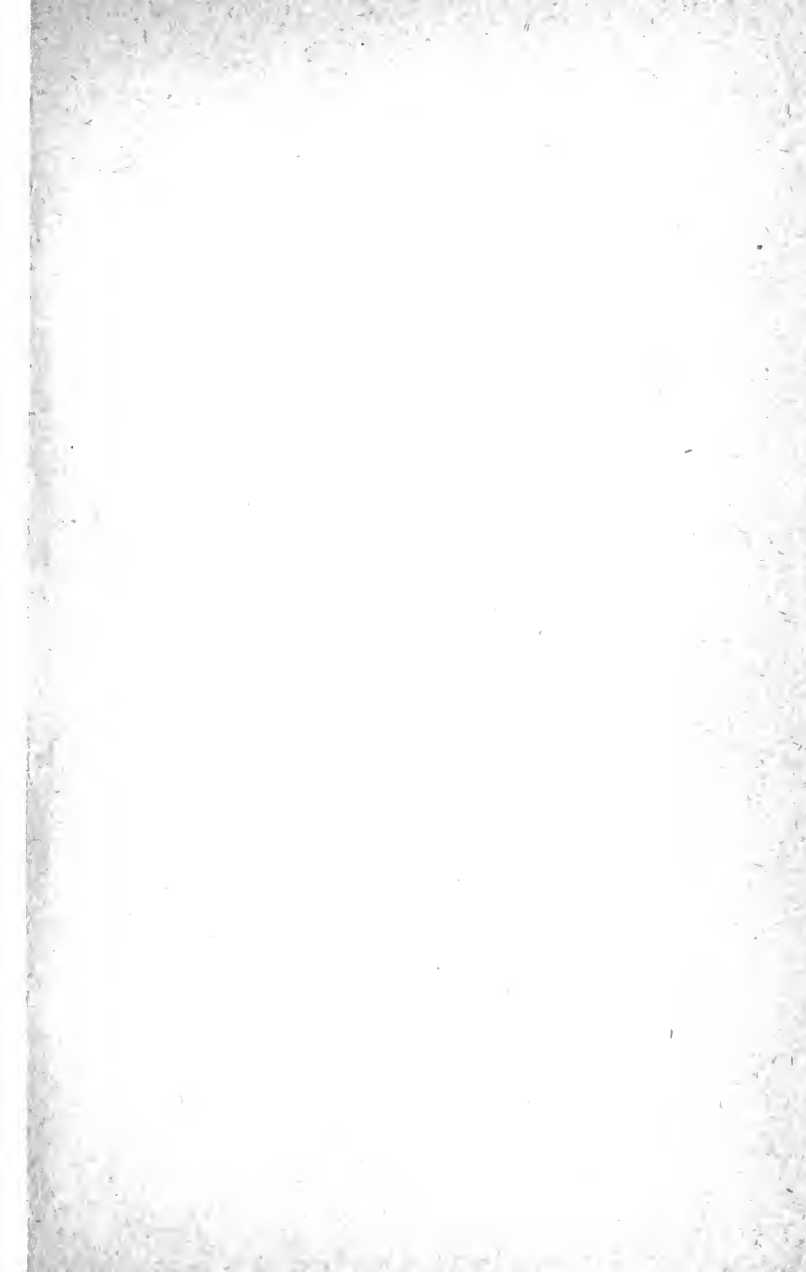


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## CHAPTER I.

### THE BEGINNINGS OF DONATISM.

THE Donatist Communion was a most serious division in the North African Church. The actual separation occurred in Constantine's reign; but the circumstances causing it arose earlier out of Diocletian's persecution.

The first eighteen years of Diocletian's lengthy reign formed for the Church at large a period of comparative peace. Persecutions, indeed, occurred in the dominions of one or other of the four rulers under whose administration the Empire was divided. But these attacks were only local and intermittent. Whatever the predilections of the subordinate Cæsars, the old Emperor himself was, for political reasons, of a tolerant disposition. Christianity was believed in his palace and even in his family. Prisca, his wife, Valeria, his daughter, were, more or less distinctly, of the Christian faith. Christian convictions also prevailed among his most trusted servants. And the religion, thus existing in close proximity to the imperial presence, developed also in wider circles among the leading officials of the Empire at large. All this could scarcely be unknown, and it was tolerated for eighteen years. Then came a sudden change.

What it was that suddenly filled the old and hitherto tolerant Emperor with unwonted persecuting zeal has never been quite satisfactorily explained. The version given by Lactantius is evidently not unbiased. Lactantius, court official in the Palace of Nicomedia, contemporary with the events described, had certainly unusual opportunities for ascer-

taining the truth.<sup>1</sup> But Lactantius writes in the style of the impassioned apologist, able to see no good in the opposing side. According to Lactantius, the old, enfeebled Diocletian was terrorized by his own superstitions, and by the domineering insolence of his fierce and brutal son-in-law, the Cæsar Galerius. Galerius played upon Diocletian's fears, filled him with suspicions of plots against his life, had the palace secretly set on fire, ascribed the act to the Christians, and then abruptly left Nicomedia protesting that he departed to escape being burnt alive.<sup>2</sup> Whether this version is accurate or complete may well be open to question. What is certain is, that after tolerating Christianity for eighteen years, Diocletian now launched out into the horrors of persecution. He compelled his wife and daughter to offer sacrifice to the pagan divinities, he inflicted horrible tortures upon his confidential officials, and determined to expel Christianity from his household and from his palace. The spirit of persecution once roused passed out to wider circles and Diocletian attempted to suppress the faith in the whole Empire itself.

It was the month of March in the year 303. The commemoration of the Passion was near, when Diocletian launched his first and famous edict against the faith.<sup>3</sup>

He ordered:—

1. The demolition of churches.
2. The destruction of the Scriptures.
3. The degradation of Christian officials.
4. The servitude of ordinary believers.

This document was followed in rapid succession by three more: one enjoining torture as a method of coercion, and the last inflicting the penalty of death.

Diocletian's edict embraced the whole extent of the Empire. Its peculiar feature was the order for the destruction of the Sacred Books. It affected the whole course of North African Christianity. The Government search for the Scriptures was

<sup>1</sup> "De Morte Persec."

<sup>2</sup> Ch. xiv.

<sup>3</sup> Eusebius, VIII, 11.

vigorously conducted. The official report of procedure in Cirta (afterwards called Constantine), the ancient capital of Numidia, still survives. It is an extremely graphic narrative, presenting a singularly clear picture of the state of the Church.

The recorder describes that the investigation began in Cirta on 19 May (303) under Munatius Felix, Curator of Cirta. The municipal officials came to a house where Christians were assembled. Felix said to the Bishop: "Bring out the copies of the Scripture and whatever else you have here, as the edict commands". Bishop Paul replied: "The Readers have the copies, but what we have here we will surrender". They produced two golden chalices, six of silver, six silver vessels, etc. The officials then went to the library. It was empty. Only one large copy of Scripture was discovered. The Curator asked: "Why have you produced no more than one?" "We have no more," was the answer, "we are only subdeacons; the Readers have the copies." "Point out to us the Readers," said the Curator. "We do not know where they are," was the evasive answer. "Then tell us their names." The subdeacons refused. "We are not betrayers. Here we are, you can have us killed." The Curator ordered them to be arrested.

The officials went on to another house. "Bring out what copies of the Scripture you have," said the Curator. Four copies were produced. At another house they secured five more, at another eight.

They passed on to the house of Victor the teacher. They demanded as before, "Bring out the Scriptures". Victor produced two codices. "You have more than these," said the Curator. "If I had more I should have brought them," was the reply. They passed on to another house. The owner was out. His wife brought out six codices. "See whether you have not more," said the Curator. The woman protested that these were all. The Curator turned to an attendant, "Go in and ascertain whether this is really all".<sup>1</sup> The attendant

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, IX, 1107.

searched the house and returned to say that he could find no more. Felix the Curator contented himself with a general threat that if any persons had failed to do their duty in the matter they would be held responsible. And so the inquiry ended. In this way nearly forty copies of the Sacred Writings were confiscated.

This matter of fact official document enables us to realize with ease the temper and motives of all the parties concerned. The magistrate has evidently no personal interest or animosity against the Church. He observes the law to the letter, and takes precautions to guard himself against any possible suspicions of carelessness or indifference. But the representatives of the Church are all deplorably weak. No courage, no zeal is anywhere displayed. A very human self-interest, an extraordinary readiness to yield the Church's sacred vessels and Scriptures, is the prevailing temper in the clergy of Cirta. Personal security is obviously the main idea. No one, from the bishop downwards, has the least conception of any other duty. There is, however, one important exception. The Churchmen of Cirta made no scruples in yielding the Scriptures to the flames; but they absolutely declined to betray their brethren.

In other places the demand for the Scriptures was met with heroic determination to endure the utmost rather than to yield.<sup>1</sup> Felix, Bishop of Thibar in the African Proconsulate, was summoned before Magnilian, the Curator of the City, and ordered to surrender any copies of the Sacred Writings in his possession. Felix refused, and was accordingly imprisoned. After an interval of three days he was again brought before Magnilian, and on his second refusal sent for trial before Anulinus the Proconsul. After sixteen days in prison he was interrogated by the Proconsul, and, persisting steadily in his refusal, was remanded to the higher authorities in Italy. The heroic Bishop was thrust down into the hold of a ship, among the cattle, where he remained in the discomfort and

<sup>1</sup> Baronius, A.D. 302, § 119 ff.



heat, without food, during four days while they sailed along the edge of Sicily. In Italy he was placed upon his trial for the last time, and met the sentence of execution by the sword with words of thanksgiving.

The pressure of Government inquiry created for African Churchmen practical problems demanding immediate solution. Could a Christian conscientiously yield the Scriptures at Diocletian's order? Was surrender of Sacred Writings consistent with fidelity to Christ? or was such conduct equivalent to apostasy? Should the Christian adopt the line of discretion and reserve, or that of uncompromising publicity? Should he wait until challenged, with the possibility that he might be overlooked; or should he make escape impossible, advance unbidden, and boldly proclaim refusal at the heathen magistrate bar?

Such questions might meet with more than one reply. African religious thought was divided. There was a school of discretion and also a party of fanaticism. Some rushed impulsively to the courts, unsummoned, declared themselves possessors of Sacred Scriptures, and registered a defiant determination to retain these treasures, regardless of imperial commands.<sup>1</sup> Thus they forced the magistrates to arrest and imprison them, and to proceed against them in accordance with the statutes. This anxiety to secure the honours of martyrdom, regardless of the dangers which such conduct entailed upon the Church at large, was, to the moderate and better balanced mind, exceedingly distressing and ill-advised.<sup>2</sup> To none was it more distressing than to Mensurius, Bishop of Carthage. Mensurius was a serious, sober-minded man, disciplined by the responsibilities of office. He was more likely to err on the side of caution than on that of rashness. Like his great predecessor Cyprian, who expressly forbade all unprovoked defiance of the secular power, he refused to honour men who rashly went uncalled, and courted risks and sufferings

<sup>1</sup> Noris, iv. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Hefele.

which they might not be able to endure. He would not acknowledge as true martyrs men who brought death upon themselves. He prohibited the faithful from crowding round the prison doors, and from provoking further efforts against the Church by their well-meant but imprudent demonstrations. In short, he required of his flock the exercise of forbearance and self-repression.<sup>1</sup> These labours to control the indiscreet were productive of great unpopularity and were easily afterwards misrepresented. Mensurius was pictured to the next generation as having thrown to the dogs the food brought to believers languishing in prison; as withholding weeping parents from their dying children's last embrace; and as driving away with scourges those who lingered near the prison doors.<sup>2</sup> It is not difficult to see how fanaticism and dislike put these constructions on firm and possibly sometimes harsh endeavours to protect the Church from perilous sensationalism and from a zeal not according to knowledge. But Mensurius was not content with repressing fanaticism. He had no hesitation in going further still. Before the Government officials searched the Carthaginian churches he took the precaution of substituting heretical writings for the Sacred Books.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly the searchers confiscated and destroyed the productions of heretics while the codices of the New Testament were saved.

It is hardly possible that such a ruse should succeed without official connivance. And we are told that when it was afterwards hinted to the secular authorities, by some energetic opponent of the Church, that the officials had been deceived, the Proconsul Anulinus refused to permit any further investigations. The magistrate's personal convictions may often in this period have favoured the religion which his official orders directed him to suppress.

But it was quite natural that the conduct of Bishop Mensurius should not pass unchallenged. The austerer party in the Church were grievously offended. They were evidently

<sup>1</sup> Noris, iv. 19.

<sup>2</sup> "Martyrdom of Dativus."

<sup>3</sup> Migne, "P. L.," xi, 773-4.

powerful in Carthage itself ; and their versions of his proceedings were carried beyond the limits of his diocese. The Metropolitan thought it prudent to explain his conduct in a letter to Bishop Secundus, the Primate of Numidia. He admits that he had substituted heretical documents for the Sacred Scriptures, and that the Proconsul, on being informed, refused to reopen the inquiry. He acknowledges that he had repressed the fanatical who courted persecution, and forbade the faithful to give them honour.<sup>1</sup> But he insists that these fanatics included a number of shady and questionable people ; criminals and debtors, and other undesirable individuals ; who posed as confessors : partly perhaps as atonement for unworthy life, but often, Mensurius believed, rather for the support and esteem thereby acquired from an indiscriminating piety.

That the Metropolitan should have thought it necessary to write this self-defence to the Numidian Primate shows, at any rate, the powerful influence of the opposition in Carthage. The charge against his own fidelity was one which he did not think it wise, nor perhaps even safe, to ignore.

To this apology the Numidian Primate returned a lofty but evasive reply. He expatiated on the fidelity of the Numidian confessors, their courageous behaviour under persecution. Then, with a light and rapid touch, he mentioned that his own reply to the magistrates was : " I am a Christian and a Bishop, and not a Betrayer " ; leaving the conclusion implied, but not asserted, that with this response the inquirers were somehow satisfied.

There were, however, critics among the Numidian bishops who considered their Primate's account an evasion rather than an answer ; and were ready to challenge him to a fuller explanation if the need arose.

Here for the moment, however, the matter dropped.

But in the year 305 the twelve Numidian bishops met at Cirta,<sup>2</sup> for the purpose of electing and consecrating a successor

<sup>1</sup> St. Aug. (Gaume), ix. 864 ; " Brevic. Coll.," III. 25.

<sup>2</sup> St. Aug., " C. Crescon.," III. 30 ; Gaume, ix. 696 ; Optatus, I, xiv.

to Bishop Paulus, who behaved so poorly in the persecution, and had since apparently died.<sup>1</sup> Secundus, the Primate, presided. He began by proposing to make the usual official inquiry into their own qualifications to act as consecrators; in order to secure the consecration against subsequent disputes. Addressing one of the bishops, the Primate said: "It is reported that you were a traditor". The Bishop replied: "You know how severely Florus incited me to offer incense; and God did not betray me into his hand, my brother. Since God has spared me, do you also leave me to God." The answer was a virtual admission of failure. "What then," said the Primate, "are we to do for martyrs? They are esteemed because they did not betray." The Bishop could only answer: "Leave me to give account to God"—the usual formula for declining to make a judicial investigation. The Primate did not venture to pursue the inquiry further. He accepted this lame account as a satisfactory explanation. So he passed to another. "It is reported," said the Primate, "that you also betrayed the Scriptures." "They were medical treatises," was the answer. The Primate accepted it. He turned to a third bishop: "It is said that you surrendered four Gospels". The Bishop replied: "Valentinus the Curator forced me to throw them into the flames. But I knew that they were worn-out copies. Forgive me this offence, and may God also forgive me." The Primate accepted this also. Every bishop hitherto had answered submissively. But when Purpurius, Bishop of Lima, was examined, he answered in a very different tone. "Do you think to terrify me," exclaimed Purpurius, "as you have terrified others? What did you do yourself when the Magistrate questioned you, and ordered you to surrender the Scriptures? How did you escape without yielding to their demands? Assuredly, they never released you without submission! As for me," continued Purpurius furiously, "I will kill anyone who opposes me. Do not provoke me to say

<sup>1</sup> Morcelli, "Africa Christiana," II. 195.

more." The Primate was overawed. Another bishop interposed in the embarrassing silence, and addressing the Primate, pleaded: "You hear what he says against you. He is ready to make a schism. And not only he; all the others are ready to go with him. They will give sentence against you, and you will remain the only heretic."

The Primate quailed. He offered no reply, but consulted with other bishops, who strongly advised that the whole matter of past unfaithfulness should be left to the judgment of God. Accordingly he terminated the inquiry at once; leaving the integrity of the other bishops undetermined. All he observed was: "You know, and God knows; be seated". With expressions of relief the bishops resumed their places, and proceeded to elect a new bishop for the city. The selection was apparently in the hands of the bishops. They selected Silvanus, subdeacon of the former Bishop Paulus, and implicated, like his bishop, in yielding the Scriptures to the flames. It is said that remonstrances were made by leading Churchmen of Cirta. He is a traditor, they complained; let another be chosen. We desire a man of integrity. But their objections were overruled. A group of bishops with such antecedents would have no scruple in selecting a person like themselves. Silvanus was accordingly consecrated Bishop of the Numidian capital.

This was in 305. Very little is known of the course of events for the next six years. It seems clear, however, that in this period the condition of the Church of Carthage was one of strong party spirit. Opposition to the Metropolitan found sympathizers in the Numidian Primate, and his suffragans, partly through official jealousy. And if no serious conflict arose while Mensurius lived, this was greatly due to his strength and caution. Probably the Numidian bishops dared not venture upon any public attack on one who knew too much about their own antecedents. But the troubles which he successfully averted from the Church of his day developed instantly at the time of his decease.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Morcelli, II. 199.

Mensurius the cautious was destined to suffer through other men's imprudence. Felix, his deacon, wrote a letter,<sup>1</sup> in an hour of zealous indiscretion, against no less a personage than the Consul Maxentius, who thereupon summoned him to give an account of himself at Rome. Mensurius, however, protected his deacon. But the protection involved the bishop in making the journey to Rome himself. If he surrendered documents, he protected men. Before leaving Carthage he entrusted, for greater security, the golden vessels of the sanctuary to the keeping of certain laymen. And, for further precaution, gave privately an inventory of the church's treasures to an aged woman, with injunction to deliver it to his successor, in case he did not return. Mensurius made his peace with the Consul, but died on the journey home.<sup>2</sup>

The death of Mensurius brought on a crisis in the African Church.

Contemporary African Churchmen appear quite unconscious of the critical nature of the election now to be made. Numerous conflicting interests are seen at work. Party spirit ran extremely high. But no one appears to understand that the whole course of African Church life would be permanently affected by their conduct at this hour. Nor, on the face of it, does it seem that there were grounds for the gravest anxieties. The circumstances did not present so menacing an aspect as many another episcopal election. The incident was no more than an election to the chief bishopric in Africa. Yet the result was a division of the whole African Church for more than a hundred years. The explanation seems inadequate. What was it that gave this disputed election a consequence immeasurably more disastrous than many another?

1. In the first place there were certain leading Carthaginian clergy, the two priests, Botrus and Celestius, who, not without some reasonable prospect of success, aspired to the vacant See. Prompted by self-interest, they managed to secure that a synod

<sup>1</sup> Optatus, I, XVIII.

<sup>2</sup> A.D. 311, Hefele, I. 173.

of neighbouring bishops should be immediately assembled, and the election proceeded with at once, in the absence of the bishops of the province of Numidia. However, the expectations of the ambitious were incorrect. They had miscalculated their own popularity. The laity of Carthage overlooked both Botrus and Celestius, and elected Cæcilian the Archdeacon. Accordingly Cæcilian was consecrated, by Felix, Bishop of Aptunga, as Bishop of Carthage, Primate and Metropolitan. But their disappointment converted these two influential clerics into resolute opponents of the new bishop.

2. A second discordant element was shortly created.<sup>1</sup> The woman whom Mensurius entrusted with the inventory of Church treasures faithfully discharged her duty by putting Cæcilian in possession of the facts. The new bishop thereupon requested the various elders to deliver up the golden vessels into his keeping. This they did, it is said reluctantly, having intended to appropriate them to their own uses. At any rate they forthwith abandoned the communion of Cæcilian and ranked themselves among the opposition.

3. A third element of division was created by a wealthy and influential Spanish lady, then residing in Carthage, named Lucilla, whom Cæcilian, when Archdeacon, had the misfortune to offend. Lucilla brought with her to church the relics, real or imaginary,<sup>2</sup> of some martyr, upon which she lavished much veneration before receiving the Holy Eucharist. Cæcilian, in his capacity as Archdeacon, had rebuked this practice, as resting on no authority. The probability is, not that Cæcilian felt any repugnance to the veneration of relics, but that Lucilla was bestowing this public veneration upon one whom the Church had not recognized in the roll of martyrs.<sup>3</sup> The Church had refused to acknowledge as martyrs those whose imprudence or fanaticism brought persecution upon themselves. And it is quite probable that Lucilla was here attempting to canonize one whose claim to the honour of martyrdom the less fanatical

<sup>1</sup> Migne, "Optatus," p. 919.

<sup>2</sup> Optatus, I. 16.

<sup>3</sup> "Nondum Vindicati," Optatus.

were not prepared to admit. At any rate Lucilla withdrew from his communion, and took her place among the discontents.

These three discordant elements, clerical, lay, feminine, disappointed ambition, frustrated covetousness, and spiteful feelings, coalesced in an unholy alliance, for the purpose of retaliation upon the new Bishop of Carthage.<sup>1</sup> And these three, from the time of the historian Optatus, have been commonly adduced as chief causes of the trouble which ensued.

4. These adverse elements, however, could scarcely by themselves affect the African Church at large, had not other and more extensive motives prevailed. There can be little doubt that the election of Cæcilian appeared a party question. For Cæcilian had been completely identified with his predecessor's policy. As Archdeacon, he had been Mensurius's right-hand. The repression of fanaticism during the persecution had been carried out through his instrumentality. His election, therefore, meant the continuance of lenient views, the rejection of austerer ideals. Cæcilian's election showed, indeed, that the majority of the Carthaginian Church shared his opinions, and approved his behaviour; but the discontented, if in the minority, were not on this account less active, nor perhaps less formidable. What Cæcilian termed prudence they considered laxity; what they called firmness he would call fanaticism. Thus the choice of Cæcilian was a burning question of party strife. And the locally discontented knew well that if the School of Severity was in the minority within the Carthaginian Church, it possessed vast masses of adherents beyond the limits of the great city. The Numidian bishops enjoyed a reputation for austerity. At the time of the election they were, it is true, left out; but they could be now, at any rate, invited to pass adverse judgment on Cæcilian's consecration. Accordingly an appeal was made to their impartiality. It is difficult not to see the activities of Botrus and Celestius in this—the malice of disappointed ambi-

<sup>1</sup> Optatus.



tion. The Numidian bishops accepted the appeal with alacrity. No less than seventy of their number assembled in Carthage. They acted the part of vigorous advocates of an austere ideal. They recoiled with abhorrence from lax and easygoing ways. Nevertheless, their reputation for austerity was wholly undeserved. The severer school at Carthage were apparently deceived by Numidian professions, with which Numidian practice did not correspond. It has been already seen, on the authority of official reports, that these same Numidians had themselves, during the persecution, surrendered the Scriptures to the imperial decree, or escaped by evasive methods which would not bear more rigorous scrutiny than the conduct of the other school. Here was Secundus of Tigisis, now Primate of Numidia, whose reforming zeal at the Synod of Cirta collapsed altogether before the menaces of undeniable traditors, and whose own integrity was more than open to suspicion. With him was Silvanus, now Bishop of Cirta, the same who as subdeacon had yielded the chalices to the pagan authorities in the Diocletian trial. Here was Purpurius, the wild, ferocious, and defiant, whose record was among the worst in that cruel time. It was certainly, to say the least, incongruous that these ill-assorted elements, none of whom was really fit to be a bishop, should appear as champions of an austerer view. But it was not incongruous that they should be welcomed by the disappointed, and supported by the wealth of the vindictive Lucilla. Her house became the central office for schismatic agencies, and apparently the place where the Numidian Synod met.

5. A question of ecclesiastical jurisdiction now arose, which has never been quite clearly solved to the present day. The Numidian bishops professed themselves indignant that the consecration to the See of Carthage had taken place before they came. They regarded Cæcilian as a mere intruder, and the See as vacant still.<sup>1</sup> But it is difficult to define pre-

<sup>1</sup> Hefele.

cisely upon what ground they based a claim to share in an election at Carthage.<sup>1</sup> If they had no right, why were they indignant? If they had a right, upon what ground did it rest? The Bishops of Numidia had a primate of their own. What right could they have in electing a primate for another (the proconsular) province? It has been suggested that, since the Numidian bishops were subject to the Bishop of Carthage as Metropolitan, their assent was necessary to his selection.<sup>2</sup> In this case, Cæcilian's consecration, in the absence of their approval, would be irregular.<sup>3</sup> But of this asserted necessity for the consent of the Numidian Episcopate there is no documentary evidence. The Mauritanian bishops made no such claim. Nor does it seem that the Numidians could have had any more right to share in electing the Metropolitan of Carthage than was possessed by the Bishops of Mauritania. The objection to Cæcilian's consecration, as formulated by the Donatists a hundred years later at the Carthaginian Conference, was that a primate should be consecrated by a primate<sup>4</sup> (*princeps a principe ordinaretur*) and not by inferior bishops. The Catholic answer to this was that it was not the custom of the Catholic Church. The Bishop of Carthage was traditionally consecrated, not by the Numidians, but by the bishops of the churches round Carthage; just as the Bishop of the Roman Church is not consecrated by some metropolitan, but by the neighbouring Bishop of Ostia. What authority the Donatists had for their asserted custom, Augustine says he did not know, nor when it was supposed to have originated. Had the custom been ancient their ancestors would have urged it against Cæcilian when they rejected him in his absence.

Probably the dispute was complicated by differences between the secular and religious divisions of North Africa. The chief secular divisions were three: the Proconsular, the Numidian, the Mauritanian. The Proconsular was Africa proper, with

<sup>1</sup> Noris.

<sup>2</sup> Völter.

<sup>3</sup> Reuter, "Aug. Studien," 234-6.

<sup>4</sup> "Brevic. Coll.," 868, § 29.

Carthage as the capital ; the Mauritanian extended to the West towards Spain ; while between them lay Numidia, with its capital, Cirta.

But the frontiers between the Proconsular and the Numidian provinces underwent alterations from time to time. Now it seems that the ecclesiastical divisions followed the secular, but failed to keep pace with the alterations. A district might belong secularly to one province, ecclesiastically to another. Even in St. Augustine's time his bishopric was secularly in the Proconsulate, but ecclesiastically in the Province of Numidia. Such Numidian bishops as were in the secular Proconsulate might not unnaturally consider themselves privileged to vote in its ecclesiastical concerns.

It is also clear that the ecclesiastical organization of the African Church was at the time of the Diocletian persecution incomplete. When Numidia became an ecclesiastical province is not exactly known. Probably not much before 300. The Numidian Primacy was thus a youthful institution. It could not be compared for influence with the Primacy of the Proconsulate, which already possessed a long and eventful history. The Proconsular Primacy at Carthage, by its immemorial association with one city, and that city the African capital, had gradually grown to great but undefined authority over the entire African Church. The Bishop of Carthage was in reality a Metropolitan. But this increasing power was evidently viewed with jealousy in the Numidian division. The bishops of that province were not reluctant to seize an occasion for restricting the power of the Carthaginian See. This motive, in all probability, contributes to explain the alacrity with which they gathered and intervened.<sup>1</sup>

6. There was yet another element which tended to lift this local disputed succession into a universal conflict for the entire North African Church. It gathered up into itself the rivalries

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Theodor Mommsen, "Provinces of the Roman Empire," II. 303-45. Rauscher, "Augustinus," 521. Monceaux, "Hist. Lit. de l'Afrique Chretienne," III. 85.

of race. North Africa of the period was a region of many nationalities and tongues. To name no more, there were the Latin and the Phœnician, and underlying these, the Berber or native, destined to survive them both. The Phœnician had conquered the African, and the Roman the Phœnician. But the Roman antipathy to the Phœnician had never been overcome. The conqueror stood aloof from the conquered, and never intermixed. Whatever the proportions between the two it is certain that the Phœnician language pervaded the whole Province of Numidia. Phœnician towns had become Italian colonies, and the official language of North Africa was that of Rome. But yet in the social life, more especially of course in places which stood aloof from intercourse,<sup>1</sup> or away from Roman centres, the Phœnician language was habitually spoken. These racial and linguistic difficulties necessarily affected the course of the life of the Church. The cultured Latin churches of the Roman population were intruded upon, or out of touch with, or alien to, a stock of a different kind. The student will remember numerous instances. Valerius, Augustine's predecessor in the See of Hippo, ordains Augustine precisely to remedy his own inability to make himself intelligible to the surrounding population. The city of Fussala, forty miles from Hippo, still needs a bishop in Augustine's day who can speak the Punic language. Punic words occur in the sermons of Augustine. The strongest opponents of the Metropolitan in the old Numidian capital of Cirta are of Moorish origin.<sup>2</sup> The gangs of wild defenders of the schism are evidently of Punic race. They cannot understand their bishop's sermons without an interpreter. The dearth of African clergy is partly due to the difficulty of finding men qualified to teach in the Punic language. The materials were consequently ready for a serious severance between churches of the national types. We are tempted to ask whether the obvious Numidian and Carthaginian jealousy was partly due to diversity of race. It is

<sup>1</sup> Theodor Mommsen, "Provinces of the Roman Empire," II. 328.

<sup>2</sup> "Gesta apud Zenophilum."

probable that the North African Church was really being confronted with the problem of a racial as contrasted with a territorial episcopate. It may be that the subsequent separation would never have taken place on so vast a scale if the Punic Christians had been guided by bishops of their own nationality.

7. But whatever weight was possessed by these separate elements, undoubtedly the ultimate cause of the division consisted in dogmatic difference. The Numidian bishops had theological tendencies of their own which must issue in a separate Christian type. The accusation which they framed against Cæcilian was that his consecrator, Felix, Bishop of Aptunga, was a traditor, or betrayer of Sacred Writings in the recent persecution. This indirect attack, at first sight so irrelevant, was quite sufficient for their purpose, assuming the dogmatic theories with which they connected it. For the Numidian theory was that no traditor could administer a valid sacrament. Consequently no consecration performed by Felix could constitute its recipient a bishop: the inference being that Cæcilian had never been truly consecrated. Here we find the first introduction into the controversy of the uncatholic theory, fruitful in bitter discords, that the value of a sacrament depends on the personal worth of the minister. Cæcilian, who refused to appear, replied that, even if his consecration were invalid, his election was certain, and that all the Council had to do was to consecrate him themselves. This challenge, to dispute his election if they could, was not accepted by the Synod. And yet, in all justice, it ought to have been. It carried the war direct into the Numidian camp. It virtually required the Numidian bishops to show by what right they intervened in a Carthaginian episcopal election. It challenged them to establish the validity of their own proceedings. If we may judge from the only answer given, the force of the challenge was felt and disconcerted them. Purpurius, Bishop of Lima, the same who made himself conspicuous in the Council of Cirta, broke out into the furious reply: "Let him come for

the laying on of hands, and we will break his head for him by way of penance". After this, further conference was impossible. Cæcilian's adherents dissuaded him from risking himself in such an assembly. And for his own part, as Metropolitan, he firmly declined to recognize their right of intervention.

