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### The Influence which the Lapsed had on the Concepts of Baptism and Penance in the Writings of Cyprian and Tertullian

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THE INFLUENCE WHICH THE LAPSUS HAD ON THE  
CONCEPTS OF BAPTISM AND PENANCE IN  
THE WRITINGS OF CYPRIAN AND TERTULLIAN

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Historical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis has as its purpose the investigation of the concepts of baptism and penance during the times of persecution, in order to determine whether those Christians who lapsed during the persecutions had significant effects on the development of these concepts. This problem arose for the writer in his study on the nature of sacramentalism in the early Church and specifically on whether the concept of opus operatum, which later developed in the Roman Catholic Church as stated at the Council of Trent, had its beginnings already in the ante-Nicene Church.

The scope of this thesis is limited to the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian. Both of these men lived in the North African city of Carthage and played important roles, not only in the development of these concepts in the North Africa Church, but throughout all Christendom and especially in the Western Church.

An historical overview of the times in which these two theologians and church fathers lived is vitally necessary to understand many of their actions. This overview is contained in Chapter II. In Chapter III we look at the lapsed to see the way in which they lapsed, the extent of lapse in the Church, the attitude which the Church had over against them and finally the schisms in the Church which

were caused by the lapsed. In Chapter IV we take a look at the life and thought of both Tertullian and Cyprian in order to place them in historical perspective. In the next two chapters, V and VI, we look at the concepts of baptism and penance in the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian and indicate where the persecutions and the lapsed played an important part in influencing their concept and where they did not.

The concepts of baptism and penance in Tertullian and Cyprian are discussed in every church history which covers this period at any length. Many books have also been written on this subject, but none, to the knowledge of the writer, attacks these concepts from this particular viewpoint.

The major sources for this thesis were the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian and church histories which dealt in detail with this period. Several recognized biographies on the two early churchmen were also used. At the beginning of each chapter a more detailed reference to source material is given.

## CHAPTER II

### AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE PERSECUTIONS WHICH OCCURRED BETWEEN THE LIVES OF TERTULLIAN AND CYPRIAN

During the first two centuries of the Christian era the Christian Church had been subjected to many persecutions. These persecutions had usually been initiated by Roman emperors. Nevertheless they had all been limited to specific areas. For the most part they were unorganized and directed against Christians in general. It was usually up to the local provincial governor to enforce the persecution in his area. The edict of Septimius Severus in 202 changed the picture radically.

Severus acceded to the Roman purple in the year 193 and ruled until his death in 211. At first he was well disposed to the Christian religion but political events soon caused a change in his thinking. Following the death of Commodus, the immediate predecessor of Severus, the Roman Empire came upon bad days. Already during his reign internal disruption and barbaric invasion began to tear the empire apart. This disruption and unrest needed a scapegoat. The lot fell to the Christians.

A second cause of the edict of Severus was the increasing number of Christians. Although their total number must have been a small percentage of the entire population, the ubiquity and zeal of the Christians must have made their

number seem considerably more. Tertullian refers to the fear of the magistrates when he writes in Ad Nationes:

Day after day, indeed, you groan over the increasing number of the Christians. Your constant cry is, that the state is beset (by us); that Christians are in your fields, in your camps, in your islands. You grieve over it as a calamity, that each sex, every age--in short, every rank--is passing over from you to us; yet you do not even after this set your minds upon reflecting whether there be not here some latent good. (I:1)<sup>1</sup>

In 202 Severus issued an edict "in which 'under heavy penalties he forbade people to become Christians.'<sup>2</sup> This new edict was issued specifying:

the different classes of Christians to be prosecuted, and determining the whole procedure, including police regulations, penalties, and confiscations. The application of these edicts was not left to the discretion of individual governors; they were bound to take action, and to follow out from point to point, the plan of repression laid down by the officials of the Imperial Secretariat.

The edict was aimed primarily at stopping new conversions to Christianity.

The characteristics of the persecution under Severus are thus apparent. First, it was the first official persecution by edict: a foretaste of those that were to follow under Decius, Valerian, and Diocletian. Secondly, the edict aimed exclusively at converts;

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<sup>1</sup>Tertullian, Ad Nationes, in Ante-Nicene Fathers, edited by Alexander Roberts (Buffalo, New York: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885), III, 109.

<sup>2</sup>B. J. Kidd, A History of the Church to A. D. 461 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), I, 347.

<sup>3</sup>Louis Duchesne, Early History of the Christian Church (London: Murray, 1933), I, 262.

and only in their case reversed the regulation of Trajan that Christians "are not to be sought out."<sup>4</sup>

It was this edict which resulted in the famous martyrdoms of Perpetua, Felicitas, Saturus, and their companions, all neophytes, or catechumens, in Carthage. Eusebius records the martyrdom also of Leonides, the father of Origen, who was beheaded as a result of the edict.<sup>5</sup>

Although the intensity of the persecution was sharpest in Egypt and north Africa, the effects seem to have been negligible. Nowhere do we read of wholesale desertions from the church as occurred fifty years later during the Decian persecution. That desertions occurred is certainly true, for this was one of the issues which persuaded Tertullian to leave the church and become a Montanist. What bothered Tertullian even more was the large number of Christians who fled in the face of persecution. He condemns this practice by writing:

Well, then, if it is evident from whom persecution proceeds, we are able at once to satisfy your doubts, and to decide from these introductory remarks alone, that men should not flee in it. For if persecution proceeds from God, in no way will it be our duty to flee from what God has as its author; a twofold reason opposing: for what proceeds from God ought not on the one hand to be avoided, and it cannot be evaded on the other.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 347.

<sup>5</sup>Eusebius, Church History, in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, edited by Philip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), I, 269.

<sup>6</sup>Tertullian, De Fuga in Persecutione, in Ante-Nicene Fathers, edited by Alexander Roberts (Buffalo, New York: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885), IV, 118.



This reasoning did not become the accepted practice in the church, but it later caused much trouble in the life of Cyprian.

The reign of Severus was a turning point in the history of the Roman Empire, and for this reason it is valuable to discuss it further.

Severus ruled the empire with an iron hand. He had used dubious methods in gaining the throne and continued them until his death. During his reign the fortunes of the empire were revived. Severus was an African by birth and from a family of low social standing. He rose to power through murder and intrigue, setting the stage for succeeding emperors to follow in his steps. After his death in 211 until the accession of Diocletian in 284 twenty-three emperors sat in the seat of Augustus.

They are known as "the Barrack-room Emperors"; they reigned, on an average, a little over three years each; and all, save three--Decius, 249-51, Valerian, 253-60, and Claudius, 268-70--died violent deaths either at the hands of a mutinous soldiery or by the orders of a successful rival.<sup>7</sup>

Gibbon says that:

The contemporaries of Severus, in the enjoyment of the peace and glory of his reign, forgave the cruelties by which it had been introduced. Posterity, who experienced the fatal effects of his maxims and example, justly considered him as the principal author of the decline of the Roman empire.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 338.

<sup>8</sup>Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (New York: The Modern Library, n.d.), I, 110.

During the reign of Severus much of the religious syncretism of the century was introduced. This came about mainly through his wife, Julia Donna, who was the daughter of the high priest Bassianus of Emesa in Syria. She:

was a woman of strong will, and of remarkable intelligence and cultivation. As empress, she was soon surrounded by all that was most intellectual in the empire. At that time, cultivated men had ceased to ridicule the gods. They were becoming religious. Philosophical mysticism had not, as yet, expressed itself in the formulas of the neo-Platonic system; but there was, almost everywhere, a tendency to transform the Pantheon into a hierarchy, so as to reconcile it in some degree with a conception of Divine Unity; in morality, this school encouraged Pythagorean asceticism.<sup>9</sup>

From this attitude a very strange paradox developed, for:

The Court, reflecting the religious syncretism of the age, inclined towards Christianity, as one among other types of moral or monotheistic worship. Julia Donna, for instance, . . . was well acquainted with Christianity through Christians in the imperial<sup>10</sup> household, and was well disposed towards them.

Thus we have Severus publicly persecuting Christians and privately protecting them in his court.

When Severus died in 211, his son Caracalla succeeded to the throne and ruled until 217. During his reign the church suffered minor persecutions despite the continued influence of his mother in political affairs. The

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<sup>9</sup>Duchesne, op. cit., pp. 261-262.

<sup>10</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 350.

persecutions which began under Severus, gradually died out, for he showed no hostility towards the Christians.<sup>11</sup> Quite to the contrary he "appears to have received from his Christian nurse an instinctive regard for the followers of Christ."<sup>12</sup>

In 217 the Praetorian Praefect Opilius Macrinus plotted against the emperor and finally had him assassinated and himself assumed the throne. Soon after this Julia Donna took her own life rather than be ruled by her son's murderer. This however was not the end of the Severian dynasty. The sister of Julia Donna was as ambitious as she. Her name was Julia Meesa. She had two daughters, one of whom she claimed had borne a natural son to the deceased emperor, Caracalla. This boy was now a youth of thirteen and the high priest of Emesa. Macrinus was deposed by the loyal Eastern contingents of the army and the youth placed on the throne. He assumed the name of the Sun God of Emesa, Elagabalus,

whom he transported to Rome, and continued to worship with fanatical devotion. Like his great-aunt Donna, the new emperor was a syncretist, but after a fashion of his own. Olympus must centre round his god, and his first step was to marry that deity to the celestial Juno of Carthage. Baal, having emigrated to the West, was reunited to Asteroth, and greeted with the accustomed Syrian rites, in all their depravity and

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<sup>11</sup> Fernand Mourret, A History of the Catholic Church, translated by Rev. Newton Thompson (St. Louis, Mo.: Herder Book Company, 1946), I, 321.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

and frenzy. The emperor himself presided over this religious orgy, and there delighted to abase all that remained of the old Roman dignity.<sup>13</sup>

His ultimate goal was to establish a worship which would unite all forms of religion, including the Christian. His reign lasted until 222 and was a period of uninterrupted peace for the Christian Church.

In 221 Elagabalus was persuaded by Julia Moesa to adopt his cousin Alexander and invest him with the title of Caesar. Alexander soon became popular with the army and the emperor equally as much despised. Mutiny broke out in the army followed by severe recriminations on the part of Elagabalus, and ended in the Pretorian guard massacring the emperor and throwing his body in the Tiber.<sup>14</sup>

Upon his death Elagabalus was succeeded in 222 by his cousin Alexander Severus, who reigned until 235.

Alexander was as un-Roman as Elagabalus. His reign was also marked by a period of peace in the Church. Like his predecessor, Alexander was eclectic in matters of religion.

He set up the statue of our Lord in his private chapel, side by side with figures of Apollonius, Abraham, and Orpheus. He was ruled by Julia Mamaea, his mother, the niece of Julia Domna and the patroness of Origen. He adjudged a piece of disputed land across the Tiber to the Christians rather than to a guild of cooks: for "it were better," he said, "that in some fashion

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<sup>13</sup>Duchesne, op. cit., p. 265.

<sup>14</sup>The account of the reign of Elagabalus is given in Gibbon, op. cit., pp. 124-131.

or other God should be worshipped there than that it should be given over to cooks." And "he suffered the Christians to exist."<sup>15</sup>

In 235 we see the seed of Septimius Severus' policies of murder and intrigue bear fruit in the accession of Maximin the Thracian. During his short reign of three years the long period of peace in the Church was broken by an official persecution. Eusebius gives us a good summary of this persecution:

The Roman emperor, Alexander, having finished his reign in thirteen years, was succeeded by Maximinus Caesar. On account of his hatred toward the household of Alexander, which contained many believers, he began a persecution, commanding that only the rulers of the churches should be put to death, as responsible for the Gospel teaching. Thereupon Origen composed his work On Martyrdom, and dedicated it to Ambrose and Protocletus, a presbyter of the parish of Caesarea, because in the persecution there had come upon them both unusual hardships, in which it is reported that they were eminent in confession during the reign of Maximinus, which lasted but three years. Origen has noted this as the time of the persecution in the twenty-second book of his Commentaries on John, and in several epistles.<sup>16</sup>

The persecution was local. "In some places it was furious, in others mild, and in many places there was no persecution at all; compared with other persecutions, it claimed but few victims."<sup>17</sup>

The cruelties and conduct of Maximin generated much popular unrest and hatred among the people. In the province

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<sup>15</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 351.

