

COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

by

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This thesis will examine the changing relations between Christian community and Christian individual in the period of Late Antiquity (the 2nd to the 5th century), and will demonstrate that because of the societal demands of the time, an integral transformation was wrought in the church.

This thesis is dedicated to our gods and me.

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PRAYER

Dear Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...and great and beautiful is the world which you have created. Endlessly complex and profound are the feelings and experiences with which you have endowed our hearts to feel. And deep and dark, oftentimes, is the mountain tunnel which we as your children must traverse on our journey to understanding and therein, blessed salvation. How often we infant travelers beseech you to make our purpose on this planet clear. Why must there be pain and death and vile iniquity? Yet how, at the same time, can the most evil show goodness and charity? And how you torture us sometimes. We seem to wander aimlessly, shoved and jostled in the crowd; lost to the beauty and grace around us. Other times we stretch our bodies up, arms longing to feel your presence, to shout joyfully from the highest peak our love and wonder and joy at being alive! Can this varied tapestry of life have no patterns? Can we be merely hollow shells, made up of biological functions, and unavoidable behaviors? Can the darkest despair and the most sublime ecstasy we feel be simply the random swirling of hormones and flesh and blood? No. We see, but more importantly, we feel that it cannot be true. We have your children, living and dead (but always

living in the eyes of history) to bear witness to the wisdom and perspective, no matter how infinitesimal it may seem, which can be attained by actively searching, with all of one's heart, and mind, and soul, and having faith in your wisdom and your grace. In this sense, you are wisdom, God, and are our goal. We must, if we are to fulfill our destiny, utilize the raw materials which you have given us, to "seek his face evermore" (as St. Augustine wrote). You are wisdom, and truth, and therein you are our salvation.

Nonetheless, we sometimes cry out in despair, knowing with the transcendent wisdom of ages past, that to truly find you on this earth is a futile hope. We can only pray that in our trying we can prepare ourselves to find you in some other existence after we die. Yet we must try; The effort is the essence. At the heart of each and every one of us is the seed of our integrity. That seed germinates, and sprouts, and blossoms, never wilting and dying, if we take up your banner which is our duty as your children; the banner of truth and love which you proffer, and which we either choose to lift high and proud or to refuse. If we refuse, we reject you and your love. If we accept, then with our banners raised high, we enter the brilliant and varied stream of colors--our brothers and sisters. Together we march, walking alone in our own ways, and working together we march home to you. For what other choice do we have once we have accepted your banner, but to take your

challenge, and seek the answer to this great puzzle which you have given us called life?

Dear Father, it is with this goal in mind, and with high steps and a hopeful heart, that I have entered on my journey. This thesis is simply one step which I make as I climb the high path home. A futile effort it may be, but it is as good a try as I can make. Thank you Father for this chance, and for the glorious help you have given me in the persons of my friends, family, and mentors. Please help me to find you and feel your presence as I go on my journey, for I so want to succeed on my journey, and thus do justice to my heart and my ideas as well as the proud traditions of the other spiritual individuals about whom I will write. Lord I pray to you now, to help me in this endeavor and to accept this humble gift as the proof that I have taken my banner, and thus dedicated to seeking your face and your love and hope and wisdom for evermore. Amen.

CHAPTER ONE
PART FIRST: Introduction

In the year AD 247, the Emperor Philip inaugurated a magnificent series of games to celebrate the 1000th year of Rome.² In this millenium the Empire had grown from "the boot of Italy" to stretch from Phrygia (modern Turkey) to Illyria (Spain), Hadrian's wall in Northern England, to the Bosphorus and to North Africa and Egypt. During the height of the Empire's influence, upwards of 1,000,000 slaves entered her borders daily.³ Peoples of diverse origins, religions, and traditions made up the Roman Empire and were granted religious and cultural freedom after pledging fealty (political loyalty) to the gods of the Emperors and Rome. This was the key to the Empire's longevity; the greatness of all the Roman people was the greatness of her rulers. To pledge to these men was to pledge to the monumental feat of conquering and governing such varied people and uniting them under the eagle's wings of the Caesar. Thus, the general "world" of the Roman Empire was an amalgam of the various worlds found within her borders; the "Latin World", the "Jewish World", the "Egyptian World", the "North African World", etc.,. This diversity was the bulwark of the Roman Empire; it made her culture strong and her economy vital. It also, in the end, made her fall.