The Numidians now simply followed their own devices. How they reconciled their proceedings with ecclesiastical principles does not appear; but, acting not only on the assumption that Cæcilian's election, as well as his consecration, was worthless, but also, and here is the astounding feature, that they, the Numidian bishops by themselves, apart from the other bishops of the Proconsulate, apart also from the people, were the qualified electors to the See, they appointed and consecrated, on their own authority, as Bishop of Carthage, one Majorinus, formerly a reader under Cæcilian, a servant in the household of Lucilla.

Majorinus was a quite obscure and uninfluential person, little more than a figure-head. He takes but little part in the subsequent proceedings; nor did he succeed in permanently impressing his name upon the schism. Lucilla's influence was strong over the Numidian decision. The Council completed their work by sending a circular to the African bishops denouncing Cæcilian as an intruder, and his consecrator, Felix, as a traditor, or betrayer of the Sacred Scriptures; and declaring that Majorinus was established as the lawful Bishop of Carthage. Meanwhile, of course, Cæcilian held his own. His consecration was not affected by Numidian criticism, and he could not regard their sentence as invalidating the previous choice of clergy and people. Thus Carthage had now two bishops, and two churches, for the city was divided.

There was the party of Cæcilian and the party of Majorinus. And it is, of course, understood that these two parties represented the two antagonistic tendencies of African believers. Cæcilian represented the repression of fanaticism, the moderate view, the discouragement of superstitious practices and extreme opinions. Majorinus, on the contrary, supported by Lucilla,

represented the most extreme individualism, with austere ideals as to the toleration of evil in the Church.

The consecration of Majorinus was a tremendous and irrevocable step. It converted opposition into division. Up to that moment, the entire problem consisted in disputes, jealousies, and general discontent within the limits of one undivided communion. Henceforward the whole character of the question was changed. The division had begun.

And the great importance of the city and the See of Carthage involved all Africa in the dispute. The state of affairs was similar to the divisions which followed the creation of a rival Pope. Every local African Church of necessity took sides. Adherents of Cæcilian and of Majorinus respectively were to be found in almost every town and village of North Africa. The two churches in Carthage were reproduced and multiplied far and wide over the entire population. The miserable little local disputes, the coalition of discontent with other unamiable qualities, had succeeded in a way unintended and unforeseen. The coalition had not only retaliated upon Cæcilian, but had inflicted on Africa a terrible division, which rent the Church in fragments, and lasted on, with painful and disastrous effects to African Christianity, over more than a hundred years.

Thus the party of individualism and the party of collectivism ; those who laid peculiar stress on the worth of the isolated believer, and those whose interests were peculiarly in the community at large ; those who saw principally the subjective side of truth, and those who saw principally its objective side, were entirely severed into two antagonistic Churches, to the very serious injury of both. The tendencies of each badly needed the corrective influence of the other. If they had centred in one body, they would have modified each other's development. Separated from the balancing power of antithetical truths, each was liable to run still further into extremes. This is one of the calamities of isolation.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE DONATISTS AND THE EMPEROR CONSTANTINE.

THE year after the formation of the party of Majorinus was the year of Constantine's famous victory at the Milvian Bridge. His rival Maxentius, the same who summoned Bishop Mensurius to appear before him, was drowned in the Tiber, and Constantine's sole dominion was assured. This was in the autumn of 312. Before the year was out Constantine made it memorable again by publishing his Edict of Toleration. All the legal enactments against Christianity were thereby removed; and the Church was granted full freedom of worship, together with the restoration of buildings and possessions confiscated during the previous reign. Purchasers and present holders of Church property were to be compensated out of the public revenue; so that all vested interests would be respected, and the restitution create no jealousies and disturb no rights.<sup>1</sup> Constantine's main desire was the consolidation and unity of his Empire. The one thing he deprecated was division. Yet it is clear that his action increased what he deprecated. For he restricted these ecclesiastical privileges to the communion of Cæcilian. In adopting this line, the Emperor had not trusted to his own discernment; he was acting under the advice of the famous Bishop Hosius, one of the most influential clergy of the time, afterwards president of the Council of Nicæa. But Constantine's determination to place all Church property in Africa at the disposal of Cæcilian's Communion naturally forced the party of Majorinus to appeal to him.

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, "H. E.," x. 5.



Their appeal did not originate in a desire to introduce secular influence into ecclesiastical disputes. Their primary object was simply to secure the property to which they conceived themselves entitled.<sup>1</sup> The party of Majorinus lodged their complaint against the Bishop of Carthage early in the year 313. They presented to the African Proconsul Anulinus a sealed packet, wrapped in leather, and labelled, "a document of the Catholic Church containing charges against Cæcilian, and furnished by the party of Majorinus".<sup>2</sup> This they requested the Proconsul to forward to the Emperor, which he lost no time in doing. In this appeal the applicants requested that Constantine would appoint a Commission of Gallican Bishops to investigate the case of Cæcilian. Their preference for Gallican intervention was due to the fact that Gaul had been exempt from the recent persecution. Bishops of that country would therefore approach the subject unaffected by the bias of party spirit. It should be particularly noticed here that the Separatists did not ask Constantine to determine the matter in the secular courts, or to investigate in person. All they ask is that he would give them ecclesiastical judges from a special province. The appeal of the party of Majorinus to Constantine resulted in three decisions upon the question.

1. The first decision was given at the Synod of the Lateran in 313. Constantine was greatly concerned with the failure of his scheme in Africa. He wrote a letter<sup>3</sup> to Miltiades, Bishop of Rome, informing him that Cæcilian of Carthage was accused by his African colleagues of ecclesiastical offences. Such disputes and divisions were exceedingly injurious to the province divinely entrusted to imperial control. He has therefore determined to send Cæcilian to Rome with ten accusers and ten defenders, requiring Miltiades, together with certain other bishops whom he nominates (Maternus of Cologne,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. St. Aug., "Ep.," 43, §§ 18, 19.

<sup>2</sup> See St. Aug., "Ep.," 88, where the Proconsul's letter is preserved. Hefele, I. 178.

<sup>3</sup> Eusebius, v. 5.

Reticus of Autun, and Marinus of Arles), to hear the case and decide it in accordance with Christian principles.<sup>1</sup> The Emperor concluded with an earnest desire that the Synod would leave no opportunity for schism.

In accordance with these directions, a Synod was held in Rome, in the palace of the Lateran, the residence of the Empress Fausta. Three Gallican bishops came, and fifteen Italian bishops were added, presumably by Miltiades, the Roman bishop, who presided. Cæcilian and his supporters appeared, the main opponent being Donatus, Bishop of Black Huts in Numidia. Majorinus, the rival Bishop of Carthage, was apparently not there. He simply disappears from history. It is difficult to suppose that if he were living he could have been exempted from attendance.<sup>2</sup> Yet the Separatists are called "the party of Majorinus".

The Lateran Synod met three several days.

The case for the prosecution completely failed. Donatus conveyed his witnesses from Africa to Rome, but in the Council Chamber they were able to sustain no valid charge against Cæcilian.<sup>3</sup> On the contrary, the tables were unexpectedly turned. It was proved that the accuser Donatus had become schismatical during the episcopate of Cæcilian's predecessor Mensurius. He had taken Christians and rebaptized them. The acts of the Numidian Council at which Cæcilian had been condemned were then considered. This condemnation of Cæcilian, although the act of some seventy bishops, did not greatly weigh with the nineteen bishops in Rome. It was not a question merely of numbers but of weight. The Lateran bishops declared Cæcilian innocent. The only person whom they condemned was Donatus; and that on his own admissions. Towards all other members of the schism their decree was most lenient. Every Separatist bishop willing to return to unity was to continue his episcopal functions; wherever the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bright, "Age of the Fathers," I. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Noris, IV. 116.

<sup>3</sup> Noris, IV. 105; Hefele, I. 179; St. Aug., "Ep.," 43; Optatus (Migne), p. 930.

party of Cæcilian and that of Majorinus both possessed a bishop, the senior should retain the See, the junior be transferred to another diocese.

Such was the Lateran determination pronounced by Miltiades, and communicated to the Emperor Constantine. The Roman bishop did not long survive the conclusion of the Synod.

Both the contending parties, the acquitted as well as the condemned,<sup>1</sup> were detained for a while in Italy in the interests of peace. After a time Donatus obtained leave to return to Africa on the understanding that he would not re-enter the city of Carthage. Cæcilian remained at Brescia. Meanwhile two bishops were sent from Rome to announce in Africa Cæcilian's acquittal.<sup>2</sup>

They entered Carthage in Lent, proclaimed that the party of Cæcilian was the true representative of the Catholic Church, declared emphatically that the decision of the nineteen bishops in the Lateran Synod could not be changed, communicated with Cæcilian's clergy and returned. Soon afterwards Donatus released himself from his promise and reappeared in Carthage. Whereupon Cæcilian also returned. And the conflicting parties confronted each other again.

The Separatists had desired to be tried by Gallican bishops. Their desire had been granted. But they refused to acquiesce in the decision. They made unfavourable comparisons between the Synod which acquitted Cæcilian, and that which condemned him. If he was acquitted by nineteen bishops at Rome, he had been condemned by seventy at Carthage. It is significant that they take no account whatever of the fact that the Roman bishop was one of those nineteen. It is manifest that they saw no necessary finality in his decision.

The Separatists sharply criticized the Council of the Lateran. They loudly complained that no attempt had been made by the assembly at Rome to investigate the character of Cæcilian's

<sup>1</sup> Optatus, Hefele, Noris.

<sup>2</sup> See Valesius, Tillemont.

consecrator, Felix of Aptunga.<sup>1</sup> This was certainly true. And the omission was serious. For if Felix was a betrayer of the Scriptures, as they asserted him to be, then, on Separatist principles, he had no power to confer sacraments; and consequently Cæcilian had never been really consecrated at all. This was the Donatist view. It was therefore a grave mistake to omit the investigation.

Constantine, in his anxiety for peace, recognized the justice of their complaint, and ordered his Proconsul Ælian to hold a special commission of inquiry in Africa, and to report to him on the conduct of Bishop Felix during the persecution.<sup>2</sup> Ælian held a severe and searching inquiry, in which it was demonstrated from the public records and from the evidence of living witnesses that Felix had not apostatized during the persecution. It was proved that the charge against him was founded on forged letters, the spiteful work of a subordinate State official, who, being interrogated, confessed his crime before the court, and whom nothing but his official position saved from being put to the torture during the Proconsul's investigation. Ælian made his report to Constantine, who promptly ordered that the forger should be sent to him in Italy. It was noted that Constantine immediately cancelled the exemption of inferior officials from torture. Whether this particular criminal was the first to suffer from the liability to which he had reduced his class remains unknown. But Constantine's efforts to remove all causes of complaint did not bring the separated party nearer unity.

2. Frustrated in his first attempt to secure a settlement of this Church trouble by means of the Council of the Lateran, Constantine resolved to bring the matter before a larger and more influential assembly.

Hence the Council of Arles, A.D. 314.

Modern historians are much exercised to know in what light Churchmen in the age of Constantine viewed the relation

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, x.

<sup>2</sup> A.D. 314, Tillemont, p. 44.

between the Council at Rome and the Council at Arles. Did the party of Majorinus appeal from the one to the other? Was the Council at Arles a request of the Separatists, or a device of Constantine? The answer to these questions is sometimes complicated by the presupposition that the religious mind of the fourth century must have regarded the decision of a Synod where the Pope presided as possessing finality. Surely, it is suggested, the Separatists did not imagine that they could appeal from the Pope's decision. But this presupposition is a pure anachronism. It is true that the records of the period contain no precise appeal to a new Council in so many words. It may also be correct that the schismatics never definitely formulated any appeal. But what is certain is that they did appeal to Constantine from the Council of Arles. And surely that act involved an appeal from its antecedent, the Council of the Lateran. And those who appealed from a Council to an Emperor would probably not hesitate to appeal from a Pope to a Council. At any rate, after being judged by a Council where the Pope presided, they did ultimately appeal to the secular power. Technically it may be correct that they formulated no appeal from the decision at Rome. But if to complain against a decision, to refuse obedience, is practically to appeal against it, then the party of Majorinus did undoubtedly appeal from Rome to another decision. At the same time it must be noticed that the Synod of Arles included apparently among its members several of the same bishops who sat as judges at Rome. Unless these names were added after the special inquiry was concluded, their presence would seem to militate against the first principles of an appeal. Obviously the judges in a Court of Appeal cannot be the same who have already determined the case in a lower court. Still, whatever the solution of these difficulties may be, it is certain that the case of Cæcilian,<sup>1</sup> although already examined and judged by the Synod when the Pope presided, was re-examined and

<sup>1</sup> St. Aug., "Ep.," 43.

judged over again by the larger Council at Arles. Constantine was bent on making the new Synod as widely representative as possible.<sup>1</sup> He ordered Ælian, his Vicar in Africa, to facilitate the journey of episcopal representatives of either side, to furnish them with carriages at the public expense, and to convey them as far as possible by land through Mauritania and so to Spain. He also sent a circular letter to individual bishops requesting them to attend.

Yet, after all, the numerical strength of the Council appears to have been comparatively insignificant. Mediæval accounts estimated it at 600, later historians reduced it to 200, the modern estimate is 33.<sup>2</sup> This, at any rate, is the number of signatures in the Council's letter to Pope Silvester. But the records of the Council have not survived, and the fragmentary remains leave much to be desired. Yet if the Council of Arles was numerically small, it was geographically representative of Constantine's extensive dominions and of the various provinces of the Western Church. Africa and Gaul and Britain and Spain and Italy all contributed their share in its deliberations. The Bishop of Carthage, of Cöln, of Milan, and of London<sup>3</sup> met each other there; and it may truly be said that both for its subject-matter and for the representative character of its members, the Council of Arles was the most important assembly hitherto held in Christendom.<sup>4</sup>

The president of this Council was Marinus, Bishop of Arles. His name stands first in the synodal letter.

The African disputes were carefully investigated a second time. The details are not known. It is probable, although not certain, that the Proconsul Ælian's report, clearing the character of Bishop Felix from the charge of betraying the Scriptures, was produced in the Council of Arles.<sup>5</sup> The miser-

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius; Noris, iv. 156. See Ittigius, p. 269, and Bright, "Age of the Fathers," i. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Ceillier, Baronius, Hefele, i. 181.

<sup>3</sup> Restitutus. See Bright, "Age of the Fathers," i. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Tillemont, Fleury, Baronius, Hefele.

<sup>5</sup> Baronius.

able forger of the letter which caused Felix to be falsely accused had been sent a prisoner from Africa by command of the Emperor. And it is probable that he also was produced at the Council, and made to confess his spiteful misdeeds. This was clearly Constantine's intention. Cæcilian's accusers were confronted with him at Arles and entirely failed to make good their case. And by their condemnation Cæcilian was acquitted the second time.

The Council enacted among canons affecting the African Church in particular, that no person duly baptized by a heretic should, on entering the Catholic Communion, be rebaptized;<sup>1</sup> thus implying the great principle that the validity of the Sacrament does not depend on the worthiness of the minister.

Since the time of St. Cyprian's predecessor, Bishop Agrippinus of Carthage, over a period, that is, of about a hundred years, the custom of rebaptizing all persons baptized outside the Catholic body had prevailed extensively, owing largely to St. Cyprian's powerful influence.<sup>2</sup> The African bishops present at Arles appear to have yielded to the authority and reasons of the majority. From that time rebaptism ceased to be a practice of the African Church, while it continued to be maintained by the Donatists.

Two other regulations affecting the African question were passed by the Council.<sup>3</sup> It was resolved that bishops who could be proved from the public records to have surrendered the Holy Scriptures during the persecution should be deposed from their office; but at the same time it was also asserted that ordination conferred by them was valid. Felix's accusers were to be excommunicated to the day of their death.<sup>4</sup>

These regulations should have commended themselves to both parties. For, on the one hand, they fully concurred with the Separatist opinion that the betrayal of the Scriptures was sin; on the other hand, they emphasized the Catholic principle that ordination was not affected by the character of the

<sup>1</sup> Canon 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ceillier, II. 631.

<sup>3</sup> Canon 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 14.

ordainer. And further they required that accusations should be definitely proved from public documents, not vaguely and wildly asserted. They also placed a wise restraint on malicious accusers by imposing upon them the severe but righteous penalty of exclusion.

The Council communicated their decision to the Roman Bishop Silvester, and doubtless also to Constantine. The defeated party now beset the Emperor with entreaties that he would take the case into his own hands and hear it in person. This proposal of the Separatists involved an entirely new departure. It introduced an alien principle. Hitherto their appeal to Constantine had been merely to grant them new ecclesiastical judges. They had asked for bishops to hear their case. This was not inconsistent with the Church's Constitution. But they now asked for something quite new and foreign to that Constitution. They desired an Emperor as the final judge in an ecclesiastical dispute. They appealed from an Ecclesiastical Council to a Secular Court, from the legitimate authority in spiritual affairs to an authority of a purely temporal kind. Constantine's religious convictions, as an unbaptized layman, only recently drawn to the fringes of the faith, may have been elementary and inadequate; but he had imbibed sufficient instruction to know that transference of the case from a spiritual court to himself in person was irreconcilable with fundamental Christian principles. In a letter to the Fathers at Arles<sup>1</sup> he thanked the bishops for their just and dispassionate decision; complained bitterly of the deeply ingrained stubbornness, the pride of the Separatists; and expressed himself scandalized by the conduct of clergy in appealing from a council to himself. "They seek out my judgment," he exclaimed, "who myself await the judgment of Christ. The decisions of the bishops ought to be regarded as decisions of the Lord Himself. To appeal from a Council to the Emperor is to turn from the heavenly to the earthly. What

<sup>1</sup> Noris, iv. 194; Hefele, i. 197; Neander.



audacity, what madness it is. They have appealed from it like heathen. Even the practice of the world is to appeal from a lower judgment to a higher, which is what these men reverse." After these remarkable expressions of his very definite sense of the different functions of spiritual and secular power, Constantine concludes by requesting the bishops to remain a little longer at Arles in the hope of promoting reunion. If that hope should fail they are to return to their dioceses. Meanwhile he had given orders to his State officials to send to the Imperial Court, where they would be severely dealt with, such obstinate offenders as rebelled against the sentence of Arles.

The decision at Arles and Constantine's threats induced a certain portion of the party of Majorinus to return to Cæcilian's Communion. But the great body of the Donatists remained unreconciled. The Council was by this time dissolved. But the Separatists persisted in urging Constantine to hear the case; and, in spite of his clear recognition that such a course was beyond his province, their assiduity wearied him at last into a reluctant concession. He resolved to go to Africa and determine the trouble where it originated.<sup>1</sup> But this intention was speedily abandoned. He then summoned Cæcilian and his opponents to appear before him in Rome. For some unknown reason Cæcilian failed to appear, and the Separatists did their utmost to induce the Emperor to determine the case in his absence.<sup>2</sup> Constantine refused, and transferred the case to Milan. Ultimately, after various delays, the case was tried, before Constantine in person, at Milan in November, 316; and Cæcilian was for the third time pronounced innocent of the charges laid against him.

Certainly the Separatist appeal had been fairly heard and answered. The three acquittals of Cæcilian appeared conclusive. One after another the decision of the Lateran, the decision of Arles, the decision of Constantine, had shown complete concurrence. But no investigation of evidence,

<sup>1</sup> Noris, iv. 200; Duchesne, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> St. Aug., "Ep.," 43.

however impartial, and no decision, however authoritative, could prevail. The accusations against Cæcilian had been demonstrated to be baseless: yet they were obstinately believed, and pertinaciously propagated. Constantine showed his disappointment and displeasure by edicts of great severity. He ordered that their churches should be taken away from the defeated party.<sup>1</sup> But these attempts at suppression gave the Separatists the dignity which comes of suffering for conviction. Their numbers and strength increased.

About this time <sup>2</sup> appears, as head of the separated community, a conspicuous and influential personage, Donatus, commonly called the Great. Henceforth the party of Majorinus became known as the Donatists. All other leaders were permanently eclipsed by the new Separatist President at Carthage. Donatus was a masterful personality, able, eloquent, learned, of unlimited self-assertion, aggressive, controversial, domineering, exactly the man to succeed as head of a schism. He demanded and obtained an ascendancy over his own communion far beyond that exercised by the bishops in the Catholic Church. If, as some think, the substitution of Majorinus for Cæcilian was prompted partly by a desire to limit episcopal authority, it was an irony and a Nemesis which inflicted Donatus the Great upon a body of independents. A masterful personality in a newly formed communion has often acquired unique supremacy over his co-religionists from the very fact that his authority is personal rather than official; due to his individual qualities rather than to assigned position; being neither balanced nor controlled, as Catholic authority is apt to be, by traditional ideals and accepted limitations. Certainly Donatus invigorated the schism. He imparted to it what was bad for its spirituality, yet essential to its continuance: much of his own stubborn and arrogant disposition. He enabled it to resist imperial condemnation with unprecedented boldness. The advent of Donatus heralded a new era to the defeated community. He imparted to them not only his name but

<sup>1</sup> Migne, P. L., xi, 794.

<sup>2</sup> A.D. 314.

much of his nature also. They learned from Donatus to adopt a tone of defiance towards the imperial authority hitherto unheard. They wrote to Constantine informing him that nothing should induce them to communicate with his rascally bishop, meaning Cæcilian.

It has been usual among historians to distinguish Donatus, Bishop of Black Huts, from Donatus, otherwise called the Great. But whether this distinction is accurate has of late been called in question.<sup>1</sup> Certainly it is not without its difficulties. It has been recently pointed out that the former personage is a highly problematical figure. He appears at the Lateran Synod, where the evidence showed that he had been the head of the opposition against Mensurius at Carthage, and had gathered round himself and rebaptized the discontented. While he is called Bishop of Black Huts in Numidia, he is never heard of as residing in his own diocese but at Carthage. After the Lateran Synod he disappears, and is replaced by a Donatus who holds precisely the same leading position over the party. It is also certain that the historian Optatus identifies the two, and that Augustine in his earlier treatises did the same. We do not know that they were regarded as distinct individuals until a hundred years had passed, when, for some unknown reason, the Donatists held this view at the great conference in 411.

Donatus proved his power as an energetic organizer of the sect. In 318 he thought it advisable to extend his communion beyond the limits of Africa. He succeeded in placing a Donatist bishop in Rome. Bishop Victor, who had been one of the consecrators at Circa, was charged with this office. The Donatist congregation in Rome consisted apparently of African residents. It was a miserable and precarious work. But it created a Donatist succession; whose names are still recorded, down to the Donatist representative from Rome who appeared at the conference in Carthage in 411.

Donatus appears to have also possessed considerable literary abilities. He composed many works in behalf of his cause,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Monceaux, "Revue de l'Histoire de Religion," 1909.

but no portion of his writings survives.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile his influence grew very extensive. Men swore by his grey hairs, and he seems to have ruled as almost absolute dictator over a period of some forty years.

Constantine made still further efforts to secure reunion for the Church in Africa. The decisions of Lateran and Arles and that before the Emperor himself were chiefly defensive; an investigation of charges made against Cæcilian and resulting in his acquittal. But in 320 a more aggressive policy was instituted. Constantine ordered official investigation to be made into the conduct of the Donatist leaders during the Diocletian persecution. The official report of this inquiry is still preserved, although incomplete. The evidence presents a curious picture of fourth century African Church life. Zenophilus,<sup>2</sup> a man of consular rank, presided. In the course of this inquiry it was shown, from the official acts of the Diocletian persecution, that Secundus, then a subdeacon of the Church at Cirta, had secured his own safety by surrendering the Scriptures.

A very damaging correspondence was also produced between various bishops of the Donatist Communion and the same Secundus, after his consecration, strongly advising him to be reconciled with a certain deacon Nundinarius who knew too much about the past, and who might ruin everything if, in a revengeful moment, he gave the real facts publicity. Now this is exactly what Nundinarius did. He produced the correspondence in court before Zenophilus. That Secundus was himself a traditor was confirmed by witnesses, who also declared that the chief episcopal opponents of Cæcilian, namely Secundus and Purpurius, were supported by Lucilla's money. Now the point of the story is that Secundus was the consecrator of Cæcilian's rival, Majorinus, first Bishop of the Schism.

The documents of this inquiry do not completely cohere. They have probably suffered some dislocation in transmission through the copyist's hands. But the general result is obvious. Accordingly, on Donatist principles, the consecration of Majori-

<sup>1</sup> Jerome, "Catal. Script. Eccles.," 93.

<sup>2</sup> "Gesta apud Zenophil.," S. Aug., T. ix., Appendix, 1104 ff.

nus had no more value than that of Cæcilian. See then the destructive argument carried into the enemy's camp. The very basis of the Donatist position, that which alone could constitute a valid sacrament, namely the personal integrity of the consecrator, was historically proved to be wanting in the first stage of the Donatist succession. Thus official investigation proved two things: not only were Cæcilian and his consecrators innocent of any irregularity which could render his consecration on Donatist principles invalid, but also the very defects falsely charged against him were proved to exist in the persons of his accusers. If the mere refutation of unjust charges, or the mere removal of misconceptions, could produce reunion, then the Donatist separation ought not to have continued another hour.

Adverse decisions and government inquiries appeared to produce no effect whatever in the direction of unity. They increased the sectarian exasperation and audacity.

In the city of Cirta, the old Numidian capital, the Emperor Constantine built a church for Catholic use.<sup>1</sup> But the Donatist party was so strong in the city that they overpowered the Catholics and took possession. The local magistrates remonstrated, but quite in vain. The schism and the intruders prevailed. When Constantine heard of the occurrence he vacillated, reconsidered the probabilities of controlling the schismatics, came to the conclusion that coercion was ineffective, and withdrew all severity. He wrote a letter to the African Church,<sup>2</sup> a most singular production for the Master of the Roman Legions, expressing his abhorrence of the schismatic temper. There was no wonder if these men had departed; for evil departs from good and has its own affinities. He considers them profane and irreligious, thankless to God, and enemies of His Church. Then with reference to the Donatists' forcible occupation of the cathedral at Cirta, he asks the bishops to exercise patience; to leave the heretics in possession; he promises to build them another church

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 321.

<sup>2</sup> *Noris*, iv. 268.

instead of the cathedral which they have lost. Thus Constantine allowed his own magistrates to be defied with impunity, and his own gift to the Catholic body to be forcibly taken away. The incident significantly illustrates the weakness to which the Roman power was then reduced.

The Arian troubles contributed to divert Constantine's attention from the local African disputes. And Cæcilian, in spite of the distracted condition of his Church, was able to be present at the Council of Nicæa. He subscribed his name to the decrees, and took back the canons to Africa, where a great Council was held at Carthage to receive them in 327. Cæcilian's copy of the Canons of Nicæa became historic. It was treasured in the Archives at Carthage, and consulted in the Council of 419, and utilized to rectify some erroneous assertions emanating from the Roman See.

Constantine's intervention in the Donatist controversy was perhaps inevitable but certainly unfortunate. His determination to restore Church property exclusively to the communion of Cæcilian entangled him in the successive stages of the struggle. Reluctant as he was to intervene, he saw no way to escape. When his peaceful judgments failed, he resorted, as the secular authority must, to the use of force. But the attempt to secure religious unity by force frustrated its own design. The consequence of persecuting religious opinions was here, as always, to intensify what it would suppress, to enlist a sympathy with the persecuted, to multiply their strength, to crown them with the dignity of confessorship if not of martyrdom. It failed, as it always must. And when Constantine found that persecution was futile, he became alarmed at the formidable increase of fanatic opposition, and washed his hands of the whole affair. He left the Catholics to endure, as best they might, evils which his well-meant blunder had seriously increased, and which he was confessedly helpless to heal. To this policy of aloofness he adhered for the remainder of his reign. But no abandonment of severity could remove the stubborn zeal which persecution had fanned and inflamed.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE DONATISTS UNDER CONSTANTINE'S SUCCESSORS.

CÆCILIAN of Carthage presided over the African Church probably for some thirty years after the three decisions in his favour. The date of his death is unknown, but a successor occupied the See in 347. For the remainder of the century the Catholic Bishops of Carthage are almost lost in obscurity, although the succession is known. But it is the successors of Donatus who impress themselves on history, not the Catholic line ; until, as the century concludes, the See of Cyprian and Cæcilian once more resumes its power in the person of Augustine's contemporary, the distinguished Bishop Aurelius. The Donatists powerfully affected the authority of the African Metropolitan ; they curtailed his influence and diminished his prestige. Of course neither Mensurius nor Cæcilian were men either spiritually or intellectually of the calibre of Cyprian ; and it is evident that their careers had somewhat compromised the dignity of their See.

Constantine's successor Constantius continued his father's later policy of conciliation. He sent various officials into Africa to relieve the social distress. Best known of these endeavours was the mission of Paulus and Macarius (A.D. 347). Their mission was not only philanthropic but undoubtedly also political. They traversed the provinces, scattering alms and exhortations to unity. Donatus rejected both with scorn. "What has the Emperor," he asked, "to do with the Church?"—a maxim which his opponents frequently contrasted with the Separatists' former appeal to Constantine. In Numidia especi-

ally, Paulus and Macarius met with the fiercest opposition. The Donatist Bishop of Bagai forestalled their work; sent messengers through the neighbouring market-places against them; and, above all, enlisted in his service the notorious companies known as Circumcellions.

The bearers of this uncouth name, which they derived from their corybantic propensities, were a product of African social discontent. They sprang from the older population and from its poorest and most miserable elements. Their language was Punic; and Latin, the language of the dominant classes, was for the most part unintelligible to them. Their social condition was one of abject wretchedness and neglect. The half-starved African masses had been years before a subject of Constantine's serious concern and legislation. He had given orders to his officials to see that the people were fed. But the famine was evidently quite as great in 347 as it was thirty years before. These hunger-driven masses had no settled home or occupation, but prowled in restless, formidable gangs about the country places. Some called them Circumcellions, others Circuitors.<sup>1</sup> They give the impression of miserable outcasts, having nothing to lose, and often perfectly indifferent to their own existence. No owner of property was secure when they approached. No creditor dare venture if they were near to make any attempt to recover his debts. No master presumed to resent insubordination or require obedience, lest an appeal should be lodged against him to the Circumcellions, who invariably took the law into their own hands, and executed retribution on principles quite their own. They delighted to reverse the social order when it lay within their power. They would compel wealthy people to alight from their carriages and walk, and made the servants occupy their places. They bound high-born men like asses to the mills, and made them grind out corn. These weird and grim exhibitions were varied with fierce and reckless brutality, as the humour took them.

