

INVENTING CATHOLICITY
Transmarine Churches in the Donatist Controversy

by

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Short Abstract

From the origins and prehistory of the Donatist schism, to the grand ecclesiological polemics enacted in the prolonged twilight of Roman North Africa, African Christians, both Caecilianist and Donatist, understood themselves in reference to ‘transmarine churches’ (*ecclesiae transmarinae*) across the sea. The effective isolation of Donatist Christianity to Africa, where they long enjoyed local dominance, contrasted with the Caecilianists, whose identification as the imperially sponsored *catholica* arose from the legitimacy conferred on them by the imperial court and non-African churches. This thesis is a study of the history and theological literature of African ecclesiology from Cyprian to Augustine, investigating how Caecilianist and Donatist identities and their respective theologies of the church developed under the circumstances of their relationship to the transmarine Christian world. It specifically focusses on the debate concerning the meaning of ‘catholicity’, which, for the Caecilianist party, was defined as geographic universality and accordingly constellated around communion with transmarine churches. The ensuing narrative demonstrates that the discourse of catholicity as a geographic concept, defined as universality, was uniquely developed over the course of the controversy with the Donatists, reflecting a construction of the debate favourable to the situation of the Caecilianist church. The Caecilianist ‘invention’ of catholicity, and the turn to communion with transmarine churches both in general and in particular, is argued to emerge from the differing historical circumstances of both parties to the transmarine world. The competing Donatist theology of ‘catholicity’, and their theological justification for their separation from the broader Christian world, is also examined within their own approach to the problem posed by transmarine churches.

Long Abstract

This thesis examines the Donatist controversy as the ‘Catholic controversy’, a competition between two parties to be recognised as ‘catholic’, with each committed to contrary interpretations of the word. The Caecilianists, who were so successful in their claim to be ‘catholic’ that their definition indelibly stamped itself on subsequent reflection, developed both an identity and theology of catholicity which emerged from their historical situation and received a definitive theological justification in the writings of Augustine. Their interpretation of ‘catholic’ as primarily denoting geographic universality, it is argued, represents a creative innovation that constructed the debate with the Donatists as one between the universal church and a particularist local schism. These terms were favourable to the Caecilianists, who, for most of the schism’s history, were locally less significant than their rivals and depended on both the support of the imperial government and recognition from ‘transmarine’ churches, namely, churches not in Africa. This thesis seeks to explore the development of this interpretation of catholicity through the history of the controversy with the Donatists, focusing on their differing attitudes and relationships to transmarine churches.

The first chapter investigates the meaning of catholicity and the role of transmarine churches in the ecclesiology and ecclesiastical policy of Cyprian, the great architect of the African tradition claimed alike by both Caecilianists and Donatists. Cyprian’s theology of church unity is interrogated alongside his ecclesiastical interface with non-African churches. This chapter considers the place in Cyprian’s writings of specific transmarine churches which were later used by Caecilianists as authenticating their church. It is argued that

Cyprian's notion of church unity was fundamentally concerned with the local church, namely its episcopal integrity and secure succession, and had limited interest in or application to the question of broader church unity. To the extent that 'catholic' had any discernible meaning in Cyprian, it was not the later Caecilianist one of 'universal' and likely referred to the integrity of the episcopate. Despite his interest in the seven churches, and his controverted references to Rome, Cyprian does not conceive of special transmarine sees that authenticate the church and its communion on a universal level.

The second chapter adumbrates the history of the origins of the Donatist controversy through to the death of Donatus, with a special view to the construction of Caecilianist and Donatist identities with respect to transmarine churches. The formative role of imperial intervention is examined, which, from Constantine through to the severe repressions initiated by Constans, contributed to the fundamental division between the two parties. The Donatists, in continuity with pre-Constantinian attitudes, understood themselves as a persecuted 'church of the martyrs', in contradistinction to the Caecilianists, who, as local minorities, depended upon the support of both the imperial government and the recognition afforded by transmarine churches. This chapter identifies that the contest over which party could be called 'catholic' began at the very outset of the schism. The Donatist theology of catholicity emerges in their martyrological literature from this period, according to which it denoted the integrity of their church in its zealous separation from either the pollution of *traditio* or collaboration with imperial persecution of Christians. Constantine's understanding of the legal *catholica* is examined, arguing that he associated catholicity with true worship, through a possible debt to Lactantius. Turning to the Caecilianists, it is argued that their party strenuously cultivated a conformity to the transmarine churches which supported them. They did this through an embrace of imperial support and fidelity to, and participation in, transmarine councils. This is most importantly demonstrated in their willingness to forfeit the Cyprianic practice of rebaptism as part of the bargain for the transmarine support and recognition they received at the first trans-provincial council at Arles (314). This chapter concludes with a brief comparison with the contemporary Melitian schism, noting that anxiety over catholicity and communion with transmarine churches was unique to the controversy with the Donatists.

The third chapter is a study of Donatist attitudes towards transmarine churches during the apogee of their movement during the episcopate of Parmenian of Carthage, successor to Donatus. Studying Parmenian, Tyconius, and what can be gleaned of other Donatist voices, reveals a preponderating concern over the riddle posed by transmarine churches. Donatist theology of what is termed 'hamartological contamination', namely the principle that certain kinds of sin (especially *traditio*) are contractable through communion and invalidate the infected, is identified as a cornerstone of the Donatist orthodoxy propounded by Parmenian and reacted against by Tyconius, and then Optatus. Parmenian is shown to have embraced the consequences of this principle, jettisoning the transmarine world as a conspiracy of pseudo-church *traditores* implicit in an *omertà* coverup. Against such a conclusion—which earned him his excommunication—Tyconius strove to defend the perdurance of transmarine churches and undercut the theological isolationism of his coreligionists that would embrace the notion of an African remnant, consigning the transmarine churches to apocalyptic judgment. Further, Tyconius developed the African exegetical tradition of the seven churches in a spiritual interpretation that deepened the approach charted by Cyprian. This chapter concludes with an examination of two strategies which were used by Donatists not only to rationalise, but whitewash, their separation from the rest of the Christian world. The first is a creative exegesis of two verses which were read to suggest that the remnant of the church would endure in Africa in the face of a universal apostasy precipitating the trials at the end of the world. The second is the use of the Arian

controversy to undercut the desirability of communion with transmarine churches in the first place.

The fourth chapter considers the first Caecilianist polemicist, Optatus of Milevis, who is credited with developing the main lines of the Caecilianist criticism of Donatism, and, in particular, a new understanding of catholicity. Optatus introduced what is argued to be a radical innovation in ecclesiological theory: the definition of catholicity as universal geographical diffusion. Optatus' definition, his argument for it, and the contrast with the Donatist understanding of catholicity is considered. A historical survey of the Christian use of the word 'catholic' concludes that the Donatist understanding, according to which the 'wholeness' of catholicity denoted the integrity of the church's sacramental and confessional deposit, has a fairer claim to being the traditional use. Optatus elided the 'wholeness' (*secundum totum*) of catholicity into a geographic concept of the 'whole world' (*per totum orbem*). With such a view of catholicity, Optatus provided a theological account which developed the Caecilianist dependency on imperial authority by sponsoring a species of caesaropapism. Finally, Optatus was the first to use communion with specific transmarine churches—Rome, and the seven churches of Asia—as necessary conditions for being in the church. He accomplished this through a revision of Parmenian's theology of the *dots*, by anchoring two of them (the *cathedra* and the *angelus*) in historical churches (Rome, and the seven churches, respectively), communion with which was made into a requirement for possession of the *dos* in question.

The fifth chapter arrives at Augustine, in which author the several decades of anxiety over transmarine churches comes into clearer view. The bishop of Hippo, himself something of a peregrinary *transmarinus*, and successor to a Greek, non-African bishop planted in Numidian soil, was uniquely positioned to pursue the Caecilianist ecclesiastical and ecclesiological relation to transmarine churches. It is demonstrated that the phrases '*ecclesiae trans mare*' and '*ecclesiae transmarinae*' are especially Augustinian terms, recurring with remarkable frequency in his works, and in contemporary Africans taking his lead (Possidius, and African conciliar material). In the first place, Augustine pursued harmonisation with transmarine churches through ecclesiastical means—conformity, for example, to memorial practices, and the establishment, with Aurelius of Carthage, of stable organs of provincial and conciliar church government that cultivated an evolving formal relationship to the transmarine church and the imperial court. Secondly, and worthy of more comment, Augustine developed Optatus' theology of catholicity, providing a more sustained etymological and exegetical basis for the interpretation of the word. Augustine then developed an extensive series of arguments from transmarine churches, communion with which both proved catholicity and undercut the Donatist principle of hamartological contamination. In particular, his frequent use of the Eastern churches of the New Testament, is examined to demonstrate his argument for the perdurance of transmarine churches against the Donatists.

Finally, the sixth chapter explores the transmarine church most frequently appealed to in Augustine's anti-Donatist writings, Jerusalem. Augustine relied especially on Luke 24.47, in which the church is described as 'beginning from Jerusalem' (*incipientibus ab Hierusalem*) and spreading to all peoples (*omnes gentes*), to establish an empirical criterion for the question which, as he put it, determined the debate with the Donatists: 'where is the church?' (*ubi sit ecclesia*). Augustine's use of this argument, which is a culmination of both his theology of catholicity and his appeal to the perdurance of transmarine churches, is examined. Augustine's use of Luke 24.47 and his frequent use of Jerusalem has not been recognised in prior literature, and its centrality to his anti-Donatist argument is explained. This chapter features an excursus on the significance of the church of Jerusalem in the fourth century, arguing that Augustine's interest in Jerusalem was independent of any interest in

the contemporary status of the church. However, Augustine leveraged both the cultic significance of the 'Holy Land' and the networks of relics, dispersed across the Mediterranean basin, as a currency of transmarine catholicity. Finally, the chapter concludes with an examination of the argument from the church's origination from Jerusalem and spread through transmarine churches in the 411 Conference of Carthage, noting how this demonstrates the extent to which the Caecilianists had reconfigured the terms of ecclesiological reflection away from the model of Cyprian.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: DE SIMPLICITATE PRAELATORUM: CYPRIAN, THE CHURCH, AND THE CHURCHES.....	15
(1) ‘AMIDST THE WAVES OF CONFLICTING SCHISMS’	15
(2) THE CHURCH AND THE PROVINCES	19
(3) CYPRIAN’S <i>CATHOLICA</i>	26
(3.1) <i>In theory: the De unitate</i>	26
(3.2) <i>In practice: the Novatian crisis</i>	34
(4) TRANSMARINE CHURCHES.....	41
(4.1) <i>The seven churches</i>	42
(4.2) <i>Rome</i>	45
(5) IDENTIFYING THE <i>CATHOLICA</i>	49
CHAPTER 2: DE PRAEJUDICIO NOMINIS: DEBATING CATHOLICITY UNDER CONSTANTINE	51
(1) CONSTANTINE’S INTERVENTION.....	51
(1.1) <i>The beginnings of the schism</i>	51
(1.2) <i>An international affair</i>	61
(2) THE PARTING OF WAYS.....	69
(2.1) <i>Donatist catholicity</i>	69
(2.2) <i>Caecilianists and the transmarine churches</i>	74
(3) CONSEQUENCES AND COMPARISONS	80
CHAPTER 3: DE MEDIO EIUS: BETWEEN PARMENIAN AND TYCONIUS.....	84
(1) THE ‘AGE OF PARMENIAN’	84
(2) PARMENIAN AND DONATIST ORTHODOXY.....	87
(2.1) <i>Doubts concerning Parmenian’s rejection of the transmarine churches</i>	95
(3) TYCONIUS.....	100
(3.1) <i>Tyconius and the fate of non-African churches</i>	104
(3.2) <i>The septiformis ecclesia</i>	110
(4) FORAYS IN DONATIST PARTICULARISM	113
(4.1) <i>The African remnant: Donatist exegesis</i>	116
(4.2) <i>Africans and Arians</i>	122
CHAPTER 4: DE UNITATE CATHOLICA PRAETER PARTEM AFRICAE: THE OPTATAN REVOLUTION	131
(1) OPTATUS OF MILEVIS	131
(2) CATHOLICITY AND GEOGRAPHIC UNIVERSALITY	135
(3) TRANSMARINE CHURCHES.....	145
(3.1) <i>Optatus and the Empire</i>	145
(3.2) <i>Rome and the seven churches of Asia</i>	150
CHAPTER 5: DE CATHOLICA ECCLESIA, ID EST TOTO ORBE DIFFUSA: AUGUSTINE AND THE TRANSMARINE CHURCHES	160
(1) AUGUSTINE AND THE DONATISTS	160
(2) <i>TRANS MARE</i> AND AUGUSTINE’S WORLD	172
(2.1) <i>The origins of the African church</i>	180
(3) DEFINING CATHOLICITY: THE <i>CATHOLICUS ORBIS TERRARUM</i>	183
(4) EASTERN SEES	194
(4.1) <i>The seven churches</i>	199
(5) ROME	203
CHAPTER 6: DE CHRISTI CORPORE: BEGINNING FROM JERUSALEM.....	209
(1) LUKE 24.47: <i>INCIPIENTIBUS AB HIERUSALEM</i>	209
(1.2) <i>Excursus: Jerusalem in the time of Augustine</i>	219
(2) THE CONFERENCE AND BEYOND	224

CONCLUSION	229
BIBLIOGRAPHY	239
EDITION AND SERIES ABBREVIATIONS	239
PRIMARY SOURCES	239
SECONDARY SOURCES.....	244

Introduction

Christians in late antiquity were responsible for a broad range of literary innovation in both form and content. One of their special contributions, an adaptation of controversial and doxographic literature familiar to Greco-Roman philosophy, was the new genre of ‘heresiology’. These works, encyclopaedic catalogues of heresies past and present, real or imagined, provided both a practical field guide for the theological polemicist and a platform to define orthodoxy in chiaroscuro by contrast with its many counterfeits.¹ Where others might take resigned solace from Paul’s assurance that heresies must arise (1 Cor. 11.19), the antique heresiologist detected a programmatic opportunity. Though heresiology has been alternatively disparaged as a narrowing of the Christian mind or as a fund of historical data rendered opaque through prejudice,² it is under its auspices that the problem explored by this thesis may be distinctly introduced. Nearing the end of his life, Augustine condescended to produce his own heresiology, a task that he probably felt, and certainly rightly, was beneath him. Nevertheless, yielding to the request of a persistent Carthaginian deacon who insisted that the existing literature was insufficient to the needs of his contemporary Latin-speaking Africans, Augustine produced a hurried hodgepodge of these prior sources in his own *De haeresibus*.³ He was generally content to substantially replicate his models⁴ in his own expanded catalogue of eighty-eight heresies. However, as might be expected of a

¹ For the emergence of this genre, with studied lamentation over its influence, see Gerald Bonner, ‘Dic Christi Veritas Ubi Nunc Habitas: Ideas of Schism and Heresy in the Post-Nicene Age’, in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R.A. Markus*, ed. William Klingshirn, Mark Vessey, and R. A. Markus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 67–68.

² ‘[I]t is usually treated with a degree of repugnance and embarrassment’; Averil Cameron, ‘How to Read Heresiology’, *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33, no. 3 (2003): 471.

³ Their correspondence apud Augustine, *Epp.* 221-224.

⁴ Generally accepted to be Filastrius of Brescia, the *Anacephalaeoses* (an abbreviation of Epiphanius’ seminal *Panarion*), and the Pseudo-Hieronymean *Indiculus*; Todd Berzon, *Classifying Christians: Ethnography, Heresiology, and the Limits of Knowledge in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 218–46. Cf. Brent Shaw, ‘Who Were the Circumcellions?’, in *Vandals, Romans and Berbers: New Perspectives on Late Antique North Africa*, ed. A. H. Merrills (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 238.

lifelong combatant against the Donatists, his entry on this group was entirely his own and added substantially to the skeletal knowledge of his non-African predecessors. The entry begins:

The Donatians or Donatists are those who first created a schism because Caecilian was ordained the bishop of Carthage contrary to their wishes....When their stubborn dissent had grown strong, they turned their schism into heresy. On account of the charges against Caecilian, whether they were true or, as seemed more likely to the judges, were false, they claimed that the Church of Christ had perished from the whole face of the earth (*de toto terrarum orbe perierit*) where God promised that it would be. They said that it remained in Donatus' part of Africa, though in the other parts of the earth it had died out as though by the contagion of the communion (*quasi contagione communionis*) of those parts.⁵

In an earlier work in which Augustine described various heresies his denunciation of Donatism was put in much the same terms. As he stated more frankly: their cardinal error lay in denying that the catholic church was spread throughout the world, instead alleging that it was restricted to Africa.⁶ This description of Donatism, to students of historical theology and late antiquity, appears unremarkable and may even be said to possess a degree of impartiality rare to the genre. Such an impression, however, conceals the success of Augustine and his colleagues in constructing the debate with Donatists around the universality of the church. In both of his summaries, Augustine highlighted as the characteristic differentia of the Donatists their refusal to be in communion with the *totus orbis terrarum*.

By contrast, the heresiologists who were Augustine's sources took no notice of this important fact. For Epiphanius of Salamis, author of perhaps the most influential heresiology, the Donatists appear to be nothing more than a new brand of Novatians in

⁵ *Haer.* 69.1; WSA I/18.40; CCSL 46.331.

⁶ *Agon.* 29.51; CSEL 41.131: *qui sanctam ecclesiam, quae una catholica est, negant per orbem esse diffusam, sed in sola Africa.*

Africa.⁷ While an Eastern writer may be excused as less familiar with affairs in Africa,⁸ the situation was much the same with Augustine's Latin predecessors. The pseudo-Hieronymean *Indiculus*, in its entry on the Donatists, merely records that they were rigorists and had won over most of Africa to their party, and by its arrangement assimilates them also to Novatians.⁹ So too Filastrius of Brescia tallied the *Donatiani* as heretics because they rebaptised his Catholics; he also tied them with Novatians.¹⁰ Beyond heresiologists, when the Donatists were treated by non-Africans in the fourth century, there is no mention about their geographic particularism nor their failure to commune with the broader Christian world.¹¹ Well after Augustine had died, in the twilight of Vandal Africa, a certain Arian named Fastidiosus, indifferently indisposed to both parties, summarised the Donatist heresy simply under one heading, namely, that the good could be polluted through communion with the wicked.¹² The configuration of the Donatist controversy as a debate concerning the geography of the church—whether it covered the globe, or was restricted in Africa—was a unique polemical tactic of their African Caecilianist opponents. Sometime in the first decade of the fifth century, from the episcopal throne he was accustomed to preach from, Augustine in his usual habit inserted a critique of the Donatists that has since become famous:

⁷ *Pan.* 59.13.6-7; cf. *Ancoratus* 13 on the Montenses. The text Augustine used, the *Anacephalaeoses*, did not include the Donatists. For Epiphanius' confusion see Mark Edwards, 'The Donatist Schism and Theology', in *The Donatist Schism: Controversy and Contexts*, ed. Richard Miles (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 112. See further Jesse Hoover, "'They Agreed with the Followers of Arius': The Arianization of the Donatist Church in Late Antique Heresiology", *Studia Patristica* 98 (2017): 295–306.

⁸ Eastern heresiology would persist in some uncertainty about Donatists; most evidently in John of Damascus, who makes them into a bone-kissing cult (*De heresibus* 95); possibly a distant memory of Optatus' Lucilla (I.16).

⁹ Ps-Jerome, *Indiculus* 44; PL 81.643. This text specifies abhorrence of *traditio*, central to Donatist identity and discussed in Chapter 2.

¹⁰ Filastrius, *Div. haer.* 55(83); CCSL 9.253. Far from being particularist, for him, they are actually African *Montenses* (about whom, see Chapter 3.2).

¹¹ E.g. Jerome, *Chron.* a. 355; *Lucif.* 28. See also Ambrosiaster below.

¹² *Sermo Fastidiosi Ariani* 2; CCSL 91.281: *Donatistis etiam praedicantibus communionem malorum bonos pollui*. They are also, of course, in 'error' because they are not Arian, sharing this defect with the Caecilianists. For this Fastidiosus and his context see Stanisław Adamiak, 'When Did Donatist Christianity End?', in *The Uniquely African Controversy: Studies on Donatist Christianity*, ed. Anthony Dupont, Matthew Alan Gaumer, and Mathijs Lamberigts (Leuven: Peeters, 2015), 213–16.

The clouds of heaven thunder that the house of God is built through the whole world; and yet the frogs croak from their marsh: ‘We are the only Christians’!¹³

This recalls Socrates’ remark that his Greeks lived ‘about the sea, like ants or frogs about a pond’.¹⁴ However, this latter instance was a prudent caution that his contemporaries inhabited only ‘a small part’ of the earth, and that they presumed a greater diffusion and terrene science than they could own. Augustine’s remark was to a contrary purpose and fitted within decades of polemic labouring to this end, namely, that the church had in fact spread and established itself *per totum orbem terrarum*, against which the Donatist frogs croak in vain from their sad seclusion. This passage is deservedly well-known, for it summarises in vivid pigments the major theme of Augustine’s argument against the Donatists. This thesis seeks to explore the success of the Caecilianist party in structuring the schism as a competition between two different accounts of the church: one, according to which the church is ‘catholic’, understood as geographically universal, and the other, according to which it is limited to Donatist Africa. One of these ecclesiologies—the Caecilianist—was so successful that their self-denomination as ‘catholic’ has indelibly stamped itself on their theory of the church. With Augustine of Hippo as its principal patron it would attract few detractors, and the definition of ‘catholicity’ as geographic universality has been received as broadly normative for Western Christendom in its various traditions.¹⁵ The narrative of this thesis aims to show, firstly, that this understanding of catholicity as geographic diffusion represents a striking theological development, and secondly, how this

¹³ *Enarrat.* 95.11. CCSL 39.1350: *Intonant nubes caelorum per totum orbem terrarum aedificari domum Dei; et clamant ranae de palude: Nos soli sumus christiani.* Translation mine.

¹⁴ Plato, *Phaedo* 109b. Augustine may have drawn the image from this dialogue, which is one of the few he had read in translation, but see the caution that it is ‘methodologically unsound’ to too confidently propose such textual comparisons between Augustine and Plato in Stephen Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism: The Latin Tradition*, vol. 1, Publications in Mediaeval Studies 23 (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 413n30.

¹⁵ See the survey of reception in Geoffrey Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy* (London: SPCK, 1950), 177–87.

understanding of catholicity emerged from the debate with the Donatists and the historical circumstances of both parties.

Uniquely in the history of early Christianity, the Donatist schism was transacted as a debate over the very meaning of the word ‘catholic’.¹⁶ In many ways, the Donatist controversy could more appropriately be termed the ‘Catholic controversy’, just as scholars have chosen to speak of the various ‘Christological controversies’, by reference to their object, rather than their historical antagonist. Two different definitions of catholicity, following from different conceptions of the church and shaped by their respective historical relationship to the transmarine world of the Empire, were vigorously debated between African Christians. Neither party was destined to be the ‘catholic’ one: this name was in assiduous competition and carried with it the promise of formal recognition by the imperial government. Without any signs of fatigue after over a century of disagreement, a pseudo-Augustinian text written in the middle of the fifth century captured a late and typical exchange of this pugnacity:

Augustine responded: So why do you call yourself a ‘Donatist’?

Fulgentius said: *You* impose this name on me, for I am a catholic.

Augustine responded: If you are a catholic, why do you not allow yourself to be called ‘catholic’?

Fulgentius said: Because you have unfairly purloined the catholic name!¹⁷

Accordingly, this thesis will follow, as consonant with historical fairness, a still slight but increasing tendency in more recent scholarship to deploy the binary terms ‘Caecilianist’ and ‘Donatist’, rather than, prejudicially, ‘Catholic’ and ‘Donatist’. This offers the more accurate

¹⁶ The lack of attention to communion with the whole world or catholicity is considered for the closest analogues to the Donatists– the Novatians, and the Egyptian Melitians– in Chapters 1.3, 2.3, 4.2.

¹⁷ *Adv. Fulg.*, from the additional text (not included in Petschenig, CSEL 53.289ff) compiled and edited in Cyrille Lambot, ‘L’écrit attribué à S. Augustin Adversus Fulgentium Donatistam’, *Revue Bénédictine* 58 (1948): 214. ‘Augustinus’ here is the pamphleteer’s imposture. *Augustinus respondit: Cur ergo Donatista diceris? Fulgentius dixit: Tu mihi hoc nomen imponis, nam ego catholicus sum. Augustinus respondit: Si catholicus es, cur catholicum te vocari non pateris? Fulgentius dixit: Tu mihi catholicum nomen subducis iniuste.* Translation mine.

impression of two ecclesiastical parties in earnest competition for recognition and for the right to bear the very catholic name itself. While Christian demographics of antiquity are impossible to precisely fathom, it is helpful to bear in mind that the Donatists long enjoyed majoritarian triumph in Africa.¹⁸ To use the common metaphor of schisms ‘splintering’ away from the church, the Donatists were not discarded chips, but the heartwood, of the local log. It is unfortunate that, while modern patrological and late antique scholarship has done much to avoid prejudicial, and simplifying, paradigms¹⁹ when approaching, for example, ‘paganism’,²⁰ or ‘Arianism’,²¹ the same generous approach has yet to be consistently extended to the Donatists. Though some have yielded with regret to the traditional nomenclature either out of ‘historical inertia’,²² or out of principle,²³ a growing body of scholarship has adopted the neutral term ‘Caecilianist’, in reference to the bishop of Carthage whose legitimacy was contested at the outset of the schism.²⁴ Despite Fulgentius’

¹⁸ W. H. C. Frend, ‘Donatus “Paene Totam Africam Decepit”. How?’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 48, no. 4 (1997): 611–27.

¹⁹ See Ayres’ discussion on ‘the attempts of recent scholarship to move beyond ancient heresiological categories’ in Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: University Press, 2004), 1–3.

²⁰ Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17–27; Mattias Gassman, *Worshippers of the Gods: Debating Paganism in the Fourth-Century Roman West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 3–5, 78–81.

²¹ See Maurice Wiles, ‘Attitudes to Arius in the Arian Controversy’, in *Arianism after Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts*, ed. Michael R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 31–43. Especially 42–43: ‘titles deriving from the name of Arius were or would have been conscientiously disavowed by those on whom they were bestowed. Their primary disadvantage is in suggesting a view of fourth century theology, where the significant issue is seen as the various’ schools’ relation to one seminal thinker, Arius. And to approach them with that question in mind can be a dangerous disincentive to any serious study of their theologies in their own right.’

²² Geoffrey Dunn, ‘Optatus and Parmenian on the Authority of Cyprian’, in *The Uniquely African Controversy: Studies on Donatist Christianity*, ed. Anthony Dupont, Matthew Alan Gaumer, and Mathijs Lamberigts (Leuven: Peeters, 2015), 179.

²³ Brent Shaw, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 5–6.

²⁴ Jesse Hoover has recently made a persuasive case for this convention, arguing for it on the basis of being a ‘neutral’ pair of terms that would have been mutually unacceptable to both sides but not necessarily pejorative in nature; Jesse Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age* (Oxford: University Press, 2018), 18–24. Similarly Jennifer Ebbeler notes that ‘We restore some modicum of objectivity to the narrative by insisting on neutral terminology’, and the use of ‘Catholic’ can be misleading since ‘it reinforces the assumption that it was the Donatists rather than the Caecilianists who were the outsiders and schismatics’; Jennifer Ebbeler, *Disciplining Christians: Correction and Community in Augustine’s Letters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 26–27 and 27n88. This terminology was used with consistency earlier, to highlight the factional equivalency of both groups, in James O’Donnell, *Augustine, Sinner & Saint: A New Biography* (London: Profile Books, 2005). The recent magisterial volume of Burns and Jensen on Roman African Christianity

protests, it appears that ‘Donatist’, unlike ‘Arian’,²⁵ was a genuine term of self-reference²⁶ and no mere invention of adversarial imagination.²⁷ The substitution of ‘Caecilianist’ for the more quotidian ‘Catholic’ owes its origin to a bitter suggestion from the Donatist bishop Petilian in the 411 Conference of Carthage, outraged at the appropriation of the catholic name by his enemies.²⁸ The earliest known use of the descriptor ‘Caecilianist’ comes from a Donatist sermon following the first imperial repression of the Donatists under Constantine, in which the outraged homilist declared that their opponents had unjustly monopolised the catholic name.²⁹

The title of this thesis refers to ‘transmarine churches’, about which a little may be said here. Transmarine churches—from *trans mare* (‘across the sea’)—were referred to by African authors to denote non-African churches. Precisely because the Caecilianist church was a precariously situated local minority, it increasingly sought to authenticate itself through the communion of transmarine churches and the support of the imperial government. The Donatists, confronted with the reality of their isolation from the broader transmarine world and the intransigent bias of the imperial authorities against them, were

consistently uses ‘Caecilianist’, elevating this to a new standard practice; J. Patout Burns and Robin Margaret Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa: The Development of Its Practices and Beliefs* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2014).

²⁵ E.g. at the 341 Dedication Council, as preserved in Athanasius *De synodis* 22, the bishops emphatically reject being ‘followers’ of Arius. See further Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2001), 233.

²⁶ They self-identify as the *pars Donati* in Optatus; I.22; CSEL 26.26; cf. also III.3. On this see Mark Edwards, ed., *Optatus: Against the Donatists*, trans. Mark Edwards, Translated Texts for Historians 27 (Liverpool: University Press, 1997), 23n92. One of the Donatist recensions of the *Liber genealogus* (at 196 and 627) also uses the appellation *Donatistae* to refer to themselves; in the *Lucensis* manuscript edited in Mommsen, *Chronica minora* 160-196. Cf. Augustine *Ep.* 49.3. The Latin for ‘Donatists’ was either *Donatiani* or *Donatistae*; Augustine preserves that they preferred the former, *Cresc.* II.1.2.

²⁷ Ambrosiaster, *Comm. in 1 Cor.* 1.13 §1; CSEL 81.2.10: *se...Donatianos...vocari non abhorrent*. This occurs in the longer γ recension; on this passage see Stephen A. Cooper and David G. Hunter, ‘Ambrosiaster Redactor Sui: The Commentaries on the Pauline Epistles (Excluding Romans)’, *Revue d’études Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 56, no. 1 (2010): 79–84. They argue that this passage may have been inserted later by Ambrosiaster in the light of the Damasus’ conflict with his Donatist rival, Claudian. Cf. also *Comm. in Rom.* 2.16 §2b.

²⁸ *Gesta* III.30; SC 224.1004: *Donatistas nos appellandos esse credunt cum, si nominum paternorum ratio uertitur, et ego eos dicere possum, immo palam aperteque designo mensuristas et caecilianistas esse, eosdemque traditores et persecutores nostros.*

²⁹ *Passio Donati*, 3 and 8; PL 8.754, 756. This sermon is discussed more closely in Chapter 2.2.1.

forced to adopt distinct ecclesiological and exegetical strategies, with an apocalyptic timetable, to justify their position. The importance of transmarine churches as definitive for the identities of both parties has been treated in the recent study of Jesse Hoover,³⁰ whose work has particularly informed this research. Hoover traces the trajectory of Donatist separation, from the initial rejection of Caecilian to its most important inflexion point during the severe repression initiated in 347 under the emperor Constans. Hoover has shown that a lively eschatological expectation, in which the church was undergoing a final trial and the faithful remnant tested in Africa, was an animating force of the movement. Furthermore, nuancing the recent scholarship that has pushed back against Augustine's portrait of Donatism as straightforwardly rejecting 'the catholic world',³¹ Hoover has argued that a principled 'parochialism' was in fact important to many Donatists. Following from this research, I attempt to constellate the debate about catholicity and the universality of the church around both their differing attitudes to transmarine churches in general, and the way in which Caecilianists used specific transmarine churches to authenticate their claim to catholic communion. Furthermore, the Donatist repudiation of transmarine churches must be examined alongside the long tradition of sociological interpretations of the movement as

³⁰ Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*.

³¹ Robert Eno, 'Some Nuances in the Ecclesiology of the Donatists', *Revue d'études Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 18, no. 1–2 (1972): 46–50; James Alexander, 'Aspects of Donatist Scriptural Interpretation at the Conference of Carthage', *Studia Patristica* 15 (1984): 125–30; Maureen Tilley, 'Dilatory Donatists or Procrastinating Catholics: The Trial at the Conference of Carthage', *Church History* 60, no. 1 (1991): 7–19.

a distinctly African phenomenon.³² The role of both imperial patronage³³ and transmarine connections have also been studied as formative for both the Caecilianist church and, more specifically, Augustine of Hippo.³⁴ This thesis hopes to extend this approach to understand the debate over, and development of, the notion of catholicity in the schism. The Caecilianist attitude and relationship to transmarine churches has usually focused on Rome, which has been thoroughly examined in the landmark study of Jane Merdinger.³⁵ I hope to broaden the picture by paying due attention to the extensive use of specifically Eastern transmarine churches in Caecilianist polemic, which has routinely received only passing acknowledgement.

This thesis follows a loosely chronological argument. Because no study of the literature of the Donatist schism would be complete without a treatment of Cyprian, the first chapter studies this architect of African ecclesiology. Examining Cyprian's approach to and interface with transmarine churches, I draw attention to the fact that his ecclesiological theory was focused on local, rather than universal, unity, and that no perspicuous meaning

³² The seminal study in the Anglophone world, whose merits ensure it will not be dethroned, attempted to trace a specifically Berber reaction as an explanatory principle of Donatism; W. H. C. Frend, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* (Oxford: University Press, 1952). Prolonging Frend's approach, Brisson discovered in the Donatists a social and economic reaction against the Empire; Jean-Paul Brisson, *Autonomisme et christianisme dans l'Afrique Romaine; de Septime Sévère à l'invasion vandale* (Paris: Éditions E. de Boccard, 1958). The issues with this family of approaches, whose merits cannot be gainsaid, have been often discussed: A. H. M. Jones, 'Were Ancient Heresies National or Social Movements in Disguise?', *Journal of Theological Studies* 10, no. 2 (1959): 280–98; André Mandouze, 'Encore le Donatisme', *L'Antiquité Classique* 29, no. 1 (1960): 61–107; Peter Brown, 'Christianity and Local Culture in Late Roman Africa', *The Journal of Roman Studies* 58, no. 1–2 (1968): 85–95; Éric Rebillard, 'William Hugh Clifford Frend (1916–2005): The Legacy of the Donatist Church', *Studia Patristica* 53 (2013): 55–71; Mark Edwards, *Religions of the Constantinian Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 128–29; David Wilhite, 'Were the "Donatists" a National or Social Movement in Disguise? Reframing the Question', *Studia Patristica* 98 (2017): 191–220.

³³ Alan Dearn, 'The Polemical Use of the Past in the Catholic Donatist Schism' (University of Oxford, 2003), 128–37; Alan Dearn, 'Persecution and Donatist Identity in the Liber Genealogus', in *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron*, ed. H Amirav and R.B. ter Haar Romeny (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 127–28.

³⁴ Catherine Conybeare, 'Vt Tecum Tamquam Mecum Audeam Conloqui: The Politics of Return', *Augustinian Studies* 48, no. 1, 2 (2017): 105–17. For Augustine's attempt to correct African customs by transmarine standards see Matthew Alan Gaumer, *Augustine's Cyprian: Authority in Roman Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 34–35. See further Chapter 5.1.

³⁵ Jane Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1997).

or significance can be drawn from his use of the word 'catholic'. The second chapter traces the origin of the Donatist schism with specific attention to the role of the emperor Constantine. The division in Africa rapidly took on international proportions: it was the first ecclesiastical controversy that the first Christian emperor intervened in, and it was adjudicated by a synod in Rome and then the very first mass gathering of bishops at Arles in 314. This history shows how the Caecilianists were recognised as the legal *catholica*, the imperial church, and how they drew their support from transmarine churches and the emerging conciliar networks of the Constantinian period. By contrast, the Donatists, who initially sought both transmarine and imperial recognition, resisted their rivals' claim to catholicity and came to adopt a hostile attitude to the imperial government which suppressed them and the transmarine churches which were complicit in their persecution. The third chapter is dedicated to the consolidation of Donatist orthodoxy during the episcopate of Parmenian of Carthage (ca. 362-393), the long-tenured successor to Donatus. By this point, the Donatist church had established itself in Africa as the local majority, zealous in its claims to represent the traditional African Christianity of Cyprian and steeled to the fact that the imperial government and the transmarine Christian world had repudiated them. Donatist anxiety over transmarine churches, and, concomitantly, whether the church was effectively restricted to Africa or not, appears in all the major figures in this period. Their separation prompted a principled acceptance of this fact: Parmenian and his coreligionists developed various accounts first defending, and then embracing, their isolation in Africa. Tyconius of Carthage, a lay Donatist exegete who was excommunicated by Parmenian in part because he maintained that the church continued to exist throughout the whole world, affords an important insight into the variety of Donatist reflection and the hardening of the mainstream Donatist line which eventually excluded him.

Moving finally to Caecilianist polemicists, the fourth chapter considers Optatus of Milevis, a Caecilianist bishop and the first extant anti-Donatist writer, who is only known for his tract responding to Parmenian of Carthage. I hope to show that Optatus accomplished a revolutionary development in ecclesiological reflection, being the first author to explicitly define catholicity as geographic diffusion through the whole world, and then the first to appeal to communion with specific transmarine sees as authenticating the Caecilianist church against their opponents. I argue that the Donatist understanding of catholicity, according to which it denoted the sacramental and confessional ‘fullness’ of the church, represented a more traditional approach, over and against the ‘Optatan revolution’. Optatus used communion with the church in Rome and the seven churches of Asia in the book of Revelation as necessary conditions for belonging to the catholic church. The seven churches recur throughout this thesis, as I hope to demonstrate that in Optatus, and later with Augustine, a longstanding and consistent African exegetical tradition has been tuned to a new, anti-Donatist purpose. The final two chapters are devoted to Augustine of Hippo,³⁶ who, in this instance, was a debtor to Optatus. Augustine vigorously defended the Optatan definition of catholicity as universal diffusion through both etymological and exegetical arguments, thereby attempting to refute the competing Donatist conception. If catholicity could be taken to mean geographic diffusion, which party was the ‘catholic’ one could be simply settled by demonstrating communion with the transmarine churches. This polemical strategy allowed Augustine to disentangle the *causa ecclesiae*—which of the two parties was the true church—from the forensic dispute of the *causa Caeciliani*—whether Caecilian was the valid occupant of the see of Carthage at the outset of the schism. This argument

³⁶ ‘The reader who finds that there is just too much Augustine, however, must forgive me . . . he does tend to take over, however hard one tries.’ Carol Harrison, *The Art of Listening in the Early Church* (Oxford: University Press, 2015), ix.

reached its most powerful form, and most frequently rehearsed, in Augustine's many appeals to communion with the church of Jerusalem, which is treated finally in the sixth chapter.

The emerging narrative shows how the debate about catholicity in the Donatist controversy was structured around differing attitudes—one of dependency on, the other of isolation from—transmarine churches. In doing so, this thesis provides a reassessment of the origin and development of catholicity as a polemical Caecilianist 'invention'. The title ambitiously refers to this invention of catholicity, and whether this be the *inventio* of discovery, a fruitful development, or a regrettable innovation, will be left to the reader's discretion. One of the late great scholars of antiquity began his study of the Christianisation of the Empire with these words: 'My object is history. It might be, but it isn't, theology.'³⁷ In my case, it will be necessary to be attentive to both.³⁸ While the funambulatory track of doctrinal development is not, and could not be, entirely epiphenomenal to the facts of history, I believe that the definition of catholicity as global diffusion reflects and emerges from the historical situation of the Caecilianist church towards the transmarine world. In addition to the overall argument concerning catholicity, this thesis hopes to yield more specific results. The first is to contribute to the much-discussed issue of Donatist self-identity, both by showing how it was constructed in reaction to their isolation from the transmarine world, and by arguing their traditional character with respect to catholicity and the *causa ecclesiae*. The second is to draw specific attention to Optatus of Milevis, whose general neglect has obscured the revolutionary contribution of his original formulation of the Caecilianist doctrine of catholicity. The third is to expand the discussion of the African

³⁷ Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire, (A.D. 100-400)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 1.

³⁸ For the need to balance both historical and theological considerations in this period see especially Arnaldo Momigliano, 'Christianity and the Decline of the Roman Empire', in *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. Arnaldo Momigliano (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 6; William E. Klingshirn and Mark Vessey, eds., *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R.A. Markus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), vi–vii.

church and its relationship to the transmarine church beyond a preponderating, if justifiable, focus on Rome. The fixation of both Optatus and Augustine on specific Eastern churches, and the second's constant appeal to Jerusalem against the Donatists, while it may have aroused some scholarly curiosity,³⁹ has not yet been sufficiently recognised and analysed.

The period I have selected for this study, from the episcopate of Cyprian to the coincidental death of Augustine and the end of centuries of continuous Roman rule in North Africa, is typical but not undeserving of some comment. That Tertullian should have been given such short shrift is because he is generally mute on the theme of the thesis, and his opacity concerning the meaning of catholicity is only discussed in passing (Chapter 4.2). To end with Augustine and forego the renewed scholarly activity on the afterlife of Donatism as well as the fascinating role of African churchmen in matters *trans mare* in the reign of Justinian,⁴⁰ is a less obvious choice to make. Besides pleading the excuse of a limit to what competence the author can reasonably claim, the ecclesiological controversy with the Donatists largely expired together with its greatest participant.⁴¹ In any event, I incline towards the view that Donatism ceased to possess vitality, if not real existence, on the earlier side of scholarly estimates.⁴²

I have been compelled to quote significant portions of text from the extensive range of almost entirely Latin literary remains that equip the historian of Donatism. For many of these, I gratefully replicate existing modern translations where they are available, in order not to labour at what has already been satisfactorily accomplished and also to allow for a

³⁹ It is 'curious' but then unexplored in Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy*, 120. See further R. A. Markus, 'Africa and the *Orbis Terrarum*: The Theological Problem', in *Augustinus Afer: Saint Augustin, Africanité et Universalité: Actes Du Colloque International, Alger-Annaba, 1-7 Avril 2001*, ed. Pierre-Yves Fux, Jean-Michel Roessli, and Otto Wermelinger, vol. 1 (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 2003), 326.

⁴⁰ See especially Robert Eno, 'Doctrinal Authority in the African Ecclesiology of the Sixth Century: Ferrandus and Facundus', *Revue d'études Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 22, no. 1-2 (1976): 95-113.

⁴¹ Jonathan Conant, 'Donatism in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries', in *The Donatist Schism: Controversy and Contexts*, ed. Richard Miles (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 360.

⁴² R. A. Markus, 'Donatism: The Last Phase', *Studies in Church History* 1 (1964): 118-26; Adamiak, 'When Did Donatist Christianity End?'

range of different translating voices other than my own. I have been so bold to emend translations only when I encountered inadequacies or else when they assumed a sense at variance with my own reading, and, most importantly, in a consistent attempt to avoid a prejudicial translation of '*catholicus*' into the English 'universal'. A substantial part of the literature, however, has not been Englished, and readers must be forgiving for a somewhat barbarous admixture between translations and, where I have judged the sense transparent and easy, a retention of the original.

Chapter 1: *De simplicitate praelatorum*: Cyprian, the church, and the churches

(1) ‘Amidst the waves of conflicting schisms’⁴³

The Donatist controversy can be summarised as a dispute over the legacy of Cyprian.⁴⁴ His centrality to Donatist thought and identity was both their own fair boast and one partially conceded by their opponents.⁴⁵ Augustine engaged with Cyprian as a traditional source,⁴⁶ unavoidable for any member of a North African Christianity definitively shaped by his influence, and as a challenge to re-appropriate him for the Caecilianist church.⁴⁷ There are twelve extant homilies of his dedicated to Cyprian,⁴⁸ whose feast day was a momentous occasion.⁴⁹ Though Tertullian, a long-acknowledged influence on Cyprian,⁵⁰ has been dubbed ‘the grandfather of Donatism’,⁵¹ his explicit influence on the subsequent controversy was minimal.⁵² The African ecclesiological tradition, over which Caecilianists and Donatists

⁴³ Pontius, *Vita* 8; CSEL 3.xcviii: *qui inter resultantes confidentium schismatum fluctus*.

⁴⁴ ‘Cyprian was played off against himself’; Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, ed. A.B. Bruce, trans. James Millar, vol. 5, Theological Translation Library 10 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1898), 39. A concise overview of the conflict over his legacy between Catholics and Donatists is in J. Patout Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, Routledge Early Church Monographs (London: Routledge, 2002), 166–74.

⁴⁵ For the centrality of Cyprian to Donatist self-identity see the typical complaints of Augustine in *Cresc.* II.31.39 and *Gaud.* II.2.2, according to which he is made out to be their founder. See Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 130–31. Brisson even suggested that Donatism might better be named ‘cyprianisme’; Brisson, *Autonomisme et christianisme dans l’Afrique Romaine; de Septime Sévère à l’invasion vandale*, 181. For a 6th century African admission of the connection see Facundus, *Moc.* 53-4.

⁴⁶ Indicative is the way in which Cyprian is casually listed with Peter and Paul as exemplary martyrs in *Civ.* VIII.27.

⁴⁷ ‘Augustine insisted that Cyprian would have agreed to—or at least recognized—his revision and would have repudiated the contrary interpretation of his theology by the Donatists.’ J. Patout Burns, ‘Appropriating Augustine Appropriating Cyprian’, *Augustinian Studies* 36, no. 1 (2005): 115.

⁴⁸ *Serm.* 309, 310, 312, 313, 313A, 313B, 313C, 313D, 313E, 313F, 313G.

⁴⁹ Hunink, who has recently studied these homilies as a whole, comments that it was something analogous to our modern Christmas; Vincent Hunink, ‘Practicing What He Had Taught: Augustine’s Sermons on Cyprian’, in *In Search of Truth Augustine, Manichaeism and Other Gnosticism: Studies for Johannes van Oort at Sixty*, ed. Jacob Albert van den Berg et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 98.

⁵⁰ The substance, if not the facticity, of the famous story related in Jerome *Vir. ill.* 53 is borne out by the clear dependence of Cyprian on Tertullian, especially in his treatises on prayer and virginal veiling.

⁵¹ Matthew Alan Gaumer, ‘The Evolution of Donatist Theology as a Response to a Changing Late Antique Milieu’, *Augustiniana* 58, no. 3/4 (2008): 207. For Tertullian’s influence on Donatist attitudes to the Empire see Frend, ‘Donatus “Paene Totam Africam Decepit”. How?’, 616.

⁵² Tertullian is not cited in any extant Donatist material; he is cited positively by Optatus at I.9 but with reference to the doctrine of the Trinity, not ecclesiological disputes.

contested, may be fairly bracketed by the historian as beginning with Cyprian. He has been the subject of an extraordinary range of scholarly lucubration, both by theologians wishing to better understand this outstanding architect of patristic ecclesiology, and by historians who gratefully turn to the illumination he sheds on a period in both Roman and ecclesiastical history that otherwise suffers from poor contemporary documentation. This chapter will interrogate the writings of Cyprian of Carthage⁵³ for his understanding of ‘catholicity’ and the position of transmarine churches in his ecclesiology. Cyprian dealt with schisms at home and abroad, participated in disciplinary and doctrinal controversies between various churches, and, throughout his breathlessly active career, articulated and enacted a conception of church unity and organisation that would become definitive for the North African tradition. Cyprian’s activities, through letters, councils, and pamphleteering, offer a privileged insight into how he understood his church in its local structure and its relationship to transmarine churches. This chapter will limit itself to focusing on the two themes central to this thesis: his doctrine of catholicity (if he may be said to have one), and his understanding of and relationship to transmarine churches. Particular attention will be given to discerning Cyprian’s ecclesiology through his practice of churchmanship and ecclesiastical politics as revealed in his epistolary corpus.⁵⁴ Furthermore, I argue that the theoretical expression of Cyprian’s ecclesiology, in the *De unitate ecclesiae*, is of limited

⁵³ The primary texts consulted are in the 1868 edition of G. Hartel (CSEL 3). Discussion of the two texts of *De unitate* chapter 4-5 follows Bévenot and use the edition in CCSL 3A.251-2. For the *Ad Fortunatum* and *Ad Quirinum*, which texts are defective in Hartel, I rely on Weber’s much-improved edition in CCSL 3A. I have followed the letter numberings of the CSEL, and the dating provided by Clarke (ACW 43-44, 46-47), unless otherwise indicated. Cyprian’s letter numberings vary according to edition. The CSEL/Oxford numbering is standard, but differs from Migne; for discussion and correspondence see Peter Bingham Hinchliff, *Cyprian of Carthage and the Unity of the Christian Church* (London: Chapman, 1974), 131–33.

⁵⁴ For the letters and their character, see Paul Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l’Afrique chrétienne depuis les origines jusqu’à l’invasion arabe* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1901), 321ff. Henceforth all references to Monceaux’s *Histoire* will be simply ‘Monceaux’, indicating volume and page. On the priority of the letters in interpretation see e.g. Geoffrey Dunn, ‘Cyprian of Carthage and the Episcopal Synod of Late 254’, *Revue d’études Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 48, no. 2 (2002): 243. Augustine’s Cyprian is overwhelmingly that of the letters and the September 256 Council; Gaumer, *Augustine’s Cyprian*.

value in discerning more-than-local church unity, as it is concerned almost exclusively with the unity of the local church around its bishop rather than the unity of the universal church.

Since the following analysis will be presented synthetically, a brief overview of Cyprian's ecclesiastical career will follow to orient the reader. Enjoying the prosperity of a well-propriety family and reaping the fruits of an education proper to such a birth, Cyprian made a dramatic conversion to Christianity sometime in the latter half of the 240s.⁵⁵ Within a couple of years this neophyte, by general acclaim, was elected bishop of Carthage in 248, and some combination⁵⁶ of his popularity, novelty, and wealth earned him a recalcitrant core of opposition which would be a local thorn in his side for the next decade. His ascension to the bishopric imperilled his life with the advent of the Decian persecution (249-251),⁵⁷ during which he retired in hiding and directed the Carthaginian church through his agents and letters. The bishop of the Roman church, Fabian, lost his life in this persecution,⁵⁸ and Cyprian co-ordinated closely with the presbyterate there as the Christians of both cities faced the problem of what to do with those who had 'lapsed' in persecution, either by satisfying the edict to sacrifice, mollifying it with a pinch of incense, or evading it through documentary fraud (with '*libelli*').⁵⁹ Facing local opposition by those demanding easier re-admission of the lapsed, Cyprian maintained both a rigorous rejection of such 'laxism' and

⁵⁵ All of these facts are in the *Ad Donatum* 1-4, whose overwrought eloquence (noted by Augustine, *Doctr. chr.* IV.14.31) testifies to his education. See also Pontius, *Vita* 2-4.

⁵⁶ The sociological factors motivating his opposition, which played as large, if not larger, a role than theological disagreement over reconciliation are discussed in Charles Bobertz, 'Cyprian of Carthage as Patron: A Social Historical Study of the Role of Bishop in the Ancient Christian Community of North Africa' (Yale University, 1988). Especially see 142-43.

⁵⁷ Generally dated to 249, though Frend follows Benson in placing its outbreak to 250: Edward White Benson, *Cyprian: His Life, His Times, His Work* (London: Macmillan, 1897), 65; Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 126. For the penalties endured by bishops see *Ep.* 66.7. However, as Rives has noted, the original Decian persecution may not have been directed against Christianity in the straightforward manner often assumed; J. B. Rives, 'The Decree of Decius and the Religion of Empire', *The Journal of Roman Studies* 89 (1999): 152 and 152n91. For the debate on the purpose and scope of the Decian persecution see Gassman, *Worshippers of the Gods*, 7.

⁵⁸ *Ep.* 9.1.1; incidentally, he is the first known martyr of the persecution.

⁵⁹ The distinction between these classes is discussed in *Epp.* 55.13.2-14.2 and *Laps.* 27-28. The *libelli*, some papyri of which have come down to us, have been analysed in John Knipfing, 'The Libelli of the Decian Persecution', *The Harvard Theological Review* 16, no. 1 (1923): 345-90.

asserted his episcopal prerogatives over the attempt of local confessors⁶⁰ to grant indulgence on their own initiative.⁶¹ When the persecution abated, councils at Carthage in 251 and 252 accepted, and then modified,⁶² an approach which allowed the readmission of the lapsed after sufficient penance—in the case of those who had sacrificed, a lifetime’s—and the laxist party in Carthage were excommunicated.⁶³ This group, centred around a deacon Felicissimus and a presbyter Novatus, would attract to themselves a rival bishop by dubious means; nevertheless, after a council in 253⁶⁴ granted general amnesty to the lapsed, their support dwindled in tandem with the declension of their *raison-d’être*. In Rome, Cornelius was elected bishop in 251 and was contested by an eloquent and well-connected presbyter, Novatian, who set up a rival church which was committed to a rigorist position on the lapsed. Novatian’s schism proliferated throughout the empire in due course, and to Africa relatively swiftly. Cyprian supported Cornelius’ claim, who died in 253, and, after the brief tenure of his successor Lucius (d. 254), he coordinated with Stephen of Rome. The Novatian schism, with its creation of a separate church and hierarchy, made more acute an issue that had generally been opaque in traditional praxis, namely how individuals baptised in a schismatic church were to be treated.⁶⁵ Cyprian and Stephen took opposite views reflective of their

⁶⁰ Those who had suffered for their ‘confession’ of faith but had not (often yet) been killed; for Cyprian’s distinction between martyrs and confessors see Clarke in ACW 43.272-273.

⁶¹ This began in the spring of 250, when Cyprian received a letter sent by some imprisoned confessors relaying the request of certain *lapsi* to be readmitted to communion; *Ep.* 15. This, as Dunn notes, was no new practice: Tertullian witnesses (with characteristic disapproval) that penitents ‘sought forgiveness and peace from imprisoned Christians facing martyrdom’; Geoffrey Dunn, ‘Cyprian’s Rival Bishops and Their Communities’, *Augustinianum* 45, no. 1 (1 April 2005): 67. Citing *Mart.* 1.6; *Pud.* 22; *Scorp.* 10.8.

⁶² Commentators have sometimes discerned a change of view in Cyprian’s attitude towards the lapsed, from an earlier rigorism to a later, more moderate position. See e.g. Allen Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage* (Cambridge: University Press, 2010), 13–14. Representing a change, cannily done with an eye to material circumstance (the *lapsi* being generally wealthier), but basically consistent with his prior rigorism, see Geoffrey Dunn, *Cyprian and the Bishops of Rome: Questions of Papal Primacy in the Early Church* (Strathfield, Australia: St Pauls, 2007), 45. Cyprian defends his own consistency by appealing to this conciliar principle in *Ep.* 55.3.2-6.2. It appears, however, that Cyprian always understood his position as an interim judgment, awaiting the finality from a conciliar judgment; cf. *Ep.* 26.1.2 and the earlier principle expounded at *Ep.* 14.4.

⁶³ *Epp.* 55.23; 59.1.

⁶⁴ *Ep.* 57.2.2. For this synod of this epistle as that of 253 see Geoffrey Dunn, ‘Censuimus: Cyprian and the Episcopal Synod of 253’, *Latomus* 63, no. 3 (2004): 672–88.

⁶⁵ Stuart George Hall, ‘Stephen I of Rome and the One Baptism’, *Studia Patristica* 17.2 (1982): 796–98.

differing local precedent, clashing from 256-257—the Carthaginian bishop insisting that all outside of the canonical limits of the church were bereft of baptism. In September of 256, Cyprian gathered eighty-seven African bishops who formally sanctioned his policy, in a council whose *acta* are the first of any church council to survive. The emperor Valerian renewed a programmatic persecution of Christians in 257, during which both Cyprian and Stephen would perish.⁶⁶ Martyrdom set a seal on his status as the premier churchman of his day. His writings enjoyed wide circulation,⁶⁷ and his reputation at his final ascendancy unimpeachable. Harnack remarked that Cyprian’s writings came to enjoy a status as quasi-sacred literature in the West, noting how even in his lifetime certain Numidian confessors discussed his works with awe, and others whispered of his prophetic powers.⁶⁸

(2) The church and the provinces

Cyprian’s genius lay not so much in the development of what he called the ‘structure of the ecclesiastical body’ (*ecclesiastici corporis conpago*),⁶⁹ but in both the adroit command over and theological articulation of a system he had largely inherited.⁷⁰ While each bishop was,

⁶⁶ His edict in 257, and then again in 258 ordered capital punishment for bishops, priests, and deacons (but not so for laity, unless obstinate men of high position, *egregii viri*). The direction of the first edict of Valerian in 257 can be pieced together from Eusebius, *H.E.* VII.10.3-9 and the *Acta Proc. S. Cypriani* 1.1-2, and the second from Cyprian *Ep.* 80; I owe this and the reconstruction to Paul Keresztes, ‘Two Edicts of the Emperor Valerian’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 29, no. 2 (1975): 83–85. For the context and purpose of both Decian and Valerian persecutions see David Potter, *Constantine the Emperor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 13–14, 36.

⁶⁷ Roy Deferrari notes in FOTC 36.257n1: ‘The diffusion of Cyprian’s writings everywhere after his death has been called almost unique in Christian literary history . . . And the unusually large number of extant early manuscripts of his works testify to this popularity.’

⁶⁸ Adolf von Harnack, ‘Cyprian Als Enthusiast’, *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Die Kunde Der Älteren Kirche* 3, no. 1 (1902): 188. Harnack cites *Epp.* 77.1 and 78.2, regarding the Numidian confessors. For his reception as a prophet in Donatist circles see Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 87 and 87n126.

⁶⁹ *Ep.* 55.24.3; CSEL 3.642. He also uses this phrase to speak of the Eucharistic constitution of the church in *Ep.* 63.13.3; CSEL 3.712. Augustine echoes this phrase in *Ep.* 185.9.42.

⁷⁰ For a summary of the administrative details of church life—episcopal elections, role of deacons, eucharistic organisation, etc., is in Pierre Batiffol, *L’Église naissante et le Catholicisme*, Nouvelle édition (Paris: Du Cerf, 1971), 401–11. A thorough overview is provided in Victor Saxer, *Vie liturgique et quotidienne à Carthage vers le milieu du IIIe siècle: le témoignage de saint Cyprien et de ses contemporains d’Afrique* (Città del

in principle, entirely autonomous and sovereign within his own see,⁷¹ inter-episcopal coordination took on a variety of forms, and may be broadly divided between those pertaining to bishops of the same province, and those between the provinces themselves. A fondness for allusions to churches *trans mare* or *ecclesiae transmarinae* is, as will be argued (Chapter 5.2), unique to Augustine. Cyprian does not use transmarine vocabulary with regularity or even frequency. For him, and for subsequent North African authors, *trans mare* was a convenient shorthand for churches outside his province of Africa.⁷² While Roman Africa at the time was divided into three provinces, the gravitational pull of Carthage, the second largest city in the Empire,⁷³ inexorably united them. Ecclesiastically, there was one province, where the bishop of Carthage enjoyed a primacy⁷⁴ that would be made explicit in the following centuries.⁷⁵ Cyprian was easily anachronised as a metropolitan⁷⁶ in the canons of Trullo, which styled him the archbishop of the Africans.⁷⁷ Jones commented that already by the third century, ‘the bishop of Carthage had enjoyed the same kind of primacy in the

Vaticano: Pontificio Istituto di archeologia cristiana, 1969), 72–105. For the development of the episcopal system at this time see Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 126.

⁷¹ §3; for the background in Roman jurisprudence see Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 4.

⁷² *Ep.* 43.3.2; CSEL 3.592; *uniuersis episcopis uel in nostra prouincia uel trans mare constitutis*. He also uses the phrase in *Ep.* 45.2.2; CSEL 3.601: *fratres longe positos ac trans mare constitutos* in a more generic sense, writing to Cornelius and here clearly referring to simply all the other bishops of the Empire in other provinces.

⁷³ Cf. the well-known comment of Herodian (VII.6.1). See also Mommsen’s charming, if biting, description of Carthage’s place in the Empire in Theodor Mommsen, *The Provinces of the Roman Empire from Caesar to Diocletian*, trans. William Dickson, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1909), 341. For a view that Carthage’s Africa primacy rested largely on its provincial and economic status, compounded by Cyprian’s more exalted social status, see Dunn, *Cyprian and the Bishops of Rome*, 48. Stylistic comparison of his letters compared to other bishops, like Caldonius’ (*Ep.* 24), is provided in Hartel (CSEL 3.lxviii) who draws attention to the latter’s solecisms and Punic expression.

⁷⁴ Francis Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of the Apostle Andrew* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 30. He cites *Ep.* 48 at CSEL 3.607, where I believe he means to highlight *sed quoniam latius fusa est nostra prouincia, habet etiam Numidiam et Mauritaniam sibi cohaerentes* . . .

⁷⁵ *Brev. Hipp.* can. 25; CCSL 149.40: *Ut primae sedis episcopus non appelletur princeps sacerdotum, aut summus sacerdos, aut aliquid huiusmodi, sed tantum primae sedis episcopus*. Cf. also can. 28; CCSL 149.41, Augustine, *Serm.* 313C(=Guelf. 26.2). However, Merdinger points out that Augustine was instrumental in bolstering the authority of provincial primates within the African provinces; in fact, Hippo 393 created a new primatial see entirely for Mauretania (CCSL 149.32); Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, 188.

⁷⁶ For a summary of the rise of metropolitans and provincial conciliar structures see Norman H. Baynes, ‘Alexandria and Constantinople: A Study in Ecclesiastical Diplomacy’, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 12, no. 3/4 (1926): 145–47.

⁷⁷ Trullo, can. 2. In the 11th century, Pope Leo IX, writing to the few extant bishops in North Africa, commented *quia sine dubio post Romanum pontificem primus archiepiscopus et totius Africae maximus metropolitanus est Cartaginensis episcopus*; *Ep.* 74; PL 143.729C (=Mansi 19.657).

African provinces as Antioch enjoyed in the Oriens’, citing that he summoned councils for bishops throughout all of Roman Africa.⁷⁸ Various bishops in Africa sought Cyprian’s judgment on a range of practical issues,⁷⁹ showing ‘the consultative role’ which was expected of ‘the Carthaginian church’.⁸⁰

The relationships between individual episcopal churches were conditioned by provincial location, which at this time was beginning to determine conciliar membership and relationship to emerging primatial centres, like Rome or Carthage. Cyprian acted as senior churchman, answering a Mauretanian bishop’s⁸¹ query with an authoritative statement of African policy on rebaptism, but approached matters in Spain, Gaul, or Italy from the position of a concerned outsider. Magnus in Mauretania, despite being further away than bishops in Southern Italy, was in his ecclesiastical province, a member of his provincial synod where Cyprian sat in seniority, and Italian bishops, though closer, were separated by a body of water that divided them off into another province.⁸² The African council in 251 was followed by an Italian equivalent convened shortly after, disclosing a tacit understanding that each province was to resolve its affairs in a conciliar fashion for itself, and strive for cooperative harmonisation with other provinces.⁸³ This was reflected in his earlier approach: Cyprian agreed to the policy of granting communion to those on their deathbed proposed by the Roman clergy, since the policy of these churches ought to be

⁷⁸ A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), 885.

⁷⁹ E.g. Caldonius in *Epp.* 24-25, the clergy of Furnos in *Ep.* 1; Eucratius in *Ep.* 2; Rogatianus in *Ep.* 3; his solicitation for advice regarding virgins’ decorum in *Ep.* 4.

⁸⁰ Clarke in ACW 44.349n10.

⁸¹ The same should be noted for Numidia, which had no separate primate in Cyprian’s day and was treated identically from his perspective in the same way as his own Proconsular Africa. For this see Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 143-44.

⁸² Bévenot identifies the Magnus of *Ep.* 69 as Mauretanian in Maurice Bévenot, ‘Cyprian’s Platform in the Rebaptism Controversy’, *Heythrop Journal* 19, no. 2 (1978): 125. Mauretania is a slightly special case but Mauretanian attendance at the September 256 Council is evident; on this see Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 155.

⁸³ *Ep.* 55.6.2. For the Italian council see Eusebius *H.E.* VI.63.2, and the intent to come to a similar agreement from the Roman clergy at *Ep.* 30.1.2. Cyprian’s remarks on bishops striving to act in harmony are many, see e.g. *Ep.* 71.3.1. Augustine’s remarks in *Ep.* 250A; CSEL 57.598 is typically Cypriaic: *cupio...si opus fuerit, ad sedem apostolicam scribere, ut, in his causis quid sequi debeamus, concordi omnium auctoritate constituatur atque firmetur*

unified (*adunatus esse...debet*).⁸⁴ In order to ensure the two churches cohered in this unanimity, he promised that further developments would be communicated to them.⁸⁵ The mutual solicitude, and programmatic attempt of uniformity, of the *membra* of the church spread through the various *prouvinciae* was extolled in a letter of the Roman clergy to Cyprian.⁸⁶

Consultation with his ‘colleagues’⁸⁷ might be informal, such as epistolary exchanges seeking counsel.⁸⁸ More importantly, the African church had already developed an extensive conciliar practice,⁸⁹ and this model had matured into a regularised feature of ecclesial life,⁹⁰ with councils gathered in Carthage and setting precedent for episcopal judgments.⁹¹ Councils were determinative of provincial policy, and the provinces independently

⁸⁴ *Ep.* 20.3.2; CSEL 3.528-9. See also *Ep.* 27.4 on his pleasure at their agreement *unanimiter* in the case of Lucianus.

⁸⁵ *Ep.* 20.3.2. This he does, sending dossiers (*Epp.* 33, 34, 35); with confirmation of receipt by the Roman clergy in *Ep.* 36.3. For further collaboration, desiring a ‘united verdict’ at the provincial level see *Ep.* 30.5.3; ACW 44.30. See also *Ep.* 27.4 of Cyprian to Rome.

⁸⁶ *Ep.* 36.4.1; CSEL 3.575: *omnes enim nos decet pro corpore totius ecclesiae, cuius per uarias quasque prouincias membra digesta sunt, excubare*. Cf. also *Ep.* 55.24.2.

⁸⁷ Reserved solely for bishops; e.g. *Ep.* 1.1.1; CSEL 3.465; and as applied to Cornelius *Ep.* 55.1.2; or *collegae mei*; *Ep.* 9.1; CSEL 3.488. When visiting they were dubbed *peregrini*; *Ep.* 32.2; CSEL 3.565. A usage retained to Augustine’s day; e.g. *Emer.* 9.

⁸⁸ This was ‘standard Cyprianic procedure’; Clarke in ACW 43.150n3, citing *Epp.* 3.1.1, 4; 38.2.2; 49.10.2; 62.4.

⁸⁹ The first recorded mention of a *concilium* of bishops is in Tertullian, where they agreed upon scriptural canon and fasting customs; *Pud.* 10.12; *ieiun.* 13.16. Cyprian’s predecessor, Agrippinus, convoked a council of about seventy bishops (Augustine provides this number in *Cresc.* III.3.3), from Africa Proconsularis and Numidia; See *Ep.* 71.4.1, 73.3.1. This council may have been stimulated by the affair regarding penitence for adulterers in the reign of Callistus; Saxer, *Vie liturgique et quotidienne à Carthage vers le milieu du IIIe siècle*, 13. The dating is unclear; for the most sustained argument that it must postdate 230 see András Handl and Anthony Dupont, ‘Who Was Agrippinus?: Identifying the First Known Bishop of Carthage’, *Church History and Religious Culture* 98, no. 3/4 (2018): 344–66. For the view that Africa ‘was a particularly favorable laboratory for the development of conciliarism’ see Paul Valliere, *Conciliarism: A History of Decision-Making in the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 59. For pre-Cyprianic councils see *Epp.* 1.1; 55.21.1; 59.10.1. These are discussed in Yvette Duval, ‘Sur les conciles africains antérieurs à Cyprien’, *Revue d’études augustiniennes et patristiques* 49, no. 2 (2003): 239–51; Michael Sage, *Cyprian* (Cambridge: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975), 2–3.

⁹⁰ See Thomas Graumann, *The Acts of the Early Church Councils: Production and Character* (Oxford: University Press, 2021), 15. For an earlier summary of the annual pattern of African councils see Louis Duchesne, *Histoire ancienne de l’Église*, 5e éd., vol. 1 (Paris: Fontemoing & Cie, 1911), 419. That this was a specially ‘defining feature of North African Christianity’ see John Kevin Coyle, ‘The Self-Identity of North African Christians in Augustine’s Time’, in *Augustinus Afer: Saint Augustin, Africanité et Universalité: Actes Du Colloque International, Alger-Annaba, 1–7 Avril 2001*, ed. Pierre-Yves Fux, Jean-Michel Roessli, and Otto Wermelinger, vol. 1 (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 2003), 65.

⁹¹ *Epp.* 15.1.2; 16.1.2; 55.21; 70.1. For other bishops citing prior councils, *Sent.* 4.

conformed to each other through their respective conciliar organs.⁹² One example of cooperation is furnished by Cyprian's direct predecessor, Donatus (d. 248), who gathered ninety bishops in the deposition of Privatus, bishop of Lambaesis.⁹³ Probably because this decision concerned the bishop of a provincial capital, the Africans sought 'interprovincial cooperation' and successfully solicited Fabian of Rome to second their condemnation.⁹⁴ The conciliar precedent available to Cyprian was structured along the lines of imperial cartography. The councils he knew of, and the councils he will both preside over in Africa and coordinate with abroad, were the business of the episcopal college in each locale. Burns discusses this under the rubric of 'structures of collaboration': synods might be held locally, but bishops of large 'imperial administrative centres...had particular responsibilities for maintaining the flow of communication between their colleagues' and those of other provinces.⁹⁵ Cyprian's imaginative horizon did not include trans-provincial councils, and the ecumenical conciliar format inaugurated at Arles in 314 (Chapter 2.1.2) marked a real revolution in ecclesiastical organisation. In the meanwhile, each province maintained its own affairs, and Cyprian's career offers several instances of episcopal cooperation at a supra-provincial level.

Cyprian outlined, when writing earlier to the Roman clergy on the policy regarding the lapsed, his conception of the spheres of church life: 'this is a question which does not affect just [b] a few or [a] one church only or [c] one province but it concerns the [d] entire world.' That is to say, there is (a) the particular local church (*ecclesia una*), (b) the church and its immediate neighbours (*pauci*),⁹⁶ (c) the church of that province (*unius prouinciae*),

⁹² See Eusebius, *H.E.* VII.30 for the 268 council of Antioch and collaboration with Italian bishops. Firmilian of Caesarea attests to the importance of annual councils to resolve important issues in his province apud Cyprian *Ep.* 75.4.3; Clarke (ACW 47.254n14) notes that these are likely local synods and not 'interprovincial Councils'.

⁹³ Duval, 'Sur les conciles africains antérieurs à Cyprien', 243–44.

⁹⁴ Dunn, *Cyprian and the Bishops of Rome*, 19–20.

⁹⁵ Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 155.

⁹⁶ An example of their involvement is in Novatian's letter apud Cyprian *Ep.* 30.8, where neighbouring bishops were consulted—the bishopric in Rome then vacant—before the letter was drafted.

and (d) the church of the whole world (*totius orbis*). The relationship of these tiers may be summarised as follows. The (b) neighbouring bishops assisted in the election and consecration of the (a) local bishop, and the local bishop participated in (c) provincial synods or councils and had a relationship to a most senior bishop of the province, the ‘metropolitan’ of post-Constantinian times.⁹⁷ The relationship to (d) the universal, global church would generally be mediated through provincial organs and the coordination of the respective senior bishop of each province.⁹⁸ This approach may be seen at work in one of the few major transmarine interventions in Cyprian’s career.

The 252 council in Carthage permitted *sacrificati* and *libellatici* back into communion following suitable penance, which then opened the question about how to receive guilty clergy: were they to retain their orders as well?⁹⁹ This question came to the fore in the autumn of 254, when two bishops from Spain, Felix and Sabinus, appeared before a council in Carthage. In the Spanish dioceses of Legio-and-Asturica and Emerita, their two bishops, Martial and Basilides, had lapsed during the persecution and were replaced by these two.¹⁰⁰ Basilides appealed to Stephen in Rome, wishing that both be restored to episcopal dignity, and Stephen acquiesced in their favour.¹⁰¹ In outraged response, their replacements,

⁹⁷ Defined succinctly by Jones: ‘the bishop of the metropolis or capital city of the province’, formalised in Nicaea canon 5 and Antioch canon 20, who had charge over the entire province and conciliar presidency; Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602*, 1964, 2:880. For the development in Africa of ‘the system of first or metropolitan bishops’ which was ‘emerging’ in Cyprian’s day, see the summary in Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 387–88. The metropolitan system was, in later writers, construed as apostolic; Paul’s commissioning of Titus (Tit. 1.5) was read as metropolitan in nature by Chrysostom (*Hom. 1 in Tit.*) and Theodoret (*Interpretatio ep. ad Tit.*, arg.).

⁹⁸ An example of this in practice would be the habit of a bishop sending letters of communion upon his election – this was likely to neighbouring bishops, and then only to major bishops (latter-day metropolitans) who were the channels of communication with the other bishops of their provinces. On this see Dunn, *Cyprian and the Bishops of Rome*, 17–19. The co-ordination of the African episcopate in 251 around the emerging schism in Rome is particularly important: Cyprian personally visited Hadrumentum to ensure that that church would not hastily recognise Cornelius (as they had, with their bishop in absence) when the African episcopate was still discerning the matter; *Ep.* 48.1.

⁹⁹ An earlier precedent is furnished by the case of the Italian bishop Trofimius, who had apostatised (*Ep.* 55.2.1). He and his community, after penance, were received back by Cornelius, and Trofimius as a layman (*Ep.* 55.11.2-3), likely following the Italian synod of 251. See Clarke in ACW 46.184n51.

¹⁰⁰ We know only with certainty that Sabinus replaced Basilides (*Ep.* 68.6.1-2), and hence can infer that Felix replaced Basilides; but which see was whose is impossible to resolve, see G. W. Clarke, ‘Prosopographical Notes on the Epistles of Cyprian: I. The Spanish Bishops of Epistle 67’, *Latomus* 30, no. 4 (1971): 1142–44.

¹⁰¹ *Ep.* 67.5.3. Martial is not mentioned as having gone to Stephen but he is clearly involved.

Felix and Sabinus, travelled to Carthage, where Cyprian upheld their elections.¹⁰² The final result of this matter is unknown to history, though the subsequent silence probably indicates that the less controversial side (Sabinus' and Felix's) prevailed. While Stephen's rationale for supporting the *libellatici* bishops is unclear¹⁰³ Cyprian argued that their criminal pollution made them completely unfit,¹⁰⁴ and, in any case, the non-readmission of lapsed clerics to their office upon receiving them back into communion was formal African policy since the synod of spring 252.¹⁰⁵

Cyprian, giving explicit formulation of his provincial understanding of episcopal networks, explained that, as in all the provinces (*per prouincias uniuersas*), the correct method of ordinations involved the neighbouring bishops of the same province (*episcopi eiusdem prouinciae proximi*) and the laity, who convened to give witness and some form of approbation.¹⁰⁶ Cyprian was at pains to indicate that Basilides and Martial were no longer bishops—in fact, Basilides is said to have abnegated voluntarily (*sponte*),¹⁰⁷ and Martial made a public confession of his crime, which presumably resulted in removal from communion (and, *a fortiori*, from sacerdotal office). The letter that affords all our information on this episode (*Ep.* 67) was written by Cyprian on behalf of thirty-seven colleagues who had assembled in council over the matter in late 254. So far as they were concerned, the sees of Legio-and-Asturica and Emerita had been vacated, and Sabinus and Felix were validly consecrated to their respective bishoprics. The Africans scrupulously

¹⁰² I follow here the concise reconstruction of events in Dunn, 'Cyprian of Carthage and the Episcopal Synod of Late 254'. He argues that the tentative re-dating of these events to 256 by Clarke (ACW 46.143-4) should be shifted back to 254.

¹⁰³ Cyprian suggests, possibly diplomatically, that Stephen was duped, and that the great distance between Rome and Spain left events less clear to him. *Ep.* 67.5.3; CSEL 3.739 . . . *Stephanum collegam nostrum longe positum et gestae rei ac ueritatis ignarum fefellit* . . . Benson presents this as a more agonistic clash; Benson, *Cyprian*, 313.

¹⁰⁴ This attitude prevailed in the West, well until Arles in 314, where *traditor* clerics were permanently barred from the priesthood. See Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, 173.

¹⁰⁵ Dunn, 'Cyprian of Carthage and the Episcopal Synod of Late 254', 233.

¹⁰⁶ *Ep.* 67.5.1; CSEL 3.739.

¹⁰⁷ *Ep.* 67.6.2; CSEL 3.740.

avoided explicitly contradicting Stephen’s judgment, diplomatically placing the blame on the *fallacia* of Basilides.¹⁰⁸ In his conclusion, Cyprian exhorted¹⁰⁹ the Spanish churches to follow the precedent set by the collaboration of the Africans and the Italians under Cornelius *cum omnibus omnino episcopis in toto mundo*, to frustrate the ambitions of their ex-bishops.¹¹⁰ The local college had the ultimate responsibility, ‘over the opinion or decision of a non-local bishop’,¹¹¹ who could only add an authoritative outsider’s opinion.¹¹²

(3) Cyprian’s *catholica*

(3.1) In theory: the *De unitate*

In Augustine’s final anti-Donatist work, against Gaudentius, he turned—as he had on many occasions before¹¹³—to Cyprian’s treatise *De unitate ecclesiae* to establish his definition of catholicity as worldwide diffusion.¹¹⁴ This was despite the fact that Cyprian did not use the word *catholicus* or cognates in the entire treatise from which his alleged proof-text was drawn, and whether the word formed part of the title or not,¹¹⁵ its precise sense in his writings

¹⁰⁸ *Ep.* 67.5.3; CSEL 3.739-40.

¹⁰⁹ He ends the letter tellingly: *quantum possumus adhortamur litteris nostris*, not to accept Basilides and Martial back into office; *Ep.* 67.9.3; CSEL 3.743.

¹¹⁰ *Ep.* 67.6.3; CSEL 3.741.

¹¹¹ Dunn, ‘Cyprian of Carthage and the Episcopal Synod of Late 254’, 240.

¹¹² Pollman distinguishes in Cyprian between episcopal *potestas* (‘which comes close to the power of Roman magistrates’) and any *auctoritas* which ‘augmented it’, a personal authority derived from charismatic or else individual qualities. *Potestas* was limited within the magisterial boundaries of the bishop’s diocese, given ‘the principle of the absolute independence’, and *auctoritas* could both bolster this internally and be leveraged outside this context. Karla Pollmann, ‘Christianity and Authority in Late Antiquity: The Transformation of the Concept of *Auctoritas*’, in *Being Christian in Late Antiquity: A Festschrift for Gillian Clark*, ed. Carol Harrison, Caroline Humfress, and Isabella Sandwell (Oxford University Press, 2014), 163–64.

¹¹³ Perler has studied the various instances of his use of this treatise, beginning in 393 with his *De Serm. Dom.* and throughout his anti-Donatist works; Othmar Perler, ‘Le «De unitate» (ch. IV-V) de saint Cyprien interprété par saint Augustin’, *Augustinus Magister* 2 (1954): 835–58.

¹¹⁴ *Gaud.* II.2.2; citing Cyprian *Unit. eccl.* 5.