This thesis is the exploration of one world with the Roman World; that of the Christians. We will see how this

movement was born in the fertile humus of the decaying Empire; just as the forces of Christianity began to mount, the Empire began her downward tumble, from the summit of her influence, into a faded memory. Our discussion will follow the "rising star" of Christianity, tracking its progress through the three prominent scholars of their days, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine. We will discover that, contrary to what was thought at the time (and still is by some today), that Christianity was a dissenting force and therefore destructive to the peace of the Empire, Christianity became, in fact, the glue that held the Empire together during the onslaught of the barbarian invasions. There was a religious, and later, a societal vacuum which had to be filled, and Christianity filled it. What happened because of these circumstances is that Christianity went from being simply a religion within the society, one which posed a real challenge to that society, to being the definition of the society, yet in the process it integrally and dramatically changed as a religion. More than analyzing the "whys" and "hows" of this development, we will be interested in what changes took place in the religion because of these imperatives of circumstance. The ostensible transformation of the religion as it grew will be readily apparent, but the concomitant forces bearing down on Christian individuals of all social strata will be more difficult to ascertain. It is the world of the individual which will always occupy us for although the Christian group

is One in the eyes of God, each individual must in the end face death and his final judgement.

Examples of the community/individual dynamic abound in the rhetoric of Early Christian thinkers. Because of this, we can analyze one, minute world, the world of an individual for example, and see mirrored, like concentric rings in a pool, the surrounding rings of the larger worlds. Thus our "pool" will be the general movements of the day: the forces within and without the Empire, circa the ascension to the throne of the Emperor Commodus (AD 180), such as the storm clouds of barbarians at the borders, the rise of the Cult of Jesus Christ, as well as other intellectual movements like the Gnostics and the Platonists. Our discussion at this point will move from still being rather general, to being living and vibrant with our introduction to Tertullian (AD ?-circa 240). Tertullian was one of the most brilliant and outspoken scholars of his day, and his conversion heralded a new era for the intellectual scope of the Church. He wrote a fiery and graceful Apology in which he not only made a good argument for the right of Christians to exist, but successfully jived the Platonist and Christian views of God, thus making the religion more accessible to the intelligentsia.⁴ But most important with Tertullian is that the Church, which he so fervently defended, later forsook him and denounced him as a heretic; with him we see how the march of individuals, and the march of the group can

sometimes be divergent, and his excommunication will mark an important milepost for us in the evolution of the Church.

We will then follow the currents for change which we discovered in the time of Tertullian, to the turbulent era of persecution during the episcopate of St. Cyprian of Carthage (AD 248-259). Cyprian's main body of work, written during these ten short years, answered vital questions about what defines the Church group, what should the Church's stance be towards the lapsed (those who apostatized during the persecutions), and, can a bishop forgive apostates? We will see that the answers to these questions indicate a profound change in how the Christian group defined itself.

The life and episcopate of St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430) mark the maturation of the Christian Church. It is during this time that much of the Latinized world comes to the flock, and that the rapidly expanding church is almost torn apart by the Great Donatist Schism.⁵ The Augustinian Era will really be the culmination of all our previous discussion, for we will see the causes of this schism in the times and works of our other "spiritual individuals", as well as the profound importance of St. Augustine's response to the conflict. The transformation of the Church from "a religion within the society" to "the religion of society" will be complete by Augustine's death in AD 430.

We will use our spiritual individuals, Augustine, Cyprian, and Tertullian, like windows, from which we will be able to see from their subjective world through the

emanating rings, to the larger world of Early Christianity and from there, Late Antiquity. We will note how the three areas are overlapped and like the colors on a color-wheel, we will then see the history to be a color quite different from all the rest, but at the same time, containing the primary characteristics of each. Therefore, let us now, with a closer look at the World of Late Antiquity, embark on our journey, always keeping in mind that we are headed for the unique viewpoints of three brilliant thinkers of the time, and through their eyes, we will see the transformation of Christianity and the creation of history.

PART SECOND: The World of Late Antiquity

In this section we will examine the indigenous spiritual forces in the Empire which made the ascension of Christianity possible. The Roman Empire of the 3rd century was ripe for Christianity, in that there were mutually complimentary ideas in both the society and the Church which facilitated the assumption of the religion, and indicate that Christianity was to some extent a natural result and not simply an aberration, of Latin society.