The political authorities seemed incompetent to improve or

<sup>1</sup> "Philastrius de Hæres.," 85.



control this submerged element of the population. The Circumcellions continued many years, comparatively unmolested, while they did their utmost to render Africa uninhabitable.

This strong unscrupulous force of the socially miserable were long since invoked by the Donatists to add ecclesiastical controversy to their already extensive programme. And they willingly accepted office as champions in religion. These men the Bishop of Bagai summoned to his support.

It is difficult at first sight to see what affinity could exist between elements so incongruous as a Puritan community of Christians and an anarchist society. But if the view be correct that the Donatists partly consisted of a native religious movement against the Latin-speaking churches of the coast, the connexion becomes intelligible. That which drew the Donatists and the Circumcellions together would be identity of race and language. The native, whether socially discontented, or religiously independent, made common cause against their Latin-speaking conquerors.

At the invitation of the Bishop of Bagai the Circumcellions commenced an armed attack on the imperial almoners, Paulus and Macarius, who were driven to seek protection among the imperial forces. A fierce retaliation ensued. The Donatist Bishop of Bagai and several of his adherents were unhappily slain. From that date the Catholics were commonly nicknamed Macarians, and their Church the Macarian Church; while the slain were enrolled among the martyrs of the Donatist Church and revered as among the saints.

Macarius now resorted to violence. He threw aside the peaceful function of an almoner and assumed the rôle of a forceful promoter of unity. He sent the leading Separatists into exile, including among them Donatus the Great, who apparently died away from Africa. The severity restored comparative order; and, until the death of Constantius in 361, Donatist aggression was held in some measure of restraint. For some fifteen years Africa enjoyed comparative peace.

But the memories of "the Macarian period" remained as a

bitter incentive to retaliation. Suppressed by force for the time, the Donatist cherished vindictive feelings which would issue in horrible violence when released from external constraint.

Meanwhile the defeated increased his zeal by practically canonizing those who fell in fights with Catholics, or were killed while resisting the secular power; or in a fervour of fanaticism put an end to their own career. The Separatists gloried in these illustrations of sanctity; and much popular confusion arose between authentic and fictitious saints. These irregular canonizations were too often the outcome of local partisanship and schismatical self-will; and veneration for the saints became perverted into a controversial instrument. The spirit of the masterful Lucilla survived among her co-religionists. If she utilized regard for relics as a method for rebuking her bishop, her descendants also resorted to canonization as a method for reproaching the Church.

The accession of Julian reversed the State's religious policy. It was no part of Julian's design to strengthen the Church. His sympathies were with all other forms of religious expression. All other forms of thought and action recovered or obtained their liberty. The banished religious leaders were now permitted to return. The principal Donatists in exile addressed the new Emperor in flattering terms, as the one personage in whom justice could find a habitation; entreating him to remove their disabilities and sanction their restoration. This he did. He not only allowed their return, but authorized them to reoccupy the churches from which they had been evicted. Back they came then to their dioceses and their sanctuaries. The method by which they resumed possession turned Africa again into a scene of desperate strife. There was no attempt to wait for legal process and peaceful re-occupation. The Donatists struggled for immediate possession without reference to the local secular powers. They flourished the imperial edict in the faces of the Catholic occupiers. They moved in turbulent swarms across Numidia and Mauritania,

sometimes with their bishop at their head, insulting and ill-treating members of the other Church. They shaved the heads of Catholic clergy, forced them through the forms of penitence, and perpetrated the mockery of reordaining them. The most disgraceful immoralities accompanied this religious revival, which lasted through the greater part of two dreadful years.

Catholics refused to yield the sacred edifices, and were reduced to a state of siege. Finding the church doors barred against them, the new claimants clambered upon the roof, removed the tiles, hurled them down with deadly execution upon the clergy at the altar, as they clustered round it in their most solemn office. Riots occurred in the streets through Mauritania. In the pressure and excitement of the crowds women were injured and children killed.

Wherever the exiles obtained possession of the churches they signalized their victory by fantastic acts of ritual. They treated the sacred buildings as defiled and desecrated by the Catholic occupation. They washed down the walls, scraped the altars, broke up the chalices, or sold them to pagans for any uses. Vessels of consecrated oil were flung out of the windows. The consecrated elements from the altars were flung to the dogs, who, however, turned upon the desecrators and rent them. By these fanatical measures the Separatists relieved their feelings and expressed their contempt. Various strange and legendary incidents record the scandal to the Catholic sense of reverence. The historian Optatus, to whom we owe many descriptions, was himself an eyewitness of the Donatists' return.

The return of the exiles brought the Circumcellions again to power. They wandered once more in formidable companies, insulting, menacing, injuring such Catholics as fell into their hands. They declined the use of swords, as prohibited by the text: "Put up thy sword into its sheath". But they saw nothing unscriptural in the use of clubs, which they entitled "Israels," and which were equally effective. Their reforming

movements were accompanied by the words, "Praise the Lord," a song which Churchmen dreaded more than the roar of a lion. They attacked private houses and invaded churches, disordering the worship and terrorizing the congregation. In the terminology of the sect, these fanatics were styled Agonistici, and Leaders of the Saints.

For a brief period the Separatists revelled in the novel experience of imperial approval, while the Church was made to feel imperial disfavour. But this interval—the only time when the Donatists experienced the sympathy of Cæsar—was brief. The death of Julian in 363 reduced them again to their normal condition, subject to more or less severity from the reigning power.

It was undoubtedly the violence and brutality associated with the sect which led to a long series of repressive enactments from the successors of Julian. The subsequent emperors concur unanimously in regarding repression of the Donatists as a political necessity. But whatever the imperial intentions, the conduct of their local African representatives was often tyrannical and most unwise. The government of Africa vacillated between severity and laxity. Under Julian's successor the overbearing insolence of the African Proconsul provoked a secular revolt in Mauritania. Firmus, a Mauritanian patriot, of princely race, was stung by insult to rebel against the Roman power (372). He seized the capital city Cæsarea, and assumed the style of king. The Donatists identified themselves with the rebellion. After a brief struggle Firmus was overpowered by Theodosius, and in despair committed suicide. But the Donatists acquired the additional name of Firmians. Thus the religious and the political were again confused.

The fanaticism of the Circumcellions grew worse and worse. They appear filled with a reckless indifference to their own existence, which is a new feature in the strife. They courted death in any form except that of the "Traditor" Judas. They flung themselves down precipices and into wells. They died in the flames. They waylaid magistrates on circuit, and

threatened murder to such as would not kill them. Strange stories are told of officials who, at such request, disarmed them and bound them, and left them to their own devices. Even the Donatists themselves were at last appalled by the religious mania of their own defenders and appealed against them to the State.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ST. OPTATUS' REPLY TO THE DONATISTS.

HITHERTO we have witnessed outward conflict, and the growth of an anti-Catholic theology. Writers were fairly numerous on the Donatist side ; but no solitary defender of the Church's doctrine can be discovered. Doubtless there must have been such defenders ; but they were not sufficiently distinguished to secure historic permanence. This fact is curiously significant. It almost seems as if the literary ability and theological teaching of the half century since Donatism were chiefly in the Separatist Communion. The first distinguished writer against the Donatists was Optatus, Bishop of Milevis in Numidia, who wrote about the year 373. The division had now existed some sixty years.

Optatus had considerable opportunities for ascertaining the facts. He evidently writes as a man of matured experience. He was contemporary with many of the incidents which he describes. He held office in the Church in the very province where Donatism was most successful, and which furnished the chief opposition to the communion of Cæcilian. His diocese was within thirty miles of the old Numidian capital, where so much of the critical movements collected their strength. He had seen with his own eyes the fantastic incidents connected with the Donatists' rebellion. He must have been daily familiar with Donatist theories, arguments, and influence. His history, indeed, arose as a controversial reply to Bishop Parmenian, who had then presided over the opposing communion at Carthage in succession to Donatus for the last twenty years.

Modern criticism has subjected the writings of Optatus to searching investigation; and in the opinion of the best authorities his narrative is, in the main, confirmed. No doubt he writes as a decided partisan. But his historic method is fair. Optatus was valued very highly indeed in the African Church. He became the great authority for the historic incidents. His work was read and referred to on either side, and quoted in conference, together with the legal documents. Augustine speaks of him with high esteem, and couples his name with that of Ambrose. Fulgentius places him with Ambrose and Augustine, and Jerome sets him in his list of illustrious men. Augustine's personal indebtedness to him was considerable. It was no small advantage to have so valuable a store of facts and conceptions already provided.

Optatus is in intention conciliatory. He begins with Christ's words of peace. He laments that peace should be frustrated by schism. Members of the schism are brothers to the members of the Church, for they are both of the same spiritual nativity. This, of course, was Optatus' conviction; but it was a belief which the Donatist would not allow. Optatus is ready to recognize his opponents' baptismal regeneration. But the recognition was not mutual. Optatus also courteously acknowledges Parmenian's superiority to the prevailing Donatist temper; and finds him willing at any rate to discuss the subject with a member of the Church.

Optatus then lays down the subjects and conditions of the controversy. First of all he desiderates definiteness. There must be no vague accusations, but accurate statements as to persons, and place, and date. Secondly, the problem to be thoroughly discussed and ascertained is this: In which communion is the one true Church to be found. For both parties already accepted the maxim that one true Church exists and only one. Thirdly, that the question of fact, whether Catholics or Donatists made the first appeal to the secular powers, should be ascertained, and set at rest for ever. Fourthly, that the doctrine of the ministry should be cleared from misconceptions,

more especially on the point what constitutes invalidity in priestly ministrations. Fifthly, Optatus proposes to consider what is of faith on the subject of Baptism. And finally, to refute the distinctive errors of the Donatist sacramental teaching.

Optatus has much to enforce on the distinction between heresy and schism. He contends that Parmenian's predecessor had made a schism. It was not Cæcilian who went out from Peter or Cyprian; it was Majorinus who went out, he whose place Parmenian now holds. But Majorinus was legitimate successor to no man. His line began with himself. It is a departure from the true succession. Accordingly Parmenian is a schismatic. But he is not a heretic. Heresy is surrender of the creed.<sup>1</sup> The distinction between them is great. Schism is breaking the bond of peace. It is encouraged by envy and strife. It is separation from Mother Church. It is amputation, rebellion. But Heresy is exile from the realm of Truth, desertion of the Creed.<sup>2</sup> Plainly these Donatists are schismatics. Although they are not in the Catholic Church yet they are in possession of the same two sacraments as the Catholics.<sup>3</sup> They are not heretics. Heretics could not be possessors of true sacraments. So Optatus teaches.

But the evil of schism is exceedingly great: a truth which Donatists themselves will not, at least theoretically, deny. The Almighty can never contemplate schism without displeasure, as the case of Corah may prove.

The general principle stated here would be accepted by Parmenian no less than by Optatus. To both alike the existence of numerous independent religious societies destitute of unity would have been indefensible: a departure from Christian principle. The only question at issue was on which side the true Church existed.

As to the problem where the true Church is to be found Optatus' doctrine is that the Church is *one*, that its *sanctity*

<sup>1</sup> "Qui falsaverunt symbolum."

<sup>2</sup> "Sani et verissimi symboli desertores."

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Harnack.



depends upon the Sacraments, and not upon the spiritual state of the individual believer.<sup>1</sup> The Donatist taught that the Sacrament was modified by the goodness of the human person who conferred it.<sup>2</sup> Optatus confronts that theory with the opposite principle. The individual is modified by the Sacrament, not the Sacrament by the individual. To vindicate this Catholic principle in place of the Donatist theory, was to cut away the doctrinal basis of the schism. Again, Optatus contends that the Church's *catholicity* consists in its world-wide diffusion. And, for this very reason, the true Church cannot be the Donatist community. There can be no fitness in the name of Catholic if it be limited to a society which is hardly more than African. The same conclusion follows from a consideration of the Church's *apostolic* character.<sup>3</sup> Its apostolicity consists in a transmitted power, conferred through the medium of the episcopal succession. The question to ask is, Who occupied this See before? What is the line of succession? Let Parmenian apply that question to his own bishopric. Optatus illustrates this succession from the case of Rome, because St. Peter as the chief Apostle represents the principle of unity.<sup>4</sup> No Apostle was to arrogate to himself the apostolic powers in separation from the other Apostles. To set a new See in opposition to a See is the very principle of schism. Siricius, the present occupant of the Roman See, can trace his descent direct and unbroken from St. Peter. But whence did Macrobius, the Donatist Bishop in Rome, derive his See and his succession? He is a son without a father, a disciple without a master, a sequent without an antecedent. This is the anomaly of the Donatist position. They possess no true succession. They are intruders rather than successors. And Optatus roundly declares that the Spirit is in the Church but not among the separated. Optatus here concludes, from this analysis of the various attributes of the Church, its sanctity,

<sup>1</sup> "Cujus sanctitas de sacramentis colligitur, non de superbia personarum ponderatur."

<sup>2</sup> II. I.

<sup>3</sup> II. II.

<sup>4</sup> P. 947.

catholicity, and apostolicity, that the claims of the Donatist body are hopelessly excluded. It can satisfy none of the conditions of the one true Church.

On the relation between the Church and the State, Optatus observes that if the Donatists now maintain that no union whatever should exist between them, this was not their principle at the beginning of the schism. If the Donatists are now heard to say, What have Christians to do with kings? and What have bishops to do with the imperial palace? they must be reminded of their own written appeal, still extant, to the Emperor Constantine. It was the Donatist who originally carried ecclesiastical affairs before the secular power. Constantine himself replied in terms which showed a conviction that ecclesiastical affairs should rather be determined before bishops than before kings. And if he yielded it was only through Donatist insistency.

Optatus earnestly appeals to Parmenian to work for unity; whatever historic grievances overcloud the past, whatever personal defects Parmenian can discern in Catholic advocates of unity, neither past nor present imperfections can justify any Christian in repudiating the principle of unity. Let him condemn imperfections so long as he works for unity. That which is torn is partly, but not completely, divided. Donatist and Catholic have one and the same ecclesiastical discipline; and if the minds of men are contentious, the Sacraments do not strive. We both believe alike, both parties are signed with one seal. We are not otherwise baptized than you.

Those who depart from the Church may build a wall but not a house. A schism is a quasi-ecclesia; it has the semblance, but not the completeness, of the reality.

There remains to be considered the baptismal controversy, which originated in the Donatist practice of rebaptizing. Optatus has already formulated the Catholic principle, of the objective reality of the Sacraments, in his teaching on the sanctity of the Church. He now restates that principle in reference to the Sacrament of baptism. He lays it down that

the validity of baptism depends neither on the precincts within which it is received, nor upon the moral or spiritual attainments of the person administering, but upon the Holy Trinity.

As to the high importance and momentousness of this Sacrament there was no difference between Catholic and Donatist teaching. Both agreed that it was inestimable. According to Parmenian and to Optatus, baptism is the source of the virtues (evidently because it communicates the beginnings of the higher life) ; it is the death of evils ; an immortal nativity ; attainment of the heavenly kingdom, and the gate of innocency. So far both Catholic and Donatist agree. Where they differ lies in this : in Parmenian's theory the Trinity is rendered ineffective in baptism apart from Donatist ministrations. But on the other hand, the Church, says Optatus, lays all the stress on the action of the Trinity. When a person baptized in the communion of Donatus enters the Catholic Church, he is never baptized again.

Then comes the famous passage in which Optatus expounds the Catholic principle of the objective character of the Sacrament. The true nature of baptism will at once be manifest, provided that a triple distinction be made between the Trinity, the Believer, and the Worker. Of these the first is the Trinity : the essential and invariable element. Next comes the Believer, or recipient : with the essential condition of faith. Last, and entirely subordinate, and only contingently necessary,<sup>1</sup> is the Worker, or minister of the Sacrament. The Trinity is ever the same, and faith is ever the same, but the uncertain quantity is the person of the minister. The Donatist maintains that his ministers are incomparably superior in character to the Catholic ministers of the Sacrament. But he will not surely consider them superior to the Trinity. Let then the essential and invariable elements of the Sacrament be appreciated rather than the subordinate and variable ; and Donatist and Catholic will think alike. The sanctity of the Sacrament cannot depend on the mere servant who ministers it. The clergy are sub-

<sup>1</sup> " Quasi necessariam."

ordinates, not masters of the Sacraments. And the Sacraments possess an intrinsic sanctity, independent of the personal qualities of the man who ministers them.<sup>1</sup> Here we have perhaps the clearest statement heard in Christendom as yet of the objective side of sacramental truth.

Optatus has the most vivid perception of the fact that upon this objective sanctity and intrinsic effectiveness the whole value of the Sacraments depends. To his mind the Donatist theory is a virtual exclusion of the Almighty from His own institutions. It is a refusal to allow Him to preside over His own gifts. It makes the human instrument more vital than the Divine Maker. It ignores the profound if elementary truth, that man cannot originate that which is Divine. Let the Donatistic controversialist contemplate the Divine side of things, and for the time being ignore the human. Obviously it is God Who cleanses, not man.<sup>2</sup> And in that simple statement is the refutation of the schismatic theory. The maxim that a man cannot give what he does not possess, is inapplicable when the man is only the instrument and God Himself is really the Giver. It is God Who gives; and what is given is His, not man's.

The Donatist vainly urges that St. Paul rebaptized after St. John the Baptist: for this rebaptism was not prompted by disbelief in the sanctity of St. John, but by knowledge that the Trinity had not been here invoked. It was a question of the gift to be conveyed, not of the person conveying it. St. Paul did not say "by whom" but "unto what" were ye baptized. It was the thing and not the person which dissatisfied him. The Donatist, on the contrary, asks "by whom" and not "unto what". He contends about the person of the minister, which cannot alter the reality of the gift.

The principle of the intrinsic sanctity of the gift may, Optatus thinks, be illustrated from manufacturing. Take the wool and the purple dye. The manufacturer baptizes the

<sup>1</sup> "Sacramenta per se esse sancta non per homines."

<sup>2</sup> "Deus lavat non homo."

wool in the purple ; but he is only the instrument, powerless without the dye. It is the dye which gives the precious colour to the wool. And if the worker thus depends upon the dye, if it possesses its inherent capabilities apart from him, if he is the instrument and little more, so it is with the worker in the Sacrament. Without the Trinity, the worker has nothing to give ; and it is the Trinity which sanctifies, and not the instrument. If Paul planted, and Apollos watered,<sup>1</sup> it was God Who gave the increase. The function of the clergy in the Sacraments is not dominion but ministry.<sup>2</sup>

Optatus was particularly scandalized by the contemptuous manner in which the Donatists viewed the secular authority. They seemed to have no conception of the respect due to the State. Considering the treatment which they had received from the imperial power, this was scarcely wonderful. They doubtless intended to emphasize the independence of the spiritual power. But they rightly elevated the spiritual by wrongly depreciating the secular. They were wanting in sense of proportion. Optatus contrasts the Donatist tone with that of St. Paul in reference to the powers that be. And then the Bishop formulates his well-known maxim : " The State is not in the Church, but the Church is in the State, that is in the Roman Empire ".<sup>3</sup> Optatus is not here dealing with theory so much as with historic fact. His meaning evidently is that to depreciate the State, within which the Church exists, is to ignore the advantages which the Empire confers on Christianity ; since the Church has been enabled to develop in the Roman Empire as it does not in barbaric races. Optatus values very highly the mighty Empire, as the civilized arena within which the opportunities of the Church are greater. The existence of the Empire is considered by him, as it was by Tertullian before him, and by Augustine afterwards, as the great bulwark of human society. On this ground, the contemptuous depreciation of the secular power in the supposed interests of religion is, to

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. III. 6.

<sup>2</sup> " Non dominium sed ministerium."

<sup>3</sup> III. 3.

his mind, ungracious and disastrous. The work of St. Optatus was certainly a most important stage in the struggle for unity. His theological conceptions bore effect in the after time. Augustine knew and studied them. And many of his leading thoughts, and some of his interpretations, are reproduced, spiritualized, and enriched by that master-mind.

## CHAPTER V.

### INTERNAL TROUBLES OF THE DONATISTS.

THE schism had by this time presented many types of character, and would, before its course was completed, present many more. But one distinctive type was hitherto lacking. No individual Donatist seems yet to have arisen with serious misgivings as to the schismatic position, while yet unable to see the justice of the Church's claim. No leading mind, at any rate, as yet appeared keenly alive to the defects on either side, occupying an intermediate place, neither completely at one with schism, nor yet with catholicity. Such a character now appeared in the person of *Tichonius*.<sup>1</sup> He was an African by birth, learned in the Holy Scriptures, not unacquainted with affairs, keenly interested in Church questions.<sup>2</sup> His seven rules for the interpretation of Scripture were widely accepted as a guide for students in the fifth century, and with certain modifications, necessitated by their author's Donatist propensities, were strongly recommended even to Catholics by no less a person than St. Augustine himself, who embodied them in one of his own writings.<sup>3</sup> Tichonius' studies in Holy Scripture had drawn him in a Catholic direction. The universal character of the Christian society was a doctrine which the Scriptures made so prominent that it took possession of his mind, and became a living conviction. Moreover, he was too earnest and sincere to hold this conviction secretly. He published frankly his assurance that no individual unworthiness

<sup>1</sup> ? A.D. 384.

<sup>2</sup> Gennadius.

<sup>3</sup> "De Doctrina Christiana," and "Ep.," 249.

could produce a general frustration of the promises of God. He also put on record a strong personal dislike of the practice of rebaptizing. He said that a great council of 270 Donatist bishops held at Carthage had consented to receive into communion without rebaptism those who strongly resented its repetition.<sup>1</sup>

These uncompromising utterances did honour to his earnestness, but were excessively exasperating to his co-religionists. For Donatist to be refuted by Donatist was certainly hard. And Tichonius appeared unconscious or indifferent to the fact that his Scriptural inferences were fatal to the theory on which the sect existed. The Donatists naturally took alarm at his suicidal teaching. For the provoking feature was that, although Tichonius made such large concessions to catholicity, yet he continued in the division. Parmenian, the Donatist Primate, felt obliged to engage in a written controversy with this independent brother, who, from the standpoint of Donatus, defended the Church. And the authority of Parmenian reduced Tichonius to silence, although it did not and could not refute his principles.<sup>2</sup>

Parmenian's successor in the Donatist line at Carthage was *Primian*.<sup>3</sup> Under him the schism subdivided. Maximinian, one of Primian's deacons, a descendant of Donatus the Great, was, for certain offences not clearly specified, excommunicated by his bishop. Maximinian complained to the neighbouring bishops, relying on the influence of a wealthy lady, just as Majorinus relied on that of Lucilla in the dawn of the schism.<sup>4</sup> A section of Donatists sided with Maximinian. The schismatic temper was so far roused that forty-three Donatist bishops met in council at Carthage, and summoned Bishop Primian to appear before them, just as the council under the Numidian Primate had summoned Cæcilian some eighty years

<sup>1</sup> St. Aug., "Ep.," 93, 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> A.D. 391. See the fourth Book of St. Aug., "C. Crescon.," W. ix. 742, and "De Gestis cum Emerito," W. ix. 964.

<sup>4</sup> Migne, xi. 806 ff.; Ribbeck, p. 206; Noris, iv. 389.



before. Primian refused to appear before them, just as Cæcilian had formerly refused. The council expressed a preliminary sentence of disapproval. Ultimately, in a council of 100 bishops, Primian was excommunicated, and Maximinian was placed in Primian's throne.<sup>1</sup> Here, then, the Donatist body was cut in twain. Carthage saw two Donatist bishops at the same time presiding over its religious affairs.<sup>2</sup> Besides the Catholics, with their Bishop Aurelius, there were the Maximinianists, and the Primianists. And the separation begun in Carthage extended itself through Africa. There were at least 100 bishops on the Maximinianist side. Primian, fully conscious of the extreme peril, not only to himself, but to the entire body over which he presided, drew together the strength of his communion to the number of 310 bishops in council in the Numidian city, Bagai. By this imposing assembly the tables were now turned. Primian was pronounced innocent and Maximinian deposed. The council descended to abusive rhetoric. Primian's leading opponents were characterized as enemies of the Church, ministers of Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, snakes, vipers, parricides and Egyptian corpses.<sup>3</sup> But the assembly of Bagai was far too practical to exhaust its strength in mere denunciation. The Primianists were acute enough to see that so huge a schism would fritter away the powers and probably imperil the very continuance of the Donatist Communion. A serious effort must be made for unity.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly they held out to the generality of the separated an offer of reunion, if they would return to their Mother the Church within the next eight months. Whatever Sacrament had been meantime administered, whatever ordinations conferred, they consented, in hopeless defiance of the principles which they maintained against the Catholic Church, to regard as valid and complete. Considerable portions of the Maximinianist subdivision appear

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 393. Migne, p. 807.

<sup>2</sup> Ribbeck, p. 218.

<sup>3</sup> St. Aug., "C. Crescon.," iv., W. IX. 742, 756.

<sup>4</sup> "C. Crescon.," p. 746.

to have accepted the offer of readmission and returned to the Donatist body, submitting themselves to Primian's authority.

This attitude of the Donatist body towards a schism from themselves was turned by the Catholics to controversial account. The Donatists would not show towards the Church from which they sprang the sympathy, the forbearance, the conciliatoriness, which they showed towards the sect which sprang from them. With the Maximinianists they determined, if it were possible, even at the sacrifice of practices hitherto defiantly enforced, to reunite without delay. With the Church Universal they refused reunion. The Maximinianist schism, and the attempted reconciliation, meet the student of the subsequent stages of the controversy at every turn. That the Donatist cared so much for a division from himself, while he cared so little for the main body from which he himself divided, was a crucial illustration of sectarian inconsistency.

The Maximinianist was by no means the only subdivision of the Donatist Church.<sup>1</sup> Various other but comparatively insignificant names are mentioned.<sup>2</sup> Subdivision was bound to come. The independent temper, the individualistic theories, the unsocial character involved in the schism, these are the very ingredients out of which disintegration arises.

So far the development of the schism has been traced from its origin to its subdivision. We now approach the period when it encountered the greatest intellect that Christendom has known since the apostolic age.

<sup>1</sup> Noris, iv. 375.

<sup>2</sup> Priminianists, Claudianists, Rogatists. See Baronius.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ST. AUGUSTINE AND THE DONATISTS.

No event in the history of the North African Church divisions can compare in importance with the consecration of *Augustine*. The literature of the controversy was hitherto, with the one brilliant exception of St. Optatus, insignificant. Augustine enriched it with a wealth of spiritual thought on the doctrine of the Church. He studied and assimilated the earlier literature on this article of the faith. He was familiar with St. Optatus, and is frequently indebted to him. Above all, he studied St. Cyprian. Augustine had already reason to write on the subject of the Church in his first great controversy, that with the Manichæans. The value of the Church to him during that period was extremely great, but chiefly in the aspect of authority.<sup>1</sup> His profound sense of the limits of reason had made authority an intellectual necessity.

Contact with the Donatists led him now to dwell on other aspects of the doctrine concerning the Church. Augustine and Cyprian were fundamentally at one; yet the aspects on which they dwelt were largely different. Cyprian was confronted with insubordination to the individual bishop, Augustine with the antagonism of rival episcopates.

From the beginnings of Donatism to the consecration of Augustine was a period of ninety years. But the division was as strong as it had ever been. The North African Church was in a most deplorable state. In almost every town and village dwelt in resolute antagonism and watchful jealousy

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Harnack, "Hist. Dogma".

the Catholic and the Donatist Churches. They were identical in organization, and originally identical in faith. There, then, they existed, side by side : two religious communities, embittered by long continuance, and stereotyped into permanent opposition. The Catholic acknowledged the Donatist Sacraments, but the Donatist repudiated those of the Catholic. The Catholic pleaded for unity, the Donatist retorted that the sons of the martyrs had no fellowship with the sons of the traditors or betrayers. The Catholic claimed that the Church was universal, the Donatist asserted that it existed exclusively in their own communion. The Catholic was prepared, at any rate in the later stages of the controversy, for corporate reunion, the Donatist aimed at individual absorption. The Catholic recognized the baptism and the orders conferred by their opponents, the Donatist regarded the baptism of a Catholic as null and void, impure and valueless, through the contaminating association with evil men. These were among their chief antagonisms.

It is a memorable fact that the party of Donatus, notwithstanding all the coercive enactments of the State, nay, must we not say rather because of them, had steadily increased in strength. They were flourishing when Augustine appeared upon the scene. It is hardly doubtful that they were more numerous than the Church. Until Augustine arose it might have seemed, humanly speaking, that the Catholic Communion was to fade before the younger offshoot and pass away. There were evidently districts where the Church was reduced to a miserable remnant, insignificant and powerless in presence of the overshadowing separated body.

Such was the condition of affairs in the African Church at the time of Augustine's ordination.<sup>1</sup> And, for many years to come, it involved him in the most strenuous exertions. It may be roughly said that the Donatist problem mainly occupied the first half of his episcopate. For twenty years he endeavoured, by personal visits, by conferences, by letters, by

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 391.

sermons, by treatises, by influence of many kinds, by invoking the aid of the secular power, by theological reasonings, by appeal to the original facts, by indicating the impracticable nature of the Donatist theories when reduced to common life, by emphasizing the inconsistencies of their history, to awaken in the African mind a yearning after unity and a repugnance to the deplorable departure from first principles which Donatism displayed.

One of Augustine's earliest, perhaps the very earliest, literary effort against the Donatists was written while he was still a priest<sup>1</sup>: the Alphabetical Psalm.<sup>2</sup> Each new section begins with a succeeding letter of the alphabet. It was a hymn, or song, intended for popular use, containing, in a popular form, arguments against the Donatists. It is a singularly quaint production, and one wonders whether the masses of African people were ever induced to sing it.

Augustine's first encounter with the Donatists occurred in his pastoral duties as priest of the Church in *Hippo*, where they largely outnumbered the members of the Catholic Church. Close contact in a country place increased the meaner tendencies of division. Jealousy, bitterness, and strained relationships were developed to an alarming degree. Tradesmen became religious partisans. The baker at Hippo refused to serve a Catholic, and threw the Church people's provisions into the street.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the spiritual level of the Catholic Communion in the town was, as Augustine confesses, extremely low, and no small plausibility was thereby given to the need of separation. But the spiritual interests of Hippo were seriously compromised by the division, and by the unsanctified elements which it fostered, if it did not produce. The jealous rivalry of the two communions was anything but an edifying sight. Augustine's influence upon the Donatist body in Hippo during the five years of his priesthood was apparently not very great. His real power begins with his consecration. Procleian, Donatist

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 393.