¹¹⁵ In Augustine’s recounting it is the *Epistola quam de unitate conscripsit*, *Cresc.* II.33.42; CSEL 53.401.

is obscure.¹¹⁶ Whether written with a view to the Novatians in Rome¹¹⁷ or the local laxists in Carthage,¹¹⁸ the *De unitate* addressed the question of the unity of the local church in its one bishop. In both this tract, and the ecclesiological theory discernible in the letters, Cyprian is principally concerned with the church considered as a local assembly united to her bishop. This largely accounts for the subsequent Caecilianist revision of Cyprianic ecclesiology. As Eno notes:

[Cyprian's] stress on the unicity of the local Church no longer suffices. It is no longer a question of a division in this or that local Church. Now a whole great area of the world Church finds itself divided.¹¹⁹

However, as will be considered below, the expanding rival network of Novatian bishops did prompt some degree of reflection from Cyprian on the unity of the church on the universal level. In part because ingenuity cannot be a surrogate for certainty, and because no new contribution to this debate may be expected here, the *De unitate* will be read without commitment to any theory of its composition and the various editions of the fourth and fifth chapters, accepting only that they are both genuine and genuinely express his thinking.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Siniscalco and Mattei, SC 500.36-7: 'pour Cyprien l'adjectif [catholica] insiste sur un caractère inhérent à la notion même d'Église, alors qu'on peut hésiter sur le sens à attribuer aux substantifs 'ecclesia' (universelle ou locale, cette dernière formant avec les autres répandues dans le monde entier un tout indivisible?) et 'unitas' (unicité ou unité)—ou bien tous ces significations sont-elles incluses dans le titre, qui présenterait alors un caractère polyvalent, sinon ambigu.'

¹¹⁷ Monceaux II.298-303; Maurice Bévenot, 'St. Cyprian and the Papacy: Musings on an Old Problem', *The Dublin Review* 228, no. 464 (1954): 161–68; Maurice Bévenot, "'Primatus Petro Datur': St. Cyprian on the Papacy", *Journal of Theological Studies* 5, no. 1 (1954): 19–35.

¹¹⁸ This is the older view of Koch and John Chapman, 'Les interpolations dans le traité de S. Cyprien sur l'unité de l'Église', *Revue Bénédictine* 19, no. 1–4 (1902): 246–54. It has received recent support by Stuart George Hall, 'The Versions of Cyprian, *De Unitate*, 4–5. Bévenot's Dating Revisited', *Journal of Theological Studies* 55, no. 1 (2004): 138–46; Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 60; Dunn, 'Cyprian's Rival Bishops and Their Communities', 81–82.

¹¹⁹ Robert Eno, 'The Work of Optatus as a Turning Point in the African Ecclesiology', *The Thomist* 37, no. 4 (1973): 681.

¹²⁰ Chapters 4-5 come down in a 'short' and 'long' version; I retain this neutral nomenclature because it is not agreed that the so-called 'Primacy Text' can be so interpreted. They are now generally accepted to both be Cyprian's. After Chapman proposed that the longer version represented a later revision by Cyprian, this account was reversed by Bévenot, who has generally been followed, although with revisions to both interpretation and his proposed chronology by e.g. Hall, Brent, and Dunn: Chapman, 'Les interpolations dans le traité de S. Cyprien sur l'unité de l'Église'; Bévenot, "'Primatus Petro Datur'"; Hall, 'The Versions of Cyprian, *De Unitate*, 4–5. Bévenot's Dating Revisited'; Dunn, *Cyprian and the Bishops of Rome*, 86–100. See

Although enlisted as a source for Augustine’s own doctrine of catholicity, Cyprian not only does not provide any reflection on the meaning of the word ‘catholic’, but his usage is so unspecific that it only ever occurs as an ornamental adjective for the *ecclesia* or her *fides*. The word is only ever used in his letters, and most frequently applied to the church with reference to her unity (*unitas, una, unica*).¹²¹ *Catholicus* is never used in its technical or secular sense; *catholica* is always used of the church or of the faith, and in an emphatic manner, suggesting integrity, orthodoxy, or wholeness.¹²² Accordingly, it would be challenging to read *catholica*, when applied to *ecclesia*, as implying anything like ‘universal’ or even ‘general’, in Cyprian.¹²³

The ecclesiological account of the *De unitate* is as elegant as it is simple. Cyprian, ‘the theorist of episcopacy’,¹²⁴ grounded his entire vision of the church in the person of the bishop. The church is one because the bishop is one. Battifol highlighted that the treatise was known to other authors with the perhaps more revealing title *De simplicitate praelatorum*.¹²⁵ In the latter portion of the fifth chapter, common to both recensions, Cyprian

the discussion in Allen Brent, ed., *On the Church: Select Treatises*, trans. Allen Brent, Popular Patristics Series 32 (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2006), 150–51.

¹²¹ So *Epp.* 44.3.1; 45.1.1; 46.1.2; 48.3.2; 51.2.2; 54.4; 55.7.1; 55.21.1, 24.2; 66.8.3; 68.1.1; 69.1.1-2; 70.1.1; 71.1.1, 1.2.3; 72.1.1.

¹²² E. Michaud, ‘L’ecclésiologie de St. Cyprien’, *Revue Internationale de Théologie* 13, no. 49 (1905): 37. See also Clarke: ‘Cyprian would be thinking of the essentially *undivided* [local] church’ when using *catholica*; ACW 44.227.

¹²³ The awkwardness of attempting to do so is evident in Milner, who rendered the statement of the Roman confessors in Cornelius’ letter to Cyprian: ‘one bishop ought to be in the general church’, which results in a meaning plainly contrary to good sense; Joseph Milner, *The History of the Church of Christ*, ed. Isaac Milner, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (London: Printed by Luke Hansard & Sons for T. Cadell and W. Davies, in the Strand, 1810), 381. This is *Ep.* 49.2.4; CSEL 3.611: *unum episcopum in catholica esse debere*. Michaud’s comment on this passage is apt, this is about unity ‘dans une Eglise catholique’ not ‘dans toute Eglise catholique’; Michaud, ‘L’ecclésiologie de St. Cyprien’, 43.

¹²⁴ Gregory Dix, *Jurisdiction in the Early Church, Episcopal and Papal* (London: Church Literature Association, 1975), 45n1.

¹²⁵ His judgment is worth repeating: ‘On sera plus équitable en disant que le traité *De unitate ecclesiae*, écrit de circonstance et de polémique, ne renferme pas un système de l’Église universelle, autrement dit du catholicisme: il s’applique seulement à établir cette thèse, à savoir que dans une même église il n’y a place que pour un évêque. Le titre que porte le traité n’est nullement adéquat au titre du sermon de Bossuet sur *L’unité de l’Église*. S’il est vrai, comme saint Fulgence en témoigne, que le traité de Cyprien ait été quelquefois intitulé *De simplicitate praelatorum* cet autre titre moins authentique et moins ample, disait mieux le point de vue particulier auquel s’est limité Cyprien.’ Battifol, *L’Église naissante et le Catholicisme*, 437–38. See also the note in Hartel III.209. Augustine knows of its title as the *De unitate ecclesiae*; *Cresc.* II.33.42. For further discussion on the title and its significance see Siniscalco and Mattei, SC 500.35-37.

explains that there is one episcopate, with each bishop holding his share in it (*episcopatus unus est, cuius a singulis in solidum pars tenetur*).¹²⁶ This episcopate was granted to Peter, in whose single person its unity was preserved, and thence to the apostles, who were granted *parem postestatem* in the Petrine episcopate.¹²⁷ The one *ecclesia* is exemplified in the one *cathedra* of Peter, and those who depart from the latter by that very fact put themselves outside the former.¹²⁸ There is neither salvation¹²⁹ nor sacrament,¹³⁰ neither merit nor martyrdom,¹³¹ outside of the church.¹³² The church subsists in the concord of unanimity and the bond of charity, by which the people are joined to each other and to the bishop.¹³³ The unity of the church is a divine gift, in the bestowal of the episcopate upon Peter, and its unanimity a task for the bishops to cultivate among themselves.¹³⁴

A letter of Cyprian's, written in exile against the laxist party of Felicissimus in Carthage, presents a practical example of his ecclesiological theory. Although Cyprian inveighed against their policy of penance, pursuing with vigour his line against the dangers of laxism found more fulsomely in the *De lapsis*,¹³⁵ the focus of the letter is ecclesiological: who is, and who is not, in the church. These heretics¹³⁶—for Cyprian, interchangeable with schismatics¹³⁷—have attained such local momentum that they claimed to be the *ecclesia*.¹³⁸ Their motivating error, according to which they overturned episcopal authority in agitating

¹²⁶ *Unit. eccl.* 5; CSEL 3.214. Preceded, in the long version, with the claim that the episcopate is *ipsum unum adque indivisum*; CSEL 3.213.

¹²⁷ *Unit. eccl.* 4; Long Text; CCSL III.251. On this point see the valuable comments in Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, 48–49.

¹²⁸ *Unit. eccl.* 4; Short Text; CCSL III.251.

¹²⁹ *Unit. eccl.* 6; cf. also *Ep.* 4.4.3; 52.1.3.

¹³⁰ *Unit. eccl.* 11. This, as he stresses there and in the *Dom. or.* 23, is due to a defect of charity, a theme which would become dear to Augustine.

¹³¹ *Unit. eccl.* 14.

¹³² And one outside (*foris*) cannot even assume the style of a *christianus*; *Ep.* 55.24.1; CSEL 3.642.

¹³³ *Unit. eccl.* 23; cf. *Ep.* 61.3.1.

¹³⁴ *Ep.* 60.1.1; CSEL 3.691.

¹³⁵ *Ep.* 43.3.1-2.

¹³⁶ *Ep.* 43.7.2; CSEL 3.597: *haereticarum factioni*.

¹³⁷ Heretic is likely more pejorative but equivalent; see Clarke in ACW 44.223n38 and Geoffrey Dunn, 'Heresy and Schism According to Cyprian of Carthage', *Journal of Theological Studies* 55, no. 2 (2004): 551–74.

¹³⁸ *Ep.* 41.1.1-2; they excommunicated those who sided with Cyprian.

for the confessor's indulgence to the lapsed,¹³⁹ placed them by that very fact outside the church, which is essentially identified with the episcopate (*sacerdotium*)¹⁴⁰ itself.¹⁴¹ So, he stated:

God is one and Christ is one: there is one Church and one chair (*cathedra*) founded, by the Lord's authority, upon Peter (*super Petrum*). It is not possible that another altar (*aliud altare*) can be set up, or that a new priesthood (*sacerdotium nouum*) can be appointed, over and above this one altar and this one priesthood. Whoever gathers elsewhere, scatters.¹⁴²

They have forsaken the church—or, what amounts to the same thing¹⁴³—they have forsaken their bishop Cyprian, who sat on the one *cathedra*.¹⁴⁴ This language of 'altar against altar'¹⁴⁵ would have a long legacy in the later Donatist controversy.¹⁴⁶ With such a strong view of the bishop's succession to the Petrine *cathedra*, Cyprian blurred the distinction between apostles and bishops, if he did not altogether remove it.¹⁴⁷ The bishop is truly monarchic,

¹³⁹ *Ep.* 43.3.2.

¹⁴⁰ *Sacerdos* is consistently reserved to bishops in Cyprian's corpus, with a possible exception in *Ep.* 40.1.2 to a presbyter.

¹⁴¹ *Ep.* 43.2.2; CSEL 3.591.

¹⁴² *Ep.* 43.5.2; ACW 44.64; CSEL 3.594.

¹⁴³ For 'Cyprian, the chief representative of the episcopal and ecclesiastical sentiment of his age . . . [t]he Church and the episcopate are to him the same unity.' See this and the discussion in F. C. Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries*, trans. A. Menzies, 3rd ed., vol. 2 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1878), 41–42.

¹⁴⁴ *Ep.* 43.5.4.

¹⁴⁵ The setting up of a rival altar is also excoriated at *Unit. eccl.* 17.

¹⁴⁶ Optatus, I.15; cf. Augustine *C. litt. Petil.* I.10.11; *Unit. eccl.* 20.55.

¹⁴⁷ See e.g. his language about Matthias, elected in place of the 'episcopate' of Judas: *quando de ordinando in locum Judae episcopo Petrus ad plebem loquitur* (*Ep.* 67.4.2; CSEL 3.738). The bishop is an apostolic successor in a particularly robust sense; *Ep.* 45.3.2. See especially *Ep.* 3.3.1; CSEL 3.471: *apostolos id est episcopos*. The bishops is a vicar of the apostles (*Ep.* 66.4), and even *iudex vice Christi*; *Ep.* 59.5.1; CSEL 3.672. His biographer Pontius states: *apostolo etiam ordinationis honore similaretur*; *Vita Cypriani* 5; CSEL 3.xcvi. This was a common opinion, it seems, among contemporary Africans; *Sent.* 79; CSEL 3.459. The equation of apostles and bishops is a remarkable development, which may be contrasted with Tertullian (*Praescr.* 32.1ff), Eusebius (*H.E.* III.2). For the shift towards eventually viewing apostles as bishops, although Cyprian is not discussed, see Paul Parvis, 'When Did Peter Become Bishop of Antioch?', in *Peter in Early Christianity*, ed. Helen Bond and Larry Hurtado (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 263–72. Augustine preserved the distinction; cf. *Bapt.* II.1.2; CSEL 51.176: *quis enim nescit illum apostolatus principatum cuilibet episcopatus praefendum?*

only accountable to God,¹⁴⁸ and hence there can be no *episcopus episcoporum*.¹⁴⁹ This principle, while discernible in practice earlier,¹⁵⁰ was repeatedly emphasised in the rebaptismal controversy. Each bishop, enjoying his *libera potestas*¹⁵¹ was free to do as he sought fit: Cyprian's 256 council was, ultimately, counsel.¹⁵² Harnack was close to the mark when he described Cyprian as the first pope¹⁵³—indeed, for Cyprian, it may be said that every bishop is the pope.¹⁵⁴

One consequence of Cyprian's theology of the bishop, upon which the Donatists knew themselves to be upon firmer ground than their adversaries,¹⁵⁵ was that it restricted sacramental validity to bishops and made it contingent upon their integrity. The bishop was

¹⁴⁸ *Ep.* 59.14.2; CSEL 3.683: *ut uniuscuiusque causa illic audiatur ubi est crimen admissum, et singulis pastoribus portio gregis sit adscripta quam regat unuquisque et gubernet rationem sui actus Domino redditurus*. Cf. 57.5.2, 69.17.

¹⁴⁹ *Sent.* Praef.; CSEL 3.435-6. 'Cyprian . . . enunciate[d] the principle that every bishop . . . can neither judge another bishop nor be judged by him. Such a view precluded the possibility of a hierarchical principle.' Sage, *Cyprian*, 334. The role of the people in this picture is unclear: that they have a duty to separate themselves from unworthy bishops, and an essential role in their election is apparent in *Ep.* 67.3.2, but the mechanics here are left unexplained by Cyprian. In any event, to do justice to his earlier rhetoric against renegade presbyters or people in the controversy over the lapsed: a rebel *clerus* or a risk of a rebel *plebs* does in no wise undercut the legitimacy of the bishop (see e.g. *Epp.* 3.3.1, 16.4.2, 41.1.1, 43.5.2-6.1, 59.5.1-2). For a study on the role of the laity in episcopal elections see Patrick Granfield, 'Episcopal Elections in Cyprian: Clerical and Lay Participation', *Theological Studies* 37, no. 1 (1976): 41–52. Dunn's suggestion that the laity's lies in 'offering initial suggestions' and 'offering . . . testimony about the candidate' to visiting bishops seems most plausible, Dunn, *Cyprian and the Bishops of Rome*, 12–13. Everett Ferguson, using Origen's 13th Homily on Numbers, has shed light on varying election practices in the 3rd century; popular election by the people is one such method, though he argues Origen seems to favour election by presbyters. Everett Ferguson, 'Origen and the Election of Bishops', *Church History* 43, no. 1 (1974): 26–33.

¹⁵⁰ The spring council of 252 (cf. *Ep.* 59.10.1) rebuked the bishop Therapius for restoring a lapsed cleric to ministry, in contravention of the prior year's conciliar judgment, but nevertheless conceded that the bishop's act was to stand as effective and final; *Ep.* 64.1.2.

¹⁵¹ *Ep.* 73.26.1; CSEL 3.798.

¹⁵² *Sent.* Praef.; CSEL 3.435-6. For the finality of a bishop's judgment, even if (as Cyprian thought), wrongly done, *Ep.* 73.23.1. This should be contrasted with Stephen's behaviour in the rebaptismal controversy, where it does seem likely that he threatened excommunication to those who disagreed with him; *Epp.* 74.8; 75.6 and 24; Robert Evans, *One and Holy: The Church in Latin Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1972), 61.

¹⁵³ Harnack, 'Cyprian Als Enthusiast', 186. Batiffol accepts this with some perplexity, suggesting that he might have to accuse Cyprian of an 'erreur ecclésiologique' in his arrogation of Petrine succession equally to all apostles and thence to all the bishops. Batiffol, *L'Église naissante et le Catholicisme*, 436–37. Further: 'The recognition of Peter was symbolic for all bishops and not for Rome in particular.' in Sage, *Cyprian*, 334.

¹⁵⁴ Cyprian is titled *papa* in the letters of the presbyters of Rome (*Epp.* 30, 31, 36) and by Carthaginian confessors (*Ep.* 23). This was a 'widely used form of address' for bishops at the time, although there is no evidence it was yet used of the Roman bishop; Clarke, ACW 43.207n3. The first bishop of Rome known to be called such is Marcellus (296-304). See the excursus in Benson, *Cyprian*, 29–31.

¹⁵⁵ 'In [this] respect, Donatism was a continuation of the position maintained by the Council of Carthage in September 256. The Donatist claim to be the successors of the Cyprianic Church was to this extent justified.' Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 126.

the conduit of grace for his local church, and the Donatists were faithful in developing this theory more explicitly to make the bishop a mediator between man and God.¹⁵⁶ The total competence a bishop enjoyed over sacramental administration was consequent upon the fact that he enjoyed a monopoly on sacramental grace as the primary celebrant of the community. Presbyters were sacramental delegates, whose prerogatives could be revoked as easily as they were conferred.¹⁵⁷ A consequence of such a robust view of episcopal mediation is Cyprian's famous insistence that sacramental efficacy depended on the moral quality and ritual purity of the bishop.¹⁵⁸ Thus, impure bishops were inefficacious, and schismatic ones worthless, since, as he asked, how can they give what they do not have?¹⁵⁹ God is deaf to the prayers of an unworthy bishop, and the laity who remain in communion with impure prelates and partake of their sacrifices are sharers in their sin.¹⁶⁰ This, as Caecilianists were forced to admit, was the authoritative inspiration behind the Donatist doctrine of what I call 'hamartological contamination', which would have severe consequences for their attitude to transmarine churches (Chapter 3.1-2).

While the *De unitate*, addressed either to the local situation in Carthage or in Rome, or both, is theoretically interested in the unity of the church in her one bishop, it offers a slight glimpse into the unity that obtains between local churches within the universal church. The *episcopatus unus* is likened to a sun with its rays, a tree with its branches, a stream flowing out of its own source, adapting an image from Tertullian's account of the Trinity.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Parmenian in *Parm.* II.8.15-16 and Petilian in *C. litt. Petil.* II.35.82.

¹⁵⁷ *Ep.* 14.2.1, in hiding, delegates his episcopal duties to his presbyters and deacons *uice* himself. Also *Epp.* 16.4.2 (*ut interim prohibeantur offerre*; CSEL 3.520); 34.1, he excommunicates a presbyter and his deacon; 41-42 for the excommunication of Felicissimus.

¹⁵⁸ *Ep.* 65.4.1; CSEL 3.725: *nec oblatio sanctificari illic possit ubi sanctus spiritus non sit, nec cuiquam Dominus per eius orationes . . . prosit.* Cf. 71.1.2; 72.2.1ff.

¹⁵⁹ *Ep.* 70.2.3; CSEL 3.769: *quis autem potest dare quod ipse non habeat?* Also 72.1.3. The theology behind this is developed in *Ep.* 73.4.1-7.2.

¹⁶⁰ *Ep.* 67.2.2, 3.1-2.

¹⁶¹ Discussed in Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, 38-39.

The church is one in her *radix* and *fons*, and in the particular passage that Augustine later seized upon, he wrote:

Thus too the Church bathed in the light of the Lord projects its rays over the whole world (*per orbem totum*), yet there is one light which is diffused everywhere, and the unity of the body is not separated. She extends her branches over the whole earth in fruitful abundance; she extends her richly flowing streams far and wide; yet her head is one, and her source is one (*unum tamen caput est et origo una*).¹⁶²

Lest there be any doubt that this unifying principle is the Petrine episcopate, Cyprian returned to this theme in an acephalous letter written in reply to certain lapsed Christians.¹⁶³

In a later letter of 254/5, Cyprian wrote on behalf of thirty-two colleagues that the one baptism and the one church were founded by Christ on Peter, who was ‘the source and ground of its oneness (*origine unitatis et ratione fundata*)’.¹⁶⁴ The church is one because there is one bishop, and each bishop is a full possessor of the one episcopate, held undividedly in common with their peers.

In a letter dated to late 253, Cyprian responded to certain criticisms of his conduct in order to authenticate his episcopal integrity and prerogatives. As might be expected, he identified the source of ‘schisms and heresies’ as dissension from the bishop appointed by God,¹⁶⁵ and stated that the entire *ecclesia* and her sacraments ‘rest on the bishop’.¹⁶⁶ After citing Matthew 16.18, Cyprian placed himself upon this Petrine Rock and stated:

the Church consists of the people who remain united with their bishop, it is the flock that stays by its shepherd. By that you ought to realize that the bishop is in the Church

¹⁶² *Unit. eccl.* 5; CSEL 3.214.

¹⁶³ *Ep.* 33.1.1; CSEL 3.566. For the situation of this letter and its interpretation I follow Dunn, *Cyprian and the Bishops of Rome*, 35–36.

¹⁶⁴ *Ep.* 70.3.1; ACW 47.47; CSEL 3.769. For this reference to Peter see the Cf. also *Ep.* 73.7.1: Peter, *unde unitatis originem instituit [Christus] et ostendit*; CSEL 3.783.

¹⁶⁵ *Ep.* 66.5.1. For Christ’s appointment of bishops see *Epp.* 3.3.2; 48.4.2; 55.8.1; 59.5.1-2; possibly also 46.1.2. Succinctly at *Ep.* 61.3.1; CSEL 3.696-7: *quis episcopus eius unus diuina ordinatione delectus*.

¹⁶⁶ *Ep.* 66.5.2.

and the Church is in the bishop, and whoever is not with the bishop is not in the Church.¹⁶⁷

While this theoretical argument, in its Cyprianic logic, was more than sufficient to defend his status, Cyprian twice in this letter turned to the authentication provided by the communion of the universal church. He was not only recognised as bishop by holy martyrs and confessors, by virtuous virgins and widows, but even ‘all the churches throughout the whole world...are united with us by the bond of unity’.¹⁶⁸ This is a function of the unity of the Petrine episcopate, which both serves and instantiates the unity of the church, which ‘forms one single whole...it is everywhere linked and bonded tightly together by the glue of the bishops sticking firmly to each other (*sacerdotum glutino copulata*)’.¹⁶⁹ The adhesion of this ‘glue’ of charity was to be tested, and appealed to again, in the context of the Novatian schism, when a new challenge to unity was posed by rival episcopal networks.

(3.2) In practice: the Novatian crisis

Cornelius was elected bishop of Rome in the spring of 251 and ordained by sixteen neighbouring bishops, the Roman clergy deciding that it was sufficiently safe to fill the seat that had been vacant since Fabian’s martyrdom in 250.¹⁷⁰ Novatian, who had played a prominent and senior role—he was the *scriptor* of the letter (*Ep.* 30) of the Roman clergy to

¹⁶⁷ *Ep.* 66.8.3; ACW 46.121; CSEL 3.733: *et illi sunt ecclesia plebs sacerdoti adunata et pastori suo grex adhaerens. unde scire debes episcopum in ecclesiae esse et ecclesiam in episcopo et si qui cum episcopo non sit in ecclesia non esse.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ep.* 66.7.2; ACW 46.120; CSEL 3.732: *ecclesiae denique uniuersae per totum mundum nobiscum unitatis uinculo copulatae.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ep.* 66.8.3; ACW 46.123; CSEL 3.733.

¹⁷⁰ *Ep.* 55.8.4, 24.2. This was a vacancy for some sixteenth months. I follow the overview of Novatian’s history and the schism in Dunn, *Cyprian and the Bishops of Rome*, 48–58. See also 58–63 on Cyprian’s recognition of Cornelius. The decision of the Roman clergy to wait some time before re-election may also have been ‘a calculated move to prevent the factionalism’ that would inevitably arise during persecution; Dunn, ‘Cyprian’s Rival Bishops and Their Communities’, 86.

Cyprian in the summer of 250¹⁷¹ and engineered the penitential policy at the time—rallied support from the more rigorist Roman confessors and established himself as a rival bishop. The ensuing drama was the first instance of a formal schism in Cyprian’s career (i.e., one involving rival bishops claiming the same see), since the troublesome supporters of Felicissimus had not yet attracted a bishop to their party. Both Cornelius and Novatian hastened to secure letters of recognition from other churches.¹⁷² Novatian sent his letter announcing his election to the Africans swiftly after Cornelius’ own, and the Africans responded with initial circumspection. The ensuing episode may be narrated through Cyprian’s later letters to Cornelius, justifying this initially hesitant approach of the African Church to his election (*Epp.* 44, 45, and 48).¹⁷³ Novatian sent a posse of supporters with his letter,¹⁷⁴ and Cornelius, solicitous to ensure African recognition, dispatched two bishops.¹⁷⁵ However, it appears that their apparent tergiversation was not due to a genuine ambivalence between rival candidates, as the Africans refused to give a hearing to Novatian’s envoys.¹⁷⁶ I accept the position of Evans,¹⁷⁷ and more recently, of Dunn,¹⁷⁸ that what motivated Cyprian to acknowledge Cornelius over Novatian was strictly procedural: it was not a back-handed adjudication of their competing theologies or policies regarding the lapsed. Crucially, when Cyprian later defended Cornelius and his election to Antonianus,¹⁷⁹ it was because Cornelius

¹⁷¹ *Ep.* 55.5.2. It is widely accepted that he also authored *Epp.* 31 and 36, which exhibits a fairer Latinity than the first, rougher letter from Rome to Cyprian (*Ep.* 8). See Clarke in ACW 2.119, 133f, 165. Novatian’s ‘eloquence’ (*facundiae*) is pejoratively acknowledged in *Ep.* 60.3.1; CSEL 3.694.

¹⁷² *Epp.* 44.1.3-3.1; 45.1.2-3.1; cf. Dionysius’ response to one of Novatian’s letters in Eusebius *H.E.* VI.45.1.

¹⁷³ A valuable study of these letters is Maurice Bévenot, ‘Cyprian and His Recognition of Cornelius’, *Journal of Theological Studies* 28, no. 2 (1977): 346–59. Also essential is the letter to the bishops sent to Italy, *Ep.* 41, discussed below.

¹⁷⁴ *Ep.* 44.1.1.

¹⁷⁵ *Epp.* 44.1.3; 45.1.2. They were Italian, see Dunn, ‘Cyprian’s Rival Bishops and Their Communities’, 87–88.

¹⁷⁶ *Epp.* 44.1.1.

¹⁷⁷ Evans, *One and Holy*, 47.

¹⁷⁸ Dunn, *Cyprian and the Bishops of Rome*, 63. Indeed, the contest between Cornelius and Novatian may not have had any theological motivation to begin with and was strictly a personal contest; 56-58.

¹⁷⁹ An African bishop who had sent his letter of recognition to Cyprian to forward to Rome, indicating that Cyprian served as the conduit for letters of communion; Antonianus expresses some doubts about what the nature of Novatian’s *haeresis* was, after the mission of Maximus the Novatian *pseudoepiscopus* sent to Africa (*Ep.* 59.9.2) in Africa had won some support among African clergy.

had been made bishop *cum Fabiani locus id est cum locus Petri et gradus cathedrae sacerdotalis uacaret*.¹⁸⁰ That is to say, Cornelius was temporally antecedent—he was elected and consecrated first, and legitimately.¹⁸¹ The Novatian movement was not short-lived, and Cyprian had occasion to comment more fully on the nature of their schism even after Cornelius had died in 253, in a letter to a bishop in Mauretania. After establishing again the coincident unicity of bishop and church, he presented a strict dilemma: either the church is to be found with Cornelius, or Novatian—but since Cornelius had been legitimately ordained in one *cathedra* by succeeding Fabian, then Novatian cannot be a bishop.¹⁸²

This unicity of the bishop and his church was accepted and assumed on all sides, as Burns comments: ‘The issue between Cornelius and Novatian in Rome, and later between Cyprian, Maximus and Fortunatus in Carthage, was not whether a local church might be served by more than one bishop. Neither the history of Israel nor the Roman political system nor even the Trinitarian theory of the third century provided a model of shared imperium.’¹⁸³ While Brent is right to highlight and illuminate the way Cyprian may have operated within the context of ‘pagan jurisprudence, in which there could be only one episcopal *sella curulis* over a defined and sanctified sacred space (*pomerium*)’ it would be both reductionist to attribute the entirety of this view to Roman law, and wide of the mark to credit Cyprian with its invention or propagation.¹⁸⁴ By the mid-3rd century the monarchic status of the bishop

¹⁸⁰ *Ep.* 55.8.4; CSEL 3.630.

¹⁸¹ Clarke: ‘For Cyprian the basic illegality (*inlicitae*) of Novatian’s *ordinatio* was chronological.’; ACW 44.227, note to *Ep.* 44.1.1.

¹⁸² *Ep.* 69.3.2; CSEL 3.752: *si enim apud Nouatianum est, apud Cornelium non fuit. si uero apud Cornelium fuit, qui Fabiano episcopo legitima ordinatione successit . . . Nouatianus in ecclesia non est nec episcopus computari potest, qui euangelica et apostolica traditione contempta nemini succedens a se ipso ortus est.* Around the same time, Cyprian and his colleagues wrote to Lucius, the briefly-tenured successor of Cornelius, praising their steadfastness in persecution as manifest proof that they are the true church, with the people gathered in the bond of charity around their lawful bishop; *Ep.* 61.3.1.

¹⁸³ Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 90.

¹⁸⁴ Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 286, cf. 61–63. The same may be said of Batiffol’s view that Cyprian’s conciliar procedure aped Roman senatorial practice; Pierre Batiffol, *Études de liturgie et d’archéologie chrétienne*. (Paris: Gabalda et Picard, 1919), 84–153. Amidon has critiqued this theory, arguing that this dependence is indirect and incidental, in Philip Amidon, ‘The Procedure of St. Cyprian’s Synods’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 37, no. 4 (1983): 328–39.

was generally taken for granted, and no brainchild of Cyprian's.¹⁸⁵ Cyprian's great formula of church unity—one God, one Christ, and one *cathedra* of the bishop¹⁸⁶—was axiomatic. When Cyprian in a later letter described Novatian as a successor to nobody but himself,¹⁸⁷ he was not insinuating that he had no episcopal consecrators,¹⁸⁸ but rather that he has not properly succeeded to the one episcopate, which he cannot have received since Cornelius already sat upon the singular local *cathedra* in which it was invested. The town was not big enough for the both of them. In this paragraph, Cyprian continued to argue that the very unity of the episcopate was ordained by God (*unitatem de diuina auctoritate uenientem*), and that no man can be a shepherd where another has already been appointed there.¹⁸⁹

After Cyprian received the announcement of Cornelius' election and Novatian's offensively-toned¹⁹⁰ counter-claim during a 251 council of Carthage, he sent two African bishops, Caldonius and Fortunatus, to investigate.¹⁹¹ Cyprian recorded his instructions to them:

To all who were sailing away [to Rome to investigate] we explained to them the situation individually so that they should not be scandalized on their travels, exhorting them to discern (*ut agnoscerent*) the womb and root of the Catholic Church (*ecclesiae catholicae matricem et radicem*) and to cleave to it.¹⁹²

This episode will be inversely rehearsed at the outbreak of the Donatist schism, when two bishops were sent from Italy to investigate *ubi esset catholica* in Carthage (Chapter 2.1.2). In Optatus' telling, which is our only source for this event, the Italian bishops identified the

¹⁸⁵ Telfer argues that the unicity of the bishop in a particular area was particularly suited to Africa, whose native paganism placed a greater emphasis on particular deities of a given locale, but this seems to have been taken for granted across the Christian world and needn't be traced to tenuous assumptions regarding North African religious psychology. William Telfer, *The Office of a Bishop* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1962), 129.

¹⁸⁶ As *Ep.* 43.5.3 above; cf. also *Unit. eccl.* 23.

¹⁸⁷ *Ep.* 69.5.1

¹⁸⁸ Eusebius provides the three who were his consecrators in *H.E.* VI.34.8-9.

¹⁸⁹ *Ep.* 69.5.1; CSEL 3.753.

¹⁹⁰ *Ep.* 45.2.

¹⁹¹ *Epp.* 44.1; 48.2.

¹⁹² *Ep.* 48.3.1; ACW 44.75; CSEL 3.607.

catholica by finding out which of the rival candidates enjoyed communion with the universal church. That this is an editorialising gloss from Optatus, projecting backwards his own theology of catholicity, will be argued in its proper place (Chapter 4.2). What is important to note here, however, is that there is no such conception in Cyprian. Eno explains that the *matrix* and *radix* does not refer ‘to the Roman church itself’,¹⁹³ but rather to ‘the Catholic Church’, which, more specifically, means the lawful bishop there—in this case, Cornelius.¹⁹⁴ The discernment of the catholic church was equivalent to the identification of the proper local bishop.¹⁹⁵

The Novatian movement, however, escalated beyond being a purely local schism in Rome to proliferate throughout the Empire. Although now taking international proportions, Cyprian prolonged his commitment to the unicity of the bishop in the one Petrine episcopate as a functional criterion for dealing with schism that has spilled beyond the local limen. The *episcopatus unus* spread throughout the world of the *De unitate* was adapted against the competing episcopal network of Novatian and his bishops:

there is but one Church founded by Christ but it is divided into many members throughout the world (*per totum mundum in multa membra diuisa*); likewise, there is but one episcopate (*episcopatus unus*) but it is spread amongst the harmonious host of all the numerous bishops. And yet, despite this arrangement established by God, despite this unity in the catholic Church which is universally (*ubique*) linked and locked together, he is now attempting to set up a man-made church and he is sending out to numerous cities upstart apostles of his own (*nouos apostolos suos*) to lay down brand-new foundations for an establishment of his own devising. And whereas in every one of the provinces and each of the cities there have been long

¹⁹³ This is the reading foisted upon it by e.g. Klaus Schatz, *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 20–21; Dix, *Jurisdiction in the Early Church, Episcopal and Papal*, 61.

¹⁹⁴ Eno, ‘The Work of Optatus as a Turning Point in the African Ecclesiology’, 676. Cf. Robert Eno, ‘The Significance of the Lists of Roman Bishops in the Anti-Donatist Polemic’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 47, no. 2 (1993): 160. So to Michaud, on this passage: ‘On peut déjà en conclure que l’Eglise catholique n’est pas l’Eglise romaine.’; Michaud, ‘L’ecclésiologie de St. Cyprien’, 40. Plumpe’s analysis of this passage, according to which it is ‘the universal church’ or ‘the apostolic church’ is unpersuasive; Joseph Conrad Plumpe, *Mater Ecclesia: An Inquiry into the Concept of the Church as Mother in Early Christianity* (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1943), 96–97.

¹⁹⁵ Cyprian uses *matrix* and *radix* describing the unity of the church around the episcopate in *Unit. eccl.* 5 and 18. Schismatics have separated *a matrice* of the episcopate, *Unit. eccl.* 23; CSEL 3.231. Explicitly about Novatian, Cyprian claimed he separated from the *radix* and *matrix* by setting up his own episcopate; *Ep.* 48.3.1; CSEL 3.607.

since appointed bishops...he even has the effrontery to appoint over and above them a new set of spurious bishops (*pseudoepiscopos*).¹⁹⁶

This is an elegantly straightforward transposition of his basic theology of the unity of the local church around her bishop to a supra-local level: there were already local bishops everywhere, alike partakers of the *episcopatus unus*, and just as Novatian could not be the true bishop of Rome because Cornelius had already been ordained there, his *noui apostoli* could not claim episcopal thrones which were already occupied.

The Novatians also sent a bishop to Carthage, a certain Maximus, who Cyprian excoriated also as a *pseudoepiscopus*.¹⁹⁷ Most of the Novatian clergy sent to Africa likely came from Italy, as Burns argues.¹⁹⁸ With Novatians present in his own province, and because the laxists around Felicissimus had ordained their own *pseudoepiscopus* Fortunatus,¹⁹⁹ Cyprian felt that it was necessary to send a list to Cornelius specifying which were the catholic bishops in Africa. In a letter to Cornelius, he explained that he has sent:

the names (*nomina*) of the bishops here in Africa who govern the brethren within the catholic Church with integrity and soundness of faith. Indeed, it was a unanimous resolution of our Council to write this list (*conpendium*) to you.²⁰⁰

This approach, with its familiar conciliar method, was a simple application of Cyprian's understanding of the church to the problem of rival episcopal networks. As chief bishop of Africa, he compiled a registry of all the legitimate bishops of the *ecclesia catholica*—namely, those who were ordained first and properly in their respective sees—and sent this to the bishop of Rome, so that bishops of Italy would be properly informed of their correct overseas colleagues. As in the mission of the African bishops at the outset of the schism, the

¹⁹⁶ *Ep.* 55.24.2; ACW 46.48; CSEL 3.642.

¹⁹⁷ *Ep.* 59.9.2.

¹⁹⁸ Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 102–7.

¹⁹⁹ Ordained by a circle of bishops organised by the disgruntled Privatus of Lambaesis; *Ep.* 59.9.1.

²⁰⁰ *Ep.* 59.9.3; ACW 46.76; CSEL 3.676–7.

identification of which bishop was ‘catholic’ was a function of the validity of their claim to the unique episcopate. It remains to be seen, however, what would happen should one of these catholic bishops forfeit the episcopate through heresy, apostasy, or violation of the episcopal college’s unity.

In a letter written one or two years later in 244 or 245,²⁰¹ Cyprian returned to the image of episcopal glue in the context of the spread of Novatianism to Arles in Gaul. He repeated the same language of the body of bishops ‘glued’ together, but also described how this global network functions in a self-correcting way. If one of the bishops *ex collegio nostro* should fall into heresy, other bishops were there to step in (*subueniant ceteri*) and rectify the situation. He then likened the global church to a collective, constellated by individual ports (*portus*) around the sea, or inns (*stabula*) along the road: if one of these ports should be dangerous to call in to, or one of the inns has been taken over by brigands, the faithful might take refuge in other secure ones.²⁰² Thus, the global church, as a network of episcopal churches, retained its integrity in the event of localised collapses, and that same network was tasked with the repair of its weakened links.²⁰³ This time, Cyprian’s remarks on the episcopal glue were more than theoretical. He was writing to Stephen before the outbreak of the baptismal controversy would sour their relations. Cyprian called upon Stephen to intervene in the case of Macrianus of Arles, who had adopted the Novatian ‘heresy’, asking him to write to Gaul and support the local bishops in initiating excommunication procedures.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Clarke dates *Ep.* 66 to late 253, and *Ep.* 68 conjecturally to 254 or 255.

²⁰² *Ep.* 68.3.2-3; CSEL 3.745-6.

²⁰³ See Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 89–93, 151–65.

²⁰⁴ *Ep.* 68.2.1-3.1.

(4) Transmarine churches

Later Caecilianist polemic fastened upon communion with the universal church in general, and specific transmarine churches in particular, to support their claims against the Donatists. Like the discussion on catholicity, the purpose of this section is to draw attention to an absence. While Cyprian had a certain interest in, and high estimation of, several of these transmarine churches, there are no instances in which Cyprian sought to make communion with any given church a proof of, let alone necessary condition for, belonging in the church. The Novatians, for example, were never invited to nor blamed for their failure to commune with certain apostolic churches, in marked contrast to Caecilianist strategies against the Donatists. In the first place, Cyprian was remarkably reserved, by contrast with both Tertullian²⁰⁵ and his contemporaries,²⁰⁶ in appealing to apostolic churches even as authorities for doctrinal or practical matters.²⁰⁷ This may be contrasted with his correspondent, Firmilian of Caesarea.²⁰⁸ Writing to Cyprian in the course of the rebaptismal dispute with Stephen, Firmilian played off the differences between Rome and Jerusalem regarding Easter dating, giving, as Burns comments, ‘priority to the church of Jerusalem’,²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ *Praescr.* 20-22 and 32.1ff.; for authentication of customs like virginal veiling see the later work *De virg. vel.* 2.2.

²⁰⁶ Compare Stephen in *Ep.* 75.5.2, 6.2, 19.2. See also the *De rebaptismate* 1.1. This text, previously assigned to the late fourth century Ursinus (on the basis of Gennadius, *De vir.* 27), has been re-dated to this 3rd century rebaptismal controversy, and is generally held to be an African supporter of Stephen’s views; Hartel in CSEL 3.lxii; Monceaux II.91-97; J. Patout Burns, ‘On Rebaptism: Social Organization in the Third Century Church’, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1, no. 4 (1993): 379n74; Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 297-307. Mattei, who agrees that it is African (CCSL 3F.521-6) notes however important divergences from what we know of Stephen’s sacramental theology (ibid, 531-2 and 532n45).

²⁰⁷ Bévenot highlighted this ‘ambivalent attitude to ‘custom’ or ‘tradition’; Bévenot, ‘Cyprian’s Platform in the Rebaptism Controversy’, 127. See famously *Ep.* 74.9.2, defended in 74.10.2; also 71.2.1 and 3.1. Cf. *Sent.* 28, 30, 56.

²⁰⁸ I would note that there is one periphrastic citation of the prototypical community of believers in Jerusalem, regarding apostolic tonsorial practices, in *Laps.* 6 and 11, cf. 35. Cyprian seems to think beard-wearing is proper to the Christian, as in here and *Ad Quirinum* 3.84; cf. also *Laps.* 30 and Tertullian, *De spect.* 23.

²⁰⁹ Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 158. He later suggests (p. 165), on the basis of this passage, that Firmilian ‘may have expected the bishop of Jerusalem, as custodian of apostolic tradition’ to preside over ecumenical councils, if they were known in that age; but this counterfactual rests upon too slim a plinth of evidence.

using this church as the benchmark for ecclesiastical custom.²¹⁰ In general, Cyprian's appeal to precedent or tradition was to that of his own local church.²¹¹ He did not direct his correspondents to consider the witness of any transmarine church for traditional precedent and authority, and he did not use communion with specific transmarine churches as a criterion for adjudicating between competing episcopal claimants, as his Caecilianist successors would do.

(4.1) The seven churches

Nevertheless, Cyprian is responsible for providing the exegetical framework which elevated two sets of transmarine churches that would occupy an important place in subsequent reflection. This, perhaps Cyprian's most subtle contribution to both later Caecilianist and Donatist thought, is also one that has not been recognised by subsequent scholarship: his exegesis of 'the seven churches'. These are the seven Pauline churches, namely, the seven churches which were recipients of his canonical letters, paired with the seven churches which received letters from John in the Apocalypse. Though notice of these parallel sevens was given in the Muratorian Fragment,²¹² which suggests that Paul was adhering to the precedent set by John, Cyprian was the first to invest them with theological significance.

²¹⁰ *Ep.* 75.6.1; ACW 47.81; CSEL 3.813: *nec obseruari illic omnia aequaliter quae Hierosolymis obseruantur* etc. Even demons acknowledged the greater authority of the Jerusalem church; *Ep.* 75.10.3, see Clarke's comment in ACW 47.107-8.

²¹¹ *Ep.* 1.2.1; CSEL 3.466; cf. also 15.1.2; 16.1.2; 55.21.2; 63.17.2; 68.5.1; 71.4.1. Importantly, Cyprian does appeal to African precedent in the rebaptismal controversy at *Ep.* 70.1.2. But, as Firmilian perhaps embarrassingly pointed out (*Ep.* 75.19.3), and as Cyprian begrudgingly conceded (*Epp.* 71.2.1, 73.3.1), the custom of baptising heretics was only recently introduced to Africa under his predecessor Agrippinus. For the council of Agrippinus see Augustine *Unic. bapt.* 13.22; *Cresc.* III.3.3. Estimated in the 220s or 230s, respectively e.g. Bévenot, 'Cyprian's Platform in the Rebaptism Controversy', 123; Dunn, 'Heresy and Schism According to Cyprian of Carthage', 573.

²¹² The Muratorian Fragment is a Latin document that outlines, with modest commentary, the New Testament canon. For the Muratorian Canon, and Hippolytus' similar linking of the two sets of seven, see Albert C. Sundberg, 'Canon Muratori: A Fourth-Century List', *HTR* 66, no. 1 (1973), 1-41, 19n60.

This is in both of his testimonial works, the *Ad Quirinum* and *Ad Fortunatum*.²¹³ The first is an anti-Judaic collection,²¹⁴ the second a briefer one steeling the reader for martyrdom.²¹⁵ In both, a series of Biblical sevens, from the days of creation to the sevenfold lamp set in the tabernacle, were catalogued, culminating in the barren woman in Isaiah who bore seven sons. These instances fulfil a ‘septenary sacrament’,²¹⁶ Cyprian explained, which was detected in the co-incident sets of seven churches addressed by both Paul and John. In the *Ad Quirinum*, Cyprian claimed that the Apostle and the Seer both wrote to seven churches in order that the number seven be preserved (*ut seruetur septenarius numerus*).²¹⁷

In the *Ad Fortunatum*, the fuller account of the two, Paul was mindful of this *numerus legitimus* (a phrase that will recur in Tyconius’ own discussion of the sevenfold Church, Chapter 3.3.2).²¹⁸ He continued in this last text with a noticeable but elusive gloss, identifying these churches with the seven sons of the barren woman in Isaiah 4. It has a variant reading:

With the seven children the mother is also clearly joined, their origin and root, who later bore the seven churches, she being the first and only one established by the voice of the Lord upon Peter/the rock (*super Petrum/petram Domini uoce fundata*; Hartel’s and Weber’s, respectively).²¹⁹

²¹³ On their full Cyprianic derivation, see the arguments in Sage, *Cyprian*, 395–97 and see 379. For an argument on the pre-Cyprianic origins of the *Ad Quirinum* see Charles Bobertz, ‘An Analysis of *Vita Cypriani* 3.6-10 and the Attribution of *Ad Quirinum* to Cyprian of Carthage’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 46, no. 2 (1992): 112–28. Bobertz’s argument has been revised in Edwina Murphy, ‘“As Far as My Poor Memory Suggested”: Cyprian’s Compilation of *Ad Quirinum*’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 68, no. 5 (2014): 533–50. In any event, it was received in antiquity as Cyprian’s: see e.g. Augustine, *C. du. ep. Pelag.* IV.10.27, and in *Retract.* II.27.2 he cites *Ad Quirinum* III.8 as a Cyprianic authority. These two works are discussed in the context of his ecclesiastical career in Mattias Gassman, ‘Cyprian’s Early Career in the Church of Carthage’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 70, no. 1 (2019): esp. 8-15.

²¹⁴ ‘It takes the form of three books . . . The first book sets forth the Christian *narratio* by giving a detailed account of salvation history through a string of biblical quotations; the second concerns Christology . . . ; the third contains Christ’s precepts and teaching’; Harrison, *The Art of Listening in the Early Church*, 102–3.

²¹⁵ Gassman, ‘Cyprian’s Early Career in the Church of Carthage’.

²¹⁶ *Ad Fortunatum* 11; CCSL 3.205: *septenarium numerum sacramento perfectae consummationis implentes*.

²¹⁷ *Ad Quirinum* I.20; CCSL 3.20-1. Cyprian’s interest in numerology can be illustrated by a comparison between his *Dom. or.* 34 and Tertullian’s *Orat.* 25, upon which he closely relied and expanded here.

²¹⁸ *Ad Fortunatum* 11; CCSL 3.205: . . . *qui huius numeri legitimi et certi meminit, ad septem ecclesias scribit*. The range of Cyprian’s influence, however neglected, on this point is evident in also in Lactantius, who speaks of the seven days of the week as *sepenarius numerus legitimus ac plenus*; *Inst.* VII.14.8.

²¹⁹ Translation mine. *Ad Fortunatum*, 11; CSEL 3.338; CCSL 3A.205-206. The text is identical in both except for *petram* (Hartel’s), and *Petrum* (Weber’s); I reproduce the latter: *Cum septem liberis plane copulatur et*

The deficiencies in Hartel's edition of these two works have been well-known since the 19th century.²²⁰ Strengthening Weber's reading is that it has a strict verbal match with one of Cyprian's letters considered above: the one *ecclesia* and the one *cathedra* are *super Petrum Domini uoce fundata*.²²¹ The identity of this mother remains elusive, but that she precedes these two slightly overlapping sets of apostolic churches probably indicates she is not a particular church but rather a universal principle or the apostolic church in general.²²²

These two homologous passages in Cyprian have not received much attention, likely because they feature in, perhaps understandably, the least-read texts in his corpus.²²³ The endurance of the motif of the sevenfold church, which will recur in all the major African writers after the Donatist schism (Optatus, Tyconius, Augustine), has been noticed by scholars but its Cyprianic origin has not yet been identified.²²⁴ While this sevenfold church and the two symbolic sets of seven churches appear nowhere else in his writings, this identification embedded itself in the North African exegetical tradition, in a minor but noticeable position. The symbolic, sevenfold constitution of the church that Cyprian established will be taken up and adapted within the context of the Donatist controversy.

mater, origo et radix, quae ecclesias septem postmodum peperit, ipsa prima et una super Petrum Domini uoce fundata.

²²⁰ The primary issues are his reliance on a small number of MSS, only 4-5 for the *Ad Fortunatum* and only 6 for the *Ad Quirinum*, where he relied on the oldest manuscript rather than what has been established as the more accurate (that of the Codex Laureschamensis). Weber's edition has considerably expanded this, using 17 MSS for *Ad Quirinum* and 14 MSS for *Ad Fortunatum*. On this see Michael Fahey, *Cyprian and the Bible: A Study in Third-Century Exegesis* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971), 22–24.

²²¹ *Ep.* 43.5.2; CSEL 3.594.

²²² Plumpe, *Mater Ecclesia*, 97–98. He notes Tertullian's use of *matrix* for apostolic churches and *matricem religionis* for Jerusalem, *Praesr.* 21.4 and *Marc.* IV.34.

²²³ The passage from *Ad Fortunatum* is translated and commented on in Fahey, who, however, does not note the parallel passage in *Ad Quirinum*; Fahey, *Cyprian and the Bible*, 598–602. But cf. 102.

²²⁴ Edwards notes the use in Augustine and an earlier instance in Victorinus of Pettau: Edwards, *Optatus*, 43n51. Similarly, Robinson's note to Tyconius' *Expositio* (FOTC 134.38-39n92) draws attention to the Murtorian fragment and Victorinus as sources for Tyconius' thinking on the seven churches, but not Cyprian, who must be judged his direct source. Due to textual reasons I have argued that Victorinus' own usage is itself derived from Cyprian, as his knowledge of the *Ad Quirinum* has been suggested by one other possible use identified by Haussleiter in CSEL 49.52, note to line 15 of *In Apoc.* IV.4, where a suggestive parallel to *Ad Quirinum* 1.21—the text immediately succeeding this one on the seven churches—occurs. This is discussed in greater depth in my forthcoming Joshua Caminiti, 'The *Septiformis Ecclesia* in the North African Ecclesiological Tradition', *Studia Patristica*, 2026.

Tyconius was the most enthusiastic in its reception, and continued in the same vein as Cyprian, using it as a numerological key to the ‘perfection’ of the church (Chapter 3.3.2). Optatus, on the other hand, creatively turned the seven churches into anti-Donatist witnesses, as authenticating transmarine centres of communion, but did not avail himself of any numerological resonances (Chapter 4.3.2). Augustine was familiar with the *Ad Fortunatum*; it appears to have been used as a ‘quasi-liturgical’ text on the feast day of St Lawrence.²²⁵ Augustine will combine Optatus’ anti-Donatist argument with both Cyprian’s and Tyconius’ exegesis to develop an even stronger anti-Donatist argument: these sets of seven churches somehow represent the unity of the church, making lack of communion with them a particularly damning mark on any claims to authentic catholicity (Chapter 5.4.1).

(4.2) Rome

Cyprian’s attitude to the church of Rome and her bishop has been a subject of vehement disagreement since he was introduced as a critical source in late medieval ecclesiastical controversies, and then the Reformation. Claimed alike by De Maistre as a witness to papal prerogatives, by Bossuet as the architect of conciliarist Gallicanism, by Hooker as an Anglican, and by Calvin as an early rebel against the papacy, few Western theorists have undertaken to adumbrate their theology of the church without enlisting Cyprian in their support. For Gibbon, Cyprian the African was Hannibal *redivivus* who marched against Roman Stephen in the rebaptismal controversy.²²⁶ Modern scholarship has exhibited a range, if more moderate in scope and professedly more objective in intent, in interpretation.

²²⁵ As evidenced in *Serm.* 303, 305A; Andrew McGowan, ‘Augustine and the North African Liturgical Reading Tradition’, in *Augustine and Tradition: Influences, Contexts, Legacy*, ed. David Hunter and Jonathan Yates (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2021), 42.

²²⁶ Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, New ed., vol. 1 (New York: Hovendon, 1901), 416.

Bévenot, while correcting some of the enthusiasm of earlier ultramontane readings,²²⁷ argued that for Cyprian Rome was ‘in some sense the centre’ of the church, functioning centrifugally like ‘the secretariate of some international organization’.²²⁸ However, in the full and more recent treatments of the subject by Dunn and Merdinger, the same conclusion is found that Cyprian cannot be taken to accord Rome any jurisdictional primacy.²²⁹ This fact, sometimes acknowledged by earlier controversialists,²³⁰ and subject to ongoing disagreement, is not however of interest to the present investigation, which is not concerned with questions concerning jurisdiction or primacy.

The connections between the Carthaginian and Roman churches reflect the frequent exchange and interdependence of these cities in the third century. With favourable conditions, the journey to Ostia from Carthage could take as little as two days, and a third of grain consumption in Rome and Italy was grown in Africa.²³¹ As the foregoing has shown, the two premier cities of the Western Mediterranean collaborated closely throughout the decade of Cyprian’s episcopacy. The Carthaginian church, from the time of Tertullian, had a certain consciousness of authenticating harmony with the Roman church—after citing the great *cathedrae apostolorum* (giving, in order, Corinth, Philippi, Ephesus, Rome), Tertullian specified that it was Rome *unde nobis quoque auctoritas praesto est*. He praised the merits of the Roman church with a summary of Roman faith and sacramental discipline to shore up the validity of his own church’s practice.²³² Similarly, the faith of the Roman church

²²⁷ Bévenot, ‘St. Cyprian and the Papacy’.

²²⁸ Bévenot, “‘Primatus Petro Datur’”, 35–36.

²²⁹ Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, 36–49; Dunn, *Cyprian and the Bishops of Rome*.

²³⁰ Chapman excuses Cyprian’s ecclesiology of insufficient deference to papal power: ‘He was a practical man, without philosophy or theology . . . His outlook was extremely narrow, and his logic was very short-sighted’ John Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1928), 40. Brezzi takes a gentler tone of imputing ignorance: ‘Cyprian, on account of his late conversion and of his rapid religious formation, never fully understood the value of Peter’s prerogatives’ P. Brezzi, *The Papacy: Its Origins and Historical Evolution*, trans. H.J. Yannoni (Westminster: MD, 1958), 36. Quoted in Dunn, *Cyprian and the Bishops of Rome*, 129n50.

²³¹ Benson, *Cyprian*, xxv–xxvi.

²³² Tertullian, *Praescr.* 36.1-2; CCSL 2.216.

immortalised by Paul (Rom. 1.8) was a point of pride for its members in Cyprian's day,²³³ and something he 'exploit[ed] . . . with calculated flattery' in his own letters in response, as Clarke puts it.²³⁴ While the theory that Carthage was evangelised by Roman missionaries retains some currency²³⁵ this does not seem to be the understanding of any African author from Tertullian to Augustine (Chapter 5.2.1).²³⁶

Cyprian maintained an enduring respect for the city of Rome and her church. He acknowledged that the demographic size of a church had some significance in its importance—he wrote to Cornelius, stating that 'Carthage must yield to Rome because of its greater size' (*pro magnitudine sua debeat Carthaginem Roma praecedere*).²³⁷ In episcopal disputes, the size of a church had consequences: Cyprian pointed out how few rallied behind one of the rival bishops of Carthage, Fortunatus.²³⁸ However, his attitude to Rome reflected more than a sociological recognition of the size and influence of her church. The single most important passage describing Rome occurs in his letters, where the city is acknowledged to possess the Petrine *cathedra* in a more special sense, and her church described as the *ecclesia principalis*. This is in a letter to Cornelius in 252, encouraging him to avoid communion with Felicissimus' laxist party and the renegade Fortunatus. Several of Fortunatus' party travelled to Rome, where Felicissimus made an abortive attempt to win

²³³ As in the letter of the Roman clergy in *Ep.* 30.2.2.

²³⁴ Clarke in ACW 44.122; the occasions Cyprian uses it are here, at *Epp.* 59.14.1 and also at 60.2.1. Archbishop Laud long ago noted that this was 'but the epistler's courtesy'; William Laud, *A Relation of the Conference between William Laud, Late Lord Archbishop of Canterbury and Mr. Fisher the Jesuit, by the Command of King James* (England: University Press, 1839), 5–6.

²³⁵ Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 87. More recently Dunn, *Cyprian and the Bishops of Rome*, 61–62.

²³⁶ Timothy Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 66–67.

²³⁷ *Ep.* 52.2.3; CSEL 3.618; translation mine.

²³⁸ *Ep.* 59.10.3 compared to the *maximam partem plebis*; CSEL 3.678. Sage highlights Cyprian's claim here to 'numerical superiority'; Sage, *Cyprian*, 283.

the support of Cornelius.²³⁹ After rehearsing his account of church unity as built upon the episcopate,²⁴⁰ he wrote:

They have had heretics set up for them a pseudo bishop, and on top of that they now have the audacity to sail off carrying letters from schismatics and outcasts from religion even to the chair of Peter, to the primordial church, the very source of episcopal unity (*ad Petri cathedram adque ad ecclesiam principalem unde unitas sacerdotalis exorta est*).²⁴¹

Cyprian believed Rome to be unique because its church was Petrine in two senses: as having the Petrine episcopate (common to every bishop) and also as having a unique historical relationship with Peter, as being Peter's church by foundation and martyrdom. Clarke points out that this 'bestowed upon the Church of Rome a special dignity and a unique place of honour' as *ecclesia principalis*, 'the primordial or foundation church', and 'accordingly the ultimate source of episcopal unity and concord'.²⁴² While Cyprian had developed and endorsed a robust association between Rome and the see of Peter, he did not, as later Caecilianists would, leverage communion with Rome as a criterion for judging between competing episcopal claimants.²⁴³ This identification, however, of a special *cathedra Petri*

²³⁹ *Ep.* 59.1.1-2; 59.9.4. Dunn clarifies that this group could not have contained Novatus, who was already in Rome, and probably did not include Fortunatus, who, as rival bishop of Carthage, was busy establishing his local position. Rather, it was probably just 'Felicissimus and some rebellious presbyters'; Dunn, 'Cyprian's Rival Bishops and Their Communities', 84–85.

²⁴⁰ *Ep.* 59.5.1-2.

²⁴¹ *Ep.* 59.14.1; CSEL 3.683; ACW 46.81. After the passage quoted above, Cyprian immediately proceeded to defend episcopal jurisdictional sovereignty and the in-principle egalitarian limits this entails (as discussed in 3.1). This is language hauntingly reminiscent of the later *Optaremus*. This is the incipit of a letter (PL 67.228A-230B) sent in 425/6 by an African council to the bishop of Rome, Boniface, frustrated over the treatment of the 'Apiarius affair'; for which see F. L. Cross, 'History and Fiction in the African Canons', *Journal of Theological Studies* 12, no. 2 (1961): 240–47. Cyprian insisted that every *causa* be heard and decided locally by the bishop, vested with ultimate competence, and accountable only and ultimately to final judgment; *Ep.* 59.14.2.

²⁴² Clarke, ACW 46.257-8n70. Eno has justified Clarke's rendition of this momentous phrase as 'primordial church', though he states that 'The church of Rome is Peter's church historically although it is not literally the primordial church; only the church in Jerusalem fulfils that role in history.' Eno, 'The Significance of the Lists of Roman Bishops in the Anti-Donatist Polemic', 161.

²⁴³ Modern Cyprianic scholarship has been content to accept Bévenot's interpretation of the *De unitate*, according to which the phrase *qui cathedram petri...deserit* cannot be 'understood in the sense that 'any (church or) person that breaks with Rome' is no longer in the Church.' This passage is not a specific reference to Rome but rather the Petrine chair of any bishop; Bévenot, "'Primatus Petro Datur'", 21–22. I would note that Cyprian in his letters can use the phrase in a generic sense without referring to Rome, e.g. *Ep.* 43.6.2; cf. 55.8.4.

in Rome, formed the conceptual basis for one of the central appeals to the transmarine church of Rome in the Caecilianist polemic of Optatus.

(5) Identifying the *catholica*

For Cyprian, the ecclesiological question was ultimately reducible to the *simplicitas praelatorum*, the unicity of the bishop. The church was one because there was one bishop (in each place), and the bishops collectively belonged to one church because they all shared the same episcopate, divinely granted to Peter. The church was a ‘federation’²⁴⁴ of bishops, who equally possessed the *episcopatus unus*. To the extent that ‘*catholicus*’ had any particular meaning in Cyprian, it is most plausible that it would have referred straightforwardly to its etymological sense of wholeness and integrity, and that precisely with regard to the unifying principle of the local church in the bishop.²⁴⁵ When the African bishops were sent to Rome to identify the *ecclesiae catholicae matricem et radicem*, this was to find out the legitimate bishop—namely, he who had succeeded to the episcopate there, because ordained lawfully and originally. When Cyprian assembled a *conpendium* of the bishops of the *ecclesiae catholicae* to relay to Cornelius, he was indicating which bishops were legitimate and had been tenured before new pretenders, Novatian or laxist, had tried to seize *cathedrae* already occupied. To the extent that Cyprian and his contemporaries sought to justify their position, the support and recognition of bishops across the Empire offered important authentication, expressive of the collective unanimity of the shared *episcopatus*.

²⁴⁴ Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 132. As Eno summarises, ‘Cyprian’s Church is a communion of essentially equal local Churches’; Eno, ‘The Work of Optatus as a Turning Point in the African Ecclesiology’, 672. See further Sage, *Cyprian*, 334.

²⁴⁵ For ‘*catholicus*’ used synonymously with ‘*integrus*’ see Eucratius in *Sent.* 29; CSEL 3.447. I discern a similar sympathy between *catholica* and *uera* in Tertullian; *Marc.* III.22; CSEL 47.416.

Yet there is no indication that to be ‘catholic’ meant—rather than entailed—communion with any specific or generic set of bishops abroad. Cyprian engaged with the various transmarine churches that would feature in later Caecilianist polemic (apostolic churches in general, the seven churches, and Rome) but he never introduced communion with them as a proof of, let alone condition for, being in the church. When Caecilianists later sought to authenticate their church, and disavow the Donatists’, as the *catholica* through communion with these transmarine centres and the *totus orbis*, they were to fatefully break fresh ground in ecclesiological reflection.

Chapter 2: *De praejudicio nominis*: debating catholicity under Constantine

(1) Constantine's intervention

(1.1) The beginnings of the schism

Between the last systematic persecution of Christians initiated under the reign of Diocletian in 303 to the death of Constantine in 337, the fortune of the Christian church in both the Empire and in subsequent world history was permanently altered in a series of such rapid transformations as to merit, whether as a triumph or a sour compromise, Constantine's entombment as an implied thirteenth apostle. The intervention of Constantine in the Donatist controversy, perhaps even with some understatement, has received 'abundant scholarly attention',²⁴⁶ being not only the first of his official involvements in ecclesiastical matters, but one that was so well-documented as to jointly merit the industry of generations of scholars. Since the story of the Donatist schism in North Africa has been frequently rehearsed in such treatments its particulars will be presented with brevity. This account will focus instead on the development of 'catholicity' and the role of transmarine churches in these formative years of the schism.

The 'Great Persecution', which was applied with unequal enthusiasm in the various provinces, varying with the temperament of the tetrarch and the zeal of the local magistracy, raged with special fury in North Africa.²⁴⁷ Most of the programmatic energy was devoted to destabilising the church as a community, with Diocletian's first edict²⁴⁸ mandating the demolition of churches, and—what would turn out to be more devastating to the

²⁴⁶ H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 212.

²⁴⁷ Eusebius *H.E.* VIII.6.10.

²⁴⁸ For which see Lactantius *Mort.* 12.1-15.7 and W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 491.

community—the confiscation of Scripture and liturgical vessels. Some Christians complied with the authorities in the forfeiture of the Scriptures, others dissimulated by tendering heretical documents instead of the biblical books,²⁴⁹ and not a few were targeted and suffered imprisonment and execution. Those who had committed the first were denigrated as *traditores*, for having ‘handed over’ the sacred books, no small slight in an African Christianity which was especially inspired by the resistance of martyrs.²⁵⁰ The resurgence of a new and enlarged class of ‘confessors’, whom Cyprian had earlier discovered could be so troublesome for episcopal authority, and the familiar antipathies aroused between those of a more rigorist bent and the laxer of the brethren, paved the way for a fresh challenge to church unity. However, these tensions did not result in an open breach until the death of Mensurius of Carthage and the election of his deacon Caecilian as his successor. While the precise date of this event has been subject to ongoing disagreement,²⁵¹ the general narrative is clear enough. The Donatist Victor the Grammarian,²⁵² interrogated by Zenophilus, *consularis* of Numidia, 13 December 320 testified:

when I was at Carthage and a time came when Bishop Secundinus [of Tigisis] came to Carthage, they are said to have found Caecilianus the Bishop had been improperly consecrated (*non recte constitutum*) by someone or other, and they set up another [viz. Majorinus] against him. Hence the dispute (*dissensio*) arose at that point in Carthage.²⁵³

²⁴⁹ Augustine, *Brev. coll.* III.13.25.

²⁵⁰ On the other hand, Ste.-Croix notes that *traditio* was not regarded with as much condemnation in the East and even lacked an equivalent Greek ecclesiastical term; G. E. M. de Ste.-Croix, ‘Aspects of the Great Persecution’, *The Harvard Theological Review* 47, no. 1 (1954): 85.

²⁵¹ The traditional date is 311/312, as in Monceaux IV.8-9. More recently, Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 144; W. H. C. Frend and K. Clancy, ‘When Did the Donatist Schism Begin?’, *Journal of Theological Studies* 28, no. 1 (1977): 104–9. It has been revised to 308 in Noel Lenski, ‘Constantine and the Donatists: Exploring the Limits of Religious Toleration’, in *Religiöse Toleranz: 1700 Jahre Nach Dem Edikt von Mailand*, ed. Martin Wallraff (De Gruyter, 2016), 104; Edwards, *Optatus*, 16n69. Or, in light of Barnes’ arguments, 306: Timothy Barnes, ‘The Beginnings of Donatism’, *Journal of Theological Studies* 26, no. 1 (1975): 13–22; Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 812–19.

²⁵² For what we know of this character see Maier 1.215.

²⁵³ *Gesta apud Zenophilum* (=Optatus Appendix I); Edwards, *Optatus*, 151; CSEL 26.185. For a later use of this document see Augustine, *C. litt. Petil.* III.57.69. All subsequent references to Edwards’ translation of Optatus will be simply ‘Edwards’.

Caecilian, who had alienated certain confessors in Carthage by his harsh treatment towards some generous souls who had offered them and their colleagues succour,²⁵⁴ and who may also have antagonised a wealthy woman named Lucilla,²⁵⁵ was ordained in an irregular circumvention of normal process. It had been customary that the bishop of the first see of Africa be ordained in the presence of the primate of neighbouring Numidia, in this case, Secundus of Tigisis,²⁵⁶ who was on route to Carthage when he was informed that Caecilian had been peremptorily ordained in his absence. Whatever the resentment that Caecilian and his forebear Mensurius²⁵⁷ had incurred, and whatever its specific causes, unease was significant enough locally: the Donatus of later eponymous fame, then a deacon living in Carthage, joined early as a dissenter.²⁵⁸ The sectarian foment was certainly widespread. Constantine remarked as early as 313 in a letter to Miltiades of Rome recorded in translation by Eusebius, that already by this date almost all of Africa had succumbed to Donatist factionalism.²⁵⁹ Secundus and his Numidian bishops rejected Caecilian's ordination²⁶⁰ and turned dissatisfaction into division by ordaining a certain Majorinus as a rival bishop of Carthage.²⁶¹ This was the fateful moment that engendered a formal schism, and while the

²⁵⁴ *Acta Saturnini* 20; its doubtlessly Donatist epilogue accuses both Mensurius of *traditio* and Caecilian of denying food to imprisoned confessors in Carthage; PL 8.700f. For the composition of this text see Maureen Tilley, *Donatist Martyr Stories: The Church in Conflict in Roman North Africa*, Translated Texts for Historians 24 (Liverpool: University Press, 1996), 25–26.

²⁵⁵ Optatus, I.16; Augustine, *Cresc.* III.28.32–29.33.

²⁵⁶ His rank is given in Augustine, *Brev. coll.* III.13.25. For bishops ordained by neighbouring bishops of the province see Cyprian *Ep.* 67.5.1–4, ideally by a dozen, as enshrined in the 397 Carthage Council, CCSL 149.181. In Cyprian's case these were of his own province, not Numidia; see Benson, *Cyprian*, 27–28.

²⁵⁷ While Mensurius, being the last bishop of Carthage jointly recognised by Caecilianists and Donatists, was not a principle of the schism, the Donatists continued to harbour negative estimations of his character and allegations of his commission of *traditio*; see S. L. Greenslade, *Schism in the Early Church*, 2nd. ed. (London: SCM, 1964), 43. That Mensurius remained in communion with Secundus until his death, see Augustine, *Unic. bapt.* 16.29.

²⁵⁸ Augustine, *Brev. coll.* III.12.24. For the view that the Donatists were principally animated by a justifiable loathing of a brutishly tyrannical Caecilian, see José Fernández Ubiña, 'The Donatist Conflict as Seen by Constantine and the Bishops', in *The Role of the Bishop in Late Antiquity: Conflict and Compromise*, ed. Andrew Daunt-Fear, José Fernández Ubiña, and Mar Marcos (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 30–41.

²⁵⁹ Constantine to Miltiades *apud* Eusebius, *H.E.* X.5.19; see Maier 1.148–50.

²⁶⁰ Secundus' motives are attacked in Augustine, *Ep.* 43.3.6–10.

²⁶¹ Optatus, I.15.

Donatists in their later audition at Rome in 313 presented themselves as the *pars Maiorini*,²⁶² this namesake died shortly after and was succeeded by the energetic, charismatic, and long-tenured Donatus,²⁶³ who headed the movement from 313 for the better part of fifty years. Among the various objections to Caecilian's legitimacy, the one that would dominate the centre-stage of both the forensic and the later theological disputes was the allegation that one of his consecrators, Felix of Abthugni, had been a *traditor*.²⁶⁴ Whether this was true, and whether, if true, it would serve to invalidate sacramental acts like an episcopal consecration, remained two of the most interminable issues of the entire subsequent controversy.

It is uncertain precisely when Constantine involved himself with the squabbling Africans. His first foray into African ecclesiastical affairs was the imperial constitution addressed to the proconsul of Africa, Anulinus, on the restitution of church property in Africa early in 313. Following the title Eusebius gave this letter, which is only extant in his Greek translation, some have speculated that it represents an early and tacit endorsement of Caecilian against his rivals, since it specifies that restitution was only to be made to 'the catholic church in each city'.²⁶⁵ Around the same time, he addressed a letter to Caecilian with a generous grant of moneys that the ministers of 'the most catholic worship' be more

²⁶² This *libellus* incipit is quoted in Augustine *Ep.* 88.2 and 93.13; CCSL 31A.140 and 292. Also quoted in *Gesta* III.220.

²⁶³ The identity of Donatus of Casa Nigrae with his namesake of Carthage was established with consensus only in the twentieth century: Barnes, 'The Beginnings of Donatism', 16–17; James Alexander, 'The Motive for a Distinction between Donatus of Carthage and Donatus of Casae Nigrae', *Journal of Theological Studies* 31, no. 2 (1980): 540–47.

²⁶⁴ This issue is of singular importance in the 'dossier' appended to Optatus' work against Parmenian; Barnes, 'The Beginnings of Donatism', 13; Louis Duchesne, 'Le dossier du donatisme', *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 10, no. 1 (1890): 589–650. It remained a major point of dispute in the 411 Conference; see Erika Hermanowicz, *Possidius of Calama: A Study of the North African Episcopate at the Time of Augustine* (Oxford: University Press, 2008), 204. The point is put briefly in Augustine, *Unic. bapt.* 16.28: *Nempe episcopum Abtungensem Felicem post Caeciliani purgationem apud Imperatorem accusaverunt, quod ipse esset manifestissimus traditor, et ideo Caecilianus episcopus esse non posset, quod ab illo traditore fuerit ordinatus.* See further *Brev. coll.* III.14.26.

²⁶⁵ Eusebius, *H.E.* X.5.15; the title is at 15; PG 20.885; Eusebius of Caesarea, *The History of the Church: A New Translation*, trans. Jeremy M. Schott (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019), 482. Altering 'universal' for 'catholic'. Following references to this translation will be 'Schott'.

free in their religious ministry.²⁶⁶ Ossius' later compilation of the register of 'catholic' bishops in communion with Caecilian, to receive the distribution of state-sponsored *folles* was instrumental in delineating the state-recognised—and transmarine-approved—local *catholica*.²⁶⁷ Shortly after, again to Anulinus, with the exemption of clergy from the odious and onerous *munera*,²⁶⁸ Constantine restricted this privilege to 'the *catholic* church...in which Caecilian presides'.²⁶⁹ While Elliot believes that these were 'pointed' references and had exclusion of the Donatists in mind,²⁷⁰ and the earlier judgment of Coleman-Norton rejected that Constantine could have been informed of them so early,²⁷¹ Drake's asseveration of their ambiguity appears the safer course.²⁷² This first letter, however, represents a neglected milestone—doubtless eclipsed by the favouring of the Christian church by a sitting Roman Emperor—in a new legal conception of the church. Constantine, in the letter to Anulinus, stated that he was concerned to uphold the 'legal right' of all, and so wishes to restore property 'to the catholic church of the Christians', namely, to 'the said churches' legal ownership'.²⁷³ This is a landmark development not because it represents an imperial restoration of or adjudication over church property (for which there was already precedent) but in the specification of the 'church' as the legal owner.²⁷⁴ When Gallienus (in 260)

²⁶⁶ Eusebius, *H.E.* X.6.1; Schott, 482 (altered).

²⁶⁷ Eusebius, *H.E.*, X.6.2. For this list, Ossius' role, and his accordingly hostile reception in Donatist memory see Victor De Clercq, 'Ossius of Cordova: A Contribution to the History of the Constantinian Period', *Studies in Christian Antiquity* 13 (Catholic University of America Press, 1954), 163–65.

²⁶⁸ Mandatory municipal services or levies (cf. *Cod. Theod.* XI.16).

²⁶⁹ Eusebius, *H.E.* X.7; Schott, 486 (altered); PG 20.893. The restriction of exemption to *munera* to only members of 'the catholic faith' was promulgated throughout the empire in 326; *Cod. Theod.* XVI.5.1.

²⁷⁰ T. G. Elliott, *The Christianity of Constantine the Great* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 1996), 79. So too Simon Corcoran, *The Empire of the Tetrarchs: Imperial Pronouncements and Government, AD 284-324*, Rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 153; Noel Lenski, 'Imperial Legislation and the Donatist Controversy: From Constantine to Honorius', in *The Donatist Schism: Controversy and Contexts*, ed. Richard Miles, *Translated Texts for Historians. Contexts 2* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 171; David Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity: An Introduction to a Unique Context and Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 199.

²⁷¹ Paul R. Coleman-Norton, *Roman State & Christian Church: A Collection of Legal Documents to A.D. 535* (London: SPCK, 1966), 27–28.

²⁷² Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, 215.

²⁷³ Eusebius, *H.E.* X.5.16-17; Schott, 482 (altered).

²⁷⁴ 'The State recognized the Church as a juristic person capable of proprietary rights in receiving and administering gifts and bequests'; Coleman-Norton, *Roman State & Christian Church*, xlv. Baynes argues the Church's status as a 'legal person' is detectable in the so-called Edict of Milan; N.H. Baynes, *Constantine the*

restored church property following persecution, it was to Christians, not their church,²⁷⁵ an approach shared by Constantine's contemporary tetrarchs in doing the same.²⁷⁶ On the contrary, Constantine from this first moment until the end of his career treated the *catholica* as a legal person with rights of property ownership.²⁷⁷ This will remain the norm for subsequent imperial legislation: Honorius' constitution *Cassatis quae* of 412 which, if it did not kill Donatism, hamstrung both its legs, returned control of the churches to the '*catholica*', not catholic individuals.²⁷⁸

These letters are notable for their favouritism and their default preference to Caecilian, and their reserve towards certain unspecified individuals who were sowing division against the *catholica*.²⁷⁹ MacMullen stated that, 'In 313, for the first time in any surviving sources, the word "catholic" is opposed to "heretic," and by the emperor.'²⁸⁰ This is a slight exaggeration—Constantine does not yet use the latter word to designate any group—and even so, it is hasty to grant the dichotomy such originality. It is in this connection that Lactantius may be introduced, perhaps the most important precedent to Constantine. The influence of Lactantius's *Institutiones* upon the religious thought and policy of Constantine has, since its demonstration by Digeser,²⁸¹ been further and more recently traced by Lenski.²⁸² Nicholson has furthermore argued that the vision of

Great and the Christian Church, 2nd ed. (1st ed. reprinted), Raleigh Lecture on History 1929 (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1972), 11.

²⁷⁵ Eusebius, *H.E.* VII.13.2.

²⁷⁶ Cf. the Edict of Maximian (*H.E.* IX.10.7-11) of 313.

²⁷⁷ Constantine in *Cod. Theod.* XVI.2.4 makes legacies' property conferred to the *concilium* of the *catholica*. In his letters 'to the heretics' and to the provincials of Palestine (Eusebius, *Vita* III.65.2 and II.40-1), property is held respectively by 'the Catholic Church' and 'the churches'. This is displayed in his letter of 330 regarding the basilica in Numidia: *et statim ad rationalem conptentes litteras dedi, ut domum bonorum nostrorum transgredi faciat cum omni iure suo ad dominium ecclesiae catholicae*; Optatus App. 10; CSEL 26.215. Since benefactions had been made 'to the church', this would later be used by Caecilianists in the seizure of property and goods from their rivals; Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 6.26; *Ep.* 185.9.36-7.

²⁷⁸ *Cod. Theod.* XVI.5.52.

²⁷⁹ *H.E.* X.7.4.

²⁸⁰ Ramsay MacMullen, *Constantine* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), 105.

²⁸¹ Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, 'Lactantius and Constantine's Letter to Arles: Dating the Divine Institutes', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, no. 1 (1994): 33–52.