Everything has been visited,
everything known, everything exploited.
Now pleasant estates obliterate the
famous wilderness areas of the past.
Plowed fields have replaced the forests;
domesticated animals have dispersed
wildlife. Beaches are plowed, mountains

smoothed and swamps drained. There are
as many cities as, in former years,
there were houses. Islands do not
frighten [settlers], nor cliffs deter.
Everywhere there are buildings,
everywhere people, everywhere
communities, everywhere life.⁶

Tertullian wrote this circa AD 200, and it very well articulates the mood (at least of Christians) towards the world at the time: the world was a finite, knowable place which in fact, had been completely discovered and fully experienced. This attitude is perhaps not unsurprising when one thinks that the Empire at the time was almost 1,000 years old. Nevertheless, regardless of the patent inaccuracy of Tertullian's assertion (at the time the Roman Legions had just defended, as well as gained new territory on the German frontier), it is a jewel of an insight from a very highly respected intellectual of the time. For intellectuals and peasants alike, whose station remained very little changed in spite of the peace and economic prosperity heralded in by the Severan Dynasty in AD 197, new discoveries were unlikely, and in the Roman Pantheon, death would only be more of the same. The greatest Empire the world had ever seen could not alleviate the very real fear of death on the part of her people, and was primed for the "other-worldly" philosophy of the Christians.

Undoubtedly, this attitude on the part of Tertullian, and assuming, on the part of his contemporaries, was due to the protracted peace (marred only by a few coups here and

there) brought to the Mediterranean upon the incorporation of the Roman Empire. The "pax deorm"⁷ was instituted when Octavian closed the doors on the temple of Janus in 27 BC and took the title of Augustus; it would last, except for a period of uncertainty from AD 192-197, until the death of Alexander Severus in AD 235. This peace was called the "pax deorum" because it was due to the clemency and benevolence of the gods that Rome rose to such preeminence. Her name stretched to her natural frontiers, the Rhine, the Danube, the Euphrates and the Sahara Desert, as well as the added garrisons of Britain, Dacia (the area of modern Rumania), Arabia and Mauretania (modern Algeria and Morrocco).⁸ The glory of Rome was the glory of her diverse and bountiful lands, and all of these kingdoms paid homage to her greatness by pledging fealty to her Caesars and her Gods.

"Peace, ease of communications and trade went together"⁹ to make the Mediterranean Basin a vibrant place; new ideas and attitudes were imported and exported to Rome as cargo with the shiploads of olives, wine, and grain from North Africa. The active transport of information from one end of the Empire to the other facilitated the governing of far-off "civitates" (cantonal capitals) as well as the nearer "coloniae" (originally settled by Roman citizens) and their governors like Pontius Pilate.¹⁰ Orders from Rome to her ever-turbulent frontiers had to be quick. But at the same time, new religious and intellectual forces were sucked into the Empire to be assimilated into the ever-expanding

Roman Pantheon. Yet these "foster-religions" undermined her own spiritual and political base, for they often took an apocalyptic and anti-societal form of expression. Rome's religion was her polity for it was the gods and the emperors who were worshipped and they symbolized the glory of Rome. The most profoundly far-reaching of these new forces was the Cult of Jesus Christ, first introduced to the Western Empire in the first century A.D. with St. Peter's mission to Rome.

The Church spread rapidly among the lower-classes and women of all classes in spite of the popular distrust of the Christians because of their questionable rituals, and the animosity of the Jews, who, while not respected, were at least a tolerated religious minority in the Empire.¹¹ In AD 64, one year after Peter's arrival in Rome, Nero initiated the first persecution of the Christians; Peter and Paul were quickly elevated to the status of martyrs and the Church grew all the more quickly. The Mystery Cults were already a very popular form of worship for the artisanal and peasant classes because of the protection promised to initiates after death. The Christian martyrs took on the sanctified aura of religious personages by conquering death through faith in God and thus ascending to, an afore unknown, Paradise. These devotees who "lived to die" were the dramatic testimony to a new force which professed to explain life's hardships, and offer a ray of hope for the future--something which was severely lacking in the traditional spirituality. As W.H.C. Frend astutely surmises, "So long as

the creative power of Rome prevailed the new religion [Christianity] found little purpose".¹² The Empire was failing, both as a political force, and as a valid spiritual response to the hardships of the day; the apocalyptic doctrine of the Christians insinuated itself into the hardest suffering groups, the slaves and peasants, and therein found a trenchant place as the new spiritual leader. The conversion, as early as the 2nd century, of some of the middle and upper classes, traditionally haughtily pagan, is merely indicative of the grave inadequacies of the Roman Pantheon.