<sup>2</sup> "Psalmus c. partem Donati."

<sup>3</sup> "C. Litt. Petil.," II. 184, W. IX. 432.

Bishop of Hippo, was a man of gentle reasonableness, accessible to argument, and disposed for peace. Even when Augustine's companion Evodius, with a zeal which outran discretion, attacked him in a house in Hippo for his antagonism to the Church, Proculeian still declared himself perfectly willing to hold a conference with Augustine. Whether the conference was held is now unknown. But Augustine seized the occasion to send Proculeian a powerful appeal for unity, grounded on the evils which division had produced.<sup>1</sup> "I ask you," he wrote, "what have we to do with the dissensions of a past generation? Have we not suffered sufficiently through wounds inflicted by bitterness and pride? See what calamity it has brought upon us. The peace of the Christian home is broken by schism. Husbands and wives are agreed in the concerns of this world; they are divided about the Altar of Christ. They vow through Christ that they will live in peace one with another, but they are not at peace in matters of religion. Children and parents live beneath one common roof. But they are not permitted to have one House of God in common among them."

To another Donatist he writes a most earnest appeal for unity:<sup>2</sup> "Why do we not toil together in the one vineyard of our Lord, both alike endeavouring to be wheat, and bearing with the worthless grain? Why not, I beseech you, what is the reason? Is any man the better for our divisions? What possible good can it serve? Tell me. Unity is lost, while a people redeemed by the blood of the One Lamb live in angry opposition against each other. The sheep are divided among us, as if they were our own, and not His Who said to His servant, Feed My sheep, not feed thine own. The sheep are divided, of whom it was said, 'that they may be one fold and one shepherd'; 'By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples if ye have love one to another'; and 'let both grow together until the harvest'. Unity is lost; man and wife are divided. Unity is lost. Men agree about everything else except the concerns of their souls. They are relations,

<sup>1</sup> "Ep.," 33, A.D. 396.

<sup>2</sup> "Ep.," cviii. 469.

citizens, friends, guests one of another ; they are drawn together in every human relationship, in their relaxations, in their marriages, in buying and selling, in conversations, but they disagree about the Altar of God. Discord exists in that very region where of all others discord ought to cease. Our Lord said, ' First be reconciled unto thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift at the Altar '. We have reversed all that. Now men are at peace in the world and at strife about the Altar."

Augustine found that the Donatist party in Hippo, in spite of their Puritan ideals, were, not infrequently, willing, for the sake of numerical superiority, to admit persons of questionable character whom they ought on principle to have been the first to exclude. The excommunicated, the deserters or the worthless members of one communion, became too easily the favoured and the heroes of another. This was one of the temptations of religious rivalry and separation. Men who in their own communion failed to secure the recognition which they believed themselves to deserve, retaliated upon a society incapable of discerning their merits, by transferring themselves and their abilities to some other sphere, where they would be more justly esteemed. Disappointed ambition and frustrated self-will had their influence in these exchanges, as well as genuine conviction and love of truth. A young Catholic, a violent tempered man, cruelly ill-treated his mother and threatened her life. Augustine was compelled to intervene with a just and severe rebuke. In revenge, the young man abandoned the Catholic Communion and sought admission into the Donatist Church. Proculeian accepted him, and, to the scandal of all serious-minded persons in the town, where his conduct was well known, rebaptized him. The young man's subsequent behaviour seems to have harmonized with his antecedents. But the incident illustrates the extent to which Christian discipline was frustrated by religious rivalry.

Augustine's labour for ecclesiastical unity soon extended beyond the limits of his diocese. He rapidly became for the African Church the supreme champion against separation.

His primary endeavour was to make the *origin of the schism* accurately understood. It is notorious with what rapidity the origin of a controversy is forgotten or misrepresented. And it is clear that many Separatists in Augustine's day required reminding whence they sprang, or informing of the actual facts of which they often held but a partial and distorted version.

The Bishop of Hippo appealed to the authority of public records. The documents relating to the beginnings of the division were in the imperial care. They were beyond the reach of party spirit, and they were accessible to all who willed. Aided by these documents, Augustine published,<sup>1</sup> in the form of a letter to certain adherents of the Donatist Communion,<sup>2</sup> an extremely important account of the rise of their society. He says that he is well aware that some will not appreciate the motives which prompt his overtures for unity. A disputed claim to property or money would be perfectly understood; but zeal for anything so spiritual as unity will by some be considered importunate. Nevertheless the highest Authority has pronounced the peacemaker to be blessed, and entitled them children of God. To this blessedness he aspires.

As to the original founders of the division, Augustine subjects the conduct and character of the Numidian Primate Secundus to the most severe and searching criticism.<sup>3</sup> Secundus, at the Synod of Cirta, professedly in the interests of peace, overlooked the failings of his colleagues who confessed themselves guilty of surrendering the Scriptures to the pagan powers. The same Secundus at the Synod in Carthage passed sentence against Cæcilian by the aid of the very men who at Cirta confessed themselves guilty of the selfsame crime. It was no regard for peace which ruled him at Cirta, but personal fear. Purpurius challenged him to explain how he himself had escaped from arrest. That was a matter which he did not care to have investigated. He was not protecting the peace of the Church, he was only protecting himself. If concern for peace had had

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 398.

<sup>2</sup> "Ep.," 43, and cf. Duchesne.

<sup>3</sup> "Ep.," 43-6.



any place in his heart, urges Augustine, he must have recoiled from the fearful dangers of a hasty decision. The extensive influence of the Church of Carthage would warn any serious man that what affected it affected all African Christianity. The premature election of another bishop could only complicate the situation more grievously. The validity of Cæcilian's consecration had been already recognized by the Churches beyond the sea. They had exchanged letters of communion with him. It was not likely that these Churches abroad would compromise themselves by disowning their own acts of recognition, and by transferring their intercourse to another person subsequently elected. Precipitate action in the Synod could only result in forming a communion in isolation from the Catholic Churches beyond the sea.

Augustine's own belief is that the Numidian Synod in Carthage, being chiefly composed of traditors, was eager to establish its integrity by lofty assumptions and austerity of tone.<sup>1</sup> They were attempting, by vigorous judgments on other people's asserted failings, to screen their own misdoings from investigation. If this insincerity in a synod appears incredible, Augustine maintains that human nature is only too capable, as the Apostle says, of judging another while doing the same thing itself.

Cæcilian, in his opinion, could well afford to disregard local opposition on the ground that he was in communion "both with the Roman Church in which the supremacy of an apostolic seat has always flourished, and with all other lands".<sup>2</sup> Cæcilian was perfectly willing to "defend himself before these Churches".<sup>3</sup>

It should be noted here that Augustine does not speak of communion with the Roman See as the sole exclusive ground of Cæcilian's confidence. It is "*both* with the Roman Church . . . and with all other lands". It is not before the Roman Church alone, but "before these Churches," that Cæcilian is described as willing to defend himself. The Roman Church is undoubtedly singled out, because it was regarded as an apostolic

<sup>1</sup> § 10.<sup>2</sup> § 7.<sup>3</sup> Contrast Poujoulat, I. 128.

foundation. But there is no intention whatever to make communion with the Roman See the sole test of catholicity. This is still more plain in the following phrase where Augustine describes the line which the Primate of Numidia ought to have taken: "He ought to have said: Let them hasten to our brethren *and peers* the Bishops of the Churches beyond the Sea".<sup>1</sup> Cæcilian's refusal to appear before the Primate of Numidia cannot be, argues Augustine, fairly interpreted as disowning all ecclesiastical jurisdiction: "For there remained *thousands of Bishops* in countries beyond the sea, before whom it was manifest that those who seemed to distrust their peers in Africa and Numidia could be tried".<sup>2</sup> Augustine's theory of the Roman See is made still more luminously clear further on, when he supposes the Donatist to object to the decision of the Lateran, as an unwarrantable interference by the Roman bishop in a matter already decided at a council in Africa. "Perhaps you will say that Miltiades, Bishop of the Roman Church, together with the other Bishops beyond the Sea, who acted as his colleagues, had no right to usurp the place of judge, in a matter which had been already settled by seventy African Bishops, over whom the Bishop of Tigisis, as Primate, presided. But what will you say if he in fact did not usurp this place? For the Emperor, being appealed to, sent Bishops to sit with him as judges, with authority to decide the whole matter in the way which seemed to them just." Augustine's answer to the objection that the action of the Roman bishop with his episcopal colleagues was an unaccountable interference is surely remarkable. He gives no suggestion of belief that the authority of the Roman bishop is supreme, and that he cannot strictly be said to interfere. He does not charge the Donatist with advocating an uncatholic theory of the Pope's position. All he says is that the Emperor Constantine is responsible for the Pope's intervention, as he sent bishops to sit with the Roman bishop as judges. And Augustine insists, not on the Roman bishop's ecclesiastical rank, but on his moral superi-

<sup>1</sup> § 8; cf. in § 7.

<sup>2</sup> § 11.

ority. The Lateran decision was, to Augustine's mind, exemplary for its fairness and moderation. Miltiades had laboured for peace. He decided, in the interests of reunion, that where two rival bishops divided a city between them, the lawful pastor should be determined by priority of consecration, while another diocese should be found for the junior bishop. Miltiades was a true son of peace and father of the Christian people. The Synod of Lateran, by which Constantine was acquitted, bore most favourable comparison with the Synod of the Seventy by which Cæcilian was condemned; not indeed numerically but morally. Compare now this handful with that multitude of bishops, not counting but weighing them. On the one side you have moderation and circumspection, on the other precipitancy and blindness. Augustine's argument ascribes to the Roman Council a moral superiority. He assigns to it no ecclesiastical superiority to African Councils, although the Roman bishop was there.

The Donatist party refused the Roman decision. They asserted that the case had not been fairly tried. This, remarks Augustine, is the defeated party's immemorial plea. But, urges Augustine, assuming their complaint to be correct, the remedy was plain. "Well, let us suppose that those Bishops who decided the case at Rome were not good judges; there still remained a plenary Council of the Universal Church, in which these judges themselves might be put on their defence; so that, if they were convicted of mistakes, their decisions might be reversed."<sup>1</sup> Instead, however, of taking this legitimate course; instead of appealing from an ecclesiastical authority to a higher ecclesiastical authority, the Donatists appealed to the Emperor. This course Augustine disapproved, and he thinks it was uncongenial to Constantine himself. "This Christian Emperor did not presume so to grant their unruly and groundless appeal as to constitute himself judge of the decision pronounced by the Bishops who had sat at Rome." He appointed other bishops. He gave the complainants another

<sup>1</sup> § 19.

trial, in the Council of Arles. And the ultimate appeal to himself was only most reluctantly heard in the interests of peace. The Emperor's intentions were excellent but completely frustrated. To this day, writes Augustine, they administer baptism outside the communion of the Church; and, if they can, they rebaptize the members of the Church; they offer sacrifice in discord and schism. They fail to see that evil is not removed but accentuated by schism; and that truly spiritually-minded men would tolerate in the interest of unity what they repudiate in the interest of righteousness.

A conspicuous figure on the Donatist side among Augustine's contemporaries was the Bishop *Petilian*.<sup>1</sup> His entrance into the schism was not the result of conviction but of violence. Born of Catholic parents, preparing in early manhood in the city of Cirta for baptism in the Catholic Church, he was suddenly seized by the Donatists, dragged from some place of concealment, held by force, and, white and trembling with fear, baptized and ordained against his will.<sup>2</sup> But this reluctant entry was followed by willing continuance. Petilian somehow convinced himself that his new position was not only correct, but the only true communion in the world; and he became its most impassioned advocate. A barrister by profession, he had learned the arts of rhetoric and declamation, and introduced into the controversies of the theologians the methods of the Courts of Law. He was not a man of intellectual depth, but rather of the order of shallow plausibility; nor was he remarkable for reverence, or conciliatoriness, in his advocacy of religious ideas. He scrupled neither at coarseness, nor personalities, if he considered them advantageous weapons in brow-beating a difficult or abler opponent. Nor was he above the employment of insincerity, or absolute untruth, as a means of promoting what he regarded as the interests of his sect. This was the man whom the Donatists selected as a leader; and he justified their choice, for he rapidly rose to influential position among them.

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 400.

<sup>2</sup> "De Gestis cum Emerito."

As Bishop of the Donatist party in Constantine, Petilian published a pastoral letter, filled with bitter and abusive attacks upon the Catholic Church. It is the confused and desultory produce of a theologically untrained mind. And this letter Augustine has preserved by his reply.<sup>1</sup> Petilian has much to say in his letter on the subject of religious persecution.<sup>2</sup> He asks Augustine whether the Apostles persecuted any one, and whether Christ delivered any one to the secular power. Augustine does not hesitate to say that Christ Himself persecuted when He cleared the Temple with the scourge of small cords. Petilian warns Augustine that Christians ought not to imitate the cruelty of the Gentiles, and that God does not desire His priests to be executioners. Light and darkness can have nothing in common, nor sweetness with bitterness, nor gentleness with cruelty, nor religion with sacrilege, nor the Donatist Church with the party of Macarius. Augustine points out that these antitheses come with peculiarly bad grace from a community which included the Circumcellions. Assume that these antitheses are true, and let Petilian apply them to his own society. How can Donatus help them while they are polluted by Circumcellions' violence? Petilian, while applying Scripture to his own communion, quoted the words, "Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me". Augustine cannot resist inquiring whether Petilian is thinking of the clubs of the Circumcellions. As to appealing to the secular power, Augustine refers to the example of St. Paul; and reminds Petilian that his community did the same to recover churches held by the Maximinians. Here in his reply Augustine admits the principle of persecution, which, however, he apparently refused to put in practice until some years later. No man is to be forced into faith against his will. Right conduct is a matter of voluntary choice; does it therefore follow that evil conduct is not to be repressed by law? If laws adverse to your predilections are enacted, you are not thereby compelled to do good, but prohibited from doing evil.

<sup>1</sup> "C. Litt. Petil.," I. 2, p. 343.

<sup>2</sup> Bk. ii. 21 ff.

And protests against coercion were worthless when made by colleagues of the Circumcellions.

The remainder of Petilian's letter was filled with abuse and personalities. He diverted attention from Augustine's arguments by an attack on Augustine's character. He lowered the problem in religion to the level of a personal dispute. It was doubtless an easier enterprise to abuse Augustine's antecedents than to refute his reasonings. Petilian enlarged on the life Augustine had led before his conversion. Ample material for this attack was, of course, accessible to all in the pages of the "Confessions". But Petilian distorted those noble outpourings which few, it may be hoped, could have found it in their hearts to misuse. He charged his opponent with discreditable actions absolutely without foundation, declared that he was formerly one of the inner circle of the Manichæan elect;<sup>1</sup> said that Augustine left Africa because he was expelled; contemptuously described him as a mere rhetorician; nicknamed him Tertullus, after the orator who accused St. Paul; calmly asserted that his perverse ingenuity was capable of proving that black was white, and compared him to a diplomatist who on two successive days had demonstrated and then refuted the self-same question. To the catalogue of moral and mental delinquencies, unredeemed by one commendable feature, Petilian added, as a final touch, the reluctance of Megalius to admit Augustine to the order of the bishops.

Certainly it was a telling and exasperating attack, well calculated to damage an opponent's character. Its elements of unquestionable truth, its appeal to Augustine's own confessions, gave it an unmerited effectiveness and plausibility. Regarded as the product of an unscrupulous advocate it was calculated to secure its purpose; regarded as an essay in theological controversy it need not be characterized.

It is evident that Augustine felt it keenly. He was an acutely sensitive man. But he refused to be diverted from the main issue by attacks on his personal character.<sup>2</sup> He had

<sup>1</sup> "C. Petilian," III.

<sup>2</sup> "C. Litt. Petil.," III. 2.

come to defend the Church and not himself. "The House of my God Whose glory I have loved I will proclaim and extol, but myself I will humiliate and lay low," was his touching reply. As to his life before he was baptized, "When I hear that period of my life condemned, be his motive who condemns it what it may, I cannot be so thankless as to grieve. The more a man condemns my evil doings the more must I praise my Redeemer." As to his life since baptism, it was known to many persons competent to form their own opinion of Petilian's aspersions. And whatever Augustine's character might be, that was not the question at issue. The question is not the personal character of Augustine, but the true doctrine of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

"Whoever have received baptism through Augustine's ministrations need not be concerned with the defence of Augustine. You have not been baptized into us, but into Christ. You have not put on us but Christ." "I did not ask you, when I baptized you, whether you were converted unto me, but unto the living God; nor whether you believed in me, but in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

As to the references to some depreciating remarks made by Megalios, Primate of Numidia, against Augustine about the time of his ordination to the priesthood, it was necessary to say no more than that Megalios had apologized for them before a council of bishops, and that this same Megalios subsequently consecrated him to the episcopate.

Reference to Augustine's conduct in the period before his conversion was perpetually made by his Donatist opponents, with a view to counteract his influence as a controversialist; and the Bishop did not hesitate to deal with this difficult subject from the pulpit.<sup>2</sup> He told the people that the transference of controversy from doctrine to personalities was only due to the Donatist consciousness of the weakness of their

<sup>1</sup> "Homo sum enim de area Christiani; palea si malus, granum si bonus."

<sup>2</sup> "Enarr.," Ps. xxxvi., Serm. 3, 19.

case. It was no better than an evasion of the real issue. When they have no valid argument they become abusive. Augustine's past offences, to which they refer, are, he frankly owns, lamentably, painfully true. "We were sometime foolish and unbelieving and unto every good work reprobate. We were deluded and infatuated by perversity. We do not deny it. The darkness of the background is the reason of his present thankfulness to the God Who has delivered him. But what has this to do with the question in dispute? Why does the heretic neglect principles and attack persons? For what am I? What am I? Am I the Catholic Church? Am I Christ's inheritance dispersed throughout the world? It is enough for me that I am in it."

Augustine's reply to Petilian had at any rate one result.<sup>1</sup> It provoked a new antagonist. *Cresconius*, a layman, teacher of grammar, was roused by reading it to undertake Petilian's defence. Cresconius' estimate of Augustine is severe. He considers the Bishop a plausible but dangerous writer, imposing on the ignorant with his dialectical subtleties, and consumed by arrogance and pride.<sup>2</sup>

The attempt of Cresconius to limit Augustine's influence by describing him as a mere dialectician, excessively dangerous to the average intellect through his brilliant fencings and logical subtleties, led Augustine to discuss the place of reasoning in matters of religion.<sup>3</sup> After all, what is dialectic but skill in argument. Cresconius cannot mean to deny logic a place in the exposition of Christian truth. To begin with he employed it himself. He writes at times with subtlety and acuteness. The logician should not disparage logic.<sup>4</sup> Was not reasoning, and subtle reasoning, employed by St. Paul? When our Lord rebuked the Pharisees who endeavoured to perplex Him with a dilemma, He condemned their hypocrisy, but not their dialectics. And if a dexterous response to captious interrogations is dialectic, let Cresconius consider whether Christ

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 406.

<sup>2</sup> Tillemont, p. 435; "Contra Crescon.," I. 16.

<sup>3</sup> P. 624.

<sup>4</sup> "Cur dialecticus dialecticam criminari?"



Himself does not appeal to reasoning. And if the intrinsic nature of dialectics be considered, what is it but eliciting inferences already involved in accepted principles. Christian doctrine has no fear of dialectics. Reasoning need draw no man to false conclusions, unless he has consented to false data.

Cresconius proposed an argument on the subject of *Baptism*. Catholics admitted that baptism administered in the Donatist Communion was valid, while Donatists denied the validity of that administered by Catholics. Here, then, argued Cresconius, is a point asserted by the two communions. They both agree that Donatist baptism is valid. The validity of Catholic baptism is disputed. Therefore, urged Cresconius, it is safer to receive the Sacrament where both communions acknowledged it to exist, than where its validity was disputed.

Augustine's answer is that the Catholic view of Donatist baptism is inaccurately stated in this argument: The Catholic acknowledges that baptism exists among the Donatists, but denies that it is beneficial. Validity is one thing, utility another. The Donatist does receive baptism, but not to his soul's gain.

Cresconius resented the form of the term "Donatist," as a barbarism. The name is Latin but the form is Greek. It should be Donatian. As the followers of Novatus are called Novatians, so the adherents of Donatus should be Donatians.

Augustine suggested that, as causers of scandal, it would be appropriate to name them Scandalists; but, in a matter of such complete indifference, he will, when corresponding with Cresconius, call them Donatians, but with the rest of the world he will adopt the more customary form.

## CHAPTER VII.

### AUGUSTINE'S TEACHING ON THE CHURCH.

1. FIRST then, as every student knows, Augustine maintained the doctrine of a *Visible Church*. The existence of a divinely constituted institution, embodying truth and dispensing grace, is among his elementary principles. But if he maintained this conception, it is equally certain that he did not originate it. The visibility of the Church was taken for granted by Optatus, long before Augustine's time, as a matter of course. It was held by the Donatist as strongly as by his opponent. Long before Optatus lived, St. Cyprian<sup>1</sup> had accustomed Churchmen to such maxims as the following: that persons baptized in schism must be rebaptized on their reception into the Catholic body; because remission of sins is only given within the fold of the Church, and the Catholic Church alone can generate sons to God.

It is indeed quite true that the doctrine of the visibility of the Church was restated with all the pre-eminent insight of Augustine's religious genius; but it is impossible with any regard for history to credit him with originating what he did but receive.

As has been truly said:<sup>2</sup> "It cannot be too often insisted upon that the belief in the Christian Church as the one visible society to which the work of Christ's kingdom is confided, and its promises are expressly attached, was in no sense Augustinian as if originated by Augustine or under his influence".

<sup>1</sup> "Ep.," LXX.; Hartel, 768; "Ep.," LXXV. 819.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Robertson, "Regnum Dei," p. 186.

2. Augustine's second thought is the *Catholic* character, or world-wide extension, of this Divine institution. Catholic signifies nothing else than universality.<sup>1</sup> This Catholic Church is the Body of Christ. Entire Christ consists of Head and Body.<sup>2</sup> Donatists do not dispute concerning the Head, that is the Person of our Lord, but concerning His Body, which is the Church. Augustine therefore appeals to the Head, concerning Whom we agree, to inform us as to the Body, concerning which we differ. Now, argues Augustine, the Head informs us through prophet and psalmist that the obvious characteristic of the Body of Christ would be its world-wide extension, or catholicity. "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"; "I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession": these and similar utterances coincide with the words of Christ, "Ye shall be My witnesses unto the ends of the earth". Here then, exclaims Augustine triumphantly, we have the Head affirming the catholicity of the Body. Therefore the true Church must be universal.

This conclusion the Donatist resisted. To his mind it was absolutely unconvincing. It rode roughshod over human freedom. It was purely mechanical. It was fatalistic in its tendencies. Certainly, conceded the Donatist, universality was predicted. But the Divine promises are conditional, and dependent on human co-operation. The existing state of Christendom was due to man's failure to comply with God's conditions. Ideally universal, the Church had actually shrunk to the limits of the Donatist Community.

The Donatist theory that the fulfilment of Divine promises is conditional upon man's co-operation is a principle which, apart from any particular controversial use of it, deserves most serious thought. And even if it was quite untrue that the world-wide Body of Christ had withered into the attenuated proportions of an African sect, it was certainly true that the

<sup>1</sup> "Ep.," LII. 1; "C. Litt. Petil.," II. 91.

<sup>2</sup> "De Unit. Eccl.," § 7.

disastrous severance compromised its universality, and in itself illustrated the conditional character of the promises of God.

3. But this Institutional Church, visible and Catholic, is also *One*. Augustine was profoundly impressed with a sense of its unity. The unity of the Church was not only ideal but essential. But what is unity? At times it means external intercommunion; at other times it denotes the deeper conception of inward identity. Nevertheless Augustine cannot insist too strongly on the obligation of outward unity. Schism is to him an evil of the gravest sort. What is certain is that under no circumstances does God order man to create a schism.<sup>1</sup> Whatever good may exist in an individual,<sup>2</sup> yet schism compromises all; just as Naaman's greatness was negated, at the end of a long enumeration, by the disqualifying epithet, but he was a leper.

This abhorrence of schism finds characteristic expression in Augustine's exposition of two antithetical sayings of Christ. Our Lord said, "He that is not with Me is against Me, he that gathereth not with Me scattereth"; yet of the independent, who, although not of their company, cast out devils in Christ's Name, it is said, "Forbid him not, he that is not against you is on your part". Now, urges Augustine, if there were nothing in this man to correct, then let every one who gathers in Christ's Name outside the communion of the Church and dissociated from the Christian society rest assured that he is doing right, and consequently that the former sentence, "He that is not with Me is against Me," is false. But if both sentences of Christ are to retain their force and be consistent, it must be understood that while the man's veneration for the name of Christ was to be approved, yet his independence and separation must be condemned; since, unless a man gathers with Christ, he scatters.<sup>3</sup>

The essential necessity of unity, and conversely the sinfulness of separation, is illustrated again from the case of Cornelius the centurion. His prayers were heard and his alms accepted.

<sup>1</sup> "De Unit. Eccl."

<sup>2</sup> "De Bapt."

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

But neither devotion nor philanthropy are substitutes for incorporation into the Body of Christ (which Augustine here identifies with membership in the visible institution of the Church), nor could they possibly compensate for exclusion. Cornelius must be through baptism admitted into the Christian Community. He would have inflicted upon himself the gravest injury, if he had despised a blessing which he did not possess, through confidence in the blessing already received.<sup>1</sup>

Schism is to Augustine like a wound in the human body. To enumerate the members which are sound does not remedy that which is diseased. The one wound may overbalance the healthiness of all the rest.

Augustine pressed his theory of schism to rigorous extremes. Schism demonstrates the absence of charity. If there were charity there would not be schism. Even faith, which can remove mountains, is nothing without charity. From these general maxims Augustine advances to individual conclusions. What is collectively true cannot be individually false. No Donatist can be possessed of charity. Yet he is dealing with a schism of a hundred years' duration. No distinction is here drawn between being born into a schism and creating one. No suspicion of the possibility of faults on both sides. No hint is given that there may be many degrees of love. He reiterates the damning fact: schism exists. He concludes remorselessly, therefore there is no charity.<sup>2</sup>

Augustine has far too great a mind not to balance this thought elsewhere by other considerations. And this suggests the difficulty of doing him justice by quotations. He taught at another time that much depends on the temper in which error is maintained. The maintenance of the erroneous and perverse, especially in the case of an inherited faith, more still when the mind is solicitous for truth and open to further light, is essentially unheretical.

So keen an idealist as Augustine could not fail to draw the

<sup>1</sup> "De Bapt."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 12-8, III. 19-21, IV. 4.

<sup>3</sup> "Ep.," XLIII. 1.

distinction at times between inner and outer unity. When we speak of "within" and "without" in relation to the Church, it is, he says, the position of the heart that we must consider, not that of the body. All who are within the Church in heart are saved in the unity of the ark through the same water; while all who are in heart without, whether they are also in body without or not, die as enemies of unity.<sup>1</sup> Experience constrained Augustine to confess that external unity was too often maintained for worldly motives in a total absence of love. There was no necessary proof of grace in membership in the visible institution.<sup>2</sup>

Cresconius, a leading opponent of Augustine, insisted that the controversy between Catholic and Donatist belonged not to the department of heresy, but only to that of schism. Heresy signifies diversity of conviction; schism is separateness of communion. Thus the Manichæan and the Arian are heresies; but between the Catholic and Donatist bodies is no doctrinal contradiction. Between possessors of one Christ, one Religion, and the same Sacraments and Christian practices, there may be schism, but heresy there cannot be. Augustine therefore, urged his opponent, was guilty of a confusion and an injustice when he characterized as a heresy what can be no more than a schism.

This led Augustine to a fuller expression of his thought. He contended that if the doctrine of Donatist and Catholic was identical no right or reason for division could exist. While Cresconius regarded heresy as intellectual and schism as practical, Augustine preferred to view them as successive stages in the same process. Schism, to his mind, is a recent departure from communion, on the basis of an intellectual difference; heresy is stereotyped schism. There is a temporal element in the definition. Schism is recent; heresy is schism become inveterate. Yet heresy is the beginning of schism, for the latter presupposes intellectual difference.<sup>3</sup>

4. Next to the Church's unity may be considered its *Sanctity*.

<sup>1</sup> "De Bapt.," v. 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, iv. 15.

<sup>3</sup> "Contra Cresconium."

The Donatist theory maintained that (1) a Church which tolerated the existence of evil persons within it lost its essential character, and ceased to be a Church at all. (2) That the moral character of the minister affected the quality of the Sacrament which he conferred. The intention underlying the theory evidently was an admirable longing to realize the Church's actual sanctity. It seemed so natural to say, sanctity is an attribute of persons, not of institutions, nor of things. Yet the theory was simply anti-social. It was destructive to all collective aspects of religious life. It exaggerated individualism. It was intensely subjective.

As to the coexistence of the evil and the good within the Church, Augustine argued that the Donatist interpretation of Scripture texts was altogether misleading. The command,<sup>1</sup> "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing, go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord," does not enjoin physical separation, but separation in heart. He touches no unclean thing who consents to nothing evil.<sup>2</sup> To "put away the evil from among you," is certainly a duty, when it can be effected without introducing the evil of schism. But endeavours to exclude the evil must be balanced with the endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Nothing could be more futile than attempts to discover sanctions for division in the Old Testament. The whole history of Israel was one long illustration of evil men being endured by the good within the same community; rebuked indeed, but not forsaken. Continuance among false brethren is one thing, consent is another. The Church must often tolerate what it can neither prevent nor approve.

The Church on earth is a training ground of the imperfect. It is intended to include an intermingling of evil and good in the same external communion. In a sense the evil are not within the Church. In a sense they are. As sharers in the Sacraments, which they possess with the spiritually minded, they

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah, 52, 11.