²⁸² Specifically, his understanding of *patientia* and the deferment of judgment to God, as the basis of Constantinian toleration. Lenski, 'Constantine and the Donatists', 131–34. Hoover argues that Constantine's

Christianised religious history implicit in Constantine and Constantius' erection of an obelisk in Rome was indebted to Lactantius.²⁸³ Lactantius, however, while diffuse, and exhibiting a learning that is broad if perhaps ill-digested,²⁸⁴ has little interest in ecclesiological questions or concerns and cannot be said to divulge very much about the church.²⁸⁵ What he does state, however, is remarkably apposite to Constantine's conceptions. The church is the temple of God, founded by Christ and purposed to include all the nations,²⁸⁶ which the apostles accomplished in their global preaching.²⁸⁷ Heretics, led astray by demonic deceit into a false worship, have separated from the unity of the church,²⁸⁸ and falsely claim to be 'catholic'. By contrast, the 'true' and 'catholic' church is the one 'that holds to the true worship': *sola igitur catholica ecclesia est quae uerum cultum retinet*.²⁸⁹ This last instance is the only occasion in his entire corpus where *catholica* is used, and it appears to have been adopted by Constantine as his own understanding, especially evident in his letters in the Donatist controversy: catholicity signifies the true and proper worship.

Whether before he had cognition of the Donatists, or only a hazily indefinite one, these early letters establish the fundamentals of Constantine's ecclesiological attitude.²⁹⁰ That he was capable of consciously theological commitments, and that he was able to

was indebted to Lactantius for his letter to the council of Arles; *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 88-9.

²⁸³ This being the obelisk from Karnak erected by Constantius II in Rome in 357, promised by his father Constantine; Caroline Nicholson and Oliver Nicholson, 'Lactantius, Hermes Trismegistus and Constantinian Obelisks', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 109 (1989): 198-200.

²⁸⁴ R. M. Ogilvie, *The Library of Lactantius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978); Jackson Bryce, *The Library of Lactantius* (New York: Garland, 1990).

²⁸⁵ All references to the church (*ecclesia*) are restricted to the fourth book of the *Institutiones*, and by way of historical narrative, to the *De mortibus*.

²⁸⁶ *Inst.* IV.14.1.

²⁸⁷ IV.21.1.

²⁸⁸ IV.30.4.

²⁸⁹ IV.30.11 and 13; CSEL 19.396.

²⁹⁰ Practical considerations also played a role; for the view that Constantine favoured the Caecilianists because of a sagacious and self-preserving disinclination to Donatist rigorism see Elliott, *The Christianity of Constantine the Great*, 82. For a similar view— that 'he found the party which favoured bishops over martyrs more submissive to the pontifical (and secular) authority of Rome'— see Edwards, *Optatus*, xx.

develop them further, have been recently argued forcefully regarding his Christology and his ‘imperial theology’ by Smolin.²⁹¹ For the present purposes, there are two features which deserve particular mention. The first is his penchant for describing the church as ‘catholic’, which occurs in these letters and in all subsequent letters dealing with the Donatist schism, but is remarkably rarer in other contexts.²⁹² In three letters in which he deals with the Melitians in Egypt, a fairly analogous group to the Donatists, he not only fails to distinguish schismatics from catholics, but he declines to use the word altogether.²⁹³ What positive sense Constantine invested ‘catholic’ with is difficult to ascertain, and his usage is either anodyne or else idiosyncratic. Now a legal person, the ‘catholic’ church is ‘the lawful catholic church’.²⁹⁴ In a later letter summoning a Syracusan bishop to Arles, Eusebius translates ‘the catholic *hairesis*’, for what was probably Constantine’s original and curious *catholica secta*.²⁹⁵ What emerges in Constantine’s correspondence regarding the Donatists, however, is a fondness for associating catholicity with divine worship: ‘the catholic worship’ is repeatedly invoked, and the infelicity of foisting a post-Augustinian interpretation of ‘universal’ is evident in Schott’s commitment to consistently rendering the term in this way.²⁹⁶ In his other extant letter²⁹⁷ making preparations for Arles, that to Aelafius,

²⁹¹ Nathan Israel Smolin, *Christ the Emperor: Christian Theology and the Roman Emperor in the Fourth Century AD* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2024). Constantine must be re-appraised ‘as a theological thinker in his own right’, 3.

²⁹² In all the Constantinian material assembled in Eusebius’ *Vita*, he only uses the word in two letters: II.40-1 and III.65.2.

²⁹³ Apud Athanasius, *Apol. sec.* 61-2; 67-8; 85. In his 325 letter to the Alexandrians (apud Socrates, *H.E.* 1.9) he gives their church the catholic title, but does not use it as a distinguishing badge.

²⁹⁴ Letter to Miltiades, *H.E.* X.5.20.

²⁹⁵ *H.E.* X.5.21. So too Eusebius’ Greek text of the ‘Edict of Milan’ in X.5.2 has *prohairesis* where Lactantius has *secta*; *Mort.* 48.2ff. *Catholica secta* is an otherwise unattested oddity, which recurs only in legislation: *Cod. Theod.* XVI.2.5, 5.42, 5.44, 6.6; *Cod. Iust.* I.6.2. ‘*Secta*’ is not sectarian, as Galerius uses it in his ‘Palinode’ to describe the ancestral pagan worship (*parentum suorum reliquerant sectam*); *Mort.* 34.1; CSEL 27.212.

²⁹⁶ E.g. ‘the universal church of the Christians in each city’ *H.E.* X.5.16; Schott, 482.

²⁹⁷ The authenticity of the eight letters preserved in Optatus’ ‘dossier’ or ‘appendix’ has been called into question. I follow the verdict of Barnes that ‘their authenticity is now completely vindicated’, Barnes, ‘The Beginnings of Donatism’, 13 cf. 13n1 for bibliography. Their genuineness was argued for in Duchesne, ‘Le dossier du donatisme’. An earlier summary of the literature, and endorsement of their authenticity, is in N.H. Baynes, ‘Optatus’, *Journal of Theological Studies* 26, no. 101 (1924): 37–44.

Constantine twice speaks of ‘the catholic *lex*’,²⁹⁸ with a concluding note summarising his conventional yet now distinctively Christian interest in proper worship:

For only then shall true and full security be possible for me, and a hope of the best and most prosperous outcome always and in everything from that unstinting benevolence of the most almighty God, when I am aware that all men worship the most holy God by the due rites of the catholic religion (*debito cultu catholicae religionis*) in harmonious and brotherly observance.²⁹⁹

As Frend comments on this passage, in the ‘bargain’ of worship, God ‘required unity among his chosen servants’ as one of the inputs, which made it incumbent on the pious emperor ‘to impose and maintain this unity’.³⁰⁰ The second key feature then is this investment in right ‘worship’ to the Divinity, which only the united *catholica* can offer, whose undistracted continuance must be insured by the support of the state and whose integrity must be preserved against the danger of division. Constantine’s later letter, probably autumn 315, to the *vicarius* of Africa Celsus, in which he portends a visit to settle the matter himself, contains an illuminating specimen of his interest in correct worship. He wishes to come to Africa and pronounce not so much a decision between the parties, but ‘demonstrate (*demonstaturus sum*)’ ‘what sort of devotion (*ueneratio*)’ and ‘what kind of cult (*cuiusmodi cultus*)’ is pleasing to the Highest Divinity (*summae diuinitati*).³⁰¹ The Donatists pose a problem because, in their obstinate dissension, ‘the supreme God is not worshipped with the requisite devotion (*non...ueneratione summus deus colatur*)’, and deserve ‘due penalties’ for ‘the violation of the due form of worship (*uenerationis*)’.³⁰² In this short letter he for a third and again a fourth time insists upon his pious obligation, for his own salvation, to

²⁹⁸ Optatus, Appendix 3; CSEL 26.204. Edwards translates this as ‘the catholic religion’, which captures the valencies intended. He uses the same phrase in his letter following Arles; Appendix 5; CSEL 26.209.

²⁹⁹ Optatus, Appendix III; Edwards, 184; CSEL 26.206.

³⁰⁰ Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution*, 543.

³⁰¹ Optatus, Appendix VII; Edwards, 193; CSEL 26.211.

³⁰² *Ibid.*; Edwards, 194; CSEL 26.211.

safeguard the right sort of *cultus diuinitati* and *omnipotenti deo culturam*.³⁰³ As commentators have long noted, this concern for proper worship, upon which the health of the commonwealth and the good fortune of her sovereign mutually depend,³⁰⁴ was ‘thoroughly traditional’—the only Constantinian novelty being his preference for Christian cult.³⁰⁵ Ecclesiastical unity, with his programmatic concern for ‘harmony’, serves the fundamental role of providing rightly-pleasing ‘catholic worship’ to the Divinity.

This explains not only Constantine’s interest in resolving the Donatist schism, but his later concern for ecclesiastical concord in the Arian controversy and the beginnings of an empire-wide initiative to regularise into uniformity certain features of Christian worship. During this process, matters that had hitherto been subject to local variation—such as Easter dating, and rebaptismal praxis—became standardised. The very first canon of Arles concerned itself with establishing a uniform date of Easter³⁰⁶ for the entire church then under the beneficent care of Constantine, and Nicaea later followed suit by extending this consensus to the rest of the Empire.³⁰⁷ This intersection of catholicity, synodality, and unanimity is expressed programmatically in Constantine’s letter promulgating the uniform Easter dating:

my aim before all else should be that among the most blessed congregations of the catholic Church (*katholikēs Ekklēsiās*) a single faith and a pure love and a religion that is unanimous about Almighty God be observed. This however could not achieve an irreversible and secure settlement unless, after all or the great majority of the

³⁰³ Ibid.; CSEL 26.212.

³⁰⁴ Implicit already in the early letter (*H.E.* X.7) exempting clergy from *munera*; see Baynes, *Constantine the Great and the Christian Church*, 11.

³⁰⁵ Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, 216; MacMullen, *Constantine*, 104. For a summary of Diocletian’s religious policy, comparison with which reveals many analogues with Constantine’s, see Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution*, 478–83.

³⁰⁶ With sharp reasoning: *quia unus pro omnibus mortuus est et resurrexit* [2 Cor. 5.14] . . . *Censuimus ergo Pascha Domini per orbem totum una die obseruari*; *Conc. Arles. a.* 314, can. 1; CCSL 148.5.

³⁰⁷ Nicaea’s ruling is preserved in the Greek text of the Council’s letter to the Egyptians; Norman Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), 19 and 19*.

bishops had gathered in the same place, a decision were taken upon each of the points affecting the most holy religion (*thrēskia*).³⁰⁸

He continues, explaining how one dating is necessary to show forth the unity of the catholic church as willed by Christ,³⁰⁹ and that consensus had been reached in the Western provinces already (i.e. at Arles),³¹⁰ so now those in the East (principally, in Syria and Mesopotamia) should also conform, since the councils of bishops enjoy divine inspiration.³¹¹

(1.2) An international affair

In a twist of irony that later Caecilianists did not fail to exploit, it was the Donatists who first initiated imperial involvement in the controversy.³¹² The events that ensued in brisk succession, which saw one transmarine episcopal hearing, the first cross-provincial church council, and the final, if frustrated, verdict of the Emperor himself, thrust this local controversy onto the broad stage of the Western Empire then under Constantine's dominion. The international explosion of the Donatist controversy is as remarkable as it is underappreciated against the backdrop of the larger Arian controversy that later enveloped the Empire. However, no precedent in the history of the church can be found for its course. A local succession dispute in Carthage was escalated to an Emperor, principally advised by a Spanish bishop,³¹³ who called a tribunal of Gallic and Italian bishops in Rome, which was

³⁰⁸ Eusebius, *Vita* III.17; Averil Cameron and Stuart George Hall, trans., *Life of Constantine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 127-8; PG 20.1073. Italics for emendation: 'catholic' for 'universal'. References to this translation are henceforth 'Cameron and Hall'.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., III.18.

³¹⁰ Ibid., III.19.

³¹¹ Ibid., III.20. See further Francis Dvornik, 'Emperors, Popes, and General Councils', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 6 (1951): 5-7.

³¹² Optatus, I.22; e.g. Augustine *Epp.* 53.2.5; 89.3; 129.4; *C. litt. Petil.* III.25.29. This is caveated by Barnes, 'The Beginnings of Donatism', 20-21.

³¹³ For an overview of the role of Ossius on the religious policy of Constantine regarding the Donatists, see De Clercq, 'Ossius of Cordova', 163-75. The extent of Constantine's reliance on Ossius, generally regarded as significant (e.g. 'he exerted a strong influence over the emperor in ecclesiastical affairs for a space of nearly fifteen years'; MacMullen, *Constantine*, 103) has been called into question by Elliott, *The Christianity of Constantine the Great*, 79-82.

succeeded by the first mass-gathering of bishops throughout all the provinces of his imperium.

Doubtless finding Constantine's restriction of privileges to Caecilian's church obnoxious, the Donatists petitioned the Emperor through Anulinus with serious allegations against Caecilian and an invitation that their case be adjudicated by Gallic bishops, whose neutrality could be assured since the deficit of persecution in Gaul insured them from dissension of their own regarding *traditio*.³¹⁴ Augustine preserves the title of one of the petitionary *libelli* sent by the Donatists: it was a *libellus ecclesiae catholicae* against Caecilian by the party of Majorinus.³¹⁵ As Lenski has argued, this was a conscious reaction to Constantine's decision to treat *catholica* as a legal entity, and a direct insinuation that they, and not their opponents, deserved this now contested appellation.³¹⁶ Constantine assented to their request, summoning Caecilian and Donatus to be judged in the presence of three Gallic bishops by Miltiades of Rome, who, for good measure, added Italian confreres.³¹⁷ In the sneer of later Donatists, the Africans were judged in their own matters by a bunch of *transmarini*.³¹⁸ When the good names of Caecilian and his consecrator Felix were cleared the Donatists did not abate but appealed again to an increasingly frustrated Constantine.³¹⁹ His response was to order the proconsul in Africa to commission an

³¹⁴ Optatus, I.22; cf. *H.E.* X.5.18-20;

³¹⁵ Augustine, *Ep.* 88.2; CSEL 34.408.

³¹⁶ Noel Lenski, *Constantine and the Cities: Imperial Authority and Civic Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 249.

³¹⁷ That this was a move to 'transform' the proceedings into a council, see De Clercq, 'Ossius of Cordova', 167–68. It may originally have been intended to be an *episcopalis audientia*, for which, and for Constantine's longstanding confusing about this procedure, see Jill Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: University Press, 1999), 191–98. Cf. Potter, *Constantine the Emperor*, 199. Drake understands the three Gallic bishops as personally selected by Constantine through known contact during his time in the province, and Miltiades' decision to recruit Italians a way to 'pack[] the court'; H. A. Drake, 'The Impact of Constantine on Christianity', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, ed. Noel Lenski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 117–18. In his campaign against Maxentius, three out of the four of his episcopal entourage were Gallic (Optatus, I.23), see Potter, *Constantine the Emperor*, 155 and 330n10.

³¹⁸ Augustine, *Brev. coll.* III.3.3, more precisely, *ecclesiam transmarinam*; compare a similar complaint at *Don.* 28.48. Augustine agrees in describing these *collegas* and *collegis transmarinis* (*Ep.* 43.5.14 and 5.16; CSEL 34.96 and 98); but this is for him a positive, cf. *Psal. Don.* vv. 102, 105.

³¹⁹ Augustine, *Ep.* 88.3.

investigation regarding Felix, who was again formally cleared,³²⁰ and to escalate the ecclesiastical judgment to a large council in Arles.³²¹ Meanwhile, the bishops conducted their own inquest into the competing claims for catholicity. After the synod of Rome, the bishops Eunomius and Olympius³²² were sent to Carthage³²³ to investigate which party was the catholic church (*ubi esset catholica*).³²⁴ Their decision, if it was ever even in doubt, fell in favour of Caecilian.

‘Like a universal bishop appointed by God’, Eusebius observes, ‘he convoked councils of the ministers of God’.³²⁵ This is primarily in reference to the council of Arles (314)³²⁶ which was ‘intended to be a grand affair’, marking the ‘first council of bishops to assemble under imperial orders’.³²⁷ It was also the first council to be representative across several provinces:³²⁸ Cyprian knew of no organ larger than or superior to his provincial assemblies. Eclipsed in historical memory by Nicaea, Arles deserves the credit as the pioneer of the ecumenical conciliar format that would permanently reconfigure intra-church relations.³²⁹ The public *cursus* was opened up to the episcopate, granting them the mercurial

³²⁰ Optatus, I.27; Augustine, *Ep.* 88.4-5 is a letter from Constantine to the proconsul of Africa, reporting his reaction to reading the vindication of Felix of Abthungi in the *Acta purgationis Felicis* earlier that year. Barnes dates this latter to about May 315. See also *Unic. bap.* 16.28.

³²¹ Eusebius, *H.E.* X.5.21.

³²² We do not know where they are from, but it stands to reason that, having been sent by Constantine following the Synod of Rome, whose judgment they explicitly confirm, they were Italian. On the uncertain nature of their mission, see Labrousse, SC 412.229n2.

³²³ The authenticity of this was questioned by Seock but defended by Baynes, in whose article see a discussion of some of the logistics and chronology; Baynes, ‘Optatus’, 43–44.

³²⁴ Optatus, I.26; CSEL 26.28.

³²⁵ Eusebius, *Vita* I.44; Cameron and Hall, 87.

³²⁶ CCSL 148.3-25.

³²⁷ Michael Edward Moore, ‘The Spirit of the Gallican Councils, A.D. 314-506’, *Annuaire Historiae Conciliorum* 1/2 (2007): 11–12. Arles was surely chosen because of its ease of access, located at the ‘mouth of the Rhone’; see Edwards, *Optatus*, 195n6. I would note also that Arles functioned as a transport link; Donatist clerics are directed back to Africa from Italy via Arles in Optatus, App. VIII. Moore’s suggestion that it was chosen in part to remove overmuch interference from the bishop of Rome is interesting but must remain conjectural; Moore, ‘The Spirit of the Gallican Councils, A.D. 314-506’, 12.

³²⁸ Arles ‘was a milestone in the development of church organization as well, for it was the first to include representatives from all the provinces of the Western empire’; Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, 220.

³²⁹ Henry Chadwick, ‘The Origin of the Title “Oecumenical Council”’, *Journal of Theological Studies* 23, no. 1 (1972): 132–35.

mobility that characterised many of that order in the later fourth century.³³⁰ The bishops at Arles not only supported Caecilian, but tacitly rejected the incipient Donatist theology of sacraments, in canons accepting the orders of those consecrated by *traditores* as valid,³³¹ and rejecting, with qualification, the Cyprianic practice of rebaptism (§3.1).³³² While Arles failed to put an end to the Donatist schism, it marked a consciously conciliar ecclesiology and ecclesiastical practice that was both welcomed by bishops and promoted by Constantine, in service to his preponderating concern for harmony and uniformity in right worship. In a letter written after the council to its bishops in jubilant tones,³³³ Constantine made two points of interest to the present inquiry. The first is a characterisation of the error of the Donatists as pertinacity in ‘repudiating the equitable judgment’ of Arles and that their disservice to ‘religion’ (*legis*) as ‘deceivers of religion’ (*deceptores religionis*) consists precisely in ‘refusing the judgment of heaven’ by seeking in Constantine a further judgment.³³⁴ The Donatists, who were ‘diverted’ by the devil ‘from the exceeding brilliance of the catholic religion (*catholicae legis*)’ instead persist in a *rabida furoris audacia*.³³⁵ This, of course, is their capital sin against the undefiled harmony of catholic worship which so vexed Constantine. The second, relatedly, is Constantine’s claim to absolute deference to the finality of the judgment of the Arlesian council: ‘the judgment of the priests should be

³³⁰ Eusebius *H.E.* X.5.23. Constantine arranges for Donatist bishops to return to Africa in Optatus, Appendix VIII (28 April 315), though he revokes this in Appendix VI (ca. 1 May 315); also Optatus, I.26. On bishops using the *cursus publicus* see Eusebius *Vita* III.6. For the strain this practice would put on the imperial transport service by the reign of Constantius see Ammianus Marcellinus’ famous observation (XXI.16.18) discussed in E. D. Hunt, ‘Christians and Christianity in Ammianus Marcellinus’, *Classical Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1985): 186.

³³¹ *Conc. Arles. a. 314*, can. 14(13); CCSL 148.12: *Nam si idem aliquos ordinasse fuerint depraehensi, et de his quos ordinauerunt ratio subsistit, non illis obsit ordinatio.*

³³² *Conc. Arles. a. 314* can. 9(8); CCSL 148.10-11. This canon, like the others, is adumbrated in the letter of the fathers at Arles to Silvester of Rome in Optatus, Appendix IV; CSEL 26.208.

³³³ Optatus, Appendix V. Frend finds the authenticity of this letter improbable by comparison with other Constantinian letters, and this scepticism has recently been elevated to charges of full falsification by Ubiña; Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 152 and 152n6; Fernández Ubiña, ‘The Donatist Conflict as Seen by Constantine and the Bishops’, 34. I accept its authenticity following Barnes, ‘The Beginnings of Donatism’, 13n4; Edwards, *Optatus*, 189n1.

³³⁴ Optatus, Appendix V; Edwards, 190-1; CSEL 26.209-10.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*; Edwards, 189-90; CSEL 26.208-9.

regarded as if God himself were in the judge's seat'.³³⁶ This letter is entirely preoccupied with the Donatist question, and has no comment about the canons drawn up by the bishops; whether Constantine was present at Arles remains unclear but appears unlikely.³³⁷

By contrast, the letter of the Arlesian fathers to Silvester of Rome, updating him on the proceedings and sending a summary of the canons, has only this periphrastic comment on the Donatists:

When we suffered the great and pernicious injury to our religion and tradition (*legis nostrae et traditionis*), and men of unbridled mind, who were so abhorrent both to the present sovereignty of our God and the tradition and rule of truth that they neither had any rational ground of speech or any proper mode of accusation or proof: so it was that by the judgment of God and the mother Church, who knows and approves her own, they have been either condemned or expelled.³³⁸

The judgment of the church, a trans-provincial conciliar organ 'summoned...by the will of the most pious emperor' and united 'in the common bond of love and linked by the unity of the catholic church our mother',³³⁹ is entirely competent in drawing the boundaries of the church and in adjudicating the case of these Africans. The universalising impulse of this council, which may be contrasted with the local remit adhered to in Cyprian's time, may be appreciated by considering the council's decision to mandate the worldwide uniform Easter dating. It is important to recall that Cyprianic councils had their authority fixed locally, with any supra-local agreement to be sought through harmonising with the episcopate, in principle independent, elsewhere. Where, as Edwards notes, though in the Quartodeciman controversy of the late 2nd century, Victor of Rome unsuccessfully strove to impose the Roman date on the Asiatics, and was counselled to respect local variety by Irenaeus,³⁴⁰ now

³³⁶ Ibid.; Edwards, 191; CSEL 26.209.

³³⁷ Frend seems to incline towards thinking he was; Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 152. I am persuaded to the contrary by the argument in De Clercq, 'Ossius of Cordova', 170.

³³⁸ Optatus, Appendix IV; Edwards, 185; CSEL 26.207.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Irenaeus apud Eusebius, *H.E.* V.24; Edwards, *Optatus*, 187n11.

the Roman date was promulgated for everyone. The scope of the first canon was ambitious: Easter will be observed according to the Roman reckoning *per omnem orbem*.³⁴¹ The council fathers' letter provides the rationale, thoroughly Constantinian: in order that neither division nor dissension (*ne diuisiones uel dissensiones*) mar the 'duty of devotion' (*obsequio deuotionis*), everyone *per orbem totum* should celebrate Easter on the same day.³⁴²

The Donatists continued in the intransigence that would be remembered as a hallmark of their movement and refused to yield to the august authority of the Arlesian council. Constantine, after all abeyances had previously been made to the episcopal prerogative in judging ecclesiastical matters, resolved to exercise himself as a court of last appeal, and finally rebuffed the Donatists. What followed was the first experiment in anti-Donatist repression by the civil power in the years 317 to 321. Both the extent of this persecution and the existence of any stated law against the Donatists are unclear, attested only in a Donatist martyr text and a retrospective mention in Augustine.³⁴³ In any event it appears that a decree promulgating the unification of the two parties probably in 317 was a 'carrot' backed up by a 'stick' of force.³⁴⁴ The Donatist text reports mass martyrdoms endured by the Donatists in their resistance to this false unity, which is unhelpfully exaggerated and then glossed over under a pretext of modesty.³⁴⁵ In any event, this first foray into suppression of the Donatists failed and perhaps even backfired by legitimising the martyr's fervour of the dissenters.³⁴⁶ Constantine despaired of any attempt to heal this schism, and pursued the path of tolerance which he exhorted in 321 in a letter to the

³⁴¹ *Conc. Arel. a. 314* can. 1; CCSL 148.9.

³⁴² Optatus, Appendix IV; Edwards, 186-7; CSEL 26.207.

³⁴³ The edict of unity in the *Passio Donati* 3 and the *seuerissima lex* in Augustine, *Ep.* 105.2.9. Held to be improbable in Fernández Ubiña, 'The Donatist Conflict as Seen by Constantine and the Bishops', 36. See the discussion in Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 155–61.

³⁴⁴ Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 188.

³⁴⁵ *Passio Donati* 4-5. That Constantine's enforcement 'was not particularly violent despite later Donatist attempts to portray it as such', see Lenski, 'Constantine and the Donatists', 103.

³⁴⁶ John Whitehouse, 'The Course of the Donatist Schism', in *The Donatist Schism: Controversy and Contexts*, ed. Richard Miles (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 24; Tilley, *Donatist Martyr Stories*, xvi.

Caecilianist bishops.³⁴⁷ This would remain his official outlook³⁴⁸ for the rest of his reign: the last of his extant direct interventions in African ecclesiastical life was in 330, when he consoled the Numidian Caecilianists on their basilica lost to the Donatists in Cirta with the good assurances, likely offering little comfort to the recipients, that God's final judgement would vindicate them.³⁴⁹

In the twilight years of the first persecution of the Donatists, they sent Victor of Garba to Rome, who became the first Donatist bishop of that city and manned the first of two attested transmarine Donatist churches.³⁵⁰ The transmarine involvement in the controversy expanded, in lockstep with Constantine's own imperium, to the Eastern Empire. Following Constantine's victory over his former partner Licinius, he addressed an admirably irenic letter to Alexander and Arius,³⁵¹ wherein he referred to a delegation of Eastern bishops that he wished to send to Africa to adjudicate the schism there. Constantine felt that the judgment of Eastern sees would be more persuasively received, on account of their primitive proximity to the gospel: since the gospel was 'reared . . . in oriental nurseries', the Eastern bishops should be 'pioneers of salvation to the nations'.³⁵² It is unlikely that this invitation ever bore any fruit,³⁵³ but it does witness to Constantine's solicitude to resolve ecclesiastical

³⁴⁷ Optatus, Appendix IX.

³⁴⁸ For the view that this was a personal 'commitment to the principle of noncoercion' see Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, 222.

³⁴⁹ Optatus, Appendix X.

³⁵⁰ Optatus, II.4. Discussed Chapter 3.1-2.

³⁵¹ Eusebius, *Vita* II.64-72. The authenticity of this document has been proven 'beyond all reasonable doubt' by Jones' identification of a more or less official copy of part of this letter; A. H. M. Jones, 'Notes on the Genuineness of the Constantinian Documents in Eusebius's Life of Constantine and Appendix', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 5, no. 2 (1954): 196-200. Batiffol had previously challenged its authenticity, which was passed by sympathetically in Frensdorff, *The Donatist Church*, 162n3.

³⁵² Eusebius, *Vita* II.67; Cameron and Hall, 166.

³⁵³ Barnes dates this to 324. While that is certainly correct for letter, the timing of the mission, I do not believe, can be placed so confidently. Though hitherto episcopal synods were banned in the East by Licinius, this would presumably not have interfered too much in episcopal travel upon request of the Western Augustus; Timothy Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 264. See also Timothy Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 378 and cf. 213. I do not believe this delegation was sent at all, given the total silence in our sources. See Cameron and Hall, *Life of Constantine*, 250-51. For Constantine's rapidly disappointed enthusiasm for the Eastern bishops' ability to solve the Donatist schism see A. H. M. Jones, *The Decline of the Ancient World* (London: Longmans, 1966), 42.

division through ever-expanding networks embracing the universal church in his dominions. It is also the first instance where the authority of Eastern churches was solicited to adjudicate between the competing parties, something that would become an important feature of later Caecilianist rhetoric (Chapter 4.3, 5.4).

Of decisive importance to the entrenched self-identity of the Donatists as the ‘church of the martyrs’ was the repression they weathered under Constantine’s son Constans (347-348). The uneasy *modus vivendi* of the two parties after the peace inaugurated in 321 saw the consolidation of Donatism within Africa, especially in Numidia, as the majority church³⁵⁴ under the charismatic leadership of their new namesake, while the Caecilianists receded into a supine peace under Caecilian’s successor Gratus. An index of the vigour of Donatism is the fact that Donatus could gather 270 bishops at a council in Carthage in 336,³⁵⁵ and establish transmarine outposts in Rome and Spain.³⁵⁶ In a mistaken attempt to succeed where his father had failed, Constans ventured to heal the African schism. In 347, the imperial notaries, Paul and Macarius, were sent on a commission to Africa and a somewhat desultory promulgation of an edict of unity—biased from the start towards the Caecilianists—instigated riotous dissent. Military pressure was exerted which would leave long scars of trauma on the Donatist community. Dissent was crushed, some met their grisly deaths, and Donatus was exiled eventually to die outside of Africa. The effect of this ‘Macarian Persecution’ on Donatist thought about catholicity and churches outside of Africa will be discussed below, and it inaugurated a period of official repression that lasted until the reign of the last Constantinian, Julian (r. 361-3).

³⁵⁴ Frequently remarked, e.g. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 61.

³⁵⁵ Augustine, *Ep.* 93.10.43; cited to this effect by Potter, *Constantine the Emperor*, 202.

³⁵⁶ Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 169–71.

(2) The parting of ways

(2.1) Donatist catholicity

In the Donatist martyr text considered above, dated to Constantine's ineffectual first 'persecution' of the Donatists (317-321) and ascribed to the great Donatus,³⁵⁷ all the main lines of subsequent Donatist reaction are discernible.³⁵⁸ The Donatists are true Christians, their enemies are 'ministers of the Antichrist' (*ministros Antichristi*); they are in the *pia mater Ecclesia*, the Caecilianists are in the dank grotto (*spelunca*) of thieves.³⁵⁹ Ministers who have committed *traditio* were invalidated thereby in their ritual action, and they and their followers are falsely called Christians.³⁶⁰ State-enforced unity was a ploy of the Devil, animating the Emperor:

So the enemy of salvation concocted a more subtle conceit to violate the purity of faith. "Christ," he said, "is the lover of unity. Therefore, let there be unity." Those people who were already fawning on him and were deserted by God came to be called 'Catholics'. By prejudice in favor of the name (*de praejudicio nominis*), those who refused to communicate with them were called 'heretics' (*haeretici*).³⁶¹

Contention over the catholic name features already at this early date, and was, as Shaw has pointed out, a formal dispute now determinative of alternatively imperial suppression or support.³⁶² Since they are not, and the Donatists are, 'catholics', this sermon witnesses their own heresiological coinage. The earliest known use of the pejorative descriptor 'Caecilianist' (here in the adjectival *caecilianensis*) is employed in this sermon to describe

³⁵⁷ Brisson considers the attribution authentic, but this conclusion has generally not been followed; Brisson, *Autonomisme et christianisme dans l'Afrique Romaine; de Septime Sévère à l'invasion vandale*, 310.

³⁵⁸ *Passio Donati*; the text is in Maier, 1.201-211, which reproduces without alteration that in PL 8.752-8; for the reader's convenience I refer to the Patrology. 'Maier' subsequently refers to Jean-Louis Maier, *Le dossier du donatisme: Des origines à la mort de Constance II (303-361)*, vol. 1, 2 vols (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1987).

³⁵⁹ *Passio Donati* 1; PL 8.753.

³⁶⁰ *Passio Donati* 2; PL 8.754: *falsa appellatio*.

³⁶¹ *Passio Donati* 3; PL 8.754; Tilley, *Donatist Martyr Stories*, 55.

³⁶² Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 189.

the ‘persecution’.³⁶³ But the Caecilianist *traditores* cannot be truly ‘catholic’, because they violate the *lex* of God by persecuting Christian Donatists; the true church is in the patience of the martyrs.³⁶⁴ Instead, and in a tradition that Tilley has documented which would go on to have a formative role in the entire movement’s self-identity, the Caecilianists are ‘gentiles’ (*nationes*).³⁶⁵ Their imperial patronage was hurled back in their face: the moneys and exemptions given by Constantine (which their bishops had coveted in initially appealing to Anulinus) are rather an inducement to avarice concocted by the Devil.³⁶⁶

In an earlier document, the Acts of the Abitinian Martyrs, written and narrating events before Constantine’s involvement,³⁶⁷ many of the same themes are evident. What is absent, of course, is any specific hostility towards Constantine—who had not yet been enrolled among the *dramatis personae*—instead, the traditional resistance of martyrs against persecuting pagan magistrates is rehearsed in a familiar, if particularly poignant, manner.³⁶⁸ This text, however, is the earliest witness to the Donatist theology of catholicity, which was retained with little alteration and only further elucidation in the ensuing century of controversy (Chapter 3, 4.2, 5.3). In the Donatist version preserved in Baluze’s edition, the narrator frames the martyr acts with an immediate ecclesiological focus:

Once error has been condemned, let whoever rejoice in the Lord’s truth read the records of the martyrs so as to hold fast to the Catholic Church and distinguish the holy communion from the unholy.³⁶⁹

³⁶³ *Passio Donati* 8; PL 8.756. For dating see Tilley, *Donatist Martyr Stories*, 51–52; Maier, *Le dossier du donatisme: Des origines à la mort de Constance II (303-361)*, 1:200.

³⁶⁴ *Passio Donati* 12. Also 7; PL 8.755-6: *quam gloriosi antistitis patientia Christi Ecclesiam manifestavit.*

³⁶⁵ *Passio Donati* 14; PL 8.758; they are *illos gentilis* in the later *Passio Marculi* 1; PL 8.760. Maureen Tilley, ‘Sustaining Donatist Self-Identity: From the Church of the Martyrs to the *Collecta* of the Desert’, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5, no. 1 (1997): 21–35.

³⁶⁶ *Passio Donati* 3.

³⁶⁷ Tilley, *Donatist Martyr Stories*, 26.

³⁶⁸ *Acta Saturnini* 12-13 on obedience to the higher law of Christ. For a traditional African martyrological statement regarding the separate status of the church in her proud autonomy from the empire see *Act. Scil.* 6.

³⁶⁹ *Acta Saturnini*, 1; Tilley, 28; PL 8.689: *quique dominica veritate gaudet, errore damnato, ut Ecclesiam catholicam teneat, sanctamque communionem a profana discernat, acta martyrum legat.* I use the Patrology text but follow Tilley’s section numbering for the reader’s convenience.

The controlling division is that between the martyrs and the *traditores*, whose perfidy is rejected and whose effective writ of excommunication was sealed in the former's blood.³⁷⁰ The Donatist epilogue explains more fully the principles whereby one may distinguish which of the two competing groups is the catholic church (*Ecclesia catholica quae sit poterit recognosci*).³⁷¹ The *catholica* is identifiable in her fidelity to the dominical *Lex*, both in the sense of the commands of God, and in the salient use of the word by Africans to denote the physical text of Scripture,³⁷² and hence the very object of *traditio*.³⁷³ It is incumbent on true Christians to separate from the 'filth' of communion with *traditores*, because their violation of the *lex* consigns them to eternal damnation.³⁷⁴ The true catholic church, which follows the martyrs, is identified in her integrity: faithful and not faithless, holy and not unholy, integral and not compromised. Therefore, the editor cautions, it is consummate foolishness to confuse the *ecclesia martyrum* with the *conventicula traditorum*, with whom there can be no unity.³⁷⁵ This separation is no factionalism, for the church's unity is absolutely inviolate and inviolable: 'Such is the nature of the Church of the Lord that I do not say "this part" because it is one alone and cannot be split or divided into two parts'.³⁷⁶ The identity of the catholic church is defined: *quae est Ecclesia sancta, una et vera catholica, ex qua martyres profecti sunt, et a quibus divina testamenta servata sunt*.³⁷⁷ 'Holy', 'one', 'true', and 'catholic' are functionally non-synonymous but co-referential, serving to denote the perfect

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 2.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 19; PL 8.700.

³⁷² The physical text of Scripture was particularly hallowed as an 'avatar of divine presence'; it is in such a context that the gravity of *traditio* can best be appreciated; see Jeremiah Coogan, 'Divine Truth, Presence, and Power: Christian Books in Roman North Africa', *Journal of Late Antiquity* 11, no. 2 (2018): 375–95.

³⁷³ *Acta Saturnini* 2. That this was a *capitale peccatum* in Donatist eyes see Optatus, VII.1; CSEL 26.165.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 20.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 22; PL 8.701.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 22; Tilley, 47; PL 8.702: *Talis est enim Ecclesia Domini, quae una semper singularisque contra sese et in partes duas dividi non potest.*

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 23; PL 8.703.

integrity of the church of the martyrs, outside of which there can be no sanctification, for all the sacraments of the *traditores* are null and void.³⁷⁸

While from the beginning ‘imperial patronage’ was a ‘formative influence’ in the divergence of Caecilianist and Donatist self-identity,³⁷⁹ the so-called Macarian persecution galvanised Donatist opposition into a hardened point of principle. This, as Hoover has argued, marked an inflection point in Donatism, radicalising their hostility to both the imperial government and also steeling them to a repudiation of transmarine churches.³⁸⁰ Before the ‘Macarian’ persecution, one may note with surprise, Donatus had petitioned Constans pacifically to be recognised as the next bishop of Carthage, which might have effectively ended the schism.³⁸¹ As will be considered below, the Donatists preserved a fond memory that the ‘Eastern’³⁸² council of Serdica (343) seemed to recognise their Donatus as the bishop of Carthage. After this persecution, the increasingly divergent attitudes to empire and her transmarine churches drove a perpetual wedge between Caecilianist and Donatist. In two Donatist martyr texts covering events of the Macarian persecution, the imperial unity is decried as a ‘sacrilegious unity’.³⁸³ In one, the martyr Maximian tore up a copy of the imperial edict, and was backed up by his colleague Isaac who had a dream in prison in which he defied *ipsum imperatorem*, now a diabolic agent, to his face.³⁸⁴ In the other, the ‘Macarian persecution’ (*macarianae persecutionis*) was ushered in by the tyrant ‘king’ (*rex*) Constans,

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 22-23. Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa*, 101 notes a similarity of reasoning with Parmenian in *Parm.* II.14.32.

³⁷⁹ Dearn, ‘The Polemical Use of the Past in the Catholic Donatist Schism’, 128–37; Dearn, ‘Persecution and Donatist Identity in the Liber Genealogus’, 127–28.

³⁸⁰ Especially chapter 4 in Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*.

³⁸¹ Optatus, III.1, 3. Frend causally links this, following Optatus, directly to the subsequent persecution; Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 177–78. This has been contested by several scholars, whose scepticism is rehearsed and endorsed at Whitehouse, ‘The Course of the Donatist Schism’, 25.

³⁸² On the inappropriateness of a simple ‘East’ and ‘West’ binary for these twin councils, and that the latter had substantial Eastern representation, see Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 123.

³⁸³ *Passio Maximiani et Isaac* 4; Maier 1.261: *sacrilegae unitatis*; *Passio Marculi* 4; Maier 1.280: *sacrilegae unitati*.

³⁸⁴ *Passio Maximiani et Isaac* 5 and 8; Maier 1.265 and 267. See also Optatus on how Donatists reckoned *unitati consentire...peccatum est*; II.26; CSEL 26.66. For dating, if we accept the conventional attribution to the Donatist Macrobius of Rome (d. 366), see Tilley, *Donatist Martyr Stories*, 61.

with his two apocalyptic beasts Paul and Macarius.³⁸⁵ The bishop Marculus, who resisted the dread Macarius, earned a fatal fall from a rocky precipice for his obstinance.³⁸⁶ Whether or not an imperial bust was placed on the altar in Carthage during the liturgy celebrating the ‘unity’,³⁸⁷ this report, or slanderous invention, draws a clear conclusion: their enemies belonged to the church of the Emperor. The Caecilianists did not disabuse their opponents of this conception, cultivating a studied gratitude for the Macarian persecution (§2.2) and accepting their dependence on imperial support (Chapter 4.3.1).

Though the ‘Caecilianists’ are excoriated as such by Petilian in 411, who was exacerbated by their mistaken monopoly on the catholic name,³⁸⁸ the Donatists’ favourite terms of abuse were drawn from this persecution. In addition to *traditores*, the Caecilianists were Macarians³⁸⁹ belonging to the *pars Macarii*³⁹⁰ or the *ecclesia Macariana*,³⁹¹ and are *persecutores* belonging to the so-called *ecclesia quae persecutionem fecit*.³⁹² As Toczko comments, this language ‘create[d] an association with the infamous proconsul who persecuted the Donatists’, which, by contrast, ‘allowed them to claim the identity of the Church of martyrs.’³⁹³ As will be considered in the following chapter, the Donatists came to embrace their separation in Africa by undercutting the very desirability of communion with the *transmarini* in the first place. The transmarine church would be accounted guilty in its complicit approval of the Macarian persecution, involved in a conspiracy of *traditores*

³⁸⁵ *Passio Marculi*; Maier 1.278-9.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 11-12. Caecilianists alleged this was a suicide; e.g. Augustine *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 11.15. See Dearn, ‘Persecution and Donatist Identity in the Liber Genealogus’, 84–87.

³⁸⁷ Optatus, III.12; VII.6. Optatus insists rather that the liturgy was done unobjectionably *ritu solito*; CSEL 26.100.

³⁸⁸ *Gesta* III.30; SC 224.1004: *Donatistas nos appellandos esse credunt cum, si nominum paternorum ratio uertitur, et ego eos dicere possum, immo palam aperteque designo mensuristas et caecilianistas esse, eosdemque traditores et persecutores nostros.*

³⁸⁹ *Macarianos* in Augustine *Ep.* 87.10.

³⁹⁰ Petilian in *Epistula ad presbyteros et Diaconos* 28; reconstructed in Monceaux V.318.

³⁹¹ Augustine, *Ep.* 49.3; CSEL 34.2.142: *sed ne dicatis non uocari ecclesiam nostrum catholicam sed Macarianam, sicuti eam uos appellatis.*

³⁹² E.g. *Gesta* III.258 etc., discussed further in Chapter 3.2.

³⁹³ Rafał Toczko, *Crimen Obicere: Forensic Rhetoric and Augustine’s Anti-Donatist Correspondence* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020), 95.

(Chapter 3.2), and also fatally implicated in a declension into ‘Arianism’ (Chapter 3.4.2). Although, in seeking out both Constantine and Constans, the Donatists were the initiators of imperial intervention,³⁹⁴ the Donatists would rally behind Donatus stiff-necked *quid est imperatori cum ecclesia?*³⁹⁵ These words, some of the few extant from the very mouth of Donatus, were a frustrated ‘verbal volley’ issued after his appeal to Constans appears to have magnificently backfired; and however hypocritical Caecilianists judged them to be, they expressed an earnest principle of a ‘secular’ partitioning of the emperor from the affairs of the Church.³⁹⁶ Augustine mimics a similar cry put into the mouth of an imagined Donatist of his contemporaries: *Sed quid mihi est imperator?*³⁹⁷ It passed on to become a ‘favoured refrain’ of the dissenters.³⁹⁸ The lines have now been drawn: the Caecilianists are a satellite of the imperial transmarine church, and the Donatists a persecuted African remnant preserving the church in her primordial integrity and evangelical separation from the world.³⁹⁹

(2.2) Caecilianists and the transmarine churches

The situation of the Caecilianists, which conditioned their ecclesiological self-identity, may be neatly summarized as that of a local minority existentially dependent on both the sanction

³⁹⁴ Wilhite makes the valuable comment that there is ‘clear evidence that Donatists often appealed to the Roman legal system and thus were not strictly anti-Roman in their behavior’; Wilhite, ‘Were the “Donatists” a National or Social Movement in Disguise?’, 193.

³⁹⁵ Optatus, III.3; CSEL 26.73. Cf. also I.22. ‘Donatus’s famous complaint [*quid imperatori* etc.] can be misleading. As their Catholic adversaries never tired of reminding them, it was the Donatists who first appealed to the emperor.’; Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, 216. Optatus’ postmortem riposte to Donatus in this section is equally interesting in showing an apologetic for an imperial church, considered in Chapter 4.3.1.

³⁹⁶ Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 490.

³⁹⁷ Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 6.25; CCSL 36.66.

³⁹⁸ Citing Augustine, *Enarrat.* 57.15, Matthew Alan Gaumer, ‘The Election of Primian of Carthage: The Beginning of the End of Donatist Christianity?’, *Zeitschrift Für Antikes Christentum* 16, no. 2 (2013): 303. See further Frend, ‘Donatus “Paene Totam Africam Decepit”. How?’, 616–17.

³⁹⁹ In this connection, in the antipathy between persecuting state and Church, Kinzig notes that the Donatists ‘continued the literature of martyr acts unchanged in the fourth century’; Wolfram Kinzig, *Christian Persecution in Antiquity*, trans. Markus Bockmuehl (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2021), 125. I repeat Wilhite’s judgment: ‘These two party identities, the African and the imperial, arguably define each side throughout the schism’; Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, 199.

of transmarine churches and the ongoing support of the imperial government. From Constantine's last letter regarding the controversy in 330 to the writings of Optatus, begun in the 360s, the Caecilianists recede from the literary remains into some obscurity. The most important witness for these years shows how deeply the Caecilianists had configured themselves to their precarious new reality. Sometime after the anti-Donatist campaign sponsored by Constans, led by Paul and Macarius, the Caecilianist bishop of Carthage Gratus convoked a council in his home see with a premature sense of triumph.⁴⁰⁰ The Gratian council opened with its president giving an optimistic portrayal of God-willed imperial interventions in church life, thanking God for Constans' sending of Paul and Macarius: servants of God and agents of church unity.⁴⁰¹ This sanguine endorsement could not be further from contemporary Donatist attitudes.

The canons of this council show a strenuous concern for harmonising with the overseas church. This, Gratus declared in the opening speech, is the time of unity (*tempus unitatis*), and it behoved Carthage, gathering the provinces of all Africa, to hold to the vigour of the law in this time of unity (*vigorem legis...tempore unitatis*).⁴⁰² The very first item on the agenda was to condemn the practice of rebaptism. Gratus asked the council whether it was permitted to have one baptised in the Trinity (the condition given at Arles) baptised again. The unanimous reply of the bishops declares that rebaptism is foreign *a catholica ecclesia*.⁴⁰³ The 'catholic church' in view must be the consensus of transmarine churches,

⁴⁰⁰ The dating of this council is a vexed question, with dates suggested between 342 and 348. The range of opinions is discussed by Munier in CCSL 149.xx, who settles for a range between 345-348. Shaw's reasoning of to place it in 348 is persuasive; Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 820-21. For the atmosphere of enthusiasm see Monceaux V.221. For a discussion of the contents of the canons see Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity*, 198-99.

⁴⁰¹ *Gratias deo omnipotenti et Christo Iesu . . . qui imperavit religiosissimo Constantio imperatori, ut uotum gereret unitatis et mitteret ministros operis sancti, famulos Dei Paulum et Macarium.* in *Conc. Carthag. a. 345-358* prol.; CCSL 149.3.

⁴⁰² *Conc. Carthag. a. 345-358* prol.; CCSL 149.3.

⁴⁰³ *Conc. Carthag. a. 345-358* can. 1; CCSL 149.3-4. On the evidence of Optatus, Caecilianists did not yet reject rebaptism as categorically as Augustine later would, envisioning it specifically in the case of Trinitarian heretics. For Optatus (V.1) Trinitarian heretics, naming explicitly only Patripassians, are to be rebaptised; something Augustine would later reject. For the development of the Caecilianist rejection of rebaptism from

especially Rome and those in her orbit. At the close of this council, Gratus stated that the impiety of rebaptism (*impietatem rebaptizationis*) had been condemned by many—if unspecified, and presumably transmarine—councils by previous bishops.⁴⁰⁴ How great a change from the verdict of Cyprian in the September 256 council, who, on behalf of all the bishops, pronounced schismatic Christians to be antichrists in need of baptism!⁴⁰⁵ Szada has argued that ‘anti-rebaptismal’ polemics against the Donatists were a later development, dateable to the 370s.⁴⁰⁶ While Donatists certainly vacillated in these years on this practice⁴⁰⁷ which would become such a defining feature of the movement in the historical memory, the Caecilianist commitment to rejecting it must be seen above all else as an attempt to strengthen their transmarine ties through uniformity in practice. The later tendency of Caecilianists to assimilate to transmarine norms and practices, whether in local church customs (Chapter 5.1) or monasticism (Chapter 6.1.2), is an extension of this same attitude, not to mention their complex entanglement in the much-studied phenomenon of transmarine appeals.

The stunning reversal⁴⁰⁸ of Caecilianists in the rejection of the African and Cyprianic practice of rebaptism may be explained as a function of transmarine ecclesiastical allegiances and conformity to the verdict of transmarine councils. When the Western

the qualified rejection at Arles to Augustine’s categorial rejection see my forthcoming article: Joshua Caminiti, ‘The Sources and Context of Augustine’s Rejection of Rebaptism’, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 33, no. 3 (Forthcoming 2025).

⁴⁰⁴ *Sane credo uos tenere multis conciliis a patribus nostris et traditionem esse damnatam et rebaptizationis impietatem esse puniendam; quas res etiam nostro concilio credo iam terminum accepisse.* in *Conc. Carthag. a. 345-358* can. 14; CCSL 149.10. If this is not an exaggeration, in addition to Rome (313) and Arles (314), he may have had in mind Nicaea, whose canons imply that Novatians are not to be rebaptised.

⁴⁰⁵ *Sent.* 87; CSEL 3.461. I reproduce Maier’s (1.295n18) comment: ‘C’est maintenant l’épiscopat africain lui-même qui, en concile plénier, condamne officiellement cette tradition africaine vieille de plus d’un siècle.’

⁴⁰⁶ Marta Szada, ‘The Debate over the Repetition of Baptism between Homoians and Nicenes at the End of the Fourth Century’, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 27, no. 4 (2019): 639.

⁴⁰⁷ Donatus himself allowed Mauretians not to rebaptise, in the council of 336; Augustine, *Ep.* 93.10.43. See further Stanisław Adamiak, ‘Who Was Rebaptized by the Donatists, and Why?’, *Journal of Late Antiquity* 12, no. 1 (2019): 46–64.

⁴⁰⁸ Indeed, the victory was so complete that by the 390s, Augustine did not even know that Cyprian had defended rebaptism! Augustine initially believed rebaptism was a Donatist innovation; *Retract.* 1.21.3; cf. *Psal. Don.* 110. See Markus, ‘Africa and the *Orbis Terrarum*’, 325.

churches vindicated Caecilian at Arles, African Caecilianists had an existential necessity to collaborate with these overseas churches that gave them the legitimacy and support which they, as local minorities, could not rest upon in Africa. Even before Arles, the judgment of the bishops in Rome in 313 (whose acts do not survive) seems to have extended an irenic recognition of Donatist orders, and a repudiation of rebaptism.⁴⁰⁹ At Arles in 314, the question of rebaptism was opened, and finally resolved, so far as conciliar legislation was concerned. The canon concerning rebaptism specifically concerns Africans (*De Afris*), singled out for their idiosyncratic local practice, and prohibits it.⁴¹⁰ Caecilian, successor of Cyprian, accepted this canon and reversed the most controversial legacy of his most revered predecessor in a single stroke.⁴¹¹ There is no contemporary record of any reaction to what must have been sensed as an extraordinary volte-face on one of the most definitive points of African ecclesiastical practice, defended so eloquently and established so forcefully within living memory by their greatest bishop. This leaves the impression that this was the price Caecilian had to pay for ‘catholic’ support,⁴¹² and Markus even detected that this ‘gave Rome its chance to get its own back on the African Church’ after the stalemated row between Cyprian and Stephen.⁴¹³ For the Donatists, ‘[o]vernight, their lack of agreement with the Roman and other Western Churches turned the African heirs of Cyprian, confident of being recognised by unprejudiced Gallic eyes as his true successors, into heretics outlawed by a

⁴⁰⁹ Augustine *Ep.* 185.10.47; Optatus, I.24.

⁴¹⁰ *Conc. Arel. a. 314* can. 9(8); CCSL 148.10-11. This canon is summarised in the letter of the fathers at Arles to Silvester of Rome, suggesting that allowing rebaptism of non-Trinitarians was a kind of continuance of African rebaptism; Optatus Appendix IV.

⁴¹¹ His signature, as well as that of other Africans, is captured in a number of manuscripts; CCSL 148.15, 17, 19, 20, and 22.

⁴¹² Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 195–96. However, Merdinger argues that ‘Caecilian and his colleagues were Catholic all along’, and that they had already believed what Arles imposed regarding rebaptism. This is an interesting supposition but improbable in the light of the tenacity of Cyprianic practice and lack of evidence to the contrary; Jane Merdinger, ‘In League with the Devil? Donatist and Catholic Perspectives on Pre-Baptismal Exsufflation’, in *The Uniquely African Controversy: Studies on Donatist Christianity*, ed. Anthony Dupont, Matthew Alan Gaumer, and Mathijs Lamberigts (Leuven: Peeters, 2015), 175.

⁴¹³ R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 109–10. Similarly MacMullen, *Constantine*, 106.

Christian emperor.’⁴¹⁴ By the time of Augustine, the legitimation of Caecilianist baptismal theology would be made to rest substantially on the heightened authority afforded by the trans-provincial nature of Arles, greater than the merely local councils preceding it in Africa.⁴¹⁵

In addition to rebaptism, this Gratian council abounds in ‘transmarine’ connections. Just as the canon considered above reiterates Arles, elsewhere Gratus pronounced on another issue by citing the ‘most holy council’ of Serdica’s precedent.⁴¹⁶ Clearly now, in Africa, transmarine councils were authorities—another indication of how very far the Caecilianists have moved from the ecclesiastical provincialism of Cyprian. A similar development is evident in ecclesiastical legislation: just as the church began to be uniformly legislated across the entire empire, so too, an imperial edict, issued from far-off Serdica to Numidian clergy could direct them to follow the practice of the Oriens.⁴¹⁷ The estranged twin councils of Serdica (343) were representative of an equally sorry state of Christian division and exercised a curious influence on the African schism. The bishops of the separate parties were unwilling to convene together, and mob violence was only prevented by patrolling soldiery.⁴¹⁸ These rival councils also apparently took on contrasting attitudes to the African schism. Gratus looked back with pride at his attendance and support of the ‘Western’, ‘pro-Nicene’ council.⁴¹⁹ By contrast, the ‘Eastern’ council, which met at Philippopolis, addressed

⁴¹⁴ Markus, *Saeculum*, 109–10.

⁴¹⁵ Augustine, *Bapt.* I.7.9, II.1.2, and III.10.14, where ‘plenary’ councils of the ‘universal church’ trump local ones; and VII.53.102 on their divine inspiration. Cf. also the strength *in transmarinis tot disceptationibus*; *Parm.* I.6.11; CSEL 51.30.

⁴¹⁶ *Conc. Carthag. a. 345-358* can. 5; CCSL 149.6.

⁴¹⁷ Cf. two pieces of Constantinian legislation, one to *universis episcopis per diversas provincias* (*Cod. Theod.* XVI.2.10; a. 320), and another to the *consularis* of Numidia (XVI.2.7; a. 330).

⁴¹⁸ Smolin, *Christ the Emperor*, 151–52; Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 123–24.

⁴¹⁹ *Conc. Carthag. a. 345-358* can. 5. For relevant comments on Gratus’, and Africans’, transmarine mobility in this period see Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, 90.

itself to Donatus of Carthage⁴²⁰—perhaps an innocent mistake,⁴²¹ jointly excusable through ignorance and the vastly greater local prominence his church enjoyed.⁴²² Nevertheless, and as will be considered in greater detail (Chapter 3.4.2) it appears that certain Donatists were eager to seize upon this as proof of transmarine *bona fides*, in contrast to their generally cavalier acceptance of their isolation.⁴²³

Caecilianist participation in transmarine councils of a trans-provincial scope began at Arles and continued with Nicaea. Caecilian had the privilege of attending Nicaea in 325, the distinction of being listed in its subscriptions, and personally ferried a Latin version of the canons which were guarded by the Carthaginian church for well over a century.⁴²⁴ Caecilianist loyalty to Nicaea, and their conciliar participation in overseas assemblies, was again reiterated in a council in Rome under Julius, where Caecilian's successor Rufus was both present and a signatory.⁴²⁵ Despite this 'pro-Nicene' track-record, the twin factors of dependence on imperial support and legitimation through transmarine conciliar organs make it no surprise that Restitutus, Gratus' successor, presided at Constantius' council of Ariminum in 359.⁴²⁶ His subsequent and seeming⁴²⁷ defection from his predecessors'

⁴²⁰ Their letter, addressed to several bishops including a *Donato* survives only in Hilary, *Fragm. Hist.*; CSEL 65.48; see R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 296. Zellier's argument that this is a falsified document has not met wide acceptance; Jacques Zeiller, 'Donatisme et arianisme. La falsification donatiste de documents du concile arien de Sardique', *Comptes rendus des séances de l'année - Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 77, no. 1 (1933): 65–73.

⁴²¹ Maier, *Le dossier du donatisme: Des origines à la mort de Constance II (303-361)*, 1:256n2.

⁴²² So Mark Edwards, 'The Beginnings of Christianization', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, ed. Noel Lenski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 152–53; Edwards, *Religions of the Constantinian Empire*, 129. I think this more plausible than the view of Hoover, in which this represents a deliberate attempt at 'rapprochement'; *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 119.

⁴²³ Attested in Augustine, *Ep.* 44.3.6; *Cresc.* III.34.38; IV.44.52.

⁴²⁴ Monceaux III.216. For whether these copies were in Latin, Greek, or both, see Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, 115.

⁴²⁵ Caecilian is mentioned as a signatory at Nicaea by Gelasius of Cyzicus, *Hist. Nic. conc.* II.27 and 37; for his participation see Georges Folliet, 'L'épiscopat africain et la crise arienne au IV^e siècle', *Revue des études byzantines (Paris)* 24, no. 1 (1966): 196–97. For Rufus in Rome see Monceaux III.216.

⁴²⁶ Frend points out that 'He thereby raised the prestige' of his see, that this was a massive council with some 400 western bishops, and that '[i]t was the first and last time that a bishop of Carthage presided over a representative synod of the western provinces.' Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 183n6.

⁴²⁷ Ariminum, and the majority party's subsequent acceptance of a modified version of the Dated Creed had complex motives and cannot be read, as it has often been, as a straightforward embrace of 'Arianism'; Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 161–63.

doctrinal policy would come to embarrass the Caecilianist episcopate on the transmarine stage⁴²⁸ and later furnish the Donatists with new polemical munitions (Chapter 3.4.2). True to his name, he restored his, and the Africans', pro-Nicene credentials seemingly with a recantation before his death.⁴²⁹ Restitutus, however, was doubly under duress:⁴³⁰ under house arrest, like his fellow bishops, but, unlike his peers, he was the head of a minority church especially dependent on the good graces of the Emperor.

(3) Consequences and comparisons

The Donatist theology of catholicity, construed as denoting a 'wholeness' of integrity of ecclesial life, would be litigated and debated with the continuity of a stalemated repetition. The Caecilianists enjoyed formal and legal recognition as the *catholica* and were identified as such by their transmarine allies and the imperial government. There is no indication that they sought to rationalise their right to this title until Optatus (Chapter 4), who, unsurprisingly perhaps, defined it precisely as 'universal diffusion' throughout the universal Empire achieved through communion with the transmarine churches outside of Africa. Let it be said here, because the organisation of this thesis does not allow for an independent treatment of the 411 Conference of Carthage, that there the contest over the 'catholic' name reached its agonistic climax. As at the very outset of the schism, this appellation was fervently claimed by both parties, with their opposed conceptions, in part for perfectly legal

⁴²⁸ Monceaux III.217-18. Restitutus' role in Ariminum is usually held to be the occasion for Athanasius' *Epistula ad Afros*, which has relatively recently been restored as genuinely Athanasian against the earlier criticism of Kannengiesser by von Stockhausen. It is worth recalling here that Africa's Caecilian is held up by Athanasius as one of the venerable heroes of Nicene faith in *Ep. ad episc. Aeg. et Lib.* 8.

⁴²⁹ For his episcopacy, and the beginning dates of either 345/8 see André Mandouze, *Prosopographie de l'Afrique chrétienne (303-533)* (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1982), 968–69. For his involvement— indeed, leadership— at Ariminum, alongside another African bishop (Muzonius, primate of Byzacena), see Robin Whelan, 'Arianism in Africa', in *Arianism: Roman Heresy and Barbarian Creed*, ed. Guido Berndt and Roland Steinacher (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 240–41; Hoover, "They Agreed with the Followers of Arius", 296.

⁴³⁰ For Constantius' pressures see Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 161.

and self-preserving reasons. During the Conference, where the assembled forces of both sides clashed in a prejudicial but open debate, Tilley has highlighted that ‘[t]he Donatists properly insisted that the right to use the appellation “Catholic” was a central issue’.⁴³¹ The Donatists reinscribed their commitment to being the church of the martyrs,⁴³² and defended a definition of catholicity apposite to this self-identity, as purity and wholeness.⁴³³ Their objections to the new Caecilianist theology of catholicity as global diffusion will be registered in its appropriate place.

Mention was made above of the Melitians in Egypt. This group is generally regarded as the closest, and conveniently contemporaneous, analogue of the Donatists, who likewise engendered their schism due to the tensions and instabilities brought about during the Diocletianic persecution.⁴³⁴ Peter of Alexandria, having gone into hiding during the persecution, found his authority undermined by the bishop of Lycopolis, Melitius, who went to dioceses with vacant bishops and ordained successors on his own initiative sometime in 305 or 306.⁴³⁵ The emerging jurisdictional divide, compounded by differences on the weathered riddle of the treatment of the lapsed, was provisionally healed at Nicaea in 325 but conflict erupted again during the troubled episcopate of Athanasius. The Melitians were associated, although this must be judged as uncertain, with rigorism around rebaptism,⁴³⁶ and were dubbed the ‘church of the martyrs’ in contradistinction to the ‘catholic church’.⁴³⁷

⁴³¹ Tilley, ‘Dilatory Donatists or Procrastinating Catholics’, 12. She cites *Gesta* III.91-97 and 258.

⁴³² See Thomas Graumann, ‘Upstanding Donatists: Symbolic Communication at the Conference of Carthage (411)’, *Zeitschrift Für Antikes Christentum* 15, no. 2 (2011): 336–37.

⁴³³ Chapter 4.2.

⁴³⁴ For similarities between Melitians and Donatists—and how they importantly differed with respect to their attitudes towards Empire, see Hans Hauben, ‘The Melitian “Church of the Martyrs”: Christian Dissenters in Ancient Egypt’, in *Studies on the Melitian Schism in Egypt (AD 306-335)* (Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 331–33, 342–44. A typical handbook judgment: ‘The Melitian schism formed the Egyptian parallel to the better known Donatist Schism in Roman North Africa.’ David M. Gwynn, ‘Athanasius’, in *The Early Christian World*, ed. Philip F. Esler, 2nd ed. (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2017), 1038. See also Peter Iver Kaufman, ‘Donatism Revisited: Moderates and Militants in Late Antique North Africa’, *Journal of Late Antiquity* 2, no. 1 (2009): 131. Frend proposes the parallel in *The Donatist Church*, 108ff, with a caveat at 23.

⁴³⁵ Rowan Williams, ‘Arius and the Melitian Schism’, *Journal of Theological Studies* 37, no. 1 (1986): 35–52.

⁴³⁶ Sozomen, *H.E.* I.15.

⁴³⁷ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 68.3.7; see also Greenslade, *Schism in the Early Church*, 53.

As the Donatists were confined to Africa, the Melitians were to Egypt.⁴³⁸ It is not surprising, then, that they are often paralleled to the Donatists, and also sometimes interpreted as a national Coptic movement.⁴³⁹ Also like the Donatists, their schism attracted imperial attention and was slated to be solved at a trans-provincial council. However, closer acquaintance with the Melitians reveals such parallels to be superficial.⁴⁴⁰ Nevertheless, a comparison between the polemical strategies adopted in both instances is highly instructive. The innovative character of the subsequent Caecilianist polemic of catholicity, and their appeal to transmarine churches as authenticating their claims, is obscured in part because it might appear to be an unobjectionably obvious strategy to make. It is therefore remarkable that, in the admittedly narrower literary remains dealing with the Melitians, one cannot find the ‘catholic party’⁴⁴¹ using non-Egyptian churches, and a putative consent of the *totus orbis*, as proof that they are in, and their rivals outside, the catholic church. Rather, in the developed anti-Melitian polemic of Athanasius, they were condemned for two traditional reasons: they disrupted the unity of the church by usurping the prerogatives of the bishopric of Alexandria,⁴⁴² and they were accused furthermore of doctrinal heresy in their alleged allegiance with Arians.⁴⁴³ Indeed, so far from constructing the opposition as that between his geographically ‘catholic’ party and sectarian Egyptians, Athanasius perhaps exaggerated to the contrary, that ‘Arian’ networks and imperial support purportedly abetted his rivals.⁴⁴⁴ Neither Epiphanius nor Athanasius made any mention of the Melitian’s failure to be in communion with the broader Christian world, let alone specific churches outside of Egypt.

⁴³⁸ Jones, ‘Were Ancient Heresies National or Social Movements in Disguise?’, 286.

⁴³⁹ This view is critiqued in Edwards, *Religions of the Constantinian Empire*, 299.

⁴⁴⁰ Unlike the Donatists, who were on the whole indistinguishable from their Caecilianist counterparts in matters of cult, ecclesiastical organisation, and theology (excepting, of course, sacramentology and ecclesiology), the Melitians were more radical in their divergences from mainstream Egyptian Christianity; Scott Carroll, ‘The Melitian Schism: Coptic Christianity and the Egyptian Church’ (Miami University, 1989), 163–87.

⁴⁴¹ Cf. Athanasius, *Apol. sec.* 69.

⁴⁴² *Apol. sec.* 59-79; *H. Ar.* 59; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 68.1.6, 2.1-4.

⁴⁴³ Athanasius, *Ep. ad episc. Aegpti et Libyae*, 21-22; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 68.3.1-2.

⁴⁴⁴ Athanasius, *H. Ar.* 71.

This striking absence serves to highlight that the most important ecclesiological and political strategy of the Caecilianists—claiming to be genuinely the *catholica* through communion with *ecclesiae transmarinae*—was no natural and automatic impulse.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁵ The same phenomenon of absence was noted regarding Cyprian's approach to the Novatians (Chapter 1.4), and will be observed more broadly in subsequent anti-Novatian polemic (Chapter 4.2).

Chapter 3: *De medio eius*: Between Parmenian and Tyconius

(1) The ‘Age of Parmenian’

Though the inimitable Donatus has forever given his name to his church, an immortalisation ably earned by his spiritual charisma and vigour in leadership, it is during the equally long tenure of his successor Parmenian that the Donatist church transformed from a movement of protest to a rooted and institutionally cohesive body. Donatists were also known by the name of Parmenianists, on account of the pivotal role he played in consolidating and expanding their church.⁴⁴⁶ When Donatus died, Parmenian was consecrated his successor in exile, and provided stable leadership for what may be reckoned the apogee of Donatism.⁴⁴⁷ The Caecilianist church was comparatively supine. Restitutus, after his capitulation to Constantius, was succeeded by the more competent but ‘colourless’⁴⁴⁸ Genethlius, whose labours seem to have been limited to maintaining a peaceful *status quo*.⁴⁴⁹ Having weathered the attempts at imperial suppression, the reign of Parmenian began under fortuitous auspices for the Donatists. Julian (r. 361-3) had issued an edict of toleration in 361/2, recalling exiled bishops and restoring church property and rights to some.⁴⁵⁰ It appears that the Donatists

⁴⁴⁶ Monceaux V.224. For a favourable portrait of Parmenian as a gifted churchman and teacher see A.-G. Hamman, *La vie quotidienne en Afrique du Nord au temps de saint Augustin* (Paris: Hachette, 1979), 296.

⁴⁴⁷ For an overview of the fate of Donatism between Parmenian and Primian see Gaumer, ‘The Election of Primian of Carthage’.

⁴⁴⁸ Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 200.

⁴⁴⁹ The council convened under him in 390 (CCSL 149.12-19; *Conc. Carth.* a. 390) was remarkable only for its Caecilianist conservatism; gracious deference to the emperor and professions of Nicene orthodoxy open the session. See further Jane Merdinger, ‘Augustine and Church Authority: The Developing Role of the Provincial Primate’, ed. Elizabeth Livingstone, *Studia Patristica* 30 (1997): 184. See also Monceaux III.218 and the advertisement in WSA I/21.18.

⁴⁵⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus (XXII.5.3-4) suggests the intention was to deliberately destabilise Christianity from within; see Sebastian Schmidt-Hofner, ‘Reform, Routine, and Propaganda: Julian the Lawgiver’, in *A Companion to Julian the Apostate*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Wiemer and Stefan Rebenich (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 158. For a similar analysis, and with the important note that this was a return to the *status quo* of Constantinian tolerance, see Lenski, ‘Imperial Legislation and the Donatist Controversy’, 177–78. For Julian’s broader ecclesiastical policy (showing ‘no preference for any single Christian leader in a city’), see Neil McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1994), 23–24.

benefited directly from Julian's clemency.⁴⁵¹ The era of severe anti-Donatist repression had come to a close, for now. The emperor Valentinian, for example, in keeping with his general neutrality in religious affairs,⁴⁵² hardly lifted a finger against them.⁴⁵³ During this period of relative ease, the Donatists undertook their first experiments in theological writing beyond the extant hagiographies of earlier days and whatever the lost works of Donatus contained.⁴⁵⁴ Although the core issues of the schism—the election of Caecilian, and the major theological breach regarding rebaptism—were primary focuses for both Caecilianist and Donatist churchmen, a growing and acute concern regarding ‘transmarine’ churches is evident in all the sources in this period.⁴⁵⁵ The state of play from the origin of the schism to Parmenian, discussed in the previous chapter, hardened into entrenched battle lines: the Caecilianists were imperial favourites recognised and supported by transmarine churches, and the Donatists enjoyed prominence as the local majority⁴⁵⁶ yet were effectively isolated from the transmarine ecclesiastical world. This opposing relationship to the *transmarini* formed the self-identity and ecclesiological strategies of both parties and is a relatively neglected but dominant concern in the literature. Caecilianist communion with transmarine churches became, above all else in the hands of Optatus (Chapter 4), the singular proof of their

⁴⁵¹ Not extant, but cf. Optatus, II.16 and *Cod. Theod.* XVI.5.37. Augustine preserves a rescript in reply to three Donatist bishops permitting their exiles to return to Africa and return to their churches, *C. litt. Petil.* II.97.224. See Monceaux V.222-3 and Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 115 and 163n10.

⁴⁵² Ammianus XXX.9.5: *inter religionum diversitates medius stetit, nec quemquam inquietavit, neque ut hoc coleretur imperavit aut illud*. For Valentinian's tolerance, not only towards pagans, but towards disputants within Christianity, see Noel Lenski, *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A.D.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 238; Smolin, *Christ the Emperor*, 321–24. For his neutrality evident in legislation see Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity*, 200–201.

⁴⁵³ Though he issued a rescript condemning clergy who had rebaptised, whose enforcement, Lenski argues, underlies the Donatist accounting of his *Comes Africae Romanus* as a persecutor of their movement; Lenski, ‘Imperial Legislation and the Donatist Controversy’, 178.

⁴⁵⁴ The seven extant martyrological texts identified as Donatist, and treated in the prior chapter, date shortly after either the Diocletianic persecution or the Macarian campaign. Donatus authored several works; only one title is recorded by Jerome (*Vir. ill.* 93)—on the Holy Spirit—and another on baptism responded to by Augustine in his now also lost work *Contra epistolam Donati* (cf. *Retract.* I.21(20)).

⁴⁵⁵ ‘[W]e cannot help but notice that our primary sources, Donatist and Caecilianist alike, attest to an increasingly virulent debate over the validity of the churches outside of Africa’; Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 123.

⁴⁵⁶ Optatus, VII.1. See Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 210.

catholicity. On the other hand, Donatists were faced with the riddle of their African seclusion, and transmarine churches presented them with a distinctive problem. Their response may be characterised as a ‘siege mentality’⁴⁵⁷ against these non-African churches, buttressed by rationalisations that transmuted their separation from a fatal flaw to a point of pride.

Parmenian articulated and gave support to a more broad-minded ecclesiology which at the same time sharply delineated itself from the persecutorial Caecilianist *traditores*.⁴⁵⁸ The theological activity of these decades orbited around and in response to Parmenian. Tyconius, who trimmed his sails as a dissident against him, remains the most famous and most ecclesiastically misfit of the Donatists. His divergence from Parmenian, over what I have called ‘hamartological contamination’ (that sin, especially, *traditio*, can pass from bishop to bishop through communion) had significant consequences for his more positive estimation of the status of and communion with transmarine churches. Accordingly, he sailed too close to the ‘Catholic’ wind to survive for long within the fold of Donatist orthodoxy. Also in opposition to Parmenian, the first mature Caecilianist *apologia* was produced by Optatus, in his seven-book response to Parmenian’s own ecclesiological pamphlet. This Optatan vision, which was both a critique and subtle re-appropriation of Parmenian, would in the main be entirely absorbed, and then expanded and modified, by Augustine.

It is during Parmenian’s episcopate that ‘geography’ came fatefully into play with ecclesiology. For Donatists, from Parmenian to sectarians with a more pronounced sectarian

⁴⁵⁷ Robert Kugler, ‘Tyconius’s *Mystic Rules* and the Rules of Augustine’, in *Augustine and the Bible* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 131.

⁴⁵⁸ Exemplary in this respect is his casuistry justifying a novel approach that validated receiving Caecilianist clergy into Donatism with their orders preserved; for this see Maureen Tilley, ‘Augustine’s Unacknowledged Debt to the Donatists’, in *Augustinus Afer: Saint Augustin, Africanité et Universalité: Actes Du Colloque International, Alger-Annaba, 1–7 Avril 2001*, ed. Pierre-Yves Fux, Jean-Michel Roessli, and Otto Wermelinger, vol. 1 (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 2003), 147; Maureen Tilley, ‘Theologies of Penance during the Donatist Controversy’, *Studia Patristica* 35 (2001): 330–37.

bent, the true church may be seen to be prophetically indicated in Scripture as an African remnant. The isolation of the African Donatists from the transmarine world became, thereby, a principled mark of their legitimacy rather than an embarrassing chink in their armour. Against this, the new ‘catholic’ line spearheaded by Optatus saw the general consent of the *totus orbis*, together with the sponsorship of particular transmarine sees, as proving the Caecilianist line of succession and communion. The conflict between the competing Donatist visions of Tyconius and Parmenian centred precisely on the question of transmarine churches: were they also implicated in the sin of *traditio* by their communion with Caecilian’s party, or was there a sense in which the transmarine Christian world perdured? Conveniently, the age of Parmenian ends exactly when Augustine himself takes to the stage, ordained a priest in 391, whereupon he began his first anti-Donatist activity, first in his 392 letter to the Donatist Maximinus,⁴⁵⁹ and then his popular *Psalmus contra partem Donati*, in 394.⁴⁶⁰ Though Augustine’s ‘anti-Donatist’ period, for scholarly convenience, is typically framed as running from 400-411, it is important to note that it was inaugurated by his first major Donatist work—one against Parmenian, and the long shadow he still cast from the grave.

(2) Parmenian and Donatist orthodoxy

Parmenian succeeded Donatus,⁴⁶¹ and likely disciplined himself to the great bishop while he was in exile abroad and came to Carthage after Julian repealed anti-Donatist measures.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁹ *Ep.* 23. His ‘first sure reference to Donatism’ in Frend’s estimation is in *Ep.* 20.3; Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 237n1.

⁴⁶⁰ In fact, this work is an imitation of and response to Parmenian, who had composed popular psalms, now lost, for the Donatists. See Augustine, *Ep.* 55.18.34 and the treatment in Monceaux V.225-26.

⁴⁶¹ Augustine, *Serm.* 46.17.

⁴⁶² Monceaux V.222.

He had the magic touch of special association with the inspired Donatus,⁴⁶³ which no doubt strengthened his authority and made this foreigner an attractive choice for the future of the movement. Parmenian was not an African, hailing either from Gaul or Spain.⁴⁶⁴ The lady Lucilla, detracted by Optatus, has been identified as Spanish herself and the originator of a solitary Donatist foundation in Spain.⁴⁶⁵ More significantly, there was a Donatist satellite community set up in Rome,⁴⁶⁶ which received the pejorative nick-name ‘Montenses’ (‘Mountain people’) since they apparently convened in the hills outside the city.⁴⁶⁷ The bishops of Rome were aware of a community by this name⁴⁶⁸ and even sought imperial suppression against the Donatist bishop of Rome Claudianus in 378.⁴⁶⁹ Augustine knew of them,⁴⁷⁰ and it appears they may have been set up precisely to provide some ersatz claim of communion with (their own) Roman See.⁴⁷¹ Augustine’s discussion of these two satellite transmarine foundations in his work against Petilian suggests that certain Donatists may

⁴⁶³ Personal connection to the cherished Donatus was of great currency within the movement; even as late as the 393, Maximian’s claims against Primian seem in part to have been assisted by the fact that he was a relation of Donatus’; Augustine, *Ep.* 43.9.26. For the esteem in which Donatus was held see Augustine, *Serm.* 198.45 (Dolbeau 26, Mainz 62), and his miraculous charisma, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 13.17; cf. *En Ps.* 69.5. A later Caecilianist author exaggerates Augustine’s polemic, stating that the Donatists worshipped Donatus as equal to God (*pariter colitis*); *Adv. Fulg.* 2; CSEL 53.290.

⁴⁶⁴ Parmenian ‘n’est pas africain d’origine’; citing Optatus, I.5 (*quia peregrinus es*; CSEL 26.7); cf. II.7; III.3; Mandouze, *Prosopographie de l’Afrique chrétienne (303-533)*, 816 and 816n2. Optatus mocks that he is an immigrant to Africa and hence ignorant of the truth of ecclesiastical matters there in the above-cited passages. Shaw suggests that his ‘outsider’ status rendered him ‘a compromise or neutral candidate’, and hence appealing, in a potentially factious succession dispute for Donatus; Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 108–9.

⁴⁶⁵ For Lucilla’s role in the origin of the schism, see Optatus, I.16; Augustine, *Ep.* 43.6 and 9; *Enarrat.* 36.2.19; *Serm.* 46; *Cresc.* III.28.32; *Parm.* I.3.5; cf. also Jerome, *Ep.* 133.4. For a recent argument that this episode must be judged fictitious, see Robert Wisniewski, ‘Lucilla and the Bone: Remarks on an Early Testimony to the Cult of Relics’, *Journal of Late Antiquity* 4, no. 1 (2011): 160. She is identified as Spanish by Tilley and Ramsey in WSA I/21.612n13; and by Congar in BA 28.723. Augustine mentions the foundation there in *C. litt. Petil.* II.108.247.

⁴⁶⁶ Optatus, II.4.

⁴⁶⁷ For the history of the Donatist bishops of Rome and what is known of their activity see Monceaux V.160–64.

⁴⁶⁸ Innocent, *Ep.* 2.8; PL 20.475. Cf. Filastrius, *Div. haer.* 55(83); Jerome, *Lucif.* 28; Ps-Jerome *Indiculus* 47; Gennadius, *Vir. ill.* 5; *Cod. Theod.* XVI.5.43.

⁴⁶⁹ A council in Rome in 378 sought action from Gratian, *Relatio Romani concili a. 378 ad Gratianum et Valentinianum Imperatores directa* (= *Amb. Ep. ex. coll.* 7), 7; CSEL 82/3.194. For Claudianus’ career in Rome see Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 206–7; Charles Pietri, Luce Pietri, and Janine Desmulliez, *Prosopographie de l’Italie chrétienne (313-604)*, vol. 1, Collection de l’École française de Rome (Rome: École française de Rome, 1999), 446.