The strong and spiritual character of Jesus Christ was attractive to Romans as well, because of the supreme popularity of the Cult of the Emperor. The forces for the creation of the first Christian Emperor, Constantine in AD 313, were already intact in the Latin world because of the Emperor's dual nature, but also because:

Paul, who possessed dual citizenship, both of Tarsus and of Rome, regarded the magistrates of the ministers of divine justice in restraining crime; and on the express authority of the Lord himself, Christians faithfully paid their taxes. The Gentile mission had every interest in the maintenance of public order, and none whatsoever of adopting an attitude of disaffection towards the State. In the Acts of the Apostles, it is already implied that the Empire, under the providence of God, could be the instrument for the furtherance of God...What was wrong with the State was its old paganism. Change its religion, and all would be well.¹³

Again, we see a mutually complimentary connection between Christianity and the Empire which made the religion particularly attractive to the people. The concept of a righteous and holy "Vicar of God" was already woven into the doctrine of the Church as demonstrated by this excerpt from the Epistles of Paul. At the height of Roman paganism, not to worship the emperors and the gods was to be suspected of being disloyal to the Empire. Yet not long after the conversion of Constantine (the first "Christian" emperor), to be anything but Christian was not only unwise (preferment was given to Christians), but it was even considered treasonous, so strong was the Cult of Emperor. Thus one thing we note in this comparison between the indigenous factors of the Roman world, and the ideas of Christianity, is the worship of spiritual leaders by the "populus dei" (God's people).¹⁴ Later in our discussion we will note two things: first, the bishop will fill the role of "patronus" (patron) as the mediator between God and man (but more often between man and man), and second, we will see the transformation of the imperial symbology from a god-like emperor to an emperor blessed by God, resulting from the veritable "courtship" of the secular power by the Church in the 3rd century.

Yet another general "ring" in which we will move in our discussion, is the gradual change in the Christians from an exclusive sect of the sons of Abraham, to a world-wide moral body founded on the shoulders of Saints Peter and Paul. One

of the earliest Christian apologists, Justin Martyr (circa AD 130 -165), sought to delineate in his work, Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, the differences between Christian and Jew. In fact, many of the earliest attacks on the Cult of Jesus Christ came from the Jews who felt that the Christians denied the necessity of the Mosaic Law (the Law of God given to Moses). Justin Martyr was careful in his Apology not to alienate Christianity from the generally respected tradition of the Jews, but saw Christianity "continuous with the highest aspirations of Judaism, but freed of the shackles of ceremonial rules peculiar to one race..."¹⁵ This argument gave the Christians a more timeless, universal appeal than Judaism. Thus, as early as the "Dialogue" (AD 160) the "new" Church was being hammered out from the continuous dialectic between the Christian apologists and their critics; the Church was beginning to free itself from the stifling shackles of an exclusive, inherited genealogy, to a religion with all people as converts.

Concomitant with this "blossoming" of Christian potential, was the subtle transition from an apostolic church to a liturgical (or a church based on written doctrine--in this case the Bible) one. With the death of St. John circa AD 95 (16) the direct spiritual line from Jesus to the Apostles and then to bishops becomes more recondite. There is a gradual shift from the living, vibrant word of the missionaries and prophets to the written word of the Bible. The apologists, conversant in the

viscidities of philosophy and dialectic, analyzed the Bible as a biologist would analyze an amoeba, in order to find the "real" meaning of God in elaborate allegory. We see that the shift from the exclusive Body of Christ to a Church of the World, and the dying-out of the apostolic age, went hand in hand: when there is a living holy man to hear the word of God and then prophesy, the message is clear and alive, and the group is necessarily limited to those who hear that prophet, but, when the emphasis is shifted to a written work, a work which can be copied and transported in a rucksack, a work of endless allegorical potential and complexity, then the breadth of influence is much greater, and the meaning is much more ambiguous.

For example, we note varying emphases given to different parts of the Bible depending on the apologist and the circumstances resulting in his writing the apology. Cyprian, in his battle with Stephen of Rome will deemphasize the potential leadership role of Rome as the seat of Peter and Paul. Augustine, to the contrary, will raise Petrine Primacy to new heights stressing the unity of the Church in order to convert the Donatists. We will see another example in the Praescriptio Haereticorum (Prescription Against Heretics) of Tertullian, in which he warns against the phrase "seek and ye shall find" (matt.vii.7) because of its interpretation by heretics, in particular the Gnostics, to mean, "seek truth forever until you find it, no matter where you find it". Tertullian emphasizes the topical meaning of

this phrase in the Bible (said before the "truth" of Jesus Christ); now that the One truth has been found, one need no longer search--more searching can only lead to heresy.¹⁷ Whereas with St. Augustine, in his famous work de Trinitate (On the Trinity), searching and seeking God with one's heart is all important; "...Thus let us enter together, in the path of charity, in search of Him of Whom it is said: seek his face evermore".¹⁸ Augustine will use every iota of his intellect, and any means God gives him to seek God's Truth--in this case the truth of the Unity. Two very similar phrases, two famous theologians, two completely different interpretations.