<sup>16</sup>Eusebius, op. cit., p. 274.

<sup>17</sup>Mourret, op. cit., p. 358.

of Africa the first revolt against Maximin broke out. The proconsul Gordianus was proclaimed emperor along with his son of the same name. Immediately they moved their court to Carthage where Cyprian must have been living at this time. From Carthage they appealed to the senate in Rome for support against Maximin. The senate concurred, but before they could take any material action the Gordians had been defeated by Capelianus, governor of Mauritania. "Carthage, destitute of defense, opened her gates to the conqueror, and Africa was exposed to the rapacious cruelty of a slave, obliged to satisfy his unrelenting master with a large account of blood and treasure."<sup>18</sup> But the senate had already elected Maximus and Balbinus as co-emperors of the empire and passed a sentence of death against Maximin. In April of 238 this sentence was carried out as Maximin was besieging the city of Aquileia.<sup>19</sup>

By July of this same year the two co-emperors Maximus and Balbinus had met the same fate as Maximin at the hands of a group of soldiers.<sup>20</sup> Gordian III now became emperor.

This third Gordian was only thirteen when he was carried by the troops into their camp outside Rome and proclaimed emperor. He ruled until 244. His reign was filled

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<sup>18</sup>Gibbon, op. cit., p. 156.

<sup>19</sup>An account of the reign on Maximin can be found in Gibbon, op. cit., pp. 147-161.

<sup>20</sup>Gibbon, op. cit., pp. 161-164.

with intrigue, murder and unrest as his ministers jockeyed for positions of leadership and imperial control. With such confusion in the capitol, the Church was left unmolested. At the age of nineteen, in the year 244, Gordia III was assassinated by the next emperor, Philip the Arabian.

Philip reigned from 244 to 249. Eusebius has a very interesting comment to make concerning this emperor.

Gordianus had been Roman emperor for six years when Philip, with his son Philip, succeeded him. It is reported that he, being a Christian, desired, on the day of the last paschal vigil, to share with the multitude in the prayers of the Church. but that he was not permitted to enter, by him who then presided, until he had made confession and had numbered himself among those who were reckoned as transgressors and who occupied the place of penance. For if he had not done this, he would never have been received by him, on account of the many crimes which he had committed. It is said that he obeyed readily, manifesting in his conduct a genuine and pious fear of God.<sup>21</sup>

Philip not only refrained from persecuting the Christians, but the evidence seems to indicate that he was favorably disposed to the Church.

He marked his reign by several humane measures. He abolished that publicity of vice which had long been the scandal of the pagan world. In 248, at the millennial of the founding of Rome, he granted a general amnesty, which permitted the return of exiled or deported Christians.<sup>22</sup>

The same writer continues by saying that:

In its outward organization, its geographical expansion, its penetration into society, and the development of ecclesiastical science, the Church made

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<sup>21</sup>Eusebius, op. cit., p. 278.

<sup>22</sup>Hourret, op. cit., p. 364.

notable progress in the reign of Emperor Philip.<sup>23</sup>

The five year reign of Philip came to a tragic end in 249. He fell in battle against the army that had revolted against him and had made Decius the new emperor.

The reign of Decius lasted for only three years, from 249-251, but the results which his reign had on the Christian Church are certainly enormous. It was his edict of persecution that caused the wholesale desertion from the ranks of the Church and gave rise to the important controversies and developments in Christian doctrine which are treated in this thesis.

Decius was a native of Pannonia, northwest of Thrace. The reason for the issuing of his famous edict is not clear. It was probably his grave concern over the moral and cultural breakdown of Roman society which began with the introduction of the religions from the East.

Unlike the Neronian persecution, that under Decius was not the work of a despot's caprice: it was the result of a strictly conservative and pagan reaction against the favors granted the Christians under Emperor Philip, a jealous rivalry against the social status acquired by Christianity during the first part of the third century. Decius was merely the instrument of that reaction and rivalry--an instrument wonderfully adapted to the task laid upon him by the faction which put him on the throne. The pagan writers praise him as a man of Stoic regularity of life, but the Christians denounce him as "an accursed wild beast" for his work of calculating and methodical destruction.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid, p. 365.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid, p. 378.



As a means of implementing reform he revived the office of censor, entrusting it to the senator Valerian, who became emperor in 253.<sup>25</sup>

He commissioned Valerian:

to reform all abuses, whether in the palace, the senate, the government, or elsewhere. A determination to extirpate the Christian religion was among his schemes for general reform; he saw in Christianity a potent solvent of Roman manners and customs; he expected to put an end to it by severe measures, vigorously applied.<sup>26</sup>

The edict which Decius issued is no longer extant but its contents can be gathered from the many writers which refer to it. We do know that:

it provided for an universal proscription; and left nothing to local or personal initiative, whether of people or magistrate. It fixed a date, or appointed term, for making profession of belief; and all who by this day had failed to declare their paganism were to be taken for Christians and so liable to persecution, not only in the large cities such as Rome, Carthage, Alexandria, Antioch, or Ephesus, but in lesser towns such as New-caesarea, in villages, and on private estates.<sup>27</sup>

The chief characteristic of this persecution is that it was aimed at all Christians and not just the leaders.<sup>28</sup>

Its object was not so much to make martyrs as to make

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<sup>25</sup>Duchesne, op. cit., p. 267.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 451.

<sup>28</sup>Mourett, op. cit., p. 380.

apostates.<sup>29</sup> It was enforced throughout the empire.<sup>30</sup>

In the spring and early summer of 251 the persecution began to slacken. The Goths were invading from the North, and Decius had to stop them. A battle was fought in the marshes of the Dobrudzscha in August of 251 with the Romans suffering a disastrous defeat. In this battle Decius lost his life. The Church was given a breathing spell to determine its losses and to take positive steps in reclaiming those who lapsed.

What were the results of this persecution?

Short as it was, his persecution left deep wounds. The number of apostates and Libellatici, their efforts to return to the Church, the strife between Confessors and Bishops and between the advocates of rigour and of laxity, not to mention the schism of the rigorists and the doctrinal question about rebaptism, together with the personal rivalries involved, all these things were a serious legacy to the Church.<sup>31</sup>

The main purpose of the persecution was to cause a great number of apostacies. In this:

It succeeded well at first, as persecutions usually do when the government has common sense enough to make recantation easy. It is far harder to resist at first than at a later stage, when each successive martyr swells the growing tide of enthusiasm which often gives new strength to those who began with utter failure. At first apostates are many, martyrs few. So in the Decian persecution. It was skillfully planned, it took the churches by surprise, and it found many unworthy brethren whom the long peace

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<sup>29</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 433.

<sup>30</sup>Henry Melvill Gwatkin, Early Church History to A. D. 313 (London: Macmillan and Company, 1909), II, 254-255.

<sup>31</sup>Kidd, op. cit., pp. 435-436.

had tempted into them. So the crowd of renegades was particularly scandalous. These were of sundry sorts, for the authorities cared little how a man denied Christ, so that he did it in one way or another. . . . The virtual apostates appear to have been much fewer at Alexandria, where the riots in Philip's time had warned the waverers, than at Carthage, where the offenders were in the thousands, and gave rise to more than one serious controversy.<sup>32</sup>

As the persecution proceeded, many of the bishops in the larger cities escaped to the country and remained in hiding. This was true of Cyprian at Carthage, of Gregory at Neo-Caesarea, of Dionysius at Alexandria and undoubtedly of many other bishops. From their hiding places they continued to govern their bishoprics and in no small way accounted for the steadfastness of many Confessors and the ongoing operation of the Church.<sup>33</sup>

When Decius was killed in 251, his immediate successor to the throne was Gallus. The reign of Gallus was short (251-253), but during these two years he continued the persecution edict of Decius although his lack of zeal and enthusiasm for maintaining it greatly hindered its effectiveness.

In 253 Gallus was defeated and murdered by Aemilianus who had put down the advance of the Goths in the North. Aemilianus assumed the purple, but his reign lasted less

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<sup>32</sup>Gwatkin, op. cit., pp. 255-256.

<sup>33</sup>Duchesne, op. cit., pp. 269-270.

than four months. He in turn was defeated and killed by Valerian.<sup>34</sup>

Valerian reigned until 260. His reign brings to a close the terminus ad quem of this paper. At first Valerian was peacefully disposed to the Christians but soon resumed the principles in the edict of Decius. The peace which the church enjoyed is described by Dionysius of Alexandria.<sup>35</sup> It lasted from 254 to 257.

In his real relation to the Christians, Valerian reminds us of Severus and Diocletian. If he had no sympathy with Christians as such, he was willing to be on the most friendly terms with individuals. He began with the recall of Lucius and the exiles. Before long his house was full of Christians who were so kindly treated that they called it a house of God.<sup>36</sup>

Dionysius of Alexandria in Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History attributes the change in Valerian's attitude to "the teacher and ruler of the synagogue of the Magi from Egypt,"<sup>37</sup> a certain Macrian. This Macrian was a staunch pagan and a bitter foe of the Church. The conditions in the empire made Valerian a good listener to the charges of Macrian.

The frontiers were assailed on all sides; the Franks, the Alamans, and other pillaging tribes from Germany crossed the Rhine and the Danube. The Goths, dwellers

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<sup>34</sup>Gibbon, op. cit., pp. 219-223.

<sup>35</sup>Eusebius, Book VII. 5, op. cit., p. 294.

<sup>36</sup>Gwatkin, op. cit., p. 266. Eusebius has this information in Book VII. 10 of his Church History, op. cit., pp. 298-299.

<sup>37</sup>Eusebius, op. cit., p. 298.

by the North Sea, became pirates, harried the seaboard, ravaged Asia Minor, and even showed themselves in the Aegean. On the east of the empire, the Persians took possession of Armenia and Mesopotamia. Even the tribes of the Sahara attacked the outposts of Numidia. Valerian, good but weak, so far lost his head as to yield to fanatical counsels and renew Decian's futile persecution of the Christians.<sup>38</sup>

It must have been the old appeal of Celsus, that every Christian should give his wholehearted support to the emperor and the empire, which caused the change of heart in Valerian. The charges against the Christians resulted:

in two edicts of persecution in 257 and 258. Neither of these was directed against Christians as individuals so much as against the Christian Church. No one was required to apostatize. The first decree enjoined upon the hierarchical heads of the Church to join officially in the worship of the gods, although, if they so wished, they might continue their worship of Christ, and, to abandon the collegiate form of church organization.<sup>39</sup>

This first edict was published in August of 257. It affected only the higher clergy and resulted in few martyrdoms. Those bishops who refused to carry out the orders of the edict were exiled from their bishopric. Stephen of Rome was banished, Cyprian of Carthage was exiled to Curubis in Africa, and Dionysius of Alexandria was exiled to Kephro in Libya.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Duchesne, op. cit., p. 273. See also Gwatkin, op. cit., p. 266 and Gibbon, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>39</sup>Mourett, op. cit., p. 413. See also Duchesne, op. cit., p. 274.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 414.