⁴⁷⁰ He calls them *Montenses* only once, in his own *Haer.* 69.3, and this is likely from the influence of Filastrius. He speaks of the Donatist bishops of Rome in *Cresc.* II.37.46.

⁴⁷¹ *Ep.* 53.1.2, *C. litt. Petil.* II.108.247. So also Optatus, II.3–4.

have pointed to them as evidence that they enjoyed communion with the broader Christian world.⁴⁷² However, since there are no other indications of their doing so, and their understanding of catholicity quite different (Chapter 4.2, 5.3), this may only be Augustine's own polemical foil.⁴⁷³ Frend's claim accordingly that their foundation in Rome 'suggests' that Donatists 'considered that the unity of the Church entailed contact in some form with the see of Peter'⁴⁷⁴ is an anachronising judgment, problematised by the silence of the sources.⁴⁷⁵ Augustine elsewhere, I believe, leveraged Parmenian's non-African origins to add further sting to his barb that Parmenian's commitment to Donatist exclusivism damns as contaminated by *traditio* Gauls, Italians, Spaniards, and by extension, the whole world.⁴⁷⁶ This was almost certainly inspired by Optatus, who made the same challenge in the same terms.⁴⁷⁷

While Parmenian's works are not extant, his ecclesiology and baptismal theology can be reconstructed through the respective literary rejoinders of Optatus and Augustine to two different texts.⁴⁷⁸ Augustine's *Contra epistolam Parmeniani* was written in response to a now-lost letter of Parmenian to Tyconius, sometime after the latter's excommunication in the 380s, and Optatus' against a five-book work of his arguing in favour of Donatist legitimacy.⁴⁷⁹ According to Optatus, Parmenian's *Adversus ecclesiam traditorum*⁴⁸⁰ enjoyed a popular circulation, commensurate with the great standing Parmenian enjoyed in Africa. Parmenian's letter is only, if substantially, fragmentary as it did not receive the same

⁴⁷² *C. litt. Petil.* II.108.247.

⁴⁷³ I agree with the similar reasoning in Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, 204.

⁴⁷⁴ Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 181. Endorsed also in Gerald Bonner, 'Quid Imperatori Cum Ecclesia? St. Augustine on History and Society', *Augustinian Studies* 2 (1971): 237.

⁴⁷⁵ The Donatist community in Rome was a frequent subject of debate, and from neither side do we find any indication that the Donatists attempted to leverage this satellite in such a way. See below (§5.1) for the Donatist Roman bishops' lower signatory rank in the 411 Conference. Carthage, it seems, was dearer to the Donatists.

⁴⁷⁶ *Parm.* I.2.2; CSEL 51.20.

⁴⁷⁷ Optatus, II.1.

⁴⁷⁸ Optatus, I.4. In this passage Optatus also notes the popularity and diffusion of his writings and homiletic material.

⁴⁷⁹ Optatus, I.5-6. For these two works and their dating see Monceaux V.226-37.

⁴⁸⁰ Title unknown, suggestion that of Congar in BA 28.718.

tiresome exhaustiveness at the hands of Augustine’s dialectic as Petilian’s later would. Tilley aptly summarises Parmenian’s most important contribution to Donatist ecclesiology: he ‘reconfigured it from the holiness of the individual persecuted Donatist saints, the faithful remnant, to that of a stable institution, the Church.’⁴⁸¹ For Parmenian, the integrity of the church was not to be located in the moral or spiritual status of persons, especially, bishops, but rather in the church as such. The church was qualified and authenticated by legitimate possession of the *notes*, or gifts (analogous to how later theorists speak of the ‘marks’ of the church), which Parmenian catalogued as six—all entirely without reference to the church’s ubiquity or communion with overseas churches.⁴⁸² Accordingly, the validity of the church’s activity in the sacraments depended on the church’s possession of the *notes*, rather than the stature of the individual minister.⁴⁸³ When Donatists would articulate their own theology of ‘catholicity’, it would have in view a similar conception: the church is catholic through integral possession of the whole of ecclesiastical life and orthodoxy. Parmenian’s scheme, though woodenly delineated, introduced some much-needed sophistication into Donatist reflection on the relationship between the sacraments and the holiness of the minister. Instead of a cruder conception where the efficacy of the sacrament was contingent on its celebrant’s integrity—a typical caricature of Donatism that Augustine would not relinquish—it was located instead in the church which had the true spiritual *notes*.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸¹ Maureen Tilley, ‘The Ecclesiologies of Parmenian and Tyconius’, *Studia Patristica* 33 (1995): 263. Also Maureen Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa: The Donatist World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 101–6, 106n5.

⁴⁸² Optatus, II.2-8; CSEL 26.36-44. For the conflict over the *notes* between Optatus and Parmenian see Edwards, ‘The Donatist Schism and Theology’, 108–9. For the view that these *notes* were meant to apply to the episcopal basilica itself, see David Wilhite, ‘True Church or True Basilica?: The Song of Songs and Parmenian’s Ecclesiology Revisited’, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 22, no. 3 (2014): 399–436.

⁴⁸³ A point also made by Gaumer, ‘The Election of Primian of Carthage’, 295. That said, Augustine interprets Parmenian as making bishops mediators ‘between the people and God’, a point which, when he reports it, he shows surprising energy in assaulting. *Serm.* 198.52 (Dolbeau 26); WSA III/11.221. Compare his caricature of Donatist bishops: *Nos baptizamus, nos quod damus nostrum est, et quod nostrum est, sanctum est; Tract. Ev. Jo.* 4.9 (cf. 11); CCSL 36.35. The distinction insisted upon by Petilian in *C. litt. Petil.* III.14.16— with the importance of the adverbial *sancte*— reflects this more sophisticated Donatist sacramentology.

⁴⁸⁴ Alden Bass, ‘Ecclesiological Controversies’, in *Augustine in Context*, ed. Tarmo Toom (Cambridge: University Press, 2017), 148–49.

Cyprian's doctrine that sacramental efficacy rested upon the bishop, who 'cannot give what he does not have' (Chapter 1.3.1), was modified to belong to the church as an institution in its 'catholic' integrity.

This difference in attitude, and Donatist sentiments about hamartological contamination, were crystalised in an imaginary dialogue Augustine framed in a sermon between a Donatist and a Caecilianist. The Donatist first claims that the Caecilianist does not possess baptism because a sinner had conferred it (*Malus tibi dedit*), namely a *traditor*. The Caecilianist is not bothered by this claim, believing rather that his minister (his bishop) is innocent and proper scrutiny would vindicate his confidence. However, the Caecilianist dismisses this line of enquiry as ultimately irrelevant. It is beside the point to defend the innocence of his bishop since the validity of his baptism depends only on Christ, the true agent. Augustine's Donatist ignores this and insists that even if the bishop is innocent he is still a fraudulent minister because he is in communion with the *traditores*: 'that bishop baptized you, and that bishop communes with those *traditores*.'⁴⁸⁵ This discussion represents a mature phase in the dispute over baptism, with both agreeing that the actual personal innocence or sanctity of the minister is almost a red herring: for Caecilianists, what matters is the effectual agency of Christ, for Donatists, belonging to the correct communion, namely, the one which has separated from *traditores* and the infection of their sin.⁴⁸⁶

While Parmenian could nuance the simple contours of Donatist ecclesiological rigorism, it appears that he was unwilling to extend the same liberality to the problem of transmarine churches. From the witness of both Optatus and Augustine, the mainstream Donatism of Parmenian pursued with relentless consistency the basic logic of the movement. The sin of *traditio* invalidates and contaminates a bishop and is contractable through

⁴⁸⁵ *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 5.13; CCSL 36.48; *ille episcopus te baptizavit, et ille episcopus illis [traditoribus] communicat.* Translation mine.

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. the debate at the end of the 411 Conference, with the Donatist insistence on the distinction between open and hidden sinners; *Gesta* III.258ff.

communion. Therefore, transmarine churches in communion with Caecilianist *traditores* were themselves criminally polluted.⁴⁸⁷ That Parmenian believed Caecilianists to be a counterfeit church is well-illustrated by his comparison of the Donatists to Moses, and the Caecilianists to Jannes and Jambres (i.e., hucksters simulating grace).⁴⁸⁸ The fundamental premise of Parmenian's Donatism, then, is the possibility of hamartological contamination; of an invalidating pollution of the church through wrongful communion.⁴⁸⁹ His dread of such viral infection from the Caecilianists was hypochondriacal: he instructed Donatists to avoid greeting Catholics, and his church threw out holy oil consecrated by Caecilianists as impure.⁴⁹⁰ Even if the reports were doubtless exaggerated, Donatists were portrayed as throwing out their rivals' eucharistic elements, whitewashing their churches upon repossessing them, and replacing the very head-coverings of former Caecilianist dedicated virgins.⁴⁹¹ Given that the graceless and polluted church of the *traditores* had in fact been accepted by the *ecclesiae transmarinae*, Parmenian and his followers were forced to conclude that they too were fatally implicated.⁴⁹² Petillian, a later and articulate spokesman for the Donatist theology represented by Parmenian summarised the principle of hamartological contamination, and its ecclesiological imperative neatly: 'Sharing in the same communion, the wicked defile the good, and therefore the good must withdraw by a physical separation, lest all perish equally.'⁴⁹³

⁴⁸⁷ Optatus, VI.2; *Parm.* II.4.8; III.3.17-18. See also the neat summary in the *Praedestinatus* CCSL 25B.42: *qui* [the Donatists] *per totum orbem ecclesiis unius Caeciliani crimen impingunt.*

⁴⁸⁸ These are Pharaoh's magicians in Exodus, given these names in 2 Timothy 3.8; Optatus, VII.5. They were evidently reasonably known even among educated pagans in Africa by the time of Apuleius (*Apol.* 90). For a parallel citation see Pacian, *Ep.* III.21.5.

⁴⁸⁹ This was now a traditional principle of Donatist ecclesiology, as in the early *Acta* of the Abitinian Martyrs; especially cap. 2 (PL 8.705); Chapter 2.2.1.

⁴⁹⁰ Optatus, IV.5; II.19. See Tilley, 'Sustaining Donatist Self-Identity', 29.

⁴⁹¹ Optatus, II.19 (eucharist); IV.5-6 (whitewashing and purifying Caecilianist churches with salt); VI.4-5 (head coverings).

⁴⁹² *Parm.* I.4.6; CSEL 51.25. Monceaux (V.235) comments on this passage: 'La condamnation prononcée contre les *traditeurs* africains atteint donc tous leurs complices d'outre mer. Voilà pourquoi la véritable Église, universelle en principe, n'existe plus que dans le parti de Donat.'

⁴⁹³ Apud Augustine, *Unic. bapt.* 14.23; CSEL 53.24: *in una communione sacramentorum mali maculant bonos, et ideo corporali disiunctione a malorum contagione recedendum est, ne omnes pariter pereant.* Translation mine.

By the time of Parmenian, Donatists had further reason to be cultivate hostility towards transmarine churches. The trauma of the Macarian persecution contributed to Donatist suspicion of both the imperial government and the church of their backing. Their ecclesiastical rivals, the Caecilianists, were loathed not only as the descendants of *traditores*, but as colluders with the persecutors of Donatist Christians, and hence were tarred by association as ‘Macarians’.⁴⁹⁴ While *traditio* was the ‘original sin’⁴⁹⁵ of the Caecilianist communion, their latter-day disgrace was the persecution of other Christians, showing them to be a false church.⁴⁹⁶ In seamless continuity with the understanding of catholicity found in the earliest Donatist martyrological literature, the Donatist bishops, in their official letter at the 411 Conference, pointedly referred to themselves as bishops of ‘the *true catholic church*’—in contrast to their rivals—*quae persecutionem patitur, non quae facit*.⁴⁹⁷ Parmenian is quoted by Optatus to the same effect: ‘For neither can that be called a church, which feeds on bloody morsels and battens on the blood and flesh of the saints.’⁴⁹⁸ This attitude was of course extended to the transmarine churches, as preserved in Augustine: the *transmarinarum partium ecclesias* lost all legitimacy due to their tacit approval of the Macarian persecution.⁴⁹⁹ Judging by Optatus’ response, Parmenian frequently, or at length, animadverted these imperial suppressions. He likened it to the persecutions of old under pagan emperors,⁵⁰⁰ and may have pointed to the fact that only Donatists suffered in Africa

⁴⁹⁴ Chapter 2.2.1.

⁴⁹⁵ Merdinger, ‘In League with the Devil?’, 169. Citing Augustine *Ep.* 35. See also Albert De Veer, ‘L’exploitation du schisme maximianiste par Saint Augustin dans sa lutte contre le Donatisme’, *Recherches Augustiniennes* 3 (1965): 236–37.

⁴⁹⁶ The clearest statement to this effect is somewhat later, in the tract of the Donatist Fulgentius, written ca. 412–420, and reconstructed in Monceaux V.335–39 as drawn from Ps-Augustine *Contra Fulgentium* (CSEL 53.289ff and PL 43.763ff). There, Fulgentius generously clarifies that his current Caecilianist rivals of course did not personally commit *traditio*—their episcopal progenitors did—but they now have disgraced themselves with defiling commission of persecution of Christians: *Tu, filius ejus, non quidem tradidisti, sed nobis persecutionem fecisti*, etc.

⁴⁹⁷ *Gesta* III.258; SC 224.1194; translation and emphasis mine. cf. Augustine *Ep.* 185.2.10–11; *Don.* 16.20–17.22.

⁴⁹⁸ Optatus, II.14; Edwards, 42; CSEL 26.48: *neque enim illa ecclesia dici potest, quae cruentis morsibus pascitur et sanctorum sanguine et camibus opimatur*.

⁴⁹⁹ This is the argument of Fortunius in Augustine *Ep.* 44.3.5; CSEL 34.113.

⁵⁰⁰ Optatus argues against this in III.1 and 8.

and the rest of the Christian world was unaffected.⁵⁰¹ At the end of his letter to Tyconius, Parmenian cautioned him that his more liberal attitude to transmarine churches sailed too close to the wind of joining communion with persecutors of the church.⁵⁰²

Further, rejection of transmarine churches was compounded by more than fidelity to the logical consequences of hamartological contamination from *traditio* and *persecutio*. It appears that Parmenian also believed that many in the overseas churches had themselves committed *traditio*—of the bishop of Rome Miltiades it was alleged, of Ossius it was implied, that each was a *traditor*.⁵⁰³ Augustine summarised this as follows:

Parmenian...says that...the whole world was implicated in the crimes of *traditio* (*crimibus traditionis*) and other sacrileges, because, since many such things were perpetrated in the time of persecution, no separation of the people occurred afterwards in those very provinces.⁵⁰⁴

The resulting picture is a transmarine conspiracy of *traditores*, implicit in a cover-up of each other's guilt,⁵⁰⁵ with only Donatist Africa preserving the needful courage to condemn and separate from such polluted apostates. Thus, Parmenian's claim above that the 'whole world' was implicated in *traditio* has a much starker sense than that overseas bishops were contaminated by association simply with Caecilian. They had *traditores* of their own among themselves too, and, like the Caecilianists in Africa, not only failed to separate from but actively sheltered them. Optatus was concerned to refute the basic principle of hamartiological contamination, both on its own grounds, and because of the absurdity it

⁵⁰¹ Optatus, III.9-10.

⁵⁰² *Parm.* III.6.29.

⁵⁰³ For Miltiades: *Parm.* I.5.10; *Brev. coll.* III.18.34; *Ep.* 53.1.3; *Unic. bapt.* 16.28; for Ossius, *Parm.* I.4.7. Petilian names and shames a circle of Roman clerics as complicit; *Unic. bapt.* 16.27. For this attitude see further Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 127–28. That Miltiades' (not immediate) predecessor Marcellinus (bishop from 296-304) sacrificed to the gods— strenuously denied by Augustine, *C. litt. Petil.* II.92.202f— is judged probable in Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution*, 495, 503–4.

⁵⁰⁴ *Parm.* I.3.4; WSA I/21.274; CSEL 51.23. On the *populorum...separatio* see also II.4.9 with Augustine's counter-claim that it will only happen at the eschaton.

⁵⁰⁵ Especially Parmenian's comment quoted, with Augustine's telling comment in the midst, in *Parm.* I.2.2: CSEL 51.20: *quod Gallos et Hispanos et Italos et eorum socios, quos utique totum orbem uult intellegi, traditoribus Africanis commercio scelerum et societate criminum dicit esse consimiles.*

entailed, of damning the entire world to guilt by association. Optatus writes: ‘On what grounds do you [Parmenian] refer to catholics as polluted? Is it because we have followed the will and bidding of God by our love of peace, communicating with the whole world’?⁵⁰⁶ Optatus’ highly developed account of catholicity, considered in the next chapter, consciously took aim at the inexorable conclusion of Parmenian’s theology: a belief that the *ecclesiae transmarinae* have become polluted, and only Donatist Africa perdured. The state of the transmarine churches, and communion with them, emerges as both an ecclesiastical-political and a theological fault line between the communities. But for the Donatists, as Hermanowicz has clarified, the attempt to separate the *causa ecclesiae* from the *causa Caeciliani* was unacceptable: the happenings around Caecilian’s ordination impacted the purity, and hence legitimacy, of the church as such.⁵⁰⁷

(2.1) Doubts concerning Parmenian’s rejection of the transmarine churches

Nevertheless, this portrait of ‘orthodox’ Donatist theology, represented by Parmenian, requires some cautious caveats.⁵⁰⁸ The extent to which Parmenian and his colleagues earnestly believed in this consequence of hamartological contamination redounding to the transmarine world is unclear.⁵⁰⁹ First of all, it is important to consider the genesis of this hardened approach: the notion that all non-African churches had succumbed to the deathly contagion of *traditio* surely cannot have been current before Donatists abandoned the sincere possibility of any potential recognition from *ecclesiae transmarinae*. It was also unevenly applied—at any rate, it wasn’t necessarily as total as Caecilianist witnesses might like to claim. The fact that Donatists appealed to a letter from the ‘Eastern’ council of Serdica to

⁵⁰⁶ Optatus, VI.3; Edwards, 119.

⁵⁰⁷ Hermanowicz, *Possidius of Calama*, 203–4.

⁵⁰⁸ Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 318.

⁵⁰⁹ While Parmenian freely casted aspersions on the integrity of various Western provinces, he held a more ambivalent position so far as the entire transmarine world is concerned in *Parm.* II.2.4.

Donatus as witnessing to ‘Eastern’ recognition meant that, at least from the 340s, it was still possible for certain Donatists like Fortunius and Cresconius to entertain hopes that their faction could enjoy some legitimate transmarine communion.⁵¹⁰ That such spurious connections would be sought in the first place assumes these churches were not accounted as utterly compromised pseudo-churches.⁵¹¹ In the Conference of 411, this ambivalence came to the fore. Maureen Tilley accordingly argued that:

The Donatists did not claim that there were no orthodox churches outside North Africa and the orbit of the Donatist allies...They merely stated that it was their opinion that those in communion with the Catholics of North Africa were in communion with the wrong party.⁵¹²

Tilley cited the remarks made by the Donatist Bishop, Emeritus of Caesarea, in this connection.⁵¹³ Eno likewise highlighted this passage, claiming that it reveals that Caecilianists were exaggerating when they claimed that Donatists unambiguously damned the entire transmarine church. Instead, Emeritus, and supported later by the great Petilian,⁵¹⁴ both argued in the Conference that the transmarine churches have simply made an error in judgment: they have picked the wrong party to be in communion with, which mistake they hoped only to rectify. If true, this would contradict Augustine’s (and, Optatus’) claim that the Donatists ‘considered the Catholic Church outside of Africa as no church at all because it had entered into communion with the African *traditores*.’⁵¹⁵

This is disambiguating as to the nuance of Donatist approaches, however, it cannot discredit Augustine and Optatus’ reading of Parmenian’s isolationist ecclesiology. Donatist

⁵¹⁰ *Ep.* 44.3.6; *Cresc.* III.34.38.

⁵¹¹ Augustine lampoons this inconsistent vacillation in *Don.* 28.48. That the Donatists pleaded that the *transmarina ecclesia* should ‘wait and see’ for who won the debate (*debet expectare...qui vicerint*) implies that the transmarine church is innocent of the crimes imputed to them by the Donatists.

⁵¹² Tilley, ‘Dilatory Donatists or Procrastinating Catholics’, 17.

⁵¹³ *Gesta* III.90.

⁵¹⁴ *Gesta* III.146.

⁵¹⁵ Eno, ‘Some Nuances in the Ecclesiology of the Donatists’, 48.

polemicists, like religious controversialists of any age, were perfectly capable of speaking out of both sides of their mouths.⁵¹⁶ Furthermore, it is also possible that mainstream Donatist theology may have accommodated a less rigorist position during the episcopate of Parmenian's successor, Primian. Gaumer has argued that one effect of the Maximianist schism⁵¹⁷ was a reduction in the anxiety over ecclesial purity which was the dominant impulse of Donatist self-identity from the Macarian Persecution through to Parmenian.⁵¹⁸ In any event, the very setting of the 411 Conference militated against a frank expression of Donatist sentiment with respect to transmarine churches.⁵¹⁹ The Donatists were speaking to win over the judgment of an imperial notary sent from Rome, and could hardly be expected to present barefaced claims that the churches of the Empire were defiled pseudo-churches.⁵²⁰ In all cases, the frankness of freer circumstances must take interpretative precedence over tact adopted in a tribunal.⁵²¹ Donatus' same antithesis between empire and church was repeated by Parmenian, in terms that were just as damning of African Caecilianists as it was

⁵¹⁶ As MacMullen put it memorably: 'Confronting the need to survive...leaders rise above consistency.' MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire, (A.D. 100-400)*, 77. For example, in a similarly rigged exchange, the same Palladius of Ratiaria that accused Ambrose of perfidious heresy and asserted that he was plummeting into the maws of hell (*Apol.* 86-7), when on the defensive at Aquileia 381 opens with a courteously guarded recognition that his would-be prosecutors were but fellow Christians. For references and discussion see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 114, 129. Augustine argues a similar hypocrisy in Gaudentius' praise of the tribune Dulcitus' *religio*; *Gaud.* I.2.3.

⁵¹⁷ Primian made the mistake of excommunicating a relative of Donatus, the deacon Maximian, upon his election and in 393 a council of Donatist bishops at Cebarsussa consecrated Maximian as a rival Donatist bishop of Carthage.

⁵¹⁸ Gaumer, 'The Election of Primian of Carthage', 294-300. I would suggest that Primian's developments were prodded on by Caecilianist opportunism: following after the Maximianist schism, proposals to integrate Donatist clergy, retaining their rank and their parochial charges, were made in the 393 Council of Hippo (*Brev. Hipp.* Can. 37; CCSL 149.44). For how 'radical' this proposal was, and its transmarine consultation and later expansion in 397, see Burns, 'Appropriating Augustine Appropriating Cyprian', 116-17. The Maximianist schism also revolutionised the position of the Donatist bishop of Carthage with respect to state persecution: Primian enthusiastically used the strong arm of government to curtail the Maximianists, deploying strategies and state cooperation at least verbally abhorred by Parmenian.

⁵¹⁹ Agreeing with Hoover that 'the Donatist assertion at the Conference that they would happily unite with the transmarine provinces if vindicated [*Coll. Carth.* III.99]' is 'an essentially defensive posture'; Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 120n14.

⁵²⁰ Consider Petilian's courteous comments to Marcellinus at *Gesta* I.145 with its studied double-meaning, discussed in Graumann, 'Upstanding Donatists', 335-36.

⁵²¹ I would note, however, that the speech of Gaudentius (*Gesta* III.102) on the purity of the church needs little reading between the lines to detect its severe consequences.

of the rest of the transmarine church they were in communion with.⁵²² His consistently hostile attitude to the imperially sponsored attempts at unity reveals a more thorough resentment than one simply directed at the odious agents themselves: this is why Optatus responded to him by conceding the possibility that they and their violence may have been evil.⁵²³

Most importantly, it appears that the sources are correct to report that one of the major disagreements Parmenian had with Tyconius was regarding the latter's belief in the church's continued universality.⁵²⁴ That Augustine and Optatus provided accurate presentations of Parmenian's view on the implication in *traditio*, and concomitant collapse, of transmarine churches is borne out by the fact that Parmenian excommunicated Tyconius precisely for failing to subscribe to this set of beliefs. If, on the other hand, the conciliatory approach cited above in the 411 Conference could be read as truly representative, it would be difficult to explain why a council of Donatist bishops in 380⁵²⁵ found Tyconius' belief that the broader transmarine world had not been contaminated by *traditio* so repulsive as to merit excommunication.⁵²⁶ As Frend noted, Tyconius' commitment to 'the universal character of the Church' was seen to threaten the very principle of Donatist separation from the communion of the *traditores*.⁵²⁷ Accordingly, after the 411 Conference, the rigorist Donatist party line emerged from its tactical concealment. In letters written after the Conference and responded to by Augustine, the Donatist bishop of Thamugadi, Gaudentius, seems to have claimed that transmarine churches were outside the church.⁵²⁸ The later

⁵²² Optatus, I.22; cf. Donatus in III.3 and the note in Edwards 22n88.

⁵²³ Optatus, III.1, 4-5.

⁵²⁴ Augustine, *Ep.* 93.10.44; *C ep. Parm.* I.1.1.

⁵²⁵ For 380, see Congar (BA 28.719); Frend puts it at ca. 385; Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 205.

⁵²⁶ This point is articulated by Congar (BA 28.718-20), who highlights that the letter to Tyconius refuted by Augustine begins with a strong insistence that 'les Donatistes sont dans la seule véritable Église' and recognition of transmarine churches compromised the core motive (to Parmenian's mind) of Donatist self-identity.

⁵²⁷ Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 205.

⁵²⁸ *Gaud.* II.4.4-5.5; see Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 188-89.

Donatist bishop Fulgentius' treatise on baptism is filled with the logic of hamartological contamination invalidating Caecilianist baptism, altars, and oils, and damning all churches that are not *Ecclesiam meam...certissimam* which is that, in a now-hallowed Donatist phrase, *quae persecutionem patitur, non quae facit*.⁵²⁹ There can be no doubt that Fulgentius' fulminations were not restricted to African Caecilianists and did not also extend to their overseas allies and imperial strongmen. Furthermore, as will be considered below (§5), there is substantial evidence that many Donatists were committed to the belief that the true church had come to be restricted to Africa.

Finally, Donatist rebaptismal practice does support the contention that by Parmenian's time the mainline of the Donatist church regarded the transmarine world as effectively unwashed pagans.⁵³⁰ The Donatist bishop of Rome contemporary with Parmenian, Claudianus, provides the clearest instance of Donatists rebaptising non-Africans. The orthodox Roman clergy complained that he denigrated their baptisms and considered them no better than pagans.⁵³¹ The Roman clergyman Ambrosiaster, contemporary with Parmenian, also corroborates that Donatists practiced rebaptism of other Christians in Rome.⁵³² Filastrius of Brescia is a similar witness,⁵³³ as also the possibly Roman⁵³⁴ author of the pseudo-Hieronymean *Indiculus*.⁵³⁵ Such a rigid rebaptismal practice seems to indicate that the Roman Donatist community believed that transmarine churches united to the Caecilianists were invalidated. In much the same vein, Optatus remarked that the Donatists charged the Caecilianists in Africa: *Adhuc paganus es*,⁵³⁶ i.e., they were

⁵²⁹ Fulgentius, *Libellus de baptismo* 15; Monceaux V.339. This is an identical phrasing to the Donatist letter in *Gesta* III.258 cited above.

⁵³⁰ However, on the fluidity of Donatist rebaptismal practice relevant to this question see Adamiak, 'Who Was Rebaptized by the Donatists, and Why?'

⁵³¹ Note 469.

⁵³² Ambrosiaster, *Comm. in 1 Cor.* 1.14; CSEL 81/2.11-12.

⁵³³ Filastrius, *Div. haer.* 55(83); CCSL IX.253.

⁵³⁴ Gustave Bardy, 'L'indiculus *De Haeresibus* du Pseudo-Jérôme', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 19, no. 1 (1929): 402-3.

⁵³⁵ *Indiculus* 47; PL 81.613-4.

⁵³⁶ Optatus, III.11; CSEL 26.98.

reckoned unbaptised. Optatus claimed that he could prove that during the time of Parmenian, people from far-flung transmarine locales like Antioch or Arabia were subject to rebaptism by Donatists when in Africa.⁵³⁷ The rhetoric, notwithstanding the actual practice, of Donatist rebaptism in the time of Parmenian shows that they understood the boundary of the church to be effectively restricted to the Donatist communion in Africa and its lonesome satellites. So far as their polemical ecclesiology was concerned, transmarine churches that had sustained their defiling communion with the Caecilianist *traditores* were not churches at all.⁵³⁸

(3) Tyconius

As Roger Gryson remarked in his introduction to his edition and translation of the *Expositio*, today to give a general introduction for Tyconius⁵³⁹ is a ‘tâche facile’,⁵⁴⁰ since contemporary scholarship has advanced considerably in establishing our knowledge about this attractive and peculiar author. Though Burkitt prepared his edition and translation of the *Liber Regularum* in 1894, it ‘remained dormant’, in the words of one scholar, ‘languish[ing] on library shelves’ until the significant study of Pamela Bright in 1988.⁵⁴¹ Around the same

⁵³⁷ Optatus, II.12. Cf. also Augustine, *Ep.* 185.4.17; *Enarrat.* 10.5 (Donatists rebaptise visiting Mesopotamians and do not even consider them Christians), and *Emer.* 9. Augustine also points to Antioch as part of the Christian world reputed to have ‘perished’ by communion with putative ‘African crimes’ of *traditio: quomodo potuit Afrorum perire criminibus?*; *Unit. eccl.* 17.31; CSEL 52.270.

⁵³⁸ However, Conant has drawn attention to how Donatist refugees after the Vandal invasion seemed remarkably willing to enter into the communion of transmarine Christians, suggesting that ‘the two parties’ sectarian struggle was deeply contextualised in the specific circumstances of late ancient African life’; Conant, ‘Donatism in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries’, 349–50.

⁵³⁹ The orthography of his name is varied in the manuscript tradition: Tichonius, Thiconius, Thyconius, Tychonius, and Tyconius. Simply because the latter is most common, I have adopted it. See the discussions in Monceaux V.166; F.C. Burkitt, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1894), 103; Johannes van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine’s City of God and the Sources of His Doctrine of the Two Cities* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 255n291.

⁵⁴⁰ Roger Gryson, ed., *Tyconius: Commentaire de l’Apocalypse*, trans. Roger Gryson, Corpus Christianorum in Translation 10 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2011), 9.

⁵⁴¹ Charles Kannengiesser, ‘Tyconius Crux Interpretorum: A Response to Karla Pollmann’, *Augustinian Studies* 29, no. 2 (1998): 99. He highlights Anderson’s 1974 translation and commentary in between, whose notes I have found abundantly useful: Douglas Leslie Anderson, ‘The Book of Rules of Tyconius: An Introduction and Translation with Commentary’ (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1974). On the

time, Steinhauser published his study of the *Expositio* in 1987.⁵⁴² William Babcock shortly after produced his own English translation and a very slightly emended edition of Burkitt's text of the *Liber Regularum*, whose text and translation is followed below.⁵⁴³ Since then, interest in Tyconius has continued apace, reaching a renewed apogee following Gryson's 2011 edition of the *Expositio Apocalypseos* for the CCSL, putting in the hands of scholars for the first time⁵⁴⁴ a meticulously reconstructed text of this hitherto opaquely fragmentary work.⁵⁴⁵ Most recently, Lynskey's 2021 study of the Apocalypse Commentary represents the most up-to-date treatment of this challenging text, offering a thorough 'theological-literary analysis' which does much to uncover Tyconius' 'church-centric exegesis'.⁵⁴⁶ The loss of Tyconius' treatise on the church, which was written as an *apologia* after receiving censure from his coreligionists,⁵⁴⁷ can only be lamented. In its absence, care must be taken in reconstructing his ecclesiology from his two surviving works, which are primarily exegetical. The task is made considerably easier because Tyconius' exegesis is perhaps

neglect suffered by the *Liber Regularum* see Bright's own comments in Pamela Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius: Its Purpose and Inner Logic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 16–18. Also of importance is the previously standard study of Tyconius (which I have not been able to consult) by Traugott Hahn, *Tyconius-Studien*. (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1900).

⁵⁴² Kenneth Steinhauser, *The Apocalypse Commentary of Tyconius: A History of Its Reception and Influence* (Bern: P. Lang, 1987).

⁵⁴³ William Babcock, *Tyconius: The Book of Rules* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989). References to his translation and text are henceforth, 'Babcock'.

⁵⁴⁴ The Turin Fragments were published and edited in *The Turin Fragments of Tyconius' Commentary on Revelation* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1963). Nevertheless the whole was judged to be 'practically lost'; Charles Kannengiesser, 'Augustine and Tyconius: A Conflict of Christian Hermeneutics in Roman Africa', in *Augustine and the Bible* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 162. Even more recently, Vercruysse, by way of excuse, limited his remarks to the *Liber regularum* because the *Expositio* 'reste à l'état fragmentaire dans l'attente d'une éventuelle reconstitution à partir de l'édition scientifique'; Jean-Marc Vercruysse, 'Tyconius a-t-il lu Origène?', *Studia Patristica* 46 (2010): 155.

⁵⁴⁵ On the earlier *status quaestionis* for the *Expositio Apocalypseos* see Monceaux V.195-201; Kenneth Steinhauser, 'The Structure of Tyconius' Apocalypse Commentary: A Correction', *Vigiliae Christianae* 35, no. 4 (1981): 354–57; Paula Fredriksen, 'Tyconius and the End of the World', *Revue d'études Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 28, no. 1–2 (1982): 59n4. Gryson published a French translation of his edition in 2011, which was followed by that of Francis X. Gumerlock (FOTC 134), with valuable notes by David Robinson. For a summary of Gryson's achievement (for whose methodology, CCSL 107A.7-102), see Robinson in FOTC 134.5-6.

⁵⁴⁶ Matthew Lynskey, *Tyconius' Book of Rules: An Ancient Invitation to Ecclesial Hermeneutics* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

⁵⁴⁷ The three books of the *De bello intestino*, known to us from Gennadius' catalogue of his writings; *Vir. ill.* 18. On its contents see Monceaux V.169-71.

obsessively ecclesiological: the church is read into and read out of a bewildering array of images and material in the Apocalypse, founded on an approach sponsored and promoted by his *Liber regularum*. I will devote special attention to the *Expositio* in the following analysis, both in order to contribute to the ongoing study of this text and also because it contains his most illuminating commentary on the universality of the church and the relationship between the Donatists and non-African churches. The major features of Tyconius' doctrine of the church have been rehearsed by commentators, often with a clear Augustinian interest: his precedent regarding the *corpus permixtum*, and his commitment to the church's universal diffusion, are frequently cited.⁵⁴⁸ Augustine's reliance on and admiration for Tyconius' *Liber regularum* was frankly conceded, and he may also have had direct knowledge of the Apocalypse commentary.⁵⁴⁹

In perhaps the most tantalisingly incomplete biographical note in his corpus, Augustine described how Tyconius, *omnibus sanctarum paginarum uocibus circumtunsus*, was brought to concede that the church was in fact diffused all over the world, and that sin was not contagious.⁵⁵⁰ Apparently because of this, Tyconius was excommunicated by Parmenian in a council in the 380s.⁵⁵¹ The conceptual relation between 'hamartological contamination', and the status of transmarine churches, is implicit: if sin is not contagious

⁵⁴⁸ This was in part inevitable, as Tyconius' reception and legacy was almost entirely due to Augustine's endorsement of the *Liber Regularum*, see Burkitt, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius*, xxiii–xxiv; Pamela Bright, "The Preponderating Influence of Augustine": A Study of the Epitome of the *Book of Rules* of the Donatist Tyconius', in *Augustine and the Bible* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 109–28.

⁵⁴⁹ For the extensive bibliography on Augustine and Tyconius on the Apocalypse see n16 in Sean Michael Ryan, 'Praising God in Adversity: Tyconius's Ecclesiological Exegesis of the Celestial Liturgy (Rev. 4–5)', in *The Book of Revelation and Its Interpreters: Short Studies and an Annotated Bibliography*, ed. Ian Boxall and Richard Tresley (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 46. Monceaux believed Augustine 'expressément' mentions the Apocalypse commentary in the famous passage in *Doctr. chr.* III.30.42; however, the discussion of the angels as churches, which he doubtlessly was referring to, may only be a reference to the *Liber regularum* (2, quoted above). Yet Augustine's mention that Tyconius concludes this after sustained reasoning, to my mind, does suggest the Apocalypse Commentary; Monceaux V.197 and 216. For a recent argument that this passage does show Augustine had read the *Expositio*, see Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 36.

⁵⁵⁰ *Parm.* I.1; CSEL 51.19; cf. *Ep.* 93.10.44. Augustine's contention that the entirety of Scripture clamours against the Donatists is put forcefully in *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 6.24.

⁵⁵¹ See note 525.

in this way, then the transmarine churches united to the Caecilianists cannot be jettisoned. Augustine explained that Tyconius' rejection of Donatist orthodoxy on these two interrelated points⁵⁵² delivered him up to excommunication, and it is here where he located the chief conflict between Parmenian and Tyconius.⁵⁵³ Tyconius, despite the protestations of Augustine, was not a crypto-Caecilianist,⁵⁵⁴ and represented a sincere alternative within the range of 4th century 'Donatisms'.⁵⁵⁵ For example, it appears that Tyconius' defended his rejection of rebaptism⁵⁵⁶ by appeal to Donatist conciliar precedent on the report of both Augustine⁵⁵⁷ and Gennadius.⁵⁵⁸ On this point he serves as an important reminder that Donatist rebaptismal practice, usually held as definitive and typical of the movement, was not as monolithic as Caecilianist critics insinuated.⁵⁵⁹ Jesse Hoover has argued recently that Tyconius represents an older Donatist tradition, before the movement was galvanised into an increasingly isolationist position following the Macarian persecution.⁵⁶⁰ Tyconius, in the words of one commentator, 'opens to us the nobler motives of Donatism.'⁵⁶¹ Nevertheless, it is clear both from his excommunication and his writings that he faced internal opposition.

⁵⁵² Identified and analysed in Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa*, 113.

⁵⁵³ See also *Ep.* 93.10.43-44; CSEL 34.487.

⁵⁵⁴ As I have argued in Joshua Caminiti, 'Tyconius the African: Reassessing the Theory of His Greek Origins', *Vigiliae Christianae*, Forthcoming 2025. See also Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 34–39; Joseph Ratzinger, 'Beobachtungen zum Kirchenbegriff des Tyconius im Liber regularum', *Revue d'études augustiniennes et patristiques* 2, no. 1–2 (1956): 185.

⁵⁵⁵ For a plea for moving from a 'monolithic' Donatism to a range of 'Donatisms' see Maureen Tilley, 'Redefining Donatism: Moving Forward', *Augustinian Studies* 42, no. 1 (2011): 25.

⁵⁵⁶ See *Exp. Apoc.* 2.34, 54.

⁵⁵⁷ Tyconius cited a council of ca. 336 in which Donatus permitted Mauretanian Donatists to refrain from rebaptism; Augustine, *Ep.* 93.10.43; see Merdinger, 'In League with the Devil?', 175–76. Mauretians had a long tradition of hesitancy about rebaptism, evident from Cyprian's day; Monceaux II.92.

⁵⁵⁸ Gennadius, *Vir. ill.* 18; PL 59.1071: . . . *in quibus ob suorum defensionem antiquarum meminit synodorum. E quibus omnibus agnoscitur Donatiane partis fuisse.*

⁵⁵⁹ Adamiak, 'Who Was Rebaptized by the Donatists, and Why?' See also Szada, 'The Debate over the Repetition of Baptism', 641–42.

⁵⁶⁰ Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 163.

⁵⁶¹ Egbert C. Smyth, 'Tyconius-Studien. Ein Beitrag Zur Kirchen- Und Dogmengeschichte Des Vierten Jahrhunderts. Von Traugott, Hahn', *The American Journal of Theology* 6, no. 1 (1902): 154. So also Markus, for whom Tyconius is 'the greatest of Donatist theologians'; Markus, *Saeculum*, 115.

Certainly, for the present purposes, Tyconius' ecclesiological commitment to the continuing universality of the church certainly placed him outside of Parmenianist orthodoxy.⁵⁶²

Fundamental to Tyconius was his doctrine of the church as a *corpus bipertitum*, expounded programmatically as the second of his exegetical 'rules' and deployed with consistency in his *Expositio*. The church is composed of two unequal halves: *fusca* yet *speciosa*, split between a *pars dextera et pars sinistra*.⁵⁶³ Tyconius explained that there is a basic cleavage between the *duae partes* in the world: the *populus Dei* and the *populus diaboli*, but that presently they are intertwined in the church.⁵⁶⁴ Tyconius elsewhere used the word typically associated with Augustine in this respect: the church is *permixta*, a mixed, and not pure, society.⁵⁶⁵ This is in marked opposition to the official line taken to represent mainstream Donatism.⁵⁶⁶ The church, for Tyconius, 'tolerates' (*tolerat*) the presence of the false brethren, who, though within the visible community, are *spiritaliter foris*.⁵⁶⁷

(3.1) Tyconius and the fate of non-African churches

From his conflict with Parmenian, as mediated by Augustine, Tyconius has been understood as a puzzling crypto-Caecilianist, committed to the universality of the church despite his allegiance to Donatism.⁵⁶⁸ It is important to note that Tyconius does not use the word

⁵⁶² Gryson, commenting on Tyconius' claim in *Exp. Apoc.* 3.60 (*Una est ecclesia in toto orbe*), says that 'Voilà bien une phrase qu'un donatiste de stricte observance n'aurait jamais pu écrire.' in Gryson, *Tyconius: Commentaire de l'Apocalypse*, 142n31.

⁵⁶³ *Lib. reg.* II; Babcock, 18, 14.

⁵⁶⁴ *Exp. Apoc.* 2.35; CCSL 107A.140.

⁵⁶⁵ *Exp. Apoc.* 2.44; CCSL 107A.146.

⁵⁶⁶ Compare Petilian in *C. litt. Petil.* II.75.167, 76.169.

⁵⁶⁷ *Exp. Apoc.* 2.35; CCSL 107A.140.

⁵⁶⁸ Monceaux V.177. The earliest English-language history of Donatism, of Thomas Long, makes the implausible claim that he 'continued in the Schism, when he was convinced that it was so; having espoused the Schisme, and gained great reputation, he knew not how to leave that'; Thomas Long, *The History of the Donatists* (London: Printed for Walter Kettelby at the Bishop's Head in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1677), 58. Long also laboured under the misapprehension that Tyconius was a bishop (*ibid.*, 57). Steinhauser has argued that he was originally Greek and idiosyncratically caught between the crossfire, Kenneth Steinhauser, 'Tyconius: Was He Greek?', *Studia Patristica* 27 (1993): 394–99. This has been followed by Vercauteren (SC 488.13) and Gryson in Gryson, *Tyconius: Commentaire de l'Apocalypse*, 9. Lynskey cautiously rehearses Steinhauser's view but concludes that it is 'uncertain'; Lynskey, *Tyconius' Book of Rules*, 23.

catholica to refer to the church. In fact, he never uses the word in any of his extant writings.⁵⁶⁹ This may be because the Caecilianist party had so thoroughly arrogated this term to themselves or for some other reason which cannot be definitively conjectured. Nevertheless, Tyconius frequently defends the church's universality and opposes any view that would restrict it to the Donatists in Africa.⁵⁷⁰ The church exists throughout the whole world, composed of all peoples and nations.⁵⁷¹ His refusal to use the word 'catholic' in this connection is remarkable, and may suggest that, at least for him, it did not mean 'geographically universal'. Tyconius, as Augustine would do with greater intensity,⁵⁷² used the prophecy of the stone and the mountain in Daniel 2 to indicate the real worldwide spread of the church.⁵⁷³ Commentators have detected that Tyconius' application of this prophecy to the universality of the church was barbed as a refutation of Donatist particularism.⁵⁷⁴ Indeed, as Hoover has remarked, Tyconius was responding to a more 'parochial' interpretation of Daniel's prophecy according to which it is only God's power (*potestas*) and not the body of his church that is prophesied to fill the whole earth.⁵⁷⁵ On the contrary, for Tyconius, the church was spread throughout the world, established beyond doubt because of God's promise to Abraham.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁶⁹ This has not stopped scholars—assuming the Caecilianist interpretation—from stating that Tyconius defended the 'catholicity' of the church; e.g. Mandouze, *Prosopographie de l'Afrique chrétienne (303-533)*, 819.

⁵⁷⁰ In addition to instances discussed below, see *Exp. Apoc.* 7.37, 50. The *corpus bipertitum*, in both its hierarchy (*Exp. Apoc.* 1.27; 3.74; 5.43) and sacraments (*Exp. Apoc.* 2.34) is throughout the world and will globally struggle against the Antichrist; *Exp. Apoc.* 1.22. The body of the devil, the anti-church, is universal; symbolised by the leopard (*pardo*) in Revelation—its many spots indicate that it embraces a *uarietatem gentium*; *Exp. Apoc.* 4.27; CCSL 117A.182.

⁵⁷¹ *Exp. Apoc.* 7.17; CCSL 117A.218: The elect will be found to be predestined (*in uitam destinatae*) in all nations (*gentes, nationes*). Also *Exp. Apoc.* 2.48; CCSL 117A.149: The church is composed of innumerable (*innumerabilem*) members from *omnes gentes*.

⁵⁷² *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 4.4; *Parm.* III.5.27; *C. litt. Petil.* II.38.91.

⁵⁷³ *Lib. reg.* I; Babcock, 5; *Exp. Apoc.* 1.5, 6.14. See the comment by Andersen: 'Tyconius understood the passage to be both a prophecy of the Second Advent... and a prophecy concerning the Church in the time period prior to the Second Advent.' Anderson, 'The Book of Rules of Tyconius', 27n5.

⁵⁷⁴ Gryson (CCSL 107A.235) comments that he used this prophecy to 'démontrer, contre les donatistes, que le Christ a rempli la terre entière non pas virtuellement,—en ce sens que son pouvoir s'étendrait à l'ensemble de celle-ci,—mais réellement, par l'intermédiaire de son corps, l'Église'. Vercruyse (SC 488.136n2) comments on this passage that it is to be taken as a barb against fellow-Donatists, staking his ground on a principle of the church's 'universalité'.

⁵⁷⁵ Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 125.

⁵⁷⁶ *Lib. reg.* III; Babcock, 22, 24.

The extent to which Tyconius differed from his coreligionists on the universality of the church was a function of his disavowal of the principle of hamartological contamination. Almost certainly representing the views of his critics, he adumbrated the outline of a Donatist remnant theology: ‘They say that the church is dwindling and is able to be reduced to the number of the household of Noah’.⁵⁷⁷ Tyconius rejected this, arguing from the mixed constitution of the church implied in the parable of the Wheat and Tares: ‘it is impossible for the number of saints to be lessened by the evil deeds of the tares growing up [with them]’.⁵⁷⁸ For Tyconius, the sacraments remain effectual and cannot be compromised by the co-presence of sin or sinners.⁵⁷⁹ In one passage, he explained that the ‘mystery of iniquity’ cannot ‘invalidate the power of the sacraments either in themselves on account of others, or in others’.⁵⁸⁰ Tyconius continues by stating that the church will perdure integrally throughout all time, in its fulness (indicated by the figure seven), and links this to its bipartite constitution: the church does not expel all the false brethren but tolerates them, and is in no way diminished or invalidated thereby.⁵⁸¹ The conflict with the false brethren, the crisis precipitating the final apocalyptic *discessio* (of 2 Thess. 2.3ff, discussed below), may have ruptured to an open breach in Africa between the persecuting ‘church’ and the true church of the martyrs, but this very same rupture was fated to play out in eschatologically in the rest of the Christian world.⁵⁸² A persecution—of Caecilianists against Donatists—has

⁵⁷⁷ *Exp. Apoc.* 1.42. See Robinson in FOTC 134.57 and Gryson, *Tyconius: Commentaire de l’Apocalypse*, 90n51.

⁵⁷⁸ *Exp. Apoc.* 1.42; FOTC 134.57-8; CCSL 107A.126. For the application of the tares and wheat arguing for a mixed constitution of the Church see also *Exp. Apoc.* 1.11. Cf. Augustine’s summary: *nullius hominis...peccatum praescribere promissis Dei*; *Parm.* I.1.1; CSEL 51.19.

⁵⁷⁹ *Exp. Apoc.* 2.54; FOTC 134.87; CCSL 117A.150: *Virtutem sacramentorum dicit in suis uigere nec aliqua solis et lunae aduersae deceptione restingui.*

⁵⁸⁰ *Exp. Apoc.* 2.34; FOTC 134.72-3. See Davidson in FOTC 134.73n73 and Gryson in Gryson, *Tyconius: Commentaire de l’Apocalypse*, 107n24.

⁵⁸¹ *Exp. Apoc.* 2.34-25.

⁵⁸² *Exp. Apoc.* 1.41, CCSL 117A.126: Tyconius takes the particular historical referent of the letter of John to the Philadelphians as written to *Omni ecclesiae*; there were then trials in Philadelphia, now in Africa, and then finally in the whole world. Also *Exp. Apoc.* 5.1; CCSL 117A.188: *Recapitulat a tempore persecutionum in Africa gestarum.* The climax of history prophesied in Revelation 14 is a ‘recapitulation’ referring to the first persecutions in Africa

happened in one place in Africa (*uno in loco in Africa*) as a sign of what is to come to all nations (*omni gente*): the final and definitive separation of the church from the world of Babylon.⁵⁸³ Steinhauser notes that it is precisely this eschatological framework which aggravated his coreligionists against him.⁵⁸⁴ He was a Donatist because he believed the sifting of the church had begun in Africa; he was a condemned Donatist because he did not believe this separation had already been effected throughout the world.

Accordingly, a close reading of Tyconius' *Expositio* reveals that his understanding of the church's universality is perhaps not as 'Catholic' (i.e., Caecilianist) as Augustine had made it out to be. Here, as Bright comments, Tyconius was waging a war 'on two fronts':⁵⁸⁵ against both fellow Donatists and enemy Caecilianists. While the church is not to be restricted to Africa as a lone remnant, African Christians, Tyconius believed, should still shun allegiance with *traditores* in the persecutorial state church. In other words, Tyconius managed to balance a commitment to Donatism alongside a belief that the church outside of Africa perished. The *separatio populorum*, which was Parmenian's foundational rationale for Donatism (§2), was differently conceived by Tyconius. As Frend explains, for Tyconius the critical 'division' is 'a moral one'; actual 'physical separation' was unnecessary.⁵⁸⁶ Nevertheless it has happened that in Africa a traumatic separation has occurred between persecuting *traditores* and the faithful Donatists, and Tyconius was in no doubt as to which party he would cleave to.⁵⁸⁷ The present schism in Africa was a foretaste of the true and final

⁵⁸³ *Exp. Apoc.* 5.2; CCSL 117A.118: *Ad hoc enim uno in loco in Africa fit, ut notum sit quod in omni gente fiet, et ecclesia, quae in parte praedicat in Africa, ea ratione in omni gente sic praedicet, cum de medio istius saeculi Babylonis exierit.*

⁵⁸⁴ Steinhauser, *The Apocalypse Commentary of Tyconius*, 249–50.

⁵⁸⁵ Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius*, 20.

⁵⁸⁶ Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 204. For an explicit statement of this distinction see Augustine, *C. litt. Petil.* III.3.4, and cf. *Gesta* III.258.

⁵⁸⁷ For Tyconius' aversion to persecution see *Parm.* I.10.16–11.17. For the fascinating theory that he was sympathetic to Rogatianists, who had themselves been persecuted by mainstream Donatists see Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 196. Augustine twice quotes a motto as Tyconius' personal manifesto: *Quod uolumus, sanctum est*; *Ep.* 93.10.43 and earlier in 4.14; CSEL 34.487 and 459. Andreicut notes that 'Tyconius' heart was Donatist', and he above all wished to belong to a church not complicit in *traditio* or persecution; Gavril

eschatological *separatio*, the drama of which Tyconius saw reflected in his contemporary hostilities. Tyconius believed that the church will always be martyred, never lack for persecutors and hostility from the *principes* who are the *potestates huius saeculi*.⁵⁸⁸ Tyconius interpreted the diabolical dragon of Revelation, with its seven heads and ten kingdoms, as representing respectively *omnes reges* and *omnia regna*.⁵⁸⁹ This is in marked distinction from his Latin predecessor Victorinus, who interpreted it more narrowly to mean the seven ancient kings of Rome.⁵⁹⁰ Such an anti-imperial reading of Revelation seems to have been a substantial current in Donatist exegesis,⁵⁹¹ judging also by the later *Liber genealogus*, which understood the Antichristic Nero ‘as emblematic of Roman emperor’s generally’.⁵⁹² Bright argues that the ‘fratricidal hatred’ of persecution, instigated by secular ‘princes’, was for Tyconius the ‘very indication of the presence of the Antichrist’.⁵⁹³ The divide between earthly power and the church was stark for Tyconius: when the Scriptures mention kings or nations, this can often be a mystical shorthand for the adversarial body of the devil.⁵⁹⁴ Tyconius, sincerely a Donatist, felt that there was a real persecution of the Empire against the church in Africa, which has accordingly suffered a division between a

Andreicut, ‘The Church’s Unity and Authority: Augustine’s Effort to Convert the Donatists’ (Marquette University, 2010), 96. See also Frend, ‘Donatus “Paene Totam Africam Decepit”. How?’, 622–23.

⁵⁸⁸ *Exp. Apoc.* 2.22; CCSL 107A.135. See also there: *Nemo putet solos apostolos esse mortuos pro Christo, et iam cessasse martyrium, et persecutores in ecclesia non esse*.

⁵⁸⁹ *Exp. Apoc.* 4.10; CCSL 107A.175. Also *Exp. Apoc.* 6.5.

⁵⁹⁰ Victorinus, *Apoc.* 12.3; SC 423.102. For the reception of this text, come down to us in Jerome’s revision of the later chapters excising its millenarianism, see Roger Gryson, ‘Les commentaires patristiques latins de l’Apocalypse’, *Revue théologique de Louvain* 28, no. 4 (1997): 484–502.

⁵⁹¹ Augustine reports Donatists as saying that they suffer persecution *a catholicis regibus aut a catholicis principibus*; *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 11.13; CCSL 36.118. Augustine’s reply (pointedly?) only refers to them as *principes*. This synonymy between kings and emperors—impolitic, of course, to Latin-speaking Romans (cf. *Civ.* V.12)—seems to be a Donatist exegetical tactic of assimilating their persecuting government to Biblical language, see also the *reges saeculi* of Petilian, *passim* in *C. litt. Petil.* Book II. However, on occasion Augustine can refer to the emperor as a *rex* in a praiseworthy way—here for example alluding to Prov. 21.1, throughout *Ep.* 105. That Donatists were capable of being diplomatic in this respect is evident in Petilian, who, as Hoover notes, is careful not to ‘directly implicat[e] the emperors in the recent persecutions’; Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 70.

⁵⁹² Dearn, ‘Persecution and Donatist Identity in the Liber Genealogus’, 133.

⁵⁹³ Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius*, 171–72.

⁵⁹⁴ *Lib. reg.* VII, Babcock, 114 and 118. See also Robinson, FOTC 134.161n9.

persecuting pseudo-church and a martyred church.⁵⁹⁵ Tyconius thus interprets the five years of the Constantinian persecution of 317-321 as prophesied in the five months of the torment inflicted by the locusts in Revelations 9.⁵⁹⁶ This plague of locusts has its sting in the false bishops of the Caecilianists.⁵⁹⁷

For Tyconius, the final *discessio* (cf. 2 Thes. 2.3ff), or ‘withdrawal’, of the true from the false brethren will only happen in the end,⁵⁹⁸ and that ‘from the midst of the church’ (*de medio eius*).⁵⁹⁹ This ultimately ‘will reveal the bipartite distinction’⁶⁰⁰ that hitherto was concealed within the church between her two intermingled halves. He believed the fault-lines of the bipartite body were being incipiently revealed in Africa, with its corresponding division into martyred and persecuting churches.⁶⁰¹ Yet, until the final and apocalyptic judgement, it is impossible to cleanly separate the two parts in advance.⁶⁰² Africa is only the first to experience the apocalyptic trial,⁶⁰³ which he understood as immanently unfolding across the world.⁶⁰⁴ The eschatological trials predicted by Daniel were happening ‘now in

⁵⁹⁵ Explicitly he singles out Africa as suffering from a further division of the church with schism in *Exp. Apoc.* 1.35.

⁵⁹⁶ *Exp. Apoc.* 3.35; CCSL 107A.159: ‘*Mensibus quinque*’ pro toto tempore persecutionis annorum quique dixit, quae facta est maxime in Africa. On this passage see Gryson, *Tyconius: Commentaire de l’Apocalypse*, 131n12. See also 3.25 where he identifies the months as standing for years.

⁵⁹⁷ Loc. cit. The bishops are the ones who cause harm, under the headship of the princes of the world who enable them; *Exp. Apoc.* 3.46. Cf. also *Exp. Apoc.* 4.38, 43; 5.41. Elsewhere he also assimilates these false Caecilianist bishops to locusts, who use the sacraments to delude the people and serve the devil; *Exp. Apoc.* 4.40; CCSL 117A.184. This is the interpretation of Robinson, FOTC 134.97, who writes: ‘This may be an indication of Tyconius’ Donatist theological leanings, i.e., that evil bishops in the church administer sacraments illegitimately.’ So too Gryson *Ibid.*, 184n16.

⁵⁹⁸ *Exp. Apoc.* 6.40; CCSL 117A.214: *Haec dicit ecclesia, cum discessio facta fuerit et cum aperitus uindicata*. Also *Exp. Apoc.* 7.48; FOTC 134.184; CCSL 117A.226: *Futuri temporis describit ecclesiam, quando iam malis de medio segregatis soli cum Christo boni regnabunt*.

⁵⁹⁹ *Exp. Apoc.* 5.22; CCSL 117A.194; FOTC 134.148. For this passage and its ambiguity see Gryson, *Tyconius: Commentaire de l’Apocalypse*, 54–55. Also at 5.46; CCSL 117A.202: the church *exierit de medio ipsius*. Cf. also *Exp. Apoc.* 5.25; FOTC 134.148. This passage shows a remarkable similarity to Augustine’s discussion of the ‘house’ of the Lord in the *De baptismo* (VII.51.99-52.100).

⁶⁰⁰ Commenting on *Lib. reg.* IV; Anderson, ‘The Book of Rules of Tyconius’, 139n111.

⁶⁰¹ Cf. the comments on Elam in *Lib. reg.* IV.

⁶⁰² His doctrine is summarised well by Harrison: he taught ‘that the true Church could not be identified with any particular group or place but was made up both of individuals destined for salvation who were obedient to God’s will, and of sinners destined for damnation, who would only be separated at the end’; Carol Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford: University Press, 2000), 150. On the irrelevance of geography in this accounting see *Exp. Apoc.* 5.47.

⁶⁰³ Monceaux V.208.

⁶⁰⁴ For his ‘immanent’ view of the apocalypse see the Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius*, 183. Earlier scholarship understood his reckoning of 350 years (from the death of Christ) as marking a literal apocalyptic

Africa' yet 'the end is not at this time'.⁶⁰⁵ Tyconius' commitment to the universality of the church is intimately related to his eschatology. One of his strongest statements to the effect of the church's universality (*Una est ecclesia in toto orbe*) is in a passage where he clarifies that the split in the church that has begun in Africa will percolate through the wider world. After the African persecutions (*post africanas persecutiones*), of the Caecilianists against the Donatists, the worldwide 'final...contest will be like this in Africa'.⁶⁰⁶ Far from repudiating Donatism, Tyconius' belief in the universality of the church was in many ways a charter or a platform for a global Donatism. He thought that the Donatist schism was not unique to Africa: the rest of the churches of the world would experience their own, and sooner rather than later.

(3.2) *The septiformis ecclesia*

While Tyconius does not discuss 'transmarine' churches under that name, he extensively developed the Cyprianic tradition of exegesis on the twofold seven churches of Paul and the Apocalypse. It is in the hands of Tyconius that the North African tradition of the seven churches (of Paul's letters, and of Revelation) reached its most thorough development before Augustine. The concept of a 'septiform church' in Tyconius has recently been subject to

calculus, which, however, Fredrisken-Landes has convincingly argued should not be read as setting a 'fixed' 'eschatological date'; Fredriksen, 'Tyconius and the End of the World', 63. This was the verdict of Hahn, followed by Bonner. Anderson, whose work was not yet published, also sees in it a literal calculus: 350 marked 'the specific number of years that the created world order would exist following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ'; Anderson, 'The Book of Rules of Tyconius', 163n57. For his belief in the imminence of the eschaton see *Lib. reg.* I; Babcock, 4: *Istius nobis iugis aduentus cavendus est, donec de medio* [2 Thess. 2.7] *eius discedat Ecclesia*. Anderson translates it as 'immediate advent'; *Ibid.*, 40.

⁶⁰⁵ *Lib. reg.* VI; Anderson, 183; Babcock, 110. *Quod autem Danihel dixit in Africa geritur, neque in eodem tempore finis*. And the end is 'about to be' (*futurum*). For this passage see the discussion in Kenneth Steinhauser, 'Recapitulatio in Tyconius and Augustine', *Augustinian Studies* 15 (1984): 3. I have used Anderson's translation here as Babcock's retains the obscurity of the original.

⁶⁰⁶ *Exp. Apoc.* 3.60; FOTC 134.108; CCSL 117A.166. Cf. *Exp. Apoc.* 2.35; CCSL 117A.141: *quod in Africa geritur exemplum est per orbem futurae reuelationis anitchristi*.

close study by Matthew Lynskey.⁶⁰⁷ This section will consider more narrowly what role, if any, these two sets of transmarine churches played within Tyconius' understanding of and reflection on the broader church outside of Africa. The idea of a *septiformis ecclesia* is first found in the *Liber regularum*, in one explicit instance in the context of his numerological interest in the number seven, and then in his *Expositio*. The passage in the *Liber regularum* occurs as Tyconius is explaining his all-important second *regula* of the *bipertita* church with reference to the seven angels of the seven churches addressed in the letters of Revelation:

It is in virtue of this mystery that, in the Apocalypse, the Lord now calls the seven angels (i.e., the septiform church (*id est Ecclesiam septiformem*)) holy (*sanctos*) and keepers of his precepts and now shows the same angels to be guilty (*reos*) of many crimes and in need of repentance.⁶⁰⁸

The significance of this passage for Tyconius is that it demonstrates the bipartite nature of the church. These seven churches, representing the fullness of the *ecclesia septiformis*, are at the same time *sanctos* and *reos*. He cautioned that the servants of the Lord are divided *in duas partes*, those who do the Lord's will, and those who are hypocrites. If the churches of Revelation, of such hoary antiquity and apostolic pedigree, and mystical symbols of the entire church, were mixed in such a way, surely, Tyconius reasoned, the church is so constituted as a bipartite body with some who are *sanctos* and others who are *reos*. Augustine will adopt a similar line of argument, except explicitly tuned against the Donatists (Chapter 5.4.1). Tyconius interpreted the angels of the churches in letters of Revelation 1-3 as 'personified communities', which seems to be a view traceable to Tertullian.⁶⁰⁹ This is explained at length in his *Expositio*, where he supported his interpretation through a

⁶⁰⁷ Lynskey, *Tyconius' Book of Rules*, 175–231.

⁶⁰⁸ *Lib. reg.* II; Babcock, 18-19. Cf. *Lib. reg.* VII; Babcock, 96.

⁶⁰⁹ Everett Ferguson, 'Some Patristic Interpretations of the Angels of the Churches (Apocalypse 1-3)', *Studia Patristica* 63 (2013): 95–96. He cites Tertullian *De paen.* 8.1 and *Scorp.* 12.8.

clarificatory retranslation from the Greek⁶¹⁰ with a brief excursus criticising notions of guardian angels.⁶¹¹ With this understanding, Tyconius used an argument that would later be repeated by Augustine: judging by these letters, it is clear that the septiform church contained wheat and tares, and would continue to do so.⁶¹²

Tyconius had an avid numerological interest,⁶¹³ which he used to develop Cyprian's exegesis of the seven churches more fully. Tyconius noted three special numbers which he called, adopting a Cyprianic expression, *numeri legitimi*—seven, ten, and twelve, and their multiples—which ‘signify either a perfect whole or a part representing a whole or a simple sum’.⁶¹⁴ Their mystical signification is coreferential. Tyconius explained that *Septem namque et decem idem est*, pointing to the fact that where Luke records Jesus saying the faithful will be recompensed sevenfold (Lk. 18.30) Matthew without contradiction has one hundredfold (i.e., 10x10; Mt. 19.20), since both signify the same thing (namely, plenitude).⁶¹⁵ The number seven for Tyconius specifically indicates ‘plenitude’ or completion.⁶¹⁶ Accordingly the seven angels of the seven churches of Revelation symbolise

⁶¹⁰ His knowledge of Greek is discussed in detail in Gryson's introduction and examined with great attention in the notes, see Gryson, *Tyconius: Commentaire de l'Apocalypse*, 71n16, 172n7. This was recruited as one piece of evidence for Steinhauser's hypothesis that he was Greek; Steinhauser, 'Tyconius: Was He Greek?', 397–98.

⁶¹¹ *Exp. Apoc.* 1.11.

⁶¹² *Exp. Apoc.* 1.11.

⁶¹³ See his treatment of the number of the beast (he attests to a rare variant where it is 616, on which see Jesse Hoover, 'Exegeting the Apocalypse with the Donatist Communion', in *The Cambridge Companion to Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. Colin McAllister (Cambridge, 2020), 83–84) in *Exp. Apoc.* 4.46; CCSL 117A.187. See also his exegesis the twenty-four elders of Rev. 4.4 to be a sum of another mystic number, twelve, representing the doubled dozen of the apostles and the tribes, representing the offices of the Church; *Exp. Apoc.* 2.5.

⁶¹⁴ *Lib. reg.* V; Babcock, 97; *Exp. Apoc.* 3.81. Andersen explains: “‘Legitimi’ means ‘legitimate,’ ‘proper,’ or ‘fixed as by law.’” In the context of this rule, the word conveys the idea of a divinely “fixed” or appointed number which serves as a source of special revelation. In other words, Tyconius has devised a numerology to explain the significance of certain numbers which occur frequently in the Scriptures, such as the numbers 3, 7, 10 and 12.’ Anderson, ‘The Book of Rules of Tyconius’, 148n3.

⁶¹⁵ *Exp. Apoc.* 4.26; CCSL 117A.182. Elsewhere Tyconius switches from the seven angels to the twelve angels of Rev. 21.12, which designate the same thing: *uniuersitatem totius plebis*; *Exp. Apoc.* 7.37; CCSL 107A.224.

⁶¹⁶ *Exp. Apoc.* 2.34; CCSL 107A.139: *ubique enim septenarius numerus plenitudo est eius rei de qua agitur*. For a negative sense of completion (of wrath) see *Exp. Apoc.* 5.22 and of demons see *Exp. Apoc.* 6.12. It can also signify perfection, as in 3.1. The *septenarius numerus* will have a long legacy in Latin exegesis: Savonarola notes that *septenarius iste numerus, quem impletis, in Scripturis valde commendatus; De veritate prophetica* I.11. The sevenfold fulness of the churches of Revelation secured their status as an exegetical

the ‘perfect whole’ of the entire church.⁶¹⁷ Septiformity is expressive of a basic unity-in-multiplicity, which is why the seven churches describe the one church.⁶¹⁸ Commenting on the seven churches of Revelation, he wrote:

Surely the church of Christ was not only in these places at that time, but all fullness (*plenitude*) consists in the number seven and, as is the custom of divine mystery, the general is perceived in the particular. For the apostle Paul also writes to seven churches, not, however, to the same ones to which John writes.⁶¹⁹

Augustine will gratefully loan the exegetical valences added to the seven churches by Tyconius and combine it with Optatus’ own use of these churches to develop a new anti-Donatist polemical device, using communion with these seven churches as a marker of catholic legitimacy.

(4) Forays in Donatist particularism

A sacred demarcation of geography, if it is not a basic feature of religious experience,⁶²⁰ was certainly current in late antiquity. To cite one example, in a Stobaeian Hermetic fragment, the goddess Isis portrayed the landmass of the earth as a woman reclining supine: the author’s native land, Egypt, of course, was at the heart of her body and the most suitable climate for producing intelligent souls.⁶²¹ Whether done for theological reasons, as in the Hermetic fragment, or out of a cultural chauvinism no less incorrigible today than in

mainstay through the complex medieval reception of Tyconius’ *Expositio*, and resurfaces in Denis the Carthusian, Martin of Léon, and others.

⁶¹⁷ *Exp. Apoc.* 1.11, 3.66, 7.40; cf. 5.27, 6.12.

⁶¹⁸ *Exp. Apoc.* 3.55; CCSL 107A.164: exegeting Rev. 10.3’s seven peals of thunder, *Septem tonitura septem ecclesiae sunt, quae est una*.

⁶¹⁹ *Exp. Apoc.* 1.11; FOTC 134.38; CCSL 107A.113.

⁶²⁰ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1987), 20–50.

⁶²¹ Stobaeian hermetic fragment 24.11-12; as in M. David Litwa, ed., *Hermetica II: The Excerpts of Stobaeus, Papyrus Fragments, and Ancient Testimonies in an English Translation with Notes and Introduction*, trans. M. David Litwa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 135–36. This is something of a motif in the Hermetic literature, Egypt is also the centre and temple of the world in *Ascl.* 24. For a recent discussion see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Hermetic Spirituality and the Historical Imagination: Altered States of Knowledge in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 53–54.

antiquity, prejudice for one's *patria* took on a number of forms. When Firmicus Maternus commented on the impact of geography on temperament—replicating the typical Roman prejudice that Africans are 'tricky'—he reserved the only unqualified positive ethnographic description to Sicilians, who were distinguished for their intelligence.⁶²² The author, the reader will not be surprised to discover, was Sicilian.⁶²³ Greeks were special adepts in this art:⁶²⁴ Diogenes Laërtius insisted that not only philosophy, but humanity itself, sprang from his Hellenes.⁶²⁵ The Donatists are often held to be conspicuous in their tendency towards aggrandising the theological significance of Africa and the superiority of African Christianity.⁶²⁶ Donatists evidently took pride in their local tradition of rebaptism, over against the haphazard but general reduction of the practice in transmarine churches.⁶²⁷ In the 411 Conference, the Donatist bishop of Rome in 411 gave his signature after his African colleagues—apparently, Cyprian's successor took precedent over Peter's.⁶²⁸

In the 411 Conference of Carthage, after Augustine attempted to establish the coincidence of the world (*mundus*) with the church, Emeritus fired back with a quotation from John 17.25: 'Mundus te non cognouit. Ergo Deum ecclesia non agnouit, si mundus ecclesia

⁶²² Firmicus Maternus, *Math.* I.2.3. Africans were regarded as untrustworthy, with a proverbial denigration of *Punica fides*; Augustine faced this prejudice himself (Secundinus *Ep.* to Augustine, 2; CSEL 25.2.895). Sallust denigrates the fickleness of *Punica fides* in *Bell. Iurg.* 108.2.

⁶²³ Stating as much in *Math.* I.pr.4, cf. also his *De errore* 7. For climactic situation generating specific intelligence in his Athenians compare Plato, *Tim.* 24d.

⁶²⁴ See the discussion on Hellenocentrism and imperialism in Jeremy Schott, *Christianity, Empire, and the Making of Religion in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 15–28.

⁶²⁵ Diogenes Laertius, I.3.

⁶²⁶ Augustine claims that the Donatists are those, hearing the testimony of Psalm 46.2 of God's universal dominion, *qui putant eum in Africa sola regnare*; *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 13.3; CCSL 36.131. This is a frequent charge. Some 'African chauvinism' has even been detected in Augustine himself, to be sure; van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon*, 20.

⁶²⁷ Szada, 'The Debate over the Repetition of Baptism'.

⁶²⁸ *Gesta* I.149 and 157; SC 195.800 and 804. For the order of Donatist signatories see Lancel in SC 194.176–181 and 177n3. This fact is also emphasised in Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, 205. I am grateful to Erika Hermanowicz, who pointed out in conversation that this may have been a consequence of seniority in episcopal tenure. Relatedly, the number of epigraphic commemorations of Peter and Paul in North Africa, collated and studied by Frend, show the fascinating phenomenon where they are often annexed to local names, putting 'African saints...placed on the same plane as the Apostles'; W. H. C. Frend, 'The *Memoriae Apostolorum* in Roman North Africa', *The Journal of Roman Studies* 30, no. 1 (1940): 41.

*est.*⁶²⁹ The Donatist Cresconius also turned the tables on Augustine's insistence of ecclesiastical ubiquity by suggesting that truth more often lies with the faithful minority than with the erring masses.⁶³⁰ A theology of the church as 'remnant', following as a bold conclusion of hamartological contamination, could draw such disconsolate assurances when confronted by the issue posed by isolation from the transmarine churches. Augustine noted this in his critique of Petilian's cadre of bishops using appeals to Old Testament motifs of the pure remnant of Israel: 'With examples of this sort the heretics try to make much of their fewness (*paucitatem*)'.⁶³¹ Whatever embarrassment the Donatists may have felt in the face of the 'catholic' pretence of the Caecilianists to global diffusion, they cleverly inverted.⁶³² Communion with the *totus orbis* was not only not a part of their understanding of catholicity, it became a negative trait rather than an ecclesiological *sine qua non*.

This Donatist theology may have been combined with an apocalyptic narrative for their remnant church,⁶³³ whose native Africa was the predestined eschatological arena and home of the true Israel.⁶³⁴ This phenomenon has been most recently examined in the study of Jesse Hoover, who discerns in it a response to Caecilianist theologies of catholicity as universality. He notes that, with such a narrative, 'the problematic circumstance of the

⁶²⁹ *Gesta* III.266; SC 244.1226; he is replying to Augustine's immediately preceding statement at III.265. This is followed by a battery of scriptural texts (Rom. 3.19; John 15.19; 1 John 4.5) to the same effect. A similar point was made by Emeritus in the confusing comment *Non legit aream* (*Gesta* III.262), replying to Augustine's use of the threshing-floor (Matt. 3.12; Lk. 3.17). Alexander has very convincingly demonstrated that, contrary to how this remark was interpreted both by Marcellinus and later by Augustine (*Don.* 10.14; *Brev. coll.* III.9.15; *Gaud.* II.4.4)—namely, an oversight in remembering the text—his remarks rather meant *Non legit aream [ecclesia esse]*; James Alexander, 'A Note on the Interpretation of the Parable of the Threshing Floor at the Conference of Carthage of A.D. 411', *Journal of Theological Studies* 24, no. 2 (1973): 512–19.

⁶³⁰ *Cresc.* III.66.75; CSEL 53.560 *In paucis, inquis, frequenter est ueritas, errare multorum est.* Cf. 53.63, 66.75. See a similar attitude in Tertullian, *Apol.* 1.2, 10. However, Donatists at the Conference did want to make a show of their impressive numbers; *Ep.* 129.6.

⁶³¹ *Unit. eccl.* 13.33; WSA I/21.643; CSEL 52.274.

⁶³² Novatians may also have embraced their relative fewness; Pacian, *Ep.* III.28.

⁶³³ For Donatist remnant self-conceptions see e.g. Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius*, 165; Tilley, 'Sustaining Donatist Self-Identity'. For its study under the rubric of 'eschatological ecclesiology' see Matthew Alan Gaumer, 'The Evolution of Donatist Theology as Response to a Changing Late Antique Milieu', *Augustiniana* 58, no. 3/4 (2008): 203.

⁶³⁴ Such is certainly the hostile view of Augustine, who insists (against Donatist protestations to the contrary; *Gesta* III.248) that they saw the apocalyptic 'field' of Matthew 13's parable as Africa; e.g. *Ep.* 76.2, *Serm.* 88.21. See the discussion in Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 26–30.

dissident communion's rejection by the wider churches could be transformed into a polemical virtue.⁶³⁵ Optatus detected this eschatological impulse, and lampooned the idea that the apocalyptic persecution (i.e., of the Empire against the Donatists) happened only in Africa, and not in the other provinces.⁶³⁶ Tyconius, as seen above, alluded to such Donatists in passing, when he stated that some think (*aliqui putant*) that Antichrist's persecution has come *uno in loco*, i.e. in Africa.⁶³⁷ Donatist belief that Africa was the special threshing-floor of the Lord is also found in Augustine.⁶³⁸ This theological narrative was critical, as Hoover has argued, for rationalising Donatist separation from transmarine churches.⁶³⁹ The following will consider two more specific strategies recruited by Donatists to defend their 'particularism' in Africa, one exegetical, and another exploiting the ecclesiastical divisions of the transmarine world.

(4.1) The African remnant: Donatist exegesis

Supporting, or else partly motivating, Donatist particularism was a set of exegetical strategies designed to identify the fated remnant as African. One instance appears relatively crude: with more patriotic enthusiasm than historical good sense, some Donatists apparently made much of the fact that the Simon who carried Christ's cross was from Cyrene, and

⁶³⁵ Ibid., 120. He argues for a 'middle path' between scholars that have over-emphasised Donatism as essentially an apocalyptic/parochial movement (Brisson, Frend, Bonner) and those who have minimised its importance (Tilley); Hoover, 'Exegeting the Apocalypse with the Donatist Communion', 81.

⁶³⁶ Optatus, III.9-10.

⁶³⁷ *Exp. Apoc.* 1.41; CCSL 107A.126. That it is Africa is clear in the preceding remarks (*Sicut enim in Africa factum est* etc.). Continuing, Tyconius notes that 'they' (Parmenian's Donatists) say that the church has suffered its great falling-away, and is to collapse into the figural number of a remnant household of Noah. Gryson explains the identification of these with Donatists in his commentary: 'Ces contradicteurs doivent être des donatistes, qui se présentent comme le reste fidèle, face à une Église qui a globalement failli à sa mission. Ils tiraient sans doute argument de ce passage pour prouver qu'une telle défaillance n'était pas impensable.' Gryson, *Tyconius: Commentaire de l'Apocalypse*, 90n51. See also *ibid.*, 107n24. *Exp. Apoc.* 1.42; CCSL 107A.126: *Dicunt ecclesiam deficere et ad numerum domus Noe multis coronam perdentibus posse deduci.*

⁶³⁸ *Unit. eccl.* 17.43-44; cf. *Cresc.* III.64.71.

⁶³⁹ Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 121–23. Later (146): 'at least some elements within the Donatist communion viewed their church as the last survivor of a great apostasy . . . while it is unwise to claim that *all* Donatists rejected the validity of the transmarine churches, it is equally clear that an influential faction did.'

hence, an African.⁶⁴⁰ But, as will be discussed later in greater detail, standard Greco-Roman cartography did not place Cyrene in Africa.⁶⁴¹ More importantly, using two prophetic passages (Sgs. 1.7, Hab. 3.3), it appears certain Donatist exegetes attempted to carve out Africa as the prophesied haven for the apocalyptic remnant following the great apostasy of the broader church. This theme has attracted the meticulous attention of several recent studies,⁶⁴² which render unnecessary a more complete adumbration. A ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’⁶⁴³ has been applied to Augustine—our only explicit source for this exegesis—either calling into doubt the existence of such arguments or questioning the reliability of Augustine’s account. However, the tendency of Donatists to apply the Old Testament to their current circumstances is well-documented,⁶⁴⁴ and Optatus insinuated as much.⁶⁴⁵ Augustine, while not entirely above the rhetorical distortions involved in the mountebank’s trade of theological polemic, was generally fairer than his contemporaries, and the nature of his dialogue with the Donatists would have militated against fabricating such arguments as a convenient foil. Furthermore, these were not flimsy arguments, but persuasive examples of exegesis whose ingenuity suggests careful deliberation. They were too clever to be mere strawmen. The significance of this exegetical strategy is evident too in the frequency with which Augustine labours to refute it.⁶⁴⁶ The two passages, in the African *vetus* Biblical text still in usage and particularly hallowed among Donatists, run as follows:

⁶⁴⁰ *Serm.* 46.41.