<sup>2</sup> "C. Parmen.," III.

have a certain form of piety, although resisting its power. They dwell within the same limits, although uncontrolled by its essential spirit. To whatever extent this incongruous intermingling should rightfully distress the mind of the devout, it should never lead him to imagine that the remedy lies in schism.<sup>1</sup> Augustine's profound consciousness of the Divine character of the outward institution of the Church forces him to recoil with abhorrence from schism as a violating and desecrating act. What is certain is that God never orders man to make a schism. No good effected by separation can compensate for the sinfulness which creates it. To Augustine's mind the whole tenor of the New Testament predicts the mingled character of the Visible Church. The lily among the thorns is a true image of the Church's state; so is the net within the sea of the world, including every kind. The threshing-floor includes the chaff as well as the grain. The great house contains within it vessels made to dishonour. The sorting of the fish will take place only when the shore of eternity is reached. The pastures of unity are not to be deserted because the goats are there as well as the sheep. They will be separated by the Shepherd at the last. The harvest is the end of the world, and not the era of Donatus; and the separation will be made by Divine judgment, and not by human rashness.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, Augustine reminded his opponents that if defective sanctity required secession from the Catholic Church, it would equally compel secession from the Donatist Communion. However truly the Separatists might describe their withdrawal from the Church as prompted by noble yearnings to secure on earth the realization of a spiritual ideal, a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, yet the facts of history showed that even the first beginnings of their reform were compromised by unspirituality, by the meanest of motives, and by the most unchristian of methods. A Donatist deacon, more outspoken than discreet, had frankly revealed in a public

<sup>1</sup> "De Unit."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. "C. Litt. Petil.," III. 3.



court what Augustine calls "the marketings of Lucilla"; how she purchased the condemnation of Cæcilian by bribing the bishops.<sup>1</sup> But the whole development of the Donatist Communion had been one long refutation of their theory that defective sanctity justifies secession from the Church. It was impossible to maintain that theory and to continue in the Donatist body. The communion of Donatus was contaminated from its birth with evils no less grave than those from which it aspired to escape.

And further still, the Donatist theory, that the Church's sanctity was contaminated and destroyed by contact and communion with evil men, could only affect the Church in Africa. It could not affect the Churches of the world beyond. The Donatist position was out of all normal relation with historic Christendom. It unchurched the entire Universal Church of Christ. It left positively no room for the existence of the Apostolic Churches addressed by St. Paul or described in the Revelation. Yet how could the Church of Antioch cease to be a Church merely through certain African contentions? Possibly the geographical knowledge of the Donatists was not sufficiently extensive even to indicate the precise position of the apostolic foundations. Probably these Churches had never even heard of Donatus' name. How then could they be defiled, contaminated, or in any way compromised, or changed, by disputes of which they were entirely ignorant? or by questions as to the character of individuals whose names they did not know?<sup>2</sup>

The other Donatist contention was that the value of a Sacrament is qualified by the moral worth of the minister; that carnally minded clergy could not give rise to spiritually minded sons;<sup>3</sup> since that which is born of the flesh is flesh. This was a natural inference from an intensely subjective theory. If the Sacrament had no intrinsic sanctity, if the Church had no holiness in itself as a Divine institution pervaded by the Spirit,

<sup>1</sup> "De Unit."

<sup>2</sup> "De Unit. Eccles.," xxxi.

<sup>3</sup> "C. Parmen.," II. 23.

apart from the varying degrees of sanctity in individual members at any given place or time, there was much to be said for their contention. But if the inference is natural it is no less a reduction of the whole theory to absurdity. It narrowed regeneration to the two human elements: the administrator and the receiver. It made everything depend on their moral state. Meanwhile the third element, the all-essential, the Divine element, seems altogether to escape their attention. If the quality of the baptism received depends at all on the moral worth of the ministrator, what happens in the case of the administrator's secret unworthiness? Does the person baptized receive regeneration or not? If he does, the theory is false. If he does not, all regeneration, and therefore all salvation, is reduced to a state of complete uncertainty. But the reduction of salvation to uncertainty is obviously unevangelical. Therefore the maxim is false.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes<sup>2</sup> the Donatist would admit that it was only obtrusive and manifested evil which invalidated a priest's ministrations; in the case of the priest's secret unworthiness it was the Holy Spirit who baptized. To this Augustine replied: "If it be true that when the baptiser is openly excellent, it is man alone who baptizes, but when the baptiser is secretly bad, then either God or an angel undertakes the work: we are driven to the inference that it is better to receive the Sacrament from a secretly unworthy priest rather than from one of sanctity". The fact is, urged Augustine, that these confusions arise from placing our hope in man rather than in God. The real minister of the Sacrament is invariably the same, namely Christ Himself. It is He Who baptizes with the Holy Ghost. Neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth; but God Who giveth the increase. The objective side of the Sacrament should be very strongly enforced. It is Christ Who regenerates. The minister imparts nothing of his own to the Sacrament which he confers. He cannot qualify the gift of which he is nothing but the constituted instrument.

<sup>1</sup> "C. Litt. Petil.," I. 5.

<sup>2</sup> "C. Parmen."

This part of Augustine's reply to the Donatists has a permanent value as a powerful statement of the objective side of religious rites and institutions. The sanctity of the Church means that the institution itself is objectively holy. This does not mean that sanctity is transferred from persons to institutions. It was not that the defective sanctity of individuals led to the ascription of an imaginary sanctity to the institution. The latter is not in the least a substitute for the former, but the means for its realization. Recognition of the sanctity of the Church as an institution means acknowledgment of the Divine side in religion. If it be said that sanctity is an attribute of persons, not of institutions or things, the answer is that the sanctity of the Church *is* the sanctity of a person, namely the Spirit of God. And the sanctity of the institution is with a view to the sanctity of its members. Only on condition of realizing progressively their sanctity can they continue to be its members; only in proportion as they are striving for that realization are they veritably its members even now. It should further be remembered that if the principle of the objective sanctity of the Church is described as Augustinian, this is admissible if it means that it owes to him its most brilliant early exposition; but it is historically incorrect if it be intended thereby to label this conception as his invention.

5. The Donatist controversy led Augustine to an elaborate exposition of the *Sacrament of Baptism*.<sup>1</sup> He taught that baptism is objectively valid outside the Visible Church; but subjectively ineffective, until admission is gained. Baptism received within the Church is not lost by withdrawal from the external limits; nor can it be repeated on the Separatist's return. Baptism can be validly given outside the Catholic Communion, as well as within it. But to this doctrine of the validity of baptism, wherever received, Augustine added another theory: the principle of suspended effects. His theory is that while this Sacrament can be given just as validly outside the Visible Church as within it, yet the saving effect of the

<sup>1</sup> "De Bapt."

Sacrament is withheld or suspended, so long as the recipient continues in schism. While the objective work of the Sacrament is invariable, its effectiveness depends on certain conditions, of which external union with the Church is one. Just as unbelief or impenitence obstruct the Sacrament's effect until they be removed, so, Augustine held, it was in the case of schism. The greatness of the Sacrament might, he thinks, produce forgiveness as a momentary possession; but the pardon would be instantly withdrawn, owing to the recipient's condition.

Augustine's anti-Donatist work was peculiarly complicated by the fact that the Separatists were able to support their practice of rebaptism by appeal to no less an authority than St. Cyprian.<sup>1</sup> The name of St. Cyprian in the African Church was second to none. His position and influence at Carthage, his ability as a theologian, his personal sanctity, his martyrdom, secured him an authority which, at least in Africa, men in proportion to their goodness were reluctant to dispute.

But in the question of rebaptism the authority of Cyprian was undeniably on the Donatist side. It had appeared to Cyprian that baptism conferred outside the communion of the Catholic Church was simply null and void. He therefore conferred this Sacrament upon every one who came to the Church from schism. His influence carried conviction in a council of over eighty bishops of the African Churches who, almost without a dissentient, endorsed his opinion. Of course the weight of an authority so high as Cyprian told strongly in favour of the Donatist cause. In Hooker's well-known words:—

“Avouching that such as are not of the true Church can administer no true baptism, they had for this point whole volumes of St. Cyprian's own writing, together with the judgment of divers African Synods whose sentence was the same with his.”<sup>2</sup>

“Whereupon the Fathers were likewise in defence of their just cause very greatly prejudiced, both for that they could not

<sup>1</sup> “De Bapt.,” bk. i.

<sup>2</sup> Hooker, v. 288.

enforce the duty of men's communion with a Church confessed to be in many things blameworthy unless they should oftentimes seem to speak as half defenders of the faults themselves, or at the least, not so vehement accusers thereof as their adversaries; and to withstand iteration of baptism, the other branch of the Donatists' heresy, was impossible without manifest and professed rejection of Cyprian, whom the world universally did in his lifetime admire as the greatest among prelates, and now honour as not the lowest in the Kingdom of Heaven. So true we find it by experience of all ages in the Church of God, that the teachers' error is the people's trial, harder and heavier by so much to bear, as he is in worth and regard greater that mispersuadeth them. Although there was odds between Cyprian's cause and theirs, he differing from others of sounder understanding in that point but not dividing himself from the body of the Church by schism as did the Donatists."<sup>1</sup>

It therefore fell to Augustine's lot to refute the teaching of St. Cyprian on the question at issue. He did so with extraordinary skill and delicacy, expressing repeatedly the greatest admiration for Cyprian's character and sanctity, while separating himself from Cyprian's opinion. He frankly declares that Cyprian was mistaken, but he regards the error as providentially permitted. For his disagreement with the ancient custom, a custom which the whole Catholic world had since endorsed, did not lead him to dream of separation. And yet if Cyprian had founded a schism he would easily have drawn away multitudes after him. The Cyprianists would have been more extensive than the Donatists. But his charity redeems his error.

Accordingly, says Augustine, the authority of Cyprian does not silence him; for he is reassured by Cyprian's humility.<sup>2</sup> If Peter acted against the rule of truth, which the Church afterwards maintained, when he compelled the Gentiles to

<sup>1</sup> Hooker, v. 62, 80.

<sup>2</sup> "De Bapt.," bk. ii. § 2.

judaize, a similar contention by Cyprian, against the rule of truth, subsequently held by the Universal Church, is perfectly accountable. Cyprian and Peter may fairly be compared, since both were martyrs, notwithstanding the Apostle's superiority in position. And, in fact, Peter's attempt to enforce circumcision on the Gentile would be far more abhorrent to the human race than Cyprian's attempt to rebaptize. But as Peter was corrected by Paul, much more must Cyprian be corrected by councils of the Church, which have greater authority than any individual bishop. Cyprian's humility and forbearance were manifested in the principles which he indicated to his synod at Carthage: every one was to say what he thought; no man to be condemned, or removed from the rights of communion, should he think differently from others.<sup>1</sup> For none of them constituted himself a bishop over bishops, or would attempt to coerce his colleagues by tyrannical influence. If, then, the Donatists perpetually appealed to the letter of Cyprian, the Council of Cyprian, let them, in all fairness, follow the example of Cyprian. Whatever Cyprian thought on the subject of rebaptism he made no rent in the Church's unity. The letters of bishops may be revised by councils; and local or provincial councils, in their turn, by plenary councils of the universal Christian world; and these plenary councils themselves are often emended by later councils, when more matured expression and profounder knowledge require reconsideration of earlier decisions.

Augustine justifies rejecting Cyprian's view by an appeal to the authority of the Universal Church: an authority to which he has no doubt Cyprian himself would have yielded, if in those days the truth had been endorsed by the decision of a plenary council. For, surely, if he praises Peter for submitting to be corrected by one of his colleagues, he would himself with the council of his province have submitted to be corrected by the authority of the Universal Church. Augustine here goes so far as to venture to insinuate the possibility that Cyprian did

<sup>1</sup> "De Bapt.," bk. ii.

actually change his mind. But of this there is not the slightest historic trace, nor indeed any probability.

Truth, Augustine thinks, is sometimes withheld from the more learned of men as a test of their patience, humility, and love ; or as a test of the way in which they hold to the Church's unity. Cyprian was not only a learned, he was also a teachable man. And out of this trial Cyprian emerged triumphantly. The liability to believe otherwise than things really are is intensely human. But the self-opinionated temper, or the envy of better men, which leads to severance from the communion of the Church, and the sacrilegious erection of schism, is indefensible presumption.

Augustine bids his opponents realize that if the Donatist maxim that retention of incongruous elements within the Church is destructive of its catholicity be true,<sup>1</sup> the Church must have already ceased to exist in Cyprian's day. Did coexistence of opposite opinions contaminate the Church in Cyprian's day? Let the Donatists give what answer they please. If they answer yes, then there is no Church existing to contend about, or separate from. If they answer no, then there is nothing to justify separation from the Catholic body to-day.

The Donatists will be more wisely occupied in maintaining unity, after Cyprian's example, than in claiming his authority for rebaptizing. Augustine is persuaded that refusal to reiterate baptism was the ancient custom of the Church and was, in fact, the apostolical tradition. Like many other things, neither written in the apostolic records, nor ordained of later councils, yet universally observed, this recognition of baptism conferred outside the Church had an apostolic origin. Cyprian's predecessor, Agrippinus, was the first to depart from the earlier custom. Agrippinus had prepared to innovate, rather than defend in practice, what he did not understand. But a plenary council has since decided that this departure was wrong. Cyprian's opponents did indeed assure him that ancient customs contradicted his theory ; but their defence of the custom

<sup>1</sup> "De Bapt.," bk. ii.

was too weak to influence such a mind. He therefore adhered to his own reasons, although mistaken, rather than yield to a custom so feebly defended.

What the plenary council is to which Augustine refers is uncertain. He does not mention its name, and learned opinion is divided between the Council of Nicæa and that of Arles.<sup>1</sup> Augustine says that this plenary council was held before he was born, which would apply to either.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, what Augustine, in disallowing the reiteration of baptism, claimed to be doing was this: he was recalling men to the earlier form of tradition, to the practice which had existed before St. Cyprian's time, and which ought never to have been changed; both because it was the original practice, and because the change involved mistaken principles.<sup>3</sup> Re-baptism was an innovation as Cyprian himself admits. It came in through Cyprian's personal influence over the Carthaginian Council; and became widely extended in Africa during the interval of forty years between Cyprian's martyrdom and Diocletian's persecution. It *appeared* ancient in the days when the schism began. But that was only due to men's ignorance of history.

Augustine setting aside the authority of St. Cyprian, is significant. He was driven by the exigencies of controversy to oppose the greatest ecclesiastical personage whom Africa had hitherto produced. He had to see a theologian, in many respects congenial to his mind, claimed with justice in behalf of a schismatic practice. But if Augustine set aside the authority of a Cyprian, it was only in deference to a still greater authority, namely, that of the Church itself. And he was thus led in the most practical way to distinguish between the authority of the individual bishop, however gifted a theologian, and the authority of the Universal Church.

It is instructive to remember that Augustine himself was to become another illustration of the same distinction.

<sup>1</sup> "De Bapt.," bk. ii. § 14.

<sup>2</sup> See iv. 8 and especially v. 23 and vi. 3.

<sup>3</sup> v. 1.



It is important to observe that hitherto the Bishop of Hippo has considered the subject of rebaptism from two different points of view: the first doctrinal, the second historical. He first explains and reasons upon the theory itself, then he considers the authority of tradition. And he is confident that both these are against the schismatic view. The doctrine of the Church and the practice of the Church are other than some men in Africa suppose. Accordingly, on the basis of this double support, he proceeds to criticize the arguments produced by St. Cyprian and by the members of the Carthaginian Council.

The arguments advanced in Cyprian's Council are interesting in many ways. They show the African mind of that period endeavouring to adjust various portions of Christian truth; thinking out the relation between Church and schism; between the Church and the Sacrament; between the Sacrament and the gift; between the authority of traditional custom and the value of reason. They show the enormous ascendancy of St. Cyprian over his colleagues. They show, too, that the sacramental theory advanced by St. Cyprian had much in common with the opinions maintained by the Donatist body afterwards. The Donatists certainly did not invent the theory that baptism could only be given inside the limits of the Visible Church. They found that theory already prevalent. Cyprian, and the African bishops under his influence, would have agreed with them.

1. One favourite argument in Cyprian's Council was that custom must yield to truth.<sup>1</sup> They opposed doctrine to tradition. The traditional practice of the Church had taken a wrong development and must be revised in accordance with evangelical principles. Our Lord in the Gospel did not say I am custom, but I am truth. When, therefore, truth is manifest let custom yield.

Certainly, replies Augustine, when truth is manifest let it prevail. But that tradition was opposed to truth is precisely what he has proved to be mistaken. Moreover, the argument admits that custom was adverse to the practice of rebaptizing.

<sup>1</sup> III. 9, 11, 12, and VI. 71.

Reason must undoubtedly be preferred to mere tradition if the two contradict. But when truth and custom harmonize, nothing ought to be more firmly retained. And custom, whose origin men in the time of Cyprian could not trace, is wisely regarded as apostolic.

2. They argued that the water of baptism ministered by a heretic is profane.<sup>1</sup>

Augustine replies that the water over which the Name of God is invoked cannot be profane. The baptism of Christ is consecrated by the Gospel words, and its sanctity is independent of the minister's moral worth. The Divine power co-operates with its Sacrament; <sup>2</sup> whether to the salvation of those who rightly use it, or to the injury of those who misuse it.

As the rays of the sun contract no defilement from the mire of the earth, so the sanctity of Christ's Sacrament cannot be contaminated by the unworthiness of human ministrations. If the Catholic reiterates baptism received among heretics, he would appear to ascribe to heretics what really belongs to Christ.

3. Cyprian had impressed upon his council the dangerous argument of expediency.<sup>3</sup> If, urged he, schismatics see that we accept their baptism as lawful and true, they will imagine themselves to be lawful and true possessors of the Church itself and all the gifts therein contained.

Distinguish, replies Augustine. What we assert is that schismatics possess a lawful Sacrament; what we deny is that they possess it lawfully.<sup>4</sup> A good man within Catholic unity holds a lawful baptism, and holds it lawfully. A bad man in the same unity holds a lawful baptism, but not lawfully. This last case is similar to that of the man who is baptized in schism. He possesses a lawful baptism, but he does not possess it lawfully.<sup>5</sup> And lawful baptism does not confer forgiveness, unless the Sacrament is held lawfully.

4. The practice of rebaptizing was also defended in Cyprian's

<sup>1</sup> III. 15.

<sup>3</sup> v. 8.

<sup>2</sup> "Sacramento suo divina virtus assistit."

<sup>4</sup> "Legitimum sed non legitime."

<sup>5</sup> § 9.

age on the ground that baptism and the Church cannot be separated from each other.<sup>1</sup> By the inseparability of the Sacrament and the Society was meant that the former could only be found or given within the latter. But, instead of limiting the Sacrament to the Society, men might have extended the Society to the Sacrament; so that the definition of the Church would have to include all the baptized. This was not the inference intended. But Augustine at any rate shows how untenable the maxim is in the intended meaning. The inseparability of the Sacrament from the Visible Society of the Church was obviously untrue to facts. What if the baptized is excommunicated? Is he not separated from the Church? But he is not separated from his baptism. The Sacrament remains inseparably in the baptized. However far he may wander, to whatever extremes he may go, however deeply he may sink, even to apostasy and perdition, still his baptism remains. But the baptized may be separated completely and finally from the Church. Thus the maxim is obviously in that sense untenable. Not all who are in possession of baptism are in possession of the Church, any more than all who are in possession of the Church are also in possession of life eternal.

5. Among the favourite theological maxims circulated in Cyprian's age were such as the following: An infidel cannot give faith; Antichrist cannot cleanse in the Name of Christ; The dead cannot confer life; A man cannot give what he does not possess.<sup>2</sup>

Augustine's reply to this and to more of a similar nature is that the maxims are inapplicable because they would prove too much.<sup>3</sup> If it were correct that personal unfaithfulness incapacitated from administration of a genuine Sacrament, it would be correct inside the Church as well as out. For heresy and schism are not the only forms which personal unfaithfulness may assume. What of the insincere within the Church? What of those within the precincts who, to adopt Cyprian's own lament, have renounced the world in language but not in life?

<sup>1</sup> V. 20.<sup>2</sup> VII. 56.<sup>3</sup> VI. 12.

If the maxim that life cannot be conferred by the dead holds true of a schismatic, it must hold equally true of the unworthy Catholic. But this would throw the whole system of sacramental grace into hopeless and irretrievable uncertainty.

It cannot possibly be true. And it is not true because the Sacrament is holy *per se*, and is not variable at the will or worth of human individuals. The maxim, for example, that no man can give what he does not possess is, when applied to sacramental matters, a fallacy, because based on the assumption that the Sacrament is the minister's possession, which is precisely what it is not.

Doubtless no man can confer upon another a sanctity which he does not possess. But it is not his own baptism which the minister confers, it is Christ's. It is not the minister of the Sacrament, but Christ Himself, who is the author and giver of the grace conveyed.<sup>1</sup>

6. Another episcopal argument in Cyprian's Council was either the Lord is God, or Baal is God. Either the Church is the Church, or heresy is the Church. But if heresy be not the Church, how can it possess the baptism of the Church?

It is a type of argument which can find too many parallels. Augustine for answer applies the method of argument to another instance. Either Paradise is Paradise, or Egypt is Paradise. But if Egypt is not Paradise, how can the water of Paradise be found in Egypt? You will say because it flowed out into Egypt. Precisely. So has the water of baptism flowed out beyond the Church.<sup>2</sup> If the thorns of the Evil One can grow within the "garden enclosed," why may not the fountain of Christ stream out beyond the garden? If Satan has his own within the Church's unity, shall not Christ have His beyond that unity?<sup>3</sup>

The Cyprianic theory springs, according to Augustine, from failure to distinguish between the Sacrament and its effects. Augustine once more sums up his own teaching as follows: The Sacrament of Baptism can be held, given, and received both

<sup>1</sup> VII. 14.

<sup>2</sup> "De Bapt.," IV. 10.

<sup>3</sup> IV. 13.

by good and evil men. By good men effectively and healthfully,<sup>1</sup> by evil men hurtfully and penally. But the integrity of the Sacrament is the same in either case. Neither the goodness of the one class can increase its sanctity, nor can the badness of the other diminish its sanctity. The Sacrament is independent of the merits either of the administrator or of the recipient. In itself it is and always must be excellent. Where it may vary is in its effects, for these depend on the subjective capabilities of the recipient.

In baptism the matter of essential moment is not *who* gives but *what* he gives, nor who receives but what he receives, nor who possesses but what he possesses.<sup>2</sup>

7. To conclude this sketch of Augustine's doctrine on the Church. Be it remembered that he wrought his work under stress of three great controversies: the Manichæan, the Donatistic, the Pelagian. These, in his experience, were more or less successive. Thus his treatment was controversial throughout, and determined by the aspects of the dispute to which he replied. In the first controversy Augustine dwelt almost entirely on the Church as the embodiment of authority, and the teacher of truth; in the second, the Church is contemplated rather as the sphere of redemption; in the third the Church tends to disappear in a discussion of predestination.

Since Augustine's teaching is in each case elicited under stress of controversial needs, the consequence is that separate sides of the truth are successively drawn out but nowhere coordinated. The work is strewn with a rich profusion of unreconciled ideas, unreconciled at least explicitly, whatever relation they bore to each other in the great writer's mind.

In the midst of all this wealth of thought, two main conceptions of the Church appear to emerge each into vivid distinctness, unreconciled.

The first of these is the institutional idea: the Church is the

<sup>1</sup> "Utiliter aut salubriter."

<sup>2</sup> "De Bapt.," iv. 16: "Non cogitandum quis dat sed quid dat". The same thought is afterwards repeated. Cf. iv. 18 and vi. 47, p. 294.

external society of the baptized. Within it is the light, outside is the darkness. Salvation is for those who are gathered within.

But secondly is the mystical idea : the Church is the society of the actually redeemed. It excludes many who are within the visible institution, it includes many who are without. Relation to the Visible Church is no test of ultimate relation to this Church of the saints. Thus the institutional and the mystical ideas conflict, and cut across each other. The idea of predestination comes to the support of the mystical conception of the Church. It suggests the number of the ultimately saved. They seem to stand in no necessary relation to the external institution of the Church. The predestined, the truly elect, may be in reach of the sacramental system or they may not.

Whatever the solution of these opposing thoughts may be, Augustine has certainly nowhere explained it.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE COUNCILS AND THE DONATISTS.

THE history of the Donatists during Augustine's episcopate has been hitherto traced chiefly on its literary side. We have seen how it pervaded the theological writings of the age. There is another side to be considered. The schism became a subject of *legislation*, both on the part of the Church and also of the State : of the Church, both with a view to secure reunion, and to determine the conditions upon which individuals, cleric and lay, might be reconciled ; of the State, both in answer to appeals from the Church, and in response to the requirements of social peace.

We have therefore to review the synodical and imperial action against the Donatists during this period.

On the side of the State a long succession of penal laws appeared against the division, simply regarding it as a serious hindrance to good government. No self-respecting State could tolerate the fanatical violence of the Circumcellions. Accordingly, the statute book contains edicts of emperor after emperor, of Valentinian and Gratian, and Theodosius and Honorius, adverse to the Donatist Community. In the same year<sup>1</sup> Theodosius decreed that any heretic who accepted or conferred ordination was to be fined ten pounds of gold ; and Honorius decreed that men who broke into Catholic churches, and injured the clergy or disturbed the worship, were to be proceeded against forthwith by the local civil authorities, as offenders against public order. It was obviously not in the theological or

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 393. Migne, "Optatus," p. 1292.

ecclesiastical interest that such enactments were framed, but purely in behalf of secular peace. The increasing feebleness of the government of Honorius doubtless contributed to the impunity of sectarian violence.

But if the Donatists occupied the attention of the State, still more did they absorb the deliberations of the Church. This period produced the important series of African councils under the able presidency of Archbishop Aurelius of Carthage. The decisions of these synods were incorporated into the great collections of ecclesiastical rulings, and became the basis of Canon Law for the Western Church.<sup>1</sup> Among those African councils some are entitled "General". Baronius considers that this title "General" expresses their relation to the African Church. They were general as being fairly or fully representative of the African provinces.<sup>2</sup> The classification of the councils varies in different writers, but Diocesan, Provincial, General, Universal or Œcumenical are the principal kinds.

The African councils held at Carthage and other places were constantly compelled to deliberate on the subject of the schism. Of the long series of these assemblies we may consider three.

Two important councils were held in the vestry or secretarium of the Basilica Restituta at Carthage in the year 401. Archbishop Aurelius presided over both.<sup>3</sup>

At the former council, held in June, the Archbishop dwelt upon the lamentable condition of the African Church,<sup>4</sup> and proposed that a representative should be sent to their fellow bishops in Italy, to Anastasius, Bishop of the Apostolic See, and to Venerius, Bishop of the Church at Milan, to consult them on the very serious dearth of clergy in Africa.

Many churches were so reduced that not even a solitary deacon, however illiterate, could be found for them. The impossibility of adequate provision for the higher offices of the ministry might easily be inferred. Moreover, statistics testified

<sup>1</sup> See Dionysius Exiguus.

<sup>2</sup> Baronius, "Annals," A.D. 403.

<sup>3</sup> Migne, "Optatus," p. 1195.

<sup>4</sup> Noris, iv. 481.



to diminishing congregations. An earlier synod had resolved, provisionally, that persons baptized in infancy in the schism, but reconciled to the Church in maturer life, were not necessarily disqualified from ordination, especially when the needs of the Church might so demand. The present problem was different and wider reaching. The Italian bishops were now to be consulted upon the best course to pursue when a congregation and clergy in schism desire to return in a body to the Church.

The dearth of clergy in the African Church was due to various causes; one was the difficulty of language. There was a reluctance to appoint in the environs of Hippo Regius,<sup>1</sup> Augustine's own episcopal city, clergy unable to make themselves intelligible in Punic to their countrymen. Punic names and phrases were still widely current, and the popular dialect survived, although banished from the schools. Augustine himself quotes Punic words in his sermons. Ignorance of Punic may have limited the numbers of suitable clergy. But of course the principal cause was the schism.

A second council was held at Carthage, in the hall of the same basilica,<sup>2</sup> in the month of September, 401. Letters were read from Pope Anastasius urging the African Church not to conceal from the secular authorities the sufferings which the Donatists inflicted upon them. The council resolved to promote a conference with the Separatists, as the best means to produce reunion. It was further resolved that, subject to the approval of the Apostolic See, and in view of urgent local needs, any cleric coming from the schism to the Church should be maintained in his office.

The African bishops held another great assembly two years afterwards, in 403,<sup>3</sup> Archbishop Aurelius again presiding. It was now resolved that each bishop in his own city should endeavour to hold a conference with the local head of the Donatist Communion. A form of invitation was drawn up

<sup>1</sup> Theodor Mommsen, "The Provinces of the Roman Empire," II. 328.

<sup>2</sup> Migne, "Optatus," p. 1197.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1200.

which a bishop might send to his Donatist rival. The council also appealed to the Proconsul Septimus to support the Church's endeavours. If the Donatists had any truth to maintain, let it be done dispassionately, by use of reason, and not by furious outbursts of violence, destructive alike of religious peace and public order.

Appeals and invitations of this kind, however excellent, were many years too late. The memories of a century embittered throughout its length by accusations, irritating if false, humiliating if true; the knowledge that this invitation to conferences came from the party supported by the civil power: these things could only be ignored and overlooked by men of real spirituality. But such elevation of temper, and refinement of soul, did not prevail in the limits of the now weakened and exasperated community. The invitation to hold a conference was therefore, quite naturally, declined with energy, and anger, and contempt.

It was also answered among the Circumcellions by another furious outburst of violence.

The most horrible atrocities were committed in Africa through this period. No Catholic home was safe from a midnight attack. The fanatics cut off the hand of a bishop, tore out the tongue of another.<sup>1</sup> They blinded their opponents by a mixture of acid and lime, causing the most excruciating torture. They set fire alike to private houses and churches; and, reflecting with peculiar irony on the origin of the schism, many copies of the Sacred Writings perished in the flames.

All these facts are recorded by Augustine.<sup>2</sup> They live as robbers, they die as Circumcellions, they are honoured as martyrs!

The nobler spirits on the Puritan side undoubtedly repudiated, but could not control, the violence of their unscrupulous and desperate defenders; and the fact remains that the Circumcellions, those unruly asserters of schismatic principles, endea-

<sup>1</sup> "Letter," 185, § 13.

<sup>2</sup> "Contra Crescon.," III. 46.

voured to suppress by tumult what they could not refute by reason.<sup>1</sup>

Against Augustine in particular the Circumcellions directed peculiar hatred. His pre-eminence and success in winning converts to the Church exasperated them above all things. More than once his life was in imminent danger; and he thankfully ascribes his escape to the Divine protection. During an episcopal visitation the road was beset by these fanatics; and the Bishop would certainly have been brutally treated, perhaps murdered, had not the priest who conducted him providentially taken the wrong road.<sup>2</sup>

In this reign of terror it was almost impossible for reason or truth to prevail. Many of the Donatist party were inwardly convinced, as they afterwards admitted, by the power of Augustine's arguments. They longed to return to Catholic unity, but dared not endanger their lives and the lives of their friends. Accordingly there is no wonder that when the African bishops met in *council in 404* they were strongly in favour of an appeal to the secular authorities. They knew that, if only this paralysing fear could be removed, vast numbers would take refuge at once within the Catholic fold. All that was wanted was freedom to act on their convictions. And this freedom could only be secured by appealing for protection to the imperial power. Many of the members of the council, including the most experienced, were prepared to go much further still. They urged not only that converts to the Church should be protected against Donatist violence, but that the Donatists as a body should be compelled by force to enter the Catholic Communion. They reminded the council that fear of the imperial laws had in the days of Constantine proved singularly conducive to ecclesiastical unity. They pointed in particular to Augustine's native town Tagaste, which was at one time almost entirely Donatist, but through imperial measures

<sup>1</sup> Bened., "Life of St. Aug.," p. 513.

