

Masters thesis

**Tertullian's conversion to Montanism as the root cause of the dispute between Cyprian and Novatian over the treatment and fate of the Lapsed**

**Brooke, S.P.**

---

Full bibliographic citation: Brooke, S.P. 2024. Tertullian's conversion to Montanism as the root cause of the dispute between Cyprian and Novatian over the treatment and fate of the Lapsed. Masters thesis Middlesex University / London School of Theology (LST)

Year: 2024

Publisher: Middlesex University Research Repository

Available online: <https://repository.mdx.ac.uk/item/242vxz>

---

Middlesex University Research Repository makes the University's research available electronically.

Copyright and moral rights to this work are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners unless otherwise stated. The work is supplied on the understanding that any use for commercial gain is strictly forbidden. A copy may be downloaded for personal, non-commercial, research or study without prior permission and without charge.

Works, including theses and research projects, may not be reproduced in any format or medium, or extensive quotations taken from them, or their content changed in any way, without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). They may not be sold or exploited commercially in any format or medium without the prior written permission of the copyright holder(s).

Full bibliographic details must be given when referring to, or quoting from full items including the author's name, the title of the work, publication details where relevant (place, publisher, date), pagination, and for theses or dissertations the awarding institution, the degree type awarded, and the date of the award.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Middlesex University via the following email address: [repository@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:repository@mdx.ac.uk)

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated.

See also repository copyright: re-use policy: <https://libguides.mdx.ac.uk/repository>

**Tertullian's conversion to Montanism as the root  
cause of the dispute between Cyprian and  
Novatian over the treatment and fate of the  
Lapsed**

A Thesis Submitted to London School of Theology in  
Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Theology September 2024

By

Samuel Brooke

Middlesex University Supervised at London School of  
Theology

Word Count: 30194

Supervised by Dr Matthew Knell

## Contents

Abstract.....	2
Introduction.....	3
History of Research.....	4
Methodology and Structure.....	6

### Part 1: Tertullian

1. Introduction.....	7
2. Stoic Foundations.....	8
3. Tertullian and Montanism.....	11
3a. Carthaginian Spirituality.....	12
3b. Schismatic or Catholic?.....	15
3c. Montanist Affiliation.....	16
4. Tertullian's Ecclesiology.....	18
4a. Catholic Tertullian.....	18
4b. The Church and Montanist Tertullian.....	21
5. Catholic Tertullian and Penance.....	23
5a. Catholic Tertullian and <i>de paenitentia</i> .....	23
5b. Montanist Tertullian and <i>de pudicitia</i> .....	26
6. Conclusion.....	32

### Part 2: Cyprian and Tertullian

1. Introduction.....	33
1a. Flight in Persecution.....	33
2. Cyprian and his Context.....	35
3. Cyprian's Ecclesiology.....	39
3a. Cyprian's Imagery, Tertullian's Origin.....	40
3b. The Church as the <i>sacramentum unitatis</i> .....	42
3c. Heresy and Schism.....	49
4. Cyprian's Penitential Theology.....	51
4a. Penitence.....	51
4b. Satisfaction.....	53
4c. Reconciliation.....	56
5. Conclusion.....	65

### Part 3: Novatian and Tertullian

1. Introduction.....	66
2. Secondary Accounts.....	68
2a. Cyprian.....	69
2b. Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History.....	68
2c. Socrates Scholasticus.....	71
3. Tertullianic Dependency.....	72
3a. Case Study: <i>De spectaculis</i> .....	72
3b. Novatian's Stoicism.....	74
4. Novatian's Penitential Theology.....	76
4a. Penance.....	76
4b. Reconciliation.....	79
5. Tertullianic Rigorism.....	82
6. Fear of Presumption.....	82
7. Holy Fragility.....	85
8. Distinguishing Between Sins.....	88
9. Conclusion.....	90

### Part 4: Conclusion..... 91

## **Abstract**

With Tertullian's conversion to Montanism, a revision came in his penitential theology and ecclesiology. As a catholic he admitted sinners to repentance who would eventually be reconciled to the church in this life. After his conversion he reversed this and barred all grave sinners from knowledge of their reconciliation, though still making them perform penance. Cyprian and Novatian, both readers of Tertullian, took from the two distinct theologies Tertullian produced. Cyprian innovated upon Catholic Tertullian's foundation and championed episcopal reform by using it. He also used Catholic Tertullian's penitential theology to claim as his own and mould to his own needs. Novatian used Montanist Tertullian's rigoristic concepts and practices to help him in his schismatic efforts to make the church the home of the pure. The irremissibility of grave sin which Montanist Tertullian championed would be the main grounds for Novatian's denial of Cornelius and the setting up of himself as the bishop of Rome and defender of Evangelical Rigor.

## Introduction

Among B.B. Warfield's most notorious quotes is a saying which attempted to summarize all of the struggle and schism the Reformation gave birth to, namely that it was 'The ultimate triumph of Augustine's doctrine of grace over Augustine's doctrine of the Church'.<sup>1</sup>

Augustine's magnitude of influence created roots for two very separate branches of thought that were doing battle. The two sides of a man's theology in tension, creating autonomous offshoots depending on which side one wishes to emphasise.

Such is what we wish to demonstrate in the influence of a fellow North African over a century prior to Augustine's seminal influence upon western theology: Tertullian of Carthage. Tertullian's influence as the first major Latin theologian makes him a frequent mention especially in the chronologies of Trinitarian developments. His influence extended far beyond the establishment of Trinitarian vocabulary, contributing to the polemics against Gnosticism, illuminating concepts of the soul, and for the purpose of our thesis, spearheaded two contradictory penitential schools of thought. His earlier life was characterised as an apologist of the catholic church, the house of the apostolic deposit of teaching. His optimistic outlook on the church's unity against the heretics led to in-house moral treatises such as *de oratione*, *de patientia*, *de baptismo*, and most pertinent to our discussion, *de paenitentia*. Yet we find in his later life as he embraces Montanism him repenting of *de paenitentia* in the treatise representing his new approach, *de pudicitia*.

A mere few decades after Tertullian's passing around the 220s, a crisis appears in the 250s under Decius which demanded the attention of every Christian, be they lay or clergy. The short lived rule of Decius forced itself upon the families of Rome with an empire-wide religious revival, demanding sacrifices to the pantheon for the empire's health. The Christians had no exemption from such rule and under the threats of tortures and state sanctioned oppression, many Christians ran to fulfil the imperial edict, compromising their allegiance to Christ and suffering the designation as *lapsi* by their more faithful brethren. If the lapsed asked for reconciliation, what should be the process? This precise question was

---

<sup>1</sup> Warfield, *Calvin*, 322.

asked by two influencers directly opposed to each other: Cyprian of Carthage and Novatian of Rome. A puzzling aspect arrives here, for, as will be demonstrated, both thinkers relied on Tertullian's contributions to produce a disciplinary remedy to the crisis.

It shall be shown the Cyprian's "master" was mostly the Tertullian of the catholic church. Cyprian develops upon the ecclesiological foundation inherited by Tertullian, building a structure which centres on the bishop. Cyprian's ecclesiology evolved into the forming of a sacramental episcopate whose role was essential to the reconciliatory process. His penitential theology shall be demonstrated to be mirroring much of what Tertullian expected of the penitents of his day, proven through similar emphases and images.

The other point we wish to demonstrate is Novatian's reliance upon the Tertullian of the Montanists. Novatian was literarily dependent upon Catholic Tertullian and embraced the rigorism of Montanist Tertullian in schism, though himself not becoming a Montanist. Their ethical models were joined by a mutual absorption of Stoic ethics and rigorist theologies. The foundations of Novatian's reasoning behind barring the lapsed from reconciliation, we shall find, are the same points and anxieties Montanist Tertullian wished to raise. In this sense, we shall aim to prove what Daly puts succinctly with, 'Novatianism represents a remnant, not of tradition, but of Tertullian's attack upon the catholic tradition.'<sup>2</sup>

Important to note is that space does not permit a full examination of the causes of sin as to produce comprehensive hamartologies of each thinker, as sin's treatment rather than its source was most relevant to the crisis. Hence questions on original sin and in-depth examinations into Christ's work on the cross will not be explored.

## **History of Research**

Of the scholarship that addresses the Tertullianic roots of Cyprian and Novatian, Daly in 1993 is the most relevant and recent tome on the subject. He holds closely to the primaries, almost to a fault, as shall be demonstrated with his acceptance of Cyprian's account of

---

<sup>2</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 202.

Confessor-Reconciliation.<sup>3</sup> Other works on this precise thesis are very sparse which is an indicator of Daly's closeness to the primary literature above all else.

The scholarship has moved away in the 20<sup>th</sup> century from understanding Tertullian as a schismatic with Barnes creating enough doubt to sway the consensus.<sup>4</sup> Barnes disputed much of the preestablished thought that was mainly based upon Jerome's account in *de viris illustribus*, especially concerning Tertullian's father and jurist background.<sup>5</sup> As Wilhite notes, the contentions from Barnes' foundation lied on whether Tertullian became a full adherent of the Phrygian sect or was an ally with similar charismatic backgrounds.<sup>6</sup> A representative of Tertullian's distance from Montanism is Bray who identified Tertullian as a faithful North African Christian who made an alliance with Montanism.<sup>7</sup> Tabbernee, specialising in the Cataphrygian sect and its reception, championed the status of Montanism in Carthage as non-schismatic.<sup>8</sup> Less ink has been dedicated to detailed studies of Tertullian's influence upon Cyprian and Novatian than is comfortable, therefore requiring more reliance upon the primaries to prove our thesis.

Of the scholarship concerning Novatian, the focus has mainly been on his contribution to trinitarian theology. Papandrea has contributed with the most recent examinations on Novatian, yet even then the focus remains on Novatian's trinitarianism. Saying this, in his works he still gives contextual information which aid us to better understand Novatian's life and ethics.<sup>9</sup> Of Novatian's Stoicism we find Daniélou dealing closely with comparisons of Novatian and Stoic thought, however again focusing upon his Trinitarianism.<sup>10</sup>

Concerning the primary sources of our thinkers, each is preserved in Migne's *Patrologia Latina* and Schaff's *Ante-Nicene Fathers* collections. This being said, Novatian's treatises having originating from a heresiarch survived under the names of both Tertullian and Cyprian in order to survive. Texts like Novatian's *de trinitate* have copies going back to the

---

<sup>3</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*.

<sup>4</sup> Wilhite, *Tertullian*, 24.

<sup>5</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 3-22, 57-60.

<sup>6</sup> Wilhite, *Tertullian*, 25.

<sup>7</sup> Bray, *Tertullian*, 56-62.

<sup>8</sup> Tabbernee, 'Montanism', 302-304.

<sup>9</sup> Papandrea, *Novatian; Trinitarian; Culmination*.

<sup>10</sup> Daniélou, *Origins*, 233-251, 329-341.



renaissance, however scholarship today has a consensus of trust concerning Novatian's surviving works apart from one: his second epistle or Cyprian's Epistle 25 (31 in Oxford Numbering).<sup>11</sup> The most recent translations of Novatian's works with both Papandrea and DeSimone both include Epistle 25 as written by Novatian on behalf of the Roman Confessors. This reverses the scepticism towards the epistle expressed from the likes of Von Harnack as its style vindicates its authenticity.<sup>12</sup>

## Methodology and Structure

Through the demonstration of verbal, imagery and concept similarities between Tertullian and Cyprian with Novatian we shall evidence their dependency upon Tertullian as a source. In Part 1 we shall examine the status of Tertullian's change towards Montanist theology and practice, detailing and comparing what areas he has had to revisit. This will allow us to go into Cyprian and Novatian's sections with the background already established concerning his change of mind. We shall establish two images of Tertullian, one as catholic and the other Montanist, in which we can then compare and contrast with Cyprian and Novatian.

In Part 2 we compare Cyprian's thoughts on ecclesiology and penitential practice with Tertullian's background we have established in Part 1. We shall examine similar imagery, use of Scripture and, through Cyprian's correspondence and treatises, construct a coherent picture of those two areas of Cyprian's thought.

Part 3 will require us, due to Novatian's limited corpus, to explore the Novatian of history, not the Novatian of polemical reportage. A reliable picture of Novatian will have to be constructed in light of conflicting and biased accounts of his life and practice. He is dependant upon Tertullian, something we shall examine through a close examination of his Stoic background and his *de spectaculis*. From there we shall examine the shared presuppositions, anxieties and beliefs of Novatian and Montanist Tertullian in their ecclesiologies and penitential practices.

---

<sup>11</sup> Going forward, Schaff's numbering shall be used and the Oxford numbering shall be bracketed (ox).

<sup>12</sup> Von Harnack, 'Novatian', 198; DeSimone, *Novatian*, 182; Papandrea, *Novatian*, 29-30.

## Part 1: Tertullian

### 1. Introduction

The general influence of Tertullian is not to be understated. Tabbernee demonstrates just how rare his literary prowess was within the church of Carthage.<sup>13</sup> Using the study of Keith Hopkins on the literacy rate of the Roman empire, estimating to Carthage 200,000 Christians, the churches only had a small handful of men with basic literacy, with Tertullian's excellent literacy making him one of the most gifted writers in the whole community.<sup>14</sup>

Chapter 53 of Jerome's *de viris illustribus* is dedicated to *Tertullianus presbyter*.<sup>15</sup> He introduces Tertullian as 'chief (*primus*) among the Latin writers after Victor and Apollonius'. He reports that Tertullian's writings are so famed among his circles that he passes over listing them. In other places, Jerome praises Tertullian's rhetoric, describing it, even in works defending Montanism, '*hujus elegans et declamatorium ingenium*'.<sup>16</sup> A peculiar tension that Jerome does not resolve for us is Tertullian's association with Montanism ('*Ad Montani dogma delapsus*') and Cyprian's labelling of him as *magistrum*, as is reported from Paul of Concordia, Cyprian's secretary.<sup>17</sup> Jerome was no friend of Montanism, labelling it 'the heresy of the Cataphrygians',<sup>18</sup> the 'heresy of Montanus',<sup>19</sup> considering it self-evidently false,<sup>20</sup> deriding Montanus as 'that mouthpiece of an unclean spirit'.<sup>21</sup>

How could Cyprian, the bishop who heavily preached until death *extra ecclesia nulla salus* give him such a title? Adding further issues, we simply cannot discount Jerome as taking down a false report through a misinformed source. Jerome here is not merely reliant upon Eusebius, has access to some of Tertullian's and Cyprian's writings and has a witness report for his label as "the master".<sup>22</sup> We shall discover that while the New Prophecy may have

---

<sup>13</sup> Tabbernee, 'Pardon', 381.

<sup>14</sup> Hopkins, 'Christian', 206-13, cited by Tabbernee, 'Pardon', 381.

<sup>15</sup> Jerome, 'Lives', 53.

<sup>16</sup> Jerome, 'Lives', 24.

<sup>17</sup> Jerome, 'Lives', 53.

<sup>18</sup> Jerome, 'Lives', 40.

<sup>19</sup> Jerome, 'Lives', 41.

<sup>20</sup> Jerome, 'Letters', 41.

<sup>21</sup> Jerome, 'Letters', 133, 4.

<sup>22</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 9-10.

been condemned in other parts of the empire it found a comfortable enough space in Carthage to not experience excommunication or schism within the region.

## 2. Stoic Foundations

To set up the comparisons of our three thinkers, we shall first dive into the key influences Tertullian was driven by, be it by active or passive belief absorption. An essential preliminary is the interaction between Tertullian and Stoicism. From the Stoic school we shall find roots which spread from Tertullian and weave themselves into Novatian.

One of Tertullian's most famed phrases is a fitting place to begin, namely in that condemnation of all philosophy as antithetical to the Christian worldview, 'What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church?'<sup>23</sup> In his list of condemnations he mentions the school of the Stoics, exclaiming 'Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition!', further accusing the Stoics as birthing Marcion's heresy.<sup>24</sup> The reader of Tertullian will know better than to take him at his word concerning the school, however, for though he repudiates the speculative schools we find their influences upon him none the less.

Osborn champions the position that Tertullian's thought has close ties to Stoicism, regardless of his open hostility.<sup>25</sup> We cannot cover every aspect of such influence upon Tertullian as many speculative dependencies, especially concerning the Trinity, lay outside our thesis' scope. Yet what is most relevant to our concern is the Stoic influence upon his ethics. Littered throughout Tertullian's ethical treatises is his desire to tame the desires that springs forth from sin. His approach to the passions and self-mastery, especially found in *de spectaculis*, provide us with vital descriptions. Amongst his fear of the idolatries and immoralities of the games, he provides a direct contrast between what is kindled in the spectacles verses in the church.

---

<sup>23</sup> Tertullian, 'Prescription', 7.

<sup>24</sup> Tertullian, 'Prescription', 7.

<sup>25</sup> Osborn, *Tertullian*, 34-47

In the theatres one is riled up like an animal where one's primal passions steer the observer. He asks 'will there be peace (*pacem*) in his soul (*in animo*) when there is eager strife there for a charioteer?'<sup>26</sup> and 'will he learn modesty while amazed at the mimes?'<sup>27</sup> The shows spark 'The very intermingling of emotions, the very agreements and disagreements with each other in the bestowment of their favours, where you have such close communion, blow up the sparks of passion.'<sup>28</sup> The vulnerability of one's dignity at the games brings to mind Epictetus' very condemnation, 'but like an ape you imitate whatever you see, and one thing after another strikes your fancy.'<sup>29</sup> Both believed that the excitement the games provoked was not befitting, with resistance and restraint as the signs of virtue.

Here, in a pre-Montanist treatise we find his exhortation to a gentle demeanour in saying,

*God has enjoined us to deal calmly, gently, quietly, and peacefully with the Holy Spirit, because these things are alone in keeping with the goodness of His nature (utpote pro naturae suae bono), with His tenderness and sensitiveness, and not to vex Him with rage, ill-nature, anger, or grief.*<sup>30</sup>

The shows are contrary to God's nature and His dealings with humanity. It is impossible for the shows to be a holy thing, for '*omne enim spectaculum sine concussione spiritus non est.*'<sup>31</sup> Epictetus too was averse to recommend the shows if you are going to shout, laugh or show any undignified excitement.<sup>32</sup> As was a prerogative for bodily moderation among the Stoics, we find such in Tertullian as well. Concerning self-mastery, he says 'what greater pleasure [is there] than distaste of pleasure itself (*fastidium ipsius voluptatis*).'<sup>33</sup> In *de patientia*, bodily patience completed the inward workings of virtue, 'That which springs from a virtue of the mind (*anima*) is perfected in the flesh (*in carne perficitur*).'<sup>34</sup> It makes the impatient sinner -

---

<sup>26</sup> Tertullian, 'Spectacles', 25.

<sup>27</sup> My translation of '*pudicitiam ediscet, attonitus in mimos?*', Migne, *Patrologia*, Vol 1, 656. ANF reads 'Wrought up into a frenzied excitement, will he learn to be modest?', Tertullian, 'Spectacles', 25.

<sup>28</sup> Tertullian, 'Spectacles', 25.

<sup>29</sup> Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 29.

<sup>30</sup> Tertullian, 'Spectacles', 15.

<sup>31</sup> Tertullian, 'Spectacles', 15.

<sup>32</sup> Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 33.

<sup>33</sup> Tertullian, 'Spectacles', 29.

<sup>34</sup> Tertullian, 'Patience', 13.

of whom Tertullian identifies himself in this early treatise – a deserving vessel of God’s mercy by their austerity, bringing about satisfaction for sin.<sup>35</sup>

What brings about *patientia*’s Stoic flavour in the treatise is how closely it resembles the *apatheia* of the same school, which Levente identifies well.<sup>36</sup> Notable comparisons are made with Cicero’s descriptions of the fortitude that comes from self mastery, as ‘the character of self-mastery (*imperandi*), and such consideration of the conduct most worthy of endurance, courage and greatness of soul not only brings the soul under submission, but actually serves somehow to mitigate pain as well (*mitiorem facit*).’<sup>37</sup>

As for Tertullian, the formidable nature of bodily *patientia* helps one do battle against persecution ‘by the patience of the flesh, [patience] does battle under persecution.’<sup>38</sup> This bodily virtue is typified in Christ’s passion. Tertullian even moulds the Gethsemane prayer of Jesus to show that while the spirit may be willing, the flesh is weak, and ‘He shows what need there is of strengthening, it—that is by patience—to meet every preparation for subverting or punishing faith.’<sup>39</sup> Tertullian himself acknowledges the similar emphases which populates the surrounding pagan literature, but casts it off as a fruitless patience. This godless patience produces vain fruits, enslaving people to their belly, celebrating immoral flattery and, God forbid, ‘makes them subject to the power of their wives.’<sup>40</sup>

We can conclude that in Tertullian that despite Athens being pushed out of his Christianity it has nevertheless entered through the back door. By the osmosis of his classical education and the culture at large, Tertullian has been influenced in his expectations of Christian *disciplina*. We shall continue this exploration further when we arrive at Novatian’s disciplinary beliefs as it will be crucial to prove a Tertullianic dependency and a Stoic affinity.

---

<sup>35</sup> Tertullian, ‘Patience’, 1; 13.

<sup>36</sup> Levente, ‘Stoic’, 14.

<sup>37</sup> Cicero, *Tusculan*, 2.53, cited by Levente, ‘Stoic’, 9.

<sup>38</sup> Tertullian, ‘Patience’, 13.

<sup>39</sup> Tertullian, ‘Patience’, 13.

<sup>40</sup> Tertullian, ‘Patience’, 16.

### 3. Tertullian and Montanism

Especially when coming to his moral treatises, we deal with not one but two Tertullians. Pertinent to understanding the shift in his understanding of the penitential process will be the search for how it changed him, how great the shift was, and its relationship to the North African spirituality which Cyprian will inherit. Originating in Phrygia in the mid-second century, the prophetic movement known as Montanism or the New Prophecy caused trouble from its inception. They were a prophetic group started by Montanus and two prophetesses, Maximilla and Priscilla, who channelled forth messages from the Holy Spirit, more frequently described as the Paraclete.

Subject to many suspect accounts of their behaviour, the task of reconstructing an image of Phrygian Montanism proves most difficult. Tabbernee details the list of charges alleged against them from the catholics which includes infanticide, bread and water (or cheese) eucharists, baptizing on behalf of the dead, sorcery, and drunken eucharistic parties.<sup>41</sup> Eusebius preserves for us some early objections of Montanism, one of which is an anonymous work which attempts to document and refute the innovations Montanus introduced.<sup>42</sup> They are portrayed as insubordinates, demon possessed due to their ecstatic practices, and Montanus with Maximilla is said to have hung themselves 'like the traitor Judas.'<sup>43</sup> It is very possible that the anonymous writer was a bishop of Phrygia, showing the early tensions between the New Prophecy and the episcopate.<sup>44</sup> The "Anonymous" as representative of the spurious allegations which even Eusebius thinks doubtful.<sup>45</sup> What we are able to do instead is to take stock of *Carthaginian* Montanism as our evidence in Tertullian removes the embellishments that come from the straw manning of its opponents.

Montanism's harshest infamy and its strongest boast was in its practice of prophetic gifts, both in channelling messages from the Paraclete and in divine visions. We have no certainty of how the New Prophecy first entered Carthage's walls, but we can comfortably say that it

---

<sup>41</sup> Tabbernee, *Fake*, 350-364.

<sup>42</sup> Eusebius, 'History', 5.16.

<sup>43</sup> Eusebius, 'History', 5.16.7, 8-10, 13-14.

<sup>44</sup> Tabbernee, *Fake*, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Tabbernee, *Fake*, 5-6.

landed on fertile soil already cultivated by a pre-Montanist spirituality that gave way for its germination.<sup>46</sup>

### 3a. Carthaginian Spirituality

Pertinent to our exploration of Tertullian's Montanism will be its comparison with Carthaginian Christian spirituality, hence we shall start here. When one looks to the tenacity of the North African Church which allowed for an opening for the New Prophecy, one needs to start at the beginning to find its source. We find a church with its skin hardened by the repeated stripes of martyrdom from our earliest knowable years. Rankin rightly states that, 'it has been appropriately remarked that the history of the North African Church during its first 500 years is, in great part, a history of martyrdom.'<sup>47</sup> Before Tertullian's years there is already an incorporation of martyrdom into its identity, inaugurated with the Scillitan Martyrs and further exemplified in the celebrated Perpetua and Felicitas.

#### (i) Scillitan Martyrs

The Scillitan Martyrs, confessors of a lesser-known town of North Africa, were brought before the proconsul Saturninus for the opportunity of recantation.<sup>48</sup> The recorded tone of the proconsul is one of dismissiveness and of defensiveness, protecting the Roman religious system from those who malign it through their abstention.<sup>49</sup> After the martyrs refuse any form of deliberation, Saturninus sentences the twelve to death, concerning which their unified response is "*Deo gratias*".<sup>50</sup> This term became a staple exclamation for North African Christians in and out of adversity, having the echo of the Scillitans reach Cyprian's lips in his recorded passion.<sup>51</sup> Augustine was especially hostile to Donatists who identified themselves more with *Deo laudes* than *Deo gratias*. His rhetoric in Sermon 313E witnesses to

---

<sup>46</sup> Tabbernee, *Fake*, 61.

<sup>47</sup> Rankin, *Tertullian*, 10.

<sup>48</sup> While the introduction of the Acts only has six martyrs mentioned, twelve are found in the narrative, most likely from abridgement in the manuscript tradition, Musurillo, *Acts*, 89 n6.

<sup>49</sup> "*Initainti tibi mala de sacris nostris aures non praebebo...*" Mursurillo, *Acts*, 87.

<sup>50</sup> Mursurillo, *Acts*, 89.

