹⁷ As opposed to the general identification of the Father and Son as *caritas* (ref. *De Trinitate* XV.5.31, which is discussed below).

¹⁸ Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.27, 421.

allowing the believer to say “For from him comes my patience” (Ps. 62:5),¹⁹ the believer cannot say of God “You are my charity.” Rather, Scripture says “God is charity” (1 Jn 4:8, 16) just as it says ‘God is Spirit.’”²⁰

Augustine begins his argument that the Holy Spirit is *caritas* with a discussion on the use of particular words in Scripture—words that can be applied either in a general sense in some instances or applied to particular objects or ideas in other instances. One such example Augustine provides is that of the word “law,” which can refer to that which was given by God through Moses to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai (the Law), or it can refer to the prophets of the Old Testament.²¹ The implication Augustine draws from this discussion regarding the Trinity is that while the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are equally charity—each Person is charity in his own nature, but it does not differ in them²²—there is distinction within the Trinity. Only the Son is called the Word of God, only the Spirit is called the gift of God,²³ and only the Father is called the One Who begets the Son and from Whom the Spirit proceeds.²⁴ As such, if “God is love (*caritas*),” then it stands to question

¹⁹ As quoted by Augustine in this discussion in Book XV.5.27, 421.

²⁰ Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.27, 421.

²¹ Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.30, 423.

²² Here Augustine alludes to a previous discussion in which he uses the analogy of the trinity of the mind (understanding, memory, and charity) as a way of understanding the Trinity. Augustine, however, acknowledges the limited nature of any analogy for the Trinity (XV.6.43), for they do not truly capture the essence of the Trinity. In regard to the analogy of the trinity of the mind, while understanding, memory, and charity are equally said to be of the mind, they each are different in relation to each other. Unlike the trinity of the mind, the three Persons of the Triune God are distinct but equal.

²³ Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.33–35.

²⁴ Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.29, 422.

to whom this distinction is made. For Augustine, though the Father and Son are charity in a general sense, “the Spirit is distinctively called by the term charity.”²⁵

Augustine first appeals to 1 John 4:7, which states: “Beloved, let us love each other because love is from God...and everyone who loves is born of God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because love is God.”²⁶ Augustine highlights the phrase “love is from God,” and refers to the end of 1 John 4:7 that states “God is love.” If love is God and is from God, then one can say “God is from God.” But, “God is from God” cannot refer to the Father, for the “Father alone is God in such a way that he is not from God;” the love that is from God must either refer to the Son (Who alone is born of God) or the Spirit (who proceeds from the Father).

Augustine then moves to 1 John 4:10 where John refers to God’s love for man—not one’s love for God, but the love of God for man through which He sent His Son as an atonement for the sin of mankind. It is with this love that John commands believers in 4:11–12 to love one another as God has loved them, and in so doing the believer abides in God. One knows he abides in God because God has given him—the believer—His Spirit. It is the Spirit, then, who makes the believer to abide in God.²⁷ But, according to 1 John 4:16, which states that “whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him,” it is love that makes one to abide in God.²⁸ Augustine connects 1 John 4:13 and 1 John 4:8, 16, and claims that “it is God the Holy Spirit proceeding

²⁵ Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.31, 423.

²⁶ Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.31, 424 (the translation of John 4:7 is that of Edmund Hill from Augustine’s Latin).

²⁷ Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.31, 424.

²⁸ Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.31, 424.

from God who fires man to the love of God and neighbor when he has been given to him, and he himself is love.”²⁹ Thus, when Scripture says “God is charity,” this particularly refers to the Holy Spirit.

The charity of the Holy Spirit is what not only causes the believer to abide in God and He in the believer, it is what distinguishes the believer from the unbeliever. Without charity, one’s faith, good works, and any other gifts given by the Spirit (such as prophecy, the gift of tongues) are of no avail—they are nothing but the “booming bronze and a clashing cymbal.”³⁰ Without God’s gift of the Holy Spirit, the believer would be indistinguishable from the unbeliever; with the gift of God’s charity—the Spirit—the believer now abides in God, God abides in the believer, and the believer is able to love his neighbor with the love of God as commanded, all of which distinguishes him from the unbeliever.³¹

The Dating of *De Trinitate*

Though *De Trinitate* is not an anti-Donatist work, understanding how Augustine argues for his view of the Holy Spirit as *caritas* helps to shed light on how he utilizes this idea in his charge against the Donatists; more will be said to this end later below. Another point that bears noting is the time period in which Augustine wrote *De Trinitate*—a period that largely coincides with Augustine’s dealings with the

²⁹ Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.31, 424.