⁶⁴¹ Chapter 5.2.

⁶⁴² Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa*, 148–49; Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 155–59; Hoover, ‘Exegesis of the Apocalypse with the Donatist Communion’, 89–91. Cf. also Michael Cox, ‘Augustine, Jerome, Tyconius and the Lingua Punica’, *Studia Orientalia* 64 (1988): 101.

⁶⁴³ Anthony Dupont and Matteo Dalvit, ‘From a Martyrological “Tabernacula Pastorum” towards a Geographical “In Meridie”’. Augustine’s Representation and Refutation of the Donatist Exegesis of Sg. 1,6-7’, *Revue d’histoire Ecclésiastique* 109, no. 1–2 (2014): 21; Toczko, *Crimen Obicere*, 132.

⁶⁴⁴ *Passio Donati* 14; *Passio Marculi* 1; *Acta mart. Saturnini et al.* 12, 16, 21; Petilian in *C. litt. Petil.* II.8.17. See further discussion in Alexander, ‘Aspects of Donatist Scriptural Interpretation at the Conference of Carthage’; Dearn, ‘Persecution and Donatist Identity in the Liber Genealogus’. Especially Tilley, ‘Sustaining Donatist Self-Identity’; Maureen Tilley, ‘Donatist Sermons’, in *Preaching in the Patristic Era: Sermons, Preachers, and Audiences in the Latin West*, ed. Anthony Dupont (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 373–402.

⁶⁴⁵ Optatus, IV.9; CSEL 26.115: *putas per prophetas sic dicta esse omnia, ut ad tempora nostra pertineant.*

⁶⁴⁶ *Unit. eccl.* 16.40; *Ep.* 93.8.24; *Serm.* 46.33, 35; 138.9; 147A.3.

Deus ab Africo ueniet (Hab. 3.3)

annuntia mihi, quem dilexit anima mea, ubi pascis, ubi cubas in meridie (Sgs. 1.7)

The first text is simple—shorn of any context,⁶⁴⁷ in the manner fashionable to much ancient exegesis—it can foretell that God shall rise from Africa in the end times, as from a fated remnant of the church on earth. This is indeed the sense Augustine claims the Donatists invested the verse with, and he disabuses their understanding by juxtaposing it with another Biblical passage (Jos. 15.8) in which Jerusalem is identified as *Africus*.⁶⁴⁸ This allows Augustine to return to one of his favourite anti-Donatist devices, and the subject of Chapter 6, in which he tethered the true church to transmarine communion with and origination from Jerusalem. In any event, as more scientific exegetes since Jerome have noted, the *Africus* in question here actually denominates the southerly wind, which he disambiguated with his own translation as *Auster*.⁶⁴⁹

This point leads to the second verse, whose *meridies* wherein the Lord reclines was taken to mean the ‘south’, and by extension (the province of Roman) ‘Africa’. *Meridies* could indeed mean ‘south’, in addition to its more familiar use as ‘noonday’, but Augustine claimed that it might just as well therefore refer to southerly Egypt—whose church, he riposted, was indeed prophesied to perdure.⁶⁵⁰ In another sermon, he summarised their argument as follows:

⁶⁴⁷ As Augustine notes, claiming that the next clause *et sanctus de monte umbroso* surely cannot mean Donatus’ Numidia, which lacks such shady mountains; *Serm.* 46.39.

⁶⁴⁸ *Serm.* 46.40. Novatian exegetes the passage as referring to the first advent of Christ, reading the south as a literal geographic descriptor, but of Bethlehem; *Trin.* 12.7-8.

⁶⁴⁹ See WSA III/2.296n94. I would add the interesting parallel that Porphyry assigns special spiritual significance to the south, the region of the gods or those ascending to the gods (*De antro* 3). In Tyconius’ version of Isaiah 43.6, the north (*Aquilo*) is contraposed to the south (*Africus*); *Lib. reg.* II; Babcock, 16. I see no reason to think Tyconius equates the south with Africa here, as Cox suggests—this is just his text, and he does not elaborate on its meaning; Cox, ‘Augustine, Jerome, Tyconius and the Lingua Punica’, 101.

⁶⁵⁰ *Unit. eccl.* 16.41, using Isa. 19.19-22. Cf. also *Serm.* 46.37.

They are accustomed to say this: ‘Africa is *meridies*, the *meridies* of the world is Africa; therefore the Church asks the Lord: *Where do you pasture? Where do you rest?* And he replies: *In meridie*—as if to say: do not seek for me except in Africa.’⁶⁵¹

That Africa could be so confidently identified with a cardinal direction was, despite the disavowals of Augustine, sensible enough for Latin-speaking authors. Claudian called Africa the ‘kingdom of the south (*Auster*)’,⁶⁵² and in Roman geographical convention the south-west wind (*Africo*) was of course related and often assimilated to the south wind (*Austro*).⁶⁵³ Augustine himself ‘defers to such usage when he uses “Africa” as a synonym for “south” in a context entirely innocent of the Donatist controversy in the *De civitate dei*,⁶⁵⁴ and elsewhere treats *meridies* and *auster* as synonyms.⁶⁵⁵ Augustine may be justified in suggesting Egypt as a better southerly candidate, however. It is worth noting that when Theodoret compassed his patristic authorities in the *Eranistes*, he marshalled them from the ‘south’ (Athanasius in Egypt), the ‘north’ (Gregory in Constantinople), the ‘west’ (Ambrose in Milan), and the ‘east’ (Flavian in Antioch together with Gelasius in Palestinian Caesarea).⁶⁵⁶ Augustine, however, disarmed Donatist appeal to this verse by asseverating that the *meridies* there has the more quotidian sense of noonday.⁶⁵⁷

The interpretation of Solomon’s *meridies* as the south in Donatist circles may be confirmed by Tyconius when he considered this passage:

There are two parts in the church, one of the south, and one of the north. The Lord abides in the southern part (*In parte meridiana*), as it is written: “where you graze your flock, where you abide in the south.” But the devil abides in the north [cf. Joel 2.20]... This world was constructed in the likeness of the church. In it the rising sun follows no other course than through the south and, once it has traversed the southern

⁶⁵¹ *Serm.* 147A.3; PL 38.769: *Hoc enim solent dicere. Africa meridies est, meridies mundi Africa est; ideo Ecclesia interrogat Dominum: Ubi pascis? Ubi cubas? et respondet ille: In meridie; quasi, noli me quaerere nisi in Africa.* Translation mine.

⁶⁵² Claudian, *De bello Gildonico* 1; LCL 135.98-99.

⁶⁵³ Caesar, *Bell. Civ.* III.26; Pliny, *Nat. hist.* VI.106; Tertullian, *Scorp.* 1; Aulus Gellius, *Noct. Att.* II.30.2. The classic survey of the four cardinal winds is in Ovid, *Met.* 1.52-68.

⁶⁵⁴ Pointed out by Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, 257. Citing *Civ.* XVI.21 and 38.

⁶⁵⁵ *In ev. Io.* 12.7; CCSL 36.124: *austrum euntum de meridie ad occidentem.*

⁶⁵⁶ Theodoret, *Eranistes* I; PG 83.73-77.

⁶⁵⁷ *Unit. eccl.* 16.40; *Serm.* 46.36. Cf. Ambrose, *Isaac* 4.14.

part, it moves unseen in returning to its place. So also our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal sun, passes through his own part, which is why he refers to it, too, as the south.⁶⁵⁸

Here, the Scriptural north and south function not as ‘geographic descriptors’ but as images representing polarities within the entire church.⁶⁵⁹ Hoover suggests that Tyconius is consciously reacting to Donatist particularising exegesis of this verse.⁶⁶⁰ This is not only plausible—as the exegesis of this verse occurs without prompt in the *Liber regularum* and why he should have fastened upon what would otherwise be a rather unremarkable passage is otherwise unclear—but, if true, adds further confirmation to the view that Augustine is not shadowboxing but responding to a live tradition of Donatist exegesis.⁶⁶¹

By way of conclusion, I want to consider one way Caecilianists attempted to defuse Donatist attempts to read themselves into Scripture, namely, by applying the same technique against them. ‘But if we wished’, Augustine says after dismissing these prooftexts, ‘to understand Donatus as the prince of Tyre, since Carthage is named Tyrian, what things are prophesied through Ezekiel about him?’⁶⁶² This Caecilianist rejoinder is playful, not seriously entertained by Augustine (though perhaps it was by Optatus, from whom he loaned

⁶⁵⁸ *Lib. reg.* VII; Babcock, 120-1.

⁶⁵⁹ Anderson, ‘The Book of Rules of Tyconius’, 192n2. See also *ibid.* 201n32: “‘North’ and ‘South’ are figurative ways of describing spiritual realities; for as Tyconius so carefully explained, God does not have a literal throne in some geographically locatable place. The throne of God is in the hearts and minds of individual believers, and the kingdom of God is defined as the power which God exercises over the wills of those who believe in and trust in Him (see Rule III). Likewise, the devil’s domain is that which consists of those individuals who are not reconciled to God and who will to be self-serving. Consequently, Tyconius held that these kingdoms were universal. He also believed that there could be true Christians living in the North, as well as false brothers in the South...these domains were spiritual realities.’

⁶⁶⁰ Hoover, ‘Exegeting the Apocalypse with the Donatist Communion’, 89. Cox proposes that this may have been a local Punic or African tradition more broadly; Cox, ‘Augustine, Jerome, Tyconius and the *Lingua Punica*’, 101.

⁶⁶¹ Despite Augustine—and even while quoting him—a particularist reading of Canticles 1.7 would survive within Latin Christianity. Cornelius a Lapide argued instead that ‘*meridies est Romana Ecclesia, ad quam S. Petrus, jubente Christo, ex Jerusalem et Antiochia transtulit primatum et pontificatum suum*’, shortly before citing Augustine to reject Donatist interpretations in their own sense; Cornelius a Lapide, *Comentaria in scripturam sacram.* Parisiis: Apud Ludovicum Vives, Bibliopolam Editorem, 1891. Tom. VII, 503.

⁶⁶² *Unit. eccl.* 16.42; CSEL 52.287: *si autem uelimus intellegere Donatum principem Tyri, quia Tyria Carthago cognominata est, quae in eum per Ezechielem prophetantur?* Translation mine.

it)⁶⁶³ and was intended as cautionary tale about applying Scripture too closely to one's particular circumstances. The barb is better understood alongside its original form in Optatus. The proud prince of Tyre was reproached by Ezekiel and, because both Scripture⁶⁶⁴ and secular literature,⁶⁶⁵ identified Carthage as Tyrian, the most plausible candidate for this specimen of arrogance is Donatus, who similarly pretended to be God himself in his creation of a new church.⁶⁶⁶ Tyconius also discussed this passage. He explained that the *rex Tyri* represents the 'body' of the devil, after which he reproduces a full citation of Ezekiel 28.2-19.⁶⁶⁷ Bright argues that the identification of the Prince of Tyre is unclear, but at least he cannot be judged as a figure of the Caecilianist episcopate.⁶⁶⁸ Maureen Tilley, however, has persuasively explained that the Prince of Tyre actually represents the *Donatist* Church: his 'fall from grace' and subsequent need for repentance was an image of the true church and its mixed status.⁶⁶⁹ Indeed, to support Tilley's reading, one may note that Tyconius later explains that the Prince of Tyre will be punished by foreigners (*alienos*), showing in the general sense (*in genus*) that God allows for foreigners to persecute his church—here, the Prince of Tyre was a symbol of the (Donatist) church.⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶³ Mark Edwards, 'Augustine and His Christian Predecessors', in *A Companion to Augustine*, ed. Mark Vessey and Shelley Reid (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 217. Elsewhere Edwards contrasts the apparent earnestness of Optatus with Augustine's 'chid[ing]' reappropriation of his predecessor's trick; Edwards, 'The Donatist Schism and Theology', 110.

⁶⁶⁴ Labrousse, SC 412.26n1 notes that Optatus' citation of Isaiah 23.1 as reading 'Carthage' may represent a Latin version dependent on a garbled and morphologically close word in the LXX. The question of Optatus' knowledge of Greek has not been broached in scholarship but may be a plausible answer to the vexed question of his apparent use of the Epistle of Barnabas, for which see Robert E. Aldridge, 'Peter and the "Two Ways"', *Vigiliae Christianae* 53, no. 3 (1999): 245ff. Edwards has drawn attention to this phenomenon as well in his translation of Optatus and more recently in Edwards, *Religions of the Constantinian Empire*, 227.

⁶⁶⁵ The *locus classicus* is in Vergil, *Aen.* 1.574; cf. also Sallust, *Bell. Jug.* 19.1.

⁶⁶⁶ Optatus, III.3. See Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 295.

⁶⁶⁷ *Lib. reg.* VII; Babcock, 128.

⁶⁶⁸ Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius*, 174.

⁶⁶⁹ Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa*, 127.

⁶⁷⁰ *Lib. reg.* VII; Babcock, 132. I would add furthermore that this kind of vacillation between two significances (negative, then generally of the church) may be compared with his discussion of the Jezebel in *Exp. Apoc.* 1.27-28.

(4.2) Africans and Arians

Eunomius of Cyzicus, the prototypical arch-‘Arian’, was exiled to Mauretania, but he never completed the journey: he found a favourable ear in the emperor Valens and his exile was remitted.⁶⁷¹ This episode can be read as a parable about ‘Arianism’ and Africa: by some happy fluke or the particularities of its local tradition, ‘Arianism’ had relatively little presence in Africa.⁶⁷² As considered in the previous chapter, the African conciliar remains endorsed an unblinking Nicene faith.⁶⁷³ The temporary defection of Restitutus was short-lived and hastily remedied, with Africa restored as a ‘fortresse de l’orthodoxie’.⁶⁷⁴ Optatus was both relatively uninterested in Arianism and very matter-of-factly pro-Nicene.⁶⁷⁵ Once, and dutifully, he anathematised Arius, ‘who tried to teach that the Son of God was made out of no substance, rather than born from God’.⁶⁷⁶ Here, as elsewhere, it is assumed that his Donatist interlocutor was on the same theological page.⁶⁷⁷ Indeed, besides this one mention of Arius and an ancillary jab at Photinus, both Parmenian⁶⁷⁸ and Optatus, in their dispute over the definition of heresy, refer consistently to second and third century models—Arius is not an arch-heresiarch to prompt much of their anxiety.⁶⁷⁹ Partly, no doubt, from polemical artifice, but partly reflecting his domestic conditions, Optatus presented an optimistic picture of transmarine Christendom exhibiting a seamless unity, only shattered by his Donatists.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷¹ Philostorgius, *H.E.* IX.8; see John Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, vol. 1, Formation of Christian Theology ; Volume 2 (Crestwood, N.Y: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2004), 102–3.

⁶⁷² Jacques Zeiller, ‘L’arianisme en Afrique avant l’invasion Vandale’, *Revue historique* 173, no. 3 (1934): 535–40. Merdinger notes: ‘Much of Africa remained untouched by the Arian firestorm’, but also discusses later the presence and impact of ‘Semi-Arianism’ in Africa in the fourth century see Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, 90, 201–4.

⁶⁷³ For the anti-Arian activity of the Caecilianist bishops of Carthage see Folliet, ‘L’épiscopat africain et la crise arienne au IVe siècle’.

⁶⁷⁴ Monceaux III.217–18.

⁶⁷⁵ For Optatus’ doctrine of common operations (V.2) in its pro-Nicene context see Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: University Press, 2013), 46–47.

⁶⁷⁶ Optatus, IV.5; Edwards, 89.

⁶⁷⁷ Optatus, I.12; V.1.

⁶⁷⁸ See his list of heresiarchs at I.9.

⁶⁷⁹ Photinus (I.12) and Praxeas (V.1).

⁶⁸⁰ Optatus, II.12; III.9.

The fractured state of fourth-century Christendom, which a casual acquaintance with the Christological controversy would illuminate, seemed to have barely registered in the pages of Caecilianist polemic. Ammianus' roughly contemporary and penetrating observation on Christian factionalism was certainly more candid, if perhaps more hostile.⁶⁸¹

Augustine's own engagement with Arians was largely literary⁶⁸²—he commented, in the sermon considered above regarding Donatist remnant theology, that in Africa 'there are no Eunomians'.⁶⁸³ Augustine's only recorded in-person debate with an Arian, it is helpful to recall, was with a certain bishop Maximinus who was not an African but attached to the imperial army under the command of the Gothic Sigiswulf.⁶⁸⁴ There were, however, Homoian communities in Africa, and Whelan estimates that they formed a notable if very small religious minority.⁶⁸⁵ Though the Donatists as a matter of course repudiated the synods of Arles and Rome,⁶⁸⁶ they may generally be classed as easy pro-Nicenes, despite the fact that they had every motivation to reject another council convened by an emperor who persecuted them and which played the host to their loathed Caecilian. Augustine exceeded the bounds of Optatus' irenicism by deciding that the Donatists were not only schismatics but they were also heretics,⁶⁸⁷ yet their heresy—to the extent that it had doctrinal content—touched on their practice of rebaptism and rejection of the universality of the church.⁶⁸⁸ So far as Christology and Trinitarianism were concerned, Augustine, like Optatus, freely

⁶⁸¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXII.5.4: *nullas infestas hominibus bestias, ut sunt sibi ferales plerique Christianorum expertus*. See also the remarks of Julian in *Ep.* 41 on the massacres of heretics done by Christians, and their capacity for factious intolerance.

⁶⁸² Slusser comments, for example, 'his *De trinitate* shows hardly any sign of relationship to the Arian controversy.' Michael Slusser, 'Traditional Views of Late Arianism', in *Arianism after Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts*, ed. Michael R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 5.

⁶⁸³ *Serm.* 46.18; *Eunomiani non sunt in Africa*. He wishes to assimilate the Donatists and Eunomians in their lack of catholicity.

⁶⁸⁴ For Maximinus' background and theological career see Neil McLynn, 'From Palladius to Maximinus: Passing the Arian Torch', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4, no. 4 (1996): 477–93.

⁶⁸⁵ Whelan, 'Arianism in Africa', 241–43. The several instances in Augustine's corpus where notice is made of Homoian communities in Africa are covered there by Whelan: see especially *Epp.* 170.10; 220.4; 238–41.

⁶⁸⁶ As Parmenian, in *Parm.* I.5.10–6.11.

⁶⁸⁷ For his debate with Cresconius on this very point see *Cresc.* II.2.3.

⁶⁸⁸ *Haer.* 69.1–2.

concedes that they shared the same faith.⁶⁸⁹ The ‘Nicene’ orthodoxy of the Donatists, on both the endorsement of Optatus and Augustine, and their own repudiation of Arianism,⁶⁹⁰ is now generally accepted against their heresiological assimilation to Arians initiated by Jerome and in one instance suggested by Augustine.⁶⁹¹ However, where joint belief and shared sufferings against the ‘Arians’ served to unite in greater sympathy Novatians with Nicene catholics,⁶⁹² the Donatists and Caecilianists failed to exploit their theological unity to greater mutual understanding.

At least some Donatists tried to use the ‘Eastern’ council of Serdica to demonstrate transmarine connections, and we must supply in our historical imagination their disappointment upon learning that this was an ‘Arian’ council.⁶⁹³ However, some Donatists with both a better grasp of transmarine affairs and a more astute flair for polemics capitalised on the Arian controversy by leveraging Africa’s—and hence their own—staunch orthodoxy. There are two extant examples of this kind of argument. The first is from the Rogatianist bishop Vincent of Cartenna,⁶⁹⁴ and the second from a Donatist letter of pseudo-Jerome to Damasus of Rome.⁶⁹⁵ Against the Caecilianist airbrushing of transmarine unity, Vincent used a lamentation of Hilary of Poitiers to undermine the necessity and desirability of

⁶⁸⁹ E.g. *Serm. ad Caes. pleb.* 2. Elsewhere he explicitly states that Donatists are homousians, *Ep.* 185.1.1; CSEL 57.1: *unam trinitatis substantiam confitentur*.

⁶⁹⁰ As Cresconius in *Cresc.* IV.61.75.

⁶⁹¹ The insinuation that the Donatists were Arianising, which infected the heresiological tradition, has been traced to Jerome (*Vir. ill.* 93 on Donatus) in Hoover, “‘They Agreed with the Followers of Arius’”. For the connection between Donatism and Arianism, and a suggestion that this informed Constantine’s post-321 tolerance to them, see Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, 200–201.

⁶⁹² Raymond Janin, ‘Les novatiens orientaux’, *Revue des études byzantines* 28, no. 156 (1929): 385–97.

⁶⁹³ Implied by Augustine’s refutation of Fortunius’ use of Serdica, where he relished pointing out that it was a council of ‘Arians’ several times; *Ep.* 44.3.6. This is meant to be taken as a disappointing revelation.

⁶⁹⁴ See Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius*, 168–69.

⁶⁹⁵ The *Epistula Pseudo Hieronymi ad Damasum Papam*; in PLS 1.303–4. Consensus has accepted the argument that this is a fifth-century Donatist forgery advanced in Donatien De Bruyne, ‘Une lettre apocryphe de Jérôme fabriquée par un Donatiste’, *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 30 (1931): 70–76. See Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 119n13.

communion with the *transmarini*.⁶⁹⁶ The passage of Hilary insinuating that the church perished from the whole world⁶⁹⁷ it seems, was the following from his *De synodis*:

For, apart from the bishop Eleusius and the few with him, the greater part of the ten provinces of Asia, where I now am, truly do not know God.⁶⁹⁸

Hilary also there claimed that one can scarcely find a priest or a layman (*aut sacerdotes aut populum*) that remained orthodox in the Eastern churches (*Ecclesiarum Orientalium*).⁶⁹⁹ The declension to ‘Arianism’ was for him equivalent to, or indeed itself, the ultimate sin against the Holy Spirit.⁷⁰⁰ Hilary was a wise choice: in the desperate situation of his contemporary pro-Nicenes, he took to remarkably sectarian language and, with Eusebius of Vercelli, even fostered schismatic resistance communities in Milan, advising them to refuse communion with their bishop.⁷⁰¹ As he wrote elsewhere, ‘churches which have not guarded the Word of God are shipwrecked.’⁷⁰² In a rallying-cry that would be a favourite of later dissenters,⁷⁰³ Hilary attacked Christian acquiescence with imperial ‘Arianism’ through their ‘love of walls’ (*parietum amor*); rather they should resist the ‘Antichrist’ Constantius and join with the exiled Hilary, delighting in blessed seclusion among the *montes...et sylvae, et lacus, et carceres, et voragines*, like the ancient prophets of old.⁷⁰⁴ One can imagine this being much the attitude of the Donatist ‘Montenses’, whose pejorative label Hilary may have rather

⁶⁹⁶ *Ep.* 93.6.21; CSEL 34.467.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ep.* 93.9.31; CSEL 34.476: *perierit Ecclesia de orbe terrarum*. Though this witness, in a rather conciliatory text, only applies to Eastern churches, not the whole body of *transmarini*; cf. Smolin, *Christ the Emperor*, 291.

⁶⁹⁸ Hilary, *De synodis* 63; PL 10.522-3: *Nam absque episcopo Eleusio et paucis cum eo, ex majori parte Asianae decem provinciae, intra quas consisto, vere Deum nesciunt*. Translation mine. This reference is provided in WSA II/1.396n45 but is both incorrectly given (as 65) and incorrectly translated (‘bishop of Eleusius’). As the Patrology notes, and as may be found in modern prosopographies, this is rather Eleusius, the bishop of Cyzicus.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.*; PL 10.522.

⁷⁰⁰ Denial of consubstantiality of Father and Son is the sin against the Holy Spirit: *Comm. Matt.* 12.17-18; cf. 10.27.

⁷⁰¹ McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 24–25. I would note also as relevant his fear of pollution by communion with heretics as in *De synodis* 79.

⁷⁰² Hilary, *Comm. Matt.* 8.1; SC 254.192-4: *Igitur secundum haec ecclesiae, intra quas uerbum Dei non uigilauerit, naufragae sunt*. Translation mine.

⁷⁰³ It is cited in full by Calvin in his Preface (6) to the *Divine Institutes*.

⁷⁰⁴ Hilary, *C. Aux.* 12; PL 10.616.

enjoyed for himself.⁷⁰⁵ Hilary, like Donatus, turned to invective against the emperor after his initial and more deferential appeal was rebuffed, and had a special fondness for abusing this son of Constantine as the Antichrist.⁷⁰⁶ Frend not unjustly stated that this text ‘reads exactly like a Donatist pamphlet’.⁷⁰⁷

Augustine’s response to Vincent attempted to return the conversation to his typical anti-Donatist talking points. He reminded Vincent that the church is composed of wheat and tares, and that the church is known to have survived the demerits rebuked by the apostle Paul.⁷⁰⁸ Forced to rely on Augustine’s reply to Vincent, we do not know precisely what Vincent made of Hilary’s witness. Yet a judicious head may wonder if Augustine truly appreciated the gravity of the problem. If the transmarine *catholica* could, as it did within living memory, collapse into a species of heresy considered by both Donatists and Caecilianists as utterly blasphemous, the Donatist claim that the same transmarine church had also succumbed to a polluting laxity regarding *traditio* does not appear so singular nor so stark. And, furthermore, if retreat into a sectarian and remnant minority resistant to imperial authority was legitimate for this venerable paladin of Nicene orthodoxy in the West, Hilary, why could the Donatists not jealously preserve the purity of the church by the same means?

The second instance, in the pseudonymous Donatist letter of Jerome to Damasus, has been studied regarding its charges against the Caecilianist bishop of Carthage, Restitutus:

⁷⁰⁵ *Sed exsulemus* [to be an exile] *semper, dummodo incipiat verum praedicari; De synodis* 78; PL 10.531.

⁷⁰⁶ His earlier letter to Constantius, *Ad Constantinum*, was unsuccessful, whereupon he authored the fire-breathing pamphlet *In Constantinum*. For the difference in tone, though with an argument that Hilary did not go so far as to entirely deny the legitimacy of imperial supervision of ecclesiastical affairs, see Eric Wickman, ‘Shaping Church-State Relations After Constantine: The Political Theology of Hilary of Poitiers’, *Church History* 86, no. 2 (2017): 287–310. Hilary would be remembered as a saintly confessor for his resistance to Constantius; Jerome, *Ep.* 70.5; Rufinus, *H.E.* 2.30-1; Cassian, *C. Nest.* 7.24. For a more recent treatment of Hilary’s developing attitude to Constantius and his final disenchantment see Smolin, *Christ the Emperor*, 279–316.

⁷⁰⁷ Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution*, 560.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ep.* 93.9.31-32.

not a disciple, but rather a teacher, of Arius, it alleged.⁷⁰⁹ However, the letter merits closer scrutiny taken as a whole, for it offers a valuable insight into Donatist attitudes to the transmarine world. It is not only meant to discredit Restitutus for his leading role at Ariminum, but it also casts aspersions on the state of the church.⁷¹⁰ The letter does not only attack Restitutus, but it insinuates that the Arian heresy had taken over Italy and the East as well. The forger was at least a diligent imitator of Jerome in the generous obeisances made to Damasus as bishop of Rome with his lofty station,⁷¹¹ but this is window-dressing concealing a damning allegation. Almost all of Italy (*In Italia, pene omnes episcopi*) had fallen to the error of Restitutus, and Damasus was questionably complicit by his silence (*tuo silentio*).⁷¹² Transmarine vocabulary was recruited: the teaching of Damasus *per maria huc usque peruolitauit*—the author pretending to be in Bethlehem.⁷¹³ But these ‘seas’ were rather stormy. ‘Jerome’ continues, with a force and rhetorical charm worthy of the imposture:

What is it to us that they in the church of Ephesus teach [this heresy] and the faith cannot dwell among them? How long did we reside in their province while they taught such things and, when we asked from them a rule of faith, they spoke one thing after another, and the faith cannot dwell among them. We feared to join hands in fellowship with them and if more than seventy cities [of Asia] do not want to be healed—*what is it to us?*⁷¹⁴

⁷⁰⁹ *Uerumne est Restitutum Carthaginensem episcopum magistrum fuisse Arrii, non dico discipulum*; PLS 1.303. This passage is treated in Whelan, ‘Arianism in Africa’, 241; Hoover, “‘They Agreed with the Followers of Arius’”, 297.

⁷¹⁰ This point is noted by Bruyne, ‘Une lettre apocryphe de Jérôme fabriquée par un Donatiste’, 70.

⁷¹¹ The letter is addressed *Domino meo uere domino monarchitaeque ecclesiarum totius orbis tenentis papae Damaso episcopo*; PLS 1.303. Further, he extols the *fides apostolica a tua cathedra* etc. and grants him the *potestas imperandi et corrigenda*; *ibid.* 303-4.

⁷¹² *Ibid.*, 304.

⁷¹³ *Ibid.*, 304.

⁷¹⁴ *quid ad nos quoniam Ephesi ecclesiae talia docebant et fides in ipsis habitare non potuit. quotiens accolae fuimus in ipsius prouincia et talia docebant et petii ab eis fidei regulam aliud ex alio loquebantur et fides in ipsis habitare non potuit. Eis manus iungere timuimus et si ipsae amplius septuaginta ciuitates nolunt sanari quid ad nos?;* PLS 1.304. Translation and emphasis mine.

No more succinct a charter for particularism could be expressed on the doctrinal grounds afforded by the Arian controversy. ‘Jerome’ continued by citing three biblical texts without commentary and seriatim: ‘Not all can accept this word’ (Matt. 19.11); ‘The gift is from God’ (Eph. 2.8); ‘He has mercy on whom he wills and he hardens whom he wills’ (Rom. 9.18). *Quid ad nos*—what is it to us—may have served Parmenian and those within the fold of his Donatist orthodoxy well. The Donatist sense to this letter can be easily conjectured: the *transmarini* fell, but the church does not stand or fall with geographic diffusion in a stable institution but in the zealous local custodianship of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Finally, the letter is remarkable for its staunch commitment to Nicaea and its faith.⁷¹⁵ This may, of course, have been part of the play-acting as Jerome, but the Donatist barb it is meant to mask only stings if Nicaea is assumed to represent the benchmark of orthodoxy.

Like Vincent’s choice of Hilary, this unknown Donatist’s use of Jerome was perhaps cleverer than he knew. Vincent may just as well have mentioned (if he only he was aware of it) Jerome’s famous complaints to the effect that the entire world had succumbed to the Arian heresy.⁷¹⁶ This pseudonymous letter may most relevantly be compared to the genuine letters Jerome wrote to Damasus while in the environs of Antioch, lamenting the division of the church there and the ubiquity of perfidious heresy.⁷¹⁷ Where Optatus claimed the transmarine churches of East and West were joined together in perfect charity and unity (Chapter 4.3.2), Jerome had too much knowledge of ecclesiastical affairs, and too little of the same temperament, to be so optimistic. The East was torn apart by factionalism and heresy, destroying the garment of the Lord and His Vineyard.⁷¹⁸ Just like the ‘*quid ad nos?*’ Jerome kept to himself. Speaking of the various claimants of the Antiochene episcopate, he

⁷¹⁵ Especially its closing sentence; PLS 1.304.

⁷¹⁶ Jerome, *Lucif.* 19; cf. also *Chron.* a. 359.

⁷¹⁷ J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 52–56.

⁷¹⁸ *Ep.* 15.1.

boasted: *non noui Vitalem, Meletium respuo, ignoro Paulinum*.⁷¹⁹ His aloofness from these bishops was complete: he was happy with the possibility that all three were false⁷²⁰ and vaunted his monastic estate as a platform from which he may so judge bishops.⁷²¹ Jerome's singular pugnacity and embattled purism—no small achievement in the fourth century—and his acerbic delight in casting his enemies outside of the church are so familiar to students of the fourth century that further discussion would be unnecessary.

Together with the appeal to Hilary, it seems as if certain Donatists understood the ecclesiological lessons of the 'Arian' controversy with more severity, and perhaps honesty, than their rivals. The notion of a geographically 'catholic' church, united *trans mare* in love and concord, they might have argued, was a fissiparous confabulation. When Augustine later claimed that the emperor Julian's edict of tolerance was geared towards disrupting the 'Peace of Christ' that then reigned,⁷²² the reader may be forgiven for suspecting him of wishful thinking, or else distortion. The pro-Nicene retreat into a remnant of the (doctrinally) pure against a majority of their correligionists bound by the heretical spell of an 'Antichrist' Emperor not only served to legitimate the Donatist's own policy but undermined the dearest principle of Caecilianist ecclesiology. Communion with *transmarini* was not only undesirable, if they have fallen to either Arian error or pollution in *traditio*, but it was an incoherent desideratum. These Donatists might have pointed out that there was no united global *catholica* as imagined by the Caecilianists. Augustine's own confidence in the global unity of the *catholica* is belied by the fact that he knew perfectly well that the waters that joined his church with the *transmarini* were choppy at best. The transmarine unity and

⁷¹⁹ *Ep.* 15.2; CSEL 51.64.

⁷²⁰ *Ep.* 16.1.

⁷²¹ *Ep.* 17.2; CSEL 51.71: *pudet dicere: de cauernis cellularum damnamus orbem, si in sacco et cinere uolutati de episcopis sententiam ferimus*. See also his stinging remarks regarding Augustine's senior status as a bishop apud Aug. *Ep.* 75.18. Jerome had a curious ecclesiology perhaps motivated by his own priestly status to disregard the difference between bishops and priests; *Ep.* 146. For the independence he exercised vis-à-vis bishops, such that he would not serve as a priest while in Palestine in order to secure his autonomy from John, see Jean Steinmann, *Saint Jerome*, trans. Ronald Matthews (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1959), 231.

⁷²² *C. litt. Petil.* II.83.184; CSEL 52.113.

catholicity championed by Caecilianists was perhaps a charade: ‘close to half the population who called themselves church members’, MacMullen estimates, ‘must have belonged to some allegiance other than the one that ultimately prevailed: in other words, they were Arian, Donatist, or Meletian [etc.]’.⁷²³ Augustine himself knew that the great see of Antioch was hopelessly divided, yet this did not prevent him from mentioning Antioch as an apostolic and foundational *ecclesia trans mare* innocent of Donatist division.⁷²⁴ As Wickham commented regarding the time of Hilary: ‘I have spoken of ‘the Church’. But the Church at this period was more like a confederation than a unified state.’⁷²⁵ And it was a confederation in civil war. The secession of the African church by the Donatists appears both more anodyne and more plausible with such an understanding than within the Caecilianist paradigm of transmarine catholicity. It now remains to consider precisely this achievement of Caecilianist polemic, which was built on the pioneering work of the first anti-Donatist theorist, Optatus of Milevis.

⁷²³ MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire, (A.D. 100-400)*, 93.

⁷²⁴ *Unit. eccl.* 12.31; *Ep.* 87.5. Romantic confidence in, or conniving asseveration of, the worldwide unity of the church at this time was expressed by Newman, who sighed: ‘So closely was Christendom united then!’ John Henry Newman, *The Church of the Fathers* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2002), 169.

⁷²⁵ Lionel Wickham, trans., *Hilary of Poitiers: Conflicts of Conscience and Law in the Fourth-Century Church*, Translated Texts for Historians 25 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), xvi.

Chapter 4: *De unitate catholica praeter partem Africae*: The Optatan revolution

(1) Optatus of Milevis

The charm and sensitivity of Tyconius finds a neighbour, if on the other side of the road, in Optatus, whose patient argumentation and unaffected irenicism⁷²⁶ jointly conspire to place him among the neglected treasures of fourth century patrology.⁷²⁷ While lacking something of the theological subtlety of his contemporary Tyconius and certainly of his successor Augustine, the terms in which he chose to construct the Caecilianist-Donatist dispute held constant for the rest of the schism's history. Together with Tyconius, Optatus was a contemporary critic of Parmenian and the emerging orthodoxy of the official Donatist church he led. Optatus wrote his only extant work⁷²⁸ against Parmenian⁷²⁹ in two editions, one in six books, the second in seven, and while the dating of the text and its editorial division is uncertain, its final form was written in 384 or shortly after.⁷³⁰ The facts of

⁷²⁶ For his 'conciliatory' approach, see Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 63–64. Augustine could adopt the same approach, e.g. his address to the former Donatists of Mauritanian Caesarea: *Fratres carissimi, qui ab initio catholici fuistis* . . . ; *Emer.*, 1; CSEL 53.181.

⁷²⁷ Monceaux's (V.247, 281) portrait of this honest and good-natured chronicler is worthwhile, and his estimation of his competence as a historian, often denigrated. His appreciation of his style, a pure African latinity with a share of the faults of its age but not without its own eloquence, is given 297–8. I would note that at least one of the *hapax legomena* attributed there to Optatus, *udare* (III.10), occurs in Augustine in a writing before he would have been acquainted with Optatus (*Mor.* II.13.30). Du Pin gives a positive assessment of his style— it is *magnificus* yet *minus nitidus ac politus*; PL 11.766. However, a franker critic has described Optatus style, 'as poor as is compatible with correct Latinity'; Edwards, *Optatus*, xxix. See also the advertisement in Pierre Batiffol, *Le catholicisme de saint Augustin*, 3. éd., vol. 1 (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1920), 107–8.

⁷²⁸ The several homilies attributed to Optatus are not only falsely ascribed but probably even Donatist in origin; for summary and survey of recent research see Alden Bass, 'Scripture in Optatus of Milevis', in *The Bible in Christian North Africa*, ed. Anthony Dupont and Jonathan Yates, vol. 4/1 (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2020), 191–92.

⁷²⁹ This work has no title in the manuscript tradition, and I have referred to it without one. See Ziwsa in CSEL 26.xii.

⁷³⁰ Monceaux earlier gave 366/7 and 385, for each edition, respectively; Paul Monceaux, 'La date du traité de saint Optat contre les Donatistes', *Comptes rendus des séances de l'année - Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 57, no. 6 (1913): 450–53. Edwards places the work as it has come down to us around 384 or after; Edwards, *Optatus*, xviii. Wilhite declares the 'consensus' view of 363 for the first edition and 384 for the second; Wilhite, 'True Church or True Basilica?', 400n4. See also the discussion in Labrousse, SC 412.12–14.

Optatus' life are as generally obscure as they are unimportant to the present purposes.⁷³¹ He seems to have been a pagan by birth, though we know nothing of the details of his conversion and ordination to the episcopate.⁷³² His work was a standard reference in later polemics, especially privileged for his account of the history of the schism and preservation of its sources.⁷³³

Where Tyconius has benefitted from a resurgence of interest and scholarly activity, Optatus has suffered from his quiet inclusion in the canon of Latin Patristics. Mark Edwards, who has done perhaps the most to advance interest in Optatus through his 1997 edition, could still remark two decades later that 'we still lack an English monograph on Optatus of Milevis'.⁷³⁴ The other fin-de-siècle work on Optatus is Marielle Labrousse's two volumes in *Sources Chrétiennes*, whose thorough introduction and learned notes are of great value.⁷³⁵ While he is often reckoned as a minor author, within North Africa he appears to have been sufficiently important to be ranked alongside Augustine and Ambrose by Fulgentius as a revered ecclesiastical authority.⁷³⁶ Augustine himself enshrined Optatus in his list of Latin patristic precedents, alongside Cyprian, Hilary, and Victorinus.⁷³⁷ Nevertheless, Optatus has received short shrift: Frend, almost as if justifying his own rapid treatment, notes that Parmenian 'did not bother to reply' to him and that 'contemporary chroniclers' agree in affording him little space.⁷³⁸ The situation has little changed, and scholars of Christian North

⁷³¹ See Ziwsa's lamentation to this effect in his Praefatio; CSEL 26.v-vi; as also Du Pin's note in PL 11.761; more recently Edwards, *Optatus*, xvi-xvii. Note also that 'Milevis' is a 'modern fiction'; inscriptions in *CIL* VIII.1 have 'Mileu' or 'Milev'; Eric Plumer, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians: Introduction, Text, Translation, and Notes* (Oxford: University Press, 2003), 69n53. For details on Mileu, a Numidian town near Cirta, see Mommsen, *The Provinces of the Roman Empire from Caesar to Diocletian*, 2:325n1.

⁷³² Such is the inference from Augustine, *Doctr. chr.* II.40.61. He alludes to himself as a bishop in VII.2; CSEL 26.170.

⁷³³ Surveyed in Mandouze, *Prosopographie de l'Afrique chrétienne (303-533)*, 797nn33-34. For its use by even Donatists in the 411 Conference, see Augustine, *Brev. coll.* III.20.38 and *Ep.* 141.9.

⁷³⁴ Edwards, 'The Donatist Schism and Theology', 101.

⁷³⁵ Mireille Labrousse, *Traité contre les donatistes*, 2 vols, Sources Chrétiennes, 412-13 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1995). As with others in the series, referenced by SC volume and page.

⁷³⁶ Fulgentius, *Ad Mom.* II.15.1-2.

⁷³⁷ *Doctr. chr.* II.40.61.

⁷³⁸ Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 197. Tilley justifies this by saying that 'Optatus...was primarily a historian rather than a theologian'; Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa*, 98. Cf. the brusqueness in Milner, who

Africa seem to deal with Optatus without the benefit of a developed body of secondary literature.⁷³⁹ Knowledge of Optatus is so apparently deficient that, in the otherwise inestimable *Works of Saint Augustine* series, there appears the bald error that the same Optatus of Milevis was Augustine's correspondent in the second decade of the fifth century.⁷⁴⁰ Evans' enduring study of the North African ecclesiological tradition elides cleanly from Cyprian to Augustine, with exactly two and cursory mentions of Optatus.⁷⁴¹ This lacuna is puzzling, since the influence of Optatus on Augustine, not to mention his intrinsic merit, would be difficult to overstate. This chapter seeks to remedy this by identifying in Optatus a transformative new conception of catholicity and its configuration to transmarine churches.

Optatus' theology was in the main entirely adopted by Augustine, and those familiar with Augustine's corpus can find in Optatus so many and such striking reminiscences that he must be judged an authentic successor of Optatus' anti-Donatist project.⁷⁴² The heartfelt plea for *pax*,⁷⁴³ the centrality of *caritas* as the bond of church unity and the essence of

glosses over Optatus without apology: 'Of course, I have little to say of Optatus's writings.'; Joseph Milner, *The History of the Church of Christ*, ed. Isaac Milner, 3rd ed., vol. 2 (London: Printed by Luke Hansard & Sons for T. Cadell and W. Davies, in the Strand, 1810), 247.

⁷³⁹ For example Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, 50–60.

⁷⁴⁰ Roland Teske in WSA II/3.264 and 362. These letters (*Epp.* 190 and 202A) were written ca. 420, which, even if Optatus was a rather young bishop in 363 when he published the first edition of his work, would ascribe to him an incredible longevity. See also the mistaken identification with the Optatus of *Ep.* 185.2.6 in WSA II/3.183n3. Augustine speaks of Optatus as long gone (*Doctr. chr.* II.40.61). This Optatus describes himself as new to the clergy and relatively unlettered (*Ep.* 202A.3.7 and 5.11). For further on this other Optatus, see Mandouze, *Prosopographie de l'Afrique chrétienne (303-533)*, 803–5. I am unsure just where this error arose from, as I have found no early (e.g. PL 11.761-2) nor contemporary treatments of Optatus' life that claim this (indeed, elsewhere in the WSA series, I/23.468, they are correctly distinguished). Optatus is one of the most common names in Africa, and merits special caution in identification. As Bass, who has studied their (strictly literary) relationship notes: 'There is no indication that Augustine ever had contact with the elderly bishop, who died a few years after Augustine returned to Africa in 388'; Alden Bass, 'Augustine and Optatus of Milevis', in *Augustine and Tradition: Influences, Contexts, Legacy*, ed. David Hunter and Jonathan Yates (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2021), 101.

⁷⁴¹ Evans, *One and Holy*.

⁷⁴² Bass, 'Augustine and Optatus of Milevis'. Put well by Labrousse (SC 412.78): 'Pour defendre l'Église catholique, l'évêque de Milève expose un certain nombre d'arguments qu'Augustin utilisera plus tard, à peu près dans les mêmes termes.'

⁷⁴³ See the battery of scriptural texts Optatus marshals in II.5, which would be repeatedly recycled by Augustine.

martyrdom,⁷⁴⁴ the application of the Parable of the Wheat and Tares to the mixed constitution of the church,⁷⁴⁵ catholicity in the sense of geographic extension (§2), constellations of anti-Donatist Biblical witnesses, and an argument from communion with transmarine churches (§3)—all pillars of Augustine’s anti-Donatist polemic—are gratefully borrowed whole-cloth from Optatus. One of Optatus’ most enduring contributions to ecclesiological theory is his firm theoretical distinction between heretics and schismatics, against Parmenian’s tendency, in line with Cyprian, to assimilate the two.⁷⁴⁶ Most importantly for the present purposes, Optatus is the first to champion a doctrine of ‘catholicity’ as geographic universality, together with a specific appeal to transmarine churches as authenticating *loci* of catholic communion, especially the church of Rome and the seven churches of Asia.

The relationship between Optatus and Cyprian is unclear. He cited him by name twice and only in the first book, never gave any direct quotations of his writings, and where there are shared interpretations of key biblical passages, as Labrousse has shown, the textual divergences are notable enough to render it unlikely at least that he had Cyprian before him as he wrote.⁷⁴⁷ Labrousse concluded that Optatus explicitly mentioned Cyprian in order to herald him as a marker of catholic unity yet declined to complicate matters by citing him in connection with the controversy over rebaptism. Gaumer has more recently argued that Optatus’ references to Cyprian ‘are noticeably lacking in affection’, ‘dispassionate’, and accordingly indicate that he did not refer to him as an authority.⁷⁴⁸ Dunn has also investigated the relationship between Optatus and Cyprian, considering their theology more

⁷⁴⁴ E.g. Optatus, III.8.

⁷⁴⁵ Optatus, VII.2; cf. III.7 and IV.9.

⁷⁴⁶ Optatus, I.10 and 12. He was clearly fond of this piece of ingenuity, cf. II.1. Though note that the Donatist Cresconius could agree with the distinction; *Cresc.* II.3.4. For this distinction in North Africa at the time see the discussion in Hermanowicz, *Possidius of Calama*, 129–31.

⁷⁴⁷ Mireille Labrousse, ‘Le baptême des hérétiques d’après Cyprien, Optat et Augustin: influences et divergences’, *Revue d’études augustiniennes et patristiques* 42, no. 2 (1996): 225–31.

⁷⁴⁸ Gaumer, *Augustine’s Cyprian*, 61.

than their language, and he concluded that Optatus makes departures from Cyprian though in doing so ‘he was not overly conscious of this fact or concerned about it’.⁷⁴⁹ In any event, the remarkable fact of a North African theologian writing so independently of Cyprian cannot fail to raise an eyebrow. That Optatus had read Cyprian cannot be gainsaid: the parallels in thought, pet phrases, and familiar citations, are abundant.⁷⁵⁰ However, with Optatus, Caecilianist theology becomes importantly post-Cyprianic; as will be argued, Optatus broke new ground and fundamentally altered the terms of ecclesiological reflection away from the monumental legacy of his predecessor.

(2) Catholicity and geographic universality

Transmarine churches are essential ingredients in the Optatan recipe for catholicity, which he consistently treated as a geographical concept. The definition of ‘catholic’ (*proprietas catholici nominis*), he wrote, is the church’s harmonious constitution and universal diffusion (*rationabilis et ubique diffusa*).⁷⁵¹ He took himself to have ‘proved’ (*probauimus*) that catholicity means global diffusion off a series of psalm verses made famous by their later reiterations by Augustine to the same effect.⁷⁵² The proof is, it must be conceded, unsatisfactory: God’s dominion over the entire earth, extolled in the psalmist’s praise (Ps. 49.1, 71.8 etc.),⁷⁵³ is neither compromised by nor contributed to by the earthly extent of the

⁷⁴⁹ Dunn, ‘Optatus and Parmenian on the Authority of Cyprian’, 191.

⁷⁵⁰ Tell-tale examples include the handling of the allegory of the garden and the church from Sgs 4.12 (I.10, 12; II.11, 13) and the ecclesiological application of Korah, Nathan, and Abiram as paradigmatic schismatics (I.21; VI.1).

⁷⁵¹ Optatus, II.1; CSEL 26.33. Edwards (p. 29) renders it ‘international and universal diffusion’, taking the proposed emendation of *non nationalis*; this is more readable but as *nationalis* is not otherwise attested in Optatus (whereas *rationabiliter* is used in VII.1) nor in any classical or Christian Latin, I have declined to follow this reading. In addition to my reason, see the critique in Batiffol, *Le catholicisme de saint Augustin*, 1:96-97n2. For further discussion of the meaning of *rationabilis* here, with the useful rendering of Marone’s Italian translation as ‘harmony with truth’, see Bass, ‘Scripture in Optatus of Milevis’, 201n71.

⁷⁵² Optatus, II.1-2, where he states (CSEL 26.36): *Ergo quia probauimus eam esse catholicam, quae sit in toto terrarum orbe diffusa*.

⁷⁵³ Optatus, II.1; on Augustine’s use of these see Edwards, *Optatus*, 30n5.

church, and in any event the messianic promise of Psalm 2 (*dabo tibi gentes hereditatem tuam* etc.) could just as well be yet ongoing and not a *fait accompli*.⁷⁵⁴ Optatus' definition of catholicity was more axiomatic than deduced from Scriptural data. He was on much firmer ground when apparently arguing later from the liturgical practice at the eucharistic anaphora of praying *pro una ecclesia, quae sit in toto terrarum orbe diffusa*.⁷⁵⁵ His definition provided him with a simple and clear criterion to adjudicate the *causa ecclesiae*: the party which remained in communion with the 'whole world' was truly catholic, and the other shown to be schismatic.⁷⁵⁶

Despite Optatus' confidence, it is unclear to what extent this geographic interpretation of catholicity commanded universal and automatic commendation, especially for his opponents.⁷⁵⁷ The casual fashion in which he asserted his definition conceals its highly innovative character, which is belied both by the labour he takes to prove it, and the fact that it was vigorously resisted by Donatists. Though Optatus did not provide an etymological assessment (*catholicus* = καθ' ὅλον, or *secundum totum*), as Augustine will do, he knew that being catholic has something to do with being whole (*totus*). He railed against Parmenian: 'you want yourselves alone to be the whole, when you are nowhere in the whole'.⁷⁵⁸ The 'whole' of which Optatus is interested, however, is the 'whole world' (*totus orbis*): in this passage he reiterated this phrase so often, as if by a verbal sleight of hand, to elide the *totus* of catholicity into the *totus orbis* of geography. For Parmenian and his successors however this was not the meaning of catholicity: the relevant 'wholeness' was sacramental and ecclesial integrity. As Gaudentius opined at the 411 Conference, his

⁷⁵⁴ We know that some Donatists of Augustine's time made this relevant rejoinder; Augustine, *Ep.* 93.7.21-22, considered in the following chapter.

⁷⁵⁵ Optatus, II.12; CSEL 26.47.

⁷⁵⁶ Optatus, I.15 and 28; cf. I.26 discussed below.

⁷⁵⁷ The following attempt to disambiguate the earlier sense of the word *catholicus* methodologically follows in the wake of Cameron's more extended clarification for *paganus*; Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 17-27.

⁷⁵⁸ Optatus, II.1; Edwards, 31; CSEL 26.35: *uultis uos solos esse totum, qui in omni toto non estis*.

rivals—who by then had adopted Optatus’ definition—reckoned catholicity as a quantitative tally of provinces and peoples, when instead it meant completeness of the sacraments, perfection, and purity.⁷⁵⁹ Gaudentius’ barb directly answers to the quantitative element in Optatus’ understanding of catholicity, according to which the latter was often presented as a function of a score of provinces or demographic head-count.⁷⁶⁰ In the Donatist letter read out at the third session of the 411 Conference, the first point they made was to contrast these competing understandings of catholicity: *ubique diffusa* (and hence *permixta*) as opposed to *sancta* and *immaculata*.⁷⁶¹ Petilian also made a similar argument: to be ‘catholic’ is to be entire and whole, a purity innocent of confused mixture with sin.⁷⁶² The Donatist (Rogatist) bishop of Cartenna, Vincent, was summarised by Augustine as explaining ‘that the name “Catholic” comes not from the communion of the whole world (*totius orbis*), but from the observance of all (*omnium*) God’s commandments and all (*omnium*) the sacraments.’⁷⁶³ This Donatist understanding of catholicity may arguably lay claim to being a more authentic representation of the traditions of the second and third centuries.⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁵⁹ *Gesta* III.102; SC 224.1064: *Catholicum nomen putant ad prouincias uel ad gentes referendum, cum hoc sit catholicum nomen sacramentis plenum est, quod perfectum, quod immaculatum, non ad gentes*. See the commentary in Markus, *Saeculum*, 112–13. I would note also the summary of this discussion in Augustine, *Brev. coll.* III.3.3; CSEL 53.53, especially: *Donatistae autem responderunt, non catholicum nomen ex uniuersitate gentium, sed ex plenitudine sacramentorum institutum*.

⁷⁶⁰ Optatus, II.1; CSEL 26.33: *per tot innumerabiles insulas et ceteras prouincias, quae numerari uix possum* etc. Cf. also II.5, 11; III.9; VII.1.

⁷⁶¹ *Gesta* III.258; SC 224.1197.

⁷⁶² In *Aug. C. litt. Petil.* II.38.90.

⁷⁶³ *Ep.* 93.7.23; WSA II/1.392; CSEL 34.468: *catholicae nomen non ex totius orbis communiione interpretaris sed ex obseruatione praeceptorum omnium diuinorum atque omnium sacramentorum*.

⁷⁶⁴ For which see the discussion in John Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop during the First Three Centuries*, trans. Elizabeth Theokritoff (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001), esp. 126–137. Cf. also the lengthy footnote in John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 143n3. But cf. Mark Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church* (London: Routledge, 2018), 9. This supports the general thesis of Markus in seeing Donatists as essentially more traditional and conservative; R. A. Markus, ‘Christianity and Dissent in Roman North Africa: Changing Perspectives in Recent Work’, in *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest: Papers Read at the Tenth Summer Meeting and the Eleventh Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. Derek Baker, *Studies in Church History* 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 28–29.

The early meaning of ‘catholic’ is controverted, and discussions tend to focus on the early Greek witnesses of the word in Ignatius and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*.⁷⁶⁵ This section will argue that no clear definition of *catholicus* as geographic diffusion existed in the Latin tradition before Optatus. Pre-Christian usage is relatively rare and restricted to grammarians and rhetoricians, whose professions ensure its proper technical meaning as ‘general’ or ‘on the whole’.⁷⁶⁶ In Tertullian it cannot be seen to have any other meaning beside ‘orthodox’ or ‘complete’, when used ecclesiastically,⁷⁶⁷ or else in the sense of ‘whole’ or ‘entire’.⁷⁶⁸ Cyprian used the word frequently but affords little view into its precise sense, where it primarily has reference to the unity of the local church around the bishop (Chapter 1.3.1).⁷⁶⁹ Cyprian, to be sure, believed that the church was spread throughout the whole world,⁷⁷⁰ but that the catholic church is spread throughout the whole world does not imply that the meaning of ‘catholic’ is to be spread throughout the whole world.⁷⁷¹ As will be considered later (Chapter 5.3), Augustine’s strained attempt to use Cyprian to prove that

⁷⁶⁵ See the summary and overview by an article which confirms my thesis: Bryan Litfin, ‘Origins of Catholicity in the Apostles’ Creed’, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 64, no. 3 (2021): 553–54. This consensus is articulated by Avery Dulles, who points explicitly to Optatus and Augustine as marking a critical step in the meaning of ‘catholicity’ as ‘communion with the Church spread over the whole world’; Avery Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 13–14. See further Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, N.Y: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1988), 61; Georges Florovsky, *The Patristic Witness of Georges Florovsky: Essential Theological Writings*, First edition, Bloomsbury Collections. (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2019), 260.

⁷⁶⁶ Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.5.7.6; Velius Longinus *De orthographia* (passim). In the spurious *Ars* of Palaemon, *catholicus* is synonymously paired with *generalis*. There is also Pliny, who also uses it (as a substantive) in this sense (*catholica* [general properties] *siderum errantium*); *Nat. hist.* I, contents, LCL volume I, 24.

⁷⁶⁷ *Marc.* III.21.3, 22.6; IV.4.3 (as opposed to heresy); *De monog.* 2. See especially *Praescr.* 26 and 30.

⁷⁶⁸ *Marc.* II.17.1; Evans, 132: *Haec ita dispecta totum ordinem dei iudicis operarium et, ut dignius dixerim, protectorem catholicae et summae illius bonitatis ostendunt . . .* See also IV.9.9 for a similar use. It has one adverbial sense of ‘generally’ (*catholice*) in *De fuga* 3.

⁷⁶⁹ Cf. *Sent.* 29, where *catholicum* and *integrum* are best read as pleonastic; this seems to be the case furthermore when Augustine treats of this *sententia* in *Bapt.* VI.36.69–70.

⁷⁷⁰ *Ep.* 55.24.2; CSEL 3.642: *per totum mundum in multa membra diuisa*.

⁷⁷¹ The same discretion should be used in parsing another pre-Optatan usage in Eusebius of Vercelli, *Ep.* 2.5 (Ad presbyteros et plebem Italiae), 5; CCSL 9.107. The *uniuersi catholici episcopi* are throughout the *orbis terrarum*— this does not mean that *catholicus* includes *per totum orbem diffusus* as part of its definition, and not rather as a consequent. In Eusebius of Caesarea (*C. Marc.* I.1.36; PG 24.728) the same holds true, where he states ‘the catholic church of God, spread from one end of the earth to the other’, which, if ‘catholic’ simply meant universal, would be a rather redundant expression. I owe this last to Mark Edwards in conversation.

καθ' ὅλον means *per totum orbem* shows how he struggled to derive the Optatan definition from Cyprian's authority.⁷⁷²

The key valencies of 'catholic' for Constantine, following Lactantius, was its denomination of true and proper worship (Chapter 2.1.1). Well into the fourth century, 'catholic' still seems to have served as a synonym for 'orthodox',⁷⁷³ hence the frequency with which it modified *fides*. For Jerome, whose apology against Rufinus was especially concerned with the line drawn between catholic and heretic, to be catholic is to be orthodox, evidenced by fidelity to the faith of the Roman church.⁷⁷⁴ This is why a bishop of perfectly good standing in his life like Eusebius was, for him, emphatically not a catholic, and the 'Origenist' Didymus was a heretic but nevertheless 'catholic' with respect to the Trinity.⁷⁷⁵ Similarly, Peter Chrysologus could say that Pharisees were the 'Catholics of the Jews' because of their orthodox belief in the resurrection.⁷⁷⁶ For this reason there is to be no surprise that in Jerome's work against the schismatic Luciferians, while he mocks the idea that the church is restricted to Sardinia and not the whole world,⁷⁷⁷ he nowhere uses the word, and indeed elsewhere in the treatise famously countenances the idea that the entire Christian world succumbed to heresy.⁷⁷⁸ In this connection it is important to stress again that Tyconius, despite a patient interest in defending the universality of the church, conspicuously fails to use the word even once. In the invectives of that unyielding pro-Nicene Lucifer of Cagliari against Constantius, the 'Catholics' are precisely defined, not in,

⁷⁷² *Gaud.* II.2, using *Unit. eccl.* 5. Cyprian nowhere even uses the word *catholica* in the treatise cited; Augustine guilty of a noteworthy non sequitur.

⁷⁷³ So, for example, Fortunatianus of Aquileia, *Expl. in Matt.* 13.31sq. (=cap. 70) in CSEL CIII.178: *Volucres autem caeli, qui in ramis habitant, homines sanctos et spiritales significat, qui in doctrina apostolorum requiescunt, hoc est catholicos.* It may be worth noting this author was originally African, and a rough contemporary with Optatus: see Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 97.

⁷⁷⁴ Jerome, *Apol.* I.4; similar to Ambrose in *Exc.* I.47. For the general dispute around being called 'catholic' (as opposed to 'heretic'), see especially the third book.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.* II.16. This work furnishes many such examples, such as his fondness for using the adverbial *catholice* to indicate orthodox teaching.

⁷⁷⁶ Peter Chrysologus, *Serm.* 95; PL 52.467: *Pharisaeus...catholicus dicitur Judaeorum.*

⁷⁷⁷ Jerome, *Lufic.* 15.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 19; see Chapter 3.4.2.

but rather over and against the unity of the world-wide church, which was presently being commandeered by a heretical emperor.⁷⁷⁹ Fourth-century imperial legislation, also concerned with defining the *catholica*, followed this primarily doxastic interpretation. In an edict promulgated in 380, preserved in the Theodosian Code under the title *De fide catholica*, a legal norm restricts the right to the catholic name to those of orthodox faith: ‘We command that those persons who follow this rule (*lex*)’, namely, the Trinitarian doctrine upheld by Damasus in Rome and Peter in Alexandria, ‘shall embrace the name of Catholic Christians.’ Everyone else cannot use this title, and must be content with to bear the opprobrium of being legally a ‘heretic’.⁷⁸⁰ The following year, the same emperors likewise identified, in distinguishing them from heretics, those recognised as ‘catholic’ again upon correct orthodox profession of faith in the *homoousion*.⁷⁸¹

Another explicit definition of catholicity, loosely contemporary with Optatus, was given by Pacian of Barcelona. Writing in a polemical context (against Novatians) not served by an insistence on ubiquity, he stated:

Christian is my name, but Catholic is my surname. The first names me, the second shows what I am. The first proves me, the second signifies me. And finally if a reason (*ratio*) is to be given for the Catholic name, and a Roman meaning drawn from a Greek word, it is this: the Catholic is everywhere one, or as more learned men reckon, it means obedience to all, namely all the commandments of God.⁷⁸²

⁷⁷⁹ See especially *De non conveniendo* 1 and *De Athanasio* (passim) for its frequent deployment of *catholicus* and as that adjective as a matter of contention. The judgment of Smolin on the former text is instructive: ‘Lucifer’s task in [the *De non conveniendo cum haereticis*]...is to explain why he and his colleagues have refused to participate in the incipient universal Church structure established by Constantine and Constantius, embodied in episcopal councils backed by Imperial power.’ Smolin, *Christ the Emperor*, 254. As he points out, in *De non parcendo* 26, Lucifer emphasises the ‘universality’ of Constantius’ dominion over the church, which he has led into the ‘Arian’ heresy, and against which the true Catholics are dutifully opposed. Hoover discusses Hilary and Lucifer as parallels to Donatist apocalyptic attitudes in *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 112-4.

⁷⁸⁰ *Cod. Theod.* XVI.1.2; Clyde Pharr, trans., *The Theodosian Code and Novels: And the Sirmondian Constitutions*, Corpus of Roman Law ; Volume 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), 440.

⁷⁸¹ *Cod. Theod.* XVI.5.6.2. Cf. XVI.5.28 of 395, where even minor infractions from orthodoxy deprive one of catholic status.

⁷⁸² Pacian of Barcelona, *Ep.* I.4.1; CCSL 69B.63: *Christiano mihi nomen est, Catholico uero cognomen. Illud me nuncupat, istud ostendit. Hoc probor, inde significor. Et si reddenda postremo Catholici uocabuli ratio est, et exprimenda de Graeca interpretatione Romana, Catholicus ubique unum, uel ut doctiores putant, oboedientia omnium nuncupatur, mandatorum scilicet Dei.* Translation mine. His second letter also contains relatively extended meditations *de catholico nomine*, where he contrasts how heretics derive their name from

Edwards states that Pacian's 'is the logical usage, according to which the term denoting the genus is applied 'as a whole' to the species.'⁷⁸³ In general, the surprisingly scanty polemical remains provoked by the Novatian schism show that the ecclesiological question about catholicity had yet to be conceived in anything approaching Optatan terms. The essay by Ambrosiaster *Contra Novatianum*, while touching on many points congenial to Caecilianist polemic—that the church contains *boni* and *mali*,⁷⁸⁴ that Christian ministry depends on Christ and not the minister⁷⁸⁵—neither attempts to delineate the true church from the false, nor introduces a criterion of catholicity.⁷⁸⁶ To the extent that he does, he identifies the Christian as marked out singly by the confession of *uerba integrae fidei*.⁷⁸⁷ Novatian himself uses the word once in his extant writings, and only periphrastically.⁷⁸⁸ As I noted regarding the Melitians (Chapter 2.3), the debate over the meaning of catholicity, for the specifically contested appellation of the catholic name, was peculiar to the Donatist controversy.

Neglected in relation to the foregoing is the designation of those epistles of the New Testament as 'catholic', which must inform any sensible philological quest for the ecclesiastical sense of the word. It is generally acknowledged that the first to clearly refer to the seven general epistles as 'catholic' was Eusebius, who applied it to a collection of letters headed by James.⁷⁸⁹ This earliest witness treated this nomenclature as inherited. Origen

their founder against the true Christian's simply catholic appellation. One seeks in vain there also for any comment about universality or extension.

⁷⁸³ Edwards, 'The Donatist Schism and Theology', 103n2.

⁷⁸⁴ Ambrosiaster, *Quaest.* 102 (*Contra Novatianum*), 20, etc. For this essay see Caspar René Gregory, 'The Essay "Contra Novatianum"', *The American Journal of Theology* 3, no. 3 (1899): 566–70.

⁷⁸⁵ *Op. cit.*, 28–29.

⁷⁸⁶ The same remark may be made of the anonymous 3rd century *Ad Novatianum* (CSEL 3.52–69), which is strictly concerned with refuting the Novatian doctrine of penance. Its ecclesiological reflections are limited to safeguarding the Church as a sanctuary for both saints and sinners. For this text see Benson, *Cyprian*, 557–64.

⁷⁸⁷ *Op. cit.*, 27; CSEL 50.220–1.

⁷⁸⁸ *Trin.* 30.2; CCSL 4.72: *sincerae traditionis et catholicae fidei*. This is a work written most probably before his schism.

⁷⁸⁹ Eusebius, *H.E.* II.23.25.

earlier referred to the catholic epistle of Barnabas⁷⁹⁰ and, if Rufinus' translation accurately reflects the original, of Jude.⁷⁹¹ That this was a Greek custom, possibly reflecting an Origenian tradition, is confirmed by the fact that Jerome is our only independent 4th century Latin witness to this naming convention (and he is relatively sparing).⁷⁹² So, for example, it is absent in Optatus⁷⁹³ and more remarkably so in Augustine, who might have been expected to at least playfully latch on to this nomenclature, since he used the titles and address of scriptural letters against the Donatists frequently (Chapter 5.4).⁷⁹⁴ In this case the meaning, while never commented upon, hearkens to its grammatical sense: those epistles are 'catholic' whose intended audience is to the general church, rather than to specific churches. That in Greek, as in the Latin grammarians, 'catholic' had a primary sense of 'general' or 'on the whole' is open to view.⁷⁹⁵

The Optatan revolution to render catholicity as first and foremost geographic universality is a product of polemics with the Donatists, and one that would enjoy such an exceptionally long and victorious legacy that its status as an innovation has been hidden.

⁷⁹⁰ Origen, *C. Cels.* I.63; PG 11.777.

⁷⁹¹ Origen-Rufinus, *Comm. Rom.* V.1; PG 14.1016: . . . *Judas apostolus in Epistola catholica dicit* . . .

⁷⁹² Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 2 and 4, speaking of the epistles of James and Jude; also *Comm. Isa.* XIV.8 in Isa. 51.6, XVIII.7 in Isa. 65.8; *Comm. Hier.* I.8 (speaking of 1 Peter); *Ep.* 46.7 (again of Jude). No further references to 'catholic epistles' are to be found in this most industrious monument of ill-digested exegetical learning.

⁷⁹³ Optatus misses an obvious opportunity to use the nomenclature in I.5, disputing the rights to the name 'catholic', uses *catholica/catholicus* three times before citing the *epistula* of 1 Peter without mentioning it as *catholica*; CSEL 26.7. While purporting to quote 1 Peter, he actually gives James (4.11), such a confusion perhaps revealing that these letters were nevertheless part of a discrete collection.

⁷⁹⁴ There is not a single instance in his corpus where the general epistles of the New Testament are referred to as 'catholic'. That Augustine was not averse from using the designations of epistles in anti-Donatist polemic will be studied in further detail in the next chapter (his habit of pointing out the recipient churches as out of communion with the Donatists, e.g. *Unit. eccl.* 12.31). It comes as a great surprise, then, that he nowhere mentions this appellation in his lengthy anti-Donatist sermons on the catholic epistle of 1 John; presumably, this was unfamiliar to him.

⁷⁹⁵ G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 690.

Optatus was indeed the first⁷⁹⁶ to make this profound development in Christian thinking,⁷⁹⁷ and the revolution marked by Optatus' definition of catholicity in terms of geographic extension needs to be all the more carefully appreciated because of how accepted it has since become. Cyprian held relatively thin conception of unity when it came to the church considered as an aggregate or communion of other churches; his primary interest was the unity of the given local church around the bishop. For Cyprian, catholicity was reducible to the legitimate succession to the episcopate in a given local church. While it is a commonplace that the Donatists adopted from Cyprian their theology of baptism, concern for ecclesiastical purity, and other features, it appears that they also continued to conceive of the task of catholicity in Cyprianic terms. For Donatists, the *causa Caeciliani* was the same as the *causa ecclesiae*. Optatus has profoundly altered the rules of engagement by shifting to a broader, 'supralocal' perspective. This is not to say that the question of Caecilian's ordination was not of interest to Optatus—he devoted considerable energy to establishing the forensic security of the Caecilianist line of succession. But this recedes into the background after his first book and is almost dismissed as a red herring by the final. By the time of Augustine, a Caecilianist could concede that *even if* Caecilian was ordained by a *traditor*, it didn't matter anyways.⁷⁹⁸ As Augustine would come to argue, even granting

⁷⁹⁶ However Cyril of Jerusalem (*Cat.* XVIII.22; PG 33.1044) independently offered a definition of catholicity that included, as one of its several *differentia*, being spread throughout the world. He also however added in his definition that it is universal and complete in doctrine and integral in worship and salvific power. In the same homily (XVIII.26) it has the sense of 'orthodox'. Optatus, on the other hand, exclusively treats catholicity as geographic universality. For a view critical of the assumption that Cyril taught a doctrine of spatial-universal catholicity, see R.P. Morozziuk, 'Some Thoughts on the Meaning of ΚΑΘΟΛΙΚΗ in the Eighteenth Catechetical Lecture of Cyril of Jerusalem', *Studia Patristica* 18, no. 1 (1989): 169–78.

⁷⁹⁷ Also asseverated by Labrousse, SC 412.102-3: 'Optat a, le premier, souligné les limite géographiques du schisme africain, auxquelles il oppose l'extension de l'Église catholique «répandue dans tout l'univers [II.12]». Les donatistes revendiquaient pourtant le titre de «catholiques», mais ils donnaient à ce terme un sens different: ils considéraient dans l'Église catholique non l'universalité de la communion, mais «la plénitude des sacrements» [Aug. *Brev. coll.* III.3.3]. La conception donatiste de la catholicité est liée à la notion de pureté...'.
⁷⁹⁸ Augustine makes this claim, though insisting nevertheless on the falsehood of Donatist accusations, in *C. litt. Petil.* II.93.208 and III.3.4, 58.71; *Ep.* 185.1.4-5. Cf. also *Cresc.* IV.25.32. See the striking expressions of hypothetical concession in *Serm. ad Caes. pleb.* 7; CSEL 53.176: *sed hoc sit quod dicunt . . . prorsus hoc accipiamus: criminosus erat Caecilianus*, etc. The *causa Caeciliani* was declared by the Caecilianist bishops as ultimately irrelevant to the *causa ecclesiae* in their letter to Marcellinus (*Gesta* I.16= Aug. *Ep.* 128.2). See

Donatist allegations about Caecilian, they were still in the wrong to separate, as they have done, from the rest of the catholic world.⁷⁹⁹ Cyprian's theology of unity was no longer serviceable in the unique situation of the Donatist schism, which involved hundreds of separate bishops forming their respective communions with parallel hierarchies; this new problematic pushed the Caecilianists to expand the horizons of the debate.⁸⁰⁰

The shift from a Cyprianic to an 'Optatan' model of catholicity is strikingly demonstrated in Optatus' description of the mission of bishops Eunomius and Olympius to Africa following Constantine's detainment of both Caecilian and Donatus.⁸⁰¹ They were sent, Optatus states, 'so that they might declare where the catholic church was (*ubi esset catholica*)'.⁸⁰² This is unobjectionably Cyprianic in language and methodology: the same logic governed Cyprian's understanding of the African mission to Rome after the episcopal contention introduced by Novatian (Chapter 1.3.2).⁸⁰³ The sense is clear: the bishops were meant to discern which of the rival candidates (at this point both detained in Italy) was the legitimate successor in the locale of contention, Carthage. Where (*ubi*) the *catholica* was would be with and in that legitimate bishop. But this is not what Optatus relates, who interpreted this episode through his own understanding of catholicity. The verdict (*sententia*) of these two bishops, Optatus described, decided in favour of Caecilian because the true catholic church is the one that is diffused through the whole world (*illam esse catholicam, quae esset in toto orbe terrarum diffusa*).⁸⁰⁴ Optatus claimed that he read this *sententia*, now otherwise lost, but his language shows that he was not quoting from it but giving his own

especially his division of possible options for Donatist charges in *Unit. eccl.* 5, arguing that even if any were conceded, they should still not have gone into schism; discussed in Toczko, *Crimen Obicere*, 92.

⁷⁹⁹ Augustine, *Unit. eccl.* 3.5. See the distinction between the Donatist 'historical' and the Caecilianist 'geographic' conceptions of catholicity in Bass, 'Ecclesiological Controversies', 147–48.

⁸⁰⁰ Eno, 'The Work of Optatus as a Turning Point in the African Ecclesiology', 681.

⁸⁰¹ Convincingly dated to summer 315 in Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*, 244.

⁸⁰² Optatus, I.26; Edwards, 26; CSEL 26.28.

⁸⁰³ Cyprian, *Epp.* 45, 48, especially 48.3.1.

⁸⁰⁴ Optatus, I.26; CSEL 26.28.

description.⁸⁰⁵ This helps to understand this puzzling sentence, with its patently circular logic, as a polemical anachronism more revealing of Optatus' ecclesiology than the actual statement of Eunomius and Olympius.⁸⁰⁶ After all, why these two bishops should even have ventured forth to Africa is unclear, both if they already knew Caecilian to be the one who they and the rest of their transmarine colleagues were in communion with, and if that alone was sufficient to determine catholic legitimacy. A final consideration is that the phrase *totus orbis terrarum*, while used by earlier Christian and classical authors, is a tellingly Optatan phrase.⁸⁰⁷ What began, then, as a traditional investigation of catholicity⁸⁰⁸ has, under Optatus' subtle editorialising, shifted to his new universal and geographic conception. The bishops were no longer discerning catholicity through investigating the legitimacy of claims to a local church's episcopal *cathedra* but discerned catholicity against the benchmark of universal communion.

(3) Transmarine churches

(3.1) Optatus and the Empire

Principally relevant to the question of the transmarine world, Optatus establishes the parameters for the Caecilianist approach to the relationship of the church and the Roman

⁸⁰⁵ Especially *talis legitur, ut dicerent*, followed by *oratio obliqua* indicating his own report. While Batiffol recognises this ('Ce jugement est rapport en une forme elliptique') he struggles to wrest it from anachronism as a genuine historical account; Pierre Batiffol, *La paix constantinienne et le catholicisme* (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1914), 297. Since he takes this as authentic, he later uses this testimony as proof that Augustine's definition of catholicity as universal diffusion could claim legitimate antiquity; Batiffol, *Le catholicisme de saint Augustin*, 1:214.

⁸⁰⁶ Augustine followed suit, saying that the Donatists ordained a bishop against Caecilian *cui totus orbis christianus in transmarinis et longe remotis terris....communicaret*; *Parm.* I.3.5; CSEL 51.24. Wilhite also agrees that this expresses a 'theological affirmation', though he seems to treat it as reflective of the historical situation; Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, 198.

⁸⁰⁷ Optatus, I.26; I.28; II.13; III.2 (bis); III.5; IV.3; VI.3; VII.2; VII.5. This is not counting his other tendency to just use the shorthand *totus orbis*.

⁸⁰⁸ Indeed, the bishops may even have been going to find a replacement for Caecilian! See Labrousse in SC 412.229n2 and Edwards, *Optatus*, 26n103.

Empire.⁸⁰⁹ While Optatus is an early expounder of what has come to be called ‘imperial theology’, the general neglect he has suffered has resulted also in an absence of proper study on this point.⁸¹⁰ Explicitly responding to Donatus’ brusque (and possibly hypocritical) *Quid imperatori cum ecclesia?*,⁸¹¹ he took an opposite approach, charting a species of caesaropapism.⁸¹² He explained that the *ecclesia* has very much to do with the *imperator*, since the *ecclesia* is contained within, rather than containing, the *respublica* which is the *imperium Romanum*.⁸¹³ In a striking passage, he declared:

there is no-one higher than the Emperor save God himself who made the Emperor, [so] when Donatus raised himself above the Emperor, he had already, as it were, exceeded human limits, so that he almost deemed himself God rather than man, because of his lack of reverence for the one whom humans feared next after God.⁸¹⁴

⁸⁰⁹ For an overview of this and his ‘*théorie de la persécution*’, see Monceaux V.289-91. See also Bass, ‘Augustine and Optatus of Milevis’, 121–22.

⁸¹⁰ Optatus is not mentioned in recent studies of imperial theology or Christian interpretations of empire in e.g. G. W. Bowersock, ‘From Emperor to Bishop: The Self-Conscious Transformation of Political Power in the Fourth Century A.D’, *Classical Philology* 81, no. 4 (1986): 298–307; Marta Sordi, *The Christians and the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 1994); Peter Brown, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World* (Cambridge: University Press, 1995); Sophie Lunn-Rockcliffe, *Ambrosiaster’s Political Theology* (Oxford: University Press, 2007). Typical of Optatus’ reception is how he is only cited incidentally for the sake of the appendicular dossier, in Smolin, *Christ the Emperor*. He is importantly included alongside Eusebius and Ambrose as part of the triumphal imperial theology of the 4th century in van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon*, 159. See the useful comments by Frend, who, however, assimilates Optatus to what he considers ‘Western’ attitudes in that he ‘accepted the Church and the Empire as representing two independent powers’; a difficult judgment to square with what is quoted below here; Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution*, 552–53.

⁸¹¹ Put into Donatus’ mouth at III.3, and more generally to the Donatists in I.22. See also the martyr Felix’s retort to Magnilianus in the *Passio sancti Felicis episcopi*, 16-17; Maier 1.52-53. For a later iteration of the same Donatist complaint, see Gaudentius in Augustine, *Gaud.* II.12.13—God commissioned his prophet Jonah, not the king of Nineveh, to proclaim repentance. Augustine mocks Donatist hypocrisy on this score at e.g. *Ep.* 105.8

⁸¹² Greenslade represents it as ‘the commoner Christian position at the time’; Greenslade, *Schism in the Early Church*, 61. By contrast, Frend assimilates Optatus to Hilary and situates him as a precursor to Augustine, which sits unevenly with the quotation adduced later in this paragraph; W. H. C. Frend, ‘The Roman Empire in Eastern and Western Historiography’, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, no. 14 (194) (1968): 28. The same view is taken by Bonner, who curiously reads the *Non enim respublica est in ecclesia, sed ecclesia in respublica, id est in imperio Romano* to mean that ‘he was determined to hold Church and Empire apart’; Bonner, ‘*Quid Imperatori Cum Ecclesia?*’, 246. See further the comments in Edwards, *Optatus*, xxvi.