<sup>51</sup> Mursurillo, *Acts*, 173.

the importance of the saying to North African Christians as we can gather from his harsh condemnation of their schismatic attitude even over praise language.<sup>52</sup> After Augustine's days, eventually the term would find itself in the name of its mid-5<sup>th</sup> century bishop, Deogratias (454-457). It is worth noting with Barnes that the origin of the martyrs reveals that Christianity spread so deep into North Africa's roots to where a smaller town can house the martyrdom of twelve devout Christians.<sup>53</sup> The tame contents of the *Acts* itself along with its style shows itself to be fitting the circumstances of late first century Carthage well enough to, even with pious redactions, be an authentic record of Christian contention with imperial religion.<sup>54</sup>

## (ii) Perpetua and Felicitas

Of importance to our sections especially on Confessor forgiveness is Perpetua's Passion. Perpetua as the queen of Carthage's martyrs experienced incredible visions concerning the soul of her brother, fights against the devil and visions of clergy pleading before the lay-Perpetua to restore peace. Regardless of the authorship of Perpetua's narrative, the New Prophetic character cannot be denied, as Barnes amply states, 'The theological character of the Passion is Montanist through and through.'<sup>55</sup> Agreeing with Tabbernee, it is most likely that the editor, even if they were not Tertullian, participated in the same Montanist circle in Carthage.<sup>56</sup> The author prefaces the work by explaining the duty to preserve contemporary accounts of God's acts as well as maintain that which was previously written.<sup>57</sup>

Perpetua's experiences in prison become types of the North African dilemma in both the struggle for Montanism's acceptance and the varied persecutions of Christians. The *episcopus* Optatus and *presbyter* Aspasius bowing before the spiritual Perpetua pleading for peace evokes images of Tertullian's dichotomy of the *ecclesia numerus episcoporum* verses the *spiritalem hominem*.<sup>58</sup> Perpetua's charism is recognised all the while she does not abrogate

---

<sup>52</sup> Augustine, 'Sermon 313E', 114.

<sup>53</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 62-63.

<sup>54</sup> Brenner, 'Imitation', 161.

<sup>55</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 77.

<sup>56</sup> Tabbernee, 'Montanism', 301-302.

<sup>57</sup> Anonymous, *Passion*, Preface.

<sup>58</sup> Anonymous, 'Passion', 4.



their positions; a fitting picture of the brand of ecclesial relation Tertullian would wish to see even in the heat of his Montanist polemics.<sup>59</sup> Frend correctly describes this rendition of the clergy's ecclesial role as merely administrative and disciplinary, giving the *spirituales* a higher place of honour.<sup>60</sup> This wrestling of authorities between clergy and martyr will be an issue Cyprian dedicates much time to, wishing to temper down the claims of the martyrs and assigning a larger degree of importance to the episcopate.

The diary of Perpetua bears a witness to the spirituality which bears stark resemblance to the authority of the Confessor; that thorn in the episcopate's side which they had to delicately temper especially in Cyprian's day. Perpetua receives a vision of her brother, who passed at seven years old, in a place of distress and unable to climb to the brink of a pool of water to drink.<sup>61</sup> After Perpetua raises her petitions to God, the boy is able to drink and his countenance restored. She thus interprets the vision, 'Then I understood that he was translated from the place of punishment.'<sup>62</sup> If the 250s experienced a movement of those championing the confessors' ability to forgive the sins of the lapsed, this vision created a precedent with the region's leading martyr.

This being said, it creates tension with the discipline of the New Prophecy who were strict on their membership. Tertullian rebukes the confessors who wished to grant remission of sins. He states that they sin themselves who presume to have knowledge of hearts so as to forgive, indeed going further to say, 'Who has redeemed another's death by his own, but the Son of God alone?'<sup>63</sup> The fluidity of prophetic movements is hard to contain, even for Tertullian. What Perpetua's vision demonstrates is the charismatic spiritual milieu which gave rise for North Africa to be softer ground for the New Prophecy compared to other regions. Confessor forgiveness was not limited to New Prophetic circles as we shall see below, but it reveals that the boundary lines between "Catholic" and "Montanist" North Africans possessed shades of grey.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> "... for lighter sins [they] will be able to obtain pardon from the bishop, or else, for greater and irremissible ones, from God only." Tertullian, 'Modesty', 18.

<sup>60</sup> Frend, *Donatist*, 117.

<sup>61</sup> Anonymous, 'Passion', 2.

<sup>62</sup> Anonymous, 'Passion', 2.

<sup>63</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 22.

<sup>64</sup> Tabbernee, 'Pardon', 379.

Perpetua's vision displays the greatest respect among North African Christians for the martyrs. The reverence for the persecuted extends even to the living martyrs; those who confess Christ in prison. Confessors were recognised as a class within the church which by virtue of their sufferings granted them an honoured rank. Hippolytus instructs that the confessor who has truly suffered for their faith is not required to receive the laying on of hands for the presbyterate or diaconate, 'For he has the office of the presbyterate by his confession'.<sup>65</sup>

### 3b. Schismatic or Catholic?

The status of Tertullian's communion status will affect how we approach Cyprian and the schismatic Novatian. Tertullian's divisive language when speaking about the spirituals verses the fleshly evokes questions as to the status of his communion with the catholic church in Carthage. As seen above, Jerome makes no effort to reconcile the "lapse" of Tertullian into Montanism and Cyprian calling him his master. Augustine also associated Tertullian with a form of schismatic group which took after him. The theory that Tertullian broke away from the Montanists to start his own group, called the "Tertullianists", mentioned by Frend with Augustine as his source, has too many spaces between the facts to be considered a viable theory.<sup>66</sup> Augustine testifies to the *Tertullianistae* of his day, but they appear to be a post-mortem creation of which Cyprian makes no mention.<sup>67</sup>

The position that Tertullian was indeed a schismatic is untenable. Powell acutely dismantles such approach in mentioning how unlikely that Cyprian, a 'fanatical' opponent of schism, ever zealous for the church's unity, considered a notoriously heretical Montanist a master of any sort.<sup>68</sup> If the Montanists were truly schismatic, they still recognised the need for bishops, and we would expect a divergent branch of schismatic bishops, yet we find no such record within Tertullian's or Cyprian's writing.<sup>69</sup> Instead, the catholic and New Prophetic groups are seen as 'one institution interpreted according to two divergent conceptions of

---

<sup>65</sup> Hippolytus, *Apostolic*, 9, Although episcopal ordination still requires hands laid.

<sup>66</sup> Frend, *Donatist*, 124; Augustine, *haeresibus*, 86.

<sup>67</sup> Powell, 'Tertullianists', 53.

<sup>68</sup> Powell, 'Tertullianists', 38; see also Bray, *Holiness*, 10, 59.

<sup>69</sup> Powell, 'Tertullianists', 37.

authority'.<sup>70</sup> Hence, when constructing an image of a "Catholic" and "Montanist" Tertullian, it is to include the fact that both of these selves were in communion with the catholic church.

### 3c. Montanist Affiliation

Bray is averse to using conversion language when describing Tertullian's later identification with the New Prophecy. Tertullian indeed does not recall such an event and Bray also asserts that he was not a *representative* of the Phrygian trio.<sup>71</sup> Bray defends these assertions by appealing to how the *nos/vos* distinctions in his writings between the *spirituales* and the *psychici* are overstated when trying to demonstrate a significant gap between the two groups.<sup>72</sup> He refutes the *spirituales/psychici* distinction being *gnostic* divisive term from Von Harnack and De Labroille.<sup>73</sup> His summative quote says 'Montanism, though it was defended by Tertullian, neither conquered his allegiance nor influenced the development of his thought to any great degree'.<sup>74</sup> Though it leans on overstatement to say that it had little influence on his thought, his statement is mostly agreeable.

Tertullian was only partially dependant upon written Montanist prophecies attributed to Montanus, Priscilla and Maximilla.<sup>75</sup> Tertullian had no issue citing a prophetess in his congregation that converses with both angels and God, reveals the secrets of hearts and at times reveals matters of doctrine.<sup>76</sup> Citation alone does not indicate a previously written record originating from Phrygia. Sometimes Tertullian quotes but does not name the New Prophets that he cites, as seen in *de pudicitia*.<sup>77</sup>

He may sparingly directly quote from Priscilla's revelations in *de resurrectione* and *De exhortatione castitatis* (which is most likely literarily sourced), however his use of prophecy demonstrates that verification of the Divine Will through prophecy was locally utilized as

---

<sup>70</sup> Powell, 'Tertullianists', 35.

<sup>71</sup> Bray, *Holiness*, 56.

<sup>72</sup> Bray, *Holiness*, 58-60.

<sup>73</sup> Bray, *Holiness*, 57-58.

<sup>74</sup> Bray, *Holiness*, 62.

<sup>75</sup> Tabbernee, 'Pardon', 378.

<sup>76</sup> Tertullian, 'Soul', 9.

<sup>77</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 21.

opposed to a distant adhering to exclusively Phrygian New Prophecy.<sup>78</sup> That he defends the cause of the Phrygian group against the Bishop of Rome, actively naming them, demonstrates that he has enough commonality with the group to come to their polemical defence.<sup>7980</sup>

As his affiliation grew with the New Prophecy, he defended the extra fasts in *de ieiunio*, demanded more modest clothing for women in *de velandis*, proscribed remarriage after the death of a spouse in *de monogamia*, and demanded brutal lifelong penances filled with uncertainty in *de pudicitia*. In his mind, Tertullian was defending the discipline of the Gospel led by his Scriptural interpretation with the aid of the Paraclete, protecting monogamy, the dignity of the Paraclete and the holiness of the church by the non-admission of grave sinners, all of which were part of the package deal of the New Prophetic movement. Yet Wilhite rightly notes that his acceptance of the New Prophecy and the Paraclete's harder sayings came about by his prior desire for a more rigorous spirituality, hence Tertullian says 'it is not lightly that the Holy Spirit has come to an agreement with us.'<sup>81</sup> The desires for severity grew as Tertullian got older, and within the New Prophecy he found the Divine confirmation he was looking for. One which was able to supplement and bolster his readings of Scripture.

To conclude this section, Tertullian's dissensions, as divisive as they are fiery, were directed towards an expanding, presumptuous episcopate that invoked the Keys without the Paraclete.<sup>82</sup> The *psychici* were enemies of the Paraclete, but not totally of God, of whom they were still children. The North African church with hardened skin from its various persecutions was one which allowed for a charismatic base. Tertullian was likely not fighting with what we would know as "cessationists", as anachronistic as the term is. Instead he was disputing in-house issues concerning prophecy and its discernment. As Tabbernee rightly says, 'North-African Christians in general valued visions, prophecy and especially martyrdom highly—even if they may at times not have valued these as much as Tertullian

---

<sup>78</sup> Tertullian, 'Resurrection', 11; Tertullian, 'Exhortation', 10.

<sup>79</sup> Tertullian, 'Praxeas', 1, see also 'Fasting', 1, 12; 'Resurrection', 11.

<sup>80</sup> For this reason, with Tertullian's identification with the Phrygian trio, it is acceptable to interchangeably describe Tertullian as Montanist and New Prophecy adherent.

<sup>81</sup> Wilhite, *Tertullian*, 171; Tertullian, 'Modesty' 12.

<sup>82</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 83-84.

would have liked.<sup>83</sup> This background transfers onto the North Africa of Cyprian's day, for we will see that even the episcopate, desiring ever more centralization for the church, used prophetic charismata in their dealings, showing them as loyal to this region's exercise of the charismata. It is from here that we turn to Tertullian's views on ecclesiology especially to prepare for his influence in Cyprian's penitential thought.

#### **4. Tertullian's Ecclesiology**

Tertullian's polemics were directed towards those in and outside of the catholic church. Yet the methodology for convincing a heretic will be different to debating an intra-communion issue. Originally, as we shall see, Catholic Tertullian was more optimistic concerning the church's unity of belief and used it as a buttress against the heretics. Yet as those churches of esteemed apostolic origin rejected Tertullian's newfound Montanism, the appeal to the churches' possession of all things needful for the Rule of Faith would not support his arguments against them, and instead he turned to the Paraclete. We shall establish images of Catholic and Montanist Tertullian's relation to the church and episcopate as, especially with Cyprian, the two have a symbiotic relationship.

##### **4a. Catholic Tertullian**

Where is the church for early Tertullian? In his apology Tertullian mentions the foundations of the church's unity so exemplified in the ἀγάπη meal: 'We are a body knit together as such by a common religious profession, by unity of discipline, and by the bond of a common hope.'<sup>84</sup> Here we see the central tenets of Tertullian's identification of the visible church manifested in doctrine and conduct.

For doctrinal unity, Tertullian's *de praescriptione haereticorum* is an essential read. His tools for the art of ecclesial and doctrinal discernment was found in his appeal to the unanimity of the faith of the churches established by the Apostles. With the churches that hold faithful to the apostolic deposit, 'no other rule directs than the one tradition of the selfsame mystery (*quam*

---

<sup>83</sup> Tabbernee, 'Montanism', 310.

<sup>84</sup> Tertullian, 'Apology', 39.

*ejusdem sacramenti una traditio*).<sup>85</sup> That which is contrary to the tradition sourced from the Apostles is considered suspect. His emphasis on the Spirit's role in discernment of doctrine here is sourced in the Divine confirmation of *the Twelve's* teaching, 'He (thus) shows that there was nothing of which [the apostles] were ignorant, to whom He had promised the future attainment of all truth by help of the Spirit of truth.'<sup>86</sup>

The subliminal Stoicism of Tertullian again rears its head, as Barnes notes that the foundation of ecclesial unity is derived from a common root, 'Since the nature of every object is determined by its origin, every church is apostolic, so long as unity is maintained.'<sup>87</sup> Unlike Cyprian's episcopal focus, Tertullian has the pinpoint of the church's visible unity as that of unanimity of a doctrine traced back to the apostles. He acknowledged a futility in arguing through Scripture with the heretics, relying as a penultimate foundation on the lineage of the doctrine's reception rather than verifying the teaching in itself.<sup>88</sup>

This being said, that which determined one's membership in this church of unanimous teaching was not one of mere assent to certain apostolic propositions. To his opponent in *ad nationes* he replies, 'But although you prove that some of our people are evil, you do not hereby prove that they are Christians.'<sup>89</sup> To be a Christian is to be person of virtue in line with discipline. Additionally, participation in the mystery of baptism was essential for the new covenant people of God. Abraham and other pre-new covenant participants were permitted to believe by faith alone, but now that faith demands its seal, 'The clothing, in some sense, of the faith which before was bare... which cannot exist now without its proper law [of baptism].'<sup>90</sup> It can be ministered by all believers in theory, though the primary right belongs to the *episcopus* as a matter of order.<sup>91</sup> With the sacrament is the trifold ratification of the catechumen's entrance into the church with the persons of the Trinity (cf. Matthew 18:19-20) as he says, 'wherever there are three [witnesses], that is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, there is the Church, which is a body of three'.<sup>92</sup> Tertullian, as with Cyprian and

---

<sup>85</sup> Tertullian, 'Prescription', 20.

<sup>86</sup> Tertullian, 'Prescription', 22.

<sup>87</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 66; Rankin, *Tertullian*, 145.

<sup>88</sup> Tertullian, 'Prescription', 19.

<sup>89</sup> Tertullian, 'Nations', I, 5.

<sup>90</sup> Tertullian, 'Baptism', 13.

<sup>91</sup> Tertullian, 'Baptism', 17.

<sup>92</sup> Tertullian, 'Baptism', 6.

Novatian after him, believed in the strictness of the validity of baptism confined only to the church's walls.<sup>93</sup>

The function of the episcopacy for Tertullian was much more limited compared to that of Cyprian. Rankin states concerning Tertullian's view of the *episcopus*, 'at no point, however, not even as a Catholic apologist, did his understanding advance beyond that of seeing the bishops – or at least their line of succession – as guarantors of the transmission of unadulterated apostolic doctrine.'<sup>94</sup> While mostly true to Tertullian's emphases, there is some overstatement in Rankin's words. Tertullian is quoted as saying 'Emulation of the episcopal office is the mother of schisms,' a statement in the context of the bishop as the first port of call for officiating Baptism.<sup>95</sup> The generality of the statement demonstrates an authority beyond that of teaching and doctrinal preservation. Supporting this, even in his Montanist phase the episcopate was still a means of granting remission of sins to those done to people (but not to God).<sup>96</sup> Especially in light of this, the presence of a bishop can be comfortably implied.<sup>97</sup> Additionally, Catholic Tertullian chastises heretics for having a fluid hierarchical system, 'for even on laymen do they impose the functions of priesthood (*sacerdotalia munera injungunt*)', indicating duties beyond Rankin's statement.<sup>98</sup>

#### **4b. The Church and Montanist Tertullian**

As is seen from the tensions between the New Prophets and the episcopate, there is a wrestling of claims to certain rights and powers. The closer one comes to Cyprian's day in the middle of the third century, the more we see such a fight. The grassroots nature of

---

<sup>93</sup> Tertullian, 'Baptism', 15.

<sup>94</sup> Rankin, *Tertullian*, 144-145.

<sup>95</sup> Tertullian, 'Baptism', 17.

<sup>96</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 18.

<sup>97</sup> Rahner, *Penance*, 131.

<sup>98</sup> Tertullian, 'Prescription', 41.

Montanism was at the mercy of the Spirit and provided some an alternative to the increasing claims of clerical power.<sup>99</sup>

There is a temptation when reading *de pudicitia* 21 to conclude that Tertullian is completely flattening and invalidating much of the episcopal office when he says 'The Church, it is true, will forgive sins: but (it will be) the Church of the Spirit, by means of a spiritual man; not the Church which consists of a number of bishops'.<sup>100</sup> Rankin rightly tempers the temptation to use the excerpt as evidence of a violent putting off by Tertullian of the episcopal system, rightly stating that Tertullian is merely limiting the overextension of the *ecclesia numerus episcoporum* in its claim to forgive *grave* sins.<sup>101</sup> Tertullian gives permission for lesser sins to be remitted by such *episcopi*.<sup>102</sup> In fact, as Rankin sharply observes, such preserved respect for the episcopate, as is evidenced in *de corona* 9.1.<sup>103</sup> Tertullian lists the esteemed (crownless) authorities of salvation history from prophets to priests, apostles, and preachers to support his custom of apparel, with bishops being lastly named in a list that 'is determined as much chronologically as in terms of dignity.'<sup>104</sup>

However useful Tertullian's apostolic appeal may have been to fight those outside the developing orthodoxy, intra-communal matters would have to be settled in a different form. When he penned *de praescriptione haereticorum* he produced a very optimistic perspective of the unanimity of doctrine amongst catholic churches which he would later be forced to nuance. While one can side with the Roman Church against Patripassionism because of its reception of apostolic teaching, inhouse disputes, especially of Tertullian's against Rome, required a different appeal to authority. Carthage could not win against the Roman see's esteemed heritage.

Tertullian does not lay out formally the process of receiving revelation from the Paraclete, but we do find several aspects relevant to comparisons especially with Cyprian. *De velandis virginibus* was Tertullian's attempt at making regional customs of veiling a universal practice. Before any interpretation of Scripture is put forward, he describes the purpose of

---

<sup>99</sup> Jinkwang, 'Montanism', 121.

<sup>100</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 21.

<sup>101</sup> Rankin, *Tertullian*, 150.

<sup>102</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 18.

<sup>103</sup> Rankin, *Tertullian*, 149.

<sup>104</sup> Rankin, *Tertullian*, 149.



the Paraclete for the church, 'Since human mediocrity was unable to take in all things at once, discipline should, little by little, be directed, and ordained, and carried on to perfection, by that Vicar of the Lord, the Holy Spirit'.<sup>105</sup>

We see here an ironic twist for the great adversary of innovative heresies. Once so adamantly hostile to allegations of any hidden teachings revealed late, Tertullian has to work into his system the revelations of the Paraclete who reveals discipline previously hidden.<sup>106</sup> The Holy Spirit was also called the Vicar of Christ and Steward of God in *de praescriptione* as it worked in the church the preservation of doctrine *previously delivered*.<sup>107</sup> Now in *de velandis* the Vicar of Christ is a revealer of disciplines previously not understood by the apostolic churches.<sup>108</sup> Such shows how Tertullian's move towards Montanism required revisitations of his understanding of the Spirit as Revealer to the church.

With this new thought, Tertullian's ecclesial hierarchy is not shattered but is certainly flatter as he says '*Nam et Ecclesia proprie et principaliter ipse est Spiritus in quo est trinitas unius divinitatis, Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus.*'<sup>109</sup> As the church is constituted in three persons based on his interpretation of Matthew 18:20, so the church (and Spirit) can be present where the clergy are not.<sup>110</sup> The bishops may remit lesser sins but they are not essential constitutors of the church. Advocating for a new form of the priesthood of all believers, the clergy do not gain their rights based on ordination and succession alone but are now competing with the spirituals.<sup>111</sup> Here we see small semblances of the older catholic Tertullian, who in *de baptismo* said the first right of baptism belongs to the bishop, but indeed any Christian can perform the sacrament.<sup>112</sup>

To conclude this section, we find two different foundations of the church depending on which Tertullian one asks. Especially concerning the catholic view which Tertullian

---

<sup>105</sup> Tertullian, 'Veiling', 1.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Tertullian, 'Prescription', 22, 24, 26.

<sup>107</sup> Tertullian, 'Prescription', 28.

<sup>108</sup> Tertullian, 'Veiling', 1.

<sup>109</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 21.

<sup>110</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 10; cf. Tertullian, 'Baptism', 6.

<sup>111</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 12-13; cf. Tertullian, 'Exhortation', 7.

<sup>112</sup> Tertullian, 'Baptism', 17.

propagates in his earlier life, it shall be the groundwork for Cyprian's episcopal-focused reconciliation theology.

## 5. Catholic Tertullian and Penance

Now we turn to *de paenitentia* which, while humbling the penitent quite literally into dust and ashes, allows for some possibility of one's forgiveness after grave sins. In this early stage of Tertullian's ministry he did not exclude any sins as irremissible but with his conversion to Montanism he, like Novatian after him, championed a rigorist system which excludes more than it reconciles. It is worth delving into both *de paenitentia* and *de pudicitia* together as they capture so well Tertullian's shift in thought concerning church discipline.

### 5a. Catholic Tertullian and *de paenitentia*

*De paenitentia* addresses catechumens preparing for baptism. The catechumen is to prepare their immersion first into the sanctified *habitus* of the Church. Baptism makes the person 'clean' for the reception of the Holy Spirit and guarantees the forgiveness of former sins.<sup>113</sup> One is to approach baptism with open and clean hands, for 'We are not washed in order that we may cease sinning, but because we have ceased, since in heart we have been bathed already.'<sup>114</sup> Yet one still has a "last chance" to remit the sin charges against them, through *paenitentia*.

Tertullian's use of penitential Scriptures in this part of his life should be noted, as these interpretations will be reversed by his future self. To those who would doubt God's willingness to pardon, his appeal drives them towards the call to repentance of the churches of Revelation.<sup>115</sup> Whether it was the Ephesians' lack of love (Revelation 2:7) or the Thyatirenes' immorality (2:20), the presence of a rebuke in Scripture indicates the possibility of repentance. This rule of interpretation is precisely what he will later reverse in *de pudicitia*. The parable the lost coin, the lost sheep and 'that most gentle father' of the Prodigal Son are

---

<sup>113</sup> Tertullian, 'Repentance', 2, cf. Tertullian, 'Baptism', 6.

<sup>114</sup> Tertullian, 'Repentance', 6.

<sup>115</sup> Tertullian, 'Repentance', 8.

all interpreted as exhortations for the *Christian* sinner to confess.<sup>116</sup> All of these texts to Catholic Tertullian are cited to show the hope offered by God to the sinner after baptism.

While this hope was offered, the expectation of the catechumen was to cease from sinning and ‘know nothing of repentance and require nothing of it,’ with strained metaphoric language to show how undesirable post-baptismal repentance should be in their minds. This tension is seen in how he immediately contradicts the image he is using to show the totality of the sanctified pre-baptismal life, ‘...although the gate of forgiveness has been shut and fastened up with the bar of baptism, has permitted it still to stand somewhat open (*aliquid adhuc permisit patere*).’<sup>117</sup> It is clear that Tertullian was averse to allowing this final chance of acquittal lest it be treated as license to offend the majesty of God with a free pass. The sole and *final* remedy for post-Baptismal sin was the gruelling ἐξομολόγησις process of ecclesial humiliation.

To perform ἐξομολόγησις is to quite literally put on sackcloth and ashes. One is to eat simple food and forsake certain luxuries, kneeling before the Christian community from bishop to lay person, pleading that they bring supplication as ‘ambassadors’ (*legationes*).<sup>118</sup> Promising its benefits to the confessor, we see Tertullian show that its effects can bring satisfaction ‘by confession satisfaction (*satisfactionis*) is settled, of confession repentance is born.’<sup>119</sup> The language of this great influencer of Latin Christianity concerning penitential remission is not to be overlooked. Transactional language appears elsewhere, where repentance is ‘enjoining a demeanour calculated to move mercy’ (*conversationem injungens misericordiae illicem*).<sup>120</sup> One’s ἐξομολόγησις is a formal process for the obtaining of mercy, ‘inasmuch as by confession satisfaction is settled’.<sup>121</sup> By the sacrifice of the present, one is assured that the eternal punishments are remitted.<sup>122</sup> One is to “change” (*mutare*) one’s sins

---

<sup>116</sup> Tertullian, ‘Repentance’, 8.

<sup>117</sup> Tertullian, ‘Repentance’, 7.

<sup>118</sup> Tertullian, ‘Repentance’, 9.

<sup>119</sup> Tertullian, ‘Repentance’, 9.

<sup>120</sup> Tertullian, ‘Repentance’, 9.