Valerian soon discovered that the first edict did not do the job of stopping the Church from holding gatherings and extending its influence. Consequently in 258 he issued his second edict, which Cyprian describes in his letters 80 and 81.<sup>41</sup> This edict included not only the clergy but also laymen in certain secular positions. The sentence for those who violated the edict was death.<sup>42</sup> Martyrdoms grew in great numbers as a result.<sup>43</sup>

The death of the bishop of Carthage is thus described:

Cyprian was summoned from Curubis to Carthage by the new proconsul Galerius Maximus. But when Galerius found himself too unwell to leave Utica, he sent for Cyprian to come there. As this did not suit Cyprian's plans, he hid himself. He was quite ready for death, but at Carthage among his people, not at Utica. When the proconsul reached Carthage, Cyprian was arrested in his own home, and brought before him next morning (Sept. 14). The trial was short, for the offense was flagrant and avowed: and soon the dying Galerius read the sentence "that Thascius Cyprianus be beheaded with the sword." A great company followed to the place of execution, for all men felt that a great career was ending. Even the executioner was overawed and utterly unnerved, and the commanding centurion had to give the fatal stroke. So fell Cyprian . . . ."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Cyprian, Epistles 40 and 41, in Ante-Nicene Fathers, edited by Alexander Roberts (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885), V, 406-408.

<sup>42</sup>Duchesne, op. cit., p. 274.

<sup>43</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 476.

<sup>44</sup>Gwatkin, op. cit., pp. 269-270. See also Mourett, op. cit., pp. 419-421.

In 260 Valerian was imprisoned, and his son Gallienus assumed the throne and ruled until 268. He issued the first edict of toleration in a Rescript of 261.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 478.

We would like to consider the nature of the persecution by which a Christian passed from the church. In the letters of Cyprian we find such information on this subject. For this reason we shall consider this topic in the light of the earlier persecution.

The long period of peace that the Church experienced from the end of the reign of Septimius to that of Maximian, with only minor outbreaks, caused the Church to become lax in its discipline and filled with members who were not strong in their faith. This situation Cyprian describes in section 6 of his treatise On the Lapsed:

...and was desirous of increasing his estate, and forgetful of what believers had either done before or the times of the apostles, or always ought to do, they, with the insatiable greed of covetousness, devoted themselves to the increase of their property. Among the priests there was no devotion of holding; among the ministers there was no sound faith; in their words there was no reverence; in their manners there was no discipline. . . . But a few bishops who sought to resist both corruption and example in others, regarding their divine charge, began again in several provinces, to erect their thrones, dismount their people, wander about over Jewish territories, hunted and marked for painful servitude, while profane were staying in the Church.

<sup>46</sup>Cyprian, On the Lapsed, in Antiquities of Christianity, edited by Charles Scribner's Sons: The Christian Literature Co. New York, 1901, p. 438. Hereafter cited as Ant. V.

## CHAPTER III

### THE LAPSED AND THE CHURCH

#### The Nature and the Extent of the Christian Lapsed

We would first like to consider the nature or method by which a Christian lapsed from the church. In the letters of Cyprian we find much information on this subject. For this reason we shall consider this topic in the light of the Decian persecution.

The long period of peace that the Church experienced from the end of the reign of Caracalla to that of Decius, with only minor outbreaks, caused the Church to become lax in its discipline and filled with members who were not strong in their faith. This situation Cyprian describes in section 6 of his treatise On the Lapsed:

Each one was desirous of increasing his estate; and forgetful of what believers had either done before in the times of the apostles, or always ought to do, they, with the insatiable ardour of covetousness, devoted themselves to the increase of their property. Among the priests there was no devoutness of religion; among the ministers there was no sound faith: in their works there was no mercy; in their manners there was no discipline. . . . Not a few bishops who ought to furnish both exhortation and example to others, despising their divine charge, became agents in secular business, forsook their throne, deserted their people, wandered about over foreign provinces, hunted the markets for gainful merchandise, while brethren were starving in the Church.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cyprian, On the Lapsed, in Ante-Nicene Fathers, edited by Alexander Roberts (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Press, 1886), V, 438. Hereafter cited as ANF, V.



It was no surprise then that when the persecution came many flocked to the altars to offer incense to the Roman emperor. These scenes must have truly been a horrible sight for those who remained firm in their faith.

They indeed did not wait to be apprehended ere they ascended, or to be interrogated ere they denied. Many were conquered before the battle, prostrated before the attack. Nor did they even leave it to be said for them, that they seemed to sacrifice to idols unwillingly. They ran to the market place of their own accord; freely they hastened to death, as if they had formerly wished it, as if they would embrace an opportunity now given which they had always desired.<sup>2</sup>

Besides those who willingly went to the altars to sacrifice (sacrificati) there were also those who cast incense on the altar (thurificati) and ate of the sacrifices and drank of the libations which were offered. Some Christians at first stubbornly refused to sacrifice but after a period of torture finally consented. There also were a group of lapsed who did not actually sacrifice but received from the magistrates certificates stating that they had sacrificed. These lapsed became known in the Church as the libellatici. There were Christians who had their name placed on the roll as having sacrificed by proxy. These were labeled as acta facientes.<sup>3</sup> Later on when these lapsed came back to the Church, the amount of

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 439.

<sup>3</sup>Henry Melvill Gwatkin, Early Church History to A. D. 313 (London: The Macmillan Company, 1909), II, 256.

penance which they were required to do was in a large part dependent on the above categories into which they fell.

The number of those who received the certificate of sacrifice was very great.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Attitude of the Church Towards the Lapsed

When the Decian persecution came, the Church was quite unprepared for the situation. As soon as the first wave of persecution passed over the Church, leaving it with so many that had lapsed, the question that immediately arose was what should be done with those who did lapse but now desired to be reinstated in the Church. First it must be remembered that Cyprian considered the very act of sacrifice, or even obtaining a certificate of sacrifice, the same as self-excommunication.<sup>5</sup> By their own free will these people were no longer in the Church. Their crime was truly horrible:

Returning from the altars of the devil, they draw near to the holy place of the Lord, with hands filthy and reeking with smell, still almost breathing of the plague-bearing idol-meats; and even with jaws still exhaling their crime, and reeking with the fatal contact, they intrude on the body of the Lord . . . .

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Cyprian, Epistle 69, 4, in Early Latin Fathers, translated by S. L. Greenslade (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), p. 152.

<sup>6</sup>Cyprian, op. cit., p. 441.

Despite the great abhorrence which the Church had for the lapsed, Cyprian would not have them forsaken by the Church. While in exile from Carthage in the year 250, he wrote to the clergy there advising them on the way in which the Church should deal with the lapsed.

. . . I think that our brethren must be dealt with; --that they who have received certificates from the martyrs, and may be assisted by their privilege with God, if they should be seized with any misfortune and peril of sickness, should, without waiting for my presence, before any presbyter who might be present . . . , be able to make confession of their sin, that, with the imposition of hands upon them for repentance, they should come to the Lord with the peace which the martyrs have desired, by their letters to us, to be granted to them.

And concerning those who are not sick unto death he writes in the same epistle:

Cherish also by your presence the rest of the people who are lapsed, and cheer them by your consolation, that they may not fail of the faith and of God's mercy. For those shall not be forsaken by the aid and assistance of the Lord, who meekly, humbly, and with true penitence have persevered in good works; <sup>8</sup> but the divine remedy will be granted to them also.

It was the practice of the Church that confessors and martyrs could write letters to the bishop asking that certain lapsed be granted forgiveness and restored to the Church. It is these letters to which Cyprian is referring in the above quotation from his eleventh epistle. This practice was not new, but not until the wholesale desertions

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<sup>7</sup>Cyprian, Epistle XII, ANF, V, 293.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

of the Decian persecution was it seriously questioned. The reason: it was being misused.

Many of those who lapsed and desired readmittance to the Church hurried to the confessors in prison and got them to write letters to the bishop asking him to reinstate them in the Church. Cyprian seems willing to do this as is indicated in the above letter. But the misuse of this privilege soon became flagrant as is indicated by the following letter:

All the confessors to father Cyprian, greeting. Know that, to all, concerning whom the account of what they have done since the commission of their sin had been, in your estimation, satisfactory, we have granted peace; and we have desired that this rescript<sup>9</sup> should be made known by you to the other bishops also.

To stop this misuse, Cyprian mildly rebuked the confessors, and especially one Lucius who was the ringleader of this movement of wholesale reconciliation.

For while the Lord has said that the nations are to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and their past sins are to be done away in baptism; this man (Lucian), ignorant of the precept and of the law, commands peace to be granted and sins to be done away in the name of Paulus; and he says that this was commanded him by Paulus, as you will observe in the letter sent by the same Lucian to Celerinus, in which he very little considered that it is not martyrs that make the Gospel<sup>10</sup> but that martyrs are made by the Gospel . . . .

In the treatise of Cyprian entitled On the Lapsed he gives his views further on this matter as follows:

<sup>9</sup>Cyprian, Epistle XVI, ANF, V, 296.

<sup>10</sup>Cyprian, Epistle XXII, ANF, V, 301.

Let no one cheat himself, let no one deceive himself. The Lord alone can have mercy. He alone can bestow pardon for sins which have been committed against Himself. . . . But if any one, by an overhastened haste, rashly thinks that he can give remission of sins to all, or dares to rescind the Lord's precepts, not only does it in no respect advantage the lapsed, but it does them harm. . . . And does any one think that, in opposition to the Judge, a man can become of avail worthy of for the general remission and pardon of sins, or that he can shield others before he himself is vindicated? The martyrs order something to be done; but only if this thing be just and lawful, if it can be done without opposing the Lord Himself by God's priest. . . .<sup>11</sup>

This problem of the attitude of the Church toward the lapsed will be discussed further in the last two chapters of this paper and in the section following, where the schisms which resulted in the Church due to the lapsed are considered.

#### The Schisms in the Church Caused by the Lapsed

In considering this point we shall again limit our discussion to the schisms which occurred during the episcopate of Cyprian. It might be thought that Montanism should also be included here since it had such a great influence on Tertullian. This influence cannot be disputed, but the fact nevertheless remains that Montanism arose in the latter part of the second century, which is before the terminus a quo of this paper. Furthermore, the direct cause of Montanism cannot be attributed to the lapsed in the persecutions. The schisms therefore considered in

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<sup>11</sup>Cyprian, On the Lapsed, ANF, V, 442.

in this section are those of Novatian and Felicissimus.

Our main information concerning the schism of Novatian is found in Cyprian's epistles 40, 42, 43, 47, 48, 51 and 66. Upon these we shall depend for the bulk of our information. In our discussion of Novatian we must be careful not to confuse him with Novatus, who played an important part in the Novatian schism, and with whom we must begin.

Novatus was a presbyter in Carthage. He was one of the five presbyters who objected to the election of Cyprian as bishop of Carthage and eventually was excommunicated from the Church by the first council of Carthage.<sup>12</sup> He advocated a liberal policy of receiving the lapsed back into the Church. He soon entered into partnership with Felicissimus and became his deacon.<sup>13</sup> The main concern of Novatus was not that of strictness or leniency toward the lapsed but rather one of "clericalism in opposition to the bishop Cyprian and the laity."<sup>14</sup> This can be seen immediately when we view the change of attitude in Novatus when he left Carthage and went to Rome. This was occasioned by the breakup of the schism of Felicissimus. Novatus consequently went to Rome and immediately fell in with Novatian.

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<sup>12</sup>Cyprian, Epistle LI, ANF, V, 327.

<sup>13</sup>B. J. Kidd, A History of the Church to A. D. 461 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1922), I, 445.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 446.

Novatian was a presbyter in Rome. After the death of bishop Fabian in 250 he became very prominent during the long interim before the election of the new bishop. In March of 251 the election of a new bishop of Rome took place. The person elected was Cornelius.<sup>15</sup> Soon after this Novatian was also elected bishop by a group of Roman Christians headed by the confessors Maximus, Urbanus, Sidonius and Macharius, and the ex-Carthaginian presbyter, Novatus. After some hesitation Cyprian recognized the ordination of Cornelius and rejected that of Novatian and declared him outside the Church.<sup>16</sup> Cyprian also wrote to the confessors and admonished them to return to the true Church.

For it weighs me down and saddens me, and the intolerable grief of a smitten, almost prostrate, spirit seizes me, when I find that you there, contrary to ecclesiastical order, contrary to evangelical law, contrary to the unity of the Catholic institution, had consented that another bishop should be made. . . . I entreat that in you, at all events, that unlawful rending of our brotherhood may not continue; but remembering both your confession and the divine tradition, you may return to the Mother whence you have gone forth; whence you came to the glory of confession with the rejoicing of the same Mother.<sup>17</sup>

This admonition was effective, for soon Cornelius was

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid, pp. 446-447.