⁸¹³ Optatus, III.3; CSEL 26.74.

⁸¹⁴ Optatus, III.3; Edwards, 64; CSEL 26.75: *et cum super imperatorem non sit nisi solus deus, qui fecit imperatorem, dum se Donatus super imperatorem extollit, iam quasi hominum excesserat metas, ut prope se deum, non hominem aestimaret non reuerendo eum, qui post deum ab hominibus timebatur*. Just as Donatists are rebels against the Emperor in matters of ecclesiastical governance, they also try and usurp God in rebaptism, by alleging that it is them, and not God, who does the washing, V.7.

This is an ambitious statement on the legitimacy of the imperial government's supervision of ecclesiastical affairs and the supremacy of the Emperor over the episcopate.⁸¹⁵ In exalting the Emperor to the very heights of the sublunar realm, Optatus was breathing the same air as some of his Latin Christian contemporaries. Ausonius, in his effusive thanksgiving to Gratian, remarked that he had but to make a little turn (*flexu...parvo*) from Gratian to God, since they are not very far (*procul*) away from each other.⁸¹⁶ Firmicus Maternus, writing his astrological tract sometime before becoming a Christian,⁸¹⁷ taught that it is not only ill-advised, but impossible, to divinise the fate of the emperor, who was above all such astral influences because directly ruled over only by God Himself.⁸¹⁸

Optatus had to justify the coercive activity of imperial agents in attempting to bring about unity in the North African Church, first of Leontius and Ursacius, then of the dreaded Paul and Macarius.⁸¹⁹ He conceded that the latter may have been 'evil', but nevertheless they were 'agents of unity' directed by Providence to secure the peace of the church.⁸²⁰ In a fascinating image, he described the activity of imperial coercion as that of a 'tailor' mending the 'garment' of church unity.⁸²¹ Flowing from his political theology of the divine role of the emperor, Optatus repeated twice that Macarius was, despite being no bishop, nevertheless a *minister* of the will of God.⁸²² Accordingly Macarius, with the blood of the dirty work of violence on his hands, could legitimately receive communion, since he was

⁸¹⁵ Optatus 'requir[ed] the almost complete dependence of the Church on the civil power.' Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 196.

⁸¹⁶ Ausonius, *Gratiarum actio* 18; LCL 115.266. So too the (possibly un-Nicene) Trinitarian analogy of Valentinian I with his *augusti* in *Vers. Pasch.* 24-28, discussed in McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 83-84.

⁸¹⁷ For the question of his conversion, often discussed, see now Mark Edwards, 'Astrology and Freedom: The Case of Firmicus Maternus', in *Individuality in Late Antiquity*, ed. Alexis Torrance and Johannes Zachuber (New York: Routledge, 2014), 41-43.

⁸¹⁸ Firmicus Maternus, *Matheseos libri VII*, II.30.4-7.

⁸¹⁹ Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*, 239ff. On the broader phenomenon of Christian acceptance embrace of persecution of heretical rivals see A. H. Armstrong, 'The Way and the Ways: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in the Fourth Century A.D', *Vigiliae Christianae* 38, no. 1 (1984): 1.

⁸²⁰ Optatus, III.5; Edwards, 71. Further, whatever force they used was both justified by and proportionately less than Donatist violence against Caecilianists, as he avers in II.18.

⁸²¹ Optatus, III.9; Edwards, 77.

⁸²² Optatus; VII.6; CSEL 26.180: *ministerium fuisse uoluntatis dei...est enim minister uoluntatis dei*.

just like Moses, Phineas, or Elijah: a *minister* in the hands of God, using violence for divine justice.⁸²³ That being said, Optatus retained mixed feelings about state violence,⁸²⁴ and while showing an uneasiness around the Macarian persecutions in his concessions to Parmenian on its unpleasant aspect, nevertheless held to the principle that lawful coercion, for the loftier goals of the peace and unity of the church, can be justified.⁸²⁵ Bass explains how, contrary to Donatist attempts to uphold a demarcation between *ecclesia* and *imperium*, ‘Optatus was easing into a “Catholic world” centred in Rome’:

Optatus read Scripture as a Roman Christian. Catholics in Africa enjoyed imperial recognition, and this new alliance altered the hermeneutical horizons. Though not legally Christian yet, Optatus believed the empire had already been sanctified by the Divine Name through the rule of Christian emperors . . . Christian martyrs no longer struggled against a diabolical empire; to resist imperial agents as the Donatists in Bagai had done was to “wage war” against “the Name.”[III.8]. Christians ought to live peaceably with the imperial powers, he urged, holding up Paul’s injunction to pray for those in power. Intentionally or not, he misquoted 1 Tim 2:2 as “pray for the rulers and powers so that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life *with them*” (*cum ipsis* rather than *cum omni*).[III.3]⁸²⁶

This acceptance of imperial involvement in church life⁸²⁷ no doubt was conditioned by the exigencies of his context and the general acceptance of imperial theology in the post-Constantinian church.⁸²⁸ Nevertheless, it must be viewed as an intimate component of his doctrine of the church, rather than a mere accident of history. It should come as no surprise that the architect of an ecclesiology of catholicity as geographic universality should so

⁸²³ Optatus, III.7. See also praetorian prefect Gregory described as responding to Donatus with *patientia episcopali*, III.3; CSEL 26.73. Optatus’ understanding of human ‘agency’ in divine things (where we are *operarii* and God is the only *dominus*), is spelled out in his theology of baptism in V.4; CSEL 26.127. As Edwards notes, *operarius* is used ‘to designate both ministers of the sacraments [V.5] and officers of martial law [I.6]’; Edwards, *Optatus*, xxvi.

⁸²⁴ He is careful to clarify, in the summary of his argument, that *a nobis militem non esse petitum et ad nos non pertinere, quod ab operariis unitatis dicitur esse commissum* in I.7; CSEL 26.9.

⁸²⁵ Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 496–97. See the striking image at the end of III.4; CSEL 26.85.

⁸²⁶ Bass, ‘Scripture in Optatus of Milevis’, 206–7.

⁸²⁷ Summarised in Labrousse, SC 412.78–80.

⁸²⁸ Not even the Donatists are un-imperial, he alleges, when he yokes them to Julian, who reversed legislation against the Donatists apparently at their request. And in the end, showing Optatus’ confidence in the guiding hand of Providence resting firmly on the imperial office, his reign was cut off early; Optatus, II.15.

closely associate the church with the only other institution that could and did claim coextensiveness with it in the same universality: the Roman Empire. Though Optatus' preferred referent for geographic catholicity is the *totus orbis terrarum*, when he was moved to be more specific, he disclosed his Roman perspective. In a slightly idiosyncratic scheme, he glossed a roughly exhaustive list of the provinces, as grouped into post-Constantinian dioceses, as the very ambit of catholicity.⁸²⁹ The church is in the Empire, and imperial unity serves Christian unity. I can detect no other reason for why Optatus should have said that Constantine helped reunite the churches of East and West⁸³⁰ unless he was referring to Constantine's consolidation of sole hegemony of the Empire.⁸³¹ The *totus orbis terrarum* simply is the world of the Roman Empire—with some limited exceptions, which, for a good Roman, were peripheral irrelevancies to its pretensions to universality.⁸³²

The universal Empire is the very canvas of the *orbis*, upon which the universal church has painted its colours from corner to corner. As Optatus exclaimed, the mountain of the church *per omnem orbem Romanum caput tulit sub toto caelo*.⁸³³ And, continuing, the valleys of this mountain (alluding to Isaiah 22.5) are nothing but each of the provinces of the whole world (*singulas prouincias totius orbis*), namely, the Roman Empire.⁸³⁴ When Optatus circumscribed the church within the Empire, he linked this to Biblical prophecy. With 'a patriotism unusual in the literature of African Christianity',⁸³⁵ Optatus professed that the Lord's Bride is exhorted to *come from Lebanon* (Sgs. 4.8), where Lebanon is

⁸²⁹ Optatus, II.1; CSEL 26.33. He begins from the dioceses of Gaul, Spain, and Italy, to a more granular provincial survey from the provinces of Dacia through to province of Mesopotamia. He gives a more fragmentary overview to the same purpose in III.9.

⁸³⁰ Optatus, II.15; esp. CSEL 26.50.

⁸³¹ Cf. Claudian, *De bello Gildonico*, vv. 1-4.

⁸³² An example of this is Optatus' (III.8) restriction of the four beasts of Daniel 7 to exclusively Roman history, instead of the customary interpretation where they successively stand in for the empires that preceded Rome's; see Edwards, *Optatus*, 75n79.

⁸³³ Optatus, III.2; CSEL 26.71.

⁸³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸³⁵ Edwards, 'The Beginnings of Christianization', 152.

interpreted as the Roman Empire (*de Libano, id est de imperio Romano*).⁸³⁶ The church sprang from the Empire, whose civilisation allows religion to flourish intact, unlike *in barbaris gentibus*, where true worship and doctrine do not exist nor could be sustained for long.⁸³⁷ In conclusion, Optatus' defence of imperial intervention in ecclesiastical matters is not only a wise expediency reflecting the situation of the Caecilianist church but is a product of his theology of catholicity. If the church's catholicity is essentially a function of its distribution through the universal world of the Empire, it is only natural that this same Empire should be closely associated with the church.

(3.2) Rome and the seven churches of Asia

For Optatus, at the glorious culmination of Christian history with the accession of Constantine, the whole church was one body exhibiting transmarine unity: the Africans were joined in peace with the Easterners and other transmarine Christians (*orientales et ceteros transmarinos*), as various members 'coagulated' into the one body of the church.⁸³⁸ The Donatists shattered this transmarine unity; for Optatus, this is both the chief sin of their

⁸³⁶ Optatus, III.3; CSEL 26.74. Markus cites this passage in an examination of Latin Christian attitudes to Empire and makes the following valuable comment: 'Roman' and 'Christian' were virtually synonymous. 'Christian' had come to define the inner quality of the Roman world; 'Roman' had come to define the outer edges of Christendom . . . [Optatus] could already assume that the Roman and the Christian worlds were coextensive'; R. A. Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World*, Currents in the History of Culture and Ideas (London: Thames & Hudson, 1974), 141. I would add that this is certainly a strange interpretation of Lebanon and the Canticle as a whole here; Optatus' contemporary, Ambrose, takes it negatively as signifying the corruptible body that the soul is exhorted to withdraw from; *De Isaac* 6.52.

⁸³⁷ Loc. cit. Chadwick explains this passage: 'The African Optatus instinctively treats the barbarians outside the empire as being beyond the scope of the gospel. Christianity belongs to the Roman world.'; Henry Chadwick, *The Circle and the Ellipse; Rival Concepts of Authority in the Early Church*, Inaugural Lecture Delivered before the University of Oxford on 5 May 1959 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 15. See also Edwards' comment that this is related to his characterisation of Donatists as Numidian 'barbarians' (I.18); Edwards, *Optatus*, xxi. Compare Leo, *Serm.* 82.2; PL 54.432: *Ut autem hujus inenarrabilis gratiae per totum mundum diffunderetur effectus, Romanum regnum divina providentia praeeparavit; cujus ad eos limites incrementa perducta sunt, quibus cunctarum undique gentium vicina et contigua esset universitas.*

⁸³⁸ Optatus, II.15; CSEL 26.50: *cum Africanos populos et orientales et ceteros transmarinos pax una coniungeret et ipsa unitas repraesentatis omnibus membris corpus ecclesiae coagularet.* This is the only instance in his writings of the adjective *transmarinus*; the phrase *trans mare* does not occur.

schism and the signal proof that they are on the wrong side of it. Since catholicity has been defined as universal geographic diffusion, communion with the *transmarini* functioned in Optatus as a simple criterion of catholicity. Catholicity is almost by definition possessed by the transmarine churches, and only in Africa—perhaps optimistically (Chapter 3.4.2)—has there been a division against this global family: ‘The whole world rejoices over catholic unity, apart from Africa (*de unitate catholica praeter partem Africae*), where a fire has been blown up from a spark.’⁸³⁹ Accordingly, Optatus developed an argument that Augustine later rehearsed to its later fame, that the Donatists were guilty of a local particularism that attempted to enclose the church within Africa. For Optatus, there is one church throughout all the provinces, and while the Caecilianists remain in communion with all throughout the ‘whole world’, the Donatists are guilty of a schismatic separation.⁸⁴⁰ Parmenian, Optatus alleged, desired to ‘lock up the church in a small space’, namely ‘in a tiny portion of Africa, in the corner of a little region’.⁸⁴¹ The Donatists were thereby guilty of perfidy towards God’s promise (Ps. 2.8) that Christ will inherit the nations,⁸⁴² and deny God’s possession of ‘the Christians peoples of the east and north, even of all the western provinces and innumerable islands, against which you alone, a handful, are in rebellion, and with whom you have no dealings in communion’.⁸⁴³ With the confidence of a general surveying the superior size of his forces, Optatus reminded Parmenian of the universal support of all the peoples and provinces the Caecilianists enjoy, and that a few Donatists cannot hope to claim that they alone constitute the church.⁸⁴⁴

⁸³⁹ Optatus, III.9; Edwards, 78; CSEL 26.92-3.

⁸⁴⁰ Optatus, I.15 and 28. See also II.9.

⁸⁴¹ Optatus, II.1; Edwards, 29-30; CSEL 26.33: *in particula Africae, in angulo paruae regionis*.

⁸⁴² Ibid.

⁸⁴³ Optatus, II.11.

⁸⁴⁴ Optatus, II.5.

There are eight specific transmarine churches that Optatus canvasses in order to further buttress his case for Caecilianist legitimacy and catholicity. In an oblique self-description, he wrote in the fourth book that:

You have been averse to dissension and schism, you have entered into concord with your brother, and with the one church which exists throughout the whole world, you have communicated with the seven churches and the memorials of the Apostles, you have embraced unity.⁸⁴⁵

This passage is a close re-presentation of an earlier statement in the second book, where Optatus ‘glories in’ the fact that his church remains in unity with ‘the seven churches which are in Asia’ and also that the Caecilianists communicate ‘with the memorials of the Apostles (*memoriis apostolorum*)’.⁸⁴⁶ In these instances, as elsewhere, the *memoriae* should be read as an allusion to Rome, as Merdinger has argued.⁸⁴⁷ Optatus used the seven churches of Asia and Rome as authenticating centres of communion in a structurally similar way, through a creative re-appropriation of Parmenian’s theology of the *dots*. Unfortunately, Optatus’ fascination with the seven Eastern churches routinely receives only passing commentary, as scholars make haste to discuss the more vexed question of Rome, magnified through the controversy of centuries.⁸⁴⁸ This has led to some misunderstanding of Optatus, since I would here contest that his appeal to the seven Eastern churches is of the exact same species as his appeal to Rome, and to neglect the former as a cursory oddity is to let the priorities of anachronism dilute good historical judgment in the interpretation of the latter.⁸⁴⁹

⁸⁴⁵ Optatus, IV.3; Edwards, 86; CSEL 26.105: *dissensio et scisma tibi displicuit, concordasti cum fratre tuo et cum una ecclesia, quae est in toto orbe terrarum, communicasti septem ecclesiis et memoriis apostolorum, amplexus es unitatem.*

⁸⁴⁶ Optatus, II.14; Edwards, 43; CSEL 26.49.

⁸⁴⁷ Also II.4, where it is explicit, and cf. III.5. Jane Merdinger, ‘Optatus Reconsidered’, *Studia Patristica* 22 (1987): 296–97.

⁸⁴⁸ A good example is in Batiffol, who devotes two sentences to acknowledging the *septiformis ecclesia* and then initiates a long discussion on the *cathedra Petri* without considering any of the other *dots*; Batiffol, *Le catholicisme de saint Augustin*, 1:98–105.

⁸⁴⁹ Typical is Labrousse, SC 412.109. A much more balanced judgment is in Harnack: ‘[Optatus] emphasises the connection of the African Catholic Churches with the Oriental, and especially the seven-fold *ecclesia* of Asia...almost as strongly as that with the Roman Church’; Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 5:47.

Optatus adverted to the notion of the *cathedra Petri* and to the figure of Peter as the pattern of unity on several occasions, but he made exactly one mention of the Roman church in this connection.⁸⁵⁰ By contrast, the seven churches of the East receive three, and relatively fulsome, mentions.⁸⁵¹ Scholarship, however, has disproportionately focussed on the isolated passage on Rome, and has often been content to gloss over his parallel treatment of the seven churches. This is to miss that his appeal to these transmarine churches shares the same conceptual basis, as guarantors of certain of the *dotes* listed by Parmenian. His mention of both Rome, and the seven churches, first appears in his discussion of these *dotes*. The *dos* of the *cathedra* (the episcopal chair) was correlated to the *cathedra Petri* in Rome, and the *dos* of the *angelus* (the presiding angel of the church) to the angels of the seven churches of Asia in John's Apocalypse. In both instances, these defining and essential marks of the true church were argued to be specially instantiated in transmarine sees, communion with which being at least a necessary condition for possession of the *dos* in question.

Optatus' appeal to Rome against the Donatists is remarkable, and Edwards has noted that it marked a profound development in not only African ecclesiology, but even non-Italian ecclesiology.⁸⁵² It has deservedly received much attention,⁸⁵³ and may be presented only briefly here. In the first place, Optatus was eager to reject the Donatist bishop of Rome as illegitimate. He pointed out that Macrobius (the contemporary Donatist bishop of Rome while he was writing his first edition) did not occupy the *cathedra Petri* and was rather a successor to a false line of bishops extending from some 'Africans and immigrants' sent to the city and secluded in their mountain caves.⁸⁵⁴ The most visible sign of their fraudulent status is that they cannot and do not communicate and make offerings to the *memoriae*

⁸⁵⁰ Optatus, I.1 (where Rome is mentioned), II.2-3, VII.3-5.

⁸⁵¹ Optatus, II.6 and 14, VI.3.

⁸⁵² Edwards, 'The Donatist Schism and Theology', 102-7. See also Edwards, *Optatus*, xxiv-xxv.

⁸⁵³ See especially Merdinger, 'Optatus Reconsidered'; Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, 50-58.

⁸⁵⁴ Optatus, II.4; Edwards, 34; CSEL 26.38: *Afri et peregrini*.

apostolorum of the twin founders of the Roman church, Peter and Paul.⁸⁵⁵ Instead, Optatus provided a list of Roman bishops down to his own time, both to show the integrity of the episcopal succession there, and also to locate the stable point of origin for the *dos* of the *cathedra*. So, he wrote:

The first of these [viz. the *dots*] is the see (*cathedra*), to which, unless the Bishop occupies it, the second gift (*dos*) cannot be joined, which is the angel (*angelus*). We must see, who first occupied the see, and where...you cannot deny that you know that the first episcopal see was set up in Rome, which was occupied by Peter the head of all the Apostles (for which reason he was called Cephas) so that in this one see unity might be preserved by all, lest each of the other Apostles should maintain his own; thus anyone who set up another see against this one see would be a schismatic and a sinner.⁸⁵⁶

This *dos* of the *cathedram unicam* was bestowed to Peter, and has been passed down uninterruptedly in Rome through to his contemporary Damasus, *hodie qui noster est socius*.⁸⁵⁷ With Damasus, Optatus claims, the entire world is in communion, and this Petrine *cathedra* in Rome established the primordial *cathedrae originem*.⁸⁵⁸ As Eno noted, here with Optatus there was a ‘transfer of the Petrine-Unity symbolism from the local level to the world level of the universal Church’, taking the Cyprianic concept of the *cathedra Petri* and identifying a ‘special Chair of Peter in the world Church’ in Rome.⁸⁵⁹ By localising the one *cathedra Petri* in Rome, Optatus restricted possession of this *dos* to those churches who enjoyed communion with the primordial see.⁸⁶⁰ Near the end of his work, Optatus returned to the significance of Peter as an exemplar of ecclesial unity. It was to Peter that Christ vouchsafed the keys, and it was through him that the other apostles received their own

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁶ Optatus, II.2; Edwards, 32; CSEL 26.36.

⁸⁵⁷ Optatus, II.3; CSEL 26.36-7.

⁸⁵⁸ Optatus, II.3; CSEL 26.37: *cathedrae...originem*.

⁸⁵⁹ Eno, ‘The Work of Optatus as a Turning Point in the African Ecclesiology’, 684–85. Labrousse cites Eno and reproduces his analysis on this question; SC 412.115.

⁸⁶⁰ ‘Optatus’s arguments abstracted spiritual power from the particular and embodied African bishops to a universal and intangible heavenly authority mediated through the Roman see, the see with whom the Caecilianists had exclusive communion’; Bass, ‘Augustine and Optatus of Milevis’, 113.

share.⁸⁶¹ After his betrayal of Christ—incomparably worse than the *traditio* the Donatists arraigned against the Caecilianists—the apostles nevertheless remained in communion with Peter: ‘So many innocent ones stood by and the sinner received the keys, so that a practice of unity might be established.’⁸⁶² Because the African Caecilianists also were united with the successor of Peter, they retained the divine gift of the *cathedra* bestowed on the first of the apostles.⁸⁶³ The *cathedra* ‘is ours through Peter (*per Petrum nostrum esse*)’,⁸⁶⁴ because the Caecilianist bishops in Africa, unlike their rivals, are in communion with the primordial *cathedra* of Peter in Rome.

Optatus yoked possession of the *cathedra* through ongoing communion with Peter’s successor in Rome to possession of the *angelus* through ongoing communion with the seven churches of Asia. He articulated this in a way, typical of the author, which leaves much to the patience of the reader to be deciphered:

This [viz. the *cathedra*] draws with it the angel, unless perhaps, claiming it as your own, you have it locked in your purses. Send him, if you can, let him exclude the seven angels, who are among our colleagues in Asia (*excludat septem angelos, qui sunt apud socios nostros in Asia*)... Where will you find an angel, who could move the font in your presence or be numbered among the other gifts of the church? Whatever is outside the seven churches, is foreign (*extra septem ecclesias quicquid foris est, alienum est*). Of if you have one from there, you communicate through one with the other angels, and through the angels with the aforesaid churches with us. If that is so, you have lost your case.⁸⁶⁵

It would be a fruitless enterprise to invest more thoughtful labour on the concept of the *angelus* than Optatus likely did himself. Nevertheless, it may be surmised that Optatus

⁸⁶¹ Optatus, VII.3.

⁸⁶² Optatus, VII.3; Edwards, 141.

⁸⁶³ Also Optatus, VII.5. Monceaux states that for Optatus, through Rome, African Caecilianists ‘remontaient, eux aussi, jusqu’à l’âge apostolique’; Monceaux V.286. Accordingly, he thinks Optatus goes on to break beyond Cyprian and accord to Rome ‘non plus seulement une simple préséance honorifique, mais une primauté réelle, une sorte de suprématie’ (ibid, 287).

⁸⁶⁴ Optatus, II.6; Edwards, 37; CSEL 26.42-43.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid.; Edwards, 37-8; CSEL 26.42-3.

followed Parmenian⁸⁶⁶ in postulating this *dos* to be a presiding guardian angel, given the elision implied between the angel stirring the water at Bethesda (John 5.4) with an angel sanctifying the water of baptism.⁸⁶⁷ Just as the first *dos* of the *cathedra* has a primordial point of origin in Peter's church in Rome, so too the second *dos* of the *angelus* may be pre-eminently located in the seven churches of Revelation, whose angels are its explicit addressees. In both cases the *dotes* may be seen to be transitive through communion: those who are in communion with the *cathedra* in Rome show themselves to have the *cathedra*, and so too for the seven *angeli* in Asia.⁸⁶⁸ This led Optatus to formulate the stark view above, according to which communion with the seven churches was necessary for being in the church, such that any not in communion with them are by that very fact outside (*foris*) the church. Though Optatus' use of the seven churches may have been conversant with his precedents in Victorinus⁸⁶⁹ or Cyprian, it is noteworthy that on one instance he calls the seven churches of Asia the *septiformis ecclesia*,⁸⁷⁰ an expression only otherwise attested in Tyconius.

An overlooked idiosyncrasy of Optatus' use of the seven churches is that he only ever considered the specific set of the seven in Revelation, and—unlike Cyprian, Tyconius, Victorinus, or Augustine—did not attempt to set them in parallel with the seven Pauline churches. He mentioned some Pauline churches with the seven churches of Revelation in two places, where appeals to the former follow closely from appeals to the latter, but on both occasions, he only cited Corinth, Galatia, and Thessalonica and made no attempt to parallel

⁸⁶⁶ Parmenian's view is uncertain; Tilley leaves it ambivalent, defining the *angelus* as 'the rightly consecrated bishop or guardian angels of the churches like those in Revelation'; Tilley, 'The Ecclesiologies of Parmenian and Tyconius', 263.

⁸⁶⁷ For the divine presence mediated upon the waters of baptism through an angel see especially Tertullian, *Bapt.* 4-5; cf. also Ambrose, *De myst.* 4.32. Tilley rejects that the angel is the local bishop, arguing that it is an actual angel in *The Bible in Christian North Africa*, 105.

⁸⁶⁸ For the unity and ubiquity of the *dotes* in the global *catholica* see II.9; CSEL 26.45: *hanc esse catholicam, quae sit in toto orbe terrarum diffusa, cuius membra et nos inter alios sumus, cuius dotes apud illam ubique sunt.*

⁸⁶⁹ Whom he lauds by name in I.9.

⁸⁷⁰ Optatus, VI.3; CSEL 26.147.

the two sevens.⁸⁷¹ The reason for this is simple. Any parallel of the Pauline with the Johannine sevens was contrary to his purpose: the ‘seven churches’ must be a discrete set for Optatus, because it is not a numerological cipher for the plenitude of the church, as it was for Tyconius and Cyprian. This narrower specificity was critical to his argument. Just as he had tethered the *dos* of the *cathedra Petri* to a particular church in Rome, Rome, so too he derived the *dos* of the *angelus* from particular churches in Asia. These churches, stubbornly fixed in the scriptural record—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyateira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea—stand as paradigmatic guarantors of the *angelus* exclusively to those churches which remain in communion with them.

However, these other Pauline churches form part of a different appeal to transmarine churches against the Donatists which Augustine will return to with affection and greater dexterity (Chapter 5.4). The fact that the Donatists were not in communion with the recipients of the letters they read in Scripture could be pressed to their embarrassment. Optatus pointed out that though ‘John the Apostle wrote to these churches’ the Donatists do not have ‘communion with these churches’.⁸⁷² Relying more on the force of rhetoric than any inexorable chain of logic, Optatus deduced:

Why do you dare to read letters written to the Corinthians, when you refuse to communicate with the Corinthians? Why do you recite writings addressed to the Galatians, to the Thessalonians, when you are not in their communion? Since all this is patently so, understand that it is you who are cut off from the holy church, not we who are polluted.⁸⁷³

Similar appeal to venerable churches of apostolic foundation to authenticate the Caecilianist communion is scattered throughout his work. The apostolic memorials in the Pauline

⁸⁷¹ Optatus, II.14, VI.3.

⁸⁷² Optatus, II.6; Edwards, 37.

⁸⁷³ Optatus, VI.3; Edwards, 119; CSEL 26.147-8, esp.: *ut quid audetis epistulas Corinthios scriptas legere, qui Corinthiis communicare noluitis? ut quid ad Galatas, ad Thessalonicenses scripta recitatis, in quorum communione non estis.*

churches of specifically Corinth, Galatia, and Thessalonica are also cited in the second book.⁸⁷⁴ As proof both that the Donatists were not ‘in the whole’ (*in tota*) of the catholic church, and as a piece of absurdity consequent upon the strictures of belief in hamartological contamination and rebaptism, Optatus upheld the innocence of the churches of Antioch and Arabia.⁸⁷⁵ The churches of the East, due to their apostolic and scriptural pedigree, and their distance from the affairs surrounding the Donatist controversy, serve in this way as valuable false positives for any Donatist theory that would allege them to be condemned and defiled through communion with African *traditores*. Bringing together these various themes, Optatus turned to the Pauline churches, the seven churches of Asia, and the Holy Land to disarm Parmenian’s thesis that the Caecilianists belong to a polluted transmarine communion:

On what grounds do you refer to Catholics as polluted? Is it because we have followed the will and bidding of God by our love of peace, communicating with the whole world, associated with the Orientals where Christ was born according to his humanity, where he impressed his sacred footprints where his venerable feet walked (*ubi secundum hominem suum natus est Christus, ubi eius sancta sunt inpressa uestigia, ubi ambulauerunt adorandi pedes*), where all those great miracles were done by the very Son of God, where so many Apostles followed him, where the sevenfold church (*septiformis ecclesia*) is, from which you have cut yourselves off, not only without sorrow, but with a certain self-congratulation? Because we have been in accord with the Corinthians, Galatians and Thessalonians and maintained communion with them, you call us polluted . . .⁸⁷⁶

Between his definition of catholicity and his program to authenticate the Caecilianist church through its communion with transmarine churches, Optatus deserves more credit, or discredit, if one prefers, for a radical alteration of the terms of ecclesiological controversy. Throughout the various disputes, doctrinal or ecclesiastical, that early Christians seemed almost uniquely fond of, combatants had supported their view or their church through appeal

⁸⁷⁴ Optatus, II.14.

⁸⁷⁵ Optatus, II.14; CSEL 26.47.

⁸⁷⁶ Optatus, VI.3; Edwards, 119; CSEL 26.147.

to the authority of important churches like Rome or the consensus of a majority.⁸⁷⁷ What is original to Optatus is the explicit notion that communion with a specific church or set of churches is a necessary condition for being part of the church. Coupled with a novel doctrine defining catholicity as universal and geographic diffusion, Optatus established these two basic empirical standards answering to a robust identification of the visible church with the imperial *catholica*. Augustine adopted both elements in his anti-Donatist polemic, with some alteration of the first, and some nuance of the second, bequeathing to posterity the most highly developed account for what was, to him, the fundamental question of the controversy: ‘Certainly the question at issue between us is where the Church is (*ubi sit ecclesia*), whether with us or with them. In any case it is one, which our forebears called “catholic.”’⁸⁷⁸

⁸⁷⁷ That specific sees should be representative of the catholic religion was current among 4th century pro-Nicenes. For Ambrose’s brother Satyrus, Roman faith was synonymous with catholic faith; *De excess* 1.47. For Theodosius, orthodoxy is benchmarked to the profession of Damasus in Rome and Peter in Alexandria; *Cod. Theod.* XVI.1.2. Early and much-discussed examples include Tertullian, *Praescr.* 20.4-9 and Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III.3.2.

⁸⁷⁸ *Unit. eccl.* 2.2; WSA I/21.607; CSEL 52.232.

Chapter 5: *De catholica ecclesia, id est toto orbe diffusa*: Augustine and the transmarine churches

(1) Augustine and the Donatists

Arriving at the base of the peerless summit of North African letters,⁸⁷⁹ the loosely chronological order of this investigation will be disrupted and must yield to a more topical and thematic treatment. By way of defending such an approach, the essential continuity and uniformity of Augustine's anti-Donatist theology may be briefly defended. It is a common enterprise in Augustinian scholarship, as the vast bulk of his corpus demands, to divide his oeuvre into chronological units and accordingly evaluate its developments, evolutions, or discontinuities. So scholars are accustomed, probably too readily,⁸⁸⁰ to distinguish between the 'early' and the 'later' Augustine, or to partition his life along the contours of his corpus,

⁸⁷⁹ 'A great epoch-making man is like a stream: the smaller brooks, which have had their origin perhaps further off in the country, lose themselves in it, having fed it, but without changing the course of its current. Not only Victorinus, but ultimately also Ambrose himself, Optatus, Cyprian, and Tertullian were lost to view in Augustine; but they made him the proud stream in whose waters the banks are mirrored, on whose bosom the ships sail, and which fertilises and passes through a whole region of the world.' Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 5:35–36.

⁸⁸⁰ Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford: University Press, 2006). On the recent studies that have moved to stress continuity in Augustine's thought and work, see Paul Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls: Revising a Classical Ideal* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 15 and 220n68.

into ‘Manichaeen’, ‘Donatist’, and ‘Pelagian’ periods.⁸⁸¹ At a more granular level scientific industry even considers the changes within such periods, such as the often-observed hardening of Augustine’s thought as he became an embittered old man, in the memorable portrait of Bonner, during the Pelagian controversy.⁸⁸² However, Augustine’s specifically anti-Donatist works demonstrate a remarkable degree of consistency, even allowing for the inevitable alterations of two and a half decades of his polemical programme.⁸⁸³ With the exception of his well-known volte-face to support the compulsion of Donatists to join the Caecilianist church,⁸⁸⁴ Augustine’s thought, including his vocabulary and patterns of biblical citation, suffered little change.⁸⁸⁵

The attentive reader of his anti-Donatist corpus may feel that Augustine seems here to be torturously repetitive, which is no mean achievement.⁸⁸⁶ No doubt he is partly to be excused due to the fruitlessly ‘stuck’ discourse of the controversy, whose forensic disputes and theological issues remained interminably the same from at least the time of Optatus to the twilight of Roman Africa. Partly as well this is due to his manner of composition, wherein, with posterity at least grateful for his diligence if not for his lack of concision, Augustine responded to his opponents’ works with near-exhaustive or exhaustive quotation

⁸⁸¹ An example of the difficulty of such periodisation is in F. Edward Cranz, ‘The Development of Augustine’s Ideas on Society before the Donatist Controversy’, *The Harvard Theological Review* 47, no. 4 (1954): 255–316.

⁸⁸² Gerald Bonner, ‘Pelagianism and Augustine’, *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992): 29–30. For his comments on such a division of Augustine’s life and work and his summary of his Donatist writings see Gerald Bonner, *St Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (London: SCM, 1963), 133–38.

⁸⁸³ See Monceaux VII.191 for a similar judgment, and the treatment of what ‘evolutions’ may be detected in his polemical method and activity, 188ff.

⁸⁸⁴ Charted with valuable cogency in John Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 239–45.

⁸⁸⁵ For an overview of various schemes proposed to chronologically divide and analyse his anti-Donatist activity, and a recent agreement with Monceaux that in the main Augustine’s anti-Donatist polemic was consistent, see Toczko, *Crimen Obicere*, 27–32. As Congar notes: ‘sa vision de l’Église n’a pas connu de changement notable depuis son sacerdoce’; Yves Congar, *L’Église: de saint Augustin à l’époque moderne*, *Histoire des dogmes* 20 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1970), 12.

⁸⁸⁶ This is possibly why his anti-Donatist corpus has yet to be fully translated into English; the diligent student would not be misled by the impression that the *De baptismo* is sufficient to compass the whole. See Willis’ remarks on his repetitiveness, its utility, and purpose: Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy*, 169.

interspersed with his own running rejoinders. The single longest book in his entire corpus is his second against Petilian, in which he cannot even avoid taking issue with Petilian's inoffensively conventional opening greeting,⁸⁸⁷ where afterwards the same arguments were, with the efficiency of an industrialist, lined out and mechanically assembled.⁸⁸⁸

Augustine's pen was first engaged against the Donatists during his priesthood,⁸⁸⁹ with a lost work against a letter of Donatus,⁸⁹⁰ and his *Psalmus*, famous only to a scholarly audience who have alternated between embarrassment and rehabilitation.⁸⁹¹ Before he began his extant anti-Donatist works, he wrote a series of early letters in which he protested against the Donatist practice of rebaptism and proffered his own theology of baptism, which he continued to articulate unchanged in the subsequent decades.⁸⁹² In this early period he shows himself to have already made considerable study of Optatus' work against Parmenian, and the extensive treatment already given to Optatus can be justified simply by the fact that Augustine was a capable and almost entirely faithful replicator and perfecter of his anti-Donatist theology.⁸⁹³ At the turn of the 5th century, Augustine produced three of his most famous and lengthy works against the Donatists: against Petilian, another against Parmenian (then recently deceased), and his *De baptismo*.⁸⁹⁴ Sometime after 400, he authored his letter

⁸⁸⁷ *C. litt. Petil.* II.2.3. Though in a change of heart, perhaps, his last anti-Donatist work explicitly declines to quibble over Gaudentius' conventional opening; *Gaud.* I.1.2.

⁸⁸⁸ For a sympathetic evaluation of the second book's strengths as a singularly worthy specimen of Augustine's polemics, see Monceaux VII.102.

⁸⁸⁹ For Augustine and Donatism during this period see the treatment in Allan Fitzgerald, 'When Augustine Was Priest', *Augustinian Studies* 40, no. 1 (2009): 37–48.

⁸⁹⁰ *Retract.* I.20.5.

⁸⁹¹ See the summary of attitudes in Carl Springer, 'The Artistry of Augustine's *Psalmus Contra Partem Donati*', *Augustinian Studies* 16 (1985): 65. The most memorable reaction, to my mind, remains Van der Meer's: 'It is a sort of ballad, of very slender literary merit . . . the doggerel of a musical-hall ditty.'; Frits van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop: The Life and Work of a Father of the Church*, trans. Brian Battershaw and G. R. Lamb (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 104–5. See also the exculpatory advertisement in PL 11.812. For the broader context of this work, of propaganda hymns, see Arthur Darby Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), 92.

⁸⁹² *Epp.* 23, 34, 43, 51, 52; these have received valuable study with respect to his developing position on Donatist exsufflation in Merdinger, 'In League with the Devil?'

⁸⁹³ '[T]he entire polemical playbook Augustine used in response [to the Donatists] . . . was taken from Optatus'; Gaumer, *Augustine's Cyprian*, 60.

⁸⁹⁴ For their order, see *Ibid.*, 103–10.

De unitate ecclesiae, also known as the *Ad catholicos fratres*, which is of singular importance to this investigation given its focus on transmarine churches. I follow the consensus of modern scholarship in treating it as authentic.⁸⁹⁵ He continued to produce pamphlets against the Donatists at a pace of just over one every two years from 401 to the watershed moment in the schism's history: the Carthaginian Conference in 411.⁸⁹⁶ Augustine, who by then had positioned himself as the premier Caecilianist churchman, took a leading role in this Conference as one of the seven bishops selected to represent his side. The others, one is bound to observe, fell rather dutifully into the party line that Augustine had established in his years of prior labour.⁸⁹⁷ This Conference occasioned two short works, the *Breviculus*, which was a digested summary of its proceedings meant to assist circulation of the Caecilianist triumph, and one of Augustine's neglected masterpieces,⁸⁹⁸ the *Post collationem contra Donatistas*, in which he made an impassioned case to the Donatist laity. The climax of the controversy, as it is typically and not unfairly narrated, now past, Augustine's anti-Donatist work diminished. Important in these twilight years was his contest with his rival at the 411 Conference, the Donatist bishop Emeritus of Mauretania Caesarea, against whom he wrote a lost tract in 416, and before whom he unsuccessfully attempted to have a final debate in 418.⁸⁹⁹ His final work against the Donatists, addressing two letters of Gaudentius of Thamugadi, was composed sometime around 420.⁹⁰⁰ While its first book

⁸⁹⁵ This work will be consistently referred to, following the SBL (see Abbreviations in Bibliography) by its more traditional but less accurate title as the *De unitate ecclesiae* (*Unit. eccl.*). Doubts have been raised as to its authorship but Monceaux (IV.498) and the CSEL editor, Petschenig (CSEL 52.vii-xi), judge it to be authentic. For an argument against Monceaux see Batiffol, *Le catholicisme de saint Augustin*, 1:182-3n1. Congar (BA 28.485-494) gave an up-to-date assessment of its authenticity.

⁸⁹⁶ That is, if we include the four lost works dated from between 406 and 410; see WSA I/21.26-7. For the difficulty of dating his anti-Donatist works, where I have generally followed the standard chronology, see Éric Rebillard, 'Augustine in Controversy with the Donatists before 411', in *The Donatist Schism: Controversy and Contexts*, ed. Richard Miles (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 297-316.

⁸⁹⁷ Émilien Lamirande, 'Augustine and the Discussion on the Sinners in the Church at the Conference of Carthage (411)', *Augustinian Studies* 3 (1972): 112.

⁸⁹⁸ See the judgment of Monceaux, VII.121-2.

⁸⁹⁹ This event is captured in the *Sermo ad Caesariensis ecclesiae plebem* and *Gesta cum Emerito Donatistarum episcopo*.

⁹⁰⁰ See Lamirande in BA 32.494-5.

shows signs of a rushed composition, the second and final is a worthy valedictory for Augustine's two and a half decades of anti-Donatist literary activity. Among his anti-Donatist works, his homiletic activity deserves special attention. His tractates on the first epistle of John, the *enarrationes* on the Psalms of Ascent (119-133), and the first sixteen homilies of his tractates on the gospel of John, were preached in tandem and are laden with anti-Donatist polemic.⁹⁰¹

A peculiar feature of Augustine's anti-Donatist writings is their unique paucity of classical references.⁹⁰² Unsurprisingly then, the style of these works is, by Augustinian standards, relatively unadorned though not without a certain liveliness of sympathetic appeal, perhaps more powerfully developed here than in his other controversial works. While simplicity of style and stability of vocabulary is a feature of his *Confessiones*,⁹⁰³ the abundance of commentary this work has received is merited due to its singular complexity, philosophical involvement, and classical intertextuality. The same cannot be said for his anti-Donatist works. These show Augustine at his most ecclesiastical: the debate is above all else about church history, canon law, sacramental practice, and biblical interpretation. Here as elsewhere Augustine shows his characteristic ability to accommodate his words to his audience. The myth of Donatist bishops as intransigent, uncultured, and parochial malcontents cannot survive acquaintance with the sources: the polish of Emeritus, the theological vigour of Parmenian, and the sophistication of Petilian, for example, are open to

⁹⁰¹ For the consensus on their unity and the estimation of their dating (certainly before the 411 Conference), see Berrouard in BA 71.34 and Douglas Milewski, 'Augustine's 124 Tractates on the Gospel of John: The Status Quaestionis and the State of Neglect', *Augustinian Studies* 33, no. 1 (2002): 66–67.

⁹⁰² I have used the magisterial study Harald Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 2 vols (Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1967). The only exceptions are fittingly enough in his response to the grammarian Cresconius, where Hagendahl captures seven references. To this I add the gratifying extracts from Terence to Count Boniface in *Ep.* 185.6.21. Besides this there is exactly one allusion (to Vergil, *Aen.* VIII.487), cited in the *Parm.* (III.6.29; CSEL 51.139), as also later in the *Cresc.* (IV.49.59; CSEL 52.556).

⁹⁰³ Praised to this effect in Clifford Broeniman, 'The Resurrection of a Latin Classic: The "Confessions" of St. Augustine', *The Classical World* 86, no. 3 (1993): 209–13.

view.⁹⁰⁴ Accordingly, Frend's judgment that Augustine's classicism contrasted with Donatist bishops, and represented alternating attitudes to Rome and her empire, must be re-examined.⁹⁰⁵ Rather, as Augustine's comments regarding the need for stenographers in debates with Donatist bishops show, this controversy was transacted very much with an audience of African Christians in mind.⁹⁰⁶ Ebbeler has recently illuminated how Augustine strove to 'insert' himself into intra-Donatist discussions in the face of Donatist bishops repeatedly refusing to engage with him directly.⁹⁰⁷ By responding to their letters—not addressed to him—Augustine could reach out to the literate population when he was unable to do so to the bishops directly.⁹⁰⁸ The relative simplicity, therefore, of Augustine's anti-Donatist works is to be explained by this vulgar orientation and its immediately popular context: the Donatist question was an intimate pastoral issue, debated and enacted in the very streets of Hippo.⁹⁰⁹ Describing the occasion that prompted a now-lost work, Augustine wrote:

While we were involved in numerous debates with the party of Donatus, a certain layman, who at the time was one of them, presented against us in church several (albeit few) items in spoken and written form as proof-texts that they think are favorable to their cause. I responded to them very briefly.⁹¹⁰

⁹⁰⁴ It seems the learning and eloquence of Donatus was prized; this is mocked by Augustine: *I nunc, Donate, et clama: Disertus sum; i nunc, et clama: Doctus sum; Tract. Ev. Jo.* 6.20; CCSL 36.64. For Emeritus' liberal education see *Ep.* 87.1, and an example of his deftness in the Conference at *Gesta* II.20. For the legal background of Petilian, see *C. litt. Petil.* III.16.19. See the comments to this effect also in Pamela Bright, "Donatist Bishops", *ATTA*, 282.

⁹⁰⁵ Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 327.

⁹⁰⁶ See *Ep.* 33.4 and 44.2 regarding his debate with Fortunius; discussed in Fitzgerald, 'When Augustine Was Priest', 45n34.

⁹⁰⁷ Ebbeler, *Disciplining Christians*, 151–90. For a critical modification of this account, arguing that it was a 'shared strategy' between both parties as a mode of public propaganda see Rebillard, 'Augustine in Controversy with the Donatists before 411', 308–9. Augustine's self-insertion was attacked by Donatists as dishonestly presenting a debate between two parties where it was in reality only a literary rejoinder: see the touchiness and his concessive caveats in *Gaud.* I.1.1.

⁹⁰⁸ For example, *C. litt. Petil.* III.7.8 (to the Caecilianist public) and 14.15 (to the Donatist public).

⁹⁰⁹ See especially his comments on his *Psalmus* in *Retract.* I.20, and his challenge to have a public debate with the Donatist bishop of Calama, Crispinus, with records to be translated into Punic for the broader public in *Ep.* 66.2. For the distinction between Augustine's works targeted towards a cultivated audience, with certain classicising expectations, and his more popular works, see Peter King, *On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: University Press, 2010), xviii.

⁹¹⁰ *Retract.* II.19; WSA I/2.127. On this and the pamphleteering of the age see the discussion in Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 433–35.

The popular dimension of the debate, into which Augustine condescended so steeply in his *Psalmus*, cannot be neglected in an estimation of both the style and the function of these works.⁹¹¹

The temptation to reduce Augustine to a literary figure⁹¹²—if a reduction, given the extent of his writings—must be resisted in order to appreciate that his energies against the Donatists were not simply expended at the writing-table or in the pulpit.⁹¹³ Augustine was, together with his friend and senior colleague, Aurelius of Carthage, one of the principal architects of a renewed Caecilianist church in North Africa.⁹¹⁴ He was the mastermind and a guiding spirit behind the extraordinary resurgence of conciliar activity,⁹¹⁵ much of which either directly or indirectly concerned the domestic difficulties posed by the Donatist question. These councils proactively sent regular petitions to the imperial court of Honorius, ‘designed to corner the emperor and his officials into cracking down on the dissident church using the apparatus of imperial law’.⁹¹⁶ As not only a post-Constantinian bishop, but as one of the premier bishops of the day, Augustine was also a key coordinator between the church

⁹¹¹ The social boundaries of the two churches was less stark than polemics might indicate. The border between the two communions seemed to be something of a porous no-man’s land: scholars often do not know if someone was a Caecilianist or a Donatist, besides Monica, considered below, see perhaps the *vir clarissimus* Eusebius of *Epp.* 34-35, see Mandouze, *Prosopographie de l’Afrique chrétienne (303-533)*, 374–75. Caecilianists and Donatists intermarried (*Ep.* 22.5; *Reg. Carth.* 21) and lay people seemed to show the deference due to a bishop regardless of their affiliation, out of reverence for their clerical attire (*Ep.* 33.5; also witness the inter-episcopal fraternity across schism lines between Augustine and his Donatist counterpart Proculian). It is a striking fact that for the 392 debate with the Manichean Fortunatus, all the Christians of Hippo concurred in selecting Augustine as their spokesperson—including the Donatists; Possidius, *Vita* 6. For the need to penetrate the ‘smoke of hostile rhetoric’, which was a ‘theologically motivated effort to segregate the habitually mixing populations’ of different communities see Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 99.

⁹¹² ‘Augustine, after all, was a theologian and Bishop as well as a philosopher and rhetor!’; Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 36.

⁹¹³ Allan Fitzgerald, ‘Tracing the Passage from a Doctrinal to an Historical Approach to the Study of Augustine’, *Revue d’études Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 50, no. 2 (2004): 301.

⁹¹⁴ Possidius, *Vita* 7. See further Merdinger, ‘Augustine and Church Authority: The Developing Role of the Provincial Primate’.

⁹¹⁵ This conciliar renaissance eventually proved onerous, and a 407 Carthage council tried to limit unnecessary convocations of general African councils for matters that could be settled provincially; for this conciliar fatigue and the Nicene context see Valliere, *Conciliarism*, 113.

⁹¹⁶ Lenski, ‘Imperial Legislation and the Donatist Controversy’, 180.

and the imperial government.⁹¹⁷ He was, for example, closely involved in enforcing Honorius' anti-heretical edict of 405 which now applied to the Donatists.⁹¹⁸ Furthermore, much of Caecilianist conciliar material, and Augustine's own or coordinated action with his fellow bishops, dealt with relationships to *ecclesiae transmarinae*. One of Augustine's first tasks as a presbyter was a vigorous campaign against the local African custom of martyrial *laetitiae*,⁹¹⁹ abused in service of drunken license, attempting to correct this practice through imitating the sobriety of the transmarine church.⁹²⁰ Aurelius' conciliar project, surely not by accident,⁹²¹ took its beginning at Hippo in the plenary council of 8 October 393, which in its fifth canon established annual general councils for the entire African episcopate.⁹²² This landmark council in African canon law began with an emphatic subscription to Nicaea and a stipulation that their church maintained close consultation with the *ecclesia*

⁹¹⁷ For Augustine's influence on imperial legislation relevant to ecclesiastical issues, see Charles Munier, 'L'influence de saint Augustin sur la législation ecclésiastique de son temps', in *Augustinus Afer: saint Augustin, africanité et universalité: actes du colloque international, Alger-Annaba, 1–7 Avril 2001*, ed. Pierre-Yves Fux, Jean-Michel Roessli, and Otto Wermelinger, vol. 1, 2 vols (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 2003), 109–23. McLynn argues that we must be careful not to overstate, as commonly, Augustine's involvement with and leverage in the imperial government, even at the local proconsular level; before 412, it appears his contacts were minimal; Neil McLynn, 'Augustine's Roman Empire', *Augustinian Studies* 30, no. 2 (1999): 35–36.

⁹¹⁸ *Epp.* 86 and 88, the summary of Dolbeau's comments in WSA III/11.388n5, and McLynn, 'Augustine's Roman Empire', 37–38. See especially *Ep.* 28*, showing his 'real "hands-on" involvement' discussed in Frederick Russell, 'Persuading the Donatists: Augustine's Coercion by Words', in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R.A. Markus*, ed. William Klingshirn, Mark Vessey, and R. A. Markus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 120–21.

⁹¹⁹ For this custom, denounced also in *Ep.* 22, see Lancel in BA 40/A.634–5.

⁹²⁰ *Ep.* 29.10; on this and for other aspects of Augustine's split heart between Africa and the transmarine world during his presbyterate see Conybeare, 'Vt Tecum Tamquam Mecum Audeam Conloqui'. For this custom, denounced also in *Ep.* 22, see Lancel in BA 40/A.634–5. For its pagan origins and parallels with Eastern Christians, see Ramsay MacMullen, *The Second Church: Popular Christianity A.D. 200–400* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009), 57–60. For Augustine's attempt to correct African customs by transmarine standards see Gaumer, *Augustine's Cyprian*, 34–35. Note further the custom of *refrigeria*, suppressed in Caecilianism, and which evidence suggests continued in Donatism; Anna Leone, 'Tracing the Donatist Presence in North Africa: An Archaeological Perspective', in *The Donatist Schism: Controversy and Contexts*, ed. Richard Miles (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 343.

⁹²¹ 'The first such regular council met at Hippo Regius on 8 October 393. It was an event of the first importance, and the choice of place is a sufficient proof that Augustine was the motive power behind it.'; he notes also of course the extraordinary fact that Augustine, a presbyter, gave a homily to the gathered bishops; Cross, 'History and Fiction in the African Canons', 229.

⁹²² Each province was to send three bishops, with Tripoli excused *propter inopiam episcoporum* to send just one. *Brev. Hipp.* Can. 5; CCSL 149.34.

transmarina.⁹²³ Though Optatus did not take an interest in Arles,⁹²⁴ Augustine frequently leveraged this ‘plenary council of the whole world’ as having more heightened authority than merely regional African councils, against the Donatists.⁹²⁵

Augustine himself fatefully never left Africa upon his return in 388; but this was in many ways exceptional, for so esteemed a churchman, with a bishopric in the second-largest port town in Africa.⁹²⁶ As his biographer and friend Possidius put it, he returned to his own from the *transmarini*.⁹²⁷ Though Augustine was bound to the Libyan shores, the rise of his episcopal and literary celebrity led him to cultivate an increasingly broad network across the Mediterranean.⁹²⁸ From laypeople to bishops to the imperial court, this *Punicus*, as one critical Italian derided him,⁹²⁹ or *Poenus*, as another,⁹³⁰ never lost sight of the world beyond Africa. He explained that many of his fellow-clergy were often engaged in *labores marinos et transmarinos*, yet his frequently complained-of poor health excused him of this necessity.⁹³¹ His friend Alypius of Thagaste provides a much more mobile example of extensive travels. He acted as a go-between for the African and Italian churches, was

⁹²³ The *ecclesia transmarina* of the 36th canon of Hippo 393, Cross has argued, refers to both Rome and Milan, on the basis of a following canon’s specification of *consacerdotes nostros Siricium et Simplicianum*. Cross, ‘History and Fiction in the African Canons’, 232. See canon 47 in *Reg. Carth.*; CCSL 149.186. This observation may be strengthened by comparing it to the sentence of Aurelius in the 401 Council of Carthage, wherein he cites the counsel of *transmarinas Italiae partes*, making explicit that he means the then bishop of Rome, Anastasius, and his fellow bishop of Milan, Venerius; found in the *notitia* of the 16 June 401 council of Carthage in *Reg. eccl. Carthag. excerpta* 6; CCSL 149.194; cf. Du Pin in PL 11.1195-6. I would add also that Possidius, though this must be judged a coincidence, describes how Augustine went *trans mare* specifying Rome and Milan; *Vita* 2; PL 32.35.

⁹²⁴ Optatus, unlike Augustine, did not use councils against the Donatists. He never mentions Arles and his only mention of Nicaea is in connection with Arius; IV.5.

⁹²⁵ See the remarks on the *plenario totius orbis concilio* in *Bapt.* I.7.9; CSEL 51.154. Arles explicitly trumps the merely local, African councils of Cyprian in III.10.14. Cf. also *Ep.* 47.3.19 and *Parm.* I.6.11.

⁹²⁶ Harrison, *Augustine*, 118; O’Donnell, *Augustine, Sinner & Saint*, 9. Indeed, Augustine rarely even left his familiar turf of Numidia and Africa Proconsularis; his trip in 418 to Caesarea was remarkable. For this see Othmar Perler, *Les voyages de saint Augustin* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1969), 25–26.

⁹²⁷ Possidius, *Vita* 5; *de transmarinis ad sua remeasset*.

⁹²⁸ For the creation of episcopal networks in this period, and some comments on Augustine’s place in them, see the outstanding treatment in Elizabeth Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, Course Book (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 13–39.

⁹²⁹ The Manichee Secundinus’ *Ep. ad Aug.* 3; CSEL 25.2.896.

⁹³⁰ Julian of Eclanum apud *C. Jul. op. imp.* I.7; PL 45.1053. See Cox, ‘Augustine, Jerome, Tyconius and the Lingua Punica’, 92.

⁹³¹ *Ep.* 122.1. For his delicate constitution, see e.g. *Serm.* 355.7.

involved in communications to the imperial court, and, as Peter Brown summarises, ‘in the 420s Alypius spent more time in Italy, as a sixty-year-old bishop charged with lobbying the court, than he had ever spent there when making his career as a young man.’⁹³² While Augustine was largely confined to Hippo, its environs, and Carthage, other African Caecilianist clergy formed dynamic relationships with overseas churches.⁹³³ This could take the form of conciliar participation, such as the African legate bishops attending Ambrose’s 381 council of Aquileia,⁹³⁴ or the much-studied practice of increasing ‘transmarine appeals’ to Rome.⁹³⁵

The particularities of Augustine’s upbringing, hometown, and eventual episcopal see contributed to his ‘transmarine’ consciousness and approach to the Donatist question.⁹³⁶

⁹³² Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 170.

⁹³³ For how Augustine could exert such powerful influence abroad, through literature and personal contexts, while remaining in Africa see the comments in Hermanowicz, *Possidius of Calama*, 11.

⁹³⁴ See Monceaux III.218.

⁹³⁵ The Caecilianist existential necessity to forge strong relationships with transmarine churches led to a tensed compromise of the proud African ecclesiastical independence that flashed forth so brightly in Cyprian. There was a sort of outsourcing of specifically juridical functions to the Roman church which, after the Donatist domestic threat had been significantly reduced after 411, would be walked back as the strengthened African episcopate felt more emboldened to reassert their independence. This is no coincidence: the weak domestic situation of the Caecilianist party is precisely what led them both to identify with and follow the *ecclesiae transmarinae*. Once they had stably recovered the upper hand in Africa, such a compromise was less necessary and accordingly more grating to the dignity of the African episcopate. Munier asserts that the days of appeal to Rome would come to a resounding end: ‘cette période a pris fin, de toute évidence, avec la décision du concile de Carthage de 424/245: *Ut nullus ad ecclesiam romanam audeat appellare.*’ Charles Munier, ‘La question des appels à Rome d’après la Lettre 20* d’Augustin’, *Etudes augustiniennes* Hors série (1983): 299. Reprinted in Charles Munier, *Vie conciliaire et collections canoniques en Occident: IV^e-XIII^e siècles* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1987). I repeat the judgment of Lancel: ‘Notamment par sa [Augustine’s] participation quasi constante aux conciles de l’Eglise africaine, il a tenu un grand rôle dans la revendication d’une relative autonomie. Comme on a pu parler de «gallicanisme» en France à partir du XIV^e siècle, on pourrait parler à ce sujet sans excès de langage d’un «africanisme» ecclésial dans la manifestation duquel Augustin a joué sa partie.’ Serge Lancel, ‘Entre Africanité et Romanité’, in *Augustinus Afer: Saint Augustin, Africanité et Universalité: Actes Du Colloque International, Alger-Annaba, 1–7 Avril 2001*, ed. Pierre-Yves Fux, Jean-Michel Roessli, and Otto Wermelinger, vol. 1 (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 2003), 56. For a related assessment regarding the Apiarius affair see Brisson, *Autonomisme et christianisme dans l’Afrique Romaine; de Septime Sévère à l’invasion vandale*, 234. For the vacillations of the African episcopate in this period towards Rome see Christopher Ocker, ‘Augustine, Episcopal Interests, and the Papacy in Late Roman Africa’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42, no. 2 (1991): 179–201.

⁹³⁶ For his cosmopolitan and ‘transmarine’ attitude see Paul Copan, ‘Augustine and the Scandal of the North African Catholic Mind’, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41, no. 2 (1998): 287–95. For this being peculiar among African clergy see McLynn, ‘Augustine’s Roman Empire’, 32. For the tension between Augustine’s Roman education and career mobility and his African milieu see Conybeare, ‘Vt Tecum Tamquam Mecum Audeam Conloqui’; Lancel, ‘Entre Africanité et Romanité’. Harnack detected in this a providential corrective to the ‘ethnicising’ impulse in African Christianity at the time; Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 5:60.

Augustine's hometown of Thagaste was, in the time of his mother, a Donatist stronghold that only converted to Caecilianism perhaps in the late 340s.⁹³⁷ Some speculate that his mother Monica was born in that communion, thereby granting Augustine a familial Caecilianist pedigree,⁹³⁸ though a 'growing consensus' believes that she was originally a Donatist.⁹³⁹ Nevertheless, his see of Hippo, like Thagaste, did not enjoy any claim to seamless Caecilianist succession: both were at some point entirely Donatist, making Augustine's party relative newcomers.⁹⁴⁰ When he had come to Hippo, it was likely that a majority of the population there was Donatist.⁹⁴¹ Augustine, his own Christian commitment a product of an overseas, Milanese, church, succeeded the foreign-born Greek Valerius in what was a kind of Caecilianist hostile takeover planted in the midst of Donatist Hippo.⁹⁴² As Maureen Tilley stated rather starkly: 'In many ways Donatism represents the ancestral heritage of North Africa and Augustine represents an Italian imposition.'⁹⁴³ But it appears it was not merely an Italian imposition: Valerius, and the unnamed Greek who became a

⁹³⁷ Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 184; Bass, 'Augustine and Optatus of Milevis', 104.

⁹³⁸ David Wright, 'Monica's Baptism, Augustine's Deferred Baptism, and Patricius', *Augustinian Studies* 29, no. 2 (1998): 3. See n16 for bibliography. For the contrary view— that she grew up Donatist but was made a Catholic after the anti-Donatist measures of 347, see O'Donnell, *Augustine, Sinner & Saint*, 56–57. This theory was recently and sympathetically discussed in Rebillard, 'Augustine in Controversy with the Donatists before 411', 300–301.

⁹³⁹ Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, 251. See the preceding note and Gillian Clark, *Monica: An Ordinary Saint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 136–38. Indeed, one of their family, Severinus, was a Donatist; *Ep.* 52.1. Ebbeler states that Monica was in all probability a Donatist who only became a Caecilianist following the pressures of the Macarian persecution: Jennifer Ebbeler, 'The Letter Collection of Augustine of Hippo', in *Late Antique Letter Collections: A Critical Introduction and Reference Guide*, ed. Cristiana Sogno, Bradley Storin, and Edward Watts (University of California Press, 2016), 239.

⁹⁴⁰ For the situation of Caecilianists and Donatists in the episcopate of Augustine see Berrouard in BA 71.81: 'les Donatistes continuaient sans doute d'avoir pour eux le nombre, la richesse et la puissance, mais dans les documents qui nous restent la minorité catholique n'apparaît nulle part comme un groupe minuscule et sans importance.' Further, even his Caecilianist basilica may originally have been Donatist; O'Donnell, *Augustine, Sinner & Saint*, 15. For Thagaste having been entirely Donatist see *Ep.* 93.17. Peter Brown described Donatism as 'the established church of Numidia'; Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, New ed. with an epilogue. (London: Faber, 2000), 222.

⁹⁴¹ Coyle, 'The Self-Identity of North African Christians', 68.

⁹⁴² For the aggressive strategy of Augustine's circle, where capable members became bishops of former 'Donatist strongholds' in Numidia, see Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 245–46. Further still, Petilian complained that Caecilianists were in the habit of incorporating merely titular sees to pad their numbers; *Gesta* I.59, 61, 65.

⁹⁴³ Tilley, 'Redefining Donatism', 22.

Caecilianist bishop in Augustine's correspondence with Aurelius,⁹⁴⁴ are further examples of 'transmarine' mobility in the Caecilianist episcopate. When Petilian bitterly questioned Augustine's origins at the 411 Conference,⁹⁴⁵ he was not shadowboxing, but probing at someone made Christian outside of Africa, a man of (possibly) Donatist parentage, and an heir to a foreign bishop who manned what was in effect a missionary parish.⁹⁴⁶ Not only then did the Caecilianist church draw its legitimacy from transmarine connections (Chapter 2.2.2), but Augustine himself was personally invested in such a strategy. A telling example of the connection between the Caecilianist church and the *transmarina* is provided by Maximus, Donatist bishop of Siniti in Numidia—an area locally dominated by Donatists—who defected to Caecilianism only after returning from across the sea, following his participation in a Donatist delegation to Ravenna in 406.⁹⁴⁷ His motivation for doing so is unclear,⁹⁴⁸ but one cannot help but wonder what assurances and what impressions he received at the imperial court, upon whose support Caecilianist legitimacy depended. It is doubtful whether a Donatist bishop of at least two decades would have so easily joined his rivals, and on such hostile territory, without this transmarine backing.⁹⁴⁹

On the other side of the ecclesiastical picket line, the Donatist communion's relationship to the transmarine world had hardened into a point of principle and cold recognition of fact. As argued, Donatist detachment from the transmarine churches was a dynamic development that was particularly strengthened after the Macarian persecutions

⁹⁴⁴ *Ep.* 22.4. For this and Valerius see Michael Cameron, 'Valerius of Hippo: A Profile', *Augustinian Studies* 40, no. 1 (2009): 5–26.

⁹⁴⁵ *Gesta* III.231. Petilian elsewhere alleged Augustine's time in Italy was a flight from Africa due to some decision of the proconsul Messianus against Manichees, which Augustine denies as chronologically incorrect; *C. litt. Petil.* III.25.30; cf. also III.1.1.2.

⁹⁴⁶ Fitzgerald, 'When Augustine Was Priest', 39–41.

⁹⁴⁷ *Ep.* 105.4. Augustine earlier wrote to him denouncing rebaptism in a letter belonging to his priesthood, *Ep.* 23.

⁹⁴⁸ Mandouze, *Prosopographie de l'Afrique chrétienne (303-533)*, 728.

⁹⁴⁹ Compare *Ep.* 93.5.16 where Augustine openly and rather proudly claims that many, through fear of imperial suppression, defected from Donatism to the Caecilianists. Donatists who became Caecilianists without protection could suffer harsh reprisals, e.g. the humiliations of one case in 403, see *Ep.* 88.6; *Cresc.* III.48.53.

and accepted as part of the theological and exegetical architecture of the movement by the time of Parmenian. In this connection Hoover remarks, '[d]espite repeated attempts to receive official recognition from the transmarine provinces, by the late 390s it was abundantly clear' that this strategy had resolved into despair.⁹⁵⁰ Augustine's controversial writings and activities against the Donatist took full advantage of this situation. This chapter seeks to examine the role of the ubiquitously mentioned 'transmarine churches' in Augustine's anti-Donatist doctrine of catholicity. These churches are appealed to as authenticating centres of communion, union with which is taken as an exemplar of instantiated catholicity. Augustine especially mentioned Eastern churches, either as individuals, or as members of the sevenfold sets (which tactic he synthesised from all three of his major North African predecessors), or in generic terms such as the *ecclesiae transmarinae*, 'Eastern church', or 'Eastern churches'. One of the churches that inevitably will surface in this discussion, Jerusalem, occupies such a recurrent, and distinctive, place in his anti-Donatist works, that it will be treated separately in the following chapter.

(2) *Trans mare* and Augustine's world

A survey of pre-Augustinian Christian African literature will find that the phrase *trans mare* or the adjective *transmarinus* are extremely rare.⁹⁵¹ This is despite the fact that this terminology has an impeccably classical pedigree: for example, both forms are used in Cicero and Livy. Restricting a lemmatised search within the Brepols Latin Library for the use of either expression within all Latin patristic sources, even allowing for the

⁹⁵⁰ Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 119. Hoover cites (119n11) comprehensively the 'contemporary heresiological notices', which, East and West, advertise Donatist rejection abroad, as well as the key pieces of imperial legislation against them.

⁹⁵¹ Used only once by Optatus (II.15, *transmarinos*), and once by Tyconius (*Lib. reg. IV, trans mare*). Tertullian used it once (*Marc. IV.13, transmarina*), and Cyprian twice (*Epp. 43.3.2 and 45.2.2; trans mare*). Only Optatus and Cyprian use it to describe churches.

disproportionately large size of Augustine's extant corpus, yields impressive results. 103 of a total of 169 uses of the adjective *transmarinus* in Latin sources from AD 200-500 come from Augustine; a further five of these are in Possidius' biography; and several others are clearly under his influence. For example, single uses are in Aurelius⁹⁵² and Quodvultdeus,⁹⁵³ and a remarkable 24 in contemporary African conciliar acts in which Augustine would have had a hand or influence. The situation is much the same for *trans mare*. 38 of a total of 72 uses are from Augustine's pen, with an additional six in Augustinian and post-Augustinian African conciliar material, and two more in Possidius. The fact that, in the little work of Possidius chronicling the saintly life of his friend, *trans mare* and *transmarinus* should jointly receive more mention (seven times) than in any other Latin writer of the period except the copious Jerome (with only ten) should signal that these are Augustinian terms of art.⁹⁵⁴ The explosion of 'transmarine' vocabulary is a distinctly Augustinian phenomenon, one previously unrecognised.⁹⁵⁵ When Augustine spoke of matters 'over the sea' or 'transmarine', his unsurprising focus was on the church, or rather churches, usually in the plural. Augustine foregrounds the *transmarini* in his descriptions of the history of the Donatist schism, from both his very first extant anti-Donatist work,⁹⁵⁶ until the end of his polemical engagement.⁹⁵⁷ These terms enabled Augustine to draw a sharp conceptual line between the African church, with its ongoing schism, and the non-Africans *trans mare*.⁹⁵⁸

⁹⁵² *Epistula ad Caelestinum papam*; PL 50.423.

⁹⁵³ *Serm.* 10 (*Adversus Quinque haereses*), 7.40; CCSL 60.299— here denigrating the Donatists for exsufflating (and rebaptising) those *de transmarinis partibus*.

⁹⁵⁴ 'Possidius' relentless mining of Augustine's books for textual material results in a biography comprising many of Augustine's own words and phrases.' Hermanowicz, *Possidius of Calama*, 18–19.

⁹⁵⁵ The fondness for maritime imagery in his descriptions of human consciousness, on the other hand, are well-documented; see the survey and analysis in Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation*, 175–77.

⁹⁵⁶ *Psal. Don.* vv. 102 (*iudices transmarinos*) and 115 (*sacerdotes transmarini*).

⁹⁵⁷ *Emer.* 9 and 12.

⁹⁵⁸ The African church was a discrete ecclesiastical unit, as in the time of Cyprian. Augustine, more through his personal stature than any dignity of his see, often spoke on behalf of the entire African church, as in his correspondence with Jerome; *Ep.* 28.2.2. See also Augustine's coordination with Olympius, who became Master of the Offices at the imperial court after the death of Stilicho; *Ep.* 97.2, studied in detail in Sigrid Mratschek, 'Te Velimus ... Consilii Participem: Augustine of Hippo and Olympius, A Case Study of Religious-Political Cooperation in the Fifth Century', *Studia Patristica* 38 (2001): 224–32.

The ecclesiastical organisation of the African church, which inexactly corresponded to the imperial provinces of Africa,⁹⁵⁹ was essentially uniform between Caecilianists and Donatists.⁹⁶⁰

Longstanding Hellenistic geographical convention divided the landmass of the earth into three continents,⁹⁶¹ which form the relevant semantic context of *trans mare/transmarinus* from an African perspective. The prime example in Latin historical writing is Sallust, for whom Africa is a separate continent, bounded by the Straits of Gibraltar and the Catabathmos plateau that goes down between Cyrenaica in Libya and Egypt.⁹⁶² Augustine followed Sallust for his own continental accounting.⁹⁶³ Also for Pliny, Egypt was next to Africa, and not part of it.⁹⁶⁴ Augustine's treatment of Cyrene is important

⁹⁵⁹ Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 417. For the provinces of Roman Africa in this period, and the fickle nature of the evidence in the *Notitia dignitarum*, see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), 347–80. For the earlier evidence of the 'Verona List' see Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*, 201–8. The status of Mauretanian Tingitania (present-day Morocco) is unclear; it was under the diocese of Spain since Diocletian and reckoned seemingly with some contradiction as both one of the provinces of Hispania (albeit *in regione Africa*) and also one of the African provinces by Isidore of Seville, *Etym.* 14.4-5; PL 82.509-11. For Orosius (I.94) it is simply part of Africa, but this is a strictly geographic description. It appears conventional for churchmen to have assimilated it under Mauretanian Caesarea (see PL 11.860ff and 82.509-10 note i), but prosopographical evidence from the region for the ecclesiastical historian is limited. Possidius is clearer; by specifying *ex Hispaniae partibus transmarinis*, he thereby indicates that there were parts of Hispania which were not transmarine (i.e. on the African continent); *Vita* 28; PL 32.57-8. In any event this province was both generally underdeveloped and poorly connected to the rest of Africa; its consolidation to Spain, Mommsen reckoned, was a recognition of a state of affairs long preceding it; Mommsen, *The Provinces of the Roman Empire from Caesar to Diocletian*, 2:321–22. Indeed, Augustine's own Hippo was ecclesiastically in Numidia though civilly in Africa Proconsularis; Noël Duval, 'L'Afrique dans l'Antiquité tardive et la période byzantine: l'évolution de l'architecture et de l'art dans leur environnement', *Antiquité Tardive*, 2006, 123. By 419, Mauretania would be split between Mauretania Sitifensis and Mauretania Caesariensis, each with their own primates, to more closely adhere to the secular division of the provinces; Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 417n410-11. Also see the provincial attendance survey for the 411 Conference in Lancel, SC 194.144.

⁹⁶⁰ Cf. the Maximianist council quoted by Augustine, *Enarrat.* 36(2).20.

⁹⁶¹ See, for example, Herodotus, II.16.1, cf. Polybius, III.37. This is followed by Orosius (*Hist.* I.1) and Augustine himself (*Civ.* XVI.17).

⁹⁶² Sallust, *Bell. Iurg.* 17.1-4; see the commentary in Sallust, *The War against Jugurtha*, ed. and trans. Michael Comber and Catalina Balmaceda, Classical Texts (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2009), 203. See also Pliny, *Nat. hist.* 5.1.1: Africa is bounded by Egypt and runs all the way to the Pillars of Hercules.

⁹⁶³ *Civ.* XVI.17, for the three continents of Europe, Africa, and Asia. The distinction of Egypt and Africa is not specified but is inferred from his almost certain dependence on Sallust here. It is important to note, for the discussion below on the antipodes, that these three continents of the Old World represent the entire world for Augustine.

⁹⁶⁴ Pliny, *Nat. hist.* 5.9. For Pliny's treatment of Africa see Aude Doody, 'The Science and Aesthetics of Names in the *Natural History*', in *Pliny the Elder: Themes and Contexts*, ed. Roy K. Gibson and Ruth Morello (Brill, 2011), 127. The Latin geographical authority Pomponius Mela is inconsistent in demarcating the border of the African continent, though in any event he is clear that Egypt is not in Africa. Pomponius Mela, 1.40, 49.

in this connection. As I have discussed (Chapter 3.4), the Donatists, in their attempt to ground African particularism in Scripture, apparently made something of the fact that Simon of Cyrene, who helped carry the cross of Christ, was an African, and hence indicative of a special relationship between Africa and the Lord. Augustine was pleased at the opportunity to demonstrate his superior education and correct this error.⁹⁶⁵ Cyrene was not in Africa and Roman Africans in the know felt Cyrenaics to be ethnic others. Trygetius of Thagaste, one of the principal voices in the dialogue *Contra Academicos*, tried to distance himself from Carneades (a philosopher from Cyrene): *graecus non sum; nescio Carneades iste qui fuerit*. Cyrenaics were foreigners.⁹⁶⁶ Modern cartography and facility of land transport obscures how geographically discrete the continent of Africa was from Egypt and Asia.⁹⁶⁷ Accordingly *trans mare* or *transmarinus* denoted anything non-African, from Spain to Egypt.⁹⁶⁸

The other fundamental cleavage in Augustine's conception of the church *totius mundi* is the distinction between Latin West and Greek East, which even had certain

Though in one case the boundary is our standard Catabathmos Valley in Cyrenaica (1.40), he considers that the threshold may be drawn at the Nile (1.8, 1.20, 1.22) or Alexandria (1.60). I owe this to the treatment in F. E. Romer, *Pomponius Mela's Description of the World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 32. The anonymous author of the (probably late antique) *Liber memorialis* gives Africa as *inter Nilum et Gaditanum sinum* (6.1).

⁹⁶⁵ *Serm.* 46, see 46.41 for the prooftexting on Cyrene, which is in Libya Pentapolis (i.e., not Africa). Orosius, doubtless confused (he seems to think Cyrenaica and Pentapolis are two different places) places it in Africa, not Asia; *Hist.* I.2.

⁹⁶⁶ *Acad.* I.3.7; PL 32.909. For the ethnic and geographic divide formed by the Great Syrtis in this connection see again Mommsen, *The Provinces of the Roman Empire from Caesar to Diocletian*, 2:306. For a coincident parallel see Plato, *Theat.* 143c-d.

⁹⁶⁷ T. Robert S. Broughton, *The Romanization of Africa Proconsularis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1929), 1. So too Mommsen: 'North Africa, in a physical and ethnographic point of view, stands by itself like an island.'; Mommsen, *The Provinces of the Roman Empire from Caesar to Diocletian*, 2:303.

⁹⁶⁸ So the church of Africa is contrasted with the church of Italy and then more broadly all those *trans mare*, in *Ep.* 22.4. Conversely, of course Africa was *trans mare* for non-Africans; e.g. Avitus, bishop of Vienne, writing of African (including Donatist) exiles coming to Gaul, wrote of their schism as a *transmarina contagia*; *Ep.* 24; PL 59.240. I owe this reference to, and cf. the discussion in Adamiak, 'When Did Donatist Christianity End?', 215. Cf., from the perspective of Israel, also Tyconius, *Lib. reg.* IV, Babcock, 86. Edwards points out that Norman Williams' dubious attribution to Origen of an 'African' temperament (from Epiphanius' statement that he was of the Egyptian race; *Pan.* 64.1) is certainly 'in defiance of the standard ancient use of the term 'African' to denote only the inhabitants of modern Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.' Mark Edwards, *Origen against Plato* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 38n1.

acknowledged ritual differences.⁹⁶⁹ This is evident in the fourth Divjak letter, in which Augustine wrote to Cyril of Alexandria and identified himself as a member of the *occidentali ecclesia*, and one of the *Latini* as opposed to the *Graeci*.⁹⁷⁰ The same ethnographic division recruited to sift out Cyrenaics also functioned to divide the church between the two privileged cultural and linguistic axes of the Roman world. How this was conceived can be seen in the letter to Boniface in the proceedings of the 419 Conference of Carthage, known by its incipit *Quoniam domino placuit*. More accurate copies of the Nicene canons were sought *ex orientalibus ecclesiis*, namely from the *illarum partium sacerdotes*, meaning the bishops of the most prominent Eastern sees: Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria.⁹⁷¹ This neat dimidiation discloses the different centres of gravity, and also the challenge of Latin-Greek translation, familiar to students of the fourth century controversies and particularly evident in the later Pelagian controversy.⁹⁷² Despite, and as will be argued, precisely because of this distance, Augustine exhibited a marked interest in ‘Eastern’ transmarine churches in his anti-Donatist polemic (§4).

The significance of transmarine vocabulary, and how it informs his theology of catholicity, knit so closely together to geographic ubiquity, needs to be understood against the backdrop of Augustine’s cosmography and his notion of the *oikumene*, or the inhabited world. Augustine, like his predecessor Lactantius,⁹⁷³ ridiculed the notion of an antipodean landmass⁹⁷⁴ as empirically unsustainable, and, further, any denizens in the antipodes were

⁹⁶⁹ Discussion of Eastern and Western church customs in e.g. *Ep.* 36.2.4, 5.9, 9.21, etc.; cf. Possidius, *Vita* 5.

⁹⁷⁰ *Ep.* 4*.5; CSEL 88.29.

⁹⁷¹ *Ep. ad Bonifatium*; CCSL 149.160. These three sees are the same ones from which Alypius requested copies of the Nicene canons by Alypius in the same council; CCSL 149.91.

⁹⁷² Augustine’s *De gestis pelagianorum* abounds with references to *orientales* and *occidentales*, specifically highlighting the difficulty in theological translation which, he avers, created the ambiguity necessary for Pelagius’ acquittal at Diospolis (1.2, 2.4).

⁹⁷³ Lactantius, *Inst.* III.24.1ff. Though this Hermetic text was not one of those known to him, I have detected a possible denial of antipodeans in the Hermetic *Definitions* 3.2; see the edition and translation of Mahé in Clement Salaman et al., *The Way of Hermes: The Corpus Hermeticum* (London: Duckworth, 1999), 137.