³⁰ Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.5.32, 424. Augustine argues that one can have faith even without charity and appeals to Galatians 5:6 and James 2:19.

³¹ In Book IX.2.13, Augustine seems to contrast the love of man, which is covetousness, and the love of God, which is charity. With covetousness, man loves the object of love essentially as an end in itself; with charity, one is able to take pleasure in relationships and other goods in this world, but the believers pleasure in these things refers back to God—“the only wholly satisfying object of enjoyment” (see footnote 24 in *De Trinitate* IX.2.13, 285).

Donatists.

Augustine's involvement in the Donatist controversy began around 393 when he was a priest under Velerius³² and continued in various forms (attending councils against Donatists, writing letters to Donatist bishops, and writing anti-Donatist treatises) until about 423 when Augustine wrote his last letter on Donatism to a converted Donatist and Catholic nun, Felicia.³³ The period of Augustine's anti-Donatist works also spans approximately the same time period in which Augustine wrote *De Trinitate*. Though scholars do not agree on the exact dates it took Augustine to write *De Trinitate*, general consensus is that he began around 399 and completed the work in 417 or 419.³⁴ The works considered in this paper cover roughly the same time period as the writing of *De Trinitate*. The approximate dates for Augustine's anti-Donatists works are as follows: *De Baptismo contra Donatistas* appeared around 400/401; *Contra litteras Petilliani* appeared around 401/405;³⁵ and Letter 185 around 417.³⁶ The bulk of his letters fit

³² W.H.C. Frend, "Augustine and State Authority: The Example of the Donatists" in *Orthodoxy, Paganism and Dissent in the Early Christian Centuries* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 57.

³³ John Anthony Corcoran, *Augustinus Contra Donatistas* (Donaldson, IN: Graduate Theological Foundation, 1997), 58-69.

³⁴ William Harmless has Augustine completing *De Trinitate* in 419/420, while J. Corcoran has him completing the work in 417. Phillip Schaff in his *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* has *De Trinitate* completed in 420, while J.J. O'Donnell has it completed as late as 422/426 (J.J. O'Donnell, "Chronological Table of Augustine's Works," accessed March 31, 2014, <http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/augustine/chrontable.html>). C.C. Pecknold claims that the first eight books of *De Trinitate* were written from 399-416 ("How Augustine Use the Trinity: Functionalism and the Development of Doctrine", 132).

³⁵ William Harmless, "Augustine's Works: Dates/Editions," accessed March 30, 2014, <http://www02.homepage.villanova.edu/allan.fitzgerald/>; Internet.

³⁶ Corcoran, *Augustinus*, 9.

within the dates of *De Trinitate*. What is significant about the dating of these works is that as Augustine wrote *De Trinitate*—a work in which his identification of the Holy Spirit as *caritas* serves as the distinctive identity of the Spirit within the Trinity—he utilized the Holy Spirit as *caritas* as a foundational truth of his ecclesiology in his anti-Donatist writings.³⁷

³⁷ A helpful book regarding the development of Augustine's idea of *caritas* in relation to Church unity is David. C. Alexander's *Augustine's Early Theology of the Church: Emergence and Implications, 386-391* (in *Patristic Studies*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. 9 [New York: Peter Lang, 2008]), in which he points out in Augustine's early works an already developed understanding of *caritas*. For instance, Alexander states that even in Thagaste, Augustine's teachings "reflected a commitment to charity as the center of his relationship with God and with the church as the communion of shared charity with all believers" (226-27). He later states that in Augustine's last year at Thagaste, Augustine's ecclesiology "is refined in understanding catholicity as derivative from the unity of God himself and from charity" (300-1). Thus, if Alexander is correct, then Augustine did not develop his ecclesiology of *caritas* as a result of his dealings with the Donatist controversy.

For instance, Frederic van der Meer states that the Donatist controversies "awakened" in Augustine the deeper meaning of the church—beyond it being "a thing rooted in the world of hard facts" to a growing consciousness "of the real nature of its unity, of the reasons which necessitated that unity...Hard experience of the facts before him taught Augustine that the rendering apart of the body of the Church was a worse thing than any handing over of books" (*Augustine the Bishop*, 126-27). Thus, according to this account, Augustine was forced to develop an ecclesiology of *caritas* because of what he encountered in the Donatist controversy. This may well be true, but it does not seem to fit with the story of Augustine's life up to the point of his dealings with the Donatists.