<sup>2</sup> "Enchirid.," xxvii.; "Possid. Vita," xii.

had become almost entirely Catholic. The Council of Carthage seems unconscious of the immense distinction in principles between these alternative schemes.

It was one thing for a religious body to appeal for freedom to worship without distraction or fear : it was a very different thing to require the secular power to allow no worship but its own, and to coerce all others into its own communion. The former was to claim liberty of conscience as a universal right ; the other was to claim liberty as one's own exclusive possession.

The council, however, although not clear on this tremendous distinction, were yet, on the whole, more inclined to appeal to the imperial authority for protection than coercion. It was in the end agreed that two legates should be sent to the Emperor Honorius, entreating him that the laws of Theodosius, of pious memory, against all heretics should be re-enacted against the schism in particular ; and that all perpetrators of violence against the Catholics in Africa should be liable to a fine of ten pounds in gold. Certainly this appeal was, under the circumstances, forbearing.<sup>1</sup> It should be remembered that the influence of Augustine was at work in this.

Meanwhile fresh acts of violence among the Circumcellions rendered dispassionate and conciliatory movements on either side increasingly difficult.<sup>2</sup> Possidius, Catholic Bishop of Calama, did his utmost, in accordance with the suggestions of the council, to bring his rival, the Donatist Bishop Crispin, to confer with him. Crispin refused with the Scriptural quotation : "Speak not in the ears of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of thy words".<sup>3</sup> Nothing daunted by this disconcerting application of Scripture, Possidius vigorously pursued the work of reunion. The consequence was that the Donatists resorted to other than Scriptural weapons. Possidius was one day strengthening the faith of some Catholics in his diocese when the house was besieged by Circumcellions, who attempted to

<sup>1</sup> Bened., "Life," p. 535.

<sup>2</sup> "Contra Crescon.," III.

<sup>3</sup> Prov. XXIII. 9.

set the building on fire, and were only frustrated by townsmen, who feared the consequence. Thereupon the fanatics, determined not to be baffled, and headed by a Donatist priest, broke down the door, killed the horses stabled in the lower portion of the house, dragged the Bishop from the upper story, and brutally beat him until the Donatist priest himself begged them to desist. Possidius escaped further inflictions. And the matter was laid before the Donatist bishop, who took no steps whatever to correct his priest. Accordingly Possidius appealed to the secular authorities ; and Crispin was condemned to a fine of ten pounds. Crispin, however, much to the disgust of his own party, appealed to the Emperor Honorius,<sup>1</sup> on the ground that the law under which he was condemned was directed against heretics, among whom he claimed that the Donatists could not be included. The imperial reply was prompt, emphatic, and severe. Honorius declared that Donatists were included with heretics, and confirmed the fine. At this point, however, the Catholic bishops, with considerable magnanimity, intervened ; and Crispin was not compelled to pay. But while the bishops set the example of asking no more than protection, doubtless the desire to suppress these elements of social anarchy was increasing both among statesmen and members of the Church.

Another incident which strongly influenced opinion in the same direction was the tragic experience of Maximinian, Catholic Bishop of Bagai.

The Bishop of Bagai was taken from the altar in the very act of celebrating, by a desperate mob of Circumcellions. He was cruelly beaten ; and, wounded and half stunned, was dragged through the mire, which closed upon his wounds, and so prevented him from bleeding to death. He was then thrown from a tower and abandoned as dead, but rescued at night by Catholics, and hidden from his enemies. He recovered, and appeared in the streets of Rome, scarred and disfigured by appalling wounds, to seek for protection from the Emperor. Honorius at once resorted to coercive legislation. He

<sup>1</sup> See Ribbeck, 445.

passed a law<sup>1</sup> that, in consequence of the brutality of the Donatist party, their bishops were to be sent into exile, and their members compelled to enter the unity of the Church.<sup>2</sup> Still severer edicts were issued early in the following year.<sup>3</sup> It was now ordered that the Donatist churches should be taken away from them. Honorius determined to prevent the Donatists from pleading any more the inapplicability to their case of the laws against heretics. He published an edict in which he deals with the theological distinction of heresy and schism, and includes the Donatists among heretics, on the ground that their conduct in reiterating baptism has converted their schism into heresy.<sup>4</sup> They are to suffer civil penalties. Buildings lent for schismatic purposes are to be confiscated to the State. This decision was known among the Catholic party as the Edict of Unity.<sup>5</sup>

This coercive legislation was immediately followed by a considerable return of Donatists to the Church. Many declared that they had only held aloof in simple terror of Circumcellion fanaticism.<sup>6</sup>

Augustine watched the practical effects of secular intervention in spiritual affairs and considered them beneficial. He requested the principal officer of State to apply to the district of Hippo, and the borders of Numidia, the measures of coercion which had proved so successful in promoting unity elsewhere.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 404.

<sup>2</sup> Hefele, p. 441.

<sup>3</sup> A.D. 405.

<sup>4</sup> "Ita contigit ut hæresis ex schismate nasceretur."

<sup>5</sup> St. Aug., W. ix. 612 n.

<sup>6</sup> "Letter," 185, § 29.

<sup>7</sup> "Ep.," 86.

## CHAPTER IX.

### IN ST. AUGUSTINE'S DIOCESE.

FROM these movements <sup>1</sup> in the great Empire itself, we turn to diocesan affairs.

While Augustine wrote for the Church at large, he laboured strenuously for the diocese which was his own especial care. And while the Donatists strove to refute Augustine's writings, they laboured desperately to frustrate him in Hippo itself. Within the diocese of Hippo the contest between Catholic and Donatist was intensified by its very concentration. Augustine had now been bishop fifteen years. Macrobius now occupied the place of Proculeian. Macrobius, after a triumphal entry into Hippo, was instated in the midst of throngs of his adherents, among whom the Circumcellions held a conspicuous place. They shouted their terrible war cry, "*Laudes Deo*," <sup>2</sup> but so conducted themselves that Macrobius himself was more disgusted by their turbulence than delighted by their loyalty. On the following day he delivered in the church a severe rebuke to the disorderly crowd who compromised his position, and endangered his cause at the hands of the State. The Circumcellions would seem to have belonged to the ignorant native African population; for Macrobius had to speak to them by means of a Punic interpreter. They were by no means prepared to hear correction, nor did they wait for the finish of the episcopal advice. With outbursts of indignation and disgust, they rose and left the church and took their departure. Certain Catholics who were present at the service

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 409.

<sup>2</sup> Bened., "*Life of St. Aug.*," p. 600.

reported these proceedings to the Churchmen of Hippo. But no sooner had the Catholics themselves withdrawn than the Macrobianus performed an act of ritual more expressive than polite. They proceeded to wash with salt water the place where the Catholics had stood.

Significant this of the exasperation with which the Catholic Church was regarded. Still in spite of these proceedings, Augustine held Macrobius in respect and paid a tribute to his eloquence and abilities. But he was not likely to make much way in the direction of unity. The old transference from one Church to the other on inadequate grounds continued. There was one Rustician, a Catholic, and subdeacon, somewhere in the Diocese of Hippo, who, for misconduct, was excommunicated. Rustician immediately bethought himself of entrance into the Donatist schism at Hippo; partly as a means of reinstating himself,<sup>1</sup> and partly as protection against the urgent pressure of his creditors, who, however anxious they might be to obtain repayment, would hardly care to awaken the attention of the Circumcellions. Bishop Macrobius saw no reason why the excommunicated deacon should not be admitted to the schism. He therefore received him into the separated society. Augustine protested vehemently against rebaptizing Rustician; and called upon Macrobius to reconcile such a procedure with the conduct of his predecessors in the famous incident of the Maximinians.

Augustine sent his protest by two messengers, whom Macrobius at first refused to admit, but eventually dismissed with the answer that he could not do otherwise than receive such converts as came to him. As to the Maximinianist difficulty, Macrobius returned the evasive answer that "it was not for him, a man but recently consecrated, to sit in judgment on the deeds of his fathers". To that Augustine's retort was unanswerable. If the Donatist is not to pass judgment on the deeds of his father,<sup>2</sup> who is still alive, and can be personally interrogated, with a view to explanation, how can the Catholic

<sup>1</sup> St. Aug., "Ep.," 108.

<sup>2</sup> "Ep.," 108.



be required to pass judgment on the deeds of certain of his fathers who are no longer accessible in the flesh but deceased a century ago? <sup>1</sup>

These distressing troubles at Hippo filled Augustine with profound depression. The world, says he in a letter, is a scene of universal wretchedness. The religious houses in Egypt have been beset, and the inmates massacred by barbarians. Italy is full of disasters, so is Gaul, so is Spain. But there is no need to describe other countries; for Hippo itself, although the barbarians have not reached it, is suffering terrible calamities from the Donatist clergy, and from the Circumcellions who are worse than barbarians. They desolate churches; they murder. They rob houses and burn them. Multitudes are terrorized into accepting rebaptism as the only way to escape. Nevertheless, Augustine strives to strengthen himself with the thought that these troubles are deserved and predicted. If it be questioned why saintly men suffer these things, the answer is that they are not better than the Three Children, or Daniel, or the Maccabees. Augustine encourages his correspondent to endure without murmuring.

Meanwhile, in response to Augustine's application, the methods of coercion laid down in the Edict of Union were applied to the Donatists at Hippo; with the result that the party was considerably reduced. A unity which neither personal conviction nor argument could produce was being effected before Augustine's eyes; and if the weapons were worldly, and the process painful, yet it appeared to him that the result was good.

<sup>1</sup> St. Aug., "Ep., III., to Victorian," p. 477, A.D. 409.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE GREAT CONFERENCE.<sup>1</sup>

THE capture of Rome by Alaric in 410 created a profound impression alike on the pagan and the Christian mind. Augustine reassured men on the lines afterwards to be published in his masterpiece, "The City of God". But not even the Fall of Rome could divert the Bishop from his efforts to heal the African schism. With characteristic pertinacity he worked for it as before. His great desire throughout had been to hold a conference with the leaders on the other side. For years they had met in strife, but never in council. It was the persistent policy of the Church to secure, and of the schismatics to avoid, an assembly for mutual understanding and explanation. The exclusiveness of the Donatists had hitherto successfully frustrated all Catholic efforts at corporate reunion. It was a singular condition. The Catholic eager to make advances, and willing to make great concessions, which the Donatists invariably rejected. The desire for unity was chiefly on the Catholic side. But there can be no corporate reunion unless eagerly desired on both sides. Appeals to the Donatists failed. Accordingly, the Catholics appealed to the secular power. Four bishops were sent from the Council at Carthage, in the year of the Fall of Rome, to Ravenna, to acquaint Honorius more fully with the condition of the African Church. The details of their mission are unknown.<sup>2</sup> But the result is clear. Honorius published an order commanding the Donatist bishops in a body to meet their Catholic leaders in a conference at Carthage. The news

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 411.

<sup>2</sup> St. Aug., "Works," ix., Appendix, 1139.

struck the schism with dismay. It was the severest blow which had fallen as yet. It foretold the end. It compelled what they had hitherto escaped. For while it was easy to ignore the appeals of the Catholic, it was difficult to disobey the command of the Emperor. At any rate, the Donatists, as a body, were not prepared to resist. Consequently the conference, so long desired and avoided, was at last to be realized. But if the Donatists yielded to the inevitable, they could scarcely be expected to arrive in a mood conducive to dispassionate argument, or mutual peace. They found themselves caught between two forces. They were marshalled by secular power to listen to theological reasonings. Between the soldiers of Honorius and the logic of Augustine they were in a most unenviable plight. The situation may have been a Nemesis upon their fanaticism and their fierceness ; but it can only in irony be regarded as a conference. Harnack calls the incident a tragi-comedy.<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Bramhall drew from it the lesson of the futility of all such discussions. "Public conferences for the most part do but start new questions and revive old forgotten animosities. What were the Donatists the better for the Collation at Carthage?" Bramhall's criticism is hardly endorsed by all experience, but it is indeed most certain that out of such conditions as those under which the conference at Carthage assembled no other issue could possibly be expected but failure to produce conviction. It might be a coercive victory : it must be a moral fiasco.

The conduct of the Catholic party has been praised for its consideration ; and undoubtedly they did exhibit great restraint and forbearance. Yet it must be remembered that, after all, they could well afford to be considerate, now that their ascendancy was so obviously guaranteed.

The work of arranging the details, and of presiding over the conference, was entrusted to the tribune Marcellinus. A worthier selection could scarcely have been made. Marcellinus was conspicuous for his piety, prudence, and tact ; and although

<sup>1</sup> "Hist. Dogm.," i. 68.

a Catholic, and a personal friend of Augustine, yet elevated by character above suspicion of unfairness toward the other side. His correspondence with Augustine reveals a devout and earnest mind: eager to know religious truth, and deeply appreciating the privileges of such a friendship. The Bishop afterwards dedicated to him the great work on the "City of God"; and wrote for his especial instruction his invaluable treatise on the "Letter and the Spirit". But if the loftiness of Marcellinus' character insured justice to the proceedings, nothing can diminish the strangeness of the scene. The sight of an officer of State appointed by secular power, to control a meeting between two Christian communities suggests many reflections. It was difficult to see how otherwise matters could have reached any sort of conclusion; but this does not relieve the situation of its luridness and its irony.

Marcellinus published an edict summoning all bishops, Donatist and Catholic, to assemble in conference at Carthage. He declared that all who obeyed the imperial order were to be exempt from the action of the recent suppressive laws; and were, at least for the present, to have their churches restored to them. He went so far as to express a willingness to accept as coadjutor any suitable person whom the Donatist party might select.<sup>1</sup> He vowed that he would endeavour to act with complete impartiality and solemnly promised a safe conduct to every bishop attending the conference.

Accordingly, in the month of May, A.D. 411, the bishops began to pour in from all parts to the city of Carthage. The Catholic prelates came separately, without ostentation or parade; so quietly, that their actual numerical strength was scarcely understood. The Donatist bishops came in a body, making a great demonstration, determined that all Carthage should be impressed with their numbers.<sup>2</sup> Marcellinus then laid down the rules of procedure in a second edict. To secure peaceful discussion, he directed that there should be selected

<sup>1</sup> St. Aug., ix., Appendix, p. 1142.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix, p. 1142.

from either side seven disputants, seven assessors, and four secretaries to keep and scrutinize the records. By this order he reduced the conference to the manageable number of thirty-six, excluding all other bishops from personal intervention in the course of its proceedings. He appointed the Gargilian Baths as the place of discussion; in all probability as being neutral ground. And he ruled that no persons, lay or episcopal, beyond the chosen thirty-six, should approach the precincts of assembly, or disturb the calm essential to dispassionate discussion. He desired each side to assist the public proclamation of his conclusions. The course of the conference would be recorded. The utmost care would be taken to secure the fidelity of the records. Every word would be written down, under careful supervision; and the acts of the conference would be signed and sealed and published immediately after their labours were ended. It was significantly added that this conference would be held between Catholics and Donatists, and that the Maximinianists were expressly excluded.

To this second edict of Marcellinus the Donatists replied, urgently demanding the right to appear at the conference in their full numbers, rather than reduced to a miserable selection of eighteen. Nevertheless, they chose their representatives.<sup>1</sup> While the Donatists thus resented and resisted the President's rules of procedure, the Catholics acquiesced in his decisions. They pledged themselves to recognize the Donatist orders, and to receive their bishops on terms of equality. Where two rival bishops existed in one city, they promised either to transfer one of them to another See, or else to subdivide the diocese between them, until such time as death should unite the city once more under the guidance of the survivor.<sup>2</sup> They solemnly protested their willingness to resign their Sees, if by so doing reunion could be accomplished. Can we hesitate, exclaimed the Catholic Fathers, can we hesitate to make this sacrifice to our Redeemer? If He descended from

<sup>1</sup> Bened., "Life," p. 633.

<sup>2</sup> See St. Aug., "Ep.," 128; "Brevic. Collat.," p. 835.

Heaven's throne to unite us to Himself, shall we fear to descend from our thrones to secure unity among His members? We are bishops for the people's sake, not our own. If to resign was to unite the flock, and to continue was to scatter it, what faithful mind could be in doubt about its duty? If they preferred Christ's advantage to their own honour in this world, assuredly their Lord would not fail to reward them in the world to come.<sup>1</sup>

The tone of the Catholic party was admirable; their self-repression exemplary. They conducted themselves throughout the proceedings with patience and courtesy. Augustine gave the keynote to their whole attitude when he exclaimed in an address before the people: "*Non vincit nisi veritas, victoria veritatis est charitas*".<sup>2</sup>

At last the conference opened in the hall of the public baths. It was the 1st of June. The Donatists came in full force. The Catholics sent only their selected eighteen. The conference occupied three separate days, of which the first two were chiefly concerned with formalities.<sup>3</sup> Marcellinus had the Imperial Edict read, and offered to accept as coadjutor any suitable person whom the Donatists might choose. Petilian, the vigorous leader of the opposition, curtly replied that they had not asked for any moderator at all, and it was not for them to select a second.<sup>4</sup> Emeritus and Petilian pertinaciously endeavoured to close the proceedings by declaring that the time allowed in the Imperial Edict was already past: an objection which of course the President was obliged to overrule. Lists of the respective parties were given to Marcellinus.

The Donatists, seeing none of their opponents but the selected eighteen, were incredulous of their strength, and accordingly demanded that every bishop should be summoned to answer to his name.

<sup>1</sup> "Collat. Carthag.," i. 16.

<sup>2</sup> "Sermon," 358 (1); "Works," v. 2067.

<sup>3</sup> "Works," ix., Appendix, p. 1154.

<sup>4</sup> Bened., "Life," p. 639.

The Catholic party, apprehensive of tumult, for some time resisted this proposal.<sup>1</sup> They urged that smaller numbers were more conducive to peace and orderly discussion; that the Catholic bishops had absented themselves in obedience to the President's ruling. Augustine in particular pointed out that if tumult arose in a vast assembly it would be difficult to localize the fault. Emeritus protested that a great part of the day was already spent, and not a sign of tumult had arisen; disturbance ought not to be feared among bishops met for such a cause. The Catholic party reluctantly consented. Marcellinus hereupon ordered the entire body of Catholic bishops to be admitted. Accordingly they entered, in their full strength. The list of Catholics was read and its accuracy proved. Excepting a few, who had fallen ill in the city since their arrival, every bishop answered when his name was called. But the reading of the list was accompanied by running comments of a personal character on the names recited. However, the Donatist party, in turn, were required to verify their list of names. Hereupon much confusion resulted. When the name of the Donatist Felix,<sup>2</sup> who described himself as Bishop of Rome, was recited, the Catholic comment was, let it stand, but without prejudice to the absent (i.e. to Pope Innocent). As the list was continued, the Catholics declared that many among their opponents were bishops without a See, titular bishops without a flock. For several names no satisfactory explanation could be given. They were permitted to pass. In certain cases priests had signed for episcopal absentees. When the name of Quodvult Deus was read, the answer was that he had died on the way. When an explanation was then requested how, in that case, his signature could have been written at Carthage, the party found it difficult to reply. Some declared that he had left Carthage since, but declined to make that statement on oath. Petilian endeavoured to dismiss the subject with the remark that even dying men made wills, adding the platitude that death was human. Alypius could not for-

<sup>1</sup> "Gesta."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1522.

bear the retort that if death was human, it was inhuman to deceive.

These are incidents which it is difficult to explain. That any concerted plan of deception existed is most improbable. It was after all the Donatists themselves who by their demand for the Catholic lists courted investigation of their own. For they could not exempt themselves from a similar scrutiny. Moreover, the existing records are all on the Catholic side. On the other hand, it is possible that anxiety to swell their numbers may have tempted unscrupulous individuals to resort to discreditable means of which the majority were ignorant.

When the verification of the lists was completed there were found 286 on the Catholic side, and on the Donatist 279.<sup>1</sup> Both parties claimed that these numbers did not represent their full strength. The Catholic party asserted that their episcopate included 120 more, detained by age or illness or some necessity. Petilian declared that their absentees were yet more numerous still. These statements were probably correct. The Synod of Bagai which re-established Primian consisted of 310 Donatist bishops. And there were at least 100 more on the Maximinianist side. Thus the total number of schismatic bishops in Africa was clearly above 400. If the number of Catholics at the conference be added to that of their absentees their total also is above 400. It would therefore appear that the numerical strength of the two parties so far as the episcopate goes was fairly equal. But if the Catholic statements are correct, the number of the Donatist episcopate is no guarantee that their laity were nearly as numerous as on the Catholic side. Of course, in the Conference, the Maximinian party with their 100 bishops was excluded. The dispute being between Donatists and Catholics, no other community was recognized. Whether this exclusion was a drawback or a gain to the opposition may be questioned. The statistics then bring us to the startling conclusion that there were more than 800 bishops in North Africa at the beginning of the fifth century.

<sup>1</sup> "Gesta," p. 1351. Cf. Baldwin, p. 1466, and Hefele.



After the testing of the lists Marcellinus directed all the bishops to withdraw, except their selected representatives. So the first day passed.

On the second day of the conference none but the selected bishops were admitted. There were eighteen on either side.

The seven disputants in the Donatist behalf were Primian, Petilian, Emeritus, Protasius, Montanus, Gaudentius, and Adeodatus.

The Catholic disputants were Aurelius, Alypius, Augustine, Vincent, Fortunatus, Fortunatianus, and Possidius. We note Augustine's supporters. Alypius was his intimate friend; Possidius his biographer. Here then at last the disputants are face to face. The issues of a long-lived separation are in their hands. Humanly speaking, the fortunes of the African Church depend on the motives, the temper, the character, the spirituality of these fourteen. But the hopelessness of the whole procedure was manifested from the first.

Marcellinus requested the bishops to be seated. The Catholics complied, the Donatists refused. Petilian explained their refusal. They had a scriptural objection. Was it not written, "I will not sit among the ungodly". Marcellinus observed that the respect due to their episcopal rank forbade him to remain seated, when so many priests were standing. Accordingly he ordered his own chair to be removed. Thus through the tedious length of a protracted conference for two whole days every one remained standing; which may have caused the Donatists to regret their exegesis.

Petilian immediately asked for an adjournment. He wanted further time to revise the reports of the previous meeting.<sup>1</sup> The subtle observations of the other side required on his part further thought and reflection. Without this he could not be expected to reply. Marcellinus promptly refused to grant this unreasonable demand. Then, muttered Petilian, we are circumvented. Nevertheless, the opposition succeeded in frustrating all progress for that day.

<sup>1</sup> "Gesta," p. 1359.

But the discussion had to come. It was only on the third day that the conference reached the subjects of contention. The aim of the schismatic leaders was to avoid the central theme by a policy of obstruction. Time was wasted in technicalities. Augustine, who during the former meetings had for the most part continued reticent, was at last roused to protest.<sup>1</sup> God, he exclaimed, would have them to be fellow-counsellors, rather than antagonists. Let nothing be interposed which was not essential to the matter in hand. The Church, whose cause the Catholics maintained on the evidences of Scripture, was known to all; it was set upon a hill, and all nations flocked to it. If there was anything to be said against that Church let it be spoken. The interest not only of this city, he added, but almost of the world is fixed upon us. Men desire to hear something about the Church;<sup>2</sup> and we waste our time in legal formulas and despicable quibbles. How much is done in order that nothing should be done!<sup>3</sup>

This vigorous appeal was not without effect. They began to consider the subject of *the Church*. The Donatists claimed for themselves the exclusive right to the title of Catholic. Marcellinus here interposed that, without prejudice to any rights, he was personally obliged to call them Catholic whom the Emperor called by this name.

The Donatists further complained that their opponents put the subject in a misleading light, by advocating the claims of the Universal Church; whereas the question was a local one, between two religious communities in Africa. The justice of the rival claims of these two communities ought not to be prejudiced or decided by reference to the world-wide Church; but, conversely, the rival claim should be first decided, and then it would be known to which of the two communions the title Catholic rightfully belonged.<sup>4</sup> The Catholics retorted that they were already in communion with the world-wide Church; their right therefore to the title Catholic was already determined.

<sup>1</sup> "Gesta," p. 1566.

<sup>2</sup> Bened., "Life," p. 648.

<sup>3</sup> "Gesta," pp. 1368-9.

<sup>4</sup> "Brevic. Collat.," p. 846.

They were already Catholic in fact and therefore in name.<sup>1</sup> To this the Donatist Gaudentius replied that the term Catholic has reference not to local extension but to sacramental integrity.

Then followed a long desultory dispute, vacillating between the personal (case of Cæcilian),<sup>2</sup> and the doctrinal (theory of the Church). Augustine urged that these two subjects required separate methods of defence. If the Donatist accused Churchmen as traditors or betrayers, there was nothing for it but an appeal to secular documents and public archives. If the Donatist, abandoning that charge, would confine himself to a discussion of the doctrine of the Church, then nothing more need be said about secular documents; the appeal in this case would be to the Sacred Scriptures. It was for the opponents to determine which of these two lines should be pursued. But if they adhered to accusations on personal matters, they had no right to object to the production of secular documents.<sup>3</sup> Augustine insisted repeatedly on this alternative, while the Donatists protested that, since they had not originated the conference, but came because summoned to attend, they could not be expected to act as plaintiffs. It was not therefore for them to take the initiative.<sup>4</sup> Augustine then pressed Emeritus and Petilian; did they, or did they not, persist in the charge against Cæcilian? Emeritus declined a definite reply.<sup>5</sup> Petilian demanded whether Augustine was a son of Cæcilian or not? Augustine replied, "Call no man your father upon earth". If Cæcilian was innocent, that was a cause for gladness; but Augustine's hope does not depend on Cæcilian's innocence. If he was guilty, the Church to which Augustine belongs endured him, as the tares are suffered to grow among the wheat. Emeritus thought he saw here an opportunity.<sup>6</sup> With more subtlety than grace he replied, "If Augustine's hope does not, as he says, depend on Cæcilian's integrity, why discuss Cæcilian at all? Nothing could well be

<sup>1</sup> "Gesta," p. 1381.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1390.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. p. 1395.

<sup>4</sup> "Gesta," p. 1398.

<sup>5</sup> P. 1402.

<sup>6</sup> P. 1402.

more unscrupulous or insincere from men whose century-long protest had been against Cæcilian's character."

Augustine answered with great forbearance, The case of Cæcilian and his colleagues is precisely what is charged against the Catholic Church—the Church of which we are all members.<sup>1</sup> If this is not their objection to the Church, let them state what their objection is. If they have none, why are we divided? If they have any other accusation to make beyond that of Cæcilian, let them make it, let them produce it.

Marcellinus here interposed, and ruled that Augustine had satisfactorily replied. Petilian angrily retorted, "By God! how well you defend them!"

At this point an attempt was made to diminish Augustine's power in the conference by attacking his character. Petilian asked what was the name of Augustine's consecrator. The reference to the unfortunate reluctance of Megalius to raise him to the episcopate must have been plainly understood by every one present.<sup>2</sup> Possidius at once interposed. They were met to consider the cause of the Church, not the character of Augustine.<sup>3</sup> But Augustine thought it well to reply that the name of his consecrator was Megalius; had they anything to say against it? Upon this the Donatists dropped the subject. Then the discussion turned on the mingling of evil and good within the Church. The Donatists contended that the Church according to Bible predictions was not to include the evil with the good.<sup>4</sup> They challenged the Catholics to refute what seemed to them an unassailable position. By general consent the duty of reply was left to Augustine.<sup>5</sup> Augustine therefore expounded the Church's doctrine, but amid frequent interruptions. The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares predicted the coexistence within the Church of the evil with the good.<sup>6</sup> The Donatists disputed the application. Did not the parable say "the field is the world"? All that the parable therefore predicts is the

<sup>1</sup> "Gesta," p. 1403.

<sup>3</sup> Bened., "Life," p. 653.

<sup>5</sup> "Gesta," 1412, p. 856.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1405.

<sup>4</sup> "Brevic. Collat.," p. 852.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1415.

coexistence of evil and good in the world, not in the Church. Augustine supported his interpretation, and declared that "the world" here means "the Church". When our Lord said the field is the world it is just as if He said the field is the Church. Emeritus exclaimed, "The world hath not known Thee!" If the world is the Church then the Church has not known God.<sup>1</sup> Augustine had no difficulty in replying that in Scripture "the world" is a phrase employed sometimes to denote good. If it was written "the world hath not known Thee," it was also written "that the world through Him might be saved," and that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself".<sup>2</sup> The Donatist bishops loudly interrupted. Marcellinus ordered that the disturbance should be recorded in the Acts.<sup>3</sup> Petilian's reply was pertinent.<sup>4</sup> The Master said the field is the world. He could have said, if He would, the field is the Church. But Augustine showed that his interpretation had the general concurrence of Holy Scripture. Scripture assumes the intermingling of evil with good in the Church. This does not mean that ecclesiastical discipline should therefore be relaxed, or that any effort should be spared to elevate the condition of the Church's life; but it does mean the impossibility of anything like a perfect cleansing. Often evil must be tolerated for fear of greater evil; often evil is latent and unknown. But in no case can evil be removed by perpetrating evil. And schism itself is sin. The Church is to exist in two successive stages.<sup>5</sup> Just as the individual man is mortal now, but will be immortal hereafter, yet is the same man in successive states; just as this was true of Christ Himself in His life before His Resurrection and after it, so is it true of Christ's Body the Church: it exists here in two successive states; here imperfect, hereafter stainless. It is not of the Church here, but of the Church hereafter, that it is written, "the unclean shall not pass over it".

<sup>1</sup> P. 1416.    <sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v.    <sup>3</sup> "Gesta," p. 1416.    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1417.

<sup>5</sup> Termination of the "Gesta". The rest is summarized in "Breviculus," p. 857 ff.

To this teaching the Donatists were unable to assent. They imagined that Augustine taught the existence of two distinct Churches ; the one impure on earth, the other pure in Heaven. Augustine replied that the Donatists themselves had admitted the existence of hidden evil within the true Church. To put the matter in the plainest way ; the Church, imperfect though it is here on earth, is not other than the Kingdom of God in which hereafter the evil will not be intermingled. It is one and the same Church in different stages of its progressive development. Just as there are not two Christs but One, although once He was mortal and is immortal now, existing in the successive stages of mortality and immortality ; so there are not two Churches but one, progressing from an inferior to a higher condition.

The discussion on the nature of the Church here terminated. Marcellinus was urged by both parties to give decision on the first great question before the conference proceeded to discuss the second. This he declined to do, on the ground that it was not customary to pronounce judgment until the entire case was concluded.

