

Proposal

Title: "Augustine's Power Play Regarding the Donatists' Understanding of Holiness and the Problem of Church Unity."

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Cultural particularity does not exclude either generality or plurality, though particularity represents not only cultural identity, but also its power toward others. That means, of course, that without one's own particularity, we cannot expect that there would be plurality, as there would not be generality, but only a normative matter without plurality. There was power play regarding ecclesiastical particularity in North Africa between the Donatists and Augustine. The particularity of the Donatist Church in North Africa was clearly sectarian; it did not include others. While the Donatists claimed the necessity of priestly purity for pure Christianity, which derived from Cyprian's theory of priests, they became sectarians in the North African context, and raised the problem of the unity of the Catholic or universal Church. The power of their claim was North African tradition, which was leaning on the ecclesiastical authority of Cyprian. As a result, their understanding of priestly holiness led to the exclusiveness, not only of their church, but also of sacraments such as baptism, from the Catholic Church's. In this schematic context, Augustine needed his polemical answer to respond to this problem. That response was, in fact, Cyprian's theory of the unity of the Church set against the claim of the purity of priests. This North African tradition provided Augustine the power of pursuing the universal Church, which means inclusiveness, supported by the idea of the body of Christ as the foundation of the unity of the Church. In this sense, what he really wanted to do was to reconcile North African Churches relying on the tradition of North Africa as well as on his interpretation of the body of Christ-the Church.

Therefore, what I want to do in this paper is to examine that, based on his North African tradition of cultural and ecclesiastical particularity, Augustine could articulate his idea of the unity of the Church as the universal Church, while not only rethinking the concept of the purity of priests, but also providing the concept of the true priest in the context of North Africa. In other words, Augustine exploited Cyprian's concept of the unity of the Church and then transformed the concept of priestly purity for the Church. In his historical and polemical context, the North African Church tradition provided power to persuade the Donatists in his attempts to reconcile churches rather than to be exclusive of them.