In his early wanderings after truth, Augustine states that he "had absolutely no confidence in [the] Church," yet over time, he began to see the Church as holding to the Truth—that which he had sought after passionately since reading Cicero's *Hortensius* (Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998], 88, 116, 119 respectively). Eventually, Augustine could say of the Church: "I now gave my preference to the Catholic faith. I thought it more modest and not in the least misleading to be told by the Church to believe what could not be demonstrated—whether that was because a demonstration existed but could not be understood by all or whether the matter was not open to rational proof" (Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. Chadwick: 95). As such, I would find David Alexander's thesis that Augustine began to develop his ecclesiology *before* his dealings with the Donatist

The Holy Spirit, Unity, and *Caritas* in Augustine's Anti-Donatist Writings

In order to better understand Augustine's ecclesiology in his anti-Donatist writings, a brief discussion is needed regarding how Augustine understood the nature of the problem of the Donatist schism. Once this is laid out, the backdrop will be set for the thesis of this paper.

The Heart of the Donatist Schism

When Augustine became a priest in Hippo near the end of the fourth century, Donatism was going strong despite imperial efforts to halt their baptisms and end their violence.³⁸ The Donatist church was well-established in North Africa with churches in both rural and urban areas,³⁹ whose history began around 303 with the edicts of Diocletian.⁴⁰ While Augustine is perhaps the most prolific writer against the Donatists, he was not the first Catholic to publish a book-length work against the schismatics. The first known polemic against the Donatist

church one that fits better within the narrative of Augustine's life than the theses presented by van der Meer and Wright.

³⁸ Corcoran, *Augustinus*, 30.

³⁹ W.H.C. Frend, "Donatist and Catholic: The Organization of Christian Communities in the North African Countryside," *Orthodoxy, Paganism and Dissent in the Early Christian Centuries* (Burlington, VA: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 611. Frend mentions archaeological digs of North African towns that show evidence of having several Donatist churches in each town. He conjectures that the towns did not have several Donatist churches because of splintering within the church, but because the individual churches had been set up in honor of Donatist martyrs. Frend states: "Their worship had been centered on martyrdom" (Frend, "Donatist and Catholic," 616).

⁴⁰ Mark Edwards, "Introduction," *Optatus: Against the Donatists*, ed. and tran. Mark Edwards (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), xi.

church was written by Optatus of Milevis in 384,⁴¹ who wrote in response to Donatist bishop Parmenianus' anti-Catholic work, *Epistola Parmeniani*.⁴² Augustine utilized the work of Optatus in his own attacks against the Donatists, "expanding and deepening" Optatus' arguments in his efforts to convince the Donatists of their error.⁴³

The Donatists claimed that the Catholic Church was impure because they allowed back into the fold of the church priests and bishops who had turned over the sacred writings during the persecution of Diocletian (called *traditors*) without rebaptizing them. As such, they believed that anyone baptized by these men did not receive a true baptism. Further, because these *traditors* handed over the sacred writings during persecution, but sought forgiveness once the persecution subsided, they were not worthy of remaining in their role as priest or bishop. The Catholic Church, then, was impure, so they broke away in order to be the true, pure church.⁴⁴

Augustine tailors his arguments to answer the Donatists' charges that the Catholic Church's baptism is invalid and to discredit their

⁴¹ Edwards, "Introduction," xviii. According to Corcoran in *Augustinus*, Optatus' *Contra Parmenianum Donatistam*, also known as *Against the Donatists*, is "the only substantial surviving anti-Donatist work before the time of Augustine," but nothing is known of Optatus beyond what is given in his anti-Donatist work (Corcoran, *Augustinus*, 26–27).

⁴² Corcoran, *Augustinus*, 26.

⁴³ Corcoran, *Augustinus*, 71.

⁴⁴ This summary of the Donatist schism is merely an attempt to get at the heart of the controversy. The situation is indeed more complex and involved than what is outlined above. Augustine spilled much ink in his letters (especially) and his works recounting to the Donatists the history of the schism and the Donatists inconsistencies in their actions compared to the charges they bring against the Catholic Church. Some of Augustine's works that contains detailed accounts of the history of the schism include, in part: Letter 43, Letter 44, Letter 88, Letter 185, *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, and *Contra litteras Petiliani*.