Thus began the endless wrangling of the Church Fathers over exactly what the Bible means, whether Jesus Christ was man, god, or both, which sins are anathema, what exactly defines the Christian "ecclesia" (the Christian unity based on the keys given to Peter, and thus to the bishops).¹⁸ The changes in the Christian body, the world which surrounded her, and her ever-evolving liturgy are all inter-connected by the fact that, the Church which will enter the Middle Ages, is largely created by the Church's reaction to heresy in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th centuries. Unfortunately, this solidification of doctrine had a very real, and painful biproduct--heretics. Like Lorenz's Butterfly Effect (the flap of a butterfly in China will change the weather in the United States), one doctrinal dispute could leave thousands of souls lost. Because of this, there will be a change in

emphasis from "righteousness" to "forgiveness" during our period.

Let us now leave the realm of general discussion and go into more detail with our first spiritual individual, Tertullian. Tertullian is important to us not only because of the testament to the strength of the Christian faith at the time left by his fiery and adept polemical works, but also because he marks a first "mile-post" in this study of the Early Church for this defender of the Church of the Holy Spirit will end his life estranged and alienated from the Catholic Church as a heretic.

CHAPTER TWO

Tertullian; Apologist and Heretic

Earlier, it was stated that the Age of Tertullian was a "mile-post" in the evolution of the Church. It is in two senses. First, in this chapter, we will see the Church make a definite step away from the ideal of being an exclusive body of saints towards the motliness of a potentially "world religion". In this sense, the changes wrought in Christianity during this time are only one step on the march to what she will become under Augustine. But moreover, like the yellowing photos in a family album, Tertullian is (and was) a haunting memory of what was; the Church was never the same after his excommunication, bearing witness to the Church's growing intolerance for new prophecy which might challenge an already solidifying status quo.

The era during which Tertullian wrote (2nd century) still pulsed with the memory of Jesus Christ and the Twelve Apostles; your great-grandmother might have seen Peter and Paul martyred in Rome. It was called the Apostolic Age because there were still bishops, like Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons, who converted and studied under men whose teachers were converted by the first missionaries. Imagine how real and integral one's faith must have been! Thus, at the death of Irenaeus in the late 2nd century, the pendulum began to swing from a church based on the living (or the living memory) of the Apostles, to one based on the closed

doctrines of the Scriptures (in fact, the "Holy Scriptures" became a "thing" and a phrase under Irenaeus).²⁰ Also at this time, the first maelstrom of heresies broke out; foremost in the minds of the successors of "the Age of Justin (Justin Martyr being one of the first Apologists)²¹ was the Gnostics. To combat their philosophy, Christians needed something with more intellectual weight (for above all the Gnostics respected "gnosis" or intelligence) than the words of a man. Furthermore, in order to counter effectively this heretical force, the Christian world needed a ready and immutable medium of intellectual exchange. Thus, the written word became supremely important, and the ancient authority of the Bible was used as a sword to wield against heresies and persecutors alike. This is the "self-conscious" Church, seeking to conform to the demands of her society; only now, the Church was limited to evolution within the murky confines of the Bible.

The 2nd century was a time both cementing and unsettling for the Church; in meeting the demands of the day, apologists tackled major questions of theology like, The nature of Christ, the role of the Church in the world, but at the same time, with the transference of authority from person to the written word, there was a real sense that the age of "revelation had come to an end..."²², which "had sufficed for Christianity's youth. The New Prophecy spoke for an age that awaited the end of an age."²³ That new prophecy was apocalyptic; all that was left to do was to

"clean up the Church's house" for all wonders had ceased, and the next wonder to come would be the Last Judgement of God at the Second Coming of his son Jesus Christ.