<sup>121</sup> Tertullian, ‘Repentance’, 9.

<sup>122</sup> Tertullian, ‘Repentance’, 9.

for humble and simple afflictions fitting to the severity of the spending again of the divine mercy.<sup>123</sup>

While Tertullian lays out the formulae of ἑξομολόγησις, repentance is not restricted to it. Confession aids the work of penitence which then results in satisfaction for sins. Such is seen when he states that ἑξομολόγησις ‘may enhance (*commendat*) repentance; may honour God by its fear of the (incurred) danger may, by itself... stand in the stead of God’s indignation.’<sup>124</sup> The confession spoken of is not to be confused with the later formalized approach as one finds in the later western church, for Tertullian knows nothing of a merely private confession with temporal acts of contrition remitting sins due for the state of purgatory. The very presence of the Christian community is what acts as a means of forgiveness. When the penitent meets the church, they meet Christ; ‘when, then, you cast yourself at the brethren’s knees, you are handling Christ, you are entreating Christ.’<sup>125</sup>

Incredibly pertinent to our comparison of Early verses of Late Tertullian is this admission in the treatise:

‘To *all* sins, then, committed whether by flesh or spirit, whether by deed or will, the same God who has destined penalty by means of judgment, has withal engaged to grant pardon by means of repentance’ (Emphasis added).<sup>126</sup>

Here we find, without further qualification, the possibility of the remission of sins of any kind through sufficient ἑξομολόγησις; a position that he would later retract and abhor in *de pudicitia*. The church’s role in the penitential process is to pray and join in the sufferings of the sinner, advocating for their return to the fold.<sup>127</sup> The relationship of the church to the sinner finds its change in his later, more rigorous years.

## **5b. Montanist Tertullian and *de pudicitia***

After entering Carthage’s New Prophetic group, the time came to undo what he previously established in *de paenitentia*. There was not a removal of the sackcloth, ashes and ascetic

---

<sup>123</sup> Tertullian, ‘Repentance’, 9.

<sup>124</sup> Tertullian, ‘Repentance’, 9, Kimmel, ‘Comparative’, 8.

<sup>125</sup> Tertullian, ‘Repentance’, 10.

<sup>126</sup> Tertullian, ‘Repentance’, 4.

<sup>127</sup> Tertullian, ‘Repentance’, 10.

living but rather the previous promises that came with it. No longer was there to be a hope in this life of remitting sins against God. His new outlook was to focus on prevention rather than rehabilitation. A pronouncement by a certain bishop that granted reconciliation to the church of adulterers and fornicators once their period of penance was completed sparked his fury. Tertullian preserves a morsel of the edict to introduce his treatise, 'I remit, to such as have discharged the requirements of repentance (*poenitentia functis dimitto*), the sins both of adultery and of fornication.'<sup>128</sup>

### (i) *De pudicitia* and the *pontifex maximus*

Before we delve into *de pudicitia*, it is important to shed some light on the *pontifex maximus* which Tertullian repudiates in chapter 1. There are two sides among scholars as to the identity of the bishop. Tabbernee and Barnes put forward that Tertullian's adversary was an unnamed bishop of Carthage. Tabbernee claims that while Tertullian's treatises were masterfully written, they were written to be read aloud to the unlettered, and thus his local congregation.<sup>129</sup> The immediate concerns of his Carthaginian listeners would, therefore, most likely be with what their local bishop pronounces. Yet Tertullian could have easily taught the congregation of areas of foreign diocese, as he has done with the Roman bishop of *adversus praxeas*.<sup>130</sup> What was declared licit in Rome could well spread to Carthage unless someone like Tertullian took up the defence. Barnes holds that Tertullian condemning the bishop for presuming that because Peter had the power of the keys, so may every church akin (*propinquam*) to Peter.<sup>131</sup> For Barnes, this demonstrates that Tertullian's opponent cannot be a Roman bishop.

However, this is not necessitated as Tertullian's main argument is that no church, most assuredly including Rome, has the authority given exclusively to Peter '*commutans manifestam Domini intentionem personaliter hoc Petro conferentem*'.<sup>132</sup> It is rather more plausible for his adversary to be Callistus I of Rome (217-222). Even if Cyprian had no knowledge of

---

<sup>128</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 1.

<sup>129</sup> Tabbernee, 'Pardon', 376-377.

<sup>130</sup> Tertullian, 'Praxeas', 1; Wilhite, *Tertullian*, 174-176.

<sup>131</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 247.

<sup>132</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 21.

*de pudicitia* as a work, it is very difficult to conceive Tertullian rebelling against and mocking his local bishop, ostracising himself from the episcopal system, and still being praised by Cyprian.<sup>133</sup> It is far more comfortable to posit that Tertullian left an influence on Cyprian which led to a Carthaginian rebuke of a Roman overextension of power, as seen with his hostility to Stephen's acceptance of heretical baptism.

## **(ii) Tertullian's New Penance**

Tertullian's work on modesty produced a series of developments, if not full U-turns in his penitential advice. In response to the edict set out by Callistus I concerning the forgiveness of grave sins such as adultery and fornication, Tertullian sets his sights on defending the disciplinary (or rather, exclusionary) practice of the Carthaginian Montanists. Fully acknowledging his abrogations and developments, Tertullian justifies himself by referring to how even the incarnate Christ matured in knowledge as time went on (Luke 2:52), speaking and acting as a child until maturity came his way (cf. 1 Corinthians 13: 11-12).<sup>134</sup> *De paenitentia* now needed a revision.

Of those who hold to his older form of penance, he condemns their approaches as contradictory, because 'they take precaution, as if they were unwilling that something should be committed; but grant indulgence, as if they were willing it should be committed.'<sup>135</sup> Tertullian now sees the granting of pardon as a license to sin. For the protection of the church's holiness, we must not allow a reckless peace to ruin it. As those who take a second marriage are moral criminals, these too will share in condemnation as he puts them out of fellowship (*foris sistimus*) for 'bringing infamy upon the Paraclete by the irregularity of their discipline.'<sup>136</sup> Tertullian cites his prophets towards the end of *de pudicitia* confirming to his faction that the church puzzlingly has and has not the power to remit grave sins, 'The church has the power to forgive sins; but I will not do it, lest they commit

---

<sup>133</sup> Osborn, *Tertullian*, 175.

<sup>134</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 1.

<sup>135</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 1.

<sup>136</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 1.

others withal.’<sup>137</sup> The spiritual have the means, but not the command to do so, for immorality will break out in the church.

The presence of such severe moral codes naturally provokes the question as to what sins fall under the category of “irremissible”. In short, Tertullian classifies as irremissible all sins committed against God, while sins against one’s fellow man are indeed remissible.<sup>138</sup> To justify a distinction, Tertullian makes use of the vague distinguishing the first Johannine epistle makes between sins that lead to death and those that do not (1 John 5:16-17).

Tertullian then infuses his understanding into the text to produce categories of sins, placing adultery and fornication in the latter category.<sup>139</sup> One might ask Tertullian why, if the irremissible is found in sins against God, that adultery and fornication also make the list? He responds that the severity of these sexual sins are alike in idolatry’s severity.<sup>140</sup> In his ever idiosyncratic use of Scripture, he says that adultery is mentioned before murder in the decalogue, therefore it has a place among the severer sins such as idolatry and murder.<sup>141</sup> Presuming that his listeners would agree with the irremissibility of idolatry and murder, he moves on.

The hope of pardon is now rooted in sin’s cessation, showing his change from it being previously found in the remorseful remedy of ἐξομολόγησις.<sup>142</sup> This change could be why Tertullian uses no self-deprecatory language in this treatise when in previous disciplinary treatises he was the chief of sinners or desired catechumens to pray for ‘*Tertulliani peccatoris*’.<sup>143</sup> As his theology developed, the minimum standard of holiness for the Christian has increased to a very high expectation. Hence now, enlightened by the Paraclete’s clarifications on the Gospel, ‘whatever flesh is in Christ has lost its pristine soils (*sordes pristinas solvit*), is now a thing different, emerges in a new state.’<sup>144</sup>

---

<sup>137</sup> Tertullian, ‘Modesty’, 21.

<sup>138</sup> Tertullian, ‘Modesty’, 2.

<sup>139</sup> Tertullian, ‘Modesty’, 2-5.

<sup>140</sup> Tertullian, ‘Modesty’, 5, 12.

<sup>141</sup> Tertullian, ‘Modesty’, 5.

<sup>142</sup> Tertullian, ‘Modesty’, 10.

<sup>143</sup> Tertullian, ‘Baptism’, 20; Tertullian, ‘Repentance’, 3.

<sup>144</sup> Tertullian, ‘Modesty’, 6.

Concerning the church's role in the process of forgiveness, we find a more nuanced approach than his previous penitential thesis in two areas. Firstly, *de paenitentia* told the Christian to not turn away from the penitent, exhorting them to continue in their ἑξομολόγησις, 'The body cannot feel gladness at the trouble of any one member, it must necessarily join with one consent in the grief, and in labouring for the remedy.'<sup>145</sup> Tertullian's new command in *de pudicitia* is as severe as it is merciless: 'as far as regards the church it prefers the blush of shame to the privilege of communion.'<sup>146</sup> God may indeed forgive the sinner that lies low in the process of ἑξομολόγησις, but the church is restricted from granting such peace, as that would require knowledge of the only judge's will.<sup>147</sup> He still exhorts the Christian in right standing to shed tears for their brother or sister and that the penitent continue in ἑξομολόγησις, but the new treatise removes any hope of *knowing* one is forgiven.<sup>148</sup> As the church is removed from the distribution of peace, so too is the confirmation of remission removed. The sinner is to stand at the doors of the church, as by their sorry condition their repentance 'returns with an even richer merchandise—their compassion, namely— [rather] than their communion.'<sup>149</sup>

Secondly, we see Tertullian appeal to the use of a bishop as a means guaranteeing remission of *some* sins. Remission for lesser sins, namely those done not directly to God, 'will be able to obtain pardon from the bishop, or else, for greater and irremissible ones, from God only.'<sup>150</sup> As noted by Le Saint, this text shows the episcopate as a means of the *divine* forgiveness of lesser sins because it is directly apposite to the divine ability alone to forgive the irremissible.<sup>151</sup> Tertullian here does not remove the clergy from the process of divine reconciliation but rather limits what it can achieve without overstepping their office. Therefore, even with Tertullian's emphasis in his treatise upon the divine initiative alone to forgive certain sins, we have a witness to the episcopal, and therefore ecclesial, means of

---

<sup>145</sup> Tertullian, 'Repentance', 10.

<sup>146</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 3.

<sup>147</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 3.

<sup>148</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 3-4.

<sup>149</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 3.

<sup>150</sup> 'Quae aut levivoribus delictis veniam ab episcopo consequi poterit, aut majoribus et irremissibilibus a Deo solo', Migne *Patrologia*, vol 2, 1017, Tertullian, 'Modesty', 18.

<sup>151</sup> Le Saint, *Treatises*, 268-269.



forgiveness, even within Montanism. A means which Novatian will hold faithful to and Cyprian revise.

Of his use of Revelation and the Luke 15 parables in particular there is a reversal of his previous interpretations. Where the exhortation for repentance was found in those passages, he now excludes them from being applied to the *baptised* Christian. Their newly discovered function is to inspire fear of committing sins in the first place rather than pointing to a post-baptismal remedy. He thinks it inconceivable that all kinds of severe sins, from idolatry to adultery, will be forgiven and how prone to abuse his old disciplinary system would be, 'For who will fear to squander what he has the power of afterwards recovering?'<sup>152</sup> Therefore the stern words of Revelation are to encourage the Christian not to sin in the first place, for fear that they will find no remission if committed.

Tertullian's rule of thumb through this new practice can be summed up as thus: precaution is to be preferred over assuming indulgence. Presumption is far more disastrous to God's glory and the church's sanctity than of overly strict discipline. This affected his interpretation especially of Scriptural instances like the sexual sinner of 1 Corinthians 5 and 2 Corinthians 2. Paul surrenders the man to Satan (1 Corinthians 5:5) "so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord," yet Tertullian, with interpretive dexterity, declares the "spirit" being saved is actually the church's spirit that is saved from casting the sinner out.<sup>153</sup> And, because the sinner reconciled in 2 Corinthians cannot be the prior, he must have been a different person.<sup>154</sup>

Tertullian's increasing intermingling with Montanism led the ecclesial guarantee of correct doctrine and practice to develop. Tertullian's later works reveal emphases on the proofs of Christ's ecclesial presence residing within the *current* demonstration of the Spirit's works rather than the antiquitous, done through the Paraclete of the New Prophecy.<sup>155</sup>

When the prophets' authenticity is questioned, he retorts, 'it would have been more the part of a subverter on the one hand to commend himself on the score of clemency.'<sup>156</sup> Bray posits

---

<sup>152</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 9.

<sup>153</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 13.

<sup>154</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 14.

<sup>155</sup> Rankin, *Tertullian*, 103.

<sup>156</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 21.

that this is Tertullian opening the door for the possibility of a given prophecy not being true and, ergo, showing his distance from the Montanists of Phrygia.<sup>157</sup> Yet this is not at all a concession considering the flow of his argument in Chapter 21. He is challenging the bishop of Rome for a demonstration of verifications of the assertion that the church has the power to remit grave sins, quipping '*exhibite igitur et nunc mihi... prophetica exempla*'.<sup>158</sup> If there was a false spirit among the New Prophets, they would not be supporting the Divine Severity. Rather than a doubtful concession, it is Tertullian's high boast that one can be sure that the Spirit is not speaking if a prophet relaxes the high discipline of Tertullian's branch.

Tertullian starts with the premise that only God remits sins and from that foundation builds a system of rigorous and severe discipline from it. Only God can judge, humans may not. Ergo, by human means (namely the church) the judgement of the forgiveness of sins is inaccessible and unpronounceable. There is removed from the grave sinner any knowledge of their forgiveness precisely because one cannot presume to pronounce by fallible human knowledge what the Divine Mind has decreed in secret. The Spirit discerns between doctrinal controversy directly through the New Prophets. The Old Covenant prophets had an authority to proclaim God's will (namely the forgiveness of grievous sins) and Calistus presumes that the Church has such authority from the Spirit to offer similar dispensations. Tertullian quips, 'Exhibit therefore even now to me, apostolic sir, prophetic evidences (*prophetica exempla*), that I may recognise your divine virtue, and vindicate to yourself the power of remitting such sins!'<sup>159</sup> The psychic bishop, of course, is unable to answer, as the Paraclete will not work among a people of such lax discipline.

## 6. Conclusion

---

<sup>157</sup> Bray, *Holiness*, 62.

<sup>158</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 21.

<sup>159</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 21.

Tertullian's conversion brought no small change in his concept of church and how it relates to sinners. Harnessing an inherited tradition in his early life, swearing by the reliability of apostolic transmission through the churches, Tertullian's ecclesiology allowed for the reconciliation of all sinners with no exclusions. This was done by apostolic mandate in his eyes until the Paraclete illumined the way forward. To readmit sinners was a defilement of the church and God's holiness and his reformed penitential theology reflected that. It is with this foundation, fully equipped, that we move to a comparison of Cyprian and Novatian with Tertullian.

## **Part 2: Cyprian and Tertullian**

## 1. Introduction

We now turn to Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus, bishop and resident of Carthage. While Cyprian was not alone in his dealings with the Novatian struggle and the crisis of apostasy, we find him to be the champion of what would become the catholic response to similar pastoral concerns. We will start with a necessary preliminary study into the extent of Cyprian's dependence on Tertullian, the findings of which will be supported throughout the rest of this section as well. From there we shall delve into the context which Cyprian found himself in which led him to lean upon and develop his Tertullianic inheritance. The Decian Persecution brought a crisis of two fronts that Cyprian had to juggle, that being the laxist parties with several groups of Confessors and the rigorists who shared Montanist Tertullian's severity. After, we shall detail Cyprian's ecclesiological and penitential thought, demonstrating the Tertullianic roots of much of his thought while also considering deviations.

### 1a. Flight in Persecution

As our arguments concerning Tertullian's orthodoxy within Montanism lie in Cyprian's acceptance of him as the *magistrum*, it is important to note the extent of his influence. An apparent problem that faces us is that Cyprian never directly cites Tertullian by name. Yet Cyprian seldom cites anything other than Scripture, as Powell rightly says 'This would be significant did Cyprian ever name, quote or refer directly to any writer at all. Since he does not, the omission of even Tertullian's name is evidence for nothing but Cyprian's didactic style.'<sup>160</sup> Due to the lack of direct citation, our approach shall take from the commonalities which they both share demonstrating more than an incidental dependency. Such an approach agrees with Walker's assessment of the situation, as '[Tertullian's] influence is shown through content rather than in literary style.'<sup>161</sup> Cyprian's emphasis was on the practical while Tertullian's overall work was more blended between the theological and the practical.

---

<sup>160</sup> Powell, 'Tertullianists', 38.

<sup>161</sup> Walker, *Churchmanship*, 11.

Cyprian's flight in persecution is especially worth noting due to Tertullian's strong opinions against the practice. Cyprian flees from Carthage shortly after his ordination at the start of Decian's persecution. Carthage, physically shepherdless, received letters of instruction from their bishop *in absentia* and also received instruction from Rome of the clergy's duties.<sup>162</sup> The Roman clergy did not condemn Cyprian for this and neither did Novatian when he was in communion acting as Rome's foreign secretary.<sup>163</sup> In *de lapsis* Cyprian said that fleeing in persecution was completely licit as the example of Jesus Himself proves (Luke 4:28-30, Matthew 10:23).<sup>164</sup> 'He states that 'whosoever abiding in Christ departs for a while does not deny his faith, but waits for the time; but he who has fallen, after refusing to depart, remained to deny it.'<sup>165</sup>

Yet Montanist Tertullian was adamant on staying put during persecution especially with leaders of the church, asking 'with the leaders turning their backs, who of the common rank will hope to persuade men to stand firm in the battle?'<sup>166</sup> It is unlikely that Cyprian later found *de fuga in persecutione* after his flight as we do not find him repenting of it nor of him encouraging others to stay, invoking judgement on those who flee. With this contradiction, it sets up what will follow as the thesis for this section, namely that Cyprian's use of Tertullian's thought was mainly from his Catholic works and thought. He built upon Catholic Tertullian as a foundation which eventually caused a deviation from Tertullian's Montanist theology.

## 2. Cyprian and his Context

---

<sup>162</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 2(8ox)', 1-3.

<sup>163</sup> 'Although you were torn away from the brethren for a time because of prevailing conditions, you never failed them,' Novatian, 'Epistle 2', 6.

<sup>164</sup> Cyprian, 'Lapsed', 10.

<sup>165</sup> Cyprian, 'Lapsed', 10.

<sup>166</sup> Tertullian, 'Flight', 11.

In part, the beginning of Cyprian's ministry foreshadowed the troubles he would later encounter, with mixtures of affection and hostility. His passion narrative recorded by his deacon indicates the extent of public affection for him, pressing him into his own house when he initially resisted the episcopal position.<sup>167</sup> In terms of hostility, he was met by a small faction of clergy that would be a perpetual thorn in his side. Three main reasons can be surmised as to why they were so hostile: firstly, he ascended to the episcopate as a neophyte, secondly with how he made an enemy out of laxists and rigorists, and finally with how Cyprian, contrary to his master's wishes, flees when persecution arises.<sup>168</sup>

The ordination to the Bishopric of Carthage presumed participation in affairs international as well as in their own pasture. Such is seen in Rome's correspondence with Cyprian in 250 where their international representative – his future rival, Novatian – consults 'pope' Cyprian on his reservations to readily admit the lapsed.<sup>169</sup> Thus the platform which Cyprian was given in his ordination to the episcopate was an ecclesial *and* political position. The weight of such an office brought detractors into its orbit, notably a group of opposition spearheaded by the presbyter Novatus.<sup>170</sup>

### **(i) Novatus and the Opposition Party**

The initial clerical thorns for Cyprian were Novatus, Felicissimus, Donatus, Gordius, Fortunatus who opposed his ordination. Hinchcliff comments that one so young in the faith would naturally garner jealousy among fellow clergy, a comfortable assumption considering he was only two years a Christian before his ascendancy.<sup>171</sup> Hinchcliff also states that there was even doubt among the more sensible hierarchy as to Cyprian's character, later to be proven wrong when his conduct won them over.<sup>172</sup> Thus, from the start Cyprian faced opposition to his elevation.

---

<sup>167</sup> Pontius, 'Life', 269.

<sup>168</sup> Hinchcliff, *Cyprian*, 48.

<sup>169</sup> Walker, *Churchmanship*, 8; n8; Cyprian, 'Epistle 30', 308.

<sup>170</sup> Not to be confused with Novatian of Rome.

<sup>171</sup> Hinchcliff, *Cyprian*, 39-40.

<sup>172</sup> Hinchcliff, *Cyprian*, 39-40; Pontius, 'Life', 269.

The opposition sooner gave further reason for the dissent of their bishop during the first crisis of the lapsed of their day when Decius issued his edict. There were three main reactions to the crisis: rigorism, laxism and the moderation championed by Cyprian. Cyprian's thorns allied themselves to the Laxist party. Laxist sympathizers expressed their desire to reconcile the *lapsi* through two main avenues: either immediate or very short recommunication, or convincing confessors to offer certificates of forgiveness. Cyprian initially desired to delay the reconciliation of the *lapsi* until the clergy could meet together to discuss a way forward that led to rebukes of the hasty laxist party and lenient confessors. Pre-Schism Novatian praises Cyprian for this attitude before the decision was made to reconcile the *lapsi* on a case by case basis, granting remission to some before their deathbed.<sup>173</sup> Cyprian's siding with Cornelius on this issue lit the flame that would roar in the Novatian Schism.

Cyprian's warning to his flock points to the two main errors of his detractors. Firstly, the subversion of Cyprian's disciplinary reservation manifested itself in a direct bypass or a cheapening of ἐξομολόγησις, recommunicating the lapsed immediately in what Cyprian calls 'the falsehood of a fallacious peace, to a fatal rashness, leaving off prayers and supplications, whereby, with long and continual satisfaction, the Lord is to be appeased.'<sup>174</sup> The second subversion came about in the convincing of the confessors to grant reconciliation to whole groups of *lapsi*. Cyprian's priorities in this particular scandal is seen in the order which he addresses it: He first critiques the provoking of ecclesial insubordination and then takes on how they have not kept 'The glory of their confession with an uncorrupt and unspotted conversation.'<sup>175</sup> We also turn to Novatus whose record is peculiar, considering in his life he joined hands with both laxist parties and rigorists. Walker hypothesises that the reason for Novatus' flippancy lay in administrative rather than theological contentions, suggesting that Novatus set up rival groups to Cyprian and Cornelius to crusade for the autonomy of the presbytery independent of the episcopate.<sup>176</sup> Novatus was the encourager

---

<sup>173</sup> Something which garners Novatian's early praise, Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 1.

<sup>174</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 39 (43ox)', 2.

<sup>175</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 39 (43ox)', 2, cf. Cyprian, 'Epistle 10', 291-292.

<sup>176</sup> Walker, *Churchmanship*, 55.

of both Felicissimus's schism and Novatian's schism as he appointed the former as a deacon and was present at the latter's ordination.<sup>177</sup>

## (ii) Decius' Edict

The edict of Decius was the spark that would set forth the blazes of the controversies Cyprian found himself in. Decius' short-lived reign starting from late 249 and ending in 251 introduced an edict intended to ignite a revival within the Roman religious system.<sup>178</sup> Every household was to participate in the sacrificial system and verify their doing so with a *libellus*. Various Christians, out of fear of hostility from the state, participated in differing ways which, while being labelled as *lapsi*, were distinguished according to the manner in which they fell. The *sacrificati* were those who participated in the full ceremony including the eating of the religious meats. The *thurificati* gave an incense offering to an imperial image. The *libellatici* were those who, either through bribery or other kinds of forgery, while keeping their hands free from idolatry, were nevertheless condemned as *lapsi* due to their denial of the faith. We shall explore below Cyprian's dealings with each category of lapsed person and, in Novatian's section, see his denial of differential treatment concerning these categories.

North Africa contained mixed reactions to the lapsed's reconciliation. Cyprian acknowledges that previous bishops were hesitant to grant reconciliation at all to the lapsed.<sup>179</sup> Rankin surmises that these bishops could very well have been influenced by or at least stood in agreement with Tertullian who vociferously held to the position in Carthaginian Christianity's formative years.<sup>180</sup> The dual reconciliatory traditions of Carthage, one more rigorous than the other, likely had Tertullian as an introducer of rigorism into a church that already practiced clemency. As Daly points out, Cyprian never accuses the laxist party of innovation as he did with the rigorists.<sup>181</sup> The laxist party is accused of presumption of the Divine Will for daring to extravagantly reconcile sinners

---

<sup>177</sup> Brent, *Cyprian*, 11.

<sup>178</sup> Brent, *Cyprian*, 119-120.

<sup>179</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 51(55ox), 21.

<sup>180</sup> Rankin, *Tertullian*, 150.

<sup>181</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 153.



early, but not innovation.<sup>182</sup> As we shall see below, they joined themselves to the tradition of Presbyter-martyrs granting reconciliation. The lower pedigree of rigorism is also seen in how Tertullian had tensions with those inside the communion of the church after his adoption of the Montanistic rigorism from Phrygia.<sup>183</sup>

### **(iii) Two Major Controversies**

Eusebius' section dedicated to Novatian and his preservation of Dionysius of Alexandria's letter mistakes him for the Novatus of Carthage.<sup>184</sup> He was acting in a leadership position as a presbyter during the days of Decian's persecution where they postponed further episcopal ordinations until peace was returned. Papandrea describes him as acting as a foreign secretary in this period, as is seen in the epistles preserved in Cyprian's corpus which are authored by him.<sup>185</sup> As we will see from these epistles, while in communion he initially, though apparently begrudgingly, holds out the possibility for the reconciliation of the lapsed. After his schismatic ordination in 251 he attempted to defame Cornelius who was his rival to the episcopate of Rome, with the latter winning the seat. Setting up a new line of bishops and asking current presiding bishops to join him, Cyprian begins his hostilities towards the schismatics, championing Cornelius' cause as the rightful successor of the Roman episcopate.