⁹⁷⁴ For a classical discussion of the debate about the Antipodes in the period, see Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* II.65. For a probably late antique assertion in favour of antipodean denizens, from a text marked by its crude learning, see

inconsistent, he thought, with the scriptural history of mankind.⁹⁷⁵ In book sixteen of *De civitate dei*, he argued that antipodeans were contradicted by the monogenism of the Bible: the human race sprang from Adam on the one known landmass (our Old World), and thus they would have had to trace their origins from some putative, and ludicrously long, seafaring venture to the opposite side of the globe.⁹⁷⁶ Accordingly for Augustine and most of his contemporaries, the entire human race was on his side of the earth, governed in a large part by the Christian Roman empire, which made its own the later boast of the British, to have covered the entire course of the sun.⁹⁷⁷ The late empire, in the words of her finest historian, was the temple of the whole universe.⁹⁷⁸

Although Augustine, like most Romans,⁹⁷⁹ believed in the pretensions of the Empire to what was effectively world governance, he was aware that matters were more complex. The bishop's response to a poignant Donatist rejoinder in this instance is particularly telling. It was pointed out to him that his 'catholic' Christendom as a matter of fact represented only a modest portion of the globe; the Caecilianist assertion to the contrary was pure conceit.⁹⁸⁰

the *Liber memorialis* 6.1. Macrobius (*In Somn.* II.5.22-26) accepts Antipodeans; see the discussion in Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 270.

⁹⁷⁵ Nothaft has convincingly demonstrated that Ferrari's account (made standard in his entry in *Augustine through the Ages*) of Augustine's flat-earthism is incorrect, and provides a treatment of Augustine's view of the Antipodes in light of Lactantius; C. P. E. Nothaft, 'Augustine and the Shape of the Earth: A Critique of Leo Ferrari', *Augustinian Studies* 42, no. 1 (2011): 46-47. For further discussion on Augustine and the antipodeans and the legacy this controversial rejection enjoyed, see Pablo de Felipe, 'The Antipodeans and Science-Faith Relations: The Rise, Fall and Vindication of Augustine', in *Augustine beyond the Book: Intermediality, Transmediality, and Reception*, Brill's Series in Church History 6 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), 281-311.

⁹⁷⁶ *Civ.* XVI.9. See the short note on the Antipodes in Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, ed. David Knowles, trans. Henry Bettenson, Pelican Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 664n53. For the strongest statement of Augustine's monogenism see the preceding passage (XVI.8), in which all manner of men (i.e. rational and mortal creatures), even Pliny's monsters, must be held to stem from Adam. One of the few defenders of Antipodeans, Macrobius (see note above) does insist however that no intercourse can be had between us and them, barred by the torrid and frigid zones and insurmountable geographical barriers (*In Somn.* II.5.33-34).

⁹⁷⁷ E.g. Claudian, *De bello Gidlonico* 48, cf. also 96. See also Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* II.68.

⁹⁷⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, XVII.4.13.

⁹⁷⁹ E.g. Vergil, *Aen.* I.234-6; Lucan, *Pharsalia* I.109-11. For contemporary statements, see especially Orosius (*Hist.* I.1, II.3) and e.g. Symmachus, *Or.* III.11-12; Rutilius Namatianus, *De reditu suo* v. 63, Julian, *C. Gal.* 218B. See also the comments in Lancel, 'Entre Africanité et Romanité', 54.

⁹⁸⁰ This is the Rogatist Vincent of Cartenna, discussed below. Augustine's response is from 407/8: *Quantum ad totius mundi pertinet partes, modica pars est in compensatione totius mundi, in qua fides Christiana*

By way of refutation, Augustine conceded that there were ‘barbarian’ nations outside of the empire, but he argued that the Gospel has already made sufficient inroads, all the way to Persia and India, such that Christendom was indeed ‘catholic’ in a completely geographic sense: the entire world had been evangelised, or at least mostly. As he commented elsewhere:

But I do not know why you are separated from the Church. For it is certain that the sect of Donatus is unknown to a great part of the Roman world (*magnae parti Romani orbis*), not to mention the barbarian nations (*barbaris gentibus*) as well, to which the apostle said that he was under obligation [Rom 1.14] and with whose Christian faith our communion is united.⁹⁸¹

I repeat here Jerome’s famous remark that ‘the proclamation of the Gospel in the whole world’ is complete or at hand since ‘I do not think any nation remains that is ignorant of the name of Christ.’⁹⁸² As with Optatus (Chapter 4.3.1), the non-Roman world was ultimately peripheral, and did little to disturb Augustine’s confidently skewed perspective of global demography.⁹⁸³ Augustine believed that the church had spread to the whole world sometime between the apostolic preaching and his own day.⁹⁸⁴

Markus has charted Augustine’s eventual disenchantment with an imperial theology, in which the Roman world was the fated stage of salvation history, and its imperial government the appointed coryphaeus.⁹⁸⁵ During the main period of his anti-Donatist

nominatur; Ep. 93.7.22; CSEL 34.467. A similar argument was made by Cresconius, *Cresc.* III.70. See the comments in Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 5:149n2.

⁹⁸¹ Ep. 87.1; WSA II/1.344; CSEL 34.397.

⁹⁸² Jerome, *Comm. in matt.* 24.14; FOTC 117.271; CCSL 77.225: *euangelium in toto orbe praedicari . . . Non enim puto aliquam remansisse gentem quae christi nomen ignoret.*

⁹⁸³ For the co-extension of Roman and Christian worlds and the problem of barbarian Christianity in this period see Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World*, 142–44.

⁹⁸⁴ E.g. *Serm.* 198.51 (Dolbeau 26).

⁹⁸⁵ For Augustine’s change of heart on the *tempora christiana* of the Empire see the classic treatment in Markus, *Saeculum*, 29–36; R. A. Markus, *Conversion and Disenchantment in Augustine’s Spiritual Career*, The Saint Augustine Lecture 1984 (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1989), 38–39. For more recent and sympathetic discussions of this view see Harrison, *Augustine*, 203–5; Paula Fredriksen, ‘Secundum Carnem: History and Israel in the Theology of St. Augustine’, in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R.A. Markus*, ed. William Klingshirn and Mark Vessey (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 26–27.

productions, the church was unquestionably spread throughout the entire world, and this for him was the *lucida et manifesta testimonia* of Daniel's (2.34-5) prophecy of the mountain of the church that has filled the whole world (*impleuit uniuersam terram*).⁹⁸⁶ This was read as already fulfilled;⁹⁸⁷ an assumption that, to a modern reader, should have been impossible to sustain in the early fifth century. But by 418, in his correspondence to Hesychius of Salona, Augustine countered the anxious enthusiasm of his colleague. This inquiring Dalmatian bishop expressed a lively apocalyptic expectation that the end was at hand, since the gospel had already spread throughout the world.⁹⁸⁸ But Augustine rejected this premise, in terms contrary to the triumphalist tone he often adopted when addressing Donatists:

For I have established by certain proofs that what Your Reverence thinks was already accomplished by the apostles is not the case. For there are among us, that is, in Africa, countless barbarian nations (*barbarae innumerabiles gentes*) where the gospel has not yet been preached; it is easy for us to learn this every day from those who are taken captive from them and are now among the slaves of the Romans . . . those [barbarians] who are further inland (*Interiores*) and are not under Roman power have no contact with the Christian religion in any of their people . . .⁹⁸⁹

This sober awareness, which he might not have conceded so baldly out of polemical interest, nevertheless did surface in his anti-Donatist works. While the church is spread throughout the whole world, Christ's prediction that the end shall come (*veniet finis*, Matt. 24.14) after the gospel is preached in the whole world is not yet at hand (*nondum impletum*).⁹⁹⁰ Against the Donatist Cresconius, concerned with the same prophecy, he carefully noted that the church was growing throughout the world and throughout so many barbarians, and it shall

⁹⁸⁶ *Unit. eccl.* 16.40; CSEL 52.285. See also *Parm.* III.5.27; *C. litt. Petil.* II.38.91; *Serm.* 45.7; *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 4.4. See J.-M. Vercruyse in SC 488.136n.

⁹⁸⁷ Note the perfect tense in what was just cited, as well as e.g. *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 4.4; CCSL 36.32: . . . *ecclesia, qua impleuit totam faciem terrae*. What was the *stone* rejected by the Jews has now become the *mountain* rejected by the Donatists (*ibid.*). See also e.g. *C. litt. Petil.* III.6.7; *Unic. bapt.* 15.25.

⁹⁸⁸ *Ep.* 198.2, 5-6. This was a typical eschatological expectation; see also e.g. Hilary, *Comm. Matt.* 25.2, where the global proclamation of the Gospel, once complete, will trigger the march of the eschaton.

⁹⁸⁹ *Ep.* 199.12.46; WSA II/3.351; CSEL 57.284-5. This correspondence is discussed in Markus, *Saeculum*, 39-40.

⁹⁹⁰ *Unit. eccl.* 17.43; CSEL 52.288.

continue to do so until it satisfies sufficient extension to precipitate the eschaton.⁹⁹¹ Altogether, Augustine's perspective seems to be that the *catholica* was more or less spread throughout the world, but for some leftovers sparing his contemporaries from the apocalypse.

(2.1) The origins of the African church

It is a much discussed and uncertain question as to where African Christianity can trace its roots. Benson's judgment has remained sound: 'It was and is vain to try and ascertain where and by what avenues' the church came to Africa.⁹⁹² The monumental 2014 volume *Christianity in Roman Africa*, where a discussion on origins might be expected, apparently has taken this sage advice and declines to consider the question altogether.⁹⁹³ Nevertheless, historical intractability has here, as elsewhere, never proven an obstacle to further scholarly speculation.⁹⁹⁴ It is not in my interest to venture a theory in this connection; I want only to consider what fourth century Africans, and especially Augustine, believed. There was a

⁹⁹¹ *Cresc.* III.64.71. Also *C. litt. Petil.* III.37.43; CSEL 52.197: *ecclesia, quae secundum fidelissimas prophetias toto terrarum orbe dilatate finem saeculi...expectat.*

⁹⁹² Benson, *Cyprian*, xxxvii. See also the agnostic judgment of David Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 9.

⁹⁹³ Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 2–5.

⁹⁹⁴ For the disputed theories, particularly of the Jewish origins, of the beginnings of North African Christianity, see the comprehensive overview in Geoffrey Dunn, *Tertullian* (London: Routledge, 2004), 10–15; David Wilhite, *Tertullian the African: An Anthropological Reading of Tertullian's Context and Identities* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 31–32. For the history of Jews in North Africa and potential connection with the prevalence of 'Judaising' in the locale, see H. Z. Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North Africa*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 10–11, 81–83. For an assessment of various views, a critique of Jewish origins, and factors sympathetic to Eastern origins, yet resolved in studious agnosticism, see J. B. Rives, *Religion and Authority in Roman Carthage: From Augustus to Constantine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 223–26 and 226n116. The most recent sustained treatment of the question gives a sympathetic analysis of both Greek-Eastern and Jewish theories: Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, 83–85. Frend, otherwise adventurous in his analyses of African Christianity, also declines to choose between Jewish or Roman options (Eastern origination is not considered); Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 87. In a later article, however, he notes that the peculiarly African retention of *seniores laici* into the fourth century and certain aspects of their sacerdotalism suggest Jewish origins; W. H. C. Frend, 'The "Seniores Laici" and the Origins of the Church in North Africa', *Journal of Theological Studies* 12, no. 2 (1961): 280–84.

tradition that Africa was evangelised by Rome, which account seems to have been unsurprisingly promoted by bishops of that city,⁹⁹⁵ though it probably lacks historical verisimilitude.⁹⁹⁶ Examining the claims of apostolic connection in African traditions, when treating of Augustine Dvornik comments that he ‘is rather vague and seems to link the origins of African Christianity only very generally to the apostolic age.’⁹⁹⁷ Augustine does attest to a Donatist tradition that Africa was last to be evangelized (and hence, for Donatists, indicative of its special eschatological role in the final drama), which he rejects.⁹⁹⁸ His own views, however, are perhaps a bit more solid than Dvornik has made out. Monceaux advanced the plausible theory that African Christianity had multiple points of origin, but, for the present purposes, helpfully points out that Augustine was anxious to insist upon ‘l’origine directement apostolique de l’Église locale.’⁹⁹⁹ Most important here is his 52nd letter, to the Donatist Severinus written 399/400. He wrote:¹⁰⁰⁰

The sect of Donatus, however, found only in Africans, slanders the world and does not consider that by that sterility, because of which it refuses to bear the fruits of peace and love, it is cut off from that root of the Eastern churches (*radice orientalium ecclesiarum*), from which the gospel came to Africa. If a bit of soil is brought to them from those lands, they reverence it, but if a believer comes to them from there, they subject him even to exsufflation and rebaptize him.¹⁰⁰¹

⁹⁹⁵ Innocent *Ep.* 25.2 (in the context of the Apiarius affair); Gregory *Ep.* VII.32. This has led to a propagandistically mistaken reading of Augustine in the Patrology— Du Pin in his *Historia Donatistarum* asserted that Augustine taught that the African church derived from Rome, but the *unde euangelium ad ipsam Africam uenit* cited (*Ep.* 43.3.7) surely refers to the immediately prior *ceteris terris*, i.e. the unspecified *transmarinis regionibus* in the previous sentence; CSEL 34.90. More recently, Gaumer also uses *Ep.* 43.7 to state that Africa was evangelised by Rome; Gaumer, *Augustine’s Cyprian*, 36n67.

⁹⁹⁶ The theory of Roman origin is dismantled in William Telfer, ‘The Origins of Christianity in Africa’, *Studia Patristica* 4, no. 2 (1961): 512–17.

⁹⁹⁷ Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of the Apostle Andrew*, 35.

⁹⁹⁸ *Unit. eccl.* 15.37.

⁹⁹⁹ Monceaux I.7. Citing *Enarrat.* 44.23 and 32.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Cf. *Ep.* 185.4.17.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Ep.* 52.2; WSA II/1.202; CSEL 34.150: *Pars autem Donati in solis Afris calumniatur orbi terrarum et non considerat ea sterilitate, qua fructus pacis et caritatis adferre noluit, ab illa radice orientalium ecclesiarum se esse praecisam, unde euangelium in Africam uenit, unde terra si eis adferatur, adorant; fidelis autem inde si ueniat, exsufflant et rebaptizant etiam.*

This passage has a striking reminiscence to Optatus with its focus on the sacred ‘soil’ (*terra*), which Optatus had pointed to as rendered holy by the footsteps of the Lord.¹⁰⁰² In a similar register, he later lamented that Pelagius’s acquittal at Diospolis was done by Eastern bishops ‘in the very land (*ea terra*), in which our Lord revealed the presence of his flesh’.¹⁰⁰³ In this letter to Severinus Augustine expressed, perhaps in indefinite terms, that African Christianity had Eastern roots. He went on to extol ‘the church overseas (*ecclesiam transmarinam*), from which the authority of the Christian faith came to these parts’.¹⁰⁰⁴ This is an instructive passage, with its use of *ecclesia transmarina* in the singular, which appears to be a generic reference to Eastern apostolic centres, since he subsequently singled out the apostolic churches which received letters in the New Testament.¹⁰⁰⁵ This letter has close parallels with a similar argument developed in the *Contra litteras Petiliani*, in which Augustine capitalised on the Donatist repudiation of the baptism of Christians in Eastern churches, from whence (*unde*) the church came to Africa.¹⁰⁰⁶ That Augustine thought African Christianity had apostolic roots is intimated in a fascinating passage where he discussed peculiarly Punic Christian sacramental nomenclature as deriving *ex antiqua...et apostolica traditione*.¹⁰⁰⁷ Altogether, the evidence points towards Augustine holding a general belief in the Eastern origins of African Christianity, though his critical faculties, more heightened than his contemporaries, restrained him from conjuring up specific myths in the service of this intuition. His repeated appeal, then, to Eastern transmarine sees, to be considered below, has therefore this additional resonance.

¹⁰⁰² Optatus, VI.3; cf. Constantine *apud* Eusebius, *Vita* II.67.

¹⁰⁰³ *Gest. Pelag.* 25; WSA I/23.352; CSEL 42.79.

¹⁰⁰⁴ *Ep.* 52.3; WSA II/1.203; CSEL 44.150.

¹⁰⁰⁵ In a good example of popularised Augustinianism, Possidius recounts how through the labours of Augustine against the Donatists the entire African church rejoiced with the *Ecclesia Dei transmarina*; doubtless shorthand for the *catholica* in general; *Vit.* 7.

¹⁰⁰⁶ *C. litt. Petil.* I.20.22; *et baptismum ecclesiae Christi toto orbe diffusae, unde in Africam ipsa pax venit, ad sacrilegam iniuriam pacis Christi repudiant* (CSEL 52.17-18), especially when read together with I.11.12-12.13.

¹⁰⁰⁷ *Pecc. merit.* I.24.34; CSEL 60.33. Cf. on Punic ecclesiastical language, *C. litt. Petil.* II.104.239.

Part of his intent in adverting to the origins of African Christianity was to establish continuity with the primordial origin of the Christian religion: Jerusalem. On one occasion he explicitly cited Jerusalem as the origin of African Christianity (*Non inde venit ad Africam?*) but this must be taken in a mediated,¹⁰⁰⁸ rather than direct, sense, for Jerusalem is the origin of the church as a whole.¹⁰⁰⁹ So, he responded to Petilian:

You ask of me whence my communion took its origin. Christ the Lord tells us when he said: *it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and remission of sins to be preached in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.* [Lk 24.46-7] This proclamation (*praedicatio*) began from Jerusalem, it was spread abroad from the illustrious origin, spreading even to the church which I hold; first through its neighbours, then after some time coming to Africa.¹⁰¹⁰

Augustine desired to establish a relationship of origin to the transmarine church of Jerusalem, with Luke 24.46-7's *incipientibus ab Hierusalem* as the almost always attendant proof-text. This feature of his anti-Donatist polemic is so sustained, so ubiquitous, and so disproportionate to any other transmarine appeal in his anti-Donatist work, that it will be treated separately in the following chapter.

(3) Defining catholicity: the *catholicus orbis terrarum*¹⁰¹¹

The geographic ubiquity of the church was a significant motif in Augustine's thought throughout his career and present in a variety of polemical contexts, though nowhere so

¹⁰⁰⁸ This is clearer in the second synodal letter of the Caecilianists (*Ep.* 129.3 = *Gesta* I.18); the church came *ab Hierusalem...non migrando sed crescendo*; CSEL 44.36.

¹⁰⁰⁹ *Serm.* 162A(=Denis 19).10. A similar conclusion to, and see the discussion in, van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon*, 370n32.

¹⁰¹⁰ *Gesta* III.230; SC 224.1170: *Quaeris autem a me unde communio mea sumat exordium. Dominus ipse Christus adserit exordium communionis meae dicens : Oportebat Christum pati et resurgere a mortuis tertio die, et praedicari in nomine eius paenitentiam et remissionem peccatorum per omnes gentes incipientibus ab Hierusalem [Lk. 24.46-7]. Coepit ista praedicatio ab Hierusalem, inde se ab inlustrissimo exordio diffudit, diffundens ecclesiam quam tenemus; primo per uicina, deinde per longinqua etiam in Africam uenit.* Translation mine.

¹⁰¹¹ *Bapt.* III.2.2; CSEL 51.197.

pronounced as when dealing with Donatism. Recounting the meditations that prompted his conversion, the spread of the church throughout the whole world impressed itself upon his mind as a pledge of her divine authority.¹⁰¹² As early as 390, Augustine confidently assumed in the *De uera religione* that the church's right to be called 'catholic' derives from its spread through the entire world.¹⁰¹³ The universality of the church promoted the truth of the Christian faith¹⁰¹⁴ equally against all rivals: Jews and pagans,¹⁰¹⁵ Manichees and heretics.¹⁰¹⁶ The conspicuous magnitude and spread of the church was necessary for it to function as an authority stimulating faith in the unseen,¹⁰¹⁷ and, in the Donatist works, Augustine suggested that the church must be *cunctis clara atque conspicua*,¹⁰¹⁸ so that Donatism's minority claims were simply implausible.¹⁰¹⁹ For Augustine this was sometimes put into demographic terms, appealing to the sheer size of the *catholica*'s headcount vis-a-vis contenders, and he later recycled the argument against the Donatists, with passing reference to Jews,¹⁰²⁰ and as a triple-assault against Jews, pagans, and Donatists, in a sermon dated to 403.¹⁰²¹ Augustine's understanding of catholicity was taken over without alteration from Optatus: it was defined as total geographic extension 'through the whole world',¹⁰²² which has both geographic and demographic content (the church is represented in every place and among all peoples). Augustine insisted that, at least by his day, the Caecilianist communion was numerically larger in Africa (excepting Numidia), and incomparably so with the entire

¹⁰¹² *Conf.* VI.11.19.

¹⁰¹³ *Ver. rel.* 7.12.

¹⁰¹⁴ *Catech.* 27.53; verifying her scriptures, *Cons.* I.8.13; her virtues, *Mor.* I.31.65.

¹⁰¹⁵ E.g. *Util. cred.* 7.19. See an earlier argument to similar effect in Tertullian, *Adv. Iud.* 7.1-9; 12.1-2; 14.12-13.

¹⁰¹⁶ E.g. *Faust.* XX.20.23 and passim in this work.

¹⁰¹⁷ *Util. cred.* 9.21-10.24; in anti-Donatist works, cf. *Cresc.* I.33.38-39.

¹⁰¹⁸ *Cresc.* II.36.45; CSEL 52.405.

¹⁰¹⁹ *Ep.* 49.3 to Honoratus, a Donatist bishop of Numidia.

¹⁰²⁰ *Unit. eccl.* 7.18. Jews are mentioned alongside Donatists as those refuted by the catholicity of the church in *Gesta* I.18. Augustine enjoys flaunting the size of the *catholica* as a badge of certainty: *quod ecclesiam, quae per omnes gentes numerositate copiosissima dilatatur*; *Cresc.* I.33.39; CSEL 51.358.

¹⁰²¹ *Serm.* 360A (=Dolbeau 24, Mainz 60). For the use of the same anti-Jewish polemic against the Donatists see M.-F. Berrouard in BA 71.110.

¹⁰²² *Ep.* 144.3; CSEL 44.265: *de catholica ecclesia, id est toto orbe diffusa*. And see further below.

transmarine world added.¹⁰²³ At the beginning of his *De baptismo*, Augustine identified the *catholica ecclesia* in terms recalling Optatus' definition:¹⁰²⁴ it is *toto terrarum orbe diffunditur*, and, in an emphasis demonstrating his belief in its real spatial universality, *extenditur usque ad fines terrae*.¹⁰²⁵

Augustine, unlike Optatus, provided an etymological justification for this definition in several places.¹⁰²⁶ One example adorns the opening of his *De unitate*, where he asserted:

Certainly the question at issue between us is where the Church is (*ubi sit ecclesia*), whether with us or with them. In any case it is one, which our forebears called "catholic." Thus by its very name they showed that it is everywhere (*per totum*) since in Greek καθ' ὅλον means "according to the whole." (*secundum totum*)¹⁰²⁷

As Optatus had done more implicitly, Augustine explicitly elided *secundum totum* into *per totum* into *per totum orbem*. Augustine used this etymology to deny that the Donatists could describe themselves as 'catholic'. One such instance is in a sermon he preached, addressing the absent Crispinus, Donatist bishop of Calama who faced proconsular judgment:¹⁰²⁸

What did you say in the proconsul's court? "I am a Catholic (*catholicus sum*)." Those are his words, quoted from the record. As a Catholic keep a firm grip on the whole; *holon*, you see, means whole, and that's why the Church is called Catholic, because it is throughout the whole (*per totum*). Was it ever called *Katamerike*, and not Catholic? *Meros*, you see, means part, *holon* means whole; the Church is called Catholic from a Greek word, meaning "according to the whole (*secundum totum*)." So, are you in communion with what is entire (*Ergo comunicas universo*)? "No," he says. So you are just in a part, a party; how can you be a Catholic? There's a great difference between the whole and a part, from where it gets the name Catholic. You, after all, have taken your name from the party of Donatus; the Catholic Church has taken its name from the entire world (*ab universo orbe terrarum*).¹⁰²⁹

¹⁰²³ *Ep.* 129.6.

¹⁰²⁴ Sometimes Optatus' *ubique diffusa* is directly replicated, e.g. *Ep.* 78.8; *Cons.* I.26.40. More frequently, it is *diffusa* through the whole world (*toto orbe terrarum*); e.g. *Epp.* 185.5, 187.14.

¹⁰²⁵ *Bapt.* I.4.5; CSEL 51.150.

¹⁰²⁶ The one instance not discussed below, because largely identical in analysis, is *Serm.* 228B (=Denis 3), 20.

¹⁰²⁷ *Unit. eccl.* 2.2; WSA I/21.607; CSEL 52.232.

¹⁰²⁸ Given in brief detail at *Ep.* 105.4. For this episode see Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 513–27.

¹⁰²⁹ *Serm.* 162A(=Denis 19).10; WSA III/5.162; *Sancti Augustini Sermones post Maurinos reperti*, Miscellanea Agostiniana vol. 1 (Rome, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1930), 38. Translation altered.

The confident movement between the first *universo* to the second, where what was implicit emerges unabashedly as *universo orbe terrarum* is a remarkable example of the ease in which post-Optatan Caecilianist thought assumed catholicity was a quantitative and geographic concept.¹⁰³⁰

In his final anti-Donatist work, that against Gaudentius, Augustine abused a testimony of Cyprian to prove that *catholica* meant geographic diffusion, since Cyprian stated that the *ecclesia* extends *per totum orbem*.¹⁰³¹ The issue, of course, is that Cyprian did not use the word *catholica* in this connection, and in fact the word nowhere appears in the entire treatise from which Augustine's quotation is taken (Chapter 1.3.1).¹⁰³² Nevertheless, Augustine proceeded to provide the same etymological argument and used this morsel of Cyprian to prove that καθ' ὅλον can only mean *per totum* in the sense of *per totum orbem*.¹⁰³³ This is so clear and dear for Augustine that denial, he threatened Gaudentius, constitutes heresy.¹⁰³⁴ By fathering the Caecilianist doctrine of catholicity on Cyprian,¹⁰³⁵ Augustine at once concealed its innovative character and advanced it as axiomatic. This doctrine enabled Augustine to relocate the debate away from the election of Caecilian and into the stability afforded by the catholic name.¹⁰³⁶ This represents a consistent strategy of Augustine's,

¹⁰³⁰ Curiously, there is another case where Augustine's preaching offers his audience an interpretation of the Greek ὅλον, and in a way that understood it in the 'qualitative' sense identified as more typical of Donatist readings (Chapter 4.2). Commenting on the word 'holocaust', he explained that ὅλον means 'whole' (*totum*), and hence, with καθύς, 'whole burnt offering' (*totum incensum* or *totum igne absumtum*); *Enarrat.* 49.15; 64.4; 137.2.

¹⁰³¹ *Gaud.* II.2.2; citing Cyprian *Unit. eccl.* 5.

¹⁰³² Noted by Koch in 1926, whose observation is repeated by Siniscalco and Mattei, SC 500.35.

¹⁰³³ *Gaud.* II.2.2; CSEL 53.256-7: *Quod enim Graece ὅλον dicitur, Latine 'totum' uel 'uniuersum' interpretatur. 'per totum' ergo siue 'secundum totum' est καθ' ὅλον, unde catholica nuncupatur. si hoc nosti, quare te nosse dissimulas? si autem ignoras, quare non prius quam loqueris, quod nescis, eos qui norunt interrogas? quod si displicet tibi, non Graecam, sed aliquam linguam inueni, qua doceas καθ' ὅλον non 'per totum' siue 'secundum totum' uel 'secundum uniuersum' significari, et recede a testimonio Cypriani.*

¹⁰³⁴ *Gaud.* II.9.10; CSEL 53.266: *fecistis . . . sacrilegam haeresim contra dei manifesta promissa et inpleta de ecclesia toto orbe diffusa nefario spiritu sentiendo.* Compare *Haer.* 69.1 where this is the fundamental basis of Donatist heresy, their belief in rebaptism being only the icing on the cake.

¹⁰³⁵ Cf. *Cresc.* II.33.42 for a similarly specious attempt, using again *Unit. eccl.* 5 but without discussing the word *catholica* (this is repeated at III.65.73). Cyprian states that the church spreads its rays of light throughout the world, which can hardly be taken as satisfactory proof that ubiquity is a necessary or essential mark of the church, or that it is the principle of the catholic name.

¹⁰³⁶ *Gaud.* II.13.14; CSEL 53.273: *uides nempe sine ulla defensione Caeciliani vel quorumlibet hominum, quos accusandos putatis, catholicam suo robore ac firmitate consistere.*

which was to structure the conflict with the Donatists as a debate over the (geographic) universality of the church.

In his earlier work against Petilian he gave the same etymology and buttressed it with Scriptural quotations in what must appear to an unprejudiced reader as a magnificent non-sequitur:

If the truth be told, I myself also know very little of the Greek language, next to nothing, yet I say unashamedly that I know that ὅλος means not ‘one’ but ‘whole,’ and that καθ’ ὅλον means ‘according to the whole (*secundum totum*).’ Hence the Catholic Church has taken on the name, following what the Lord himself says, ... *you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem and in all of Judea and Samaria and even to all the earth (totam terram; Acts 1:7-8)*. See why it is called Catholic. But with your eyes closed you are crashing with such force against the mountain which, according to the prophet Daniel, grew from a little stone and filled the whole earth, that you tell us that we have ceased in a part and are not in the whole of those whose communion is spread throughout the world.¹⁰³⁷

The Donatists protested in vain against this etymologising, an unfortunate specimen of a generally incredible habit of antique reasoning. This citation of Daniel’s mountain as indicating the spatial universality of the church was a commonplace in his works, and an exegesis he shared with Tyconius.¹⁰³⁸

While Optatus was either ignorant of or else dismissively silent towards the competing Donatist theology of catholicity, Augustine mentioned it several times to subject it to a criticism which may more fairly be termed dismissal. His most detailed refutation occurs in his letter to the Rogatist Vincent, who interpreted ‘catholic’ to come from the fullness of the sacraments and observance of all the commandments, as opposed to communion with the whole world.¹⁰³⁹ The difference then between a catholic and a heretic

¹⁰³⁷ *C. litt. Petil.* II.38.91; WSA I/21.121-2; CSEL 52.75. Cf. *C. litt. Petil.* II.73.164; 55.125; III.35.41.

¹⁰³⁸ See J.-M. Vercruyse in SC 488.136n2. The ‘theory of four kingdoms’ was, through both Jewish and Zoroastrian channels, disseminated in the broader Greco-Roman world; it does not appear that Augustine drew upon such traditions. For the history of the four kingdoms see David Potter, *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 186–90.

¹⁰³⁹ *Ep.* 93.7.23: *cum Catholicae nomen non ex totius orbis communione interpretaris, sed ex observatione praeceptorum omnium divinorum, atque omnium Sacramentorum*

is that the one has the *totum* of the truth, and the other merely *nonnullae particulae*. Here may be observed the synonymy of catholicity and orthodoxy and orthopraxy (broadly conceived) which seems to have been of more traditional currency (Chapter 4.2). Augustine offered two responses in which he avoided directly contesting the definition. The first was to concede, remarkably, that the teaching of the church's ubiquity derived more from the promises of Scripture than from the interpretation of the name (and here he cited Luke 24.46-7 in full), and the second was to pour scorn on the apparent absurdity that Vincent's tiny sect of Rogatists should be sole possessors to catholic verity (a claim they may not have actually made).¹⁰⁴⁰ It is important to recall that Caecilianists since Optatus conceded that the Donatists were generally and unobjectionably orthodox in both belief¹⁰⁴¹ and liturgical practice.¹⁰⁴² A more traditional definition of catholicity, such as Vincent's, was insufficient to accomplish Augustine's goal, of denying to the Donatists the right to the catholic name.

The scriptural warrant for the church's universal diffusion was presented by Augustine as incontrovertibly clear.¹⁰⁴³ Augustine believed that the scriptural case for the universality of the church was unimpeachable.¹⁰⁴⁴ He used a battery of texts from the Psalter, in which the universal praise of God resounding through the world (Ps 95.1), or the ubiquity of his glory (56.12),¹⁰⁴⁵ for example, were adduced to support the notion that that the church

¹⁰⁴⁰ Especially if Frend was right to associate Tyconius with Rogatism; Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 196. Indeed, and furthermore, the ex-Rogatist Vincent Victor had remarkably liberal views about salvation, allotting unbaptised infants to dwell in a Paradise he distinguished from the Kingdom of Heaven; see *De anima et eius origine* II.10.14. He used both the thief on the cross, and the popular tale of Dinocrates, brother of Perpetua—a piece of African lore doubtless dear to Donatist sensibilities— as proof for his suggestion. It appears that Vincent, though a Caecilianist, felt his views were specially inspired by the Rogatist Vincent, whose name he took; *ibid.* III.2.2.

¹⁰⁴¹ Chapter 3.4.2.

¹⁰⁴² Optatus, I.12. Excepting, of course, their practice of rebaptism.

¹⁰⁴³ Schematised neatly in *Enarrat.* 67.39: Scripture refutes Photinians by clear assertions *de Christo Deo*; against Manichees by its perspicuity *de homine Christo*; against Arians and company *de unitate Trinitatis*; and finally, against Donatists (and Luciferians!) *de catholica ecclesia toto orbe diffusa*; CCSL 39.89. See further the discussion in Chapter 6.1.

¹⁰⁴⁴ *Parm.* I.1.1; see Chapter 6.1. When he was more selective, the three central passages used to prove the church's actual universal diffusion against Petilian were Ps. 2.8, 71.8; Gen. 22.18; *C. litt. Petil.* I.13.14 and III.50.62.

¹⁰⁴⁵ As at e.g. *Ep.* 142.2: Ps 95.1 (*cantate Domino omnis terra*), Ps. 56.12 (*in omnem terram gloria tua*).

was spread throughout the world. Particularly important was the second Psalm's promise that Christ will possess the ends of the earth.¹⁰⁴⁶ When Augustine used Ps. 18(19).2 (*In omnem terram exiit sonus eorum, et in fines orbis terrae verba eorum*)¹⁰⁴⁷ to proclaim the universal spread of the church, a phlegmatic observer may be conscious of a persistent doubt that such testimonies are not equal to what they are enlisted to prove. As some Donatists contested, these passages referred instead to the ubiquity of God's sovereignty over the earth, and not the spatial extension of his church.¹⁰⁴⁸ Daniel's prophecy, mentioned above,¹⁰⁴⁹ was perhaps similarly opaque, and Augustine's enthusiasm for God's promise to Abraham¹⁰⁵⁰ (Gen. 22.18)—that *omnes gentes* will be blessed in his seed—may be troubled by the fact that this contains no assurances that the imperial church of the Theodosian Age had fulfilled it.¹⁰⁵¹ The most important proof-text, however, is one of the more perspicuous. This is Luke 24.46-7 (often paired with Acts 1.8), and his use of this text will be considered in detail in Chapter 6. In the Caecilianist *Mandatum* read out at the first day of the 411 Conference, a systematic presentation of scripture texts proving that the church is 'catholic', meaning, diffused through the whole world, culminated in Luke 24.46-7, which, it was claimed, disambiguates what the Psalter had intimated.¹⁰⁵²

Jesse Hoover has shown that Augustine's polemical insistence on the universal proclamation of the Gospel and diffusion of the church was not straightforwardly rejected by Donatist opponents. Sharing the same eschatological presupposition as many in the fourth century, that this achievement was both predicted and a necessary condition for the advent

¹⁰⁴⁶ Frequently used against the Donatists; *Epp.* 43.25; 49.2; 76.1; 105.14; 185.3; *C. litt. Petil.* II.8.20 et passim, *Agon.* 29.31.

¹⁰⁴⁷ *Epp.* 93.21; 105.14; *C. litt. Petil.* II.43.102; *Unit. eccl.* 8.21 and many times in his *enarrationes* and sermons.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Tyconius, *Lib. reg.* 1; Babcock, 5.

¹⁰⁴⁹ See note 986.

¹⁰⁵⁰ *Parm.* I.2.2-3; II.13.27; *C. litt. Petil.* II.16.37, 31.71, 54.124; *Unit. eccl.* 19.51; *Cresc.* III.63.70, IV.58.70, 61.74; *Epp.* 53.1, 93.19-20, 105.14, etc.

¹⁰⁵¹ That Christian emperors facilitated the church's total spread see *Catech.* 21.37.

¹⁰⁵² *Gesta* I.55.

of the end, many Donatists added on to the universal proclamation of the gospel ‘a *second* set of predictions which had to be fulfilled’, in which the world would experience ‘a widespread “falling away” [*discessio*] from the faith.’¹⁰⁵³ Augustine was aware of this when responding to Donatist arguments.¹⁰⁵⁴ The difference between Augustine and his Donatists, it appears, concerned the ultimate fate of the churches spread throughout the world, not the church’s sufficient global diffusion at some point or other. Accordingly, when Augustine made his repeated arguments for transmarine catholicity against the Donatists, there was a usually implicit, sometimes explicit, assumption behind his argument. Augustine’s quiet premiss, which marked his real disagreement with Donatist particularism, regards the perdurance of transmarine churches, as opposed to their possible defection.¹⁰⁵⁵ Where the church has spread—especially in privileged apostolic centres of communion—it shall remain intact, he believed.¹⁰⁵⁶ He made this explicit in a claim about Egypt, stating that Isaiah prophesied the church there, which shall endure with unshakeable stability.¹⁰⁵⁷ Whatever final *discessio* will not be to such an extent as envisioned by Donatist remnant theologies (Chapter 3.4), nor so geographically discriminating.¹⁰⁵⁸ So, later in the letter to Vincent, Augustine insisted on the perdurance of the church wherever it has been sown: ‘[a]nd in that way the Church, which is growing in all the nations, is preserved in the grain sown by the Lord and will be preserved up to the end until it contains absolutely all the

¹⁰⁵³ Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 139.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Hoover cites *Enarrat.* 101(2).8 and *Agon.* 29.31. So too Batiffol: ‘Les Donatistes déclinent l’argument tire des prophéties, en faisant valoir que les prophéties qui annoncent l’Église et la catholicité...son véridiques et ont été accomplies, mais qu’elles n’ont été accomplies qu’un temps, et que l’Église n’a pas survécu à leur accomplissement: la *Catholica* a péri...’; Batiffol, *Le catholicisme de saint Augustin*, 1:234.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Again pointed out in Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 151: ‘the bishop of Hippo is surreptitiously smuggling in a further assumption about the church’s prophesied universal expansion, namely, that once established, it can never die out in any region. . . . this is precisely what Donatist remnant ecclesiology . . . would not grant.’

¹⁰⁵⁶ See also *Ep.* 129.3; CSEL 44.36, where the notion that the church which began at Jerusalem and passed through so many *ciuitates* and *prouvinciae* to Africa should be implied to perdure where it passed through.

¹⁰⁵⁷ *Unit. eccl.* 16.41, citing Isaiah 19.19-22. He then calls out against the Donatists: ‘Why are they not in communion with the church of the Egyptians that was foretold?’; WSA I/21.654.

¹⁰⁵⁸ *C. litt. Petil.* III.2.3.

nations, even the barbarian ones.’¹⁰⁵⁹ In a claim that is likely to raise an eyebrow, Augustine claimed that God had subjected the entire earth to the church, and will not fail to preserve its extension.¹⁰⁶⁰ The progress of history, which not only decimated Christianity in Augustine’s Africa, but indifferently witnessed the decrepitude and even desolation of many apostolic churches, alone is sufficient to cast a pallor of suspicion on his optimism.

Altogether, there are three critical assumptions underlying Augustine’s approach to catholicity against the Donatists. The first is that it denotes geographic universality, the second, that the church has in fact achieved this geographic universality, and the third, that the church will endure where it has spread: it can only spread further to the remaining peripheries. While this view comes with the apparent trouble that the church only later—sometime after the apostolic preaching—became catholic, and by definition could not have been so from its humble beginnings, Augustine does not exhibit a single scruple about this potential issue. Instead, he essentialised the note of catholicity through his doctrine of ecclesial perdurance: the church has spread throughout the whole world, and it will not perish throughout the whole world.¹⁰⁶¹ The Donatists rejected his first assumption, may have acquiesced in the second, but were opposed to the third.¹⁰⁶² Part of the importance of Augustine’s appeal to specific transmarine churches is his strategy to buttress this final assumption of ecclesial perdurance. As will be considered below (§4), churches founded by the apostles and enrolled in the New Testament provide attractive examples shoring up the intuition behind this doctrine.

Since catholicity was taken to mean global diffusion, proving catholicity was as simple a matter as demonstrating communion with churches scattered around the world,

¹⁰⁵⁹ *Ep.* 93.9.31; WSA II/1.397.

¹⁰⁶⁰ *Ep.* 35.3; CSEL 34.30: *non deerit Dominus ad tuendam ecclesiam suam, qui iugo suo in gremio eius toto orbe diffuso omnia terrena regna subiecit*. He also points to the subjection of the kings (*reges*) of the world to the gospel in his *Psal. Don.*, vv. 278-80.

¹⁰⁶¹ *Enarrat.* 21(2).24; cf. *Unic. bapt.* 14.24.

¹⁰⁶² See Chapter 3.2 and 3.5.

namely, the *transmarini*.¹⁰⁶³ If catholicity is the warp of Augustine's ecclesiology against the Donatists, transmarine churches are the weft. The turn towards *transmarini*, while not specific to his anti-Donatist writings, is most perspicuous in them, and begins with his very first extant work in the *Psalmus*. This programmatic battle-cry for beleaguered Caecilianists in the 390s has three references to the 'transmarine' (*transmarini*) bishops who judged in favour of Caecilian.¹⁰⁶⁴ From this point onwards, Augustine wove a complex web of appeals to transmarine sees, whose communion was taken to prove Caecilianist catholicity, and whose continued perdurance as authentic churches frustrated the main thesis of Donatist hamartological contamination. He repeatedly stated that the entire question (*quaestio*) between the two parties is this: *ubi sit ecclesia*.¹⁰⁶⁵ This, he thought, was an empirical question demanding an empirical answer: they agree about the 'head', which is in heaven, but dispute about 'the body', which is on earth.¹⁰⁶⁶ The catholic church is discernible in its transmarine ubiquity, through communion with churches over the sea both in general and in particular, and in its continuity with its origin from Jerusalem. In the letter of the Caecilianist bishops¹⁰⁶⁷ to Marcellinus in preparation for the 411 Conference, they framed the dispute in terms definitely unacceptable to the Donatists. The primary issue was not the *causa*

¹⁰⁶³ Hence the boast in the letter to Marcellinus convening the 411 Conference, that the Caecilianists hope to show the catholic church exists *non solum Africanarum, sed etiam transmarinarum provinciarum*; *Ep.* 128 and as quoted in *Emer.* 5. The catholic church in Africa (*catholicae Africae*) is united to the catholic transmarine church (*catholicae transmarinae*); *Ep.* 141.4. The transmarine world is that in which the catholic church is most diffused; *Unit. eccl.* 2.4. Cf. also *Ep.* 141.2-3.

¹⁰⁶⁴ *Psal. Don.* vv. 102-3, 115, 134. For the same point in prose e.g. *C. litt. Petil.* III.4.5; *Bapt.* III.2.3; *Parm.* I.4.6, 8; 6,11; *Ep.* 89.3.

¹⁰⁶⁵ E.g., *Unit. eccl.* 2.2; CSEL 52.232: *quaestio certe inter nos uersatur ubi sit ecclesia, utrum apud nos an apud illos*; *C. litt. Petil.* II.73.164; CSEL 52.104: *quaestio est inter nos ubi sit ecclesia*. The question 'ubi sit ecclesia' in exactly those words recurs 15 times in his corpus, all in anti-Donatist writings, and in no other author of the period.

¹⁰⁶⁶ On the empirical status of the problem see Evans, *One and Holy*, 87-88.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Likely not solely Augustine himself, given the signature at the end; Toczko, *Crimen Obicere*, 21. Nevertheless, the letter's contents bear the distinct mark of his influence. That it, and *Ep.* 128, are nevertheless properly Augustinian productions, see Lamirande, 'Augustine and the Discussion on the Sinners in the Church at the Conference of Carthage (411)', 98-101.

Caecilian, but whether the transmarine church spread throughout the world perdures or whether it has perished through communion with African *traditio*.¹⁰⁶⁸

The turn towards transmarine churches represents a consistent strategy of sidelining, if not trivialising, the major forensic contention central to Donatist opposition. The original empirical dispute was precisely the matter of Caecilian's ordination—and so, in a letter of 396/7, he told certain Donatists that '[w]e are not dealing with some obscure question... The issue lies in the open', namely, what the ecclesiastical records witness regarding Caecilian.¹⁰⁶⁹ But Augustine made haste to consider the *ecclesiae transmarinae*, whose judgment on the case was adduced, whereupon the weight of his argument shifted towards denouncing the Donatists for failing to commune with them,¹⁰⁷⁰ and, lending specificity to this argument, he pointed to the seven churches of revelation and apostolic churches.¹⁰⁷¹ This is a recurrent pattern of argument, where the *causa Caecilian* was disentangled from the *causa ecclesiae*, and the latter instead made to rest on the guarantee of catholicity afforded by transmarine churches.¹⁰⁷² As he argued against Petilian, even if Caecilian's accusers were correct about the charge of *traditio*, they should never have abandoned the family of Christians spread throughout the whole world.¹⁰⁷³ Indeed, whatever was actually the case regarding their accusations about everyone—from Marcellinus and Miltiades of

¹⁰⁶⁸ *Ep.* 128.2. See the comments in Lamirande, 'Augustine and the Discussion on the Sinners in the Church at the Conference of Carthage (411)', 99.

¹⁰⁶⁹ *Ep.* 43.3.6; WSA II/1.159.

¹⁰⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.8, where some variation of *ecclesiae transmarinae* occurs three times.

¹⁰⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 8.22-9.25. He makes the same argument also at e.g. *Ep.* 144.3: the transmarine judges were either right—in which case the Donatist case is wrong—or, if they were wrong, they remain catholic throughout the world and the Caecilianists are invincibly correct by remaining in communion with them.

¹⁰⁷² See especially *Brev. coll.* III.3.3. For the separation of the *causae* see e.g. *Unic. bapt.* 15.26.

¹⁰⁷³ *C. litt. Petil.* III.3.4; CSEL 52.166: *etsi uerum esset quidquid de traditione iactarunt, tamen consortium christianorum, quos usque ad extrema terrae diuina scriptura commendat, ...relinquere nullo modo debent.* Also III.57.69, where he turns to the forensic dispute of the beginning of the schism with the caveat that this is a superfluous enterprise given the clarity of Scripture identifying the Church as universal.

Rome, to the African Caecilianists—this in no wise prejudices ‘the catholic church spread throughout the world’.¹⁰⁷⁴

(4) Eastern sees

‘After all, we think about Carthage, which we know well, in one way, in another about Alexandria, which we do not know’.¹⁰⁷⁵ In Augustine’s meditations on our capacity for imagination, his ‘characteristic example’ was Alexandria;¹⁰⁷⁶ which he formed a hazy image of based upon report. While Augustine could boast of being more cosmopolitan and well-travelled than most of his African episcopal peers, and certainly of his Donatist interlocutors, the transmarine churches of the East for most were far-flung cities of legend that existed similarly only in phantasy. Given also the rather limited interface that the African church enjoyed with the Eastern churches, this should make their emphatic presence in Augustine’s anti-Donatist polemic something of a curiosity.¹⁰⁷⁷ However, it is precisely this very distance which made them so polemically valuable.¹⁰⁷⁸ The Caecilianists, and much less the Donatists, were unable to competently speculate about the ecclesial status, sacramental integrity, or moral comportment of these Eastern churches. This rendered them, to a certain extent, precious untouchables. This contrasted with Western churches, especially those of

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Unic. bapt.* 16.30; CSEL 53.30-1: *prorsus, qualescumque fuerint Marcellinus Marcellus Silvester Miltiades Mensurius Caecilianus atque alii, quibus obiciunt pro sua dissensione quod uolunt, nihil praeiudicant ecclesiae catholicae toto terrarum orbe diffusae.*

¹⁰⁷⁵ *Gen. litt.* XII.6.15; WSA I/13.470; cf. *Trin.* VIII.6.8.

¹⁰⁷⁶ See Gregory Wiebe, *Fallen Angels in the Theology of St Augustine* (Oxford: University Press, 2021), 106.

¹⁰⁷⁷ This is not to discount the inevitable bonds of commerce, and consequently ecclesial culture, that the large port of Carthage brought with it, as summarised by Brown. Commenting on how unsurprising it was that Augustine would have encountered the oriental sect of the Manichees in Carthage, Peter Brown writes: ‘Though bound by so many economic ties to Rome, the port of Carthage also looked to the east, as it had done in the days of the Carthaginians. Carthage was the first major landfall in western waters for ships from Antioch and Alexandria.’ Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 158. See also the useful summary in O’Donnell, *Augustine, Sinner & Saint*, 16–17.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy*, 119. Augustine heightened the argument against hamartological contamination by frequently leveraging the example of unknowing communion with the unknown crimes of unknown people as in e.g. *Ep.* 87.2-3. For chronological distance used to set aside Donatist calumnies against bishops in the past, see *Unic. bapt.* 16.29.

Italy, which were active participants in the Donatist schism ever since Constantine's fateful intervention. One of the reasons Augustine so little used Rome in his anti-Donatist polemic was not out of any silent animus or indifference: rather, Rome was already so implicated in the Donatist controversy (and had its own brand of Donatists) as to render it that much less valuable an instrument in polemic.¹⁰⁷⁹ The Italian churches were involved with the alleged African *traditores* from an early stage, and it was with little difficulty that they could be confidently discarded, as they were, by the Donatists.¹⁰⁸⁰ Furthermore, while the *ecclesiae transmarinae* may have been damned, especially because they assented to the Macarian persecution, the Eastern churches (*orientales ecclesiae*) were aloof from this affair, and even under the dominion of a different emperor at the time.¹⁰⁸¹

Part of the persuasive power of specifically Eastern transmarine sees lay in the fact that they could plead special ignorance and non-involvement in this African controversy. Augustine apostrophises on a number of occasions in the mouth of select Eastern churches to precisely this effect.¹⁰⁸² These wounded prosopopoeial perorations express indignation against the Donatists for condemning them so indiscriminately, over an African affair they had no cognition of. Canvassing the churches addressed in the Petrine epistles, and the churches written to by Paul and the Apocalypse, these all made the same complaint: 'What have we done to you, brothers, that you do not wish to be in communion with us?'¹⁰⁸³ Seemingly at random, for example, Augustine protested on behalf of the church at

¹⁰⁷⁹ Batiffol, *Le catholicisme de saint Augustin*, 1:205–6. He marks a glaring silence about Rome and the 'cathedra Petri', especially in anti-Donatist writings after 401, and suggests that Augustine chose to advert more to Jerusalem, than to Rome, because Donatists alleged Miltiades was a *traditor* and hence the current succession in Rome defunct. He charts the use of Rome in Augustine at 1:192-209.

¹⁰⁸⁰ See e.g. *C. litt. Petil.* II.51.118 and 72.162 and Chapter 3.2.

¹⁰⁸¹ *Ep.* 44.3.5; CSEL 34.2.111.

¹⁰⁸² As Congar (BA 28.727) notes, this is different from his 'prosopopées' in the mouth of the church in general, as at e.g. *Psal. Don.* v. 270ff; *Ep.* 76.1.

¹⁰⁸³ *Don.* 4.4; CSEL 53.139. *Don.* 22.37; CSEL 53.139: *vox nostra talis est, qualis christianarum gentium ceterarum.* Translation mine.

Corinth.¹⁰⁸⁴ He also picked out the church of Philadelphia in his treatise against Parmenian, telling him to ‘listen to its voice’ as it made the same complaint.¹⁰⁸⁵ The insistence on the ignorance, and hence innocence, of transmarine churches in the East is what made them such an attractive polemical device.¹⁰⁸⁶ He stressed that these Eastern *ecclesiae transmarinae* both were utterly ignorant at the time of the schism, have remained so, and are a great distance away.¹⁰⁸⁷ In a letter to Emeritus we wrote that the *innumerabilium ecclesiarum orientalium* were and remain totally ignorant of these African affairs.¹⁰⁸⁸ Accordingly he gestured to the *orientalis orbis*, listing a flurry of apostolic foundations, which didn’t know anything about this business of ‘African *traditores*’.¹⁰⁸⁹ Augustine developed a claim of innocence by association: the Eastern churches were innocent of this African affair, and the Caecilianists, who belong to the same church, either shared this innocence or else were in the right anyways by cleaving to, rather than separating from, these *transmarini*. Furthermore, if the Donatists ‘admit that they have no case against the Church overseas’, they also ‘admit’ that she is catholic, and hence the Caecilianists are catholic by their communion with her.¹⁰⁹⁰ This argument was repeated without substantial modification throughout his anti-Donatist writings. In the *Post collationem* he attempted to impale the Donatists with the horns of this dilemma: either the transmarine church (*ecclesia catholica transmarina*) was guilty and contaminated, and the Donatists should not have wanted to join in communion with them (which desire they at least postured in 411), or they were innocent, and the Caecilianists vindicated *ipso facto* by sharing communion with them.¹⁰⁹¹

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Ep.* 43.9.25; CSEL 34.2.107: *quid tibi fecit, o pars Donati, quid tibi fecit ecclesia Corinthiorum? quod autem de ista dico, de omnibus talibus et tam longe positus intellegi uolo.*

¹⁰⁸⁵ *Parm.* 43.9.25; CSEL 51.31.

¹⁰⁸⁶ See also *Epp.* 43.3.5 and 89.4.

¹⁰⁸⁷ *C. litt. Petil.* 1.12.13.

¹⁰⁸⁸ *Ep.* 87.1; CSEL 44.398.

¹⁰⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 5; CSEL 44.401.

¹⁰⁹⁰ *Ep.* 142.3; WSA II/2.299.

¹⁰⁹¹ *Don.* 28.48. Cf. *Brev. coll.* III.3.3; *Ep.* 141.6.

Eastern apostolic churches were used by Augustine as supports for his axiom of ecclesial perdurance. Augustine rested his case on intuition: surely it is the churches founded by the apostles, not the marginalised party of Donatus, who will endure to the end to carry on the work of the church.¹⁰⁹² This strategy Augustine deployed with devastating force. He asked: *Antiochena ecclesia, ubi primo appellati sunt discipuli christiani, quomodo potuit Afrorum perire criminibus?*¹⁰⁹³ He continued, stressing the apparent absurdity of ancient churches of apostolic pedigree collapsing because of their communion with African Caecilianists:

What African would be so powerful as to be able to spread the pestilence that he had occasioned at such a distance, where the names of those through whom or by whom this evil arose could not be known, whether at Athens or Iconium or Lystra? Who wiped out the churches established by apostolic toil (*quis deleuit ecclesias apostolico labore fundatas*)?¹⁰⁹⁴

Augustine often repeated this emphasis on churches founded by apostolic labour.¹⁰⁹⁵ In another tract, but using similar language, Augustine specified that this ‘deletion’ of the apostolic churches is above all else evident in that the Donatists reject their baptisms and would require their members to be catechumens.¹⁰⁹⁶ As with all such intuitive shortcuts through ratiocination, rhetorical effect has supplanted any actual theological rationale. Augustine’s assumption that the apostolic churches have a more obvious claim to perdurance than the Donatist (African) ones only latterly founded, nowhere receives any principled defence. Augustine recruited the examples of transmarine churches as part of a *reductio ad absurdum* of the logical consequences of the Donatist belief in hamartological

¹⁰⁹² *Unit. eccl.* 17.43-44; cf. *Cresc.* III.64.71.

¹⁰⁹³ *Unit. eccl.* 12.31; CSEL 52.270. He makes the same point in *Ep.* 51.5 specifying the bishops of Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Colossi, Philippi, Thessalonica.

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Unit. eccl.* 12.31; WSA I/21.639; CSEL 52.270. The same point is closely rehearsed at *C. litt. Petil.* II.30.71; *Cresc.* III.63.69.

¹⁰⁹⁵ *C. litt. Petil.* II.16.37; *Cresc.* II.37.46, III.79.91, IV.25.32; *Brev. coll.* III.8.10; *Don.* 2.2; see also the following note.

¹⁰⁹⁶ *Unic. bapt.* 11.19; CSEL 53.20: *in illis ecclesiis baptizati sunt, quas ipsi apostoli labore proprio fundauerunt*, etc.

contamination. Such a principle might well be intuitive within Africa, with the fevered dispute between persecuting Caecilianists and suffering Donatists, but lost its sympathetic force when a broader, transmarine perspective was introduced.¹⁰⁹⁷

Augustine chose to embellish his appeal by naming specific transmarine sees in order to heighten the rhetorical impact of this *reductio*: if the Donatists say that transmarine churches have expired through sharing communion with the Caecilianists, this must also implicate even the greatly esteemed churches of the New Testament.¹⁰⁹⁸ Beyond the Donatist controversy, Augustine held these churches in high estimation. He wrote, in the *De doctrina christiana*, that we ‘should follow the authority of the majority of the Catholic Churches, among which, of course, are those that have the privilege of being apostolic sees and having received letters from the apostles (*quae apostolicas sedes habere et epistolas accipere meruerunt*)’.¹⁰⁹⁹ In an anti-Donatist context, Augustine repeated this last phrase verbatim to emphasise the fact that the Caecilianists were in communion with, and the Donatists rejected, these churches.¹¹⁰⁰ The churches which received the letters—the seven churches of Paul, and the seven churches of Revelation—will be considered below as some of the most significant transmarine churches in his anti-Donatist polemic.

¹⁰⁹⁷ E.g. *Cresc.* III.18.21: *non unum hominem, non unam domum, non unam ciuitatem, non unam gentem, sed orbem terrarum rebaptizandum esse censetis?* And III.32.36: *crede orbi christiano dicenti tibi: ‘baptismum Christi scio; qui fuerint traditores in Africa, uel ubilibet, ignoro;* CSEL 52.427 and 444. See also *Cresc.* II.37.47.

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Cresc.* III.63.69; CSEL 52.475. *quid rescindis baptismum Christi in illis uel ex illis ecclesiis quas apostoli fundauerunt?*

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Doctr. chr.* II.8.12; WSA I/11.133; CSEL 80.40.

¹¹⁰⁰ *Don.* 2.2; CSEL 53.99.

(4.1) The seven churches

Augustine's favourite transmarine exempla are churches of apostolic foundation and, most especially, those which received the letters of the New Testament. His opponents would rebaptise those who came to them from Ephesus or Smyrna or Thessalonica, or other churches which the apostles planted, and to which the apostles sent letters.¹¹⁰¹ It is a great sacrilege, he said to Petilian, to rebaptise members of *ecclesiae transmarinae* that the sacred scriptures prove were founded in apostolic antiquity.¹¹⁰² He pointed out that the Donatists were separated 'from those churches whose names you have in your books and recite' in church.¹¹⁰³ He questioned them: 'Why are you not in communion (*quare non communicatis*) with the churches to which you hold that apostolic epistles were sent, which you read and according to which you claim to live?'¹¹⁰⁴ While the Donatists have these letters merely *in lectione*, the Caecilianists have them *in lectione ac fide*, and remain in communion with the addressees.¹¹⁰⁵ To this end, he accused Petilian of hypocrisy in mimicking Paul's usual greeting, now conventional in Christian letters (*Gratia vobis et pax*, etc.):

I note the apostolic greeting. You see what you say. Pay attention, though, to where you learned what you say. This is how Paul greets the Romans, the Corinthians, the Galatians, the Ephesians, the Colossians, the Philippians, the Thessalonians. What madness is it, then, not to want to pass on the greeting of peace to these churches from whose epistles you learned the greeting of peace!¹¹⁰⁶

He evidently enjoyed this barb, repeating it in much the same terms while refuting a letter by a Donatist clergyman of Constantina in Numidia and in his encyclical appeal to the

¹¹⁰¹ *Emer.* 5; CSEL 53.192: *et rebaptizatur qui uenit de Epheso de Smyrna de Thessalonica de ceteris ecclesiis quas suo labore apostoli plantauerunt et ad quas legimus missas apostolorum epistolas, quas audimus in ecclesia recitari.* Cf. *Enarrat.* 10.5, which singles out Mesopotamians.

¹¹⁰² *C. litt. Petil.* I.11.12; CSEL 52.12.

¹¹⁰³ *Ep.* 87.5; WSA II/1.347; CSEL 34.2.401.

¹¹⁰⁴ *Bapt.* II.6.7; WSA II/1.426; CSEL 51.182.

¹¹⁰⁵ *Unit. eccl.* 12.31; CSEL 52.271: *ad Corinthios, ad Ephesios, ad Philippenses, ad Thessalonicenses, ad Colossenses uos solas apostoli epistulas in lectione, nos autem et epistulas in lectione ac fide et ipsas ecclesias in communione retinemus.*

¹¹⁰⁶ *C. litt. Petil.* II.2.3; WSA I/21.76; CSEL 52.24.

Donatists after the 411 Conference.¹¹⁰⁷ Standing outside of communion with these Pauline churches of august memory and foundation was no doubt an embarrassment, and one which Augustine hoped to turn into a smarting wound.

Standing now within a well-travelled North African tradition (Chapters 1.4.2, 3.3.2, 4.3.2), Augustine was able to invest these churches with an added theological significance by turning towards the motif of the *septiformis ecclesia*. Combining two of his favourite devices—inventing apostrophes for transmarine churches and appealing to recipients of apostolic letters—Augustine did the same for the *septem orientales ecclesiae, ad quas scribit apostolus Ioannes*.¹¹⁰⁸ When, as considered above, he used the church of Philadelphia for this purpose in his work against Parmenian, he was careful to call out that it is one *ex illis septem*.¹¹⁰⁹ Elsewhere, however, he made this sevenfold significance clearer. In an early work, and one with the Donatists in mind,¹¹¹⁰ Augustine explained:

For Paul knew that Wisdom had built herself a house and had set up not three pillars but seven (Prov. 9.1), which may refer either to the unity of the churches—since the number seven usually symbolizes the whole (*pro uniuerso poni*), as in the Gospel saying: *That one will receive in this world seven times as much* (Matt. 19.29), as if to say: *As having nothing and yet possessing all things* (2 Cor. 6.10), and in this regard John also writes to the seven churches, which clearly represent the Church as a whole (*quae utique uniuersitatis ecclesiae personam gerunt*). Or perhaps it refers not so much to the number of pillars as to the sevenfold work of the Holy Spirit...by which the house of the Son of God, the Church, is held together.¹¹¹¹

Unlike Optatus, who turned to the seven churches of Asia but did not pair them with the seven Pauline churches, Augustine followed Tyconius and Cyprian in exploiting this parallelism. Recurring throughout his writings, the seven churches represent both the

¹¹⁰⁷ *Ep.* 53.1.3 and *Don.* 4.4.

¹¹⁰⁸ *Don.* 4.4; CSEL 53.101.

¹¹⁰⁹ *Parm.* I.7.12; CSEL 51.31.

¹¹¹⁰ Plumer, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians*, 249–52.

¹¹¹¹ *Exp. Gal.* 24; *Ibid.*, 141–43.

perfection,¹¹¹² the plenitude,¹¹¹³ and the universality of the church.¹¹¹⁴ Augustine believed that the apostle and author of the Gospel of John was the same as the John of Revelation,¹¹¹⁵ and suggested that the decision to write to seven churches was done with an eye to this numerological symbolism.¹¹¹⁶

With the benefit of such laden significance invested in these churches, Augustine took up and deepened Optatus' argument from the seven churches against the Donatists:

[Paul] writes to <seven churches> the Romans, to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, to the Thessalonians, and to the Colossians. John also writes to seven churches, [Rev. 1.11] which he mentions were established in those parts, and we understand that the universal Church is also indicated in these by the number seven (*in quibus etiam uniuersis ecclesiam septenario numero intellegimus commendari*), namely, Ephesus, Smyrna, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, Pergamum, and Thyateira. And it is evident that we are today in communion with all these churches, just as it is evident that you are not in communion with these churches.¹¹¹⁷

Communion with the seven churches, a figure of the universal church, functioned as an ecclesiological criterion to support Caecilianist claims to catholicity. In his *De unitate* Augustine incorporated the Pauline and the Johannine churches into a lengthy appeal to apostolic centres, like a list of endorsements from churches that the Caecilianists enjoy communion with.¹¹¹⁸ Altogether, however, Augustine's appeal to the seven churches was substantially more muted than that of his predecessor. He did not adopt Optatus' theology of the *notes* and refuses to follow him in hallowing the seven churches of Asia as the primordial origin of the *angelus*, which confused notion Augustine declined to entertain.

¹¹¹² *Serm.* 45.2, 95.2; *Ep.* 55.3.5.

¹¹¹³ *Civ.* XVII.4.

¹¹¹⁴ *Serm.* 198 (=Dolbeau 26, Mainz 62).51; *Ep.* 55.5.9-6.10. See also *Civ.* XVII.4.

¹¹¹⁵ *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 13.2.

¹¹¹⁶ *Serm.* 45.2.

¹¹¹⁷ *Ep.* 49.2; WSA II/1.195-96; CSEL 34.2.141.

¹¹¹⁸ *Unit. eccl.* 12.31.

However, Augustine did not ignore the angels of the churches, but turned them to another anti-Donatist purpose. The seven churches of Asia and their angels furnished Augustine with the best munitions against ecclesiastical purism, because some of their number received apostolic rebuke. If these churches survived their ancient experiments in error, they remain signal examples that the church does not depend upon the sanctity of its members. As Ferguson has shown, a range of interpretations existed regarding the angels of the churches: personifications of the community, titular guardian angels, or bishops.¹¹¹⁹ He states that Augustine adopts the last option, but I would note that elsewhere he follows Tyconius in interpreting them as the first. In both cases, however, these angels were made into accusers against the Donatists. In his letter written 396/7 to Donatist laypersons, he interprets the ‘angel’ of the church of Ephesus as its bishop, who was praised for tolerating the wicked.¹¹²⁰ Later, in his less well-known¹¹²¹ *Post collationem*, he seems to change his mind. The angel of the church which is at Ephesus, he claimed, is a personification of the church there,¹¹²² and is an object of emulation for the same reason. Augustine’s argument falls within a tradition of anti-rigorous exegesis of these churches, following Tyconius (Chapter 3.3.2), Ambrosiaster (against the Novatians),¹¹²³ and Jerome (against the Luciferians),¹¹²⁴ in recruiting from the seven *exempla* of the mixed constitution of the church. The apostolic age furnished proof of the general tolerance extended to sinners within the ranks of the church.¹¹²⁵

¹¹¹⁹ Ferguson, ‘Some Patristic Interpretations of the Angels of the Churches’.

¹¹²⁰ *Ep.* 43.8.22.

¹¹²¹ In addition to Ferguson, this locus is also missed in the treatment of this theme in Toczko, *Crimen Obicere*, 108.

¹¹²² *Don.* 22.37; CSEL 53.138: *angelus ecclesiae quae est Ephesi, quem nemo recte intellegens dubitat ipsius ecclesiae gestare personam.*

¹¹²³ Ambrosiaster, *Quaest.* 102 (*Contra Novatianum*), 18-20, esp. 20. From 22 it appears the Novatian response was to allege that the calls to repentance were urged to the world and not the church: *sed hanc domum magnam* (here, of 2 Tim. 2.20) *Novatianus mundum intellegendum significat, non ecclesiam*; CSEL 50.217. This distinction interestingly parallels the Donatists’ in *Gesta* III.258.

¹¹²⁴ Jerome, *Lucif.* 24; he cites the example of Ephesus, Pergamum, and Thyateira against rebaptism; and in *Adv. Iov.* II.3 for the possibility of repentance within the church.

¹¹²⁵ E.g. *Ep.* 43.8.23.

(5) Rome

Augustine's relationship to and understanding of the Roman church has been so extensively commented upon, and its significance still so disputed, that it would be in excess of this investigation and the author's competence to experiment further.¹¹²⁶ Accordingly, I would like to restrict comment to Augustine's use of Rome as an authenticating transmarine centre of communion against the Donatists. Augustine's use of communion with the Roman church against the Donatists has been regularly commented on,¹¹²⁷ although Rome has a relatively muted presence in his anti-Donatist works, especially in comparison with the Eastern churches of the New Testament.¹¹²⁸ This phenomenon requires no obscure conjecture, being easily explicable for the reason already considered above. Rome was far too implicated in the controversy as a direct partisan for the Caecilianists to afford the kind of neutral and serene distance of far-flung locales in Asia, and its bishop contemporary with Caecilian was thought by the Donatists to have been contaminated with *traditio* anyways (Chapter 3.2).¹¹²⁹ This also explains Augustine's general silence in naming Western churches against the

¹¹²⁶ The standard treatment is Part II in Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*. See also the study in Brian Daley, 'Universal Love and Local Structure: Augustine, the Papacy, and the Church in Africa', *The Jurist* 64, no. 1 (2004): 39–62.

¹¹²⁷ For example, Bass, who held to a high view of Optatus' theology of the Roman see, states Augustine did as well: 'the primacy of the Petrine see was central in his early [Donatist] polemics', and for Augustine 'communion with Rome guaranteed the purity of her clients.' Bass, 'Augustine and Optatus of Milevis', 117–18. I note the lack of citations in support of this claim. The same can be found for example in Sessa: Augustine 'invoked Rome's exceptionality at strategic moments . . . when confronting the Donatists'; Kristina Sessa, 'Exceptionality and Invention: Silvester and the Late Antique "Papacy" at Rome', *Studia Patristica* 46 (2010): 77. One of his greatest biographers states that in the 43rd epistle (written to certain Donatist laypeople), Augustine 'had so brilliantly formulated the prerogatives of the See of Peter'; van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 12. A frank reading of this letter may find this an overstatement. Congar states that 'Augustin a argué de la communion à tenir plus particulièrement avec le siege de Pierre' (citing exactly three loci: *Psal. Don.* vv. 238-40; *Epp.* 53.2; 43.7); Congar, *L'Église*, 21.

¹¹²⁸ 'It is interesting to note', wrote Willis, 'that the case' for Caecilianist legitimacy, 'is not made to rest solely upon communion with Rome, but with other apostolic sees as well.' Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy*, 120.

¹¹²⁹ Accordingly, many of the mentions of Rome in his anti-Donatist texts specifically concern Miltiades of Rome, who was alleged to have been a *traditor* (*Parm.* I.5.10; *Unic. bapt.* 16.27-30; *Epp.* 43.5.14) and whose judgement in favour of Caecilian required insistent defence (e.g. *Brev. coll.* III.18.34; *Don.* 13.17).

Donatists. Except for Rome—being both a Pauline church and the special heir to Peter—Augustine only ever mentioned apostolic churches of the East.

Compared to these Eastern churches Augustine rarely used communion with the Roman church against the Donatists.¹¹³⁰ This fact is doubly remarkable given the precedent Optatus had set of making communion with the *cathedra Petri* in Rome an indispensable condition for membership in the church.¹¹³¹ The culmination of Augustine's anti-Donatist programme was in the 411 Conference, where transmarine appeals abounded. Rome was never mentioned in the 411 Conference, except on the first day and that only in connection with the Donatist bishop of Rome, Felix, whose claim to that bishopric provoked some dispute.¹¹³² The contemporary bishop of Rome, Innocent, was mentioned once, and by way of disputing the claim of this Felix.¹¹³³ This silence may surprise readers more familiar with an Augustine who not only shared a high estimation of the Roman church, but also strenuously cultivated a relationship with its bishops and even acted as its legate on occasion.¹¹³⁴ Though the African church would have difficulties navigating its dependence on Rome, evident especially in the anxiety around transmarine juridical appeals, these tensions highlight rather than undercut the privileged regard and close relationship between Africa and Rome.¹¹³⁵

Augustine invoked Rome against the Donatist on several strategic occasions. His earliest mention of Rome in the controversy, sung in the *Psalmus*, is significant but simple enough. The Donatists were enjoined to 'count' the bishops in their ancient succession,

¹¹³⁰ 'Of all the voluminous writings of Augustine against the Donatists the only one that alludes to the primacy of Peter's see is an early poem which cannot be said to express the churchmanship of his maturity.' Edwards, 'The Donatist Schism and Theology', 117–18.

¹¹³¹ 'Augustin..d'abord dépendant d'Optat dans sa polémique anti-donatiste, abandonnera ensuite l'argument de la *cathedra Petri* . . .' Labrousse, SC 412.116.

¹¹³² *Gesta* I.149, 158, 161, 163. This Felix attended the Conference but was little more than a wallflower; see Pietri, Pietri, and Desmulliez, *Prosopographie de l'Italie chrétienne (313-604)*, 1:775.

¹¹³³ *Gesta* I.163.

¹¹³⁴ He acted as a legate in Mauretania in 419-20; see *Ep.* 22*.6.

¹¹³⁵ Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, 204–5. But see Coyle, 'The Self-Identity of North African Christians', 71–72.

especially those *ab ipsa Petri sede*, which in this instance is doubtless a reference to Rome.¹¹³⁶ This is patterned off a relatively infrequent anti-Donatist argument from, as he put it later, the unshaken succession (*inconcussam seriem*) of the apostles throughout the world.¹¹³⁷ The remaining few occasions in which Rome was used by Augustine against the Donatists, it never appears in isolation. Rome either headed, or was part of, general appeals to important transmarine centres of communion. In one of his letters to Donatist laypersons discussed above, he defended the integrity of the 313 synod's judgment in favour of Caecilian by shoring up the authority of the Roman church, *in qua semper apostolicae cathedrae uiguit principatus*. He highlighted that Caecilian, unlike the Donatists, secured communion with Rome, as also with Eastern churches—*ceteris terris, unde euangelium ad ipsam Africam uenit*.¹¹³⁸ And, as already presented, this argument finally culminated in an appeal to the seven churches of Asia, and a peroration in the mouth of Corinth; communion with these churches being used as a metric of genuine catholicity.¹¹³⁹ The next instance, at the turn of the fifth century and around the same time he made an appeal to the seven churches as image-bearers of the universal church,¹¹⁴⁰ he made a similar mention of Rome:

If, after all, we must consider the order of bishops in succession, how much more certainly and in a way conducive to salvation would we begin from Peter himself, who symbolized the whole Church (*cui totius ecclesiae figuram gerenti*) and to whom the Lord said, *Upon this rock I shall build my Church, and the gates of hell will not conquer it* (Mt 16:18).¹¹⁴¹

¹¹³⁶ *Psal. Don.*, vv. 238-40.

¹¹³⁷ *Cresc.* III.18.21. Cf. also *Ep.* 44.3.5.

¹¹³⁸ *Ep.* 43.3.7; CSEL 34.2.90.

¹¹³⁹ *Ibid.* 8.22-9.25.

¹¹⁴⁰ *Ep.* 49.2, see §4.1.

¹¹⁴¹ *Ep.* 53.1.2; WSA II/1.205; CSEL 34.2.153. This passage represents a more modest use of Peter's identification with Rock than he confesses to have used, with some tergiversation, in his lost and early *Contra epistolam Donati; Retract.* I.21.1. There, Peter was straightforwardly identified as the Rock personally, as opposed to his more mature position which saw the first apostle as a symbolic figure of the entire church (*Tract. Ev. Jo.* 7.14; *Serm.* 76.3) or her confession (*Bapt.* VI.24.44-45, 31.60; VII.43.85; *C. litt. Petil.* II.108.247; III.42.51).

Augustine then reproduced a list from Optatus, which he extended to his own day, of Roman bishops from Linus to Anastasius,¹¹⁴² with the purpose of showing that no Donatist could be discovered among that exalted company, and hence the Montenses in Rome were shown to be a schismatic imposition. Doubtless with an eye to Donatist charges against Miltiades, he clarified that it did not matter if any in that succession had succumbed to *traditio*, since the hope of the church is placed not in men but in God.¹¹⁴³ Augustine then concluded this sweep by turning to the apostolic churches to which the letters were sent, with the thrust-and-slash that the Donatists both have no bishop of their own there (as they pretended in Rome), and were not in communion with them.¹¹⁴⁴ Augustine's use of Rome it appears, was thoroughly traditional, in that its principal point was to demonstrate the integrity of the catholic episcopate through the well-documented succession of bishops in that primordial church. This is a point that he makes more generically elsewhere.¹¹⁴⁵

Beyond his letters, Rome is invoked as a transmarine church authenticating the Caecilianist communion only twice in his anti-Donatist treatises, and always with other transmarine churches. Augustine sometimes opted not to mention Rome when giving an overview of Pauline churches against the Donatists¹¹⁴⁶—a curious omission—but in one instance in the treatises he included the eternal city, which took first place in a list of New Testament churches. This passage is an instructive summary of his general argument from transmarine catholicity, which I translate in full:

But you therefore according to your error, or rather your madness, strive to accuse not only Caecilian and his ordainers, but even those churches which we read equally in the apostolic and canonical scriptures, not only of the Romans, where you were

¹¹⁴² Optatus, II.3.

¹¹⁴³ *Ep.* 53.1.3.

¹¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴⁵ *Ep.* 44.3.5; CSEL 34.2.113: *qui per orbem terrarum successionis ordinem custodientes in antiquissimis ecclesiis constituti etc.*

¹¹⁴⁶ *Ep.* 87.5 runs through churches Paul evangelised, especially addressees of the letters, but Rome is omitted. Similarly at *Unit. eccl.*, where he does not mention Rome either when listing Pauline churches, nor Petrine churches! Rome is included in a list of Pauline churches at *Ep.* 49.2.

accustomed to ordain a few of your bishops, but even of the Corinthians, of the Galatians, of the Ephesians, of the Thessalonians, of the Colossians, of the Philippians, to those which the apostle Paul most openly wrote; and Jerusalem, which the first apostle James governed in his bishopric;¹¹⁴⁷ Antioch, where the disciples were first called Christian; Smyrna, Thyateira, Sardis, Pergamum, Philadelphia, Laodicea, for which churches the Apocalypse of the apostle John was purposed. And so too many other churches, of Pontus, of Cappadocia, of Asia, of Bithynia, to which the apostle Peter wrote, and wherever else Paul testifies that he filled with the gospel, from Jerusalem to Illyricum. Let me fall silent now regarding the others in such broad and spacious parts of the earth; where the church having been extended there from apostolic labours and plantings, grew and still grows.¹¹⁴⁸

In the only other occasion in his polemical treatises to mention Rome, it was coupled with Jerusalem as twinned monuments against Petilian. Citing the apostolic seats of Peter in Rome, occupied by Anastasius, and James in Jerusalem,¹¹⁴⁹ held by John, Augustine attacked his unwilling interlocutor for ‘blaspheming’ (*blasphemaretis*) these apostolic seats and blamed him for failing to be in communion with either.¹¹⁵⁰ This is a typical form of argument, drawing from the same rhetorical fund as the imagined Corinthian and Philadelphian protestations of innocence.

¹¹⁴⁷ Cf. *Exp. Gal.* 15.

¹¹⁴⁸ *Cresc.* II.37.46; CSEL 52.406-7. Translation mine.

¹¹⁴⁹ Cf. *Exp. Gal.* 15.

