One route to understanding the nature of specifically religious violence is the study of past conflicts. Distinguished ancient historian Brent D. Shaw provides a new analysis of the intense sectarian battles between the Catholic and Donatist churches of North Africa in Late Antiquity, in which Augustine played a central role as Bishop of Hippo. The development and deployment of images of hatred, including those of the heretic, the pagan, and the Jew, and the modes by which these were most effectively employed, including the oral world of the sermon, were critical to promoting acts of violence. Shaw explores how the emerging ecclesiastical structures of the Christian Church, on one side, and those of the Roman imperial state, on the other, interacted to repress or excite violent action. Finally, the meaning and construction of the acts themselves, including the Western idea of suicide, are shown to emerge from the conflict itself.

**Brent D. Shaw** is the Andrew Fleming West Professor of Classics at Princeton University. He has published widely on the regional history of the Roman empire, with particular emphasis on the North African provinces and the problem of violence in its historical contexts, in major journals including *Journal of Roman Studies*, *Past & Present*, and the *American Historical Review*. He has also co-authored a new world history text entitled *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart* (2010).
SACRED VIOLENCE

African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine

BRENT D. SHAW
Shauna

*devotissimo animo*

*Vengeance is mine – I shall repay* (Romans 12: 19)
Contents

List of abbreviations  ix
List of maps  xi
Acknowledgments  xii

Introduction  1
1 This terrible custom  10
2 Church of the traitors  66
3 A poisonous brood of vipers  107
4 Archives of memory  146
5 The city of denial  195
6 Ravens feeding on death  260
7 Little foxes, evil women  307
8 Guardians of the people  348
9 In the house of discipline  409
10 Sing a new song  441
11 Kings of this world  490
12 We choose to stand  544
13 Athletes of death  587
14 Bad boys  630
15 Men of blood  675
Contents

16  Divine winds  721
17  So what?  771

Appendix A: Bishops and bishoprics in Africa: the numbers  807
Appendix B: Origins of the division: chronology  812
Appendix C: The Catholic conference of 348  820
Appendix D: The Edict of Unity and the Persecution of 347  822
Appendix E: The mission of Paul and Macarius  825
Appendix F: Historical fictions: interpreting the circumcellions  828
Appendix G: The archaeology of suicide  840
Appendix H: African sermons  842
Bibliography  850
Index  901
Abbreviations

All periodical, serial, and collection abbreviations, other than those noted below, are taken from the standard list in L’Année philologique.

AASS  Acta Sanctorum, Antwerp, Société des Bollandistes, 1643–
BA  Bibliothèque Augustinienne: Oeuvres de saint Augustin, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1948–
CCL  Corpus christianorum, series Latina, Turnhout, Brepols, 1954–
CIL  Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, Berlin, 1863–
CSEL  Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, Vienna, Tempisky, 1866–
CTh  T. Mommsen and P. M. Meyer eds., Theodosiani libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondiannis et Leges Novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes, 2 vols., Berlin, Weidmann, 1905
DACL  Dictionnaire d’archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie, ed. F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1907–53
DHGE  Dictionnaire d’histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques, ed. A. Baudrillart, Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1912–
GCC  Gesta conlationis Carthaginiensis anno 411, ed. S. Lancel (see texts s.v. Church Councils)
GCS  Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte, Leipzig and Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1897–
List of abbreviations

ICUR A. Silvagni & A. Ferrua eds., *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae*, nova series, Rome, 1922–

ILAlg *Inscriptions latines de l’Algérie*, Paris, 1922–


MGH AA *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, auctores antiquissimi*, Berlin, 1826–

MiAg *Miscellanea Agostiniana: testi e studi pubblicati a cura dell’ordine Eremitano di S. Agostino nel XV centenario dalla morte del santo dottore*, 2 vols., Rome, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1930–31


RAC *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, Stuttgart, A. Hiersemann, 1941–

SC *Sources chrétiennes*. Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1942–
Maps

1 North Africa and the western Mediterranean empire page xiv
2A Proconsularis and Byzacena xv
2B Numidia and Mauretania Sitifensis xvi
2C Mauretania Caesariensis and Mauretania Sitifensis xvii
3 The Carthage region xviii
4 The Hippo Regius region xix
I would like to record some personal marks of gratitude. I must thank all the persons at Cambridge University Press who were involved in the publication of this book, beginning with Michael Sharp for his willingness to consider a large and daunting manuscript. My production editor, Thomas O’Reilly, remained throughout a modulated source of discipline and encouragement. I am also in debt to the anonymous readers of the Press for their perspicacity, their necessary cautions, and their constructive recommendations. Finally, Mr. Adam Gitner, a talented graduate student in the Classics at Princeton, brought his eagle eye to the checking of the primary texts cited in the annotation. The lapses of interpretation and fact that remain, as they say, are my responsibility. In the struggle of the writing, I was assisted by able and generous helpers. At the onset, at my request, Ineke Sluiter, at Leiden, photocopied a whole book and sent it to me, gratuitously—what else are good friends for? In the interim, to those who generously answered pestering questions on points of detail, and who offered other much needed help: Denis Feeney, Joseph Farrell, Bob Kaster, AnneMarie Luijendijk, Ann Matter, Aislinn Melchior, and Eric Rebillard. In the end, there were two wonderful colleagues and fellow historians, Peter Brown and Johannes Hahn, who took from their own valuable time and gave it to a reading of the final draft. I must thank the latter for his series of acute challenges and observations, as well as for his critical corrections. Quite apart from his creative insights and provocative suggestions on a draft of the book, my debt to Peter Brown is exceedingly great. Without him, as I am sure many other historians would happily confess, this work of mine would never have existed.

The dedication marks another ineffable debt. Shauna Shaw read several drafts of most of the chapters, a near endless rota of drudgery and thankless hard work. She made numerous helpful suggestions in aid of enhancing
the readability of the text. I owe her for this, and for more of which she alone knows. And then there is the music, reminding one of true value. My thanks to E.C. and Derek Trucks at Philadelphia in November 2006, and to D.T. and his talented fellow players at the McCarter, Princeton, in May 2007. Life came back.
Map 1: North Africa and the Western Mediterranean empire
Map 2A Proconsularis and Byzacena
(The area in the dotted-line square is shown in Map 3.)
Map 2C Mauretania Caesariensis and Mauretania Sitifensis
Map 3 The Carthage region
Map 4 The Hippo Regius region
(The area within the dotted line approximates the boundaries of Augustine’s diocese of Hippo Regius.)