After the martyrdom of Cornelius and towards the end of Cyprian's life he experienced a new controversy in Stephen the bishop of Rome. The topic for debate was on whether those baptized by heretics should be received with the laying on of hands or rebaptism. Cyprian advocated staunchly, following Tertullian's close association with heresy and schism explored below, that the church is the only repository of valid sacraments. Two councils convened in Carthage, both in 256. The first council confirmed their Carthaginian emphasis on the exclusivity of the church, prescribed rebaptism of heretics and the demotion of lapsed clergy to laymen.<sup>186</sup> The gentle language towards Stephen who disagreed was that, 'keeping

---

<sup>182</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 27(34ox), 1.

<sup>183</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 151-152.

<sup>184</sup> Eusebius, 'Church', 6.43.1. and 6.45; Papandrea, *Trinitarian*, 28.

<sup>185</sup> Papandrea, *Trinitarian*, 12; Novatian authors epistle 30, 25(31ox) and 29(36ox).

<sup>186</sup> Brent, *Cyprian*, 316-317.

fast the bond of peace and concord', he can disagree, as every bishop is accountable to God for what they believe is right.<sup>187</sup> The second council was more firm against Stephen as he threatened excommunication upon those who disagreed, subtly suggesting that the bishop of Rome is setting himself up as *episcopus episcoporum*, the precise insult Tertullian brought to Calistus several decades before.<sup>188</sup>

To conclude, Cyprian in his relatively short ministry encountered problems rooted in schism, heresy, intra-communal disagreements and penitential presumption. As forged through fire, his theology adapted and matured depending on the practical context of the moment. It is with this background that we will turn to see this developed ecclesiology and reconciliatory practice as dependant upon, while expanding on, Tertullian his master.

### 3. Cyprian's Ecclesiology

It would be impossible to delve into Cyprian's reconciliatory practices without exploring his ecclesiology. While space prohibits an exhaustive investigation, an exploration with detail is required to understand just how Cyprian developed upon his master Catholic Tertullian, and differed with his rival Novatian. The crisis of the lapsed produced different hierarchies of sins, so to speak. Listing sins grave and sins remissible was central to Montanist Tertullian's practice of church discipline as mentioned above. For Tertullian and those who received his distinctions, the distinguishing of the remissible and irremissible was sourced from whether they had God or other people as their victim. Adultery, idolatry and fornication were put upon podium of irremissibility as well. Daly keenly points out that the precise tiering of sins was rather something alien to the tradition Cyprian inherited as he does not classify sins in the same way Tertullian did in *de pudicitia*.<sup>189</sup> As Tertullian moved towards a rigoristic model of discipline, he steered further away from the tradition he inherited and help form; the tradition which Cyprian took from.

---

<sup>187</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 71(72ox)',

<sup>188</sup> Brent, *Cyprian*, 318-319, 324-327; 'For neither does any of us set himself up as a bishop of bishops' Cyprian, 'Seventh'; cf. Tertullian, 'Modesty', 1.

<sup>189</sup> Daly, Tertullian, 150.

That being said, the classification we do have with Cyprian further breaks away from his master's Montanism by identifying the irremissible not so much with one's actions but with one's communion. The *lapsi*, though their sins were grave, had more hope of salvation than those who raised up a rival Church:

*This is a worse crime than that which the lapsed seem to have fallen into, who nevertheless, standing as penitents for their crime, beseech God with full satisfactions. In this case, the Church is sought after and entreated; in [the schismatics'] case, the Church is resisted...<sup>190</sup>*

This introduces the central aspect of Cyprian's ecclesiology and response to the enthusiastic rigorists dedicated to keeping the church clean at all costs. The unity of the church calls into question the relationship between the individual and the community; differentiating local tradition from schism.

### **3a. Cyprian's Imagery, Tertullian's Origin**

Of worthy note is Cyprian's use of imagery when describing the church. As zealous as Cyprian was for the lapsed's inclusion into the church, he was even more so concerned with the uniqueness of the church. It is a singular, exclusive body, outside which one has no hope of salvation. In this section we will see many parallels in thought and usage of language between Cyprian and Tertullian to show the dependence of the former on the latter.

#### **(i) Rays, Roots and Rivers**

Vocabulary describing the church is shared between Tertullian and Cyprian. The identification of the church as a *matrix* of salvation is used by Cyprian to describe the church as the 'womb or source of spiritual life.'<sup>191</sup> Walker identifies similarities of metaphor which are atomically close to Tertullian.<sup>192</sup> They are found with Tertullian's concept of procession and Cyprian's images of church unity. The church is the *radix et matrix* of salvation for Cyprian as the apostolic churches for Tertullian were '*matricibus*' for the apostolic teaching

---

<sup>190</sup> Cyprian, 'Unity', 19.

<sup>191</sup> Walker, *Churchmanship*, 11-12.

<sup>192</sup> Walker, *Churchmanship*, 12.

they preserved.<sup>193</sup> Tertullian says the Word proceeds from the Father ‘just as the root puts forth the tree, and the fountain the river, and the sun the ray.’<sup>194</sup> Cyprian uses the same metaphoric trio in *de unitate* with, ‘As there are many rays of the sun, but one light; and many branches of a tree, but one strength based in its tenacious root; and since from one spring flow many streams, ...yet the unity is still preserved in the source.’<sup>195</sup> Both speak of a unity sourced from an origin with the three exact same images.

For Cyprian, as the church’s unity in *de unitate*’s fifth chapter is akin to the singular shining of light from the sun, unable to be divided in its source, so the Spirit is given by Christ fully and undivided.<sup>196</sup> One can sympathise with Cyprian that if the Spirit’s relationship to the Church is so united and essential, a divided portioning out of the Spirit becomes much more untenable. We see how Cyprian’s zeal for the indivisibility of the church is sourced from the Triune life; as inseparable as it is exclusive.

## (ii) Church as Mother

Perhaps Cyprian’s most well-known phrase is his dichotomy between those in and outside the communion of the church with the words ‘He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the church for his mother.’<sup>197</sup> Cyprian often uses motherhood imagery to describe the church as both protector of the faithful and as an apposition to God’s fatherhood, emphasising the necessity of remaining in her. *Mater ecclesia* celebrates the martyrs,<sup>198</sup> glories in the virgins,<sup>199</sup> and denies the heretics as ‘strange children’.<sup>200</sup> The source of this maternal imagery would have come from reading Tertullian’s similar emphasis upon the maternal church as Daly notes.<sup>201</sup> While the baptized are received into their ‘mother’s house’<sup>202</sup>, the heretics are ‘motherless’<sup>203</sup>, lacking the *mater ecclesia* who is pleaded to for

---

<sup>193</sup> Cyprian, ‘Epistle 44(48ox)’, 3; Tertullian, ‘Prescription’, 21.

<sup>194</sup> Tertullian, ‘Praxeas’, 8.

<sup>195</sup> Cyprian, ‘Unity’, 5.

<sup>196</sup> Cyprian, ‘Letter 75 [ox69]’, 14.

<sup>197</sup> Cyprian, ‘Unity’, ch6, cf. Cyprian, ‘Lapsed’, ch9; ‘Epistle 73’ [ox74], ch7.

<sup>198</sup> Cyprian, ‘Lapsed’, 2.

<sup>199</sup> Cyprian, ‘Dress’, 3.

<sup>200</sup> Cyprian, ‘Epistle 74(75ox)’, 14.

<sup>201</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 9.

<sup>202</sup> Tertullian, ‘Baptism’, 20.

<sup>203</sup> Tertullian, ‘Prescription’, 42;

reconciliation.<sup>204</sup> So exclusive is this maternal house that only the persecuted united to the church receive the privilege of Confessorship, as Cyprian says 'Confession is the beginning of glory, not the full desert of the crown; nor does it perfect our praise, but it initiates our dignity.'<sup>205</sup>

### (iii) Church as Ark

Cyprian makes constant use of the resemblance between the Ark of Noah and the church, saying 'If any one could escape who was outside the ark of Noah, then he also may escape who shall be outside of the church.'<sup>206</sup> It is as Brent says, 'the characteristic African symbol of the church'.<sup>207</sup> The Ark is described as the foreshadowing type (*sacramentum*) of Christ's church with the emphasis that only those on the Ark were saved.<sup>208</sup> As Daly notes, Cyprian built upon Tertullian's conception of the church as the Ark and 'developed from it far-reaching implications in regard to the salvation of those outside the ark of the church.'<sup>209</sup> Tertullian before Cyprian identified the Ark as a 'typified' (*figurata*) figure of the church.<sup>210</sup> As well as using *figurata*, elsewhere he uses '*secundum arcae typum...*' and '*in arcae typo*'.<sup>211</sup>

## 3b. The Church as the *sacramentum unitatis*

### (i) Identifying the *sacramentum*

It is worth detailing the use of Cyprian's loaded term "*sacramentum unitatis*" as it communicates several fundamental features of Cyprian's theology which constrained him to such a dogmatic stance on church unity. This *sacramentum*, with the church's joining to God by the Spirit, is of a Tertullianic root. Before getting to that, we must first examine Cyprian's concept of the church as *sacramentum*.

---

<sup>204</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 5.

<sup>205</sup> Cyprian, 'Unity', ch20-21.

<sup>206</sup> Cyprian, 'Unity', ch6.

<sup>207</sup> Brent, *Cyprian*, 297.

<sup>208</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 74(75ox)', 15.

<sup>209</sup> Daly, Tertullian, 7.

<sup>210</sup> Tertullian, *Baptism*, 8.

<sup>211</sup> Tertullian, 'Idolatry', 24.

The precise identification of the *sacramentum unitatis* has disagreements as to its essence in Cyprian's usage. We first must address what the *sacramentum* is not; namely a title for the Lord's Supper. Johanny's position is that the term has a eucharistic focus due to Cyprian's constant use of *communio* as a standard of inclusion and exclusion.<sup>212</sup> He states Cyprian identified the eucharist as the 'sign, call for, source, and fruit of unity' and for this reason it is the *sacramentum*.<sup>213</sup> While most of these descriptors can accurately represent Cyprian's eucharistic theology, it is very mistaken to identify the eucharist as the primary source of ecclesial unity. However, the *sacramentum unitatis* does not communicate the eucharist in any unique sense.

This is because the closest we have to a definition of the term is located in epistle 73 (74ox) where the sacrament is identified with the church as the mystical body of Christ rather than the Eucharist. The *sacramentum* is likened to 1 Peter's linkage of Noah's flood to baptismal validity (1 Peter 3:18-22).<sup>214</sup> We see the Ark's identification as a type of the exclusive unity Cyprian wished to promote. As there was a singular Ark, so there is only one refuge of God's protection, the church; also known as the *sacramentum unitatis*. Cyprian's uses the term to communicate the mystical, reciprocal relationship between Christ and His body through the Spirit. And in this sense, when boiled down to its essence Cyprian's foundation of ecclesial unity is as pneumatological as it is episcopal. In agreement with Mills, we find Cyprian forming a primitive version of the visible/invisible church division.<sup>215</sup>

Exploring further details, *de unitate* has two mentions of the precise phrase *sacramentum unitatis*, one in chapter 4's Textus Receptus reading and another in the undisputed chapter 7.<sup>216</sup> The Textus Receptus's version of chapter 4 has an extra mention of the *sacramentum unitatis*, this time to be used in his controversy with Stephen.<sup>217</sup> The oneness of the church is

---

<sup>212</sup> Johanny, 'Cyprian', 173.

<sup>213</sup> Johanny, 'Cyprian,' 173.

<sup>214</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 73(74ox)', 11.

<sup>215</sup> Mills, 'Visible', 680.

<sup>216</sup> Two versions of *de unitate* appear in the manuscript tradition, one which includes an extended version of chapter 4 and another which has a shorter version. The longer version, called the *Primatus Text*, includes emphases on the uniqueness of Peter's office as the origin of episcopal unity. The shorter version is named the *Textus Receptus* and speaks more of Peter as typifying the dignity all the apostles shared, Walters, 'Unitas', 103-106, 118-119.

<sup>217</sup> For a defence of the dating of the Textus Receptus reading to be drafted during his controversy with Stephen, see Shuve, 'Cyprian', 627-643. Cf. Hall, 'Versions', 138-146.

exemplified in the oneness statements of Ephesians 4:4-5, quoting it as 'There is one body and one spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God.'<sup>218</sup> In chapter 7 we find another description of the *sacramentum*. 'This sacrament of unity, this bond of a concord (*vinculum concordiae*) inseparably cohering (*inseparabiliter cohaerentis*), is set forth where in the Gospel the coat of the Lord Jesus Christ is not at all divided nor cut.'<sup>219</sup> Benson interprets the foundational basis of Cyprian's unity 'practical unity, a moral unity, held together by its own sense of unity, by 'the cement of mutual concord''' based on the similar phrasing found in Epistle 66(68ox).<sup>220</sup> While accurate to the degree of Cyprian's emphasis on the episcopate as the unifier of the visible church, it is inaccurate to emphasise too deeply the human role of unity's foundation as it ignores the invisible factors for Cyprian.

## (ii) The Invisible *Sacramentum Unitatis*

We can see this from Mills' observation with how Cyprian responds to a critic of his character and office that he prefers to cite the Spirit's role in his ministry verses the appeal to apostolic succession or valid ordination.<sup>221</sup> The Spirit validated his ministry through baptism and reconciliation, and for good measure Cyprian later cites a private revelations by the Spirit to confirm his office and of the fate of those who rebel against their bishop.<sup>222</sup> Here we approach Cyprian's understanding of the church as united to the Trinity. Walker best summarizes what follows, 'If Cyprian figures above all as the apostle of church unity, it should be remembered that he based his doctrine on what Tertullian had taught him of the unity of God.'<sup>223</sup>

For Cyprian, the Spirit's centrality in the church's life is accompanied by the indispensability of the Trinity. In *de unitate*'s sixth chapter Cyprian grounds the necessity of unity in a trinitarian foundation through two Scriptures. "*ego et pater unum sumus*" (John 10:30) and the

---

<sup>218</sup> Cyprian, 'Unity', 4.

<sup>219</sup> Cyprian, 'Unity', 7.

<sup>220</sup> Benson, *Cyprian*, 195, quoting Cyprian, 'Epistle 66 [ox68]', ch3.

<sup>221</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 68(66ox)', 5. Cited by Mills, 'Visible', 670.

<sup>222</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 68(66ox)', 9, 10.

<sup>223</sup> Walker, *Churchmanship*, 13.

intriguing citation of the *comma johanneum* variant in 1 John 5:7, “*et hi tres unum sunt*”. The crux of his argument here comes in the question,

*And does any one believe that this unity which thus comes from the divine strength and coheres in celestial sacraments (sacramentis cœlestibus), can be divided in the Church, and can be separated by the parting asunder of opposing wills?*<sup>224</sup>

Here Cyprian ties together the unity of the Father, Son and Spirit with the spouse of Christ. This trinitarian unity with the church is the wellspring for much of Cyprian’s ecclesiology. This unity originates ‘from God the Father, and from the tradition of Jesus Christ the Lord and our God’, whose tradition established the episcopate to deliver the sacraments through the Spirit, found only within the one house of the church.<sup>225</sup> The unity of the trinitarian persons demonstrates the necessity of there being only a single church. To be validly baptized into Christ necessitates that they are in a saving relationship with the Father and Spirit also, lest there be a divine division.<sup>226</sup> To his opponents in the rebaptism controversy, Cyprian harnesses their aversion to acknowledging heretics’ reception of the true God and drives it toward its natural conclusion that either they receive God in fulness or they receive nothing.<sup>227</sup> As participation and adoration of the Trinity is essential for church unity, so the lacking of either the Trinity or of the church’s communion equally result in damnation, ‘He who does not hold this unity does not hold God’s law, does not hold the faith of the Father and the Son, does not hold life and salvation.’<sup>228</sup>

The possession of God’s fulness in Trinity and church is the root of Cyprian’s later controversy with Stephen over heretical baptism. Throughout Cyprian’s disputes with Rome’s approach to rebaptism of heretics, there is an attitude of abrasiveness even when equal bishops are disagreeing. The rebaptism dispute took a higher priority in Cyprian’s hierarchy of triage than his desire for episcopal autonomy. Such was because he feared as presumptuous to the Divine Will Rome’s position. Cyprian is careful to construct his treatise to Jubaianus defending his position, coating its vocabulary with language that solidifies

---

<sup>224</sup> Cyprian, ‘Unity’, 6; cf. Cyprian, ‘Lord’s’, 23.

<sup>225</sup> Cyprian, ‘Epistle 73(74ox)’, 4.

<sup>226</sup> Cyprian, ‘Epistle 73(74ox)’, 5.

<sup>227</sup> Cyprian, ‘Epistle 73(74ox)’, 5.

<sup>228</sup> Cyprian, ‘Unity’, 6.



Carthage's bishops as on God's most sure side. Carthage 'by the *divine permission* water[s] the thirsting people of God' (emphasis added)<sup>229</sup>, who has discerned what is divine and what is human by means of the Holy Spirit.<sup>230</sup>

This aligns with Tertullian in several ways. For Cyprian, baptism 'can neither be separated from the church nor from the Holy Spirit.'<sup>231</sup> And so it was with Tertullian too, as in his catholic days he tied the two or three witnesses of Matthew 18:20 to both the Trinity and church, saying 'there is added, of necessity, mention of the church; inasmuch as, wherever there are three, (that is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,) there is the church, which is a body of three.'<sup>232</sup> This was expanded upon with the new ecclesiology of Montanist Tertullian. Daly summarizes Tertullian's ecclesial pneumatology well in saying 'Just as the Spirit is the unifying principle of the divine Trinity, so also the Spirit is the principle and the constituent of the Church, which the Lord made to consist of three.'<sup>233</sup> The unification is best seen in Montanist Tertullian's words in *de pudicitia*, 'The very church itself is, properly and principally, the Spirit Himself, in whom is the Trinity of the One Divinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.'<sup>234</sup> It is from Tertullian that Cyprian acquired the language and close associations of the Trinity, church, and baptism's function as a unifier of the two.<sup>235</sup>

Tertullian was prior to Cyprian in his specified interpretation of Ephesians 4:4-5. With each controversy, either dealing with the lapsed, insubordinates, schismatics or heretical baptism, Ephesians 4:4-5 is often quoted, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (NIV). Daly notes the exegetical trail from Tertullian to Cyprian in its interpretation.<sup>236</sup> Originally concerning the common hope of Christians, Tertullian with Cyprian following interpret the verses 'intending positively to exclude from that inheritance all but the faithful believers of the true

---

<sup>229</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 72(73ox)', 11.

<sup>230</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 72(73ox)', 13.

<sup>231</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 73(74ox)', 4.

<sup>232</sup> Tertullian, 'Baptism', 6.

<sup>233</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 10.

<sup>234</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 21.

<sup>235</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 52.

<sup>236</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 21-22.

church.<sup>237</sup>

### (iii) The Visible *Sacramentum Unitatis*

It will not take long to discover Cyprian's great emphasis on the episcopacy as the glue of the visible church. Such was his well-worn tool concerning all matters ecclesiology. The *episcopi* were distinct from the *presbyteri* under them, the former exercising a final authority in local matters and a participatory role in regional councils as an equal.

Bévenot's extremely helpful study on Cyprian's understanding of the *sacerdos* identifies a dual role assigned to the episcopate in his thought.<sup>238</sup> In the study he states "*episcopus*" means the man in charge of a local church; '*sacerdos*' is the man as chosen by God to be his instrument for the distribution of his graces to those in his charge.<sup>239</sup> This distinction gives us further support in identifying a distinguished but close interlinking of the visible and invisible church in Cyprian's mind. This differs from Tertullian's Montanist ecclesiology which emphasises that, using Revelation 1:6, all believers are priests and validly constitute the visible church where three are gathered (cf. Matthew 18:20).<sup>240</sup> What is interesting is Cyprian's apparent direct refutation of this interpretation, as he rather stresses the part where Christ says "if two of you shall agree", which obviously for him refers to being in agreement with the church and its hierarchy.<sup>241</sup> While he may not have mirrored his master's interpretation here, the uniqueness relationship of the bishop with the Spirit is Tertullianic at its source. Walker identifies this in how charismatic leaders are needed in the church, 'he regarded the episcopate as a charisma and thus identified bishops with Tertullian's spiritual men.'<sup>242</sup>

The collecting of texts in both testaments concerning obedience to the priesthood was a favourite tool of Cyprian's against those insubordinate to the esteemed office. Those who rebel against the Lord's appointed rebel against the Lord Himself, citing 1 Samuel 8:7's

---

<sup>237</sup> Daily, *Tertullian*, 21.

<sup>238</sup> The *presbyteri* were not identified with the title of *sacerdos*, Bévenot, '*sacerdos*', 421-423.

<sup>239</sup> Bévenot, '*sacerdos*', 417.

<sup>240</sup> Tertullian, 'Exhortation', 7.

<sup>241</sup> Cyprian, 'Untiy', 12.

<sup>242</sup> Walker, *Churchmanship*, 15-16.

“They have not rejected you but have rejected me”.<sup>243</sup> He appeals to Jesus’ non-usurpation of the priesthood even during His trial as validation for the people of the New Covenant to still obey priestly authorities (cf. John 18:19-24).<sup>244</sup> This heavenly appointment, however, was not indestructible, as Bévenot does well in comparing Epistle 67(67ox) where Cyprian approves of the deposing of a Spanish bishop, demonstrating that ‘if seriously delinquent [he] could be deposed by the college of bishops’.<sup>245</sup> If there is deviation from Tertullian here, it is that the right of discernment of valid episcopal ordination belonged to the bishops alone, not a lay spiritual person. The bishops present at another bishop’s ordination was seen as such a validation. But again this is tempered with the Novatian schism’s upheaval, as Novatian himself was ordained by other bishops to take Cornelius’ chair, which Cyprian opposed as constituting heresy.<sup>246</sup> The episcopate for Cyprian is of the highest apostolic pedigree, becoming an essential role in the Body of Christ, ‘The church is founded upon the bishops, and every act of the church is controlled by these same rulers.’<sup>247</sup>

The college of bishops meets to discuss disciplinary practices with a divine approval found amongst their fraternal decisions.<sup>248</sup> These decisions had a heavenly backing as the dominical command to bind, loose and forgive sins to the apostles was also imparted to their successors (Matthew 16:17-19, 18:18; cf. John 20:21-23).<sup>249</sup> Such decisions could produce *ad hoc* decisions during emergencies as was the case with the synod of 253CE where penitents were granted immediate reconciliation when persecution was on the horizon.<sup>250</sup> However, these decisions were not taken flippantly. The regional council required agreement and was accompanied by special revelation ‘by the suggestion of the Holy Spirit and the admonition of the Lord, conveyed by many and manifest visions.’<sup>251</sup> To go against the rulings of the college as a layperson or schismatic is to set oneself up as the judge of God Himself.<sup>252</sup> For

---

<sup>243</sup> Cyprian, ‘Epistle 64(3ox)’, 1.

<sup>244</sup> Cyprian, ‘Epistle 64(3ox)’, 2.

<sup>245</sup> Bévenot, ‘*sacerdos*’, 421.

<sup>246</sup> Cyprian, ‘Epistle 40(44ox)’, 1.

<sup>247</sup> Cyprian, ‘Epistle 26(33ox)’, 1.

<sup>248</sup> Cyprian, ‘Epistle 54(59ox)’, 14.

<sup>249</sup> Cyprian, ‘Epistle 53(57ox)’, 1.

<sup>250</sup> Cyprian, ‘Epistle 53(57ox)’.

<sup>251</sup> Cyprian, ‘Epistle 53(57ox)’, 5.

<sup>252</sup> Cyprian, ‘Epistle 54(59ox)’, 5; cf. cf. Cyprian, ‘Epistle 72(73ox)’, 26 concerning the disagreement among fellow bishops Cyprian allows for disagreement.

Cyprian, the episcopate and presbyterate had a special institution by Christ which the deaconate did not share; a point emphasised in the case of insubordinate deacons.<sup>253</sup>

With Cyprian's emphasis upon his own office, one could surmise that the episcopate functions as the central foundation of church unity, yet Cyprian reserves that position for the Spirit alone. This is clearly seen in epistle 71 (72ox) with his treatment of repentant schismatic clergy, the inefficacy of their sacraments and of the spiritless water they baptize with.<sup>254</sup> Cyprian is clear on how they have become *traditores* who can only offer 'profane water' despite their linkage to the apostles' succession.<sup>255</sup> Thus the origin of the clergy's sacramental power comes from the Spirit whose only house is the Catholic church.<sup>256</sup>

### 3c. Heresy and Schism

Today we would normally separate between heresy and schism. Yet we find within early Christianity less division between these two manifestations. Novatian was a positive contributor to the trinitarian debate against the Adoptionists and Modalists, yet he became the figurehead of the schism so named after him. Cyprian was posed with the problem of one who is very much "orthodox" concerning the doctrine of God but sharply differed on ecclesial and disciplinary lines. Dunn in his authoritative study on Cyprian's concept of *schisma* and *haeresis* highlights this mindset, 'For Cyprian what one believed and how one related with the rest of the ecclesial community were not separable questions.'<sup>257</sup> As is always his ecclesiological focus, Satan 'has invented heresies and schisms, whereby he might subvert the faith, might corrupt the truth, might divide the unity.'<sup>258</sup> Both heresy and schism relate back to unity, both of which are deviations from it. Heretics, the same with schismatics, having lost the Holy Spirit, cannot give that which they do not possess.<sup>259</sup> The

---

<sup>253</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 64(3ox)', 3.