The conference accordingly now engaged in the *second* and *final inquiry*, the case of Cæcilian.<sup>1</sup> Documentary evidence was, after many delays and evasions, at last produced. The Donatists attempted to prove their old charge against Mensurius, Bishop of Carthage, Cæcilian's predecessor. They produced a letter of Mensurius to Secundus, the Primate of Numidia, relating how he substituted heretical documents for the Scriptures, and left the police to gather them. But this evidence was quite inadequate to prove their point. It showed that Mensurius had yielded up heretical writings : it did not prove that he had parted with the Scriptures. The inference was exactly the other way.

The Donatists then produced the Acts of the Numidian Synod under the primate Secundus, in which the absent Cæcilian was condemned. The Catholics replied by producing

<sup>1</sup> "Brevic. Coll.," pp. 861, 865.

the Acts of the Synod of Cirta,<sup>1</sup> in which the Numidian bishops confessed that they had surrendered the Holy Scriptures and agreed to leave past errors to the judgment of God. The Donatists attempted, it would appear without justification, to challenge the authenticity of this and other documents. The Catholics observed that the Synod which condemned Cæcilian was no more final and conclusive than the Synod which condemned Primian. This was an extremely telling parallel. If Cæcilian had been condemned, so was Primian. If 70 bishops had pronounced sentence on the former, 100 had condemned the latter. If, in spite of this condemnation, Primian was reinstated, and was leading the opposition in the conference that very day, it was simply impossible to claim that in Cæcilian's case there could be no appeal. Nay, further; the Donatists themselves had carried an appeal to the Emperor Constantine. This line of defence produced in the ranks of the opposition great dismay. They took refuge in the maxim that one case must not prejudice another case, nor one person another person; the very principle for which the Catholic party had contended for a century!

The Donatists then contested the regularity of Cæcilian's consecration. It ought to have been conferred by the Primate of Numidia. The Catholics answered that the Bishop of Carthage was usually consecrated, not by the Numidian primate, but by the neighbouring bishops; just as the Bishop of Rome was not consecrated by some metropolitan, but by the neighbouring Bishop of Ostia. The custom to which the Donatists appealed was unknown.<sup>2</sup> If it had been the ancient practice, it would have been charged against Cæcilian, in the Synod by which he was condemned.

Ultimately the Catholics secured a reading for the acts of the Council of the Lateran, where the Roman Bishop Melchiades presided. Here Cæcilian was undeniably acquitted. The Donatists had no defence. They attempted to accuse Pope Melchiades of having been a traditor. They demanded the

<sup>1</sup> P. 866.

<sup>2</sup> "Breviculus Collat.," 868.

reading of a passage from St. Optatus, where it was recorded that Constantine in the interests of peace ordered Cæcilian to be detained at Brixia. Marcellinus had this read aloud to the conference ; but required that the whole contest also should be recited. Then came the passage, "Cæcilian was pronounced innocent on all the above-mentioned charges". The Catholic party broke into laughter, which certainly must have broadened when the Donatists muttered, "we did not ask to have that passage read". They accused the historian Optatus with attempting to whitewash Cæcilian's character. But these vague unproved assertions were valueless. The acquittal of Cæcilian was proved from a passage in the Donatists' letter to Constantine, where they repudiated all connexion with his scoundrel of a bishop: plainly showing that Constantine had taken Cæcilian's part. Thus, from their own documents, the Donatists were refuted.

Here at length the discussion concluded. It had occupied the entire day, from morning until night. Marcellinus now requested the disputants to withdraw, in order that his decision might be prepared. And when the disputants were again admitted it was to hear the expected decision,<sup>1</sup> that judgment was given on the Catholic side.

So ended the conference of 411. The principal actors in it have revealed themselves in sharply defined unmistakable characters.<sup>2</sup> Emeritus is provoking and small minded ; author of insignificant contentions, out of all reason and proportion. Petilian is much more of an advocate than of a theologian. He leads the opposition with barrister-like sharpness ; alert and plausible, making out a case ; clever at parrying disagreeable truths, avoiding close quarters, concealing prejudicial circumstances. He is pertinacious and dogged, holding steadily to his policy of delay, inventing objections more creditable to ingenuity than earnestness, doing his utmost to hinder serious discussion and practical result, introducing into the conference of religion the worst features of a secular court.

<sup>1</sup> Bened., "Life," p. 663.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Rauscher, p. 609.



Far away above them all towers Augustine in his moral earnestness and spiritual depth. It is true, indeed, that his marvellous dialectic power does not display itself in any marked degree in his speeches on this occasion. He adds almost nothing to arguments already contained in his writings, and for the most part more effectively expressed. This comparative ineffectiveness may be partly explained by the harassing interruptions to which he was subjected, and to the disorder which even the authority of a president was barely able to restrain.<sup>1</sup> But, for all that, he is the heart and soul of the assembly ; lifting the whole discussion above the sordid and personal, and depicting great ecclesiastical and religious principles valid for all time.

It should be noticed that the nature of the conference kept Augustine clear from his peculiar and extreme theories, so that he appears at his best in the larger realm of generally accepted teachings.

A tribute of admiration is due to Marcellinus the president. His sympathies were admittedly on the Catholic side, yet his action is characterized by invariable fairness. He blends the dignity of his office with unfailing courtesy towards the ecclesiastical disputants. And there is little doubt that the firmness and skill and patience with which he controlled and directed the intricate and difficult course of somewhat passionate disputings, contributed immensely to bring the conference to so clear and obvious a conclusion.

As to the spiritual use of such an assembly, it was doomed to failure by its very conditions. Conferences may conduce very greatly to mutual understanding and unity : but they must be the voluntary outcome of mutual sympathy and common yearning after peace. The element of voluntariness is essential as a condition to their success. Opposition dragooned into a council chamber under penalties, and coerced into discussion with the other side, is a caricature of conference, and as Harnack says, a tragi-comedy. Such was the assembly of 411.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rauscher, p. 608.

Augustine defends this procedure of 411 on the ground of *its necessity*. He frankly admits that the Catholics coerced the Donatists into conference by enlisting the imperial authority. And this he justifies. For all Africa was overrun by Donatist factions; the preaching of the faith was rendered impossible, through the incessant riots, aggressiveness, murders, outbursts of fierce and reckless cruelty, on the part of this sectarian community. The struggle had been protracted for more than a hundred years, and there seemed no human probability of its termination. Meanwhile the mass of the people had lost sight of the original causes of dispute. The Catholics were therefore compelled by necessity, and driven to encourage repression.<sup>1</sup>

Augustine says indeed that, as a matter of personal knowledge, many Donatists, perhaps all, at any rate nearly all, habitually expressed a desire that a convention should be held, and the real truth demonstrated. But the fact remains that they took no step whatever during the entire century to meet in discussion; nay more, they steadily resisted all overtures in that direction, and ultimately met under imperial coercion, rather than voluntary choice. Their attitude all along had been self-righteous exclusiveness, and contemptuous aloofness from the other Communion.

<sup>1</sup> St. Aug., "C. Julian.," III., "Post Coll. ad Donat."

## CHAPTER XI.

### AFTER THE CONFERENCE.

THE conclusion of the conference was a tremendous blow to the African division ; but it was far from completing reunion.<sup>1</sup> The judgment of Marcellinus was the subject of universal interest through Africa ; but it could not restore to the Church the losses of a century. Very much remained to be done. Augustine was indefatigable. He published at once a short history of the conference,<sup>2</sup> written with studied moderation and restraint, placing the subject as far as possible within popular reach. He had the narrative recited during Lent in the churches of his diocese, as was also done in the dioceses of Carthage, Tagaste, and Cirta. He took every opportunity of preaching on reunion, enlisting the sympathy of Catholics with the hesitating members of the separated body.

Not content with writing a short history of the conference, Augustine published also an *appeal to the Donatist laity*, urging them to be no longer misled by their bishops.<sup>3</sup> Into this appeal he put all his strength. It has all the rush and energy of his masterly eloquence. It rings the changes from sarcasm to impassioned earnestness, and from impassioned earnestness to logical acuteness. It marshals with great effectiveness, in his incisive, antithetical, vibrating style, the arguments from Scripture, and history, and reason.

He began with a reference to Primian's contemptuous maxim that it is unbecoming for the sons of the martyrs to have

<sup>1</sup> Bened., "Life," p. 667.

<sup>2</sup> The "Brevic. Coll."

<sup>3</sup> "Ad Donatistas post Collationem," "Works," ix. 885-934.

fellowship with the sons of the betrayers.<sup>1</sup> Why, then, he inquires, did the Donatists themselves do this unbecoming thing? Why did they come to Carthage at all? They were not drawn by force: they came by choice. Will they say that they came because the Emperor ordered it? Do they then perpetuate what is unbecoming merely because it is an Emperor's will? They must either withdraw their maxim, or admit their conduct to be unbecoming.

Another maxim to which the Donatists were at the conference driven in self-defence, is tellingly employed to prove that the schismatics were far more prompted by prejudice than guided by reason. It will be remembered that, when charged with restoring Primian to his position as their Bishop at Carthage, in direct contravention to the fundamental principle of the schism, they had blindly taken refuge in the maxim that cases and individuals must be judged on their independent merits.<sup>2</sup> The maxim is one for which Donatist principles obviously left no room. And the fact that they had suicidally maintained it in the conference was probably now notorious through Africa. Augustine pressed it home with merciless reiteration. He reminded them that, if the maxim was applicable in behalf of Primian, it was no less so in Cæcilian's case.<sup>3</sup> If Primian's readmission did not contaminate the party of Donatus, still less could Cæcilian's readmission contaminate the Universal Church.

The tranquillity and peace of the Church does not always permit the exclusion of alien elements from the fold. But endurance is not neglect. We tolerate what we would not, in order that we may achieve what we would; mindful of the Master's caution, lest while before the time we uproot the tares, we uproot also the wheat with them. The rightfulness of these principles of forbearance Augustine illustrates from St. Paul's description of the Corinthian Church. When the Apostle characterized the Corinthians as being "in everything enriched by Him in all utterance, and in all knowledge, so that

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 412.<sup>2</sup> P. 887, etc.<sup>3</sup> P. 888.

they come behind in no gift"<sup>1</sup>—who would imagine, asks Augustine, the existence of grievous disorders there? And yet the disorders were very great. There were unworthy men. There were some who did not believe that distinctively Christian doctrine—the resurrection of the body. Here, then, we find a community so enriched by Christ in all utterance and in all knowledge, so coming behind in no gift that it actually contained persons who did not believe the resurrection of the dead. Now plainly they who were enriched in all knowledge were not the men who denied the resurrection of the dead. And yet the believing were to this extent yoked with unbelievers, that both dwelt within the limits of the same religious community. They were under the same priests. They were sharers in the same Sacraments. Obviously, therefore, what the Apostle enjoins is not physical separation of believers from the communion which included the unbelieving, but intellectual severance in will and assent.

Finally, Augustine dealt with the accusation, industriously disseminated through Africa, that the decision of Marcellinus was perverted by Catholic gold. With what sum, he asks, did the Catholic party induce Primian to stultify his position by attending the conference, after declaring that the sons of the martyrs might not have fellowship with the sons of the betrayers? How much did they pay to persuade the Donatists to put themselves to confusion about the lists of their bishops? If they were not refuted in conference, why do they not communicate with the Churches of the world, whose catholicity it is irrational to deny? Let the party of Donatus, so often condemned, and yet so calumnious; so false, yet so often refuted; so often in every way conquered and put to shame; let it continue to boast that the President was corrupted by Catholic gold—when the very document they produced in the conference strengthened that cause and destroyed their own.

That such a conference should be held had long been the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 5, 7.

desire of many on the Donatist side. Their desire is at length fulfilled. It has been done. Falsehood is convicted: truth is brought to light. Why, then, is union any longer delayed? Why should we be any longer divided for the sake of individual men? He Who created us is one God. He Who has redeemed us is one Christ. He Who would associate us together is one Spirit. Let Christ see His people reunited.

Augustine's appeal to the Donatist laity was argumentatively forcible, but the leaders of the party were certainly not in a mood to listen. The whole question had been now transferred from the province of rational conviction to that of political coercion. The Donatists had been dragged by an edict which they dared not defy to a fate which they could not avoid. They entered Carthage with ostentation and parade: but they returned to their cities baffled, wrathful, complaining; scattering insinuations everywhere against the character of the presiding judge, and against the fairness of his decision. They went so far as to appeal to the Emperor against him. But this was, as might have been expected, fatal. Honorius replied with an edict of great severity.<sup>1</sup> He revoked all previous concessions; condemned all malcontents, whether bishops, clergy, laymen or Circumcellions, to the payment of heavy fines; and subsequently, if that failed in its effect, to complete spoliation of their goods.<sup>2</sup> He forbade all men to shelter or protect them, under similar penalties. He ordered that slaves should be beaten into conformity with the Church; and that all ecclesiastical buildings should become the property of Catholics.

This edict was more effective than Augustine's arguments. On the one hand, it resulted in the return of whole communities to the Church: partly, it may be, enabling a mass of men to do what nothing but fear of Circumcellion violence had restrained them from doing hitherto; but partly also, it can scarcely be doubted, encouraging conversion from other motives than personal conviction.

On the other hand, in the more resolute and masterful

<sup>1</sup> Possidius, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Bened., "Life," p. 686.

spirits of the Donatist body, it increased the fierce determination to resist. A desperate outburst of Circumcellion vindictiveness was the not unnatural result of this imperial attempt to produce reunion by force. Atrocious acts were perpetrated. Churches were handed over to the Catholics, but then destroyed by fire. Priests were attacked, and brutally maimed and tortured.

The Diocese of Hippo in particular is recorded as the scene of their cruelties. They cut the throat of one of Augustine's clergy, Restitutus; they tore out the eye of another, Innocentius.<sup>1</sup> The Donatist offenders came before the tribunal of Marcellinus. Doubtless these things advanced the cause of the Catholics. Augustine wrote, strongly deprecating the inflicting of the full legal penalties. The lives of the offenders must be spared.<sup>2</sup>

The course of events drew Marcellinus and Augustine into closer intimacy. Ever since the conference<sup>3</sup> the Tribune and the Bishop were in frequent correspondence. Marcellinus exhibited the keenest interest in religious affairs. He brought his vacillating friend, Volusian, under the great teacher's influence. He induced Augustine to write some of his most important letters. He urged upon the Bishop the necessity of meeting the panic and despair caused by the fall of Rome; the duty of reassuring men, by some convincing response to their doubt and hesitation. Thus he encouraged the writing of the masterpiece, "The City of God"; and the dedication of that work to Marcellinus is the recognition and reward of his encouragement. The Tribune was no less keenly alive to the importance of the Pelagian controversy, as the famous work on the "Letter and the Spirit," inscribed to him, attests. All these things show how much the mental sympathies of the two men harmonized. They also show how great the influence of Marcellinus had become in ecclesiastical affairs. There is no wonder that leading Churchmen highly valued him. They were certainly greatly indebted to him. The firmness, skill,

<sup>1</sup> "Ep.," 134.      <sup>2</sup> Bened., "Life," p. 691; "Ep.," 133, 139.

<sup>3</sup> A.D. 412.

and patience, with which he presided over the conference, and brought it to its conclusion, naturally drew to him the admiration and gratitude of the Catholic party. But it drew upon him also, and no less naturally, the bitter hatred of many powerful opponents. The Donatists never forgave him. He was marked for exemplary vengeance, should the opportunity occur. Within three years of the conference that opportunity came: and the life of the Tribune closed in a tragedy. In the year 413 one of the successful generals of the Empire, the Count Heraclian, was rewarded with the dignity of Consul. Heraclian, however, aspired to sole dominion. He gathered a fleet, revolted against Honorius, sailed down on Italy, and threatened Rome. But Heraclian had miscalculated his strength. Count Marinus met and defeated him. He fled alone to Carthage, and there was slain. Honorius ordered the execution of all the ringleaders in the revolt, and Count Marinus established himself in Carthage, to carry the order into effect. Now it seems that Cæcilian, a person eminent in African civil life, was an intimate friend of Count Marinus and a bitter opponent of Marcellinus. And when a consultation between Cæcilian and Marinus was immediately followed by Marcellinus' arrest, public opinion saw in these two facts a close connexion, and ascribed the arrest to Cæcilian's influence.

The charge against the Tribune was that he had been implicated in the late revolt. The charge was absolutely without foundation.<sup>1</sup>

But in a time of ferment and reaction it was an excessively dangerous charge, easily credited where suspicion was already awakened, or where personal vindictiveness watched its pitiless opportunity. The defence of Marcellinus was instantly undertaken. Augustine himself was in Carthage at the time. He solemnly asserted before Count Marinus the Tribune's innocence. He demanded an appeal to the Emperor Honorius himself. To this the Count consented. A bishop and a

<sup>1</sup> So all the authorities.



deacon were accordingly sent to the Court at Ravenna. Meantime Marinus promised delay. The most strenuous representations were also made to Cæcilian. Cæcilian protested that he was acting in Marcellinus' behalf, and had petitioned for his release. So solemn were his utterances that the Bishop, and the Church in general, felt reassured. Imagine the dismay, on the Festival of St. Cyprian, when a messenger burst into Augustine's room with the news that Marcellinus had been executed that very morning. It is scarcely to be doubted that the influence of Cæcilian was partly instrumental in this judicial crisis. But contemporary Churchmen were also convinced that the bitter hatred of the schismatics, and the corrupting influence of their gold, had turned the scale and hastened the actions of the unscrupulous Marinus. "He was either urged by hatred or seduced by gold," says Orosius.<sup>1</sup> "Marcellinus, though innocent, was put to death by heretics," is the verdict of St. Jerome.<sup>2</sup> And that these are not the mere promptings of ecclesiastical partiality is clear: for when the news of the execution reached Ravenna, Count Marinus was instantly recalled, deprived of office, and reduced to private life; and so, dismissed to obscurity, and to the reflections of his own conscience. Meanwhile an imperial edict reasserted the fame of Marcellinus, "of honourable memory," and re-established all his decrees in the matter of the schism. Augustine's grief was indescribable. He left Carthage abruptly without a word either to Marinus or Cæcilian. A long silence followed, broken at last by Cæcilian. Augustine replied with a letter which, if Cæcilian was indeed guilty, was simply scathing.

Marcellinus received much recognition and praise among his contemporaries. He was a prudent and laborious man, keenly interested in all good studies, says Orosius, the historian. He was of honourable memory, says the imperial decree. But no words of appreciation are so fervent as the panegyric which

<sup>1</sup> Orosius, VII. 42.

<sup>2</sup> "Jerome against Pelagians," III. 19.

the Bishop of Hippo pronounced upon him: "In his conduct what innocence, in his friendship what constancy, in his study of Christian truth what zeal, in his religion what sincerity, in his domestic life what purity, in his official duties what integrity".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Aug., "Ep.," 151.

## CHAPTER XII.

### ST. AUGUSTINE AND EMERITUS.

AUGUSTINE at this period of his life was not allowed much rest from controversial distractions.<sup>1</sup>

He was busily engaged at Carthage, probably in Donatist affairs. From these he turned aside to dictate his two treatises, "On the Grace of Christ," and "On Original Sin". And as soon as these were finished, he started off to the Mauritanian city of Cæsarea, there to confer with the Donatist laity. Cæsarea, the modern Algiers, is distant from Carthage some 400 miles. The schismatic community there had been very strong. Their bishop, Emeritus, was one of the seven selected disputants against the Catholics in the Great Conference of 411. From that hopeless defeat Emeritus returned to Cæsarea, filled with despair, but clinging with heroic tenacity to a failing cause. But no determination, and no activity, could hold the party together, against the united pressure of the Church and the imperial power. And Emeritus gazed with anger and grief on the disintegration of his assembly, as little by little the flock at Cæsarea melted away.

The rapid and almost universal transference of their allegiance from the schism to the Church was undoubtedly, as Augustine himself admits, prompted by motives considerably mixed.<sup>2</sup> A large element of worldly prudence, not to say downright insincerity, was naturally produced by the sort of pressure and persecution to which the unhappy schismatics were now being subjected. But Emeritus remained in his isolation firm, im-

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 418.

<sup>2</sup> "De Gestis," § 2.

movable. He disappeared from the city, and sought concealment. Meanwhile a group of Catholic bishops entered.<sup>1</sup> Deuterius, the Catholic Bishop of Cæsarea, who is also called Metropolitan, was now supported by Alypius of Tagaste, Augustine of Hippo, Possidius of Calama, and others. When the news of these arrivals reached Emeritus he promptly reappeared. Augustine met Emeritus in the streets, and suggested an adjournment to a place more suitable for discussion. Emeritus consented. They both entered the church. Already rumour reported Emeritus' conversion.<sup>2</sup> Crowds assembled. The church was full. Augustine preached. The sermon is still preserved. The preacher spoke about Emeritus with uncommon frankness, not being under the restraint of modern conventionalities. What did Emeritus want? asked the preacher. Would he continue separated from the Catholic Church? still adhering to the party of Donatus, still remaining in schism, resembling those who said, "I am of Paul, I of Apollos, I of Cephas". But this is not God's will. This is what the Apostle rebuked, when he asked, "Is Christ divided?" The people should pray for his conversion. To this appeal the congregation answered, "Now or never!" Augustine took up their answer. You have uttered your minds; now help us with your prayers. The Lord, Who commanded unity, is able to convert the will. The return of Emeritus was what they all desired. No one desired it more than Bishop Deuterius himself. No sort of rivalry whatever existed. They were content to be less in dignity and greater in love.

That converted Donatist clergy should retain their office was repugnant to some within the Church. Catholics were heard to say, if these men are schismatics and heretics, why receive them just as they are? Augustine replied, There is evil in them, and there is good. We cannot ignore the good because of the evil. Schism, dissent, heresy, these

<sup>1</sup> "De Gestis cum Emerito," § 1.

<sup>2</sup> "Works," x. 942-50.

are evil. Nevertheless, these men also possess some of the good of the Church. They have baptism. It is not theirs, but Christ's. They have ordination.<sup>1</sup> The invocation of the Divine Name upon them, at their consecration as bishops, is the Invocation of God, not of Donatus. Their baptism has marked them with the sign of our King. They are His soldiers, although they have deserted. Their desertion must be condemned, but the sign of the King must be acknowledged. On their return to unity they will have the good without the evil. Meanwhile what good they have is God's. It is God's Baptism which they have received. It is God's Gospel which they hold.

But you will say, continued Augustine, if they have all these, what do they not possess? His answer is characteristic. What do they not possess? He answers: "If I have all faith, and have not charity, I am nothing". They are wanting in love. What is the proof? Simply the fact of schism. Love unites, separation manifests defect of love.

Accordingly he sums his conclusion in the rigorous sentences. Outside the Catholic Church a man may have everything except salvation. He may have dignity, he may have the Sacrament, he may sing Alleluia, he may answer Amen, he may hold the Gospel, he may have faith in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and he may proclaim it: but nowhere except in the Catholic Church can he obtain salvation.

This sermon to the people of Cæsarea led to still further labours. An assembly, apparently on a larger scale, including all the clergy of Cæsarea, was held within two days in the great church. Deuterius the Metropolitan presided. Again Emeritus was present, notwithstanding the sermon at the previous service; and secretaries attended to record the proceedings.<sup>2</sup>

Augustine described his meeting with Emeritus in the street, and repeated the main thoughts of his sermon. He also told the people that, notwithstanding their almost unanimous return

<sup>1</sup> P. 943, § 2.

<sup>2</sup> "De Gestis."

to the Catholic Church, yet many of them still doubted the Catholic claim; and some not only doubted, but were in heart on the Donatist side. Therefore he considered it most desirable that an opportunity should be given to their Bishop of making what defence he could of the Donatist principles. Augustine added that he knew very well what sort of incriminating remarks against the President at the conference had been busily disseminated among them; to the effect that Marcellinus was in the pay of the Catholics, and that the Donatists had been suppressed by force rather than overcome by truth. Let, then, Emeritus avail himself of this occasion to demonstrate that these accusations were just. Then, turning to Emeritus, Augustine invited him to speak. "Brother Emeritus, you are with us now. You were present at the conference. If you were vanquished, why have you come? If you think that you were not vanquished, explain why you think yourself victorious. If you think that force was against you, but truth upon your side, there is no force here by which you could seem to be overcome. Let your citizens hear why you regard yourself as victorious. But if you know that truth was the victor against you, then why stand aloof from unity?" But Emeritus was not to be drawn into controversy. "The acts of the conference show," said he, "whether I was coerced by force, or overcome by truth." "Then," asked Augustine, "why have you come?" Emeritus answered: "To say what you desire." "I desire," replied Augustine, "to know why you have come." Emeritus would give no further response. He only turned to the secretaries, and told them to go on with their writing. The attempt to challenge Emeritus failed. Since Emeritus declined to criticize the conference at Carthage, Augustine undertook to give his own version of the incidents. Alypius read the letter, sent by the Catholic bishops to Marcellinus before the conference; containing their promise to recognize the episcopal rank of their opponents, and to divide their dioceses with them, or to resign in their favour, if only they would return to unity. At this point Augustine interrupted the reader. He told the

people that the admirable spirit manifested by the Catholic episcopate in this letter had been one of the brightest experiences of his career.<sup>1</sup> When the question of resignation for the sake of unity had been submitted to the episcopal body before the conference, he was sceptical whether many could be found willing to sacrifice themselves to this extent. Rapidly forming a mental estimate of the probabilities, as he looked at the bishops, he said to himself: this man could, that man could not; this man will consent, that will not tolerate it. But his estimate was mistaken. Out of nearly 300 bishops, all except two—an aged man who frankly spoke his objection, and another whose manner betrayed what he would not express—consented to the proposal to sacrifice themselves, rather than hinder unity. And even these two ultimately gave way.

The reader then recited from the letter the passage in which the bishops gave their reasons for this self-denying proposal: <sup>2</sup>

“Can we hesitate to make this sacrifice to our Redeemer? If He descended from Heaven’s Throne to unite Himself to us, shall we fear to descend from our thrones to secure unity among His members? We are bishops for the people’s sake, not our own, and must so use our office as to advance the Christian people in Christian peace.” <sup>3</sup>

Here Augustine again interposed:—

“In reference to ourselves, the same duties rest upon us as upon you. For what is the duty of each one of yourselves to whom I am speaking? It is to be a Christian, a believer, obedient. This is your duty in reference to yourselves, this is my duty in reference to myself. And what we ought to be in reference to ourselves, it is our duty always to be. But what I am in reference to you, that may I continue to be, if it is to your advantage, but not if it be to your hindrance. This is what the bishops meant. My brothers,” continued Augustine, after a pause, “to a man whose eyes are fixed upon our Lord, this position of bishop is higher as the watch-house in a vineyard, not as an eminence for pride. If, through my anxiety

<sup>1</sup> § 6, p. 962.

<sup>2</sup> See St. Aug., “Ep.,” 128.

<sup>3</sup> “De Gestis,” p. 963.

to retain position, I scatter the flock of Christ, how can the loss of the flock be the honour of the Shepherd ? ”

After these criticisms on the attitude of the Catholic bishops, Augustine repeated once more the story of the Maximinians and the internal difficulties of the Donatist schism.<sup>1</sup> It is in the annals of this controversy an oft-told tale. But it was never told with more incisiveness than before the people of Cæsarea.

The assembly broke up and Emeritus went his way. So far as record shows he was never reconciled to the Church.

<sup>1</sup> P. 964.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### ST. AUGUSTINE AND GAUDENTIUS.

NINE years had now elapsed since the great conference ended.<sup>1</sup> But the work of compelling the schismatics to enter in was not complete. Dulcitius the tribune was now in the office which Marcellinus had held, acting as State commissioner in schism. Dulcitius was a well-intending man, an old soldier, not versed in religious controversy, but evidently with a keen appreciation for order and authority.<sup>2</sup> He did his best, by threats and promises, to induce the Separatists to surrender. The steady, persistent pressure of the State upon their religious independence stung the diminished community into madness. Gaudentius, one of the seven champions of the schism in the great conference, received letters from Dulcitius exhorting him to abandon his position of isolation and resistance. Gaudentius was furious. He wrote a desperate reply, threatening to assemble with his adherents in their church and burn it, and perish in the flames, rather than yield. Gaudentius was not particularly conspicuous in the conference, but he made a great sensation now. Dulcitius was alarmed. The language of the letter was no empty threat. Gaudentius and his flock were driven by coercion into desperation, and were perfectly capable of doing away with themselves. Dulcitius felt baffled. He therefore placed the correspondence in Augustine's hands. There is much irony in the situation. Churchmen enlist the coercive authority of the State. Then the State, through its officials, menaces and worries, until the afflicted schismatic turns

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 420.

<sup>2</sup> St. Aug., "Ep.," 204.

like a lion at bay. Then the State appeals to the Church to try expostulation, argument, and persuasion.

Such was the occasion of Augustine's last contribution to the controversy. In behalf of Dulcitius he replied to Gaudentius, who answered him. He then wrote his last words on reunion.

The circumstance led Gaudentius to dwell on these particular themes: on suicide, on liberty of conscience, and on the authority of individual teachers in the Church. On each of these Augustine dwelt at length.

Augustine tells Gaudentius<sup>1</sup> that the source from which the impulse to self-destruction comes is indicated in the words in the Gospel, "oft-times it hath cast him into the fire and into the waters, to destroy him".<sup>2</sup> It was the same power which drove the Gadarene swine into the sea, and tempted Christ to cast Himself from the heights of the Temple. Destruction of human life by fire and water and precipice is here ascribed to Satan. Let Gaudentius appreciate the source of his inspiration. Let him see the same thing taught in the trials of Job.<sup>3</sup> Job longed for death, but it came not. It is not unrighteous to long for death when life is bitter, but it is unrighteous not to endure the bitterest life if God give not the desired release.

Gaudentius quoted as an ideal case the example of suicide in the Macchabees.<sup>4</sup> Augustine replies that this like many other things in Scripture is recorded because historic rather than for imitation. The duty of the Christian is in such cases to prove all things and hold fast that which is good. And this leads him to make the famous remark on the value of this Apocryphal book.<sup>5</sup> "The Jews do not esteem the writing called the Macchabees as they do the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms to which the Lord Himself appealed: [St. Luke xxiv. 44] but it is received by the Church not unprofitably if it be cautiously read or heard."

On *liberty of conscience* Gaudentius argued many things. It

<sup>1</sup> "Contra Gaudent.," I. 30.

<sup>2</sup> St. Mark ix. 22.

<sup>3</sup> I. 35.      <sup>4</sup> 2 Macc. xix. 41; I. 37.