claim that they alone are the true Church. For Augustine, the true issue is not that the Donatists baptize outside of the Catholic Church (though he does hold that their baptism is outside of Christ).⁴⁵ Rather, the root issue of the schism is that the Donatists seek to divide the Church. Augustine brings the charge against the Donatists that they “design their own church through the vanity of human lies,” for they “do not recognize his Church through the authority of the divine writings.”⁴⁶ Thus, their schism is a “wicked error” from which they need to be delivered,⁴⁷ for when one separates himself from the Church, the Church does not abide in him, for the Church cannot “exist” in both those who are in the Catholic church and in he who has torn himself away from the body.⁴⁸ In short, Augustine “disapproves[s] in them only of their dissent by which they became heretics or schismatics.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ In Letter 43.21, Augustine says of the Donatist baptism: “the baptism of Christ is subjected to the rite of exsufflation.” (Augustine, Letter 43, trans. Roland Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, pt. II, *Letters*, vol. 1 [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001], 167). According to footnote 8, the translator Roland Teske states that exsufflation is “that part of the baptismal rite in which the devil is blown out of the candidate for baptism by the breathing upon him of the minister” (167).

⁴⁶ Augustine, Letter 185 1.2 (ed. Boniface Ramsey II/3: 181).

⁴⁷ Augustine, Letter 185 1.2 (ed. Ramsey II/3: 180).

⁴⁸ Augustine, Letter 93.25, trans. Roland Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, pt. II, *Letters*, vol. 1 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 392.

⁴⁹ Augustine, Letter 61.1, trans. Roland Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, pt. II, *Letters*, vol. 1 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 245. As one reads through Augustine’s letter, a noticeable shift is observed in Augustine’s labeling the Donatists as “schismatics” or “heretics.” In the quote above, Augustine calls the Donatists “heretics or schismatics,” whereas in later letters, Augustine chooses to refer to them as “heretics.” Daniel Doyle in “Doctrinal Discipline in the Letters of St. Augustine” points out that early in Augustine’s career he refers to the Donatists as “schismatics,” but later refers to them as “heretics” “to take advantage of the legislation passed in 405” against the Donatists. Daniels goes on to say that while the terms were used interchangeably, they were soon no longer

What, then, is the nature of this unity such that Augustine's focus and energy in his anti-Donatist writings is to convince the Donatists that they are out of unity with the church?⁵⁰ It is to this question the paper

synonymous (Daniel Doyle, "Doctrinal Discipline in the Letters of St. Augustine" in *Studia Patristica: Papers Presented at the Thirteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 1999, St. Augustine and His Opponents, Other Latin Writers*, eds. M.F. Wiles and E.J. Yarnold, vol. XXXVIII [Louvain: Peeters Publishing, 2001], 85).

⁵⁰ Indeed, the issue of unity is so vital to Augustine that he even comes to the point of justifying the use of state coercion to bring the Donatists back into the fold of the church. Augustine's appeal to state coercion has garnered much attention over the years by scholars, particularly in their attempt to understand the motivations behind his shift in thought. Early in his ministry, Augustine did not believe that the church should appeal to the state for help in church matters, particularly in regards to dealing with schismatics. In Letter 61.1 that "we desire to gain them for God through the love of Christ in order that in the peace of the Church they might have for their salvation the holy sacrament that outside of the Church they have for their destruction (Augustine, Letter 61.1 (ed. Rotelle II/1: 245). However, Augustine shifts his opinion on the matter when his fellow bishops share with him the positive results they received (the conversion of Donatists to the Catholic Church) when utilizing state coercion. Augustine states in Letter 93.17: "I yielded, therefore, to these examples, which my colleagues proposed to me...this opinion of mine was defeated, not by the words of its opponents, but by examples of those who offered proof" (Augustine, Letter 93.17 (ed. Rotelle II/1: 387).

W.H.C. Frend states that the path that led Augustine to favor state coercion was "long and complex." Augustine was not a cruel person and "recoiled" at the thought of using the death penalty against the Donatists (several times he pleads to Christians in imperial roles to abstain from using their authority to apply the death penalty to heretics) and his "favourite images of correction are those derived from family discipline...Yet behind this was the ambitious man who had once aspired to an imperial governorship, and hated to lose. It was total victory or nothing" (Frend, "Augustine and State Authority," 71). In this essay, Frend traces Augustine's progression from one who avoided appealing to state coercion to one whose support for state coercion defined the views on church and state "throughout the Middle Ages and beyond" (49). Frend delves into possible motivations based upon Augustine's past: his relationship with Monica, the social class into which he was born, his education, etc. Similarly, Frederick Dillistone states: "To Augustine, who had been trained in the classical tradition and had imbibed much of the spirit of imperial Rome, the rebellion of a small faction against the accumulated wisdom and tradition of the whole seemed madness" (Frederick W. Dillistone, "The Anti-Donatist Writings" in *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, ed. Roy Battenhouse [New York: Oxford University Press, 1955], 198).

now turns.

