

Amanda not let her  
brother go without



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

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The Clash Between Civil and Divine Law  
Charles Dickens once said, "The law is an ass." Though at first, it seems harsh and very strange, the deeper meaning is one that is a perfect summary of the Greek tragedy Antigone. The meaning of an "ass," is a stubborn, obstinate, perverse, immovable animal. Throughout Antigone, the characters must deal with the clash between Civil and Divine law.

They struggle to discover what is truly right and wrong, good and bad. In the end, they are forced to make the distinction as to which is which. In Sophocles' Antigone, Civil and Divine Law both have ass-like qualities. The decision by every character for what is most important to them, determines their fate and destiny. Antigone firmly believed that Divine law was far more superior to Civil Law in all respects. To her, the gods determined her fate completely. Obeying the gods was more crucial to obeying the government. "I know I am pleasing those I should please most.

" (Line 103) She chose to bury her brother Polynieces, though she knew that in doing so she would face her own certain death because King Creon forbid it. According to the Divine law, the dead need to have a proper burial in order to make the journey to the underworld. Antigone would not let her brother go without it. Antigone said of Creon, "It is not for him to keep me from my own.

" (Line 54) Antigone is proud of her actions and even shortly before her death she knows she made the right choice. Her death was a fair trade for the justice of her brother. "So for such..

. judges so.” (Lines 509-514) Unlike Creon’s laws, Antigone vied for love not hate. Through choosing the Divine law over Civil law, Antigone also chose death. Haemon, son of Creon, and his mother Eurydices, took their lives away as a result of the clash between Divine and Civil law. Haemon felt civil law was very important because it was his father’s law and he respected his father’s beliefs. At first, he agreed with the punishment of death for (his soon to be wife) Antigone. “ No marriage.

.. your leadership.

” (Lines 690-691) But Haemon also valued the Divine law strongly and felt compassion for Antigone and her brave actions. He tells his father that he alone cannot control everything. “ There is no...one man only.” (Lines 798-799) Haemon foreshadows, telling his father what is yet to come if something does not change. “ Then she must die- and dying destroy another.

” (Line 813) Haemon took his life after seeing his poor wife dead, and Eurydice did the same after witnessing her son’s death. The law eventually determined the fate of both Haemon and Eurydice both. The Sentry and Ismene were not as harshly affected by the fate of the law as many others. They both played roles which forced them to make decisions between their values of Divine and Civil laws. The Sentry first discovered that someone had given burial to Polynidies and had to decide whether to tell King Creon of this and obey the Civil law, or value his Divine law and let the proper burial be given. He told Creon of the crime, and though he had not performed it, the King judged him as though he had.

He himself would face the consequence of death unless he found the true criminal. He found Antigone, and was let free. Ismene also chose the Civil law over Divine. Ismene refused to help Antigone in the burial of their brother because it was against the King's rule. " You are so headstrong. Creon has forbidden it." (Line 53) Ismene takes note of the Divine law and realizes what is truly the right thing to do though she doesn't follow her heart. " I do indeed.

.. is not sensible." (Lines 74-78) By following the Civil law, Ismene and the Sentry's lives were saved.

King Creon was the most affected by his decision on what was right and wrong. He felt that the Civil law was far more important and superior to Divine law. Most of the reason he felt this way, was based on the fact that this was his own personal law which he held over the land. He made the rules for the people to follow but he himself was not subject to obey them. Creon could not handle being under the law of a higher being than himself. He based all his decisions on what was civilly correct and assumed he was always right.

" Yes, my son...father's decision." (Lines 692-694) The King never took note of how his actions had an affect on his life and those around him. He never listened to what others had to say and refused to do so.

In his judgement of Antigone, the King didn't show any compassion for what she did for her brother, though he knew it was truly the good thing to do. By following his law and sentencing her to death, he also caused the eventual

death of his son Haemon, and his wife Eurydice. It was not until after he had lost so much, that he realized what mattered most. “ Lead me away..

. upon me.” (Lines 1413-1419) The Divine law had an extremely strong effect on King Creon and his life.

There is one point in everyone’s life, where you must make the distinction between right and wrong, or Civil and Divine. Most of the time the decision will not be important enough to determine your fate, as it did for Antigone, Creon, and many others, but no matter what there will be an after effect. It is up to you to do the right thing and never forget about the effects it will have on those around you. A fine balance between what is Civil and what is Divine is the safest way to hold your beliefs. As the chorus said, “ Wisdom is far... age teach wisdom.” (Lines 1420-1424) English