<sup>16</sup>Cyprian, Epistle XLI, ANF, V, 319.

<sup>17</sup>Cyprian, Epistle XLIII, ANF, V, 321.

able to write that the confessors had returned to the Church.<sup>18</sup> Cyprian answered this letter of Cornelius<sup>19</sup> and received another from the confessors informing him that they had returned to the Church.<sup>20</sup>

It appears that for a while this silenced the schism of Novatian but it soon turned up again with Novatus playing a more important role.<sup>21</sup> In Epistle 48 Cyprian tells Cornelius about the crimes of Novatus while he was still in Carthage.

For about Novatus there need have been nothing told by you to us, since Novatus ought rather to have been shown by us to you, as always greedy of novelty, raging with the rapacity of an insatiable avarice, inflated with the arrogance and stupidity of swelling pride; always known with bad repute to the bishops there; always condemned by the voice of all the priests as a heretic and a perfidious man; always inquisitive, that he may betray: . . . This is the same Novatus who first sowed among us the flames of discord and schism; who separated some of the brethren here from the bishop. . . .<sup>22</sup>

The schism of Novatian was over the question of leniency or strictness in receiving the lapsed back into the Church. Cornelius advocated leniency; Novatian demanded a strict stand. According to Novatian "every lapsed person was to

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<sup>18</sup>Cyprian, Epistle XLV, ANF, V, 322-323.

<sup>19</sup>Cyprian, Epistle XLVI, ANF, V, 324.

<sup>20</sup>Cyprian, Epistle XLIX, ANF, V, 326.

<sup>21</sup>Cyprian, Epistles XLVII and XLVIII, ANF, V, 324-326.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid, p. 325.



be permanently excluded from it (the Church)."<sup>23</sup> The schism of Novatian is presented by Eusebius in his Church History, Book VI.43. He gives us an account of the synod which met at Rome to excommunicate Novatian, as well as a general description of the character of Novatian and his schism.<sup>24</sup>

The schism of Felicissimus we have already briefly considered in connection with Novatus. A few more remarks are needed. The schism arose out of the election of Cyprian to the bishopric in 250. The soul of the conspiracy was Novatus, but its nominal leader was Felicissimus. He was "a rich layman of doubtful morals, but of considerable influence because of his wealth and social standing."<sup>25</sup> In the absence of Cyprian during the height of the persecution, these men caused a great deal of trouble by admitting many lapsed into the Church after only a slight penance had been enacted.<sup>26</sup> To counteract this, Cyprian writes to the presbyters at Carthage that:

. . . since Felicissimus has threatened that they should not communicate with him in death who had obeyed us, that is, who communicated with us, let him receive the sentence which he first of all

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<sup>23</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 451.

<sup>24</sup>Eusebius, Church History, in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, edited by Philip Schaff (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Press, 1886), I, 286-290.

<sup>25</sup>Fernand Mourret, A History of the Catholic Church, translated by Rev. Newton Thompson (St. Louis: Herder Book Company, 1946), I, 393.

<sup>26</sup>Cyprian, Epistle XXXVIII, ANF, V, 315-316.

declared, that he may know that he is excommunicated by us. . . . Moreover, whoever shall ally himself with his conspiracy and faction, let him know that he shall not communicate in the Church with us, since of his own accord he has preferred to be separated from the Church.<sup>27</sup>

In answer to this letter Cyprian got a reply that Felicissimus had been ejected from the Church.<sup>28</sup> A new schism was born.

In schism Felicissimus and his followers continued to work against Cyprian. They induced the confessors to write letters for the lapsed in order that they might be received back into the Church. Cyprian writes:

Now it has appeared whence came the faction of Felicissimus; on what root and by what strength it stood. These men supplied in former times encouragements and exhortations to certain confessors, not to agree with their bishop, not to maintain the ecclesiastical discipline with faith and quietness according to the Lord's precepts, not to keep the glory of their confession with an uncorrupt and unspotted conversation. And lest it should be too little to have corrupted the minds of certain confessors, and to have wished to arm a portion of our broken fraternity against God's priesthood, they have now turned their attention with their envysome deceitfulness to the ruin of the lapsed. . . .<sup>29</sup>

Farther on in this same epistle Cyprian gives us in very clear terms his attitude toward the Church and schisma, and in these views we can clearly see the heart and core of his concept of penance and rebaptism.

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid, p. 316.

<sup>28</sup>Cyprian, Epistle LXXIX, ANF, V, 316.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, p. 317.

They (the schism of Felicissimus) are now offering peace who have not peace themselves. They are promising to bring back and recall the lapsed into the Church, who themselves have departed from the Church. There is one God, and Christ is one, and there is one Church, and one chair founded upon the rock by the word of the Lord. Another altar cannot be constituted nor a new priesthood be made, except the one altar and the one priesthood. Whosoever gathereth elsewhere, scattereth. Whatsoever is appointed by human madness, so that the divine disposition is violated, is adulterous, is impious, is sacrilegious.<sup>30</sup>

After Cyprian returned to Carthage in April of 251, he called the First African Council. In this council it was decided to grant peace to the lapsed and admit them to the Church after due penance had been exacted.<sup>31</sup> After this resolution had been passed by a council held at Rome under Cornelius, "the whole Church in the West promptly accepted this approval. Thus the schism of Felicissimus received its death blow."<sup>32</sup> Felicissimus went to Rome in an attempt to undermine Cornelius' attitude toward Cyprian, but this also seems to have failed.<sup>33</sup> After this we hear nothing more from Cyprian concerning Felicissimus.

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of these schisms in understanding the development of Cyprian's views in regard to penance and baptism.

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid, p. 318.

<sup>31</sup>The decrees of the council are contained in Cyprian's letter to Cornelius, No. 53.

<sup>32</sup>Mourett, op. cit., p. 395.

<sup>33</sup>Cyprian, Epistle LIV, ANF, V, 338-347.

## CHAPTER IV

### A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND INFLUENCE OF TERTULLIAN AND CYPRIAN

#### Tertullian, His Life and Influence

Tertullian was born between the years 155 and 160 at Carthage.<sup>1</sup> His father was a centurion in the service of the Proconsul of Africa. He received an excellent education and became a well known lawyer. He was converted to Christianity around the year 197 and soon afterwards, according to Jerome, was made a presbyter.<sup>2</sup> Immediately upon his conversion he began to write numerous pamphlets and articles, of which many are preserved to this day. The constancy of Christians under stress seems to have been the reason for his conversion rather than a search for truth in the style of Justin. Upon his conversion he was immediately impressed by the striking difference between Christianity and heathenism. Already in his first years as a Christian he

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<sup>1</sup>This and the subsequent information on the life of Tertullian has been taken from the following works: B. J. Kidd, A History of the Church to A. D. 461 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1922), I, 287-289, 320; Henry Melvill Gwatkin, Early Church History to A. D. 313 (London: The Macmillan Company, 1909), II, 236-239; and Louis Duchesne, Early History of the Christian Church (London: Murray, 1933), I, 286-288.

<sup>2</sup>Jerome, De viris illustribus, c. liii, as quoted in Kidd, op. cit., p. 320.

began to develop the rigorist tendencies which dominated his later life. All his writings give evidence to the fact that he was trained in Roman Law.

His earliest works exhibit all his characteristics--burning rhetoric, inexhaustible vigour, profound knowledge of his time, familiarity with the past and the books recording it, and also the aggressive and quibbling spirit traceable in all his writings.

Around the years 202-203 he joined the Montanist sect and remained in this schism until his death somewhere around the year 225.

Forever a fighter, forever in a state of nervous irritation, at last, not satisfied with opponents outside the Church, he fell foul of those within who were less harsh and intolerant than himself. . . . Then in the name of the Paraclete, he vociferated to his heart's content against second marriages, against Christians who became soldiers, artists, or officials, against those who did not veil their daughters, or practise sufficient mortification, and against bishops who took upon them to restore penitents to communion.

Duchesne probably hits the nail on the head in explaining Tertullian's reason for joining the Montanists when he writes: "In this sect, he was supreme. In Africa, the Montanists were called Tertullianists."<sup>5</sup> At heart Tertullian was a Montanist long before he joined the sect.

To him the Gospel is a rigid law, and the heinous

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<sup>3</sup>Duchesne, op. cit., p. 287.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

sinner is once for all beyond the reach of mercy. Christ will plead no more for him, and wrath shall come upon him to the uttermost. Forgiveness is not until seventy times seven, but after Baptism not even once.<sup>6</sup>

All his writings illustrate his legalistic mind<sup>7</sup> and the great stress which he placed on God's "penal justice."<sup>8</sup>

His influence upon Latin Christianity is unquestionable.

He, certainly, imparted to Christian thought that Latin character, which has dominated Western theology ever since. We can even discover in the writings of Tertullian a critical development in the teaching of Christianity, for he recognizes that it must justify its claim at the bar of reason as well as at the shrine of the heart.<sup>9</sup>

From the same author:

As the teacher of Cyprian whose writings are consulted, even to-day, as authoritative, and as the forerunner of the great Augustine, his influence is unquestionable.<sup>10</sup>

#### Cyprian, His Life and Influence

Concerning the date of his birth, his birthplace, and

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<sup>6</sup>Gwatkyn, op. cit., p. 238.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. De Cult. Pen. I, 7; De Spec. 14; the entire Apology; the De Pallio; De Paenitentia 2, 4, 5, 6, & 7; Ad Uxorem II.1; and De Praes. Haer. 37.

<sup>8</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 324.

<sup>9</sup>James Morgan, The Importance of Tertullian in the Development of Christian Dogma (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1928), p. 267.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

his family we know nothing.<sup>11</sup> He is believed to have been born around 205-210. Like Tertullian he was trained in Roman law and was noted as a famous lawyer before his conversion, which occurred in 246 by a presbyter named Caecilian. Upon his conversion he devoted his life to the Church and rose fast in its hierarchical system. He became bishop sometime after June of 248 and was martyred on September 14, 258. It is said that after his conversion he never again read a secular book, for it is impossible to find a secular quotation in all of his writings. While still in secular life he must have acquired a sizeable fortune, for after his conversion he distributed much of his wealth among the poor and to the Church. It was almost immediately after his conversion that he began his voluminous writing. Today there are extant many of his letters, a number of his treatises, and some doubtful writings.<sup>12</sup>

Cyprian differed much from Tertullian although they were nearly contemporaries and Cyprian constantly considered Tertullian his teacher. Their difference lies in temperament. Tertullian was more the scholar, doing much of his fighting with the pen rather than with actions. Cyprian was more the man of action. He was a born ruler,

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<sup>11</sup>These and the following facts on the life of Cyprian are taken from Kidd, op. cit., pp. 436ff.

<sup>12</sup>These writings are contained in volume five of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, pp. 267-600.

a man of intense activity, yet of grave and winning gentleness, a man of

princely dignity and perfect temper; as quick as any lawyer, a judge of men, and as skilful an organizer as any merchant-prince. Such was Cyprian. Yet somehow we feel that we never quite get at the real man. He moves in matters of administration, and takes the deeper questions for granted. It is not merely that he does not like to study principles: he will not face them when they call for a decision. He takes his system unexamined, and allows himself to be absorbed in it; and the system is not quite Christ's.<sup>13</sup>

For the times in which Cyprian lived his personality suited him perfectly. A man of action and persistence was needed, and Cyprian was that sort of man. He was grateful for what he received from the past but was not reluctant to change it if the welfare of the Church was at stake.