<sup>254</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 71 (72ox)', 1,2.

<sup>255</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 71 (72ox)', 1.

<sup>256</sup> Mills, 'Visible', 673 n83.

<sup>257</sup> Dunn, 'Heresy', 574.

<sup>258</sup> Cyprian, 'Unity', 3.

<sup>259</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 69(70ox)', 2.

rebaptism controversy is a prime example of the closeness of these two evils as both heretics and schismatics produce such 'profane water' in their baptism.<sup>260</sup>

Tertullian distinguishes between heresy and schism in a similar way, but not as well formed. Admittedly, he does not use them as synonyms as he dedicates a section to schism in *de praescriptione*.<sup>261</sup> However, his refusal to elaborate in the instances where they are discussed in his works leads to Dunn concluding that while distinct they heavily overlapped.<sup>262</sup> In citing 1 Corinthians 11:19 concerning the necessity of factions, he says 'no doubt [Paul] classes heresies under the same head of censure as he does schisms also and dissensions.'<sup>263</sup> The treatment of heresy and schism was the same, namely that one is placed outside of the communion of the church if they are guilty of either. One could be a heretic in praxis as well as in belief as the catholic interlocutors Montanist Tertullian did battle with accused him of heresy with his new stance on monogamy.<sup>264</sup> One could violate either the *regula fide* or the *regula disciplina* and become separated from the community. The lack of distinction apart from minute details are the equivalent of an overlapping Venn Diagram where in the centre is the separation of the person from the community of God. As Dunn notes, both Cyprian and Tertullian's close association in the consequences of these two areas demonstrate that a hard distinction between schism and heresy was a post-Cyprianic development.<sup>265</sup>

In Cyprian we see an ecclesiology that is grounded in Trinitarian roots and exclusivity. Such roots, it has been demonstrated, were first planted by Tertullian. Cyprian as he came into the faith as a recent convert required training and resources to equip him to develop and adapt the church's dealings and concerns to the present situation. Cyprian quoted much Scripture and nothing else during all of his controversies, with his ecclesiological writings being no exception. Cyprian's reliance upon Tertullian is mainly sourced from his catholic side, with more aversion to the flatter ecclesiology of Montanist Tertullian who wanted to expand the priesthood to all believers.

---

<sup>260</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 71(72ox)', 1.

<sup>261</sup> Tertullian, 'Prescription', 5.

<sup>262</sup> Dunn, 'Heresy', 555-557, 573.

<sup>263</sup> Tertullian, 'Prescription', 5.

<sup>264</sup> Tertullian, 'Monogamy', 2; Dunn, 'Heresy', 555.

<sup>265</sup> Dunn, 'Heresy', 573.

## 4. Cyprian's Penitential Theology

In this section we will demonstrate that the penitential practices of Cyprian find a fundamental root in Tertullian which he then diverges from as he develops the episcopal system, further centralizing the regional churches as in communion under a single bishop. The obvious difference emerges between Cyprian and the later Montanist Tertullian as it is the latter's penitential theology that Cyprian does battle with in the person of Novatian. Saying this, Cyprian held true to the Tertullian of earlier years in his catholic period concerning "lesser" sins, episcopal absolution and works of satisfaction after baptism.

### 4a. Penitence

Both Cyprian and Tertullian did not prescribe the *ἐξομολόγησις* process for every sin but reserved it for more grave offenses, more akin to, but not to be anachronized as, a private penance.<sup>266</sup> With lighter offences, works of atonement were required without the public display of sackcloth and ashes as is seen in Cyprian's *opere et eleemosynis*.

#### (i) Medicinal Language

The penitential process is often described using medicinal language, with Cyprian. The lapsed person who is worthy of *ἐξομολόγησις* is compared to a wounded soldiers naked on the field of battle.<sup>267</sup> The unskilful physician is one who is gentle around wounds that require a firm dealing.<sup>268</sup> Indeed, 'The sick man may cry out, may vociferate, and may complain, in impatience of the pain; but he will afterwards give thanks.'<sup>269</sup> This precisely parallels to Catholic Tertullian's exhortations to not shy away from *ἐξομολόγησις*, as 'the things which heal by unpleasant means do, by the benefit of the cure, excuse their own offensiveness...'<sup>270</sup> The laxist party deprive the sick of the '*sanitatis patientiam*' and the '*satisfactione medicinam*.'<sup>271</sup>

---

<sup>266</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 148-149.

<sup>267</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 53(57ox), 2.

<sup>268</sup> Cyprian, 'Lapsed', 14.

<sup>269</sup> Cyprian, 'Lapsed', 14.

<sup>270</sup> Tertullian, 'Repentance', 10.

<sup>271</sup> Cyprian, 'Lapsed', 15.

The lowness in outward attire and expression is not suggested but a mandated demonstration of sincere penitence. As we compare *de lapsis*' chapter 30 and *de paenitentia*'s 11<sup>th</sup> chapter, we see Cyprian and Catholic Tertullian here are in complete agreement with this distortion of repentance.<sup>272</sup> Both see cleanness and grooming as offences to the mourning ritual of ἐξομολόγησις. Cyprian condemns the goers of the baths as Tertullian condemns those who keep their nails, hair and teeth pristine while their souls are destitute. Tertullian decries how easy it is for a secular event to move people to modest living but it takes more effort to convince the Christian to undergo ἐξομολόγησις. Cyprian also shuns the lapsed who are apathetic towards the state of their soul; but if someone they love dies, 'you would groan grievously, and weep with disordered countenance, with changed dress, with neglected hair, with clouded face, with dejected appearance, you would show the signs of grief.'<sup>273</sup> So much emphasis is placed upon clothing as they designators of their relation to the community. Tertullian in his most excellent sarcasm describes the lavish life of the purple-cladded sinner and has a hypothetical interlocuter ask:

*"On whom are you lavishing all this?" let him say, "I have sinned against God, and am in peril of eternally perishing: and so now I am drooping, and wasting and torturing myself, that I may reconcile God to myself, whom by sinning I have offended."*<sup>274</sup>

Also Taking from Tertullian the ideal penitent is not to think of their own works of atonement too highly as Cyprian calls them to share the deprecation of the "unprofitable servants" of Luke 17:7-10.<sup>275</sup> Such must be expressed through attire appropriate to one's mournful state.

---

<sup>272</sup> Cyprian, 'Lapsed', 30 and Tertullian, 'Repentance', 11.

<sup>273</sup> Cyprian, 'Lapsed', 30.

<sup>274</sup> Tertullian, 'Repentance', 11.

<sup>275</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 26(33ox), 2.

#### 4b. Satisfaction

Crucial to our discussion of Cyprianic atonement is discovering what to do with his use of *satisfactio/satisfacere*. In Lewis and Short the word is primarily used in contexts of reparation and apology.<sup>276</sup> The Oxford Latin dictionary identifies it as meeting the demands of a creditor or 'a satisfaction for an offence, an apology, excuse or indemnification'.<sup>277</sup> *Propitatio* is only mentioned twice in his corpus. In *De opere* chapter 5, one propitiates God (*remedia propitiando Deo*) by righteous deeds.<sup>278</sup> The other instance is where *propitatio* is tied with *placentes* in the context of prayer, pleading for God to grant salvation.<sup>279</sup>

It is important to note the distinction between satisfaction and reconciliation as the divide is retained between both Tertullian and Cyprian. Rahner notes how Cyprian so closely resembles the ἐξομολόγησις of Tertullian as the whole church is a participant in the penitent's satisfaction.<sup>280</sup> *De paenitentia* has the penitent involve members of the church in their demonstrations of sorrow, for when the sinner pleads for the aid of the one in right standing, they are in fact pleading to Christ.<sup>281</sup> The lack of clergy involvement for Tertullian is not evidence of the absence of clergy in *reconciliation*, but rather demonstrates the flatter dynamic of peer-aided satisfaction which Cyprian preserves from his master. Hence, 'Since in Cyprian, *satisfactio* is clearly distinguished from reconciliation itself, as its necessary prerequisite, it can be achieved only by such a support given to the penitent by intercession, but in no way exclusively *per sacerdotes*.'<sup>282</sup> We see precisely this in *de lapsis* where the martyrs as well as priests aid the sinner in performing their satisfaction.<sup>283</sup>

Another distinction should be found between satisfaction and atonement. Cyprian's prescription for post-Baptismal sin takes much from Tertullian's thought. Baptism makes clean the Christian, fashioning a fitting vessel for the Holy Spirit to dwell.<sup>284</sup> Almsgiving is seen as a propitiatory act, as they are 'the remedies for propitiating (*propitiando*) God' for the

---

<sup>276</sup> Lewis, *Latin*, 1634.

<sup>277</sup> Lee, *Oxford*, 1694.

<sup>278</sup> Cyprian, 'Works', 5.

<sup>279</sup> Cyprian, 'Demetrianus', 20.

<sup>280</sup> Rahner, *Penance*, 190.

<sup>281</sup> Tertullian, 'Repentance', 10.

<sup>282</sup> Rahner, *Penance*, 190.

<sup>283</sup> Cyprian, 'Lapsed', 36.

<sup>284</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 73(74ox)', 5-7, cf. Tertullian, 'Baptism', 7.



offence caused.<sup>285</sup> By good deeds, one can make up for the offence which one has made to the Divine Majesty, as ‘by works of righteousness (*operationibus justis*) God is satisfied (*satisfieri*), that with the deserts of mercy sins are cleansed’.<sup>286</sup> Cyprian’s source of post-baptismal satisfaction in his early ministry was found chiefly in giving to the poor. As for their power, such works have cleansing language attached to them, ‘that by almsgiving we may wash away (*abluamus*) whatever foulness we subsequently contract.’<sup>287</sup> The human condition is always in need of correction, with no heart was pure enough to lack the need for the works of mercy and almsgiving.<sup>288</sup> Alluding to the Beatitude of Matthew 5:7, ‘he shall not be able to deserve the mercy of the Lord, who himself shall not have been merciful.’<sup>289</sup>

Using another Scripture, Cyprian’s version of Tobit 12:8-9 reads ‘*bona est oratio cum jejuniis et eleemosyna: quia eleemosyna a morte liberat, et ipsa purgat peccata*’.<sup>290</sup> He emphasises the *cum jejuniis et eleemosyna* that the penitent might not think that mere prayer will be of help to them.<sup>291</sup> The exhortations to alms ultimately are ultimately based upon Cyprian’s aversion to an empty repentance; an atonement without an immolation.<sup>292</sup> The Divine Mercy will rarely be kindled by mere words, hence an outward accompaniment is necessary. This draws much similarity with Tertullian who stressed in his own treatise on *patientia* how bodily patience adds to the effects of prayer and opens up the ears of God towards the sinner.<sup>293</sup>

Downs hold that this cleansing of previous sins required an extra remedy for the sins committed after such washing, acting as an atonement separate from Christ’s work on the cross.<sup>294</sup> Yet it is important to take Mills’ warning against anachronism seriously when observing this side of Cyprian’s theology. Mills rejects the concepts that Downs associated with Cyprian’s exhortations such as associating the atonement of Christ with the atonement, He recognises that Cyprian’s comment in chapter 2, that ‘*post baptismi gratiam sordidatos docet*

---

<sup>285</sup> Cyprian, ‘Works’, 5.

<sup>286</sup> Cyprian, ‘Works’, 5.

<sup>287</sup> Cyprian, ‘Works’, 1.

<sup>288</sup> Cyprian, ‘Works’, 3, 7.

<sup>289</sup> Cyprian, ‘Works’, 5.

<sup>290</sup> Cyprian, ‘Works’, 5.

<sup>291</sup> Cyprian, ‘Works’, 5.

<sup>292</sup> Cyprian, ‘Works’, 15.

<sup>293</sup> Tertullian, ‘Patience’, 13.

<sup>294</sup> Downs, *Alms*, 268-270.

*denuo posse purgari*,' is the thematic phrase of Cyprian's satisfaction or "atonement" language.<sup>295</sup> As Mills states, satisfaction in Cyprian is not the same as atonement.<sup>296</sup>

The power of almsgiving is seen as a recapitulation of the baptismal event, as 'in baptism remission of sins is granted once for all, constant and ceaseless labour, following the likeness of baptism (*instar imitata*), once again bestows the mercy of God.'<sup>297</sup> Cyprian's final exhortation to almsgiving describes it among other things as 'a wholesome guard of our security, a protection of hope, a safeguard of faith, a remedy for sin...'<sup>298</sup> Mills suggests that the language describing behavioural modifiers shows that Cyprian's emphasis is 'perseverance rather than atonement', applying even to the *medela peccati*.<sup>299</sup>

Compare this to the satisfaction language of Tertullian. *De patientia* provides a useful representative description of how satisfaction is performed in his thought. *Patientia* is manifested in the body as well as in the mind,' That which springs from a virtue of the mind (*virtute animi*) is perfected in the flesh (*in carne perficitur*).<sup>300</sup> Patience manifested bodily for Tertullian includes an ἐξομολόγησις-like simplicity and asceticism where God is appeased 'per humiliationis sacrificium'.<sup>301</sup> One is to eat simple foods, only drink water, wearing simple clothes accompanied by sackcloth and ashes. Such bodily patience produces a state of prayerful openness to the Divine Grace which moves Christ to hear the penitent.<sup>302</sup>

Here we see Tertullian's aim with promoting the penitential system: satisfaction is acquired by a worthy, humble disposition.<sup>303</sup> The humble disposition is cultivated and demonstrated through prayers and fasting to bring about a satisfaction for the wrong done. We see underlying these exhortations a repudiation of a rash acceptance of mercy; a presumptuous attitude which grasps reconciliation before it is worthily disposed. Hence 'No one deserves (favour) by availing himself of the indulgence, but by rendering a prompt obedience to the

---

<sup>295</sup> Cyprian, 'Works', 2.

<sup>296</sup> Mills, *Extra*, 88.

<sup>297</sup> Cyprian, 'Works', 2; Mills, *Extra*, 93.

<sup>298</sup> Cyprian, 'Works', 26.

<sup>299</sup> Mills, *Extra*, 100.

<sup>300</sup> Tertullian, 'Patience', 13; Migne, *Patrologia*, vol 1, 1270.

<sup>301</sup> Tertullian, 'Patience', 13.

<sup>302</sup> "precatones commendat, deprecationis affirmat, haec aures Christi Dei aperit", Tertullian, 'Patience', 13.

<sup>303</sup> Tertullian, 'Repentance', 5, 'Repentance which, being shown us and commanded us through God's grace, recalls us to grace'.

will, (of his master).'<sup>304</sup> Cyprian's tying of deeds to baptism may have been an innovation from Tertullian's concept of satisfaction, but we see a thread of this reparative language of which Tertullian set the precedent as the first great Latin theologian of Carthage.

#### 4c. Reconciliation

##### (i) Cyprian and the Lapsed

As well as Cyprian's letters, we find much relevant data in *de lapsis* concerning his attitude to the lapsed and the reconciliatory process. While the praise of the confessors is of the same sentiment as Novatian's epistles, we see Cyprian identifying with the lapsed in his tears for them, '*Doleo, fratres, doleo vobiscum.*'<sup>305</sup> While we shall see that Novatian had no tears for the lapsed, Cyprian's more pastoral approach shows how the lapsed, his *fratres*, are not irredeemable souls to be cast off, for the church's sanctity is not as fragile as Novatian makes it out to be.<sup>306</sup> Though they have immolated their salvation (*immolasti illic salute tuam*), their redeemability grants them still to be *fratres* and to be remain the cusp of the church to which they must reconcile.<sup>307</sup> Cyprian takes aim at the laxist party whose disrespect towards God is '*contra evangelii vigorem, contra domini ac dei legem.*'<sup>308</sup> Tertullian advocated for the sake of carefulness and as a test of sincerity the delay of reconciliation, saying 'Hasty reception is the portion of irreverence; it inflates the seeker, it despises the Giver.'<sup>309</sup> This mirrors Cyprian's comment that 'Not to have observed His judgment is to have provoked His wrath,' referencing the hasty reception of reconciliation.<sup>310</sup>

---

<sup>304</sup> Tertullian, 'Exhortation', 1.

<sup>305</sup> Cyprian, 'Lapsed', 4.

<sup>306</sup> Also, '*Domini mandata contemnimus*', Cyprian, 'Lapsed', 7.

<sup>307</sup> Cyprian, 'Lapsed', 8.

<sup>308</sup> Cyprian, 'Lapsed', 15.

<sup>309</sup> Tertullian, 'Repentance', 6.

<sup>310</sup> Cyprian, 'Lapsed', 18.

## (ii) Against the Rigorists

The rigorists with their schism met a charge against the presumptuousness of their doctrine. Cyprian originally refrained from condemning the rigorist position at the start of Decian's persecution as the correct approach had to be discerned with fellow bishops by the guidance of the Spirit.<sup>311</sup> Eventually, cemented with Novatian's breaking away, another upcoming persecution granted a mass reconciliatory decision, 'that we may not leave those whom we stir up and exhort to the battle unarmed and naked.'<sup>312</sup>

Cyprian uttered what would be scandalous to his master, boldly claiming 'I almost sin myself, in remitting sins more than I ought.'<sup>313</sup> Cyprian rather wishes to be found before Christ having brought reconciliation to as many as possible, even if recklessly on occasion, saying 'I remit everything. I shut my eyes to many things, with the desire and the wish to gather together the brotherhood.'<sup>314</sup> Here we find Cyprian having a shared anxiety but with a different solution to Tertullian; namely that one is to avoid recklessly presume God's will for which one is to be held accountable. In the instance that the peace granted rashly to penitents through episcopal oversight, it was considered irreversible through the very fact it was done by a 'priest of God'.<sup>315</sup> This invocation of the Keys to bind in heaven as on earth was not invincible in the eyes of God, however. The bishops discern as best as they can but they can still be deceived, saying 'We, so far as it is allowed to us to see and to judge, look upon the face of each one; we are not able to scrutinize the heart and to inspect the mind.'<sup>316</sup> That a lapsed person can deceive their bishop into a false reconciliation is not ignored by God, as He has the Divine right to remove it on the Last Day, saying '[God] will quickly come and judge of the secrets and hidden things of the heart.'<sup>317</sup>

Such discernment of heart was naturally required of Tertullian's catholic days, as the physical accompaniments of ἐξομολόγησις were a tool to aid the discernment of sincerity. The building upon of Catholic Tertullian's theology puts Cyprian in the sights of his

---

<sup>311</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 51(55ox), 21.

<sup>312</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 53(57ox)', 2.

<sup>313</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 54(59ox)', 16.

<sup>314</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 54(59ox)', 16.

<sup>315</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 58(64ox)', 1.

<sup>316</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 53(57ox)', 3.

<sup>317</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 53(57ox)', 3.

Montanist self when he critiques the ability for humans to discern hearts. Even with the Paraclete at his disposal, Tertullian and his New Prophets did not dare to presume God's forgiveness when reconciliation was always to be classed as a maybe in grave cases. Cyprian even states 'The Lord alone can have mercy. He alone can bestow pardon for sins which have been committed against Himself,' which, while similar in sentiment to Montanist Tertullian, is different in that Cyprian believes knowledge of one's reconciliation with God is possible in this life.<sup>318</sup>

The Confessors who were exercising their right of reconciliation as Presbyters were no exception, and to them he challenged them to discern hearts as Christ had done.<sup>319</sup> Christ revealed the thoughts of those He came across (cf. Matthew 9:4) as a prophetic evidence, and so Tertullian say 'it is not lawful for me to believe the same power to reside in any one, whoever he be, without the same proofs.'<sup>320</sup> Both Tertullian and Cyprian had issues with Confessor absolution, but for two different reasons. Cyprian, following Catholic Tertullian, acknowledges the possible remission of all sins and that one can have knowledge of such peace. Montanist Tertullian, with Novatian after him, shall deny such knowledge as a preservation of the dignity of the sole Judge.

### **(iii) Eucharistic Reconciliation**

It is likely at the early period of Cyprian's ministry in which *de lapsis* was written the completion and culmination of one's repentance lay in the reception of the eucharist. Rahner reads backwards into Tertullian's concept of episcopal reconciliation the imposition of hands, as it seemed plausible enough because of Cyprian's emphasis on it.<sup>321</sup> Rather, we shall demonstrate that Cyprian, although taking from Tertullian's concept of episcopal absolution, did not inherit the imposition of hands from his master. Instead, born out of Cyprian's desire for the episcopacy's supremacy, he championed an innovation in the reconciliatory ritual.

---

<sup>318</sup> Tertullian, 'Lapsed', 17.

<sup>319</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 22.

<sup>320</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 22.

<sup>321</sup> Rahner, *Penance*, 134.

This is because we find no evidence of what Cyprian will emphasise later (as a reaction against Presbyter-Confessors) in the episcopal imposition of hands.<sup>322</sup> Reconciliatory laying of hands was something alien to Tertullian who, though he admitted an episcopal means of forgiveness, does not mention that specific rite.<sup>323</sup> The culmination of Catholic Tertullian's penitential process is found in recommunication, with his Montanist self excluding grave sinners from the sacrament as a way of protecting Christ's holiness but also to demonstrate the perpetual pending status of their reconciliation.<sup>324</sup> Receiving the eucharist as the reestablishment and culmination of reconciliation appears to be the dominant form in other areas of the empire as well. Brent notes that the communion status of various churches was shared by the exchange of fragments of the eucharistic host, as we see in Eusebius with Victor's excommunication of the Quartodecimans.<sup>325</sup>

The lack of mention turns this from an argument from silence into evidence of absence as we would expect something said about it when Cyprian mentions the clerical role in forgiveness.<sup>326</sup> Cyprian's addition was the laying on of hands from a bishop which typifies his episcopal obsession.<sup>327</sup> It appears that such a reconciliatory practice was championed as a consequence of the context of the mid-third century, which would be the crisis of the lapsed. The source of Divine confirmation being the keys of the church so granted to the bishops, required that they become so involved as to be essential in the reconciliatory process.<sup>328</sup>

#### **(iv) Episcopal verses Confessor reconciliation**

Before exploring the role of the Confessor in reconciliation in Cyprian's thought, it is worth briefly touching on that tradition of the martyrs which he attempted to revise. Troubles with the Confessors granting reconciliation by right of their charism was a problem that was being disputed decades before Cyprian's input, as seen with Montanist Tertullian's

---

<sup>322</sup> Brent, *Cyprian*, 255-256.

<sup>323</sup> Brent, *Cyprian*, 256.

<sup>324</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 119.

<sup>325</sup> Brent, *Cyprian*, 267, Eusebius, 'History', 5.24.15.

<sup>326</sup> Brent, *Cyprian*, 255 n13.

<sup>327</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 11(17ox)', 2; Brent, *Cyprian*, 255.

<sup>328</sup> Brent, *Cyprian*, 267.

objections in *de pudicitia*.<sup>329</sup> The peace they gave is described by Tertullian as an actual granting of reconciliation, not a “recommendation” which Cyprian will selectively wish to hear. He rebuts, ‘If Christ is in the martyr for this reason, that the martyr may absolve (*absolvat*) adulterers and fornicators, let Him tell publicly the secrets of the heart.’<sup>330</sup>

We see with Cyprian a different contestation to the Confessors’ previous right of granting reconciliation, desiring for the episcopate to monopolise their charism. Brent documents a contention between what Cyprian reports and surrounding evidence of the confessors’ certificates of peace which will prove crucial for understanding Cyprian’s developments on the episcopal system as well as with ecclesial reconciliation.<sup>331</sup> The martyrs and confessors were viewed with the highest esteem, but the honours given to them was more than ceremonial. We see within the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus that the confessors were so favoured by God for their allegiance that they were bestowed with the Presbyterial rank,

*If a confessor has been placed in chains for the Name of the Lord, hands are not laid upon him for the office of deacon or elder. He has the honor of the office of an elder through his confession. If he is instituted as a bishop, then hands will be laid upon him.*<sup>332</sup>

Demonstrating the functions of these presbyters, we see in Cyprian’s corpus Celerinus’ letter to the Confessor Lucian where he asks for peace to be given to his sisters who lapsed and sacrificed in persecution.<sup>333</sup> In there Lucian is commended for his bravery, for now God has granted him to become a priest (*antistes Dei*).<sup>334</sup> Celerinus asks that the Confessor which is first martyred, in the power of their office, ‘that whichever of you is first crowned, should remit such a great sin (*tale peccatum remittant*) to those our sisters, Numeria and Candida.’<sup>335</sup> Cyprian is forced to admit that the authority of the Confessors dates has a tradition behind it and that the Confessors indeed have the responsibility of careful judgement.<sup>336</sup>

---

<sup>329</sup> Tertullian, ‘Modesty’, 22.

<sup>330</sup> Tertullian, ‘Modesty’, 22.

<sup>331</sup> Brent, *Cyprian*, 253-265

<sup>332</sup> Hippolytus, *Apostolic*, 9.

<sup>333</sup> Celerinus in Cyprian, ‘Epistle 20(21ox)’.

<sup>334</sup> Cyprian, ‘Epistle 20(21ox)’, 3.

<sup>335</sup> Cyprian, ‘Epistle 20(21ox)’, 3.

<sup>336</sup> Cyprian, ‘Epistle 10(15ox)’, 3.