This apocalyptic message is almost perfectly reflected in Tertullian's Praescriptio Haereticorum. In this work Tertullian finds the main fault of heretics to be their inability to see the truth when they find it; the truth of Christ's message which was a message of the imminent judgement of God. He warns against using the statement in matt. vii.7, "seek and ye shall find...knock and it shall be opened unto you"²⁴, for, he points out, this admonition by the Lord was to the Jews who had fallen away "on account of their sins"²⁵, and not for the Gentiles, who know no other covenant than that wrought by Jesus Christ. He states that once the soul finds the truth of Christ, and is filled with the Holy Spirit, one enters into a covenant with him; he has finished seeking, and he therefore, no longer needs to knock. To continue searching is not only futile, it leads the Christian into sin and heresy. The truth of Christ is the only truth one needs; once it is found one simply waits, guarding against sin and remaining pure in body and spirit. Thus we see that integral to the apocalyptic spirit is the ancient ideal of a pure and righteous group, made up of like individuals, surrounded by a world of sin. This idea is inherently exclusivist. Sin must be rooted out and eliminated to preserve the integrity of the group:

For I am come to set a man at variance
against his father, and the daughter

against her mother,...and a man's foes
shall be they of his own household...and
the children rise up against the
parents, and cause them to die. And he
who endureth to the end let that man be
saved. matt.x.34:x.21 (26)

The God of Tertullian was the violent, judgmental, strife-ridden God found in the Old testament. Regardless of the fact that he quotes often from the Apostles (as above), the idea that the Christian was the "soldier of Christ"²⁷, and that the purity and integrity of the Christian group would be assailed upon from all sides, is an idea found in the Old Testament, and identified with this attitude of "exclusivity".

Like Justin Martyr, Tertullian furthered the idea of the "world's church" which Augustine would so emphasize, and which would blossom into full-fledged "Christian Imperialism" in the Middle Ages, by emphasizing the place of the Cult of Christ in the march of history, and therefore, the universality and omniscience of God's plan. While condemning the heretics for not accepting and upholding the Truth when they find it, he harkens back to Yahweh and the Jews and therein draws a tight comparison: the Jews were, at one time, the chosen children of God, but then, because of their sin, they fell away. Jesus came to earth to rejuvenate the Word, "set things straight", and bring salvation to humankind. The Jews had failed in their mission by erring and becoming too worldly; the community of God is everlasting, and the Christians are the ones whom he has chosen to bring his saving message to the rest of the

world. Thus heretics of the 2nd century, and Jews of the 1st century are alike in being outside of the righteous march of God's history.

The ambiguity in this dialectic is essential for our discussion; we have in one breath the idea of exclusivity and the idea of world destiny. These concepts will soon be identified as "traditional" and "modern" interpretations of the Church. The vying for dominance of modern over traditional is the undercurrent of tension to our discussion.

Furthermore, hand-in-hand with this conflict in both the Praescriptio and the Apology is the role of the Roman Empire as the wielding sword in God's plan--"the Sentinel of God".²⁸ Tertullian states in his Apology : "But why dwell longer on the reverence and sacred respect of Christians to the Emperor, whom we cannot but look up to as called by our Lord to his office? So on valid ground I might say that Caesar is more ours than yours, for our God has appointed him."²⁹ The gravity of this implication was not readily apparent (except for confirming in the minds of pagans the startling ambitions of the new religion), but later on, when the Church becomes a real force in the world, the Church and State will fall naturally into communion.

These are the general movements that we will discover during this period. Let us now follow more closely the events of Tertullian's time.

"Momentous things had been happening"³⁰ in the Mediterranean world circa AD 200. After the brutal persecution of Septimius Severus in 202-3, the animosity towards Christians had been spent for awhile at least, and the Church entered a new dawn of peace and acceptance. In 212 the Constitutio Antoniniana conferred citizenship on virtually all free men in the Empire. By 222, Rome had granted toleration to Jews and Christians alike.³¹ It was during this lull in persecution, that seeds for violent conflict were sown. By 230, under the open interest of the Empress Julia Mamaea, the Church had been rapidly expanding, but the numerous holders of the sacrificial "libelli" (a certificate of pagan sacrifice required because of persecutions in 202-3, and 235)³², bore witness to the unwillingness of Christians to uphold the pure standards of the ancient Church. It is at this time (AD 217) that Bishop Callistus of Rome abandoned the fundamental rules of Leviticus, by forgiving two of the "sins unto death", adultery and homicide (apostasy being the third). In so doing, he launches the Church in a new direction. The Church would no longer be a "a company of the Elect on earth,...[but] a school for sinners bound together by a sacramental life administered by an ordered hierarchy..."³³ Regardless of Callistus "sordid character"³³, this action was born of a real concern for members whose faith wavered (understandably) in the face of death. Callistus' decision

was also prophetic for the Church, and very timely; by St. Augustine/the concept of the "world's church" and her vast mission would become the corner-stones of Christian doctrine. Yet this new direction met with violent opposition in the form of the fiery zeal of the North African presbyter, Tertullian.