And it was the welfare of the Church that most concerned him. This we have seen previously. In his treatise On the Unity of the Church he developed this doctrine to a degree that was unique for the times. Gwatkyn is very critical of this new theory:

He did not invent it to meet the needs of the Novatian controversy, for it is clearly laid down in his earliest letters; and indeed there is no sign that he ever seriously troubled himself to think out the ideas on which it depends. He takes them like a practical man from the air about him, assumes them to be not only true but self-evident, and concerns himself only with their practical applications. Yet they are not only new but essentially heathen, though the mischief is masked in his own case by lofty gifts of practical charity and complete sincerity. Cyprian is a saint--none can doubt it--yet his general conception of

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<sup>13</sup>Gwatkyn, op. cit., p. 281.



religion is more heathen than Christian. As the heathen god's favour is strictly limited to his worshipers, so God's<sup>14</sup> grace is strictly limited to the visible church.

Whether Gwatkyn is right in saying that Cyprian's doctrine of the Church is "clearly laid down in his earliest letters" is highly questionable. The references he gives to support this statement do not prove it in the mind of this writer. As we shall see later, Cyprian's doctrine of the Church is most forcefully and completely expounded in his letters sixty-nine to seventy-five which were written at the close of his life between 255 and 257, well after the beginning of persecution and the Novatian schism.

In The Unity of the Church he makes the famous statement:

He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother.<sup>15</sup>

He preceded this statement with the following:

The spouse of Christ cannot be adulterous; she is uncorrupted and pure. She knows one home; she guards with chaste modesty the sanctity of one couch. She keeps us for God. She appoints the sons whom she has born for the kingdom. Whoever is separated from the Church and is joined to an adulteress, is separated from the promises of the Church; nor can he who forsakes the Church of Christ attain to the rewards of Christ.<sup>16</sup> He is a stranger; he is profane; he is an enemy.

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid, p. 278.

<sup>15</sup>Cyprian, On the Unity of the Church, Chapter 6, in Ante-Nicene Fathers, edited by Alexander Roberts (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1886), V, 423.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

In the epistles concerning baptizing those returned from schisms, Cyprian stresses continually that those outside the Church do not possess the gift of imparting the Holy Spirit.<sup>17</sup>

Cyprian's concept of the Church vitally affected all of his doctrine and practice, especially the practice of admitting the lapsed into the Church and of rebaptizing those who returned from schism.

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<sup>17</sup>Cyprian, Epistle 69.10, in Early Latin Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), pp. 156-157.

## CHAPTER V

### PENANCE IN THE TEACHINGS OF TERTULLIAN AND CYPRIAN

#### Tertullian's Teachings on Penance

Tertullian's teachings on penance are contained primarily in two of his writings, On Repentance<sup>1</sup> and On Modesty.<sup>2</sup> The Latin name for the first is De Patientia and is undoubtedly a pre-Montanist writing, while the Latin name for the latter is De Pudicitia and was written after 218 when Tertullian joined the Montanist sect.<sup>3</sup>

Tertullian's doctrine of penance is linked quite inseparably with his ideas on baptism. Consequently some material which belongs in the next chapter will of necessity be contained in this chapter.

It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to determine the influence which the persecutions and the lapsed had on Tertullian's doctrine of penance. We might also say here that this is equally true of his concept of baptism.

His writing On Modesty was motivated by the edict of

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<sup>1</sup>Found in Ante-Nicene Fathers, edited by A. Roberts (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1886), III, 657-666. Hereafter cited as ANF, III.

<sup>2</sup>Found in Ante-Nicene Fathers, edited by A. Roberts (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1886), IV, 74-101. Hereafter cited as ANF, IV.

<sup>3</sup>A. Cleveland Cox, ANF, III, 11.

the "Pontifex Maximus" (i.e., the bishop of Rome): "I remit, to such as have discharged (the requirements of) repentance, the sins both of adultery and of fornication."<sup>4</sup> This was like throwing hot coals of fire on his head. Tertullian's strict and legalistic temperament made him declare that these were two sins which could never be forgiven by the Church. Those who lapsed during the persecutions of Severus and Caracalla must have pointed up and developed this general direction of his thinking and his eventual switch to Montanism. This becomes even more clear as we examine his ideas on penance.

The best way to determine Tertullian's concept of penance is to follow his argument in On Repentance. He begins by stating that true repentance is divine, originated by God and subject to His laws.

A good deed has God as its debtor, just as an evil has too; for a judge is a rewarder of every cause. Well, since, God as Judge presides over the exacting and maintaining of justice, which to Him is most dear; and since it is with an eye to justice that He appoints all the sum of His discipline, is there room for doubting that, just as in all our acts universally, so also in the case of repentance, justice must be rendered to God?--which duty can indeed only be fulfilled on the condition that repentance be brought to bear only on sins.

Sin is "that from which God bids us abstain."<sup>6</sup> He enlarges

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<sup>4</sup>Tertullian, On Modesty, in ANF, IV, 74. This is Callistus who was bishop of Rome from 218-222.

<sup>5</sup>Tertullian, On Repentance, ANF, III, 653.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

upon this by categorizing sin into two parts:

The source whence sins are named "spiritual" and "corporeal" is the fact that every sin is a matter either of act or else of thought: so that what is in deed is "corporeal," because a deed, like a body, is capable of being seen and touched; what is in the mind is "spiritual," because spirit is neither seen nor handled: by which consideration is shown that sins not of deed only, but of will too, are to be shunned, and by repentance purged.<sup>7</sup>

Repentance can include all sins:

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.

The effect of this repentance is a reconciliation with God:

For what I say is this, that the repentance which, being shown us and commanded us through God's grace recalls us to grace with the Lord, when once learned and undertaken by us ought never afterward to be cancelled by repetition of sin.

It is in baptism that the sinner offers his first repentance to God and receives his first forgiveness.<sup>10</sup>

For this reason baptism is very important to Tertullian and must be entered upon by the sinner with the utmost reverence and preparation. He rebukes those who consider the period before baptism as a period for having the last fling of sin before committing one's life to God:

Moreover, a presumptuous confidence in baptism

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p. 659.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p. 660.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, p. 661.

introduces all kind of vicious delay and tergiversation with regard to repentance; for, feeling sure of undoubted pardon of their sins, men meanwhile steal the intervening time, and make it for themselves into a holiday-time for sinning, rather than a time for learning not to sin. Further, how inconsistent is it to expect pardon of sins (to be granted) to a repentance which they have not fulfilled! . . . . For repentance is the price at which the Lord has determined to award pardon. . . .<sup>11</sup>

Tertullian emphasizes the important point that we must not think that God is obliged to offer forgiveness opus operatum upon the repentance of the sinner:

But some think as if God were under a necessity of bestowing even on the unworthy, what He has engaged (to give);<sup>12</sup> and they turn His liberality into slavery.

After the repentance of baptism there is only one more repentance to which a Christian can go if he is again found in sin. The mechanics of this repentance Tertullian describes:

The narrower, then, the sphere of action of this second and only (remaining) repentance, the more laborious is its probation; in order that it may not be exhibited in the conscience along, but may likewise be carried out in some "external" act. This act, which is more usually expressed and commonly spoken of under a Greek name is *ἑξομολόγησις*, whereby we confess our sins to the Lord, not indeed as if He were ignorant of them, but inasmuch as by confession satisfaction is settled, of confession repentance is born; by repentance God is appeased. And thus exomologesis is a discipline for man's prostration and humiliation,<sup>13</sup> enjoining a demeanor calculated to move mercy.

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 664.

This repentance is to be accompanied by certain outward acts to make sure that the sinner is sincere.

With regard also to the very dress and food, it commands (the penitent) to lie in sackcloth and ashes, to cover his body in mourning, to lay his spirit low in sorrows, to exchange for severe treatment the sins which he has committed; moreover to know no food and drink but such as is plain . . . to feed prayers on fastings, to groan, to weep and outcries . . . to bow before the feet of the presbyters, and kneel to God's dear ones. . . . Therefore, while it abases the man, it raises him; while it covers him with squalor, it renders him more clean; while it accuses, it excuses; while it condemns, it absolves.<sup>14</sup>

In On Modesty Tertullian distinguishes between two kinds of sins.

We agree that the causes of repentance are sins. These we divide into two issues; some will be remissible, some irremissible: in accordance wherewith it will be doubtful to no one that some deserve chastisement, some condemnation. Every sin is dischargeable either by pardon or else by penalty: by pardon as the result of chastisement, by penalty as the result of condemnation.<sup>15</sup>

From this passage certain problems arise which have received much attention from scholars.<sup>16</sup> The problems are these: (1) Does Tertullian here change his mind after coming over to Montanism and believe now that there are certain unforgiveable sins which even penance cannot wipe

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Tertullian, On Modesty, ANF, IV, 76.

<sup>16</sup>R. C. Mortimer, The Origins of Private Penance in the Western Church (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1939) has a detailed discussion of this problem on pages 6 to 22. Here we shall only state the problem and Mortimer's conclusions.

away? (2) Were there two kinds of penance for these two different kinds of sins? (3) Is there evidence here that we already have the beginnings of a private penance? The conclusions of Mortimer on these problems are as follows:

There was certainly a distinction between lesser sins and grave or mortal sins. But there is no suggestion of different kinds of penance. Either all were submitted to the one public penance, or the lesser sins required no ecclesiastical penance at all. There is no evidence for the castigatio or censure followed by absolution of which Galtier<sup>17</sup> speaks, nor for any other form of private penance.

In Tertullian's writing On Modesty there is a noticeable change in his concept of penance which reflects his Montanist influences. He denies that forgiveness can ever be given by bishops and priests in the Church.

And accordingly "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. For the right and arbitrament is the Lord's,<sup>18</sup> not the servant's; God's Himself, not the priest's.

One more point we must add before leaving Tertullian's concept of penance. This is his view on the letters which martyrs wrote absolving fallen sinners from repentance. As a continuation of the above passage Tertullian goes on to say:

But you go so far as to lavish this "power" upon martyrs withal! No sooner has any one, acting on a preconceived arrangement, put on the bonds-- (bonds), moreover, which, in the nominal custody now in vogue, are soft ones--than adulterers beset him,

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>18</sup>Tertullian, On Modesty, ANF, IV, 100.



fornicators gain access to him; instantly prayers echo around him; instantly pools of tears (from the eyes) of all the polluted surround him; nor are there any who are more diligent in purchasing entrance into the prison than they who have lost (the fellowship of) the Church! . . . who permits man to condone (offences) which are to be reserved for God, by whom those (offences) have been condemned without discharge, which not even apostles (so far as I know)<sup>19</sup> martyrs withal themselves--have judged condonable?

From the above discussion we can summarize Tertullian's beliefs on penance as follows: (1) In baptism man performed his first repentance and received forgiveness for all sins that he had committed; (2) After baptism there remained only one additional repentance called exomologesis; (3) Whether this repentance was for all sins or only for grave or mortal sins cannot be established from the evidence; (4) Certain penances were imposed on the repentant in exomologesis but a regulated system of penances is not in evidence.

#### Cyprian's Teachings on Penance

Cyprian's concept of penance is intimately linked with the lapsed. In this discussion, therefore, the preceding material dealing with the persecutions must be kept clearly in mind. It will be necessary to repeat at times what has gone before but we will endeavour to keep this at a minimum.

Cyprian's early concept of penance is very similar to that which had been handed down to him from Tertullian.

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

We first hear of this when Cyprian writes to his clergy in Carthage concerning a number of presbyters who were granting the Eucharist to some lapsed before they had done penance and received the imposition of hands from the bishop. We can almost certainly guess that the presbyters who were guilty of this were those five whom we have met before, including Novatus and Felicissimus. These words of Cyprian are contained in his ninth letter:

For although in smaller sins sinners may do penance for a set time, and according to the rules of discipline come to public confession, and by imposition of the hand of the bishop and clergy receive the right of communion: now with their time still unfulfilled, while persecution is still raging, while the peace of the Church itself is not yet restored, they are admitted to communion, and their name is presented; and while the penance is not yet performed, confession is not yet made, the hands of the bishop and clergy are not yet laid upon them, the eucharist is given to them; . . . .<sup>20</sup>

Cyprian also wrote a letter to the confessors at Carthage who were issuing letters to the lapsed requesting the clergy to receive these lapsed back into the Church before the persecution was over and before each lapsed could be interviewed separately and given a specific penance.<sup>21</sup> The kinds of penances imposed are not mentioned.