Cyprian's issue with the Confessors is especially found in his dealing with their *libelli pacis*, letters confirming that reconciliation has been ratified to certain lapsed by the martyrs. Daly insists that Cyprian's understanding of the Confessors' *libelli pacis* was one steeped in tradition and not an innovation.<sup>337</sup> Yet, with the findings of Brent, Daly is proven wrong through examining both the text of the letters and the martyr tradition. When received, Cyprian's parries of the Confessors' letters of peace by interpreting them as requests rather than demands. Cyprian found various flaws with the letters which allowed him to dismiss them as invalid.<sup>338</sup> These *libelli pacis* were invalid in his eyes if they were 'vague and blind' requests, as he brings the example of a written *libellus* that says 'Let such a one be received to communion along with his friends'.<sup>339</sup> He catastrophises that *any* acquaintance could claim inclusion in the Confessors' proceedings. He was one to be sceptical if a letter showed any signs of dubiousness, which was his reason for denying a *libellus pacis* that did not include the name(s) of its sender.<sup>340</sup>

Yet we have evidence even from Novatian that some lapsed were granted absolution by the Confessors without the need for a bishop. Novatian thinks he has found a contradiction in the lapsed's requests as he says 'they say that they have already obtained it in heaven. If they have obtained it, why do they demand what they already possess?'<sup>341</sup> Yet the ministry of the confessors, which Novatian either chooses to ignore or doesn't know, provides an ample explanation for this apparent contradiction. Certain lapsed Christians sought absolution through the Confessors, both believing that the peace has been ratified in heaven, and wished for the visible church's hierarchy to recognize what has taken place. Daly claims this excerpt was merely *ad hominem* and contradicts the rest of his epistle if the above interpretation is true.<sup>342</sup> But this does not fix the issue. Novatian's misunderstanding of what certain lapsed were asking fits wonderfully the surrounding context of there being a Presbyter-Martyr class, as will be seen below. The flaw comes from taking Novatian at his word when he represents himself as a receptor of a supposed universal tradition, either

---

<sup>337</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 154.

<sup>338</sup> Brent, *Cyprian*, 258-259.

<sup>339</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 10(15ox), 4.

<sup>340</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 26(33ox), 2; cf. Cyprian's reservation over a nameless epistle from Rome, Cyprian, 'Epistle 3', 2.

<sup>341</sup> Novatian, 'Letter 3', 1-2.

<sup>342</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 154 n420.



knowingly or unknowingly. This request by the lapsed is precisely what Cyprian received and selectively read in Epistle 16 (26ox). Lucianus writing on behalf of the Confessors says:

*Know that, to all, concerning whom the account of what they have done since the commission of their sin has been, in your estimation, satisfactory, we have granted peace; and we have desired that this rescript should be made known by you to the other bishops also. We bid you to have peace with the holy martyrs.*<sup>343</sup>

Brent notes that this is an appeal with imperatival force behind it, as there has already been peace granted in Lucianus' language (*dedisse pacem*).<sup>344</sup> Their declaration (*forma*) in conciliar language to show a verdict that has been ratified.<sup>345</sup> Their desire is for Cyprian, and therefore the universal church, to reconcile with them, having an already ratified peace. This is precisely the desire for acknowledgement which Novatian failed to comprehend in his letter to Cyprian. Cyprian's retort is seen in Epistle 22 (27ox). Instead of charging the Confessors who associated with Lucianus with recklessness, he lays the guilt solely with Lucianus. He exemplifies the cautiousness of Confessors like Celerinus who is 'reverent both in his humility and fear for our faith.'<sup>346</sup> Lucianus is contrasted with him and repeatedly berated for being ignorant of the things of God.<sup>347</sup>

After scrutinizing some of the people who were joined to the letter of peace, he found they still had some satisfaction to make up for their crime as he denies 'to many what they now are all boasting that they have received from the martyrs and confessors'.<sup>348</sup> The Confessors' verdicts on incomplete penances led Cyprian to distrust many other letters of peace sent his way. It appears the North African lapsed too heard of this decree by Lucianus, and so after hearing the Confessors' verdict 'began to be more violent, and to extort the peace granted to them.'<sup>349</sup> If some lapsed received liberal reconciliation from the Confessors, why shouldn't everyone? The diversity of discipline added extra difficulty to Cyprian's balancing of strictness and clemency.

---

<sup>343</sup> Lucianus in Cyprian, 'Epistle 16(26ox), 1.

<sup>344</sup> Brent, *Cyprian*, 271.

<sup>345</sup> Brent, *Cyprian*, 271.

<sup>346</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 22(27ox), 3.

<sup>347</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 22(27ox), 1, 3.

<sup>348</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 22(27ox)', 2.

<sup>349</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 22(27ox)', 3.

Tertullian did not explore Confessor forgiveness in his catholic period, however he condemned such practice in *de pudicitia*. He retorts to Calistus, 'But you go so far as to lavish this "power" upon martyrs withal', the power being the ability to remit sins through their intercession.<sup>350</sup> He witnesses that as soon as the Confessor is put into prison they experience waves of lapsed Christians. The giving of peace is explicitly mentioned, as 'they [sinners] seek peace at the hands of those [the martyrs] who are risking their own.'<sup>351</sup> Although some Confessors might be *spiritalem hominem*, Montanist Tertullian denies that even the spirituals can offer forgiveness, as he has spent the rest of the treatise refuting episcopal remission of grave sins. The sinlessness of Christ is the source of his atonement, while the martyrs, still wrestling with sin, do not offer valid reconciliation, 'Similarly, you who emulate Him in condoning sins, if you yourself have done no sin, plainly suffer in my stead.'<sup>352</sup>

#### (v) The Use of Private Revelation

Of worthy note is the role of private revelation as a discerner of *praxis* for Cyprian. He never mentioned the New Prophecy or Montanus and the prophetesses. The only mention – and condemnation – of the Montanists within his corpus is in Firmilianus' letter to Cyprian which goes without response.<sup>353</sup> As mentioned above in the background of North African Christianity, private revelation was not something exclusive to Montanism. The revered Perpetua had visions before her martyrdom which grounded her spiritual authority with Divine approval. The *vita cypriani*, produced by his close deacon Pontius, also contained records of Cyprian's last visions from God.<sup>354</sup> He has a '*visitationem Dei*' with a mysterious figure who grants him knowledge of his immanent martyrdom.<sup>355</sup> Some visions he would convey to the clergy while in exile concerning disunity and who should be prayed for.<sup>356</sup>

---

<sup>350</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 22.

<sup>351</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 22.

<sup>352</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 22.

<sup>353</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 74(75ox)', 7; The Montanus of Phrygia is not to be confused with Cyprian's contemporary of the same name in Epistle 20 (ox21) and 53 (ox52).

<sup>354</sup> For an examination of the close but not dependant relationship between the two accounts and how the *Passio Perpetuae* laid the foundation for North African hagiography, see Aronen, 'Indebtedness', 67-74.

<sup>355</sup> Pontius, 'Life', 12.

<sup>356</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 7(11ox)', 3, 5.

What distinguished Montanism was not its belief in prophetic charismata but rather its relationship to ecclesial hierarchy. As Cyprian advocated a case-by-case basis approach to the reconciliation of the lapsed was implemented, we see its outworking alongside openness for input from the Spirit. As he concludes his letter to the insubordinate Puppianus, thinking on what grounds he could be reconciled, says 'that first I should consult (*consulam*) my Lord whether He would permit peace to be granted to you, and you to be received to the communion of His Church by His own showing and admonition.'<sup>357</sup> It is worth quoting in full what follows:

*For I remember what has already been manifested to me, nay, what has been prescribed by the authority (auctoritate praeceptum) of our Lord and God to an obedient and fearing servant; and among other things which He condescended to show and to reveal, He also added this: "Whoso therefore does not believe Christ, who maketh the priest, shall hereafter begin to believe Him who avengeth the priest."*<sup>358</sup>

Cyprian appeals to a prophecy defending the dignity of his office, directly revealed to him (*quid iam mihi sit ostensum*). We are not told of the process by which Cyprian and the bishops achieve these visions, only that they acquired them to cite as a Divine verification of their current practices. Cyprian's hearing of voices and visions added an extra layer of Spirit-authentication to his ministry and interpretation of the Divine Will, a tool Montanist Tertullian and the New Prophets used. Montanism was mocked for receiving ecstatic prophecies that went above and beyond what its detractors would label as undignified.<sup>359</sup> It is possible from the comment of Catholic Tertullian in *de spectaculis* that private revelations came about in a more collected manner, for 'God has enjoined us to deal calmly, gently, quietly, and peacefully (*tenerum et delicatum, tranquillitate et quiete et pace tractare*) with the Holy Spirit, because these things are alone in keeping with the goodness of His nature.'<sup>360</sup> If so, this gives us a faint glimpse of the contrast between (at most) catholic Carthaginian prophecy and Montanist prophecy.

---

<sup>357</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 68(66ox)', 9.

<sup>358</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 68(66ox)', 10.

<sup>359</sup> Tabbernee, *Fake*, 92-100.

<sup>360</sup> Tertullian, 'Shows', 15.

The miraculous confirmation of valid ministry decisions can of course be seen in Montanist Tertullian too. Tertullian challenges the *psychici* to produce ‘prophetic evidences’ of their own to prove they have the power to overextend beyond mere discipline of the flock.<sup>361</sup> Tertullian then appeals to his New Prophets, who with them ‘have the Paraclete Himself’ with prophecies confirming his severity.<sup>362</sup> Tertullian takes record of the prophecies that go on in the Sunday gathering by one prophetess who is given opportunities to share what she has spiritually seen, even as ‘*de anima disserueramus*’.<sup>363</sup> While there may be some differences concerning hierarchies and manners of prophecy, it is clear that private revelation was a method of discernment for Tertullian who helped forward a charismatic environment to Cyprian, even as a catholic.

## 5. Conclusion

As we have seen, Cyprian has much more of his thought rooted in Catholic Tertullian than in his Montanist self. The Bishop of Carthage waged war against various other opinions using Catholic Tertullian, not slavishly, towards his ends. Cyprian’s development of Tertullian’s earlier beliefs led to his prescriptions of satisfaction for penitents. He continued the ἐξομολόγησις practice described by Tertullian using similar imagery while requiring a different means of absolution, the bishop. This being said, Cyprian was not completely averse to Late Tertullian’s influence, as we find in the Montanism his Master championed a system which fit comfortably into North African spirituality. As for ecclesiology, we see Cyprian borrowing again from his Master down to precise metaphors. Cyprian was ecclesologically focused, though it was through Catholic Tertullian’s theology that he found the language and Scriptures to build his case and defend his beloved office. We shall see as we turn to Novatian his battles with the schism named after him and the great influencer behind Novatian’s dealings that provided fuel for the fire.

---

<sup>361</sup> Tertullian, ‘Modesty’, 21.

<sup>362</sup> Tertullian, ‘Modesty’, 21.

<sup>363</sup> Tertullian, ‘Soul’, 9.

## Part 3: Novatian and Tertullian

### 1. Introduction

As seen in Cyprian's section, the Decian persecution was the spark that let off the powder keg for the western church. We have seen how, generally speaking, two traditions were present before the crisis which had their share of controversy, though mostly done inter-communally. The presence of a mass number of lapsed Christians required definitive answers and attempts at a unified response. Cyprian and North Africa's verdict was for ἐξομολόγησις to be prescribed on a case by case basis, distinguishing the severity between being *sacrificati*, *thurificati* and *libellatici*.<sup>364</sup> While Cyprian and his synods held to reconciliation being possible within one's lifetime, there were groups that held different stances. The presence of rigorism, denying reconciliation to certain grave sins, was an issue Cyprian acknowledges fellow North African clergy (*coepiscoporum*) held to, akin to Tertullian.<sup>365</sup>

Inheritors of Tertullian's severity were not limited to North Africa as is seen in the case of Cyprian's rival, Novatian. Breaking away from the Catholic Church in 251, Novatian's schism added another front to Cyprian's campaign. Compared to the relative wealth of works that we have to construct an image of Cyprian and Tertullian's thoughts, the student of Novatian meets a challenge. Several works, some of which survived abrogation in the manuscript tradition by being falsely attributed to Cyprian, are available for us to explore. These works are mostly moral *de bono pudicitiae*, *de spectaculis*, *de cibis iudaicis*, although his longest and most studied work is his *de trinitate*. They also include three letters sent to Cyprian as a representative of the Roman Church before he lapsed into schism.<sup>366</sup>

DeSimone notes the incredible irony of the controversy's earliest years in which Novatian, struggling for sympathy with his zeal for rigorous discipline for the lapsed found friendship with Cyprian who was driven to Rome's correspondence amidst his battle with Carthage's laxist party.<sup>367</sup> Novatian admired Cyprian's reserve, wishing to wait and test the lapsed's

---

<sup>364</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 163-164.

<sup>365</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 51(55ox)', 21.

<sup>366</sup> In Cyprian's epistles, 30(30ox), 25(31ox), 29(36ox).

<sup>367</sup> DeSimone, *Novatian*, 181.

heart through penitential delay.<sup>368</sup> While his epistles do not give us a full picture of his hamartiology or ecclesiology, we have enough data to construct Novatian's early attitude towards the lapsed which would grow ever more strict in succeeding years. Greatly helpful for this thesis is that his surviving epistles are a wealth of diatribes condemning the presumptuousness of the lapsed and laxists. It will be demonstrated that there is much emphasis placed on reservation and moderation all for the sake of not committing the injustice of overestimating the Divine Clemency, which was precisely Tertullian's fear.

Due to the lightness of his corpus, going into the early historical record is essential for constructing a coherent image of Novatian's thought. These secondary reports we shall delve into before our examination of the primary literature. As we have given a light summary of the events concerning the schism in Cyprian's section, we shall delve into a deeper investigation into his history. We shall prove from the primaries and through reliable secondary accounts that Novatian was greatly acquainted with Tertullian's thought. This acquaintance was not merely with Tertullian's Montanist literature, proven especially as we delve into *de spectaculis*. How we shall identify a parallel of Novatian's and Tertullian's thought will be through the argumentation used of Novatian and his followers. These links will be proven as extremely close in argumentation and foundation to demonstrate the accuracy of Daly when he considers Novatianism as 'one of the phases of African puritanism'.<sup>369</sup>

We shall first construct a reliable picture of Novatian through the accounts of his actions and behaviours, sifting through slander on behalf of agenda. We shall prove a literary dependency upon Tertullian to show that he had a reading knowledge of Tertullian's works, ultimately identifying with the rigorism of Tertullian's later life. As Novatian's works are of more general intent, the specifics of his post-schism life will be mainly driven from reportage.

---

<sup>368</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 1. cf. 'Epistle 2', 6; 'Epistle 3', 1.

<sup>369</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 194.

## 2. Secondary Accounts

### 2a. Cyprian

Firstly we turn to Cyprian, his contemporary with the most literature written on the controversy. Novatian's letter-spreading campaign was causing enough of an issue that Cornelius, Cyprian and Dionysius of Alexandria gave out apologetic epistles to clergy who were considering joining his cause. For the charges against Cyprian, they appear to be accusing him of changing his mind from a previous rigorism.<sup>370</sup> This is likely as Cyprian's correspondence with Novatian in their epistles up until that point was cordial and agreeing, wishing to cut down the cause of the laxists and temper the clemency of the Confessors. Novatian's letters included character attacks upon Cornelius, as Cyprian witnesses, accusing him of being in communion with lapsed bishops and obtaining a *libellus* during the persecution.<sup>371</sup>

The suspect nature of Novatian's ordination was made clear to Cyprian when envoys from Novatian were sent to Carthage to confirm his ordination, which in response garnered Cyprian's telling to Cornelius.<sup>372</sup> Several confessors joined with Novatian's cause upon their feelings of betrayal, as recorded by Novatian in his second epistle.<sup>373</sup> While in schism for a time, they reunited. Cyprian notes Novatian's U-turn in policy when he before stated that the lapsed on their deathbeds could receive communion.<sup>374</sup> We shall see below that Cyprian provides us with an incredibly valuable engagement with Novatian's beliefs.

---

<sup>370</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 51(55ox)', 3, esp. 5.

<sup>371</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 51(55ox)', 10.

<sup>372</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 40(44ox)', 1.

<sup>373</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 2', 6.

<sup>374</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 51(55ox)', 5. Cf. Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 8.

## 2b. Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History

Eusebius preserves for us details of the Schism with allegations against Novatian, supported by an attached letter from Cornelius to Fabius, and a letter by Dionysius of Alexandria. We shall first turn to what Eusebius documents in his own voice.

### (i) Eusebius

Eusebius introduces his section on 'Νουάτος' as a Presbyter of Rome, mistaking him for the North African Presbyter Novatus, the thorn in Cyprian's side.<sup>375</sup> He is described as an arrogant heretic who founded a schismatic sect self-proclaiming as the 'καθαροὺς'.<sup>376</sup> He mentions that Novatian was against reconciliation of sincere penitents, 'as if there was no longer for them a hope of salvation, not even if they should do all things pertaining to a genuine and pure conversion (γνησίαν και καθαράν ἐξομολόγησιν).'<sup>377</sup> The council of May 251 in Rome followed the Carthaginian verdict a month before in allowing the lapsed to receive the 'μετανοίας φαρμάκοις'.<sup>378</sup> Eusebius witnesses that by the time of these councils, Novatian broke away from the church, and provides further details when citing Cornelius' letter to Fabius.<sup>379</sup>

### (ii) Cornelius

With Cornelius' letter it is essential to note the agenda behind it. Novatian competed with Cornelius for the Roman episcopacy as the persecution subsided with Decius' death.<sup>380</sup> Cornelius, as his friendship with Cyprian witnesses, was more moderate than Novatian on the lapsed's reconciliation. In response to Novatian's slander campaign, he gladly reciprocates. Novatian is described as greedily ambitious for the episcopate but keeping it a secret until an opportune time.<sup>381</sup> Indeed, he 'bound himself with terrible oaths in nowise to

---

<sup>375</sup> Eusebius, 'Church', 6.43.1; Papandrea, *Novatian*, 13.

<sup>376</sup> Eusebius, 'Church', 6.43.1, All Greek Text taken from Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol 20.

<sup>377</sup> Eusebius, 'Church', 6.43.1.

<sup>378</sup> Eusebius, 'Church', 6.43.2; Papandrea, *Culmination*, 66.

<sup>379</sup> Eusebius, 'Church', 6.43.4-22.

<sup>380</sup> Papandrea, *Culmination*, 65.

<sup>381</sup> Eusebius, 'Church', 6.43.5.



seek the bishopric,[and then] suddenly appears as a bishop.'<sup>382</sup> To secure a dubious ordination, he deceived '*rudes ac simplices*' bishops of the Italian countryside and got them drunk enough to ordain him as a rival bishop of Rome.<sup>383</sup> He is alleged to have only received clinical baptism without an episcopal ratification and therefore did not receive the Holy Spirit.<sup>384</sup> Due to Cornelius' agenda with his propaganda campaign against Novatian, most of these details should be considered dubious.<sup>385</sup> Novatian's unpopularity among the Roman church, witnessed by Cornelius, is not witnessed by history, as it would be highly unlikely that someone of such unpopularity could be the spokesperson for Rome.<sup>386</sup> In fact, as Daly suggests, Fabian who ordained him to the presbyterate was likely most impressed with Novatian enough so as to ignore the dubiousness of his clinical baptism, granting episcopal approval on the man.<sup>387</sup>

A reverse compliment gives us a clue as to how Novatian was identified in the community. Novatian's *de trinitate* project did not go unnoticed, as Cornelius mockingly refers to him as 'This dogmatist, this defender of the doctrine of the church...'<sup>388</sup> He accuses Novatian of desiring to give up the presbyterate entirely in order to become a philosopher, no doubt in reference to his association with Stoicism.<sup>389</sup> With Cornelius' account, Papandrea identifies that the only valid complaint that might have some truth behind it was Cornelius' accusation that Novatian made communicants swear an oath to never return to Cornelius before he would let them taste the elements.<sup>390</sup> Due to the personal nature of these attacks coming from a direct rival, Cornelius is not considered a majorly reliable source for details of Novatian's life or thought.

---

<sup>382</sup> Eusebius, 'Church', 6.43.7.

<sup>383</sup> Eusebius, 'Church', 6.43.8-9.

<sup>384</sup> Eusebius, 'Church', 6.43.14-15.

<sup>385</sup> Papandrea, *Trinitarian*, 29-30.

<sup>386</sup> Eusebius, 'Church', 6.43.17, Papandrea, *Novatian*, 16.

<sup>387</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 190.

<sup>388</sup> Eusebius, 'Church', 6.43.8; Quastern, *Patrology*, 216-217.

<sup>389</sup> Eusebius, 'Church', 6.43.16.

<sup>390</sup> Eusebius, 'Church', 6.43.18, Papandrea, *Novatian*, 16.

### (iii) Dionysius of Alexandria

Also preserved is Dionysius of Alexandria with a more reliable and gentle communication with Novatian as he greets him 'Διονύσιος Νοουάτω τῷ ἀδελφῷ χαίρειν.'<sup>391</sup> He reports that Novatian's side of the story was that he was forced into a position of schism. To this, Dionysius challenges him that if he has truly been forced unwillingly out of the church, he should surrender willingly, 'For it were better to suffer everything, rather than divide the church of God.'<sup>392</sup> While Novatian believed that his breaking was a good thing because his fellow clergy could not agree, Dionysius pleads for him to save his soul by returning to the church.

### 2c. Socrates Scholasticus

Socrates Scholasticus is one of the most sympathetic to the Novatian cause that we have on record. He records that Novatian broke away from the church because Cornelius reconciled *sacrificati*.<sup>393</sup> Of the content of Novatian's letters which he sent out in his schismatic campaign, Socrates preserves that the churches must not let the lapsed commune, 'but exhorting them to repentance, leave the pardoning of their offense to God, who has the power to forgive all sin.'<sup>394</sup> Once again we hear that foundational principle that God alone can remit grave sins which was the precise reason Tertullian took the penitential decisions Novatian did.<sup>395</sup> By Socrates' time, the Novatianists found allies in Phrygia with the surviving Montanist movement.<sup>396</sup> This is a poetic alliance which signals the affinity of Novatian towards Tertullian's rigorism. Their differences appeared to be secondary compared to zeal towards the rigorist cause.<sup>397</sup> The cultural disposition of the Phrygians was seen as a fitting ground for Novatianism's spread, as 'fornication and adultery are regarded

---

<sup>391</sup> Eusebius, 'Church', 6.45.2.

<sup>392</sup> Eusebius, 'Church', 6.45.2.

<sup>393</sup> Socrates, 'Church', 4.28.

<sup>394</sup> Socrates, 'Church', 4.28.

<sup>395</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 2.

<sup>396</sup> Socrates, 'Church', 4.28.

<sup>397</sup> Papandrea, *Culmination*, 55 n28; Daly, *Tertullian*, 200.

among them as the grossest enormities.'<sup>398</sup>

### 3. Tertullianic Dependency

From here we shall demonstrate that Novatian has a literary dependency upon Tertullian. In his days in communion we see a wrestling between his desires for rigorism and for unity, with the former winning. Rather than go through every treatise, we shall mainly engage with the *de spectaculis* by both authors to show a multiplicity of similarities that demonstrate Novatian's reliance upon Tertullian for his moral treatises. Once the reliance is established, we shall move onwards to Novatian's penitential theology

#### 3a. Case Study: *De spectaculis*

Novatian's *de spectaculis* bears striking resemblance to Tertullian's of the same name. There are enough similarities present for us to consider that the commonalities are more than incidental but actually show dependency on Tertullian's work.

In their treatises, Novatian and Tertullian appear to have a very similar audience using similar excuses to go to the games. Both of their opponents used Scripture in two ways: seeking license and showing silence. Both of their audiences used Elijah's chariot as proofs that they could attend the chariots (2 Kings 2:1-18).<sup>399</sup> Novatian's audience further added that as David danced with instruments before the Ark, so they were allowed to enjoy the amusements and music of the theatre (2 Samuel 6:5, 14).<sup>400</sup> Novatian condemns this use of Scripture and reveals his rule of hermeneutics. Novatian's use of Scripture is a type of regulative principle, in that the Christian life forbids what Scripture fails to mention.<sup>401</sup> While Scripture does not directly speak to game or theatre attendance, Novatian says that this is because Scripture assumes better of a Christian than to steep so low, as he says 'Certain things, you can be sure, are forbidden even more when Scripture does not lay down

---

<sup>398</sup> Socrates, 'Church', 4.28.

<sup>399</sup> Novatian, 'Spectacles', 2. Tertullian, 'Spectacles', 23.

<sup>400</sup> Novatian, 'Spectacles', 2.

<sup>401</sup> Papandrea, *Novatian*, 33.

definite precepts.’<sup>402</sup> Where Scripture is silent, ‘gravity (*severitas*) speaks in place of injunctions’ and ‘right reason admonishes where Scripture is silent.’<sup>403</sup> This reveals a key insight into Novatian’s method of interpretation and plays into what we discussed with Tertullian’s presupposition. Tertullian would rather err on the side of severity rather than presume too much on God’s clemency and uses that as a metric for prophetic discernment.<sup>404</sup> This matches up with what Novatian says in *de spectaculis* and demonstrates a kinship in their discernment methods. Even further, Tertullian’s audience too will say of Scripture that ‘the matter is a doubtful one (*incertum constituit*), because such abstinence is not clearly and in words imposed upon God’s servants.’<sup>405</sup>

To be baptized is to make a public declaration of the world’s renunciation, including the giving up of the spectacles. For the baptized who think they can lawfully attend, ‘though he renounced the devil once and for all, he brings to naught everything that was wrought in baptism.’<sup>406</sup> Tertullian also grabs the spectator by their baptism, as in it ‘we bear public testimony that we have renounced the devil, his pomp, and his angels.’<sup>407</sup> Immediately after Novatian’s baptismal appeal he attacks the idolatry of the games, which is the exact progression done by Tertullian after his baptismal comments.<sup>408</sup> Novatian roots the idolatrous nature of the spectacles in a pagan dedication, as ‘Romulus was the first to consecrate circus games to Consus—the god of counsel, as it were—in reference to the carrying off of the Sabine women.’<sup>409</sup> Tertullian details this in more length but also mentions the importance of Romulus’ consecration to Consus with the *rapinam* of the virgins of Sabine.<sup>410</sup> Novatian mentions the games’ consecration to Bacchus and Ceres, ‘and, later, to the rest of the idols and to the dead.’<sup>411</sup> Tertullian expounds these details much further, finalizing the section with ‘If it is lawful to offer homage to the dead, it will be just as lawful

---

<sup>402</sup> Novatian, ‘Spectacles’, 3.