¹¹⁵⁰ *C. litt. Petil.* II.51.118; WSA I/21.134; CSEL 52.88. This passage is translated by Tilley and Ramsey with ‘an apostolic seat’ in the first instance, and then puzzlingly ‘the apostolic seat’ in the following sentence, doubtless meant to refer solely to Rome, but the sense is indefinite in both. The plurality of *apostolicae sedes* was taken for granted in Western authors as late as Gregory of Tours, who used *apostolica sedes* to refer to Rome and Bordeaux and generically even to Gallic bishoprics; On this see John Moorhead, ‘Bede on the Papacy’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 60, no. 2 (2009): 218n5. He also highlights the diversity of use in Gregory the Great, citing his application of the title to Antioch (*Ep.* V.42). See also when Paulinus of Nola wrote to Alypius in 394, he says that as bishop of Thagaste the Lord *sede apostolica merito collocavit*; Paulinus *apud* Augustine *Ep.* 24.1; CSEL 34.1.74. Augustine is operating at time when *sedes apostolica* had come to acquire specifically Roman connotations in Christian Latin; on its use as an official title in documents starting during the episcopate of Damasus see Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, 93. Augustine used *sedes apostolica* as a specific honorific for the Roman see, and does so frequently, especially in letters to the Roman bishop; *Ep.* 22*.5-7; 43.3.7; 175.3; 176.1; 190.1.1 and 6.22-3; 209.8; *C. du. ep. Pelag.* II.3.5; *Grat. Chr.* II.6.6, 7.8, 17.18-19; *Enarrat.* 36(2).21. Pintard suggests a chronological shift towards increasing use of the term for Rome, in the context of the Pelagian controversy; J. Pintard, ‘Notes sur «Sedes apostolica» selon St. Augustin’, *Studia Patristica* 16, no. 2 (1985): 552. In his a chart tallying all 19 such references (excluding the Divjak letters, not yet available) only 8 are specific to Rome (ibid., 556). Rufinus, in his ecclesiastical history has multiple *apostolicas sedes* in Rome, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria; Rufinus, *H.E.* XI.21; PL 21.527B. That Augustine used this text see Francis Murphy, *Rufinus of Aquileia (345-411): His Life and Works* (Washington, D. C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1945), 156. Augustine follows this usage in saying that the churches which received apostolic letters had apostolic seats (*apostolicas sedes habere*); *Doctr. chr.* II.8.12; CSEL 80.40.

The fact that Augustine's appeals to Rome occur together with other transmarine churches clarifies what may already appear obvious. Since Augustine was committed to a theology of catholicity as geographic ubiquity, the church's unity and perdurance throughout the whole world was more prominent a theme than authentication provided by a single local church. This is a point that has been made by Eno in examining African usage of Roman episcopal lists, who noted that Augustine moved away from a Cyprianic focus on episcopal succession, since it had become 'increasingly the property of the schismatics', towards the note of 'geographic catholicity'.¹¹⁵¹ Accordingly, Augustine desired to canvass the support offered by transmarine churches throughout the world, for which purpose a single-minded or even preponderating focus on one church would be misplaced. However, the suggestive coupling of Rome and Jerusalem in the last text considered against Petilian contains a unique and neglected exception. Among the plurality of *ecclesiae transmarinae*, there is precisely one which Augustine developed into something of a privileged axis of international communion, and it is this one which, both in the frequency of its mentions and in the force of them, eclipses all others in Augustine's corpus: Jerusalem.

¹¹⁵¹ Eno, 'The Significance of the Lists of Roman Bishops in the Anti-Donatist Polemic', 164–66. This argument has recently been sympathetically re-presented in Gaumer, *Augustine's Cyprian*, 43.

Chapter 6: *De Christi corpore*: Beginning from Jerusalem

(1) Luke 24.47: *Incipientibus ab Hierusalem*

Duly supplying its wants according to the strictures of orthodoxy and sensitivities of Christian taste, Augustine adapted the hypostatic Intellect of Plotinus to the ‘house’ and ‘city’ of God—the heaven of heavens, and eternal Jerusalem.¹¹⁵² Pilgrimaging on earth, from this land of unstable temporality (*a dispersione et deformitate*), he panted for the serene beauty of *Hierusalem patriam meam, Hierusalem matrem meam*.¹¹⁵³ It is from this City, the created Wisdom of God,¹¹⁵⁴ the community in and of intelligible beauty, that we have turned away, collapsing from unity into multiplicity, eternity into time, being into becoming, real into only apparent beauty. The return journey, of course, is the very quest of *Confessiones* which was the sincere charter of his life and has impressed itself upon readers ever since. Augustine described this City at length, which he characterised as follows:

This is the house of God, not earthly, neither corporeal of any celestial bulk, but spiritual and a partaker of your eternity, since it is without defect for eternity.¹¹⁵⁵

He never lost the clear tenacity of the vision of this City, and in his maturer masterpiece he plotted the peregrinations of its citizens from earth until their final restoration, made full colleagues with those angels who never departed.¹¹⁵⁶ The configuration, however, of this

¹¹⁵² I follow O’Connell and Armstrong, among others, in making this identification; for a recent discussion see Roland Teske, *To Know God and the Soul: Essays on the Thought of St. Augustine* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 224–26.

¹¹⁵³ *Conf.* XII.16.23.

¹¹⁵⁴ *Conf.* XII.15.20.

¹¹⁵⁵ *Conf.* XII.15.19; CSEL 33.322: *haec est domus dei non terrena neque ulla caelesti mole corporea, sed spiritalis et particeps aeternitatis tuae, quia sine labe in aeternum*. Translation mine.

¹¹⁵⁶ *Civ.* XXII.1 and 30. See also a beautiful summary of his doctrine in *Enarrat.* 124.3. For the configuration of the various titles and images used to describe this city, and the significance of its heavenly nature, see Émilien Lamirande, ‘Le thème de la Jérusalem céleste chez saint Ambroise’, *Revue d’études augustiniennes et patristiques* 29, no. 3–4 (1983): 209–32.

eternal and incorporeal community joined in the Intelligible to its very ‘corporeal’ denizens-in-the-making sloughing through the sensible, abounding with their own supply of ‘defects’, is no slight riddle.¹¹⁵⁷ It is principally in the *De civitate dei* where Augustine ventured his answer: the transformative badge of citizenship is the love of God, and it becomes a valid passport posthumously if it has sufficiently eclipsed the countervailing love of this earth. However, during the controversy with the Donatists Augustine configured—or perhaps, constricted—such citizenship to association within a discrete, identifiable, empirical community, defined by its extension over time and space. To belong to ‘the house of God, not earthly, neither corporeal of any celestial bulk’, one must first inhabit a visible house, whose corporeal dimensions—transmarine catholicity—were its defining trait.¹¹⁵⁸

Augustine drew an ecclesiological roadmap such that, to arrive at the heavenly Jerusalem, one must begin from the earthly.¹¹⁵⁹ ‘This Church began from the earthly Jerusalem,’ he preached in an anti-Donatist turn in a sermon, ‘so that it might come to rejoice in God in the heavenly Jerusalem. It begins from the earthly city and ends in the heavenly city.’¹¹⁶⁰ There, as elsewhere in his writings, and extensively in his preaching, Augustine again and again turned Luke 24.46-7 to establish this, where the Gospel recounts Christ’s post-resurrection words to the apostles:

Quia sic oportebat Christum pati, et resurgere tertia die, et praedicari in nomine eius paenitentiam et remissionem peccatorum per omnes gentes, incipientibus ab Ierusalem.

¹¹⁵⁷ The tension between Augustine’s doctrine of grace and his doctrine of the church is frequently discussed; Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 5:163–64; Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy*, 125; Congar, *L’Église*, 20; van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon*, 123–29; Charles Robertson, ‘Augustinian Ecclesiology and Predestination: An Intractable Problem?’, *Studia Patristica* 70 (2013): 401–8.

¹¹⁵⁸ His doctrine that salvation is restricted to members of the visible *catholica* is well-known. For examples in anti-Donatist works see e.g. *Parm.* I.8.13; *Bapt.* IV.3.4, 18.25; V.39.77; *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 13.12; and passim in his *Emer.* Instances of this doctrine are collated at Batiffol, *Le catholicisme de saint Augustin*, 1:243–50.

¹¹⁵⁹ Usually understood, as Augustine more commonly has it, as a relationship of image to archetype, e.g. F. Edward Cranz, ‘De Civitate Dei, XV, 2, and Augustine’s Idea of the Christian Society’, *Speculum* 25, no. 20 (1950): 215–25.

¹¹⁶⁰ *Enarrat.* 147.18; WSA III/20.164.

He quoted this ‘beginning from Jerusalem’ (*incipientibus ab Ierusalem*), either as a particle or with the rest of its context, at least 82 times in his entire corpus, and all but seven instances are in an anti-Donatist setting.¹¹⁶¹ If it was paired with supporting testimonies, the most frequent were Acts 1.8,¹¹⁶² or verses from the Psalter mentioning Sion.¹¹⁶³ The argument from this verse is most prominent in his *De unitate ecclesiae* and his work against Petilian.¹¹⁶⁴ Though the authenticity of the *De unitate* has been contested (Chapter 4.1), detection of this argument—which is uniquely Augustinian—may ease any lingering doubts. The verses are cited to similar effect on four occasions in the 411 Conference, two of which are from Caecilianist statements clearly influenced by Augustine, and once by Augustine himself.¹¹⁶⁵

Augustine’s use of this concept against the Donatists is so diffuse, and, in his typical way, so often repeated, a full digest of the relevant data would be as unnecessary as it would be taxing to the reader’s patience. Despite the frequency with which Augustine deployed these verses, together with his other appeals to Jerusalem, they form part of the same argument, brought out with more or less development throughout his anti-Donatist career. In his well-known homiletic habit, this kind of repetition conditioned his audience into such

¹¹⁶¹ *Cons.* III.25.74; *Faust.* XXII.86; *Fel.* I.3; *Pecc. merit.* I.27.40 and 53; *Civ.* X.32 and XVIII.50. In his homiletic works, the context is often explicitly anti-Donatist (e.g. *Serm.* 46), but more often it must be taken to be implied. Examples of this include *Enarrat.* 32(3).7 and 69.6, or *Serm.* 229I.2; 229J.5; 242.12, where the verse is used to make an argument used in his anti-Donatist writings that we recognise the Body of the church by listening to the Head who spoke: *Incipientibus ab Ierusalem*, etc.

¹¹⁶² E.g. *C. litt. Petil.* II.84.186; it is cited on its own in 38.91 though introducing an argument that will culminate in using Luke 24.46-7. He uses this verse seven times in this second book. See also *In ep. Io.* 10.8-10; *Unit. eccl.* 11.27-29 (3x); *Cresc.* IV.54.64; *Gaud.* I.20.22.

¹¹⁶³ E.g. 49.2 at *Ep.* 76.1; 109.2 at *Enarrat.* 109.10.

¹¹⁶⁴ In his relatively short work *De unitate ecclesiae*, the most common scriptural citation is Luke 24.47 (*incipientibus ab Ierusalem* cited directly 13 times), supported by ancillary verses (most often, Acts 1.8). It serves as the scriptural linchpin for the similar ecclesiological argument in the second book of *Contra litteras Petilianii*, where Augustine cites it 11 times, again together with Acts 1.8. The same argument from Luke 24.47 is made in the fourth book of *Contra Cresconium* (compressed in IV.54.64), the first book of the *Contra Gaudentium*, and three times in the *Breviliculus*. Outside of his expressly anti-Donatist literature, it is employed to the same anti-Donatist end of showing the true origination of the church, grounded in Jerusalem, in *In ep. Io.* 3.2, 3; 3.7; 10.8-10, and sporadically in the *Enarrationes*, e.g. 57.6; 109.10; 147.18, as well as the *Sermones*, e.g. 46.32; 47.26; 116.6; 162A.11; 229I.4; 229J.5; 238.3; 340A.11; 359.5; 359B.21. It features also to the same purpose in *Epp.* 93.7.21-23; 105.1.2; 129.2; 185.1.3; 221.4.

¹¹⁶⁵ *Gesta* I.18 (twice); I.55.110; III.230.8 (Augustine).

intertextuality that a single melodic reference to Jerusalem in this connection would evoke his earlier variations on the theme. Augustine, as I have demonstrated, derived his strategy of appealing to transmarine sees against the Donatists from Optatus, lavishing special attention on the seven churches of Asia and the seven Pauline churches. This turn to Jerusalem, however, was entirely his own contribution¹¹⁶⁶ and one that numerically and theologically preponderates so much as to be the lynchpin ‘transmarine’ argument in his corpus. Despite this, the argument has been either altogether ignored by scholarship or noted only in passing;¹¹⁶⁷ the valuable entry in the *Augustinus-Lexikon* on Jerusalem is compactly thorough, but does not mention that Augustine uses Jerusalem against the Donatists, nor does it register his fastidious use of Luke 24.46-7.¹¹⁶⁸ One of the more recent, and lengthiest, monographs on Jerusalem in Augustine’s doctrine of the two cities is similarly silent.¹¹⁶⁹ A perusal through a bibliography on Augustine and Donatism, or Augustine and the church, would not give the reader the impression that (the earthly) Jerusalem features in his anti-Donatist works more than ten times as often as Rome.

One of the reasons he turned to Luke 24.46-7 was to shift the argument away from ‘human’ evidence to the lucid witness of Scripture. So, Augustine writes, ‘I do not want the holy Church to be set forth by human proofs but by the divine oracles’ (*nolo humanis documentis, sed diuinis oraculis sanctam ecclesiam demonstrari*).¹¹⁷⁰ Elsewhere he contrasted the mighty thunderbolts (*fulgura*) of Scriptural proclamation to the frailty of

¹¹⁶⁶ Jerusalem is only indirectly mentioned in this connection in passing at Optatus, VI.3.

¹¹⁶⁷ For example, one instance is captured (*Tract. Ev. Jo. 2.3*) in an analysis, but briefly and without mention of how this is one instance of an argument that is repeated dozens of times; Tim Denecker, *Ideas on Language in Early Latin Christianity: From Tertullian to Isidore of Seville*, vol. 142, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* (Boston: Brill, 2017), 207. This argument is mentioned in passing in Markus, ‘Africa and the *Orbis Terrarum*’, 326.

¹¹⁶⁸ J. van Oort, ‘Hierusalem (Hierosolyma)’, *AL* 3.336-339.

¹¹⁶⁹ van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon*. The role of this doctrine of the two cities, and its relation to Donatist sources, is explored 254-72, and the significance of the earthly Jerusalem 129-31. Luke 24.46-7 is not cited nor mentioned a single time, nor the doctrine of the Church’s origination discussed here.

¹¹⁷⁰ *Unit. eccl.* 3.6; WSA I/21.612; CSEL 52.237.

human arguments.¹¹⁷¹ By doing this, Augustine hoped to trivialise the entire question about *traditio*, while at the same time countering the Donatist's own appeal to Scripture. As he argued against Gaudentius: it is imprudent to place the *causa ecclesiae* in human business, since it was supported and armed rather by divine testimonies.¹¹⁷² Augustine beseeched his adversaries to turn to the 'voice of the shepherd' (*vox pastoris*) so that the sheep may know the true flock—a favourite device when introducing Luke 24.46-7, often with its ancillary texts.¹¹⁷³ But unlike the scriptural battery of evidence the Donatists adduced in the service of African particularism (Chapter 3.4.1), these verses required no specious allegorising¹¹⁷⁴ and, he was confident, impressed an incontrovertibly evident sense.¹¹⁷⁵ Luke 24.46-7 occupied pride of place for its perspicuity, but also because it could serve his two ends: demonstrating the catholicity of the church (*per omnes gentes*) and its empirical origin from Jerusalem.

This text discloses the 'head' and 'bridegroom', who rose from the dead on the third day, with the 'body' and 'bride', which began from Jerusalem and spread to *omnes gentes*. Just as Christ was incarnate in Jerusalem—the significance of Luke 24.45-46—showing himself to be the Head, so too the Body of his church is shown to be incarnate from Jerusalem—the meaning of Luke 24.47. This argument showing the whole Christ, head and body, from these three verses in Luke 24, was particularly emphasised in several of his *Enarrationes*.¹¹⁷⁶ It recurs in his anti-Donatist pamphlets: if you want to know Christ, read Luke 24.45-46 (he was incarnate and died), if you want to know where the church is (*ubi sit*

¹¹⁷¹ *Parm.* II.2-3; cf. *Gesta* III.187; *Cresc.* IV.45.53; *Ep.* 185.1.4. A similar polemical deference to scripturism is deployed against the Pelagians at e.g. *De grat. et nat.* 61.71.

¹¹⁷² *Gaud.* II.13.14; CSEL 53.273-4: *sed ualde stultum est ut ecclesiae causam, diuinis testimoniis fultam atque munitam in hominum causis ratione exorbitante ponamus.*

¹¹⁷³ *Enarrat.* 69.6; *Serm.* 46 (passim); 47.4 (et passim); *Unit. eccl.* 3.6, 11.28. The church is disclosed by the very lips of Christ in Luke 24.47, he says, at *Ep.* 105.2. Also used in general to introduce scriptural argument against the Donatists, not necessarily on Jerusalem, e.g. *Serm.* 147A.5.

¹¹⁷⁴ *Unit. eccl.* 5.8.

¹¹⁷⁵ Readers may feel grateful for Augustine's perspicacity; compare the puzzling contention over Eccles. 10.1 (*Muscae moriturae exterminant olei suavitatem*) between Caecilianists and Donatists in Optatus, VII.4.

¹¹⁷⁶ *Enarrat.* 57.6; 66.9; 109.10-11; 147.18.

ecclesia), look to the following sentence in Luke 24.47.¹¹⁷⁷ Augustine framed the debate consistently as about where the church is (*ubi sit ecclesia Christi quaerimus*),¹¹⁷⁸ and surely, he reasoned, this empirical question demanded apposite evidence. Since the question between Donatists and Caecilianists was not about the Head, whom they jointly recognise in their orthodox Christology (Chapter 3.4.2), the entire matter is about the Body: *quapropter quoniam cum Donatistis quaestio nobis est non de capite, sed de corpore*.¹¹⁷⁹ Sometimes the argument from these verses is simply a proof of the church's catholicity, as in his letter to Count Boniface, without any specific weight attached to Jerusalem.¹¹⁸⁰ However, licensed by this proof-text, Augustine combined origination from Jerusalem together with global diffusion as part of his delineation of the true church.¹¹⁸¹ But, in other places, transmarine communion with Jerusalem in particular was emphasised: 'Where [is the church]? *Throughout all nations. Whence? Beginning from Jerusalem.* You need to be in communion with this Church (*Communica huic ecclesiae*).'¹¹⁸²

In a homily, after repeating twice *incipientibus ab Hierusalem* (Lk 24.47), Augustine tied the catholicity of the church to its point of origin, and offered the most explicit imperative to be in communion with a particular church in his corpus:

When we say to them, "If you are Catholic Christians, be in communion (*communicate*) with that Church from which the gospel is spread throughout the world." When we say to them, "Be in communion with that Jerusalem (*illi Ierusalem communicate*)," they respond to us: "We aren't in communion with that city where our king was killed, where our Lord was killed," as though they hate the city where our Lord was killed . . . But, indeed, they hate the city in which their own Lord was killed. Devout and merciful persons that they are, they greatly lament the fact that Christ was killed, and they kill Christ in other people! But he loved that city, and he pitied it; it was from there that he said that his preaching would begin: *Beginning from Jerusalem* [Lk 24.47]. It was there that he started the preaching of his name,

¹¹⁷⁷ *C. litt. Petil.* II.73.164; *Ep.* 129.2. Compare Optatus' own language of the *ubi sit* in e.g. I.6; CSEL 26.9.

¹¹⁷⁸ *C. litt. Petil.* II.55.126, cf. 73.164.

¹¹⁷⁹ *Unit. eccl.* 4.7; CSEL 52.238.

¹¹⁸⁰ *Ep.* 185.1.3 (using Luke 24.46-7) and 1.5 (using Acts 1.8), as also in *Ep.* 129.2 to Marcellinus.

¹¹⁸¹ Notably and clearly in *Brev. coll.* I.7: *ut ostenderetur Ecclesia catholica non esse pars Donati, sed illa potius quae per totum mundum fructificaret et cresceret, incipiens ab Ierusalem secundum sacram Scripturam.*

¹¹⁸² *Enarrat.* 147.18; CCSL 40.2155; WSA III/20.463.

and you are horrified at being in communion with that city! It isn't surprising that, since you have been cut off, you hate the root (*Non est mirum si praecisus odisti radicem*).¹¹⁸³

As may now be expected, given his theology of catholicity, Augustine elsewhere offered the more generic injunction *communicare orbi terrarum*.¹¹⁸⁴ This was perhaps too nebulous a criterion, however, and where the apostolic centres of the East acquired loaded significance in his polemic as the source of the church in Africa, Jerusalem could function as the ultimate *origo ecclesiae*.

The phrasing of Luke 24.46-7 was congenial to Augustine's purpose, allowing him, as above, to make Jerusalem the origin of the church in the very dimension of its catholicity. This is prominent in a sermon preached in June 404 at Carthage, which contains one of his lengthiest variations on the theme:

Why wait for a mere man to give judgment about you from the bench? Listen to Christ giving it from the gospel. *Throughout all nations*, he says, *beginning from Jerusalem*. Any sign of you, there? Do you communicate with all nations? Are you in communion with that Church which is spread throughout all nations, beginning from Jerusalem? If you are in communion with it, then you are there, you're in the vine, you haven't been cut off; it, you see, is the vine, which has grown and filled the whole wide world, the body of Christ, the Church of Christ, whose head is in heaven. But if you are only in communion with Africans...then don't you find that you have remained in a part only, and been cut off from the whole?¹¹⁸⁵

After reminding his audience that this verse shows that the church is (geographically) catholic by divine testimony (Luke 24.46-7) and not human artifice, he continued:

Didn't it come to Africa from there? You see, if it began from Jerusalem, it came to you by filling everything on the way, not by drying up. Who could ever say, "A channel was led off from the spring to come to me; it dried up on the way and reached me?" If it dries up along the way, how did it reach you? Of course it reached you by filling everything on the way. Ungrateful stream, why do you speak ill of the spring (*fontem*)? Unless it flowed, you wouldn't fill up (*Nisi minaret, non impereris*).¹¹⁸⁶

¹¹⁸³ *Tract. ep. Jo.* 2.3; WSA I/14.41; PL 35.1990-1.

¹¹⁸⁴ E.g., *Enarrat.* 56.13; *Ep.* 93.7.23.

¹¹⁸⁵ *Serm.* 162A(=Denis 19).10; WSA III/5.161-2.

¹¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*; WSA III/5.161-2.

The premiss of perdurance, usually assumed, is openly operational here. Augustine seems to be implying that churches ‘downstream’ of their progenitors were existentially dependent upon them. Gregory of Nyssa remarked: ‘For the river of grace flows everywhere—it does not have its font in Palestine, and flow into the nearby sea—but it fills the whole world’.¹¹⁸⁷ For Augustine, it was precisely the opposite: the church has its font in Palestine, and flows into the nearby sea, through the *transmarini* to his Libyan shores. Jerusalem appears to be more than merely a Mother Church—for children can and do survive their parents—but stands at the head of what Medieval theorists might call a *per se* series, in which each member depends upon its prior cause for its continued activity.¹¹⁸⁸

Accordingly, in the vexed dispute that concerned Donatists and Caecilianists regarding the origin (*origo, radix, exordium*) of their respective churches, Augustine grounded his communion in the very historical origin of the church.¹¹⁸⁹ On one occasion, this was done precisely to disarm any anxiety about both Augustine’s own dubiously transmarine origins and the fact that Caecilianists enjoyed no unbroken succession in Hippo (Chapter 5.1). Most instructive in this regard is his humorous, or frustrating, back-and-forth with Petilian in the third session of the 411 Conference regarding his ordination, to which I called attention earlier. Petilian began by asking why Augustine was so invested in defending Caecilian—was Augustine his son, or Caecilian his father or mother?¹¹⁹⁰ Augustine avoided the question, stating only that he is in the same church to which Caecilian had earlier belonged, and Petilian sharpened the point: was Caecilian his father, or else does

¹¹⁸⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *Adversus eos qui differunt baptismum*; PG 46.420C. Translation mine.

¹¹⁸⁸ See e.g. Scotus, *Ord.* I, Dist. II, Q. 1.

¹¹⁸⁹ Eno notes that Augustine substantially turned away from the ‘old framework’ of preoccupation with origins to one of geographic catholicity, he relied not only on Rome but also on ‘eastern sees mentioned in the New Testament’. However, the single importance of Jerusalem in this connection was missed. Eno, ‘The Significance of the Lists of Roman Bishops in the Anti-Donatist Polemic’.

¹¹⁹⁰ *Gesta* III.227; SC 224.1168: *Tu quis es? Filius es Caeciliani, an non?* Compare Optatus’ discussion about episcopal or ecclesial parentage: I.21, 28; II.5; III.10; VII.1.

Augustine lack an *origo* (presumably, for his episcopal succession)?¹¹⁹¹ Augustine's first response merits a full quotation:

We are in the church in which Caecilian was bishop and died. We commemorate his name at the altar, and hold communion with his memory just as the memory of a brother, not as of a father or mother. You ask of me where my communion took its beginning (*exordium*). The Lord Christ himself asserts the beginning of my communion when he said: [Luke 24.46-7] . . . This proclamation began from Jerusalem, from this most illustrious beginning it spread forth, spreading even to our own church; first through neighbouring lands, then through far-off lands, it came to Africa.¹¹⁹²

He concluded that no crime or calumny of men could separate him from this church. Petilian reiterated his line of questioning, whether Caecilian is Augustine's father or mother, and Augustine curtly replied that he is only his brother.¹¹⁹³

The most developed of his arguments from origination from and communion with Jerusalem occurs in his *De unitate*, which will be briefly rehearsed. In Luke 24.45-46, the 'Head' is identified in his passion and resurrection, and Luke 24.47 grants unambiguous knowledge of the 'Body' (the church), which began at Jerusalem. Just as at this point the heavenly Head rendered himself empirical and subjected himself to palpation by the disciples, so too this provided the clearest opportunity to manifest the Body.¹¹⁹⁴ For the sake of argument, Augustine was willing to jettison all proofs from the Old Testament in favour of this single most clear testimony—though he could not resist a passing citation of Psalm 49.2 (*ex Sion species decoris eius*).¹¹⁹⁵ Augustine insisted that the Jerusalem under consideration must be taken 'literally' (*proprie*) to refer to the visible city, preparing in

¹¹⁹¹ *Gesta* III.228-9; SC 224.1168.

¹¹⁹² *Gesta* III.230; SC 224.1170: *In ecclesia sumus in qua Caecilianus episcopatum gessit et diem obiit. Eius nomen ad altare recitamus, eius memoriae communicamus tamquam memoriae fratris, non tamquam patris aut matris. Queris autem a me unde communion mea sumat exordium. Dominus ipse Christus adserit exordium communionis meae dicens [Lk 24.46-7] . . . Coepit ista praedicatio ab Hierusalem, inde se ab inlustrissimo exordio diffudit, diffundens ecclesiam quam tenemus; primo per uicina, deinde per longinque etiam in Africam uenit.* Translation mine.

¹¹⁹³ *Gesta* III.231-2; SC 224.1170.

¹¹⁹⁴ *Unit. eccl.* 10.24; cf. *Enarrat.* 59.6, 67.6; *C. litt. Petil.* II.73.164 and note 1161.

¹¹⁹⁵ Often paired with Luke 24.46-7; e.g. *Ep.* 76.1; see especially *Enarrat.* 49.4.

advance for any objection that might hope to render it in a spiritual sense, because the resurrection and three-day burial of the preceding verse were manifestly literal too.¹¹⁹⁶

Continuing:

Moreover, since Jerusalem, expressed figuratively and understood spiritually, signifies the universal Church (*uniuersam ecclesiam*), how does the universal Church begin from the universal Church, as though Jerusalem would begin from Jerusalem? It is clear, then, that this was said with a literal intent (*proprie*) regarding that city from which the Church is proven to have begun, and it is so clear as to leave no room to heretical cleverness for any hidden trickery.¹¹⁹⁷

So the church began in this visible city (*uisibilem ciuitatem*), and its global diffusion stated in the same breath.¹¹⁹⁸ Taking Acts 1.8 to hand, Augustine unfolded the history of the spread of this church to all nations, narrated in the same canonical book.¹¹⁹⁹ In contrast to this evangelical testimony, the Donatists want the church to have begun from Carthage and spread only to Africa¹²⁰⁰—a witheringly unfair caricature, perhaps. The assumption of perdurance emerges again: if the church began in Jerusalem, and passed from there to Africa, it still remained there, and to be out of communion with Jerusalem is to be out of communion with the church.¹²⁰¹ It is hard to overstate the confidence Augustine placed in this argument.¹²⁰² By it, the catholic church was not only shown to possess its defining trait—‘catholic’ universal diffusion—but be empirically verifiable by the very simple test, of maintaining communion with its historic transmarine point of origin in Jerusalem.

¹¹⁹⁶ *Unit. eccl.* 10.25; CSEL 52.261.

¹¹⁹⁷ *Unit. eccl.* 10.26; CSEL 52.261.

¹¹⁹⁸ *Unit. eccl.* 11.27; CSEL 52.262.

¹¹⁹⁹ *Unit. eccl.* 11.29-30.

¹²⁰⁰ *Unit. eccl.* 16.41.

¹²⁰¹ *Unit. eccl.* 11.30, and his insistence upon the enduring steadfastness of the apostolic churches is in 17.44f.

¹²⁰² E.g. *Unit. eccl.* 11.28; CSEL 52.264: *habeo manifestissimam uocem pastoris mei* [in Luke 24.46-7] *commendantis mihi et sine ullis ambagibus exprimentis ecclesiam*. Similarly, *C. litt. Petil.* II.73.164; CSEL 52.104: *iam* [after citing Luke 24.46-7] *enim quia ubi sit ecclesia uerbis ipsius apparet, manifestum est ubi sit ouile Christi*.

(1.2) Excursus: Jerusalem in the time of Augustine

It is difficult to ascertain to what extent Augustine's appeal to Jerusalem reflected, or took advantage of, contemporary attitudes to the city and its church. Augustine does seem to have strongly developed views on Jerusalem's contemporary ecclesiastical significance.¹²⁰³ His transmarine appeal to Jerusalem against the Donatists does not mirror any awareness of the ecclesiastical importance of Jerusalem's see in the broader Christian world. It has been argued that from apostolic times Jerusalem was an 'administrative centre' and 'the head among equals' of the various churches,¹²⁰⁴ and that such a conception might even be observable in Cyprian and Firmilian.¹²⁰⁵ Indeed, among Hellenistic Jews of the diaspora there was a self-identity as colonists belonging to the mother city of Jerusalem.¹²⁰⁶ The history of the ecclesiastical status of Jerusalem has been ably covered by two older studies by Siméon Vailhé¹²⁰⁷ and Ernest Honigmann.¹²⁰⁸ Given that the patriarchal elevation of Jerusalem only happened under its bishop Juvenal, after Augustine died, it is unsurprising that one cannot find in his works any significance attached to the Jerusalem church insofar as ecclesiastical status is concerned. His attempt at damage-control in his letter to John of Jerusalem regarding the disastrous synod of Diospolis shows no unique honorifics in the address nor any special deference to Jerusalem's see.¹²⁰⁹ One would search in vain in Augustine's corpus for references to any unique ecclesiastical prerogatives of the bishop or church of Jerusalem—this is clearly besides his interest. Jerusalem is not important for him

¹²⁰³ 'Augustine rarely refers to the city in Palestine of his own day: when he mentions the empirical city of Jerusalem from post-Old Testament times, he usually has in mind the city at the time of Jesus and his apostles or at the time of its destruction in 70 CE.' Johannes van Oort, 'Augustine on Israel and Jerusalem', *Journal of Early Christian History* 13, no. 3 (2023): 124.

¹²⁰⁴ So William Mitchell Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, 3rd ed., Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures 1894 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1897), 153.

¹²⁰⁵ Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 158–59.

¹²⁰⁶ Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 13 and 383n1.

¹²⁰⁷ Siméon Vailhé, 'Formation du patriarcat de Jérusalem', *Échos d'Orient* 13, no. 85 (1910): 325–36.

¹²⁰⁸ Ernest Honigmann, 'Juvenal of Jerusalem', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950): esp. 209–219. See also, within the context of assessing the development of ecclesiastical provinces, Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602*, 1964, 2:882.

¹²⁰⁹ *Ep.* 179, esp. 1.

because of its contemporary status, it is so because of its historical position as the origin of the church.¹²¹⁰ Van Oort, who has contributed the most to scholarship on Augustine's thinking on Jerusalem, accordingly argued that Augustine had a limited interest in the contemporary and empirical city, sublimating it into a symbol, as the *visio pacis* and the City of God.¹²¹¹ This is only partly true: while Augustine does have an acute interest in the literal Jerusalem against the Donatists, this is not reflected more broadly elsewhere.

One can observe however a special epistemic interest in Jerusalem and the Holy Land as a privileged custodians of tradition in his early work, the *De utilitate credendi*. Discussing how no one would seek to interpret the scriptures on their own but would seek out a teacher or educational resources, Augustine wrote that, if those were lacking, the diligent enquirer would sail *trans mare* to those lands where the biblical history took place.¹²¹² Jerusalem's local tradition was cited as a benchmark of reliability by Firmilian (Chapter 1.4.1), and pursued by Melito of Sardis, who went to Jerusalem to verify his scriptural canon.¹²¹³ A similar fact-finding excursion was undertaken by Augustine's close friend and colleague, Alypius, who ventured to Jerome in the early 390s.¹²¹⁴ Augustine seems to have endorsed the idea that Jerusalem's proximity to the actual origination of the church in geographic space contributed some privileged reliability so far as tradition and

¹²¹⁰ See especially *Civ.* X.32.

¹²¹¹ van Oort, 'Augustine on Israel and Jerusalem'.

¹²¹² *Util. cred.* 7.17; CSEL 25.22. Compare the appeal to search for a learned or spiritually adept person to resolve a conundrum in *De duab. an.* 7.9. This 'historicist' approach is otherwise 'quite foreign to his thought'; Mark Vessey, 'The Great Conference: Augustine and His Fellow Readers', in *Augustine and the Bible* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 74–75.

¹²¹³ Firmilian *apud* Cyprian *Ep.* 75.6.1; Eusebius *H.E.* 6.27; see Clarke's note in ACW 47.257–8.

¹²¹⁴ *Ep.* 28.1. So too Orosius in 415, and perhaps the *peregrina* to Rome and Jerusalem done by his two *cives*; *De errore Prisc. et Orig.* 3. To this may be compared the venture of Plotinus, who joined Gordian's Eastern expedition to learn of Indian and Persian religion, *Vita Plotini*, 3. For this itinerary and precedents see the discussion and notes in Mark Edwards, 'Two Images of Pythagoras: Iamblichus and Porphyry', in *The Divine Iamblichus: Philosopher and Man of Gods*, ed. H.J. Blumenthal and E.G. Clark (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1993), 160.

scriptural interpretation were concerned. Jerusalem, being the *prima ecclesia*, enjoyed special insight due to its proximity to the drama of salvation.¹²¹⁵

The most significant development in Augustine's time was the proliferation of interest in Jerusalem and Palestine in the establishment of the 'Holy Land' as a cultic and pilgrimage centre for a new Christian empire.¹²¹⁶ Joan Taylor has analysed this as a distinctly Constantinian and post-Constantinian development,¹²¹⁷ which had reached its maturity during Augustine's lifetime, especially evident in the writings of Cyril of Jerusalem.¹²¹⁸ This new Christian spiritual capital, magnificently adorned by Constantine, acquired a congruent aura as a holy city and sanctuary.¹²¹⁹ Augustine had ambivalent attitudes about the value of physical pilgrimage—Renna has argued that he was 'never an enthusiastic supporter' of 'actual' pilgrimages, 'which could easily denigrate into a superstitious attachment to physical places'.¹²²⁰ Notwithstanding any preference for 'spiritual' pilgrimage,¹²²¹ Augustine was closely involved with trends in the 4th century to foster greater attachment to the Holy Places in Jerusalem, through the correspondence and literary activity of Jerome, and especially due to the importation of Stephen's relics to North Africa. Before considering Stephen, notice must be made of an episode featuring a certain Hesperius, a layman in Fussala (some forty miles from Hippo) who had received from a friend some soil taken from Jerusalem. Augustine relates that he put this soil in his bedroom as an apotropaic talisman

¹²¹⁵ *Doctr. chr.* III.6.10; CSEL 80.85: *prima ecclesia Hierosolimitana* etc.

¹²¹⁶ Edwards, *Religions of the Constantinian Empire*, 170–73.

¹²¹⁷ Joan Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish-Christian Origins* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 295–317. Though, for criticism of the notion of a Constantinian 'corporeal turn' and the theological and cultural continuity of earlier generations for this behaviour see Harrison, *The Art of Listening in the Early Church*, 33–35.

¹²¹⁸ Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 315; Kristian Akselberg, 'Greeks, Jews, Heretics, and the Church of God' (University of Oxford, 2017), 64–94.

¹²¹⁹ Zosimus, for example, relates how Constantine converted Jerusalem from a Jewish, to a Christian, city, and that it served as a place of sanctuary for the wife and daughter of the disgraced and murdered Rufinus; *Hist. nov.* V.8.

¹²²⁰ Thomas Renna, 'Zion and Jerusalem in the Psalms', in *Augustine: Biblical Exegete*, ed. Frederick Van Fleteren and Joseph C. Schnaubelt (New York, 2001), 284.

¹²²¹ For contemporary ascetic attitudes demonstrating a tensed ambivalence to concepts of pilgrimage/exile and a concept of 'armchair pilgrimage' see Philip Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford: University Press, 1978), 48–49, 221.

to ensure his safety, a logical response to harassment he had endured from demonic miscreants. When Augustine visited the locale with an episcopal colleague, Hesperius donated the soil with a desire to establish a shrine or oratory built upon it. Augustine was pleased with this suggestion, and even more pleased to share that this had borne no small fruit: a local paralytic boy had been cured by praying there.¹²²² When Augustine (Chapter 5.2.1) made use of the venerable soil (*terra*) of the Eastern churches against the Donatists, he was not drawing on abstraction but sensibilities reflected in local practice.¹²²³

Augustine preached ten sermons explicitly dedicated to Stephen, and Dupont has identified thirteen sermons in which he is the ‘main topic’.¹²²⁴ The remains of Stephen were discovered in 415 through a mode of personal revelation fashionable at the time, and they were brought to Jerusalem by the bishop, John, from which they were distributed throughout the Empire.¹²²⁵ His relics were translated to Africa by Orosius and Evodius, both friends and colleagues of Augustine’s, who received some of the relics for his own church in Hippo.¹²²⁶ In particular for the present purposes, the relics of Stephen served to reinforce the connection of Augustine’s church with the *origo* of the church in the Holy Land. More than simply establishing this connection, the spread of Stephen’s relics served to enact the very sort of transmarine catholicity that Augustine was polemically invested in. Ancona in central Italy, Augustine says, boasted of having a stone that struck his sainted arm.¹²²⁷ The cult of Stephen

¹²²² *Civ.* XXII.8.

¹²²³ *Ep.* 52.2.

¹²²⁴ Anthony Dupont, ‘*Imitatio Christi, Imitatio Stephani*: Augustine’s Thinking on Martyrdom Based on His *Sermones* on the Protomartyr Stephen’, *Augustiniana* 56, no. 1/2 (2006): 29–30. He identifies these (p. 30n5) as *Serm.* 314-319, 319A, 320-324, 382.

¹²²⁵ Though it would take until 416 for the news of their discovery to reach North Africa; discussed within the context of dating the *Tract. Ev. Jo.*, Milewski, ‘Augustine’s 124 Tractates on the Gospel of John’, 66.

¹²²⁶ Dupont, ‘*Imitatio Christi, Imitatio Stephani*: Augustine’s Thinking on Martyrdom Based on His *Sermones* on the Protomartyr Stephen’, 35. Citing *Serm.* 318.1

¹²²⁷ *Serm.* 323.2. Tabbernee is right to note that these relics ‘provided physical testimony to the continuity of the true faith from the Holy Land to the (Caecilianist, not Donatist) churches in North Africa; however, the kind of continuity in which Augustine invested is not so much of faith, but of ecclesiastical organisation and communion. William Tabbernee, ‘Augustine and the North African Martyriological Tradition’, in *Augustine and Tradition: Influences, Contexts, Legacy*, ed. David Hunter and Jonathan Yates (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2021), 82.

assumed international significance, with the bones first coming to Africa, Minorca, and later to Constantinople.¹²²⁸ The body of Stephen, through pious dismemberment, had itself become ‘catholic’, and thereby a special token of catholicity. William Tabbernee has recently brought to attention the illuminating role in which Stephen’s relics played in Augustine’s anti-Donatist polemic: the possession of the ‘true’ relics of Stephen by the Caecilianists, and the miracles worked by the relics, served to legitimate their communion against Donatist claims.¹²²⁹ Augustine carefully catalogued and promoted the miracles performed by these relics in Hippo, and their spectacular power also at Calama and Uzala. Carthage’s relics of Stephen could boast such an impressive *curriculum vitae* that a tract was authored as their literary monument.¹²³⁰ I wish to note here that the chief protagonists of this reliquary network were then, as in later times, monastics.¹²³¹ Monasticism was itself a transmarine novelty introduced to Africa after the Donatists had already separated, which fact likely explains in part both why they held it in such suspicion, and why Augustine promoted it.¹²³²

Another interesting case of saintly relics serving as transmarine connections is when Augustine sought to adjudicate the dispute between two clergymen in Hippo, Bonitatus and Spes, in 402. Both were mutual accusers of each other, and Augustine, as Shaw describes, ‘ordered the men to journey to the shrine of the holy Felix at Nola where the saint himself would decide the matter by miraculous revelation’, as a ‘final court, without appeal’.¹²³³

¹²²⁸ Hugo Mendéz, *The Cult of Stephen in Jerusalem: Inventing a Patron Martyr* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 77–78 and 77n3. For the politics of relics in the reigns of Gratian and Theodosius see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 262–34.

¹²²⁹ Tabbernee, ‘Augustine and the North African Martyriological Tradition’, 72, 88, 92.

¹²³⁰ *De miraculis S. Stephani*; attributed to Evodius but probably anonymous (text in PL 41.833-854); MacMullen, *The Second Church*, 65.

¹²³¹ Maribel Dietz, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims: Ascetic Travel in the Mediterranean World, A.D. 300-800* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005).

¹²³² *Ep.* 22.8; *Ennar.* 132.6; see Coyle, ‘The Self-Identity of North African Christians’, 71; Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 320. Merdinger highlights Augustine’s role in importing it to Africa; *Rome and the African Church*, 70.

¹²³³ Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 395–96. The details of this episode are in *Epp.* 77-78. For the shrine of Felix at Nola built by Paulinus, see Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 224–26.

Augustine was tapping into a rapidly proliferating network centred around Paulinus' Nola, both as 'a recognized center of ascetism' and because of the *sanctitas loci* of the resting place of the martyr.¹²³⁴ However, while Augustine was happy to draw from the reservoir of the thaumaturgic to aid the Caecilianist cause, he is explicit that it is subordinate to his argument from Luke 24.46-7. Though healing miracles happen in the Caecilianist church and their overseas allies; though the remains of martyrs are uncovered and held by them; though ecstatic prophecy should reveal the falsity of Donatism; these ultimately do not prove the church, he believed.¹²³⁵ The proof of the Caecilianst church was much more simple, he claimed, and it came from the lips of Christ: Luke 24.46-7.¹²³⁶

(2) The Conference and beyond

With the *uno breui capitulo paucisque uerbis* of these verses, Augustine and his colleagues argued that the Donatists were entirely refuted.¹²³⁷ This boast was in a letter they wrote to Marcellinus shortly before the Conference, in which they threw down the gauntlet of transmarine catholicity in triumphal tones. There are, they wrote:

countless passages (*innumerabilia testimonia*) that promise that the Church will exist in all nations and in the whole world, just as we see in the gospel, in the letters of the apostles, and in the Acts of the Apostles that the promise began to be kept and fulfilled. In them we read of the places, cities, and provinces through which the Church grew, *beginning from Jerusalem* [Lk 24.47],¹²³⁸ so that it also spread to Africa, not by changing place, but by growth. But they have not found any testimony

¹²³⁴ Sigrid Mratschek, 'Multis Enim Notissima Est Sanctitas Loci: Paulinus and the Gradual Rise of Nola as a Center of Christian Hospitality', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9, no. 4 (2001): 526. Quoting Augustine *Ep.* 78.3.

¹²³⁵ *Unit. eccl.* 19.50; CSEL 52.298: *quaecumque talia in catholica fiunt, ideo sunt approbanda. quia in catholica fiunt, non ideo ipsa catholica manifestatur. quia haec in ea fiunt.* For an earlier use of miracles to support Caecilianism, see the episode of the chrism phial in Optatus II.1.

¹²³⁶ *Ibid.*: *sic et ecclesiam suam commendauit dicens* [Lk 24.46-7] . . . *haec sunt causae nostrae documenta. haec fundamenta. haec firma.*

¹²³⁷ *Ep.* 129.2; CSEL 44.35.

¹²³⁸ I have inserted the scriptural citation here and indicated that it is a quotation: *incipiens ab Hierusalem.*

of the divine scriptures where it is said that the Church would disappear from the other parts of the world and remain only in Africa in the sect of Donatus.¹²³⁹

This letter was read aloud on the first day of the Conference.¹²⁴⁰ Together with the *Mandatum*¹²⁴¹ and Augustine's back-and-forth with Petilian discussed above,¹²⁴² it is one of the main instances in which Luke 24.46-7 occupies pride of place in the scriptural case for Caecilianist catholicity. Augustine rehearsed the content of this letter in his *Breviculus*, where he put the point much more severely: the catholic church is not the *pars Donati*, but rather that one which (a) was growing throughout the whole world and (b) began from Jerusalem, 'according to the Scriptures'.¹²⁴³ His logic, as in the letter, simply assumes what I have considered as the doctrine of perdurance. The Donatists, he believed, failed to demonstrate that the church had 'disappeared' in transmarine locales, leaving it a foregone conclusion that the catholic church remained among the *ecclesiae transmarinae* described in the New Testament. Because the church began at Jerusalem, Augustine could therefore rest content that the church remained in Jerusalem; and because the church was described as existing in various places in the New Testament, the church also remained there.¹²⁴⁴ In a letter written after the Conference, designed to persuade reluctant Donatists that the victory

¹²³⁹ *Ep.* 129.3; WSA II/2.179; CSEL 44.36.

¹²⁴⁰ *Gesta* I.18.

¹²⁴¹ *Gesta* I.55; Chapter 5.3.

¹²⁴² *Gesta* III.227-232.

¹²⁴³ *Brev. coll.* I.6; CSEL 53.41: *ut ostenderetur ecclesia catholica non esse pars Donati, sed illa potius, quae per totum mundum fructificaret et cresceret incipiens ab Hierusalem secundum sacram scripturam.* Augustine's use of Luke 24.46-7 often takes the form of suggesting that there are two marks of the church: that it began from Jerusalem (*ab Hierusalem coeptam*) and is spread throughout the whole world (*toto terrarum orbe diffundi*); e.g. *Don.* 29.50.

¹²⁴⁴ This point is explained more fully in *Brev. coll.* III.8.10; CSEL 53.59: *cui mandato non eos potuisse respondere inueniet, qui utraque legere et considerare uoluerit: primum, quia testimonia ex lege et prophetis et psalmis et apostolicis atque euangelicis litteris deprompta, quibus ostenditur ecclesia catholica per totum mundum diffundi incipiens ab Hierusalem, unde in propinqua et longinqua crescendo etiam in Africam uenit et in alia loca et ciuitates, per quas primitus dilatata est, in quibus multae ecclesiae ad ipsam unam pertinentes apostolico labore fundatae sunt, quibus Donatistas non communicare manifestum est, non solum non pertractare, sed omnino nec attingere uoluerunt, nec aliquod testimonium in tam proluxa epistula sua proferre ausi sunt de scripturis sanctis, quo assererent ecclesiam partis Donati esse praedictam et praenuntiatam, sicut tam multa catholici protulerunt pro ecclesia cui communicant, quae incipiens ab Hierusalem toto orbe diffunditur.*

of the Caecilianists was real and not merely a prejudicial farce, Augustine returned to this point:

For they [at the Conference] were overwhelmed by the divine testimonies of the scriptures. These scriptures describe how the Church, *beginning from Jerusalem*,¹²⁴⁵ grew in all the places where the apostles preached—and they left the names of the same places written in their letters and in their acts—and how from those places it spread through other nations. ... For, when they uphold the truth of the Church with which it is clear that we are in communion but they are not, they testify that they have already lost at that point.¹²⁴⁶

He argued that a rejection of these churches contained an implicit disregard for the Scriptures, which both prophesied the universal extent of the church, and was addressed to these specific transmarine churches.¹²⁴⁷

The unity which the 411 Conference sought included terms which were both designed to mollify Donatist recalcitrance and announce the earnest intentions of the Caecilianists. The Caecilianist bishops promised something that both Augustine had prepared the theological groundwork for¹²⁴⁸ and had been cautiously experimented with beforehand.¹²⁴⁹ The Donatist bishops who joined the Caecilianists with their communities would retain their episcopal dignity, and the resulting pair of bishops would govern in shared

¹²⁴⁵ See note 1238.

¹²⁴⁶ *Ep.* 141.4; WSA II/2.292. See also *Don.* 2.2; CSEL 52.99: *Divina lectio recitatur, quemadmodum coeperit ab Hierusalem, ubi primum congregatis fidelibus missus est de caelo spiritus sanctus; divinae lectiones recitantur, quemadmodum se ab Hierusalem per vicina et longinqua diffuderit. Expressa sunt nomina locorum, manifestata sunt nomina civitatum, in quibus ecclesia Christi apostolico labore fundata est, quae loca et ciuitates etiam epistulas ab apostolis accipere meruerunt; quas epistulas et ipsi in uestris congregationibus legunt et tamen non communicant eorum locorum et civitatum ecclesiis, quae ipsas epistulas accipere meruerunt, obicientes eis nescio qua crimina Afrorum, quod eorum contagione perierint, cum ipsi dixerint in hac ipsa conlatione, quam modo Carthagini habuimus, quod nec causae causa nec personae persona praeiudicet.*

¹²⁴⁷ *Cresc.* IV.58.79.

¹²⁴⁸ On the validity of orders conferred outside the church see e.g. *Bapt.* I.1.2 and the following notes; the muted reception of this doctrine is discussed in H. E. J. Cowdrey, 'Pope Anastasius II and St. Augustine's Doctrine of Holy Orders', *Studia Patristica* 11 (1972): 311–15. The theology and practice of reception of Donatist clergy is discussed in Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy*, 160–62.

¹²⁴⁹ *Reg. Carth.* can. 99, 118. The reception of Donatist clergy in their rank, which was 'frowned upon' by transmarine consultation, and then vetoed, was pushed through after the 401 Council of Carthage, allowing case-by-case discernment; see Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 251–52.

honour until one expired.¹²⁵⁰ This proposal, more radical than what Nicaea had planned—also unsuccessfully—to reunite the Melitians, likely had limited success and little actual application. Nevertheless, this willingness of the Caecilianist episcopate measures the great distance that their ecclesiological theory had travelled from the Cyprianic model that this thesis began with. The unity of the church had been cleanly disentangled from the unicity of the episcopate, to rest instead in the catholic unity of a worldwide communion. A plurality of bishops in a diocese—for Cyprian, the very essence of schism—has in the end become the basis of a proposal for ecclesiastical unity.

One Donatist bishop, whose rejection of this offer is the last recorded chapter of Donatist defiance, was the recipient of Augustine's final word on the matter. Gaudentius, the Donatist bishop of Thamugadi, had managed to retain possession of his see as late as 420, provoking the tribune and notary Dulcitus to apply the severity of the anti-Donatist measures that followed the Conference. Gaudentius, who locked himself inside his impenetrable cathedral with the more zealous of his congregation, threatened an incendiary imitation of Samson: to burn the cathedral down, with him and his comrades inside. Behind his blockade, he wrote two letters to the tribune. The exasperated Dulcitus solicited from Augustine a treatise in response to them, which would be his last against the Donatists. This dramatic long-distance debate ultimately resolved back to the ultimate question: the meaning of 'catholic', with both bishops staking their opposed conceptions on Cyprianic authority. Augustine acknowledges this at the close of the second and last book. Gaudentius began his second letter with an appeal to Cyprian to show that the Donatists were the true 'catholics'.¹²⁵¹ Augustine, as I have already discussed,¹²⁵² attempted to produce the opposite

¹²⁵⁰ *Ep.* 128.3; cf. *Emer.* 6-7; *Serm. ad Caes. pleb.* 2. Augustine defended this policy in a later letter of 420 to a Spanish priest, clearly unsettled at the idea; *Ep.* 11*.25-26. For the details of this arrangement see Hermanowicz, *Possidius of Calama*, 205n62.

¹²⁵¹ *Gaud.* II.2.2.

¹²⁵² Chapter 5.3; *Gaud.* II.9.10.

conclusion. He ended his treatise with an invitation to unity, doubtless recalling the offer of being bishops together, which Gaudentius had rejected:

Behold what it is you hear, behold what it is you fear: that, with the help of the Saviour's mercy, we might together hold to catholic charity and together love catholic peace and together grow with his grain everywhere... You see, of course, that without any defence of Caecilian—or even of whatever other men whom you strive to accuse—the *catholica* stands, in its own strength and firmness.¹²⁵³

¹²⁵³ *Gaud.* II.13.14; CSEL 53.273: *ecce quod audi, ecce quod caue, ut adiuuante misericordia saluatoris simul caritatem catholicam teneamus, simul pacem catholicam diligamus, simul cum eius frumentis usque quaque crescamus...uides nempe sine ulla defensione Caeciliani uel quorumlibet hominum, quos accusandos putatis, catholicam suo robore ac firmitate consistere.* Translation mine.

Conclusion

In the sixth century, two Africans, both proudly advertising their fidelity to Augustine, were haunted by the spectre of Donatism. The church ‘of the whole world’ was the object of their contention; one claiming that its mind was definitively expressed at the ‘universal’ council of Chalcedon, the other, that it was represented by the cadre of bishops supporting Justinian and the bishop of Rome who had been press-ganged into compliance. This fault line emerged during what would come to be known as the ‘Three Chapters Controversy’, a spectacular ecclesiastical drama over theological niceties which, if they were barely tolerable to their protagonists, can only be regarded with regret by the historian. Facundus of Hermiane, a bishop in Byzacena, went into schism in 550 from the bishop of Rome alongside a base of supporters in the African episcopate, indignant at what they felt was a betrayal of the authority of Chalcedon. An African *scholasticus* resident in Constantinople and loyal to the program of Justinian was quick to accuse Facundus and his colleagues of ‘neo-Donatism’:¹²⁵⁴ they put purity of doctrine at such a premium, he alleged, that they broke the unity of the church.¹²⁵⁵ Facundus objected to this characterisation¹²⁵⁶—the intransigency of Hilary for Nicaea, formerly used by Donatists, was now cited in his support¹²⁵⁷—and insisted that the debate fundamentally concerned what it meant for someone to be ‘catholic’.¹²⁵⁸ The ‘Three Chapters’ were unacceptable for him because they anathematised three men long dead, who had both died in the peace of the church and had been rehabilitated at Chalcedon. Facundus argued that doxastic considerations were irrelevant: heretical error,

¹²⁵⁴ Eno, ‘Doctrinal Authority in the African Ecclesiology of the Sixth Century’, 111.

¹²⁵⁵ For this episode, and for the likelihood on the evidence of Facundus that historical Donatism was extinct, see Adamiak, ‘When Did Donatist Christianity End?’, 221–22.

¹²⁵⁶ Though agreeing, in good Augustinian fashion, that the Donatists erred in separating from the universal church; *Moc.* 8. For the continuation of this heresiological theme in African literature see Conant, ‘Donatism in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries’, 356.

¹²⁵⁷ Facundus, *Moc.* 17. See Chapter 3.4.2.

¹²⁵⁸ Facundus, *Pro def.* III.1; V.3; VI.6.

if held without culpable pertinacity and knowledge, could not exclude one from the *catholica*. Cyprian, despite his errors on rebaptism, was not to be condemned because of the Donatists who claimed to be his progeny.¹²⁵⁹ Who better to define catholicity, Facundus suggested, than ‘Augustine the Catholic’ (*catholicus Augustinus*), who taught that:¹²⁶⁰

They are <still> catholics, who, having been established in the church, departed from this life. <Even though> due to their human weakness, they lacked sharpness of mind to penetrate the hidden depths, they probably strayed from truth. Augustine did not want such people to be called ‘heretics’... If it is shown that they have strayed from the truth in any way, and have departed from this life in error, still we do not deny that they remained in the catholic church unto the end.¹²⁶¹

Catholicity was now above all a sociological descriptor, marking out one’s membership in the unitary, and stubbornly empirical, institution of the visible church, whose universal constitution and will is expressed in universal councils.¹²⁶² Catholicity was no longer synonymously interchangeable with orthodoxy, which it had been for many in the fourth century. Ironically, out of loyalty to Augustine, Facundus and his colleagues were willing to enter into schism from the *transmarini* and rebel against the ecclesiastical supervision of the emperor.¹²⁶³ As the Donatists had long ago complained *de praeiudicio nominis*, Facundus lamented that ‘a prejudice against the catholic religion had arisen from the palace’.¹²⁶⁴ Nevertheless, he insisted that he remained in communion with the universal church and it was his opponents who had implicitly committed schism, not his party, since it was they who sought to defy a universal council of the whole church.¹²⁶⁵ By the time of

¹²⁵⁹ Facundus, *Moc.* 53-4.

¹²⁶⁰ This follows a quotation from *Catech.* 8.12.

¹²⁶¹ Facundus, *Moc.* 56-7; CCSL 90A.413: *Catholicos itaque dicit ex hac uita migrasse catholicus Augustinus, qui in ecclesia constituti per humanam infirmitatem minus ualuerunt acie mentis abditiore penetrare et uerisimilitudine a ueritate aberrauerunt, nec uult eos haereticos dici... si a ueritate in aliquo forsitan aberrasse monstretur et de hac uita in ipso positus errore migrasset, haereticos non dicimus, quousque in finem mansisse in ecclesia catholica non negamus.* Translation mine; I have taken certain liberties to make this more fluent.

¹²⁶² Cf. also Facundus, *Ep. fid.* 1-3.

¹²⁶³ Who, Facundus pointed out, was only a layperson (*unius laici*); *Pro def.* XII.3.

¹²⁶⁴ Facundus, *Moc.* 64; CCSL 90A.415: *de palatio praeiudicii catholicae religionis exortis.* See chapter 2.2.1.

¹²⁶⁵ Facundus, *Moc.* 21-3.

Facundus, the fragility of the Caecilianist conception of catholicity, which Donatists had protested in vain by citing the Arian controversy, had become too evident to ignore as brazenly as his forebears had.¹²⁶⁶ Deep and inveterate schisms had since fractured the Christian world, some enduring to the present. Nevertheless, the ecclesiological reconfiguration initiated by the Caecilianists and perfected by Augustine perdured and would go on to have a very long legacy.

The Caecilianist definition of catholicity has been elevated to an accepted axiom of dogmatics, and the Donatists have achieved immortality as its foil. Almost a millennium after the outbreak of the Donatist schism, Aquinas explained, in his concise habit: ‘the church is catholic, that is, universal—and this is to be understood firstly in terms of place, because it covers the whole world. This is against the Donatists.’¹²⁶⁷ Although I have focused on the Caecilianists, who were responsible for the development of ‘catholicity’ which has been my object, I hope to have given the Donatists a fair hearing. Modern scholarship has pursued, and continues, a study of the Donatists in their own right, and not simply as refracted through the hostile witness of their opponents.¹²⁶⁸ Nevertheless, while the centrality of the church’s universal ‘catholicity’ in Augustine has ensured it could not be ignored, the Caecilianist perspective has unfortunately been conceded a tacit normativity. To assume that ‘catholic’ means ‘universal’, and that the Donatists had separated from the universal church as conceived by Augustine, is to accept the Caecilianist framing of the schism, with inevitable prejudice against and misunderstanding of the Donatists. If, instead, the Donatist understanding of catholicity has a fairer claim to represent a more traditional—

¹²⁶⁶ Facundus frequently highlighted the Acacian schism, *Moc.* 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20, 50. Facundus agrees with Hilary that beforehand Arians *peruaserant uniuersas pene totius orbis locales ecclesias*; *Ep. fid.* 52; CCSL 90A.432.

¹²⁶⁷ *Expositio Symboli* a. 9: *quod Ecclesia est Catholica, idest universalis: primo quantum ad locum, quia est per totum mundum, contra Donatistas*. Translation mine. Calvin also defined catholic as ‘universal’, citing Augustine.

¹²⁶⁸ Highlighted in Tilley, ‘Redefining Donatism’, 26.

and, perhaps, a more etymologically sound—interpretation, the ‘invention’ of the Caecilianist party represents both a striking development in the history of doctrine, and a creative reaction to the situation of both parties with respect to transmarine churches. Consequently, the argument of this thesis has further contributed to the ongoing study of how Donatism represents both the traditional and local character of African Christianity.¹²⁶⁹ To this end, I have drawn attention to a comparative silence between the Caecilianist polemic against the Donatists and that against analogous schismatic groups. The argument concerning the church’s universality, and the equation of the contested appellation ‘catholic’ with it, is shown to be unique by comparison with other ecclesiastical controversies. Unlike the usual assumption, this was neither a natural nor obvious strategy, and the Caecilianist recourse to it specifically reflected both their precariousness in Africa and their dependence on the support of transmarine churches and the imperial government. The invention of catholicity as geographic diffusion exposes the weakness of the Caecilianist party in Africa and their anxiety to be seen as the church of the transmarine *catholica*.¹²⁷⁰ This was essential to a Caecilianist ecclesiological discourse which succeeded in constructing the terms of debate as one between local particularism and geographic universality.

This thesis, due to both my own limitations and the focus of its argument, has left a great deal unsaid, and still more passed over with brevity. These insufficiencies indicate some items that merit future study to better develop an understanding of the ‘Catholic controversy’ and the competing self-identities of Caecilianists and Donatists. Firstly, a closer examination of how both imperial legislation and policy promoted and contributed to

¹²⁶⁹ ‘[W]hat we call “Donatism” is in reality nothing else than the Christianity of North Africa as it continued to survive into the fourth century’; Markus, ‘Africa and the *Orbis Terrarum*’, 321. See further Markus, ‘Christianity and Dissent in Roman North Africa’.

¹²⁷⁰ I am grateful for the framing provided by a similar revisionism in George Demacopolous, *The Invention of Peter: Apostolic Discourse and Papal Authority in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

the creation of a unitary ‘global’ *catholica* is required, both as a separate phenomenon¹²⁷¹ and in its intersection with the Donatist controversy. One of the animating motives behind Augustine’s arguments to both restrict ‘catholic’ as a name for his party and earn the Donatists the opprobrium of ‘heresy’—because they rejected the universality of the church—was to provide a theological platform to justify the application of anti-heretical legislation against his opponents.¹²⁷² The Caecilianist ‘invention’, from the outset, never lost sight of a primarily practical and legal aim: to be identified with the privileged and recognised institution of the *catholica*. But the development of both a theology and policy of catholicity, according to which the church was structured as an institution organised across and beyond the Roman world, was neither a necessary nor a normal development in late antique or classical religion. Christianity from its inception distinguished itself from comparable ‘elective cults’ by the diligent maintenance of episcopal networks and an impulse towards broader uniformity and mutual solicitude.¹²⁷³ As Nock summarised, regarding the protagonist of Apuleius’ novel:

when Lucius after his Isiac initiation at Corinth came to Rome he went to the temple of Isis in the Campus Martius and felt ‘a stranger to the temple but at home in the faith’, but even so he was pressed to take another initiation and there is not the faintest suggestion of anything like Christian letters of introduction to a new diocese or of a holy Isiac church throughout the world. There was a will to power in the Alexandrian priesthood of Isis and Sarapis, as we see in their propaganda, but no oecumenical organization. There was a universalist point of view; Isis and Imouthes were to be praised by every tongue, but the supposed or desired piety of the world is no more than an aggregate of individual pieties.¹²⁷⁴

¹²⁷¹ For a recent example of such a study see Caroline Humfress, ‘A New Legal Cosmos: Late Roman Lawyers and the Early Medieval Church’, in *The Medieval World* (Routledge, 2001), 557–75.

¹²⁷² See especially Rebillard, ‘Augustine in Controversy with the Donatists before 411’, 315.

¹²⁷³ Gillian Clark, *Christianity and Roman Society*, Key Themes in Ancient History (Cambridge: University Press, 2004), 20–23. And, in contrast to Jews, she detects a greater impetus for shared orthodoxy and hostility to ‘rival interpretations’; *Ibid.*, 30.

¹²⁷⁴ Nock, *Conversion*, 135.

Bacchic Dionysius, spread his rites—so Euripides memorialised—through Asia among the Persians and even the Bactrians,¹²⁷⁵ and had his first birth in Thebes, where also he was rejected and where he manifested the dance and garlanded mystery. His *thiasus*, or sacred retinue, enjoyed a kind of universality in the poetic imagination, the god being a world-conquering Alexander before Alexander.¹²⁷⁶ Sacred Thebes remained a cultic centre for the divinity,¹²⁷⁷ but I cannot imagine ancient maenads and initiates forming a universal ‘church’ whose organisation was suspended upon this or any other empirical point of origin. So too, while emperors like Maximin Daia and Julian promoted and regularised traditional worship into a ‘pagan church’, provincially structured and imperially centralised,¹²⁷⁸ there was no comparable aspiration to uniformity in doctrine and practice, and system of ecclesial membership, conformable to those sought by Christian emperors for catholic Christianity.¹²⁷⁹ This thesis has only modestly explored how the ‘Catholic controversy’ interacted with the establishment of a legal and institutional *catholica*, with the Donatists coming to repudiate the project, and Caecilianists providing a theological platform for it. The Caecilianist ‘invention’, if it had shoes to fill, were those made by an imperial cobbler.¹²⁸⁰

Secondly, I have considered at length how African Christians, Donatist and Caecilianist, approached what was, respectively, the problem and the indispensable support

¹²⁷⁵ Euripides, *Bacchae* 15ff.

¹²⁷⁶ Frequently remarked; see the note by H.J. Rose in LCL 344.xiv and Oliver Nicholson, ‘The Wild Man of the Tetrarchy: A Divine Companion for the Emperor Galerius’, *Byzantion* 54, no. 1 (1984): 257n18.

¹²⁷⁷ Pausanias, IX.16.9.

¹²⁷⁸ Nicholson argues, however, that this was neither the invention nor the intention of either; this provincial system ‘already existed’: Oliver Nicholson, ‘The “Pagan Churches” of Maximinus Daia and Julian the Apostate’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 45, no. 1 (1994): 1–10. For Maximin’s restoration and reorganisation of pagan cult see Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution*, 506–9. I would note that for Maximin, in his letter to the Tyrians, preserved in Eusebius (*H.E.* IX.7.12), his focus was on restoring the integrity of traditional worship according to the diversity of local custom. For his situation within the specifically Neoplatonist pagan reaction to Christianity see *Ibid.*, 505–6.

¹²⁷⁹ See further Coleman-Norton, *Roman State & Christian Church*, xli–xliii.

¹²⁸⁰ On this ‘symbiosis’ see especially Peter Brown, ‘Religious Coercion in the Later Roman Empire: The Case of North Africa’, *History* 48, no. 164 (1963): 283–305.

of non-Africans. There is a long tradition of sociological interpretations of Donatism, and, more recently, increasing study on the transmarine character of Augustine and his Caecilianism. I have argued briefly here,¹²⁸¹ and more fulsomely elsewhere,¹²⁸² how the definitive theological issue of the controversy, regarding rebaptism, was shaped by transmarine influence. If it is right to understand Caecilianism from its existential dependence on transmarine support, this interpretative framework may be applied to better study the interface the African Caecilianists enjoyed with the broader Christian world. The Caecilianist impulse towards, and identification with, transmarine catholicity, provides an important aperture for the ongoing study of the reforms of African Christianity, the nature of the transmarine appeals that engendered so much contention among the African clergy, and the preponderating concern of Augustine to alternatively conform to, when judged adequate, and influence, when insufficient, a transmarine consensus on theological issues.¹²⁸³ This thesis furthermore has foregrounded an interpretation of Donatism as ‘parochialist’, which, while I believe this is a fair characterisation of the mainstream sympathy of the movement, has not been able to do justice to many within the complex range of Donatist attitudes to the transmarine world who were closer to Tyconius than to Parmenian.

Finally, I have avoided a theological appraisal of the consequences of the doctrine of catholicity. The tensions inherent in Augustine’s attempt to configure, and rigidly enclose, the invisible church of the elect in the visible *catholica* have long been discussed, and this aporia continues to provide a fruitful basis for ecclesiological reflection. The doctrine of the church’s universality, which received such an explicit formulation and defence during the Donatist controversy, continued to be developed in an altogether different context. I wish to

¹²⁸¹ Chapter 2.2.2.

¹²⁸² Caminiti, ‘The Sources and Context of Augustine’s Rejection of Rebaptism’.

¹²⁸³ J. Patout Burns, ‘Augustine’s Role in the Imperial Action against Pelagius’, *Journal of Theological Studies* 30, no. 1 (1979): 67–83.

conclude with a gesture to the debate over universality, and universalism, which I believe was a running theme in pagan and Christian conflict in the fourth century and provided an intriguing point of disagreement between Augustine and Porphyry of Tyre, the most trenchant critic of Christianity in the ancient world.¹²⁸⁴ Porphyry, if not with these words, then with this sense, threw down the following gauntlet: the catholic church was not truly universal. In the first place, and the only one where a work against Christians (*contra Christianos*) was ascribed to the Tyrian, Augustine considered an objection attributed to Porphyry which reflected his longstanding concern for the relationship between universal validity and particular variety¹²⁸⁵ in any religious means for salvation.¹²⁸⁶ This is in his letter to Deogratias, written sometime during the high point of his anti-Donatist activities (406-12). In this text, Porphyry appears as a defender of a magnanimous pluralism perhaps more familiar to students in the *relatio* of Symmachus in the controversy over the Altar of Victory: surely there are many ways to God, providentially and suitably adapted to peoples and times; there can be no single universal *via salutis* if it is one that arose in, and was exclusive to, a particular place and time.¹²⁸⁷ This discomfort was widespread among literate pagans,¹²⁸⁸ and

¹²⁸⁴ For the debate on his work *Against the Christians* and that reports about it are not entirely misplaced see Mark Edwards, 'Porphyry and the Christians', in *Studies on Porphyry*, ed. George Karamanolis and Anne Sheppard (London: University of London Press, 2007), 111–26. Augustine's interface with Porphyry was extensive; e.g. *Serm.* 241.6-8; *Cons.* I.15.23ff; and the instances considered below. His early use of Porphyry (*Sol.* I.14.24; cf. *C. Acad.* I.1.3; *Mus.* VI.4.7; *Ord.* I.1.3) would be critically remarked upon in *Retract.* I.4.3.

¹²⁸⁵ Usefully discussed under the heading of 'ethnic particularism', especially at 259 in Aaron Johnson, *Religion and Identity in Porphyry of Tyre: The Limits of Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: University Press, 2013).

¹²⁸⁶ *Ep.* 102.8-15. For this as a central theme in their disagreement see Gillian Clark, 'Augustine's Porphyry and the Universal Way of Salvation', in *Studies on Porphyry*, ed. George Karamanolis and Anne Sheppard (London: University of London Press, 2007), 127–41. For this as a preoccupation of his soteriological interests see Michael Bland Simmons, *Universal Salvation in Late Antiquity: Porphyry of Tyre and the Pagan-Christian Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). For how Augustine answered this through his narrative of cosmic history, which escapes the present investigation, see the concise analysis in Phillip Cary, *Outward Signs: The Powerlessness of External Things in Augustine's Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 229–30.

¹²⁸⁷ Symmachus, *Rel.* III.10. That this doctrine was 'essentially Porphyrean' see Pierre Courcelle, 'Anti-Christian Arguments and Christian Platonism: From Arnobius to St. Ambrose', in *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century: Essays*, ed. Arnaldo Momigliano (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 158.

¹²⁸⁸ See Maximus apud Augustine, *Ep.* 16.4 and Longinianus apud Augustine *Ep.* 234.1, for whom there is a spacious agreement between Socrates, Orpheus, Hermes Trismegistus, and the *paucis Ierosolymiticis*.

some species of perennialism or universalism—however one defines those terms—was a common inheritance of later Platonism.¹²⁸⁹ Porphyry shared this attitude, believing that God had distributed his light to all nations, resulting in many paths.¹²⁹⁰ He thought that to constrict salvation to a particular worship that arose in history, as Christians do, is to incautiously damn *tot saeculorum homines ante Christum*.¹²⁹¹ Where Donatists had challenged the church’s catholicity spatially, Porphyry went further by introducing a diachronic problem. Augustine’s most thorough response, in the *De civitate dei*, concludes with Luke 24.46-7 as its fulcrum. There is a universal way of salvation, and it is stubbornly fixed in world history and geography: the church that began in Jerusalem.¹²⁹² This axis of disagreement must be read as a necessary complement to Augustine’s anti-Donatist thought, concerned, as it was, with the universality of the church, the efficacy of sacraments, and

¹²⁸⁹ Where, of course, Platonism appears as the hidden truth inarticulately implicit abroad; e.g. Numenius Fr. 1a des Places; Maximus of Tyre, *Or.* 2.10. Julian likewise shared this universalist tendency, but grounded it in a (Platonising) Hellenic chauvinism wherein Greco-Roman culture had a privileged position; see esp. 100-102 in William Malley, *Hellenism and Christianity: The Conflict between Hellenic and Christian Wisdom in the Contra Galilaeos of Julian the Apostate and the Contra Julianum of St. Cyril of Alexandria* (Roma: Università gregoriana editrice, 1978), 91–102. This doubtless had its roots in Plato’s comments on the mysteries, e.g. *Phaed.* 69c, 81a; *Meno* 81a-b; *Symp.* 210a-e.

¹²⁹⁰ *De philosophia ex oraculis haurienda* fr. 324 Smith (=Eusebius *Prep. Ev.* 9.10.3-5). Hadot compares Porphyry to both Symmachus’s *relatio* and Themistius’ *Or.* 5 to Jovian, arguing however that the Tyrian differs from the other two universalist pleas for tolerance in rejecting the suitability of Christianity as one of the ways to God; Pierre Hadot, *Le voile d’Isis: essai sur l’histoire de l’idée de Nature* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 86. Note however that Porphyry had an extremely high estimation of Jewish religion and scripture, one scholar dubbing him their most ‘consistent and overt’ sympathiser of any ‘pagan intellectual before the age of Constantine’; Johnson, *Religion and Identity in Porphyry of Tyre*, 273. See further *Civ.* X.32, where Porphyry is described as being uncomfortable with the view that the one *via salutis* should have been the property of a single nation (the Jews), and not rather imparted through divine munificence to all.

¹²⁹¹ *Ep.* 102.8; CSEL 34.2.551. Augustine’s response in this letter substantially rests on the possibility that some Gentiles before the advent of Christ may have been able to participate in the saving ‘mystery’ (102.15); repeated without caveat later in *Praed.* 9.17-10.19.

¹²⁹² *Civ.* X.23. Augustine states that Porphyry, in his *De regressu animae*, sought in vain for a single *via salutis animae universalis liberandae*. Despite this characterisation, Porphyrian scholars have challenged whether Augustine is giving a whole or fair representation here; Simmons, *Universal Salvation in Late Antiquity: Porphyry of Tyre and the Pagan-Christian Debate*, xi. Simmons argues, however, that this is true of the text quoted—the *De regressu animae*—and considers it an early work; in the later (in his estimation) *De philosophia ex oraculis haurienda* he believes he has found such a way; 23-24. See also 270-1nn22-7, and especially Chapters 2 and 8. For the contrary view that instead these two fragmentary texts are one and the same, see John O’Meara, *Porphyry’s Philosophy from Oracles in Augustine* (Paris: Etudes augustinienes, 1959). This theory was recently entertained with approbation but without definitive approval in Edwards, ‘Porphyry and the Christians’, 115. Johnson, who accepts O’Meara’s identification of the two treatises gives a succinct summary of Porphyry: ‘Various peoples discovered the road to the gods, which was not singular but manifold’; Johnson, *Religion and Identity in Porphyry of Tyre*, 28.

soteriological mediation. Modern readers of Augustine, both accustomed to a fractured state of Christendom¹²⁹³ and confronted with a world enlarged beyond the narrower navigations of the ancients, may find the Caecilianist doctrine of catholicity ultimately unserviceable. In the face of both such insuperable division and irreducible diversity, perhaps the ghost of Porphyry offers a final consolation with that elusive oracle he quoted: ‘Do not therefore blaspheme Christ—rather, pity the folly of mankind.’¹²⁹⁴

¹²⁹³ Headlam, after remarking on the important discontinuities between Newman’s England and Augustine’s Africa, stated: ‘It must be recognized...that ever since the disunion of East and West the whole situation as regards the unity of the Church and the question where the true Church lies has been profoundly altered. The Church is divided.’ Hence, no ‘one body’ can claim the kind of catholicity Augustine envisions; Arthur Headlam, *The Doctrine of the Church and Christian Reunion*, 2nd ed., Bampton Lectures 1920 (London: John Murray, 1920), 153.

¹²⁹⁴ *Civ.* XIX.23; CSEL 40.414: *Itaque hunc [sc. Christum] quidem non blasphemabis, misereberis autem hominum dementiam.* Translation mine.

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Edition and series abbreviations

ACW	<i>Ancient Christian Writers</i> series. New York: Paulist Press, 1946 –
ANF	<i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325</i> . Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson. 10 volumes. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885–1896.
BA	<i>Bibliothèque Augustinienne: Œuvres de Saint Augustin</i> . Paris: Desclée de Brouwer; Études Augustiniennes, 1948–.
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</i> . Turnhout: Brepols, 1954 –
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> . Vienna: Tempsky, 1866 –
FOTC	<i>Fathers of the Church</i> series. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1948 –
Loeb	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i> . Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912 –
Maier	<i>Le Dossier du Donatisme, Tomes 1-2</i> . Edited by Jean-Louis Maier. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1989
NPNF	<i>A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</i> . Edited by Philip Schaff. 14 vols in two series. New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886–1900.
PG	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series graeca</i> . Edited by Jacques Paul Migne. 161 vols. Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1857-1866.
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina</i> . Edited by Jacques Paul Migne. 221 vols. Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1857-1866.
PLS	<i>Patrologiae Latinae Supplementum</i> . Edited by Adalbert Hamman et al. 4 vols. Paris, Editions Garnier Frères, 1958-1974
SC	<i>Sources chrétiennes</i> . Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1942 –
WSA	<i>The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century</i> . Edited by John Rotelle and Boniface Ramsey. New York: New York City Press, 1990 –

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Ambrosiaster. *Quaestiones Veteris et Noui Testamenti (Quaest.)*. Text: CSEL 50.

Ammianus Marcellinus. *Rerum gestarum libri XXXI*. Text and Translation: Loeb 300, 315, 331.

Augustine. *Epistulae (Ep.)*. Text: CSEL 34.1-2, 35, 44, 56, 57, 88. Translation: WSA II/1-4.

- Augustine. *De civitate dei (Civ.)*. Text: CSEL 40. Translation: WSA I/6-7.
- Augustine. *Confessiones (Conf.)*. Text: CSEL 33. Translation: WSA I/1.
- Augustine. *De doctrina christiana (Doctr. chr.)*. Text: CSEL 80. Translation: WSA I/11.
- Augustine. *De catechizandis rudibus (Catech.)*. Text: CCSL 46. Translation: WSA I/10.
- Augustine. *Enarrationes in psalmos (Enarrat.)*. Text: CCSL 38-40. Translation: WSA III/15-19.
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