Perhaps one of the most rapidly expanding missions in the Empire was in North Africa. This was mostly due to the youth of its mission; the North African Church was founded in the latter part of the 2nd century, while the rest of the Christian world was nearly 100 years old. This difference in ages explains much of the ensuing controversies of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th centuries, and the opposing stances of North Africa and the rest of the Christians on questions of spirituality. The Donatists would inherit this zealous legacy of African spirituality. The Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs (AD 180) which tells of the passions of "confessors" (those who confessed to being Christian) as they find the "sufferings of the flesh" in the arena³⁴, is the first testament to North African enthusiasm. The North African Church first appeared in conjunction with this work, which so embodies the fire of apocalyptic spirituality and the Cult of the Martyrs. The Donatists would harken back to this long tradition in the 4th and 5th centuries.

Tertullian was born of this seed. "The blood of martyrs is seed".³⁵ We feel in all of his writings, from his challenging Apology to his Montanist works (Montan was a

man who, along with two women, professed to be an oracle for the Holy Spirit), Scorpiace and Fuga ad Persecutione ("the Scorpion" and "Flee into Persecution"), the passion and energy of his spiritual convictions, and the sorrow and pain he feels for those fallen "soldiers of Christ", the martyrs. Above all, Tertullian championed the Truth; the inviolate truth of Christ's love and his sacrifice. This is the key to finding Tertullian in his writings, for this thread never changes throughout. He feels that his own spirituality should be the spirituality of each and every other Christian individual. He demands of himself and others no more than Christ demanded of his flock by the crucifixion. The basic humanity of Christ, and thus the utter selflessness of his act would divide East and West (with the Arian controversy of AD 319-381) and would make Tertullian the chief opponent of those "who sought to diminish the reality of Christ and his ministry".³⁶ He also articulated the unique brand of North African Christianity which identified the Church with an "ecclesia spiritus per spiritalem hominem" (a Church of the Spirit through [membership of] spiritual individuals), rather than Callistus' "numerus episcoporum" (the company of bishops).³⁷ Again we notice how the difference in "spiritual age" of North Africa compared to the rest of the world motivated this attitude; North Africans related well with the first Christians who defined their spirituality by the spiritual integrity of each of their members, rather

than by the authority of bishops, which was a more "modern" development as the Church grew larger.

Because we can follow the fundamental ingredients of Tertullian's spirituality throughout all of works, both Catholic and other, we are drawn to the conclusion, unlike A. Cleveland Coxe and others (38) who credit some integral flaw in his character for his Montanist leanings, that it was the Church in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, and not Tertullian which underwent a profound change. Later apologists, no longer concerned with the right of Christianity to exist, will "apologize" for what they feel is this embarrassing fact by putting the blame on Tertullian. Like the hermit, the monk, or any other "hominus spiritualis" who left the Christian group to lead "a truly Christian life"³⁹, Tertullian was "a living criticism of ecclesiastical society."⁴⁰

These fundamental ingredients can be stated thus: as men indebted to God for our lives and our salvations, we enter into a sacred pact upon conversion to uphold the covenant which God instigated with Moses (and which the Jews defiled), and which was reborn with Jesus Christ. The covenant is to uphold the purity of the flock in the face of all worldly things, even death. Our strength and example comes from the penultimate sacrifice of Christ who died and suffered for us so that we could have eternal life in paradise. This covenant is reaffirmed each time we partake of the Sacrament which is the incarnate of the flesh and

blood of God's only begotten Son. The Word of God is the living Word giving to us, as from God, from the mouths of the Apostles who were consumed by the Holy Spirit. The Apostolic tradition is the vital link to Christ and thus God, by the conferring of this Spirit. The bishop confers the Holy Spirit on each member of his flock, thus creating a community of spirit-filled individuals.

Like the staunch traditional Christian that Tertullian was, he saw no possible deviation from this "rule". In his own words:

What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What has the Academy to do with the Church? What have heretics to do with Christians?...Away with all attempts to produce a Stoic, Platonic or dialectic Christianity. We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after receiving the Gospel.⁴¹

This anti-societal attitude is characteristic of Tertullian's later years, when he narrowed his spirituality down to one thing--the covenant he had made with God. So, as W.H.C Frend states, "He shook the dust of [Catholic] orthodoxy off his feet and joined the Montanists".⁴² There he hoped to find the Holy Spirit and the living word of God, but eventually, he even leaves them and dies a spirit unto himself of extreme old age circa AD 240.⁴³

The integrity with which Tertullian held on to the basic precepts of the Church and the ostracizing which he suffered because of it, indicate a change in the "ecclesia".