<sup>403</sup> ‘*Ratio docet quae Scriptura conticuit*’, Novatian, ‘Spectacles’, 3.

<sup>404</sup> Tertullian, ‘Modesty’, 21.

<sup>405</sup> Tertullian, ‘Spectacles’, 3.

<sup>406</sup> Novatian, ‘Spectacles’, 4.

<sup>407</sup> Tertullian, ‘Spectacles’, 4.

<sup>408</sup> Novatian, ‘Spectacles’, 4, Tertullian, ‘Spectacles’, 4-5.

<sup>409</sup> Novatian, ‘Spectacles’, 4.

<sup>410</sup> Tertullian, ‘Spectacles’, 5.

<sup>411</sup> Novatian, ‘Spectacles’, 4.

to offer it to their gods.<sup>412</sup> Though Novatian is more concise, both of them root the games in idolatry and an embracing of the devil's celebrations in close fashion.

Novatian parallels Tertullian in his condemnation of even observing the games, as he says 'What has Scripture condemned? It has forbidden us to be spectators of whatever it has forbidden us to do.'<sup>413</sup> This mirrors perfectly Tertullian's phrase 'Why... is it right to look on what it is disgraceful to do?'.<sup>414</sup> The mere observing of the games is considered participation in Novatian's eyes, with Papandrea rightly describing this as some kind of "ocular adultery".<sup>415</sup> Tertullian, finalizing his treatise, exhorts his audience to engage with the spectacles provided by God. If one wants excitement, they should rather minister with the charismata, replacing the wrestling of gladiators with that of fighting the flesh, finishing with 'Would you have something of blood too? You have Christ's'.<sup>416</sup> Novatian finishes his treatise exhorting Christians to look at the world - God's spectacle.<sup>417</sup> Rather than the games, Christians should read Scripture, celebrating creation's goodness, exhorting them with 'Human works lose their wonder for the man who knows that he is a son of God.'<sup>418</sup>

### 3b. Novatian's Stoicism

As in Tertullian's section, we see a stoic flavour upon his ethical presuppositions especially concerning the games. Novatian builds his argument against the spectacles upon the same Stoic foundation. Papandrea has noted that Novatian's affinity for certain clouds of Stoic thought does not necessitate that he had to have the occupation as a Stoic philosopher as the foundations of a good Roman education would naturally lead to one picking up its ideals by osmosis.<sup>419</sup> This being said, we can identify several strands in his thought which shows an

---

<sup>412</sup> Tertullian, 'Spectacles', 6.

<sup>413</sup> Novatian, 'Spectacles', 4.

<sup>414</sup> Tertullian, 'Spectacles', 17.

<sup>415</sup> Papandrea, *Novatian*, 33.

<sup>416</sup> Tertullian, 'Spectacles', 29.

<sup>417</sup> Novatian, 'Spectacles', 9.

<sup>418</sup> Novatian, 'Spectacles', 9.

<sup>419</sup> Papandrea, *Trinitarian*, 6.

affinity for the Stoicism which Tertullian also absorbed, though with much more resistance.<sup>420</sup>

Perhaps Novatian's most blatant quote evidencing his Stoic influence is found in *de bono pudicitia*. He states,

*The greatest pleasure is mastery of pleasure itself. No victory is greater than victory over one's inordinate desires. A man is stronger than the man he overcomes; however, he does not overcome himself, but another. He who represses lust overcomes himself. He who defeats an adversary overcomes an alien agent, but the man who banishes inordinate desires overcomes an enemy of his own household.*<sup>421</sup>

Tertullian produced a quote atomically close to Novatian, as he says 'What greater pleasure than distaste of pleasure itself.'<sup>422</sup> The self-mastery language is unmistakable as coming from a Stoic source. It is akin to Seneca with 'Whom will you more admire than the man who governs himself, who has himself under control?'<sup>423</sup> As Novatian compares the mastery of self to the conquest of another, so Seneca says that it is easier to conquer nations than to 'restrain one's own spirit (*animum suum*) and submit to self control (*et tradere sibi*).'<sup>424</sup> With Novatian, 'He who overcomes inordinate desires regains freedom of mind,'<sup>425</sup> as Seneca, 'freedom from all mental disturbance (*perturbatione*).'<sup>426</sup>

In taking from the Stoic traditions, Novatian parrots Tertullian's objection to the games. The distortion of the body's dignity in the playing of wind instruments and the flamboyance of the actors is not befitting to Novatian's Christian.<sup>427</sup> Such misuse of the body displays ingratitude to one's Maker. His Stoic self breaks through entirely at these absurdities when

---

<sup>420</sup> Daniélou documents well the Stoicism found in Novatian's *de trinitate*. While we are not concerned with Novatian's Trinitarian theology, the semblances toward Cicero and Apuleius especially, Daniélou, *Origins*, 234-240.

<sup>421</sup> Novatian, 'Praise', 11.

<sup>422</sup> Tertullian, 'Spectacles', 29.

<sup>423</sup> Seneca, 'Benefits', 5.

<sup>424</sup> Seneca, 'Benefits', 5.

<sup>425</sup> Novatian, 'Praise', 11.

<sup>426</sup> Seneca, 'Benefits', 7.

<sup>427</sup> Novatian, 'Spectacles', 7.

he says, 'Even if they were not sinful, their distinguishing characteristic is unspeakable vanity, unbecoming the faithful.'<sup>428</sup>

While Novatian may not have been a card carrying Stoic, he absorbs from the same context as Tertullian the philosophical milieu. Tertullian loathed and tried to stay away from it, though failing. With Novatian we find a non-resistant embracing. The Stoic flavours of Tertullian, therefore, allowed Novatian to identify better with his moral theology, which would eventually sprout into a mirroring of his penitential discipline.

## Conclusion

As demonstrated by the proximity of themes, vocabulary, style and structure of both of these treatises, it is sufficient to conclude that Novatian had a reading knowledge of Tertullian's *de spectaculis*. Establishing this relationship, we now move on to Novatian's position on the lapsed and the church's responsibility. One that bears much resemblance to Montanist Tertullian's rigorism.

## 4. Novatian's Penitential Theology

### 4a. Penance

Novatian's first letter to Cyprian is done in the name of the presbyters and deacons of Rome and starts immediately with an exordium on the exclusivity of God's right to judge.<sup>429</sup> The one faithful to the *evangelicae disciplinae* desires to live with God as judge alone. He mentions how in times of hardship it is 'to maintain the due strictness (*severitatem*) of divine discipline,' rather than become lax.<sup>430</sup> Novatian is proud of his Roman heritage in its strictness, claiming that Paul's attestation of the Roman church being famed for their faith was and is still sourced in the firm moral standards of the community.<sup>431</sup> His pride in the Roman tradition causes him to advocate for its preservation, protecting it from 'so profane a facility, and to

---

<sup>428</sup> Novatian, 'Spectacles', 7.

<sup>429</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 1.

<sup>430</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 2.

<sup>431</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 2.

loosen the nerves of her severity'<sup>432</sup> Novatian sees the rash readmission of the lapsed as a compromise upon the Roman church's very prestige as a protector of God's dignity.

With Novatian at this time in his life admitting that the lapsed have hope in this life at being readmitted, he prescribes lengthy and heartfelt penitence, saying that to deprive the lapsed of delay only covers the wound rather than treating it.<sup>433</sup> This is Novatian's main emphasis throughout his epistles and his main point of praise for Cyprian. The lapsed are to patiently wait for peace to be given, having shame for their crime against the Divine Discipline.<sup>434</sup>

Akin to the Tertullian of *de paenitentia*, the lapsed are to be prayed for by the faithful with a cautious hope that they will receive reconciliation.<sup>435</sup>

Novatian describes the heart posture kindled by their penance, saying:

*Let them send tears as ambassadors of their sufferings. May the sobs which rise from the depths of their heart serve as advocates for them, giving proof of the sorrow and shame they feel for the crime committed.*<sup>436</sup>

Daly notes several borrowings of imagery from Tertullian in this first epistle.<sup>437</sup> In Novatian's exhortation for the lapsed to 'send tears as ambassadors (*legatos*) of their sufferings,' it bears resemblance to Tertullian's injunction for the church to be *legationes* on behalf of them.<sup>438</sup> As Novatian likens the church to a ship of salvation, so does Tertullian in saying sinners no longer find safety in the ship of the church.<sup>439</sup> The *totum sacramentum fidei* for Novatian is the confession of Christ's name and summation of the Gospel, also used by Tertullian.<sup>440</sup>

Novatian's corpus doesn't provide us with the satisfaction language so seen in Tertullian and Cyprian's works. Of the crumbs he has left us concerning this, there are a few hints provided which allows us not to speculate in a vacuum. The humbling of the penitent

---

<sup>432</sup> 'Profana facilitate dimittere, et nervos severitatis eversa fidei majestate dissolvere', Migne, *Patrologia*, Vol 3, 966; Rendering from ANF Cyprian Epistle 30, 3.

<sup>433</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 3.

<sup>434</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 7.

<sup>435</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 6.

<sup>436</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 6.

<sup>437</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 194.

<sup>438</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 6.

<sup>439</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 2; Tertullian, 'Modesty', 13.

<sup>440</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 3; Tertullian, 'Modesty', 18.



displays the ecclesial aspect of ἐξομολόγησις for Novatian. The demonstration of outward performances are evidences of a true internal change. If they knew the gravity of their crime, surely they would mourn. If they understood the gravity of the danger they are in, of course they would cautiously approach the throne of grace seeing if there was mercy for them.<sup>441</sup>

The language Novatian employs to the penitential process portray a cleansing aspect as well as a demonstrative aspect. The two facets of genuine ἐξομολόγησις are contrition and public reconciliation. Their conduct must be humble and they must submit themselves to the judgements of others, most probably with the clergy in mind.<sup>442</sup> They must be submissive enough to be judged and also to accept the ruling if their superior deems their peace needs to be delayed. In these two aspects, *'hoc est quod paenitentiam probat'*.<sup>443</sup>

The process is medicinal for the heart. The ἐξομολόγησις process provides a pathway to the mindset it wishes to prove just as medicine drives towards health. The act of healing is found in the reversal and recompense of satisfaction, as 'Hands which have been soiled by impious sacrifice must be cleansed by good works, wretched lips polluted by food offered to idols must be purified with words of genuine penitence.'<sup>444</sup> In Epistle 2, Novatian offers the lapsed hope in that God is willing to hear the genuine penitent, 'with tears that are acceptable to God, let those eyes delete the wrong they have perpetrated.'<sup>445</sup> Yet, showing the reservation which will soon become his emphasis in the upcoming schism, healing is only found among the patient and those who delay their grasp for peace. Tertullian too uses medicinal language as an exhortation to bear the heavy load of ἐξομολόγησις, 'the things which heal by unpleasant means do, by the benefit of the cure, excuse their own offensiveness.'<sup>446</sup>

---

<sup>441</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 7.

<sup>442</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 2', 6.

<sup>443</sup> Novatian in Cyprian's, Epistle 25, Migne, *Patrologia*, 4, 296.

<sup>444</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 2', 7.

<sup>445</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 2', 7.

<sup>446</sup> Tertullian, 'Repentance', 10.

#### 4b. Reconciliation

The lapsed should feel such a weight upon their heart that they should feel ashamed to ask for a second repentance. The reluctance to even consider such a thing harks back to Tertullian's *de paenitentia* where he cautiously, almost begrudgingly, lays the cautious path for the post-baptismal sinner, praying 'may they thereafter know nothing of repentance, and require nothing of it'.<sup>447</sup> In the same way, Novatian 'almost apologises for the concession.'<sup>448</sup>

We can see his wrestle between mercy and discipline in the last sentence of his first epistle, 'We, however, take great care that we not be prone to a too ready pardon for wicked men to praise, but that... the truly penitent may not accuse us of what they think to be an inflexible cruelty'.<sup>449</sup> This balance which still shows flexibility for his life in communion will later become stiff as Novatian is pushed further into a rigorist corner. The culmination of reception back to the church was for Novatian, as for Tertullian, the receiving of the eucharist with no mention of Cyprian's innovation of the imposition of hands.<sup>450</sup>

We encounter the frustrations of the confessors through Novatian's pen at the obstinate requests of the lapsed. They acknowledge the laxist movement in Carthage which Cyprian wrestled with from afar, condemning them for their reckless disciplinary practices. From the presbyters the lapsed have 'too hastily and overeagerly' sought reconciliation, usurping their bishop's commands for restraint.<sup>451</sup> Why should the confessors suffer if salvation can easily be given to those who deny the faith?<sup>452</sup>

The confessors were the bastions of the evangelical discipline which the laxists sought to undermine by their obstinacy.<sup>453</sup> Another aspect under Novatian's protection is the fear of God among the community which is compromised if disciplinary severity is not upheld,

---

<sup>447</sup> Tertullian, 'Repentance', 7.

<sup>448</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 193.

<sup>449</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 8.

<sup>450</sup> Favazza, *Order*, 182.

<sup>451</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 2', 6.

<sup>452</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 2', 8.

<sup>453</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 4.

‘What will happen to the fear of God if pardon is so readily granted to sinners?’<sup>454</sup> It is neither good for the health of the church nor the health of the lapsed to be swiftly admitted.

His third epistle to Cyprian repeats the same themes we have covered: a desire to protect the evangelical discipline and a halting of the lapsed’s rashness. Only now the laxist party forwarding the cause of the impatient penitents has grown. They are chastised because they claim to have Divine forgiveness imputed to them outside of the ecclesial process and demand the church recognise such a peace.<sup>455</sup>

Novatian’s critique of this presumptuous peace shows the interworking between Christ and His body in his mind. The lapsed claim that by a means outside of the church they have been granted peace, which Novatian cannot comprehend, ‘why do they demand what they already possess?’<sup>456</sup> The church’s ability to channel God’s peace is a part of the Gospel that the lapsed are not laying hold to, but instead insubordinately follow another Gospel.<sup>457</sup> This Gospel of evangelical severity, championed by Rome, ‘will be destroyed and brought low, if it could be superseded by the innovation of another decree.’<sup>458</sup>

Novatian also critiques the practice of confessor-forgiveness practiced by some. The confessors chose to be where they were due to the fear of losing their salvation if they accepted the *libellus* or sacrifices, yet some were willing to advocate the reconciliation of those who gave assent to such practices. He calls out the double standard which assaults his assumed order, ‘The law which they had previously applied to themselves also holds for others.’<sup>459</sup> He is glad that some martyrs deferred to the bishops for a ruling on the state of certain lapsed that approached them, praising how they do not overstep their boundaries reserved for the bishop. Through this respect for episcopal authority, they prove themselves upholders in the *evangelicae disciplinae*.<sup>460</sup>

---

<sup>454</sup> Novatian, ‘Epistle 2’, 6.

<sup>455</sup> Novatian, ‘Epistle 3’, 1.

<sup>456</sup> Novatian, ‘Epistle 3’, 1; cf. Cyprian, ‘Epistle 26(33ox), 1-2.

<sup>457</sup> Novatian, ‘Epistle 3’, 1-2.

<sup>458</sup> Novatian, ‘Epistle 3’, 2.

<sup>459</sup> Novatian, ‘Epistle 3’, 2.

<sup>460</sup> Novatian, ‘Epistle 3’, 2.

Novatian does not recognize and omits mention of Confessor reconciliation, either through ignorance or, akin to Cyprian, pretending the Confessors are merely requesting ecclesiastical reconciliation for the lapsed.

Ambrose comments on the Novatianists of his day and notes an inconsistency of their beliefs. As they were trying to distinguish between lesser and greater sins, Ambrose states 'But they say that, with the exception of graver sins, they grant forgiveness to those of less weight. This is not the teaching of your father, Novatian, who thought that no one should be admitted to penance.'<sup>461</sup> Ambrose's statement misrepresents Novatian's beliefs. Instead of barring penance entirely, Novatian in schism as Tertullian before him prescribed lifelong penance with no sure knowledge in this life that one will be reconciled to God. Such is witnessed by Cyprian, as he states they,

*...exhort to the repentance of atonement (satisfactionis poenitentiam), and to take away the healing from the atonement (satisfaction medicinam); to say to our brethren, "Mourn and shed tears, and groan day and night, and labour largely and frequently for the washing away and cleansing of your sin; but, after all these things, you shall die without the pale of the Church."*<sup>462</sup>

This fits precisely with the function of ἐξομολόγησις post-Tertullian's conversion to Montanism. Tertullian's rigorism allowed for there to be penitents, though they were put out of the church for the sake of defending the church's purity. Tertullian says that true repentance stands besides the doors of the church (*adisistit enim pro foribus ejus*), hearkening the people inside to mourn for them.<sup>463</sup> To those who critique him by saying repentance will be worthless, he responds that God alone judges, and God may pardon them, but the church's role is to 'prefer the blush of shame to the privilege of communion.'<sup>464</sup> In the height of his rigorism he, as Cyprian forms perfectly, exhorted to repentance without promising its healing.

---

<sup>461</sup> Ambrose, 'Repentance', 10.

<sup>462</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 51(55ox)', 28.

<sup>463</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 3.

<sup>464</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 3.

## 5. Tertullianic Rigorism

Daly is right to note that Rome's affinity and relationship with Carthage evidences that rigoristic ideas were also transferred.<sup>465</sup> The close relationship between Rome and North Africa is worth mention. As we have seen, Tertullian took interest in the affairs of the Roman episcopate. Cyprian had frequent correspondence with Cornelius, and before that the Roman clergy issued guidance to the Carthaginian clergy when Cyprian fled from persecution.<sup>466</sup> With his African rival Novatus, from the complete reversal from laxist to rigorist, in encouraging Novatian to become a schismatic bishop, had in his sights Cyprian's downfall at the expense of consistency.<sup>467</sup>

Novatian once he was ordained bishop wished to race Cornelius in a letter campaign where they both denounced each other for their immorality, demonstrating themselves as the true bishop of Rome.<sup>468</sup> This eagerness to secure the approval of Carthage's clergy led to four envoys being sent to declare Novatian as rightful bishop accompanied by defaming his character.<sup>469</sup> He documents that they were 'demanding that the accusations, which they said that they brought and would prove, should be publicly investigated by us and by the people.'<sup>470</sup> Cyprian, having unity as his foundation of the church rather than its uncontaminated purity, sided with Cornelius as he was validly ordained first.<sup>471</sup>

## 6. Fear of Presumption

There is vocabulary littered throughout his epistles which condemns the attitude of the lapsed and laxist parties, showing their foolish boldness by overstepping away from the bounds of discipline which God has ordained for the church.<sup>472</sup> The lapsed are condemned

---

<sup>465</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 194.

<sup>466</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 2(8ox)', 1-3.

<sup>467</sup> It appears that Cyprian considers Novatus as the prime cause of the schism, Cyprian, 'Epistle 48(52ox)', 2.

<sup>468</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 194.

<sup>469</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 40(44ox)', 1.

<sup>470</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 40(44ox)', 1.

<sup>471</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 40(44ox)', 2.

<sup>472</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 5.

for their hurry, and ‘crown their crimes with restlessness’.<sup>473</sup> They are to knock at the door of the church, not hurriedly breaking it down.<sup>474</sup>

While Novatian concedes that decisions must be made formally by all ranks of clergy before a decision of precedent should be made, he makes no effort to conceal his position when such a college gathers.

*We find it extremely odious and irksome that a large number of people does not pass judgment on a crime that seems to have been perpetrated by a large number, and issue a joint resolution, since such an enormous crime manifestly is widespread among many.*<sup>475</sup>

Novatian is in no fear about presuming God being harsher than He is towards the fallen, and he is bewildered that not everyone agrees with him and his perception of the unanimity of the church’s discipline. He warns the lapsed that ‘one must take into consideration, not only divine clemency, but also divine severity’.<sup>476</sup>

Novatian ends his first epistle outlining that if there is a true penitent on their deathbed who has demonstrated themselves as sincere, the church may carefully grant them peace. Even in this situation, to protect God’s right alone to judge, he immediately follows with, ‘God knows what to do with them and how to balance the scales of His justice.’<sup>477</sup> Even in such a sure situation as someone who has presented themselves as genuinely sorrowful for their falling, Novatian treads lightly. This resembles much of Tertullian’s fear of presuming the Divine Will, as Tertullian’s main emphasis in *de pudicitia* is that God, not the church, has the sole right of judgement.<sup>478</sup>

He finds safety within the high standards he sets for the church’s life. Novatian reveals to us the rule which crowns every imperative he gives to the Christian community: ‘gravity (*severitas*) speaks in place of injunctions (*praeceptorum*) and right reason (*ratio*) admonishes where Scripture is silent (*docet quae scriptura conticuit*).’<sup>479</sup> This precise comfort shares an

---

<sup>473</sup> Novatian, ‘Epistle 1’, 6.

<sup>474</sup> Novatian, ‘Epistle 1’, 6.

<sup>475</sup> Novatian, ‘Epistle 1’, 5.

<sup>476</sup> Novatian, ‘Epistle 1’, 7.

<sup>477</sup> Novatian, ‘Epistle 1’, 8.

<sup>478</sup> Tertullian, ‘Modesty’, 3, 18, 20, 21.

<sup>479</sup> Novatian, ‘Spectacles’, 3.

enormous similarity with Tertullian's later mindset, most chiefly in validating a prophecy's veracity: 'It would have been more the part of a subverter on the one hand to commend himself on the score of clemency, and on the other to influence all others to sin.'<sup>480</sup>

Even the maxim "if vague, appeal to strictness" can be seen in Tertullian's reinterpretation of forgiveness passages such as in *de pudicitia* chapter 9. Tertullian in restricting the parables to a general sense rather than a multifaceted allegory leads him to acknowledge that such an approach produces an uncomfortable vagueness.<sup>481</sup> Justifying this, he states, 'But we prefer, if it must be so, to be less wise in the Scriptures, than to be wise against them.'<sup>482</sup> He deems it absolutely unthinkable for the Spirit to grant peace to grave sinners, and even seems to judge prophetic validity by such presupposition.<sup>483</sup> This shows what lies beneath his method – "if unclear, choose severity" – is in major agreement with Novatian's foundations. Hence Novatian, in the instance of Scripture's silence, says 'gravity speaks in place of injunctions.'<sup>484</sup>

Cyprian's method of protection against presuming the Divine Will is on the other end of the spectrum. He states concerning the lapsed, 'we do not prejudge when the Lord is to be the judge; save that if He shall find the repentance of the sinners full and sound, He will then ratify what shall have been here determined by us.'<sup>485</sup> As we have seen, Cyprian with his close ties between the Spirit's work and the church's, finds assurance in God's will for the lapsed by identifying the decisions of the church with that of God himself. Novatian and Montanist Tertullian did not find assurance in the church's decisions and chose their perception of the holiness of God over ecclesial pronouncements. Hence Tertullian berated Calistus for his decree and Novatian broke away from the church to preserve its sanctity before God.

'Evangelical severity' and similar vocabulary are terms used by both Cyprian and Novatian. Cyprian described the African bishops who before the crisis agreed with Montanist

---

<sup>480</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 21.

<sup>481</sup> Devine, 'Two', 147.

<sup>482</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 9.

<sup>483</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 21.

<sup>484</sup> Novatian, 'Spectacles', 3.

<sup>485</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 51(55ox)', 18.

Tertullian's verdict on adultery's irremissibility as '*duritiae*' and '*censurae*'.<sup>486</sup> To his critics accusing him of laxism, he insists that he maintains the '*evangelicum vigorem*' and has not changed from the '*disciplina et censura*' he swore to uphold.<sup>487</sup>

## 7. Holy Fragility

Novatian's protection of the holiness of God and His church is one of the main driving forces behind his rigorism. Novatian when speaking of excommunication and penance did not merely have the penitents' concerns in mind, but, it is argued, that the issue of contamination was at play.

Burns notes that Cyprian believed in a "contamination" of the clergy during the persecution, however this was only inasmuch as people volitionally followed them.<sup>488</sup> When the confessors who followed Novatian came back to the church, Cyprian comforts their anxieties on the contamination of sinners, 'For although there seem to be tares in the Church, yet neither our faith nor our charity ought to be hindered.'<sup>489</sup> Cyprian's comforting of them indicates that this was important to the Novatian sect. Cyprian also chastises those who ate the sacrifices coming *into* the church to eat the Eucharist and defile themselves 'with jaws still exhaling their crime, and reeking with the fatal contact, they intrude on the body of the Lord.'<sup>490</sup> Defilement is located, for Cyprian, in the approaching of the holy in an unclean state, the defilement of which is obtained by active transgression.

Yet we have with Novatian a holiness of Levitical proportions, namely that through the contamination of proximity and communion with the unclean, the sanctified space is defiled. Several details confirm this: Protection of the church's holiness is spoken of more in Novatian's epistles than of the possible reconciliation of the lapsed. He says 'there is no better way to provide for the welfare of the church than by standing up against those who infringe upon it,' and that is done through the preservation of Rome's *disciplina*.<sup>491</sup> To reform

---

<sup>486</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 51(55ox)', 21.