The Nature of Unity: the Holy Spirit and Caritas

Augustine's view of the nature of unity will be discussed in three facets: first, Augustine understood that the unity of the Church is communion with the Church that has spread to all the nations, which was prophesied by Scripture. Second, unity goes beyond the number of believers united to the same Church—Augustine roots unity in *caritas*. Lastly, Augustine identifies *caritas* with the Holy Spirit, without whom no one can have *caritas*.

Unity in the universal church. One charge Augustine consistently brought against the Donatists was that they set themselves up as the true church against the Catholic Church that could be found in all the nations. In Letter 49 to Honoratus, a Donatist bishop, Augustine claims that Scripture has predicted that the church of Christ will be spread throughout the world, and appeals to Psalm 2:7-8: “The Lord said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and *I shall give you the nations as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your possession.*’”⁵¹ Augustine then points to the existence of the church

While Frensdorff's methodology does seem to coincide with Augustine's belief that one's background greatly affects who one is in the present, and Dillistone may be correct about Augustine's imbibing “the spirit of imperial Rome,” they seem to neglect what seems to be a basic facet of Augustine's motivation—the theological issue of the nature of the church, and in particular, the unity of the church. While Augustine is indeed a product of his past, this past does not necessarily dictate all he does; one must consider as well the changes that occur in him through his conversion and growth as a believer—especially a believer who once rejected Scripture as the source of truth, but soon came to embrace it as Truth. I am not condoning Augustine's appeal to state coercion in Church matters; rather, I am trying to point out that his motivation may be more theologically driven (however incorrect it may be) than Frensdorff and Dillistone make it out to be.

⁵¹ Augustine, Letter 49.2, trans. Roland Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, pt. II, *Letters*, vol. 1 (Hyde Park, NY:

in Africa as evidence that the prophecy in Psalm 2 has come true⁵²—the church which began in Jerusalem has now spread to the entire world. When the Donatists sever ties with the Catholic Church, they break away from the Church universal, not just the Church in Africa.

The appeal to the universal Church is, at the very least, an attempt on the part of Augustine to place the Donatists at odds with a multitude of believers who are of the same faith and in the same church; however, it does not provide the grounding for unity. Strength in numbers does not make a church the true Church. Augustine thus establishes the ontological basis of unity in the concept of *caritas*.

Unity in *caritas*. With just a cursory glance through Augustine’s anti-Donatist works, one is struck by his use of and appeal to charity in the Catholic Church. Stanislaw Grabowski says of Augustine that he is “the doctor of charity,” for he has

described the need and role of charity in the individual toward God, in one individual toward another and extended his theology of charity to encompass nations and mankind. His thoughts on charity run like a golden thread throughout the pages of his voluminous works...They are necessary to bring unity in the

New City Press, 2001), 195. The quote of Ps. 2:7–8 is that of the translator Roland Teske provided in his translation of Letter 49. Emphasis is mine.

⁵² A note of interest is how Augustine reads particular passages in Psalms as prophecy for the Catholic church, and Christian emperors and their use of state authority to punish heretics (Ps 2:1, 2, 10, 11; Ps 18:37; Ps 72:11)—passages that were not seen by NT writers as prophecy. What is unclear to me (perhaps primarily because my research was not directed to this end) is his hermeneutical method for determining whether a particular passage in Psalms was prophecy for the Church.

Indeed, the idea of charity plays a significant role in the theology of Augustine, particularly in his understanding of the unity of the church. In *De Baptismo*, Augustine establishes unity upon the basis of charity. In Book III.19.26, Augustine describes the true Christian, as opposed to the Donatist who is not a true Christian, as one who keeps God's commandments and therefore abides in His love (*dilectione*);⁵⁴ the fulfilling of God's law is love (*caritas*). The schismatic, on the other hand, do not have love (*caritatem*) towards God, "but are busied about those by whose pride they are led astray...For thus arise heresies and schisms, when the fleshly people [are] not founded on the love (*caritate*) of God."⁵⁵

Later in Book VII of *De Baptismo*, Augustine says of Christian brotherly love that "the very sacrifices of the Lord declare that Christians are united among themselves by a firm and inseparable love (*caritate*) for one another."⁵⁶ In *Contra litteras Petiliani*, Augustine understands charity to be "the unitive bond of the Church, and outside of this unity, one lacks charity."⁵⁷ Thus, outside of the unity of the Catholic Church and of charity, the Donatists' faith, baptism, and any other gift given by the Holy Spirit, was to no avail. Augustine appeals

⁵³ Grabowski, *The Church*, 351.