<sup>5</sup> "Contra Gaudent.," I. 38.

was written that "God made man from the beginning and left him in the hand of his counsel";<sup>1</sup> endowed him, that is, with freedom of the will. What authority had human power to deprive him of a right divinely given? Let those who attempted to coerce him realize the sacrilegious nature of their procedure. Should human presumption remove what heavenly wisdom bestowed, and then calmly assert that it acted in God's behalf? He who defends the cause of God by violence must surely suppose the Almighty unable to defend Himself. Gaudentius contrasted the conduct of the Catholic party with the language of Christ, on the contrast between the peace of the world and religious peace. The peace of the world is secured among the nations by recourse to violence and war. The peace of Christ invites the willing, but does not coerce the reluctant. It works by methods of tranquillity and gentleness. When the Almighty would teach Israel He sent them instruction by prophets, not orders by kings. And when the Saviour of the world would win mankind to faith, He sent not soldiers but fishermen.

To this protest in behalf of religious liberty Augustine made a double reply. In the first place he observed that, whatever value might belong to it as a theory, it was most incongruous on such lips as those of Gaudentius. For the founders of the schism which he advocated had not in the least respected individual freedom;<sup>2</sup> on the contrary, they appealed to the Emperor Constantine to place restraint upon it. And the predecessors of Gaudentius in his diocese, in particular the notorious persecutor Optatus, had employed coercion with great severity. Moreover, these ideals of gentleness, peace and tranquillity, sounded ironical from that communion which had advanced its claims by Circumcellion brutality, terrorizing the country places, and making the African error a byword and a reproach across the civilized world. It ill became the Donatists, who had taken away the churches from their Maximian opponents, whenever the authorities of State would allow them, to reproach the Catholic party for similar actions.

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus. xv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> I. 21.

The Donatist would do the same things now if he could. He has not lost the will, but only the power to compel.

While Augustine pointed out his opponents' inconsistencies, he was unanswerable. The theory of Gaudentius and the practice of his communion were absolutely irreconcilable. But Augustine went much further than this. He attacked the principle of religious liberty.<sup>1</sup> The gift of freedom did not involve the right of its unlimited exercise. If the opinion advocated by Gaudentius were correct, that the very endowment of free will rendered coercion sacrilegious, then the logical outcome would be that all secular power is wrong. According to Gaudentius' reasonings, the rein must be given to laxity and self-will; and all misdeeds must be allowed to go unpunished. No disorders must be repressed by public laws, no general must compel obedience in the army, no magistrate must inflict penalties. It is impossible to maintain in practice the principle that our free will may never be restrained when we do a wrong against God. The fact that God can defend Himself did not prevent Moses from enacting severe laws in case of infringement of religion. And Gaudentius' plea, that the Almighty advised through prophets rather than commanded through kings, does not alter the fact that the repentance of Nineveh was not only the exhortation of a prophet but also the command of their king. The care of religion is an obligation upon the authorities of the State. The King of Nineveh understood his duty better than Gaudentius would inform him. A Christian monarch is in duty bound to see that men do not with impunity offend in religious affairs. If the Donatists imagine that the reluctant are not to be coerced into truth they do err, says Augustine (with exquisite misapplication), "not knowing the Scriptures nor the Power of God," which converts into willingness what began under compulsion. And he again reproduces his formidable exegesis: "Compel them to come in". The emperor's duty in a Christian State was manifest from the injunction: "Be wise now, O ye kings,

<sup>1</sup> I. 20.

be learned ye that are judges of the earth; serve the Lord with fear": a passage which conveyed to Augustine's mind the duty of kings to exercise compulsion over those who would not serve God willingly.

From this point we know no more about Gaudentius. Like all the seven champions of the schism he passes out of sight.

It is hardly probable that he fulfilled his threat, for that might have made sufficient sensation to deserve a niche in history. It is still less likely that he was reconciled to the Church. But the moment Augustine ceases to write about them that moment they all sink back into obscurity. Not even Primian their chief is ever heard of again.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### ST. AUGUSTINE ON TOLERATION.

AUGUSTINE's opinions on the subject of *Toleration* have had so vast an influence on Christendom that they deserve a separate discussion.

It is well known that this is one of the subjects upon which the great bishop changed his mind. His original opinion was adverse to all use of compulsion in matters of faith. It can scarcely find better expression than in the following passage :—

“God knows that the instinct of my heart is towards conciliation. I would have no man brought into the Catholic Communion against his will. I would have the truth plainly declared to all the erring, that being by God's help clearly exhibited through our ministry, it may so commend itself as to make them embrace and follow it.”<sup>1</sup> This was his first opinion recorded in 396.

1. And this first opinion was the natural lesson from his own intellectual perplexities. The man who spent nine years in wandering through the mazes of error and the whole range of human thought had learnt but little, if it did not make him one of the most tolerant of all mankind. And at the first he was. His famous appeal to the Manicheans shows how his unsophisticated mind would have treated heresy.

“It behoves us, accordingly, to prefer the better part; that we may attain our end in your correction, not by contention and strife and persecutions, but by kindly consolation, by friendly exhortation, by quiet discussion: as it is written, the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle

<sup>1</sup> “Ep.,” 34.  
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towards all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.”<sup>1</sup>

And then he writes the celebrated words :—<sup>2</sup>

“Let those treat you angrily who know not the labour necessary to find truth, and the amount of caution required to avoid error. Let those treat you angrily who know not how hard and rare it is to overcome the fancies of the flesh by the clear intelligence of true piety. Let those treat you angrily who know not the difficulty of cleansing man’s mental vision, that he may behold his Sun. Let those treat you angrily who know not with what sighs and groans the least particle of the knowledge of God is attained. And last of all let those treat you angrily who have never been led astray in the same way that they see you are. For my part I—who after much long-continued bewilderment attained at last to the discovery of the simple truth—who, unhappy that I was, barely succeeded by God’s help in refuting the vain notions of my mind . . . by whom all these fictions which have such a firm hold on you . . . were attentively heard and too easily believed . . . and defended with determination and boldness . . . I can on no account treat you angrily. . . . I must be patient towards you as my associates were with me, when I went madly and blindly astray in your belief.”

2. And not only did Augustine’s antecedents necessitate forbearance towards error, he saw distinctly in his early period the moral perils of the opposite course :—

“Originally my opinion was that no one should be coerced into the unity of Christ, that we must act only by words, fight only by arguments, and prevail by force of reason, lest we should have those whom we knew as avowed heretics feigning themselves to be Catholics.”<sup>3</sup>

## II.

But about the year 400, that is within four years of his noble utterance on toleration, Augustine’s opinion is found to have

<sup>1</sup> “C. Ep. Fundament Manich.,” § 1.      <sup>2</sup> § 2.      <sup>3</sup> Ep.,” 93, § 17.

undergone a serious change. Already, in the reply to Petilian's letters, the Bishop of Hippo has veered round to the opposite side. Petilian had declared that it was a matter of conscience with his party that no man should be coerced into accepting their faith.<sup>1</sup> And Augustine unhappily did not content himself with the unanswerable comment that such ideals could find no place in a cause supported by Circumcellions. He sounded the first notes of that long strain of intolerance of which the world has by no means heard the last even yet. His defence of coercive measures is less austere than it afterwards became : he admitted that "No one indeed is to be compelled to embrace the faith against his will"; but he continued, "it is common, in the providential dealing, for faithlessness [perfidia] to be chastened with the scourge of tribulation".<sup>2</sup> It is very probably correct that Augustine here denies that coercion should be used as an instrument in converting the heathen, and limits its exercise to the apostate, the deserter from the faith. At any rate he certainly advocates its use against the heretic as early as 400.<sup>3</sup>

But he clearly discerns the limits of its utility. Coercion does not compel men to do good, it can only restrain them from doing harm. The moral worth of action must depend on inward consent and love of the good. Augustine sees that this cannot be produced by fear of pain. But coercion at least shuts up the evil within the precincts of the inner man. It prevents external manifestations. And for the moment, under strain of controversy, this fallacy contents him.

It was apparently in this frame of mind that Augustine attended the African Councils, when the subject of Circumcellion violence was debated ; especially in that of 404, where opinion was divided : some advocating an appeal to the State for protection of Catholics, and others an appeal for compulsory union of Donatists with the Church.

But in the following year, 405,<sup>4</sup> Augustine is found congratu-

<sup>1</sup> C. L. Petil., II. 183.

<sup>2</sup> C. L. Petil., II. 184, p. 430.

<sup>3</sup> P. 431.

<sup>4</sup> "Ep.," 86, A.D. 405.



lating a high officer of State on the wonderful success attending his coercive labours for Catholic unity in other parts of Africa; and requesting him to extend similar measures to the Diocese of Hippo and the borders of Numidia. This letter, however, ends with a carefully expressed hope that disunity may be healed by warning, rather than removed by punishment.

In 408<sup>1</sup> we come to his well-known explanation of this change of opinion, in the letter to Vincentius.

Augustine frankly tells Vincentius<sup>2</sup> that his opinion originally was that no one should be coerced into the unity of Christ; that the Catholic cause must prevail by reason, not force; that the use of compulsion involved the terrible risk of converting sincere heretics into hypocritical Catholics. But he adds that his original opinion has now been changed; and that this alteration was due to the influence of his episcopal colleagues. He tells Vincentius, with equally notable frankness, that he was not convinced by their arguments for coercion, but by the conclusive evidence of its *practical utility*. The bishops reminded him of the beneficent results of a judicious use of compulsion. They appealed to the evidence of his own episcopal city. Formerly Hippo was almost entirely on the side of the schism. It was now brought over to Catholic unity. The imperial edicts had produced this wonderful improvement. The steady pressure of secular discipline, the emotion of fear, had induced the masses to view the Church in a far less prejudiced light. Many who desired to be Catholics had been hitherto restrained by fear of Circumcellion violence.<sup>3</sup> They were now led into Catholicity through fear of the State. They now express their gratitude for past severity,<sup>4</sup> and consider it the means of their deliverance. The moral risks of coercion, keenly felt by Augustine himself<sup>5</sup> on a former occasion, disturb his mind no more. He is satisfied with the practical utility of the new method, and with the convert's outward professions. Was it my duty, he asks in

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 408.

<sup>2</sup> "Ep.," 93, § 17.

<sup>3</sup> "Ep.," 93.

<sup>4</sup> § 17.

<sup>5</sup> § 1.

self-defence, to be displeased at these men's salvation? Was he bound to recall his colleagues from methods so eminently satisfactory in their results? <sup>1</sup> If he had continued his opposition, would he not have frustrated the conquests of the Lord? There is something peculiarly melancholy in so confirmed an idealist as Augustine, reducing the whole subject of human independence to the mere utilitarian level. Certainly it might have been expected that he would have suddenly escaped by some magnificent and lofty flight from the influence of his episcopal colleagues. There is also something very naïve in the admission that, although moved by their practical appeals to results, he was not convinced by their arguments.

It appears, however, in the course of Augustine's letters that the results of coercion were by no means always satisfactory or successful. The history of the schism presents a plentiful succession of failures. Gaudentius, exasperated beyond endurance by pertinacious endeavour to convert him, threatened to burn the Church over the heads of himself and his congregation.<sup>2</sup> Donatus, a priest of the same order, threw himself down a well to avoid persecution at the hands of Augustine's companions. However, the bishop was undaunted: he comforted himself with the reflection that correction must not be abandoned merely on the ground that it sometimes fails.

### III.

Having thus established to his satisfaction the claims of coercion on the ground of its practical utility, it was natural and necessary to confirm this view by such *arguments* as his fertile and inventive genius could produce. And here Augustine exhibited all his brilliancy.

His arguments in behalf of intolerance occupy a series of letters, reproduced repeatedly in various forms, but certainly not losing in emphasis as the years moved on from 408 to 417. Sometimes we find him writing against Donatists who objected

<sup>1</sup> § 19.

<sup>2</sup> "Ep.," 173, A.D. 416.

to the process of being compulsorily converted; sometimes to Catholics who had their own grave misgivings on the rectitude of such procedure. The most momentous of these defences of intolerance is the tract on the correction of the Donatists, written to Count Boniface about the year 417. It contains Augustine's most matured opinion on the subject of coercion: and its peculiar importance consists in the fact that it is addressed to a high officer of State.<sup>1</sup>

Augustine's arguments for coercion may be roughly grouped under the following sections:—

1. Illustrations and analogies.

On the assumption that the heretic is in a similar state to a lunatic, or an unruly son, Augustine argues that similar treatment is deserved. No doubt coercive laws are resented.<sup>2</sup> But so is the restraint imposed by the physician upon the lunatic; so is the discipline inflicted by a father on a rebellious child. Yet, notwithstanding the opinion of the recipient, in either instance such inflictions are beneficial.

2. Scriptural examples and authorities.

Augustine has not much difficulty in producing from the Old Testament examples of severity, which, he considers, justify compulsion.<sup>3</sup> Sarah afflicting her servant Hagar appears to him a historic parallel with the severity of the Church in correcting schismatics. He does not omit the more obvious instance of Elijah slaying the false prophets. Elsewhere, however, Augustine recognizes that Old Testament sanctions for coercion would require to be read in the light of the New; since the examples belong to a different period, and a different dispensation.<sup>4</sup>

To discover examples of coercion to Christianity in the New Testament would have seemed a bolder undertaking. Yet Augustine thinks he can produce them.<sup>5</sup> The blinding light at the Conversion of St. Paul is pressed into service by the ardent disciplinarian as an example of Divine coercion, and as justifying

<sup>1</sup> "Retract.," II. 48.

<sup>2</sup> "Ep."

<sup>3</sup> "Ep.," 93.

<sup>4</sup> "Contra Crescon.," IV. 56, p. 780.

<sup>5</sup> "Ep.," 93 and 185.

ing severity toward schismatics. There is also St. Paul delivering the Corinthian offender to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. There is Christ scourging the Jews.

Yet, after producing these examples, Augustine admits that the Donatists are right when they contend that no precedent for such methods as those advocated by the African Church against schism can be found in the Apostolic age. It was unquestionably true that the traditions of the Church were not on the side of intolerance. They were a long record of patient endurance. Augustine undertakes to explain, in the face of this adverse tradition, that coercion is nevertheless the true attitude of the Church towards schism. He admits that there has been a change of attitude ; but the change was due to the Church's altered circumstances, and not to any departure from principle. Moreover, the change was predicted in Holy Scripture. It was self-evident that so long as the imperial power was unconverted, it could not be expected to support the Faith.

But these were the times which the Psalmist described in the terms : " Why do the heathen so furiously rage together, and why do the people imagine a vain thing ? The kings of the earth stand up, and their rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His anointed." <sup>1</sup> That was the first period of the Church's experience. But according to the Psalmist there would follow a second, which he indicates in the injunction : " Be wise now, O ye kings : be learned, ye that are judges of the earth. Serve the Lord in fear, and rejoice unto Him with reverence." <sup>2</sup> Now, asks Augustine triumphantly, how can kings serve the Lord in fear, unless they prohibit and prevent, by religious severity, transgressions against the Christian law ? <sup>3</sup> This serving the Lord in fear meant terrorizing into Catholicity. The proper attitude for a Christian king towards schism was to Augustine exemplified in Hezekiah, when he took down the groves and brake in fragments the idols ; or in Nebuchadnezzar, when he made a decree that men should tremble before the God of Heaven. <sup>4</sup> But in the nature of the case this kind of

<sup>1</sup> Ps. II.<sup>2</sup> Verse 10.<sup>3</sup> " Ep.," 185.<sup>4</sup> § 19.

service to the Almighty could not be realized until the conversion of the emperors to Christianity. This conversion heralded in the second period ; when the kings and judges of the earth, having now become wise, began to exercise coercive measures.

Precisely in the same spirit Augustine gave his famous exposition of the words, "compel them to come in". When the schismatics drew a striking contrast between the Catholic method of correction and the pathetic gentleness of the Master's appeal to the Twelve, "will ye also go away?" Augustine laboured to counteract the impression by a subtle explanation of the Parable of the Great Supper.<sup>1</sup> The servants are sent out first into the streets of the city, with a gentle message to bring in the maimed and the blind ; afterwards into the highways and hedges to compel men to come in. First to bring, secondly to compel.

These very different injunctions correspond to two periods of the Church's growth :<sup>2</sup> the former to the early days when the Church had no strength to do more than invite ; the latter to the days of its vigour and power, when it had strength to compel men to enter the eternal banquet. Christ then, according to Augustine, predicted the period of compulsion. Compel them to come in.<sup>3</sup> So Augustine drew out the terrible justification of intolerance which was to work such fearful consequences on Christian history.

This early essay in the doctrine of development is certainly remarkable.

### 3. Obligations of the State.<sup>4</sup>

To guard the interests of religion is the duty of the secular power. What sane adviser of kings would say to them, it is no business of yours whether the Church of your Lord is supported or opposed within your dominions ? Who can rationally tell them it is no part of their imperial function to concern themselves whether their subjects are devout or profane, but only whether they are moral or the reverse ? Can the imperial

<sup>1</sup> "Ep.," 173 ; W., II. 920 ; S. L. XIV. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. also "Ep.," 185, p. 980.

<sup>3</sup> P. 921.

<sup>4</sup> "Ep.," 185, § 20.

authority reasonably punish immorality and permit sacrilege? Is it less important that the soul shall keep its faith with God than that a woman should be faithful to her husband? Thus the functions of the Church and the State are confused. Augustine sees no other position for the secular power than that of submissive instrumentality to the dictates and directions of the spiritual. The function of the secular rule becomes the suppression of heresy. In these assertions and principles we have the germ of much mediæval confusion of the functions of the spiritual and secular power. We have the beginnings of theories matured in the "De Regimine Principum" ascribed to St. Thomas Aquinas, and boldly repeated in the "De Monarchia" of the poet Dante.

Such are the arguments, or rather the sophisms, says Janet, which Augustine had the misfortune to invent, doubtless without anticipating the lamentable results of his theory.<sup>1</sup> Christian philosophy, in proportion as its dominion over souls extends and its authority increases, seems more and more to depart from that wondrous spirit of gentleness and love which was the glory of its apostles and its martyrs.

We can well understand and sympathize with the moral indignation which prompted such a criticism. There is a wide and lamentable deviation in these Augustinian theories from the spirit of the earlier age.

There is no denying the fact that the plea for liberty of conscience was made on the Donatist and not on the Catholic side. It is true, that the Donatist was utterly inconsistent, in constituting himself the champion of freedom, while he enlisted the Circumcellions. Like many other religious men, the Donatist refused to share with others the liberty which he claimed. Doubtless the *tu quoque* argument, whatever its value, was one which the Donatist could not parry. Still, whatever abatement should be made, the fact remains that the defence of religious liberty came from schismatic

<sup>1</sup> Janet, "Histoire de la Philosophie Morale et Politique," I. 241.

lips, and the attack on liberty from the leading Catholic. And here there seems a justification for the criticism of a modern writer. "Donatism had its own right to be; emphasized elements in the religion Catholicism had no room for or did no justice to."<sup>1</sup>

Only, one extenuating fact must be remembered: namely, the circumstances under which Augustine developed his views and formulated his theory. He wrote and thought under the fierce brutal fanaticism of a sectarian opposition which stifled Christian spirit and desolated the community. No calm dispassionate consideration of the subject was easy or natural. He wrote in the heat of an atmosphere made almost intolerable by fevered passions; in conditions in which justice was rendered difficult although of course not impossible. The line he took is ever to be lamented. But one cannot help suspecting that Augustine, isolated from the pressure of Donatist antagonism, would have formulated very different ideals and expressions from those which have compromised his fame.

#### IV.

But the importance of Augustine as an advocate of coercion in religion consists in the fact that his influence directed the course of Christian thought upon the subject down many centuries. It is a long way from Carthage in the fifth century to Paris in the seventeenth: but the treatment of the Huguenots under the government of Louis XIV was prompted by the very principles which Augustine had announced, and often by the very words in which he gave those principles expression. The great African bishop still lives, and directs the policy of the French court, as effectively as he guided the African State officials in his own day.

It was a Sunday in October, 1685. The court was at Fontainebleau. Bossuet,<sup>2</sup> preaching before that brilliant assembly,

<sup>1</sup> Fairbairn, "Catholicism," p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> Le Dieu "Journal de Bossuet," I. p. 180.

adopted as his text the words in the parable, "compel them to come in".

The notorious exegesis originated by Augustine, advocating coercion, was reproduced with all the force of one of the greatest of modern orators. Bossuet's biographer, also his private secretary, adds that the court was moved to tears by the thought of the merciful methods whereby Providence restores the wandering. The sermon resulted in a huge increase of zeal for the conversion of the Huguenots. The king was delighted with the exposition of the words, "compel them to come in"; and to know that Augustine's interpretation was supported by the action of the entire African Church.<sup>1</sup>

Now the very month in which Bossuet preached before the court of France was the month of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Thus unity by compulsion rather than by argument, and refusal of liberty of conscience in matters of faith, were advanced in the seventeenth century on the authority of Augustine.

The French court was dissolved into tears by Bossuet's eloquent advocacy of intolerance: but, considering the sequel, the tears would seem more appropriate elsewhere; or for another reason. With a singular, almost ludicrous unconsciousness of the irony of the situation, Bossuet's biographer describes the working of the preacher's principles on the unhappy Protestants. An aged gentleman and his wife, both Protestants, and most self-willed, are taken in hand by the local magistrate in Brie, who, as a penalty for their religion, quarters twelve soldiers upon them.<sup>2</sup> This was only necessary for a week. At the end of this time the aged couple capitulated at discretion; convinced by these twelve impressive reasons for Catholicity, they meekly submitted themselves to be instructed by Bossuet, and made their abjuration with the greatest willingness. Certainly the court of France had reason to be dissolved in tears.

It must be borne in mind that the Protestant communities

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "Introd. to *Le Dieu*," p. cxvi.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Dieu* "Journal de Bossuet," I. p. 189.



no more understood the principles of toleration than Bossuet did. Calvin no less than Bossuet adopted the interpretation of the words, "compel them to come in". And when Calvin condemned Servetus to be burnt alive, the decision met a very considerable consensus of Protestant approval. All these things the French episcopate did not fail to recall to the Huguenot memory at the close of the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup>

It is singular to find Bossuet and his contemporaries recalling the circumstances of the Donatist schism as a historic parallel, and fully conscious of the dangers of hypocrisy. There is no doubt, says a French bishop,<sup>2</sup> that the Donatists when driven to reunion inwardly abjured their public profession, and perpetrated many a secret infidelity. Augustine himself did not believe in the sincerity of all these sudden conversions. And certainly his arguments are plausible. But these misgivings were not allowed to weigh in the French episcopate. An eminent officer of State, Lansignon de Basville, rested the whole subject of constraint in religion on Augustine's change of mind. Has not St. Augustine decided this question? He changed his mind. We cannot think he did so without duly considering the matter.<sup>3</sup> He saw clearly the risk of turning sincere heretics into hypocritical Catholics. Yet he considered the advantages outweighed the risks. If this method of coercion was a profanation, would not St. Augustine have felt it? Historic passages such as these may illustrate the great African's almost boundless, and, in this instance, pathetic influence.

But even this is not all. A book was circulated in France in 1686 entitled "Harmony between the Methods of the Church of France for Coercing Protestants, and those of the Church of Africa for Coercing the Donatists into the Catholic Church". Those who possessed any knowledge of antiquity, said the author of this historic parallel, could not be surprised at recent

<sup>1</sup> "Le Dieu," I. p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Montauban, p. 185.

<sup>3</sup> Bossuet's "Works," vol. XXVI, Letter 31.

coercive measures in France among the Protestants.<sup>1</sup> It is only what the Church has done on similar occasions. Accordingly the author prints a translation of Augustine's letter advocating compulsion. So the unhappy Huguenots ought to be tormented into conformity in Paris in 1686 because Augustine coerced the Donatists in 411. It was a happy necessity which forced them into better things. People indeed will say that these forced conversions are insincere : but, adds the author triumphantly, men said just the same in the Donatist days ; and St. Augustine refuted them.<sup>2</sup>

Bossuet added a further argument for coercion which escaped the notice of Augustine. He conceded that coercive methods endangered the sincerity of the victim, but asserted that things righted themselves in the next generation : for the sons of the insincere convert would be sincere believers. Thus coercion is viewed as a temporary expedient, risky in its immediate issue, but justified by its ultimate results.

It must be remembered that the method of coercion still forms part of the Roman Catholic principles. Discretion may temper its use, and modern life may render it practically impolitic ; but the right to employ it is still advocated by leading authorities.

<sup>1</sup> P. vi.

<sup>2</sup> P. xxiv.

# APPENDIX.

## TABLES.

### BISHOPS OF CARTHAGE.

<i>Catholic.</i>	<i>Donatist.</i>
-311 Mensurius.	311-315 Majorinus.
311-347 Cæcilian.	315-355 Donatus.
347- Gratus.	355-391 Parmenian.
356- Restitutus.	391 Primian.
-390 Genethlius.	
Aurelius.	

### CHRONOLOGY OF THE AFRICAN SCHISM.

- 303 Edict of Diocletian.
- 305 Synod of Cirta.
- 311 Death of Mensurius.
- 311 Consecration of Cæcilian.
- 311 The party of Majorinus.
- 312 The Battle of the Milvian Bridge.
- 312 Constantine's Edict of Toleration.
- 313 Complaint of the party of Majorinus.
- 313 Synod of the Lateran. (1)
- 314 Council of Arles. (2)
- 315 Death of Majorinus.
- 315 Donatus the Great. (A)
- 316 Decision of Constantine. (3)
- 321 Constantine's gentler measures.
- 347 Constans.
- 347 Mission of Paulus and Macarius.
- 347 The Circumcellions.
- 350 Parmenian. (B)

- 361 Julian.
- 372 St. Optatus.
- 384 Tichonius.
- 391 Primian. (C)
- 391 Ordination of St. Augustine.
- 393 Psalmus Abecedarius.
- 400 Augustine against Parmenian.
- 400 Augustine against Petilian.
- 400 Augustine on baptism.
- 402 Augustine on the unity of the Church.
- 401 Synod of Carthage : on the dearth of clergy.
- 403 Synod on conferences with the Donatists.
- 403 Increase of Circumcellion violence.
- 404 Synod of Carthage : appeal to the Emperor.
- 404 Edict of Honorius.
- 405 Edict of Honorius.
- 406 Augustine against Cresconius ? 409.
- 410 Augustine on the one baptism.
- 411 The Great Conference.
- 411 Augustine's summary of the report.
- 412 Augustine to the Donatists after the conference.
- 412 Augustine's sermon to the people of Cæsarea.
- 413 Death of Marcellinus.
- 418 Council of Carthage : regulating return of Schismatics.
- 418 Augustine and Emeritus.
- 420 Augustine and Gaudentius.

### LIST OF BOOKS.

- "Acts of the Martyrs Dativus, Saturninus," etc. [Cf. Noris, iv. 19, 20.]
- Albaspinæus. "Observationes in Optatum." [Reprinted in Migne's "Optatus," pp. 1159-80.]
- Allard. "Histoire des Persecutions," 5 vols., 1885.
- Audollent. "Carthage Romaine," 1901.
- Augustine. Gaume's edit., Vol. IX, and documents in Appendix. Petschenig's edit. of the Anti-Donatist Treatises, 1908 ; Lives by Possidius ; the Benedictines ; Poujoulat ; Bindemann ; Rauscher (left incomplete and edited after the Cardinal's death) ; Loof's article in Hauck's "Encyclopedia".

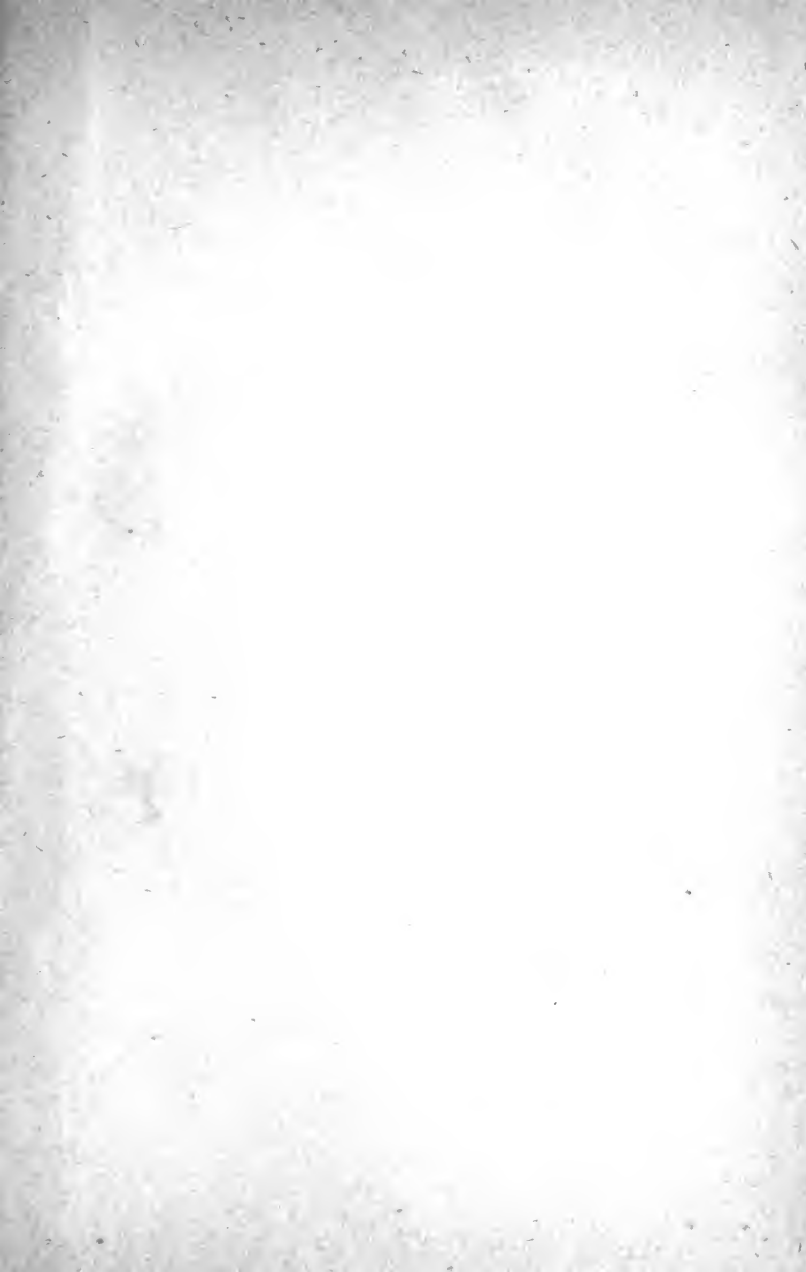
- Baldwin. "Historia Carthaginensis Collationis," 1566. [See Appendix to Migne's "Optatus," pp. 1439-1506.]
- Baronius. "Annals," A.D. 302.
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