In his early epistles Cyprian takes a very strict view

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<sup>20</sup>Cyprian, Epistle IX, Ante-Nicene Fathers, edited by A. Roberts (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1886), V, 290. Hereafter cited as ANF, V.

<sup>21</sup>Cyprian, Epistle X, ANF, V, 290-292.

toward granting restoration to the lapsed. He received this opinion from earlier practice in the Church, especially from Tertullian. Soon however it became clear to Cyprian that this policy could not be continued. The number of lapsed became so great that it is estimated that more than one half of the Christians at Carthage fell into this category.<sup>22</sup> To meet this situation he outlined a new policy of dealing with the lapsed which was to remain in effect as long as he remained in exile.

Cyprian wrote three pastoral letters from his place of retreat: one to the confessors, exhorting them to give libelli only to the lapsed whose penance was nearing its completion (letter 10); the second was to his priests, absolutely forbidding them to receive any of the lapsed into communion on their own authority (letter 9); the third letter was to the people, advising patience, peace, and obedience to the bishop's authority (letter 11).<sup>23</sup>

The directives of Cyprian in these letters are further amplified by Kidd:

He proposed, first, to reserve all cases of lapsi, regardless of libelli pacis, till Councils of Bishops, at Rome and at Carthage (ep. 15), should after the persecution, lay down the terms of re-admission (ep. 20.3); second, that bishops, with clergy and laity assisting, should then investigate each case on its merits, and that, on the full confession of the penitent, bishop and clergy should, if satisfied, grant readmission by imposition of hands (ep. 17); third, that meantime libelli pacis, given by Confessors, should be recognized so

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<sup>22</sup>B. J. Kidd, A History of the Church to A. D. 461 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1922), I, 444.

<sup>23</sup>Fernand Mourret, A History of the Catholic Church, translated by Rev. Newton Thompson (St. Louis: Herder Book Co., 1946), I, 392.

far as that those who had one might be readmitted in extremis by any presbyter or even by a deacon (ep. 18), but that those who had not, must even then be simply commended to the forgiveness of God without readmission to communion on earth.<sup>24</sup>

Later on Cyprian embodied these same ideas in his treatise De lapsis which he wrote in March of 251 right before returning from exile.<sup>25</sup>

After much struggle and the writing of a considerable number of letters<sup>26</sup> Cyprian achieved unity at Carthage and general acceptance of his principles in his home bishopric.

The affair seemed settled for the present. All the lapsed except death-stricken persons, however armed with Martyrs' papers, even Clergy penitently ready to return to their charge, were reserved for the decision<sup>27</sup> of the organic authority--the united Episcopate.

When Cyprian returned from exile in April of 251 he kept his promise and called a council of North African bishops which is known as the First Council of Carthage. It met from April to June.<sup>28</sup> It discussed three questions, the case of Felicissimus, the rival candidates at Rome and reinstating the lapsed. The last of these deals with penance and Cyprian's concept of it. The decisions of the council are contained in Cyprian's epistle number 51.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 444.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 445.

<sup>26</sup>Epistles 25, 26, 43.3, 30, 31, 32 and 34.

<sup>27</sup>E. W. Benson, Cyprian, His Life, His Times, His Work (London: Macmillan and Company, 1897), 106.

<sup>28</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 447.

<sup>29</sup>ANE, V, 327-335.

The council adopted the following decisions: "First, that the libelli pacis granted by the Confessors to the lapsed should not be taken into account, but that each case, upon penance done, should be gone into on its merits, with regard not only to the facts but to motives and inducements":<sup>30</sup>

. . . nor yet . . . should the censure of the Gospel be relaxed, so that they might rashly rush to communion, but that repentance should be long protracted, and the paternal clemency be sorrowfully besought, and the cases, and the wishes, and the necessities of individuals be examined into according to what is contained in a little book, which I trust has come to you, in which the several heads of our decisions are collected.<sup>31</sup>

"Second, that the libellatici should be distinguished from the sacrificati. The former, being less guilty, should be admitted one by one to reconciliation, after penance. The latter were to do penance all their lifetime, but would be restored in extremis if they had continued penitent to the end."<sup>32</sup>

And therefore it was decided, dearest brother, the case of each individual having been examined into, that the receivers of certificates should in the meantime be admitted, that those who had sacrificed should be assisted at death, because there is no confession in the place of the departed, nor can any be constrained by us to repentance if the fruit of repentance be taken away.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 451.

<sup>31</sup>Cyprian, Epistle LI.6, ANF, V, 328.

<sup>32</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 451.

<sup>33</sup>Cyprian, Epistle LI.17, ANF, V, 331.

"Third, those who had refused penance till death should die unrestored; for that would mean that fear, and not sorrow, had driven them to ask for readmission."<sup>34</sup>

And therefore, dearest brother, we have decided that those who do not repent, nor give evidence of sorrow for their sins with their whole heart, and with manifest profession of their lamentation, are to be absolutely restrained from the hope of communion and peace if they begin to beg for them in the midst of sickness and peril; because it is not repentance for sin, but the warning of urgent death, that drives them to ask; and he is not worthy to receive consolation in death who has not reflected that he was about to die.<sup>35</sup>

"Fourth, clerics who had lapsed would be deposed: they would then as laymen pass through the ordeal of exomologesis without hope of reinstatement in their charge, a decision, observes Cyprian, in which Cornelius and the episcopate at large concurred."<sup>36</sup>

These decisions stood until the Second Council of Carthage met in May of 252.<sup>37</sup> The decisions of this council are contained in Cyprian's epistle number 53.<sup>38</sup> In this council a general amnesty was granted to all the lapsed. The reason for such action was the threat of a new persecution.

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<sup>34</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 451.

<sup>35</sup>Cyprian, Epistle II.23, ANF, V, 333.

<sup>36</sup>Kidd, op. cit., pp. 451-452. This is Epistle 67.6 according to reckoning of Kidd.

<sup>37</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 462.

<sup>38</sup>ANF, V, 336-338.

But now, when we see that the day of another trouble is again beginning to draw near, and are admonished by frequent and repeated intimations that we should be prepared and armed for the struggle which the enemy announces to us, that we should also prepare the people committed to us by divine condescension, by our exhortations, and gather together from all parts all the soldiers of Christ who desire arms, and are anxious for the battle within the Lord's camp: under the compulsion of this necessity, we have decided that peace is to be given to those who have not withdrawn from the Church of the Lord, but have not ceased from the first day of their lapse to repent, and to lament, and to beseech the Lord; . . . .<sup>39</sup>

At this council the bishops distinguished between those who had returned to the world and are living "heathenish lives" or have gone over to heretics or schismatics, and between those who had repented of their lapse immediately after it.<sup>40</sup> In this epistle we also see Cyprian's concept of the Church influencing his concept of penance:

Nor let any one say, "that he who accepts martyrdom is baptized in his own blood, and peace is not necessary to him from the bishop, since he is about to have the peace of his own glory, and about to receive a greater reward from the condescension of the Lord." First of all, he cannot be fitted for martyrdom who is not armed for the contest by the Church; and his spirit is deficient which the Eucharist received does not raise and stimulate.<sup>41</sup>

Cyprian's concept of penance can be summarized as follows: (1) His attitude significantly changed from strictness to leniency as the number of lapsed increased; (2) The lapsed excommunicated themselves automatically by

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<sup>39</sup>Cyprian, Epistle LIII.1, ANF, V, 337.

<sup>40</sup>Cyprian, Epistle LIII.3, ANF, V, 337.

<sup>41</sup>Cyprian, Epistle LIII.4, ANF, V, 337.

by their lapse; (3) The lapsed could repent, and could be readmitted to the Church after a penance had been completed; (4) The nature of these penances are not specified; (5) Only those lapsed could be readmitted who had repented of their sin immediately after lapsing; (6) Those lapsed who repented on their deathbed and desired forgiveness and communion could be neither forgiven nor reinstated in the Church.

The author of this concept on this subject was influenced by the procedure and especially the lapsed is difficult to determine. Tertullian does mention that his treatise on Baptism has been written because "a river of the Spirit" theory, lately current in this quarter, has carried out a great number with her most various doctrine, making it her first aim to destroy baptism." Whether this theory was directly connected with the lapsed is very doubtful although we know little about it. In Tertullian's view that a valid baptism could only be received in the true Church (a view which he later changed when he returned to Christianity) the influence of the procedure is most clearly felt. But even here we must say in all candor that

<sup>1</sup> Tertullian, *On Baptism*, edited by J. Roberts (London: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1856), III, 586-579. Hereafter cited as III, III.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> See above page 33.

<sup>4</sup> Tertullian, *On Baptism*, in III, III, 569.



## CHAPTER VI

### BAPTISM IN THE WRITINGS OF TERTULLIAN AND CYPRIAN

#### Tertullian's Teachings on Baptism

Tertullian's teachings on the subject of baptism are contained primarily in his treatise entitled On Baptism,<sup>1</sup> written before he went over to Montanism.<sup>2</sup>

How much of his concept on this subject was influenced by the persecutions and especially the lapsed is difficult to determine.<sup>3</sup> Tertullian does mention that his treatise On Baptism has been written because "a viper of the Cainite heresy, lately conversant in this quarter, has carried away a great number with her most venomous doctrine, making it her first aim to destroy baptism."<sup>4</sup> Whether this heresy was directly connected with the lapsed is very doubtful although we know little about it. In Tertullian's belief that a valid baptism could only be received in the true Church (a view which he later changed when he switched to Montanism) the influence of the persecutions is most closely felt. But even here we must say in all candor that

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<sup>1</sup>Ante-Nicene Fathers, edited by A. Roberts (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1886), III, 669-679. Hereafter cited as ANF, III.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>See above page 33.

<sup>4</sup>Tertullian, On Baptism, in ANF, III, 669.

the connection is not direct by any means.

But what was Tertullian's concept of baptism?

The most important point is that in baptism the Holy Spirit is imparted to the person baptized.

Just as no soul is without sin, so neither is any soul without seeds of good. Therefore, when the soul embraces the faith, being renewed in its second birth by water and the power from above, then the veil of its former corruption being taken away, it beholds the light in all its brightness. It is also taken up (in its second birth) by the Holy Spirit, just as in its first birth it is embraced by the unholy spirit. The flesh follows the soul now wedded to the Spirit, as a part of the bridal portion--no longer the servant of the soul, but of the Spirit. O happy marriage, if in it there is committed no violation of the nuptial vow!

In baptism there is a washing away of sin and the imparting of eternal life:

Happy is our sacrament of water, in that, by washing away the sins of our early blindness, we are set free and admitted into eternal life!

Before going any farther in describing what the various functions of baptism impart, we must follow Tertullian as he describes the method used in those days to baptize.

When we are going to enter the water, but a little before, in the presence of the congregation and under the hand of the president, we solemnly profess that we disown the devil, and his pomp, and his angels. Hereupon we are thrice immersed, making a somewhat ampler pledge than the Lord has appointed in the Gospel. Then, when we are taken up (as new-born children), we taste first of all a mixture

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<sup>5</sup>Tertullian, A Treatise on the Soul, in ANF, III, 221.

<sup>6</sup>Tertullian, On Baptism, op. cit., p. 669.

of milk and honey, and from that day we refrain from the daily bath for a whole week. We take also, in congregation before daybreak, and from the hand of none but the presidents, the sacrament of the Eucharist, which the Lord both commanded to be eaten at meal-times, and enjoined to be taken by all alike.

As to who may baptize he writes:

For concluding our brief subject, it remains to put you in mind also of the due observance of giving and receiving baptism. Of giving it, the chief priest (who is the bishop) has the right: in the next place, the presbyters and deacons, yet not without the bishop's authority, on account of the honour of the Church, which being preserved, peace is preserved. Beside these, even laymen have the right;<sup>8</sup> for what is equally received can be equally given.