⁵⁴ Reference footnote 12 above.

⁵⁵ Augustine, *De Baptismo* III.19.27 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 445).

⁵⁶ Augustine, *De Baptismo* VII.50.98 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 511).

⁵⁷ Augustine, *Contra Petiliani* II.81.178 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 571): "But who will be utterly insane as to declare that the name of the Son may be of avail even beyond the communion of the Church?...But it is manifest that outside the communion of the Church, and the most holy bond of unity, and the most excellent gift of charity," one cannot obtain eternal life.

to 1 Corinthians 13:1–2 as biblical support for his charge against the Donatists:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.⁵⁸

The Donatists' works, though done in the name of Christ, are of no eternal benefit, for they "overthrow" charity, thus breaking the bond of unity with the Catholic Church.⁵⁹

Charity, therefore, is necessary to the unity of the Church, and if one lacks charity, he sets himself against this unity. If charity, then, is necessary to the unity of the Church, how does Augustine understand the ontological nature of *caritas*? In his biography on Augustine, Frederic van der Meer contends that it is the sacraments which are the "bond of unity through which [believers] are bound to one another,"⁶⁰ and these sacraments give believers the love of God. Jonathan Wright, in his book *Heretics*, sees the use of *caritas* as the encapsulation of the Church's "rehabilitation" of the Donatists: "This meant being kind, relying on reform and instruction, in order to save a person's eternal

⁵⁸ Augustine, *Contra Petilianum* 1.9.12 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 417). The verse quoted is King's translation of Augustine's quote of 1 Cor. 13:1-2.

⁵⁹ Augustine, *De Baptismo* 1.8.10 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 416). See also John Paul Hoskins, "Augustine on Love and Church Unity in 1 John" in *Studia Patristica: Papers Presented at the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 2003, Augustine and Other Latin Writers*, eds. F. Young, M. Edwards, and P. Parvis, vol. XXXIX–XLIII (Louvain: Peeters Publishing, 2006), 127.

⁶⁰ Frederic van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop: The Life and Work of a Father of the Church*, trans. B. Battershaw and G.R. Lamb (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 283.

soul.”⁶¹ However, when one reads Augustine’s use of 1 Corinthians 13:1–2 as support for his idea that any work done in the name of Christ *outside* of charity is of no eternal value, he is harkened back to Augustine’s similar arguments in *De Trinitate* XV.5.32. Likewise, by making charity the basis of unity, Augustine reflects his appeal to 1 John 4:8–16 in *De Trinitate* XV.5: when one abides in God, he has God’s *caritas*, and then is able to love his neighbors with this same love from God. If Augustine’s understanding of *caritas* as the basis of unity reflects his understanding of *caritas* in *De Trinitate*, then perhaps his understanding of the ontological nature of charity in his anti-Donatist writings goes deeper than what van der Meer and Wright propose.

The ontological nature of *caritas*. As pointed out earlier, though Augustine does not formally argue for the identity of the Holy Spirit as *caritas* until *De Trinitate* Book XV.5, his earlier books utilize this idea without argument.⁶² Written in roughly the same time period as the early books of *De Trinitate*, Augustine’s anti-Donatist writings “presuppose” the same truth regarding the Holy Spirit as *caritas*.

According to Augustine in *De Baptismo*, charity is “the greatest gift of the Holy Spirit, without which any other holy thing that there may be in a man is profitless to his salvation.”⁶³ Elsewhere, Augustine says that “divine love is breathed into [believers’] hearts so that they may be able to say ‘Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us.’”⁶⁴ At Pentecost, Jesus Christ sent

⁶¹ Jonathan Wright, *Heretics: The Creation of Christianity from the Gnostics to the Modern Church* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), 77.

⁶² Reference footnote 11 above.

⁶³ Augustine, *De Baptismo* V.23.33 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 475).