<sup>487</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 51(55ox)', 3.

<sup>488</sup> Burns, *Cyprian*, 132.

<sup>489</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 50(54ox)', 3.

<sup>490</sup> Cyprian, 'Lapsed', 15.

<sup>491</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 2.



from Novatian's tradition is to 'completely ruin the majesty of [Rome's] faith (*fidei majestate dissolvere*).'<sup>492</sup>

Novatian's attempt at chastising those of his flock goes even further than attending the spectacles, stretching even to the routes they take in order to arrive at the games. Novatian witnesses that some detour through the licentious parts of town, being in the presence of the brothels and 'notorious lechery'.<sup>493</sup> Novatian admits to the route taker that he does not chastise them for what they might have done on their way to the games, but rather that 'he has been a witness, nonetheless, to what must never be done and his eyes, drawn by lust, are fixed on the public display of idolatry'.<sup>494</sup> The moral outrage of the person culminates in how after the Lord's Supper they take a piece of the elements and go through these darker parts of town to the games, 'that faithless man has carried into the midst of the foul bodies of prostitutes the sacred Body of the Lord'.<sup>495</sup> The fact that the Eucharist has been brought into a place of defilement is so outrageous that 'He has brought down on his head greater damnation for the route by which he arrived at that public display than for the pleasure derived therefrom'.<sup>496</sup> This communicates a fitting image of Novatian's view of the holiness of God; that God does not dwell among sin. The holy is defiled by proximity as well as participation, as he admits the sinner is not active in the brothels.

The zeal for the holiness of God and its ability to be defiled by the presence of sinners is a hallmark of Novatian's ecclesiology that is the central root of the controversy of him and his followers. Von Harnack attests precisely to this, saying that the Novatianist ecclesiology is one of a holy fragility, 'The holy are contaminated by evil and the body perishes'.<sup>497</sup> Despite the doctrinal orthodoxy of the Catholic church, 'its members have lost their hold on salvation and their right to the Christian name which belongs only to a pure Church...' when they admit the sinful to fellowship, even if under heavy penance.<sup>498</sup>

---

<sup>492</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 3.

<sup>493</sup> Novatian, 'Spectacles', 5.

<sup>494</sup> Novatian, 'Spectacles', 5.

<sup>495</sup> Novatian, 'Spectacles', 5.

<sup>496</sup> Novatian, 'Spectacles', 5.

<sup>497</sup> Von Harnack, 'Novatian', 201.

<sup>498</sup> Von Harnack, 'Novatian', 201.

Tertullian too holds to the idea that places in themselves can defile the Christian. He admits that going to the circus or temple when there is no ceremony is lawful, as his imagined interlocuter retorts that 'There is no law forbidding the mere places to us.'<sup>499</sup> His ripostes this concession by saying 'The places in themselves do not contaminate, but what is done in them; from this even the places themselves (*et ipsa loca*), we maintain, become defiled (*contaminari*).'<sup>500</sup> The issue is not entering empty grounds but by filling a seat in the idolatrous Colosseum. It is in this sense, 'The polluted things pollute us (*de contaminatis contaminamur*).'<sup>501</sup> Idolatry's contaminatory power is not always active in Tertullian's thought, as the idol artificer comes into the church, even if they themselves do not worship the idol, creates outrage as 'even those very hands deliver to others what they have contaminated.'<sup>502</sup> While Levitical and Rabbinic contamination could be amoral, for Tertullian it was always moral, as idolatry is a practiced transgression through which demons influence people.<sup>503</sup> This strongly mirrors Novatian's denial that one can go through sinful alleys and the games as a merely passive observant, incurring no contamination of the sins performed around them.

Along with this Novatian parallels Montanist Tertullian in moral expectation. His *de trinitate* bears witness of his high standards for the church as the Spirit gives to the people of God the gifts of guidance, discernment and various charismata, which is all done so that 'He makes the Church of the Lord perfect and complete in every respect and in every detail.'<sup>504</sup> Elsewhere he says '[the Spirit] keeps the church uncorrupted and inviolate in the holiness of perpetual virginity and truth.'<sup>505</sup> Relevant to the crisis of the lapsed, he says that 'Grounded in this Spirit, "no one" ever "says 'Anathema' to Jesus"; no one has denied that Christ is the Son of God, nor has rejected God the Creator,' (1 Corinthians 12:3).'<sup>506</sup> Tertullian too holds to his rigorist views justifying them as a protection of the church's virginity. Concerning

---

<sup>499</sup> Tertullian, 'Spectacles', 8.

<sup>500</sup> Tertullian, 'Spectacles', 8.

<sup>501</sup> Tertullian, 'Spectacles', 8.

<sup>502</sup> Tertullian, 'Idolatry', 7.

<sup>503</sup> Irshai, 'Include', 128-129.

<sup>504</sup> Novatian, 'Trinity', 29.

<sup>505</sup> Novatian, 'Trinity', 29.

<sup>506</sup> Novatian, 'Trinity', 29.

Calistus' indulgent edict he considers it scandalous for the virgin church to be a house of adulterer, adding 'Far from Christ's betrothed be such a proclamation!'<sup>507</sup>

This is further confirmed by Cyprian having to rebut the claim, demonstrating that even among cases of sacrifice, varying circumstances must cause different penances. There is a difference between the one who flies to the sacrifice and one who 'after long struggle and resistance, has reached that fatal result under compulsion.'<sup>508</sup> This includes torture and saving one's family from persecution, with Cyprian necessitating that this is the case because if they are dealt with too harshly, 'they are hurried by the devil's invitation into heresy or schism.'<sup>509</sup> Novatian would have none of this as he refused to identify a distinction. Burns states that this anxiety of communal contamination that was the driver behind his group's failure to distinguish the severity of the *sacrificati* verses the *libellatici*, to which we now turn.<sup>510</sup>

## 8. Distinguishing Between Sins

This next part is pertinent to our overall thesis: Cyprian addresses the charges of the Novatianists that sin corrupts the fragile holiness of the community.<sup>511</sup> Cyprian's interpretation of his detractors is that the Novatianists consider idolatry irremissible and contaminable, while adultery and fornication are passed over. Cyprian, almost as if he is using Tertullian as his source here, associates fornication and adultery with idolatry.<sup>512</sup> Cyprian retorts that adultery is idolatry and vice versa by appealing to how the Christian is a temple of God, 'For as our bodies are members of Christ, and we are each a temple of God, whosoever violates the temple of God by adultery, violates God.'<sup>513</sup> Tertullian asks the *psychici* 'Do you once for all condemn the idolater and the murderer, but take the adulterer out from their midst?', associating idolatry with adultery and fornication.<sup>514</sup> The believer as a

---

<sup>507</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 1, cf. 18

<sup>508</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 51(55ox)', 13.

<sup>509</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 51(55ox)', 15.

<sup>510</sup> Burn, *Cyprian*, 54.

<sup>511</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 51(55ox)', 27.

<sup>512</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 51(55ox)', 27;

<sup>513</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 51(55ox)', 27.

<sup>514</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 4-5.

temple of God forces out adultery, idolatry and all other grave sins.<sup>515</sup> Cyprian in entertaining the Novatian position for the sake of his argument uses his master's metaphors against the position of his master.

Concerning Novatian's position, we see how his thought and influence led to a maturation grounded in Montanist Tertullian's rigorism. Cyprian's critique of Novatian's apparent inconsistency in admitting other grave sinners apart from idolaters raises a tension in our sources. On the one hand, if Cyprian is to be believed, Novatian does not view adultery as irremissible and communes with ex-adulterers. Yet elsewhere he critiques the Stoics and philosophers 'who say that all sins are equal, and that a grave man (*virum gravem*) ought not easily to be moved.'<sup>516</sup> This is an obvious quip against Novatian who was condemned for his close association with the philosophy.<sup>517</sup> Which account is true?

It is more likely that Novatian did not distinguish between grave sins such as idolatry with adultery. Novatian's lack of distinction between different types of *lapsi* evidence this. Daly tries to soothe the tension by saying that Novatian, at least initially, did distinguish between grave sins, calling idolatry irremissible while adultery and fornication is remissible, citing Cyprian's instance above.<sup>518</sup> Later Novatianists would then, in the momentum of their leader, produce expanded irremissibility lists, as Ambrose testified of the Novatianists of his day, 'as it were after the fashion of the Stoics, they think that all sins are equal in gravity.'<sup>519</sup>

This is not necessarily needed to discern the truth of Cyprian's statements. Novatian had a "flatter" hierarchy of sins, as is seen from him refusing to distinguish between the *libellatici* and *sacrificati*. The *libellatici* in their false confession of sacrificing, 'makes them no less (*non minus*) guilty than if they had actually stepped before those iniquitous altars.'<sup>520</sup> The person who signals their consent, even if it is only in words, receives the same treatment in Novatian's eyes, as he says that they who say but do not actually obey laws contrary to God,

---

<sup>515</sup> Tertullian, 'Modesty', 19, 20, 21.

<sup>516</sup> Cyprian, 'Epistle 51(55ox), 16.

<sup>517</sup> Eusebius, 'Church', 6.43.16; Papandrea, *Trinitarian*, 6.

<sup>518</sup> Daly, *Tertullian*, 197.

<sup>519</sup> Ambrose, 'Repentance', 1.5.

<sup>520</sup> Novatian, 'Epistle 1', 3.

‘obeyed them simply because he wanted others to believe that he had already obeyed them.’<sup>521</sup>

It is hardly believable that Novatian who repeatedly stressed protecting the vigor of the Gospel allowed for this inconsistency. In all likelihood, Cyprian, loyal to Cornelius’ side, has participated in the spreading of rumours to discredit Novatian’s claims of being a pure bishop. While Daly uses Ambrose as a witness to say that Novatian did have major distinctions, Ambrose’s misrepresentation of Novatian’s belief makes him a suspect witness, as he claimed that Novatian forbade penance entirely, which is untrue.<sup>522</sup> Novatian wished to use his Tertullianic logic to defer the judgement to God, with the best way of procuring a chance of Divine Mercy done through lifelong penance.<sup>523</sup> Therefore it is more likely that Cyprian’s attributing to Novatian of the equality of sins is more true than his contradictory allegation that Novatian betrayed this precise rule.

## 9. Conclusion

Our findings demonstrate Novatian to be a reader of Tertullian, but also find that he took from Tertullian’s Montanist self to establish his new project. The defence of the church’s holiness for Novatian led to him taking from Tertullian’s imagery, foundations and anxieties to produce a rigorist project without the Paraclete. From the reliable accounts we have, Novatian shared precisely the penitential theology of the Tertullian of *de pudicitia*. The chief anxiety they both shared was presuming on the Divine Will, wishing to be found on the side of severity when the Lord comes to judge His holy habitation, the church.

---

<sup>521</sup> Novatian, ‘Epistle 1’, 3.

<sup>522</sup> Ambrose, ‘Repentance’, 10.

<sup>523</sup> Novatian, ‘Epistle 3’, 3.

#### Part 4: Conclusion

We have not endeavoured to have proven Novatian's sole reliance upon Montanist Tertullian, nor have we sought to root Cyprian in only Catholic Tertullian's works. What we have demonstrated is Cyprian's taking of a foundation built by Catholic Tertullian when he read his treatises. Cyprian does not have to agree with everything Tertullian said for him to be proven as relying upon Tertullian for the building of an ecclesiology and penitential theology. What Cyprian has done is take what he read in Tertullian and applied it to the episcopate that was morphing and changing due to the contexts and trials of the church. In this sense, Cyprian heavily relied upon Tertullian as a seed bed from which he was to cultivate a reformed ecclesiology. This included the pruning of Tertullian's flatter concept of the priesthood of all believers. But the fruit he kept was the theology behind the Tertullian of *de paenitentia* in his exhortations to penance. Tertullian's vagueness about when reconciliation was granted allowed Cyprian to insert the new functions he lavished on the episcopate.

In the same way, we do not presume to say that Novatian solely relied upon Montanist Tertullian. What we posit is that Novatian sought in Montanist Tertullian the language, premises, ethics, concepts of holiness to explain and defend his rigorist cause. He was a proven reader of the famed Carthaginian, sharing a similar grand education soaked in the Stoicism of his day which gave birth to the high expectations of the Christian to master themselves in the face of sin. Tertullian's legacy lies in two contradictory figures wrestling in his corpus. Depending on what parts of this corpus one reads, one can either become confirmed in their catholic faith or, inspired by the spirit of rigorism, choose a path to preserve the church from contaminatory stain.

## Bibliography

### Primary Literature

All Latin Text taken from Migne's *Patrologia Latina*

#### Tertullian

Tertullian, 'Against Praxeas', in Roberts Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 3, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1885, 597-627.

Tertullian, 'Apology', in Roberts Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 3, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1885, 17-55.

Tertullian, 'Exhortation to Chastity', in Roberts Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 4, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1885, 50-59.

Tertullian, 'On Baptism', in Roberts Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 3, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1885, 669-681.

Tertullian, 'On Modesty', in Roberts Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 4, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1885, 74-101.

Tertullian, 'On Patience', in Roberts Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 3, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1885, 707-716.

Tertullian, 'On Repentance', in Roberts Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 3, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1885, 657-669.

Tertullian, 'On the Resurrection of the Flesh', in Roberts Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 3, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1885, 545-597.

Tertullian, 'On the Veiling of Virgins' in Roberts Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 4, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1885, 27-39.

Tertullian, 'Prescription Against Heretics' in Roberts Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 3, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1885, 243-269.

Tertullian, 'To the Nations', in Roberts Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 3, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1885, 109-149.

Tertullian, 'On the Spectacles', in Roberts Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 3, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 79-91.

Tertullian, 'On the Resurrection of the Flesh', in Roberts Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 3, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 545-594.

Tertullian, 'Exhortation to Chastity', in Roberts Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 4, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1885, 50-58.

Tertullian, 'On Flight in Persecution', in Roberts Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 4, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1885, 116-125.

Tertullian, 'On Idolatry', in Roberts Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 4, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1885, 61-76.

## **Cyprian**

Cyprian, 'Epistles', in Roberts, Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 5, Massachusetts, United States: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, 275-407.

Cyprian, 'On the Lapsed', in Roberts, Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 5, Massachusetts, United States: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, 437-447.

Cyprian, 'On the Lord's Prayer', in Roberts, Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 5, Massachusetts, United States: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, 447-457.

Cyprian, 'On the Unity of the Catholic Church', in Roberts, Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 5, Massachusetts, United States: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, 421-429

Cyprian, 'Testimonies Against the Jews', in Roberts, Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 5, Massachusetts, United States: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, 508-557.

Cyprian, 'On the Dress of Virgins', in Roberts, Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 5, Massachusetts, United States: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, 430-436.

Pontius, 'Life of Cyprian', in Roberts, Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 5, Massachusetts, United States: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, 267-274.

Cyprian, 'The Seventh Council of Carthage under Cyprian', in Roberts, Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 5, Massachusetts, United States: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, 565-572.

## **Novatian**

Novatian, 'Epistles', in DeSimone, Russell, *The Trinity, The Spectacles, Jewish Foods, In Praise of Purity, Letters, The Fathers of the Church*, , vol. 67, Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1974, 187-204.

Novatian, 'In Praise of Purity', in DeSimone, Russell, *The Trinity, The Spectacles, Jewish Foods, In Praise of Purity, Letters, The Fathers of the Church*, , vol. 67, Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1974, 165-176.



Novatian, 'On Jewish Foods', in DeSimone, Russell, *The Trinity, The Spectacles, Jewish Foods, In Praise of Purity, Letters, The Fathers of the Church*, , vol. 67, Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1974, 143-156.

Novatian, 'On the Spectacles', in DeSimone, Russell, *The Trinity, The Spectacles, Jewish Foods, In Praise of Purity, Letters, The Fathers of the Church*, , vol. 67, Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1974, 123-134.

Novatian, 'On the Trinity', in DeSimone, Russell, *The Trinity, The Spectacles, Jewish Foods, In Praise of Purity, Letters, The Fathers of the Church*, , vol. 67, Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1974, 23-112.

## Secondary Literature

Ambrose, 'On Repentance', in Schaff, Philip, and Wace, Henry, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Ambrose: Selected Works and Letters*, Volume 10, Second Series, Massachusetts, United States: Hendrickson Publishing, 1896, 329-359.

Aronen, Jaakko. 'Indebtedness to Passio Perpetuae in Pontius' Vita Cypriani.' *Vigiliae Christianae* 38, 1, (1984): 67-76.

Augustine, 'Sermon 313E', in Hill, Edmund and Rotelle, John, *The Works of Saint Augustine: Vol. 1, Sermons on the Old Testament*, 20-50, New York: New City Press, 1990, 109-117.

Augustine, *De Haeresibus ad Quodvultdeum*, Vicifons Website, [https://la.wikisource.org/wiki/De\\_Haeresibus\\_ad\\_Quodvultdeum](https://la.wikisource.org/wiki/De_Haeresibus_ad_Quodvultdeum) [Accessed 20/09/2024]

Balfour, Ian, 'Tertullian and Roman Law – What Do We (Not) Know?', in *Studia Patristica*, 94, Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2017, 11-21.

Barnes, Timothy, *Tertullian, a Historical and Literary Study*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

Benson, Edward, *Cyprian: his life, his times, his work*, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1897.

Bévenot, Maurice, '“Sacerdos” as understood by Cyprian', *Journal of Theological Studies*, , Vol. 30, 2 (1979), 413-429.

Bévenot, Maurice, 'The Sacrament of Penance and St. Cyprian's *De Lapsis*' in *Theological Studies*, 16, 2, (1955), 175-213.

Bray, Gerald, *Holiness and the Will of God, Perspectives on the Theology of Tertullian*, London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1979.

Brenner, Jan, 'Imitation of Christ in the Passion of the Scilitan Martyrs?' in Fink, Wilhelm, *For Example, Martyrdom and Imitation in Early Christian Texts and Art*, Paderborn, Germany: Brill, 2020.

Brent, Allen, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Brent, Allen, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century*, Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1995.

Burns, J. Patout, *Cyprian the Bishop*, London: Routledge, 2002.

Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, Loeb Classical Library Website, LCL 141, [https://www.loebclassics.com/view/marcus\\_tullius\\_cicero-tusculan\\_disputations/1927/pb\\_LCL141.209.xml](https://www.loebclassics.com/view/marcus_tullius_cicero-tusculan_disputations/1927/pb_LCL141.209.xml) [Accessed: 19/09/2024].

Daniélou, Jean, *The Origins of Latin Christianity*, Essex, England: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1977.

Devine, Mark, 'Two Treatises on Penance: an Inquiry into Tertullian's Exegesis and Montanism', *Churchman*, 109, 2, (1995), 143-153.

Dunn, Geoffrey, 'Heresy and Schism According to Cyprian Of Carthage', *The Journal of Theological Studies*, October 2004, New Series, 55, No. 2 (2004) 551-574.

Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, Loeb Classical Library Website, LCL 218, [https://www.loebclassics.com/view/epictetus-encheiridion/1928/pb\\_LCL218.519.xml?result=1&rskey=cfRT2r](https://www.loebclassics.com/view/epictetus-encheiridion/1928/pb_LCL218.519.xml?result=1&rskey=cfRT2r) [Accessed: 19/09/2024].

Eusebius, 'The Church History of Eusebius' in Schaff, Philip, and Wace, Henry, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol 1*, Massachusetts, United States: Hendrickson Publishing, 1890.

Favazza, Joseph, *The Order of Penitents : Historical Roots and Pastoral Future*, Minnesota, United States: Liturgical Press, 1988.

Frend, William, *The Donatist Church, a Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Hall, Stuart, 'The Versions of Cyprian, *de unitate*, 4-5. Bévenot's Dating Revisited', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 55, 1, (2004), 138-146.

Hinchcliff, Peter, *Cyprian of Carthage and the Unity of the Christian Church*, Southampton, England: Geoffrey Chapman, 1974.

Hippolytus of Rome, *Apostolic Tradition, The treatise on the Apostolic tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome, bishop and martyr*, Translated by Dix, Gregory, London: SPCK, 1968.

Hopkins, Keith, 'Christian Number and its Implications', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 6, 2, (1998), 185-226.

Irshai, Oded, and Fredrickson, Paula, 'Include Me Out: Tertullian, The Rabbis, And The Graeco-Roman City' in Berthelot, Katell, and Naiweld, Ron, *L'identité À Travers L'éthique, Nouvelles Perspectives Sur La Formation Des Identités Collectives Dans Le Monde Gréco-Romain*, Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 117-132.

Jerome, 'Apology Against Rufinus', in Schaff, Philip, and Wace, Henry, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol 3*, Massachusetts, United States: Hendrickson Publishing, 1892, 482-541.

Jerome, 'Letters', in Schaff, Philip, and Wace, Henry, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol 6*, Massachusetts, United States: Hendrickson Publishing, 1893, 1-290.

Jerome, 'Lives of Illustrious Men', in Schaff, Philip, and Wace, Henry, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol 3*, Massachusetts, United States: Hendrickson Publishing, 1892, 359-384.

Jinkwang, Lucien, 'Is Montanism a Heretical Sect or Pentecostal Antecedent?', *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 12, (2009), 123-124.

Johanny, Raymond, 'Cyprian of Carthage', in Rodorf, Willy, 'The Eucharist of the Early Christians', translated by O'Connell, Matthew, New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1978, 156-183.

Kimmel, Joseph, 'Comparative Confession: A Comparative Study of Confession in the Writings of Tertullian, Cassian, and Śāntideva', *The Journal of Interreligious Studies*, 22, (2018), 2-21.

Le Saint, William, *Treatises on Penance, On Penitence and On Purity*, translated by Le Saint, William, London: The Newman Press, 1959.

Lee. G.M, Souter, A., et al, *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968.

Levente, PAP, 'Stoic Virtues in Tertullian's Works and Their Relation to Cicero', in *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica*, 6, 1, (2014), 7-16.

Lewis, Charlton, and Short, Charles, *A Latin Dictionary*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879.

Mills, David, 'Cyprian and the Atonement', , *Puritan Reformed Journal*, 12, 1, (2020), 35-53.

Mills, David, 'The Visible and Spiritual Church: Cyprian's Pneumatology Amid Pastoral Crises', *JETS*, 64.4 (2021) 657-680.

Mills, David, *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus: The Relationship Between Ecclesiology and Soteriology for Cyprian of Carthage*, Dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021.

Monceaux, Paul, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne depuis les origines jusqu'à l'invasion arabe*, Vol 1, Paris: E. Leroux, 1901.

- Musurillo, Herbert, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- Nayagam, Xavier, *The Carthaginian Clergy During the Episcopate of Saint Cyprian*, Baltimore, United States: Tamil Literature Society, 1950.
- Osborn, Eric, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Papandrea, James, *Novatian, On the Trinity, Letters to Cyprian of Carthage, Ethical Treatises*, Introduction, translation, and notes by James L. Papandrea, Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2015.
- Papandrea, James, *The Trinitarian Theology of Novatian of Rome*, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008.
- Papandrea, James, *Novatian of Rome and the Culmination of Pre-Nicene Orthodoxy*, Oregon, United States: Pickwick Publications, 2011.
- Pontius, 'Life and Passion of Cyprian, Bishop and Martyr', in Roberts, Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 5, Massachusetts, United States: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, 267-274.
- Powell, Douglas, 'Tertullianists and Cataphrygians', *Vigilae Christianae*, 29, (1975), 33-54.
- Quastern, Johannes, *Patrology, The Ante-Nicene Literature After Irenaeus*, Vol 2, Maryland, United States: Christian Classics, 1986.
- Rankin, David, *Tertullian and the Church*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Seneca the Younger, 'On Benefits', Loeb Classical Library Website, LCL 310, [https://www.loebclassics.com/view/seneca\\_younger-de\\_beneficiis/1935/pb\\_LCL310.309.xml?result=2&rskey=2bZAht](https://www.loebclassics.com/view/seneca_younger-de_beneficiis/1935/pb_LCL310.309.xml?result=2&rskey=2bZAht) [Accessed 30/09/24]
- Shuve, Karl. "Cyprian of Carthage's Writings from the Rebaptism Controversy: Two Revisionary Proposals Reconsidered." *Journal of Theological Studies*, 61, 2 (2010): 627-43.
- Socrates, 'Church History' in Schaff, Philip and Wace, Henry, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol 2, Second Series, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishing, 1890, 1-178.
- Tabbernee, William, *Fake Prophecy and Polluted Sacraments, Ecclesiastical and Imperial Reactions to Montanism*, Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2007.
- Tabbernee, William, 'Montanism and The Cult Of The Martyrs in Roman North Africa: Reassessing the Literary and Epigraphic Evidence' in Minchin, Elizabeth, and Jackson, Heather, *Text and the material world : essays in honour of Graeme Clarke*, Uppsala, Sweden: Astrom Editions, 2017.

Tabbernee, William, 'To Pardon or Not to Pardon? North African Montanism and the Forgiveness of Sins,' in Wiles, M.F. and Yarnold, E.J., *Studia Patristica*, Volume 36, Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1999, 375-386.

Von Harnack, Adolf, "Novatian, Novatianism", in Jackson, Samuel, *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol 8., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1953, 197-202, <https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/encyc08/encyc08.n.v.html> [accessed 30/10/23]

Walker, George, *The Churchmanship of St. Cyprian*, Plymouth, England: Lutterworth Press, 1968.

Walters, Erik, *Unitas in Latin Antiquity: the Contribution of Cyprian*, PhD Dissertation, Vienna: Vienna University, 2010.

Warfield, Benjamin, *Calvin and Augustine*, Philadelphia, United States: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1956.

White, Michael, 'Transactionalism in the Penitential Thought of Gregory the Great', *Restoration Quarterly*, 21 (1978), 33-51.

Wilhite, David, *Tertullian the African*, Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 2007.