To this general number of people able to baptize one exception is made---women:

For how credible would it seem, that he who has not permitted a woman even to learn with over-boldness, should give a female the power of teaching and of baptizing!

Tertullian places a strange importance on the movement of the Spirit in the water that is to be used for the baptism.

All, therefore, in virtue of the pristine privilege of their origin, do, after invocation of God, attain the sacramental power of sanctification; for the Spirit immediately supervenes from the heavens, and rests over the waters, sanctifying them for himself; and being thus sanctified, they imbibe at the same time the power of sanctifying. Therefore, after the waters have been in a manner endued with medicinal virtue through the intervention of the angel, the spirit is corporeally washed in the waters,<sup>10</sup> and the flesh is in the same spiritually cleansed.

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<sup>7</sup>Tertullian, De Corona, in ANF, III, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>8</sup>Tertullian, On Baptism, op. cit., p. 677.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, ch. IV, 671.

But these are not altogether magical waters nor in them is the Holy Spirit directly received:

Not that in the waters we obtain the Holy Spirit; but in the water, under (the witness of) the angel, we are cleansed, and prepared for the Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup>

After the triple immersion the person baptized emerges from the water and is anointed with an unction which grants unto him the forgiveness of sins:

After this, when we have issued from the font, we are thoroughly anointed with a blessed unction,--(a practice derived) from the old discipline, wherein on entering the priesthood, men were wont to be anointed with oil from a horn, ever since Aaron was anointed by Moses. . . . Thus, too, in our case, the unction runs carnally, (i.e. on the body,) but profits spiritually; in the same way as the act of baptism itself too is carnal, in that we are plunged in water, but the effect spiritual, in that we are freed from sins.<sup>12</sup>

After the anointing with oil "the hand is laid on us, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit through benediction."<sup>13</sup> The significance of these various acts is that "immersion bestowed cleansing from sin, unction the consecration of believers to the lay priesthood, and the laying of hands conferred the gift of the Holy Spirit."<sup>14</sup>

In the treatise Against Marcion Tertullian lists four

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid, ch. VI, p. 672.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, ch. VII, p. 672.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, ch. VIII, p. 672.

<sup>14</sup>James Morgan, The Importance of Tertullian in the Development of Christian Dogma (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1928), pp. 131-132.

results of baptism. These are: (1) "the remission of sins", (2) "deliverance from death", (3) "the regeneration of man", and (4) "the bestowal of the Holy Ghost".<sup>15</sup>

In Chapter VIII of the treatise On Baptism Tertullian compares the bestowal of the Holy Ghost in baptism to the incident in the story of the dove returning to the ark of Noah at the time of the great flood. He here compares the ark to the Church and lays the foundation upon which Cyprian builds a half century later:

. . . as it emerges from the font, after its old sins, flies the dove of the Holy Spirit, bringing us the peace of God, sent out from the heavens, where is the Church, the typified ark.<sup>16</sup>

In combating the belief that baptism was not necessary since the people of the Old Testament were not baptized and no reference is made to the baptism of the apostles, he points out that revelation is progressive and that in the new age baptism is quite necessary:

Grant that, in days gone by, there was salvation by means of bare faith, before the passion and resurrection of the Lord. But now that faith has been enlarged, and is become a faith which believes in His nativity, passion, and resurrection, there has been an amplification added to the sacrament, viz., the sealing act of baptism; the clothing, in some sense, of the faith which before was bare, and which cannot exist now without its proper law. For the law of baptizing has been imposed, and the formula prescribed. . . .<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Tertullian, Against Marcion, in ANF, III, 293.

<sup>16</sup> Tertullian, On Baptism, op. cit., p. 673.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 676.

During persecutions many were martyred who were yet catechumens and had never been baptized. For these, as well as for those who had fallen after their first baptism in the font, there was still a second baptism by which they could be saved:

God had foreseen also other weaknesses incident to the condition of man,--the stratagems of the enemy, the deceptive aspects of the creatures, the snares of the world; that faith, even after baptism, would be endangered; that the most, after attaining unto salvation, would be lost again, through soiling the wedding-dress, through failing to provide oil for their torchlets--would be such as would have to be sought for over mountains and woodlands, and carried back upon the shoulders. He therefore appointed as second supplies of comfort, and the last means of succour, the fight of martyrdom and the baptism--thereafter free from danger--of blood.<sup>18</sup>

He gathers his Biblical evidence for this baptism of blood from Christ's words in Luke 12:50: "I have a baptism to be baptized with: and how I am constrained until it is accomplished!" (RSV). This, refers to His crucifixion where His side was pierced and out flowed blood and water:

These two baptisms He sent out from the wound in His pierced side, in order that they who believed in His blood might be bathed with the water; they who had been bathed in the water might likewise drink the blood. This is the baptism which both stands in lieu of the fental bathing when that has not been received, and restores it when lost.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, and of most importance, Tertullian thought thus of heretical baptism:

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<sup>18</sup> Tertullian, Scorpice, ch. VI, in ANF, III, 639.

<sup>19</sup> Tertullian, On Baptism, op. cit., p. 677.

There is to us one, and but one, baptism. . . . But it must be admitted that the question, "What rules are to be observed with regard to heretics?" is worthy of being treated. . . . Heretics, however, have no fellowship in our discipline, whom the mere fact of their excommunication testifies to be outsiders. I am not bound to recognize in them a thing which is enjoined on me, because they and we have not the same God, nor one--that is, the same--Christ. And therefore their baptism is not one with ours either, because it is not the same; a baptism which, since they have it not duly, doubtless they have not at all; nor is that capable of being counted which is not had. Thus they cannot receive it either, because they have it not.<sup>20</sup>

In the previous chapter on penance we saw that Tertullian allowed only one repentance after the repentance of baptism.<sup>21</sup> For this reason Tertullian placed great importance on baptism as we have seen in this chapter. He considered it the first means by which a person receives the forgiveness of sins and has the Holy Spirit imparted to him. Thus Tertullian taught that only adults should be baptized and not children. He writes:

And so, according to the circumstances and disposition, and even age, of each individual, the delay of baptism is preferable; principally, however, in the case of little children.<sup>22</sup>

#### Cyprian's Teachings on Baptism

The influences which the persecutions and lapsed had

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 676.

<sup>21</sup>See above, page 43.

<sup>22</sup>Tertullian, On Baptism, op. cit., p. 678.

on Cyprian's concept of baptism are primarily in the area of the baptismal controversy. The height of this controversy occurred between the years 255 and Cyprian's death in 258. It was concerned with all schisms, primarily with Novatianism where the controversy started, and Marcianism which was still strong in North Africa.<sup>23</sup>

The information which we have from the hand of Cyprian during this controversy is contained in epistles sixty-nine to seventy-five.<sup>24</sup> During this period three councils were held at Carthage which supported Cyprian. The documents from the last of these councils are still preserved.<sup>25</sup>

The baptismal controversy evolved around the principle whether people who were baptized in schism received a valid baptism or whether such people needed to be re-baptized upon their return to the Church from schism. The concensus of opinion in Africa, as influenced by Cyprian, was that the baptism of schismatics was invalid. The Roman church, led by bishop Stephen, held that such baptisms were valid.

Before we discuss the history of this period and

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<sup>23</sup>B. J. Kidd, A History of the Church to A. D. 461 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1922), I, 465.

<sup>24</sup>Ante-Nicene Fathers, edited by A. Roberts (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1886), V, 375-402. Hereafter cited as ANF, V.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, pages 565-572.



Cyprian's concept of baptism, we must first determine the relations which this controversy had with the lapsed and the persecutions. Already we have seen why Novatian left the Church and ended in schism. Instead of disappearing during the persecution of Gaius, as did the schism of Felicissimus, that of Novatian continued as before. And there were no signs that it would soon disappear. The Church had to adjust itself to this schism as well as to the other breaks in the Church as for example Marcianism and Montanism. The history of this controversy is adequately summarized by Kidd as follows:

In dealing with those who came over to the Church from schism or from heresy, the practice of the churches differed. The West was divided. Africa treated the baptism of schismatics and heretics as null and void, and required them to be baptized de novo. This was apparently the theory of Tertullian (De baptismo, c. xv), and it became the practice of the African churches at any rate since the days of the Council held under Agrippinus, bishop of Carthage, next but one before Cyprian. Elsewhere in the West, and particularly at Rome, custom had been steadily against what was held to be rebaptism; although a section had attempted it under Callistus, 217-22, not, however, from rigorism but from laxity. In the East, the churches of Asia Minor, like those of Africa, had come to require it, c. 230, at the Councils of Iconium (Cyprian ep. 75.7,19) and Synnada (Eus. H. E. VII. vii.5). 'Many districts' were of like mind, as in Antioch and northern Syria; while, about 255, the churches of Asia had a difference with Pope Stephen about the matter (Eus., H. E. VII. v, 4 & 5).<sup>26</sup>

What made the problem pressing at the time of Cyprian and Stephen was Novatians practice of baptizing converts

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<sup>26</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 464.

from the Church. What was the Church to do in the face of this? Should they recognize the baptism of the Novatians, or not? Cyprian said no. Stephen said yes.<sup>27</sup>

The history of the controversy follows these main lines.<sup>28</sup> In 255 a layman by the name of Magnus wrote a letter to Cyprian asking his opinion on the efficacy of Novatian's baptism and whether his followers should be re-baptized on coming back from this schism. Cyprian answered this request by writing his 75th epistle.<sup>29</sup> Soon after this eighteen Numidian bishops wrote to Cyprian also asking for his opinion on Novatian's baptism.

As a reply to this request Cyprian called the Fifth Council of Carthage which is the first on baptism. This council met in 255 and was attended by 31 bishops. By a majority decision it stated that all people coming over from the Novatian schism, who had been baptized while in schism, must be rebaptized. The decrees of this council

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<sup>27</sup> Henry Melvill Gwatkin, Early Church History to A. D. 313 (London: Macmillan and Company, 1909), II, 298.

<sup>28</sup> For this history see Kidd, op. cit., pp. 466-470; Gwatkin, op. cit., pp. 299-302; C. J. Hefele, A History of the Christian Councils to the Close of the Council of Nicaea, A. D. 325 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1894), pp. 98-103; and E. W. Benson, Cyprian, His Life, His Times, His Work (London: Macmillan and Company, 1895), 349-436.

<sup>29</sup> ANF, V, 397-402. The number of these epistles differ from the numbers given in most history books, which follow the Oxford Edition. The changes over from the O.E. to the A.N.F. respectively are as follows: 69=75, 70=69, 71=70, 72=71, 73=72, 74=73 and 75=74.

are contained in Cyprian's 69th epistle, addressed to Januarius and other Numidian bishops.

Soon after this a Numidian bishop named Quintus wrote to Cyprian asking him what the Council of Carthage had decided. Cyprian answered this request in his 70th epistle.

In the following year (256) the sixth Council of Carthage met with 71 bishops present and reaffirmed, this time unanimously, that "rebaptism is necessary for all converts from the sects."<sup>30</sup> The decrees of this council are contained in Cyprian's 72nd epistle addressed to Jubaianus in answer to a request from Jubaianus "wishing that the impression of my mind should be signified to you, as to what I think concerning the baptism of heretics. . . ."<sup>31</sup> In this lengthy epistle Cyprian stated that the council:

. . . had met together, bishops as well of the province of Africa as of Numidia, to the number of seventy-one, . . . (and) established this same matter once more by our judgment, deciding that there is one baptism which is appointed in the Catholic Church; and that by this those are not rebaptized, but baptized by us, who at any time come from the adulterous and unhallowed water to be washed and sanctified by the truth of the saving water.<sup>32</sup>

About the same time that Cyprian wrote this letter he also penned one to Stephen at Rome, his 71st, in which he relates to the bishop the decision which the Council of

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<sup>30</sup>Kidd, *op. cit.*, p. 467. This idea is contained in epistle 72.1.