⁶⁴ Augustine, *De Baptismo* III.16.21 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 433). Augustine quotes Romans 5:5.

the Holy Spirit “in tongues of fire, that He might make manifest the glowing heart of charity, which [one] certainly cannot have who does not keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace with the Church.”⁶⁵ In these two passages, Augustine links the presence of charity in one’s heart with the presence of the Holy Spirit—the same Spirit given to the disciples is given to believers today—and it is only in the unity of the Church where one can find Christian unity and the love (*caritas*) of the Holy Spirit—that is, the love that is of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁶ This is perhaps the closest Augustine comes to linking the identity of the Holy Spirit to *caritas* apart from explicitly saying that the “Holy Spirit is love (*caritas*)” as he does in *De Trinitate* XV.5.

Augustine states his identification of the Holy Spirit with *caritas* in a less formulaic way, however, throughout his writings when he discusses the consequences of being out of unity with the Church. At the beginning of *De Baptismo*, Augustine, after quoting Romans 5:5, claims that those who are cut off from communion with the Catholic Church lack the love (*caritas*) of God by through the Holy Spirit. Conversely, those who lack the love (*caritas*) of God “do not care for the unity of the Church.” Therefore, Augustine concludes, “we are right in understanding that the Holy Spirit may be said not to be received except in the Catholic Church.”⁶⁷

For Augustine, then, the Donatists are in grave eternal danger because of their schism, for by rejecting the unity of the Church, they

⁶⁵ Augustine, *Contra Petilianum* II.32.74 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 549).

⁶⁶ Augustine, Letter 173.6, trans. Roland Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, pt. II, *Letters*, vol. 3 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004), 127. In this passage, “love of Christ” in Latin is “Sancti Spiritus caritas” where *caritas* is in the genitive form; *caritas* here, therefore, is not the love the believer has toward the Holy Spirit, but the love that is of the Holy Spirit.

⁶⁷ Augustine, *De Baptismo* III.16.21 (ed. Schaff 1/IV: 442–43).

essentially reject the Holy Spirit, and one who rejects the Holy Spirit is one who does not abide in God. When believers are directed to God, they have one mind and one heart because of the Spirit poured into their hearts—the same Spirit that serves as the unitive bond of the Trinity.⁶⁸ The ontological nature of *caritas*—that unifying love of the Catholic Church—is the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ John Paul Hoskins, “Acts 4:32 in Augustine’s Ecclesiology” in *Studia Patristica: Papers Presented at the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 2007, St. Augustine and His Opponents*, eds. J. Baun, A. Cameron, M. Edwards, and M. Vinzent, vol. XLIV-SLIX (Louvain: Peeters Publishing, 2010), 76.

⁶⁹ Corcoran, *Augustinus*, 95. Of the scholars I studied in my research for this paper, Stanislaw Grabowski is one who stood out for the amount of ink spent on the issue of *caritas* and the Holy Spirit in Augustine’s writings. He sees the role of *caritas* and the Holy Spirit as central in Augustine’s works (recall that he calls Augustine “the doctor of charity”), yet when discussing the nature of the relationship between the two, he claims that “The Holy Ghost and charity are not identified in the writings of St. Augustine except metonymically;” that is, “The person of the Holy Ghost is the source, the cause of charity, and charity is the concomitant element, the effect” (Grabowski, *The Church*, 354). Thus, the relationship is a cause-effect relationship. Later he says in the same chapter that the Holy Spirit’s role in the Trinity is love—“the mutual love of the Father and the Son;” the Holy Spirit, though, is uncreated love while charity is a created love and a “finite gift” (Grabowski, *The Church*, 355). Ontologically, then, charity and the Holy Spirit are not the same thing.

J.N.D. Kelly also sees the Holy Spirit as the “life-principle of the unity of the Church; he sees the Spirit as “love personified, *the product* of the mutual love of the Father and Son, the life-principle of the Church can be equally well described as love” (J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* 5th ed. [London: Continuum, 2012], 414). Unfortunately, Kelly’s understanding is unhelpful as his statement is ambiguous: is the Holy Spirit as personified love a *product* of the Father and Son’s love for each other, thus making the Spirit begotten by them in some way? Or, is the *product* referring to the actual love given to the believer by the Spirit—that love which the Father and Son have for each other is the Spirit, producing the unitive love of the Church?

Perhaps most helpful in understanding the ontological nature of *caritas* in Augustine’s writings are Corcoran’s *Augustinus Contra Donatistas* (referenced several times throughout this paper). See also Gabriel Mendy, “Augustine’s Analogy Between the Spirit in the Church and the Soul in the Body and its Implications for Communion Ecclesiology” (Ph.D. diss., Duquesne University, 2009) and Gavril Andreicut, “The

Conclusion

Augustine's various works against the Donatists span nearly three decades, and during that time he also produced numerous sermons and theological treatises on various subjects. While his anti-Donatist writings serve as a great source to understand his ecclesiology (especially considering that this is an excellent case of taking theology out of the ivory tower and putting it to use in the heat of ecclesiological battles), they should be understood in light of his other works. No work or group of works is an island unto itself, separated from the concerns, ideas, and context of other works by the same author, and the same goes with Augustine. *De Trinitate* and his anti-Donatist writings (particularly *De Baptismo*, *Contra litteras Petiliani*, and Letter 185) span roughly the same time period, and all of these works touch on the issue of *caritas* and the Holy Spirit. Without neglecting the specific concerns and purposes of each work, together they can help to provide a clearer understanding of Augustine's use and understanding of *caritas*. In particular to the concern of this paper, one concern of Augustine's for *De Trinitate*—that of identifying the Holy Spirit as *caritas*—is the theological belief put into action against the Donatists and their schism from the true Church.

Since the Reformation, the Western church has witnessed a growth in the number of denominations as a result (in part) of doctrinal disagreements and difference in church governance. In particular, as American evangelical churches deal with moral issues

Church's Unity and Authority: Augustine's Effort to Convert the Donatists" (Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 2010), and David C. Alexander's book, mentioned above, titled *Augustine's Early Theology of the Church*. Corcoran and Alexander particularly take Augustine's understanding of *caritas* and its identity with the Holy Spirit, and seek to comprehend it in light of his other works, not just in isolation with the anti-Donatist writings. Done this way, one gains a greater appreciation for the depth of this doctrine.

(such as homosexuality), political issues (such as the issue of free speech versus hate speech), and gender roles (such as the role of women in church leadership), Evangelical churches will continue to witness the breakup of congregations and the formation of new denominations. Though Augustine's anti-Donatist works tackle the issue of who constituted the true Church, his elaboration upon the Holy Spirit as *caritas* and as the basis of the unity of the Church ought to give pause to those denominations encountering doctrinal battles. Though a break away may be inevitable, the gravity of such a move should not be lost for the sake of ending theological disputes.

Augustine's doctrine of *caritas* is perhaps more relevant, however, for the local church body. Though church denominations are an important way for churches to align with like-minded congregations for fellowship, evangelism, and missions, the concept of a "denomination" is not biblical. That is, one does not find in Scripture such a concept. Further, Augustine charged the Donatists for leaving the universal Church which was manifested on Earth in the Catholic Church. To leave the Catholic Church was to leave the fellowship of the true believers.

After the Reformation, Evangelicals do not see the denomination as the embodiment of the universal church, nor is the universal church manifested in a particular institution. Rather, the church universal is the invisible church which consists of all true believers. The local church body reflects the universal church, but consists of both believers and unbelievers. Despite the mixed nature of its congregation, the local church is where the believer comes under the authority of the preaching of God's Word, fellowships with the saints, disciples others and receives discipling, and reaches out to the lost world through the proclamation of the Gospel through word and deed. The local church body is the image of the unity of the Trinity, for each

of her members (those who are true believers) are united by the Holy Spirit.

If Augustine is correct, then, unity in the local body ought to give pause to churches experiencing a lack of harmony over serious issues such as doctrinal differences and musical style, or trivial matters such as carpet color or committee makeup. The decision to break up a church is no small matter, and in light of Augustine's doctrine of *caritas* it should be the last resort (if at all). Too often, however, the decision to split up a congregation seems to be viewed as the best way to solve seemingly endless disputes.

Further, the idea of *caritas* helps to deepen the idea of unity as it includes not only a like-mindedness on doctrinal and church practice matters, but it also encompasses how church members interact with one another. That is, is the church truly a family? Do the members enjoy the company of one another? Is there a healthy respect for various viewpoints (on areas of practice or those matters that Scriptures does not explicitly speak to) while maintaining a like-mindedness regarding mission and purpose? Does the local body actively seek to share responsibility within the church as opposed to leaving 80% of the tasks to 20% of the congregation? And, is the local body actively pursuing the evangelization of their surrounding area, state, nation, and the world, while baptizing and discipling new believers? Augustine's doctrine of *caritas* entails that believers are active participants in God's love as they seek to exemplify his gift of love to fellow believers and to the lost.

In an age of individualism and deep theological divides, the Evangelical churches would do well to visit the doctrine of church unity. A study of Augustine's doctrine of *caritas* is a theologically-rich place to begin when seeking to understand the theological basis for the bond of the local church body.