<sup>31</sup>Cyprian, *Epistle LXXII.1*, *ANF*, V, 379.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid*, pp. 379-380.

Carthage had made. He makes no move to conciliate his position but states it very frankly.

The historical sequence here becomes vague, but around this time Stephen wrote a letter against Cyprian. In this letter Stephen claimed:

Apostolic authority for the Roman usage, magnifying the chair of Peter, and vituperating Cyprian as "a false Christ", "a false apostle", and "a deceitful worker"--not, however, without previous provocation on Cyprian's part. By this time also he had circulated a letter in the East, declaring that he would hold no communion with bishops who practised second baptism.<sup>33</sup>

This letter met with much disapproval in Asia Minor and caused Firmilian, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia to write a letter to Cyprian telling him of the letter of Stephen and approving the position of Cyprian. He writes concerning Stephen:

For what strifes and dissensions have you stirred up throughout the churches of the whole world! Moreover, how great sin have you heaped up for yourself, when you cut yourself off from so many flocks! For it is yourself that you have cut off. Do not deceive yourself, since he is really the schismatic who has made himself an apostate from the communion of ecclesiastical unity. For while you think that all may be excommunicated by you, you have excommunicated yourself alone from all; . . . .<sup>34</sup>

The last of these seven baptismal epistles was written to Pompey, bishop of Sabrata, who had inquired of Cyprian information about the letter of Stephen. The number of

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<sup>33</sup>Kidd, op. cit., p. 468.

<sup>34</sup>Cyprian, Epistle LXXIV.24, ANF, V, 396.

this epistle is 73.<sup>35</sup>

To complete the history of this controversy we must add that in September of 256 the seventh Council of Carthage met to discuss the question of rebaptism. This was the third African council to discuss the problem. There were present eighty-seven bishops from Africa, Numidia, and Mauretania. Cyprian was president of the council and in his opening speech which is preserved along with the proceedings of the council,<sup>36</sup> said:

It remains, that upon this same matter each of us should bring forward what we think, judging no man, nor rejecting any one from the right of communion, if he should think differently from us. For neither does any of us set himself up as a bishop of bishops, nor by tyrannical terror does any compel his colleague to the necessity of obedience; since every bishop, according to the allowance of his liberty and power, has his own proper right of judgment, and can no more be judged by another than he himself can judge another. But let us all wait for the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only one that has power both of preferring us in the government of His Church, and of judging us in our conduct here.<sup>37</sup>

This passage is important for understanding Cyprian's concept of the Church and consequently his concept of baptism. The Church was centered in the individual bishop who had within his power the right and duty to practice baptism as he seriously thought it should be practiced.

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<sup>35</sup> ANE, V, 386-390.

<sup>36</sup> The Seventh Council of Carthage Under Cyprian, in ANE, V, 565-572.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 565.

This was his individual responsibility to God alone.

All eighty-seven of the bishops present at this council stated that heretics and schismatics must be rebaptized upon coming over from a schism. The statements of these bishops are very interesting and show pointedly the great influence which Cyprian had over them.<sup>38</sup>

The controversy ended in August of 257 with the death of Stephen. Harmony was soon re-established between Carthage and Rome under Sixtus II (257-58). The persecution which broke out under Valerian in 257 also helped to unite the Church and dispel dissension.

Cyprian's concept of baptism is indissolubly linked with his concept of the Church. The true Church was the local, concrete, visible organization in a particular city or area with one bishop at the head.<sup>39</sup> Anyone who separated himself from the local Church became a schismatic and excommunicated himself.<sup>40</sup> He who has cut himself off from the Church does not possess the Holy Spirit and cannot impart Him in baptism. The baptisms of those who are in schism cannot be valid because the Holy Spirit is not pre-

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<sup>38</sup> See, for example, the statements of Novatus of Thamugade, Victor of Gor, Nemesian of Thubunis and Fortunatus of Thuccahori.

<sup>39</sup> Cyprian, The Unity of the Church, in ANF, V, 425.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., chapters 10, 11 and 12, pp. 424-425.

sent at the baptism and is not imparted to the baptized. We could quote from any of the seven baptismal letters of Cyprian to show this, but for purposes of clarity, and to show that Cyprian's concept came early, we will quote only from his 69th epistle which was written to Magnus in 255.<sup>41</sup>

First he said that Novatian must be included with all schismatics and is outside the Church; even though his doctrine and teaching is similar to that within the Church:

No heretics or schismatics whatsoever have any power or right. Novatian therefore cannot properly be made an exception. He stays outside the Church, he works against the peace and love of Christ. Therefore, he must be reckoned among the adversaries and the antichrists.<sup>42</sup>

The Church is one and cannot be divided into different groups or parties:

That the Church is one is declared by the Holy Spirit . . . "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse, a fountain sealed, a well of living water (Song of Solomon 6:9; 4:12)." If then the spouse of Christ--which is the Church--is a garden enclosed, what is closed cannot be open to the stranger and the profane. If the Church is a sealed fountain, one who is outside, without access to the fountain, cannot drink from it or be sealed there.<sup>43</sup>

He who is not in the one Church does not possess Christ:

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<sup>41</sup>All the quotes from this letter are taken from the translation of S. L. Greenslade in the fifth volume of the Library of Christian Classics entitled Early Latin Fathers (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), pp. 150-157.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid, epistle 69.1, p. 150.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid, chapter 2, p. 151.

If the Church which Christ loves is one Church and it alone is cleansed with his washing, how can he who is not in the Church be loved by Christ or washed and cleansed with his washing? Therefore, since the Church alone possesses the water of life and the power to baptize and purify, no one can argue the efficacy of Novatianist baptism and sanctification without first proving<sup>44</sup> that Novatian is in the Church, or presides over it.

Novatian is not in the Church because he did not follow the legitimate succession of bishops. Cornelius succeeded Fabian "by a legitimate ordination."<sup>45</sup> Novatian was not ordained in the Church for he was:

a man who scorned the tradition of the Gospel and the apostles, succeeded no one and originated from himself! For one who has not been ordained in the Church can by no means possess or govern the Church. The Church is not outside. It cannot be rent or divided against itself, it<sup>46</sup> maintains the unity of a single, indivisible house.

Novatian or any other schismatic is not excommunicated by the Church but excommunicates himself by his act of separation.

He is not expelled by the bishop, but of his own accord runs away from the Church, condemning himself by his heretical presumption.<sup>47</sup>

And again:

The sacred bond of unity is indissoluble, and those who cause a schism, desert their bishop and set up a pseudo-bishop for themselves outside the Church, are left without hope and bring utter ruin upon

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid, chapters 2 and 3, pp. 151-152.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid, chapter 3, p. 152.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid, chapters 3 and 4, p. 152.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid, chapter 4, p. 152.



themselves from the wrath of God.<sup>48</sup>

The very crux of the matter is stated thus:

It may be objected that Novatian accepts the same law as the Catholic Church, baptizes with the same creed, acknowledges the same God the Father, the same Son Christ, the same Holy Spirit, and that he can exercise the power to baptize because, apparently, his baptismal interrogation is no different from ours. It must be recognized, however, in the first place that we and the schismatics do not in fact share a common credal law and a common baptismal interrogation. When they say, Do you believe in the remission of sins and eternal life through the holy Church? there is a lie implicit in their question, since they do not possess the Church. Further, their own lips confess that remission of sins cannot be given except through the holy Church, and since they do not possess the Church, they demonstrate that sins cannot be remitted among them.<sup>49</sup>

Since he does not possess the Church or the forgiveness of sins, he cannot possess the Holy Spirit and cannot have a legitimate baptism.

. . . no heretic or schismatic anywhere possesses the Holy Spirit, and that, in consequence, while he can baptize, he cannot give the Holy Spirit. This admission makes it easy for us to prove to them that he who does not possess the Holy Spirit cannot baptize at all. It is in baptism that we all of us receive the remission of sins. . . . This passage shows that only he who possesses the Holy Spirit can baptize and give the remission of sins.<sup>50</sup>

The conclusion to this entire line of reasoning is this:

Therefore, in order that according to God's ordinance and the truth of the Gospel they may receive the remission of sins and be sanctified and become temples of God, all without exception who come over to the

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid, chapter 6, p. 153.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid, chapter 7, pp. 154-155.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid, chapters 10 and 11, pp. 156-157.

to the Church of Christ from the adversaries and the antichrists, are to be baptized with the baptism of the Church.<sup>51</sup>

For Cyprian baptism meant the remission of sins by the imparting of the Holy Spirit. The formula used must be the trinitarian formula but this in itself did not make a valid baptism. What was important was the authority behind baptism. It must be performed within the Church and by an ordained member of the one true Church. It was the authority of the Church which made baptism valid in that it alone had the power to impart the Holy Spirit. Differing from Tertullian, Cyprian believed the predisposition of the person being baptized made relatively little difference as long as the person was brought up in the Church and continued in the Church. He therefore strongly urged that infants be brought to baptism as soon as possible, even before the eight days of the Old Testament rite of circumcision were passed.<sup>52</sup>

In the controversy over rebaptism the position of Stephen at Rome eventually won out in the Church, but Cyprian's influence in the development of the concept of baptism was nevertheless great. Much of this influence, it must be admitted, however, was in the passing on of tradition.

Above all the persecutions, the lapsed and the schisms which resulted determined the areas and the emphases in the traditional concept of baptism which Cyprian promoted and continued.

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid, chapter 11, p. 157.

<sup>52</sup>Cyprian, Epistle LVIII, in ANF, V, 353-354.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

The fifty years which this thesis covers was a period of confusion and of struggle between opposing forces both within the Christian Church and within the Roman Empire. Foreign elements were making indelible marks on both of these institutions. In the Empire the invasions of barbarians caused significant changes in the succession of emperors and in the administration of government. In the Church the persecutions and the resultant lapsed made certain changes necessary in the administration practices of the Church.

The foremost of these changes we saw in Cyprian's concept of penance. The great number of lapsed and the repeated threat of persecution made him change from a policy of strictness to one of leniency in permitting the lapsed to return to the Church.

In attempting to determine the influence of the lapsed on Cyprian's doctrines of penance and baptism we must first determine the influence which the lapsed had on his doctrine of the Church. We have tried to bring this out in the thesis. Cyprian's doctrine of the Church was influenced by the schisms which originated from the lapsed. Cyprian considered all lapsed and all schismatics outside the Church. In this state they did not possess the Holy

Spirit and as a result could neither baptize nor impose an effective penance which would gain for the repentant the forgiveness of sins.

In Cyprian the concept of the Church was centered in the corporate visible body with a legitimate bishop at the head. Any action or function performed outside of this concrete body had no sanction from God. Such an action had no power to instill the grace of God or to secure eternal life. Those baptized in schism were not baptized at all. Those coming to the Church from schism must repent of their sin, perform a suitable penance, and be baptized.

This progression of influences is complicated to follow. In a somewhat oversimplified statement we can say that the lapsed caused the schisms, the schisms influenced Cyprian's concept of the Church which in turn influenced his concept's of baptism and penance.

From the evidence which we have explored in this thesis we must conclude that the lapsed had very little influence on Tertullian's concepts of baptism and penance. The number of lapsed in his day were few and they did not cause serious problems in the Church. We must however leave the door open to the opinion that the lapsed were a contributing factor in developing his strict legalistic interpretation of penance and baptism. But this we can only conjecture and not prove.

To a large extent both Tertullian and Cyprian merely passed on the tradition of Christendom at large or the

tradition of a segment of Christianity.

Although many of the concepts in their doctrines of penance and baptism are not held by the majority of Christians today, we know that both of these writers had a great influence on the future policies of the Church regarding the readmittance of the lapsed into the fellowship of the Church. The extent of this influence is beyond the scope of this thesis. The next great voice in Western Christendom to speak on this problem after Cyprian is St. Augustine. He criticizes both Tertullian and Cyprian for their teachings on baptism and penance but the influence of both these fathers can be seen in their great successor.

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