The Church had compromised with the world, and had therein defiled the covenant of Christ. It is not so much that the ancient Church emphasized physical exclusivity, for the Bible abounds with remonstrations to maintain the political status quo, but moral exclusivity, which anyone could share if they were willing to uphold the covenant. Furthermore, the Church had turned its back on the wonders and miracles of the New Testament by denouncing the Montanists and thus ending the Age of Prophecy for good. The only goals that the Church maintained was the gaining of complete acceptance and ensuring the survival of the Unity. Yet, even at this time, there were forces to undermine these goals; the growth in hierarchy and secular influence of the Church heralded a new era of Christian authority, in which Church leaders, while ostensibly still keeping their eyes on the ultimate victory in Heaven, began to seek a victory on earth. We will follow the threads of this transformation with our next spiritual individual, Cyprian of Carthage.

CHAPTER THREE
Cyprian of Carthage: the Bridge between Two Churches

We saw the first, tentative cracks form on the hatching egg of Christianity during Tertullian's time; the Church would be more than an apocalyptic, exclusive body waiting for Christ's return, and it had to change its staunch moral standards to accomodate its growing numbers. Yet Tertullian testifies to the fact that something was lost in this transformation. St. Cyprian will not accept this. Valiantly he will try to not only find a common ground between the grand questions of episcopal authority, the lapsed, and church unity, but also seek to keep in mind his ultimate mission--the salvation of his flock. It is always with love for God's children that Cyprian acts. Moreover, events were taking place within the growing rift between Rome and Carthage, as well as in North Africa itself, between laxists, moderates, and rigorists. Thus the 3rd century is a time of religious strife. Nevertheless Cyprian manages to achieve a tenuous balance between all these forces. At his death in 258, the Church is on the threshold of a major transformation into a worldwide religion and the new "rule" for societal values. This transition would not come smoothly, rather with the wrenching violence of the Donatist Schism. But first let us discover in Cyprian's time the subtle changes in ideology

which brought about the violence of the 4th and 5th centuries. As with the previous chapters, we will first reiterate the general historical events of the period, and then focus in specifically on Cyprian, his episcopate, and in this case, his futile struggle.

From the reign of Septimius Severus in AD 197, which restored peace to the Empire, to the Decian persecution of 249-50, much of the western world converted to Christianity, so that, in that year, there was roughly parity between the two religions (Christianity and paganism). Nowhere was this more apparent than in North Africa where literally whole towns in Numidia and Mauretania converted from the Cult of Saturn to that of Jesus Christ.⁴⁴ W.H.C Frend attributes much of this seeming religious fervor to the indigenous social strife of the African peasant classes. They were almost completely tied to the land and severely oppressed by the great land owners who supplied grain and olives from the fruitful plains to the rest of the Empire. The provinces were the first to convert; the richer urbanites in Carthage and Hippo would not come into the Church until well into the 3rd century. Thus, in our next discussion, we will see a certain class-struggle come to the forefront of North African Christianity.⁴⁵ Yet, in spite of popularity of the religion, the instability of the faith can be seen by the huge numbers flocking to the temples to partake of the libations in the persecution of 202-3. It is at this time that Perpetua, Felicitas and Saturus find their passion as

told in Tertullian's (probably) Passio Perpetuae in which the crowds are bitterly hostile to the Christian martyrs. Nevertheless, the land which bore adherents like Tertullian and later, Cyprian, was largely Christian by the persecutions of Decius (AD 249-51) and Valerian (AD 257-58), and although many lapsed, they clamored for reentry afterwards.⁴⁶

It is during the period of toleration for the Church ushered in by the Gordians and Philip (AD 238-49) that Cyprian of Carthage was converted. In two years he will become the bishop of that city, and in ten more years he will suffer through two persecutions and two vehement theological battles. He has left a copious and detailed body of work which catalogues this unsettled period of Church history. Both as a spiritual individual and a Church leader, Cyprian contended with real threats to the Church from without, and the growing threat from within, brought on by the great influx of converts to the Church; the more converts, the more pressing the questions of the lapsed, of the unity, and of the correct direction of the Church.⁴⁷ Whereas Tertullian struggled with the death of the Age of Prophecy, and the growing reliance on the written Word, Cyprian is contending with the fruits of these changes; the Bible as the final authority of God is a motley document, open to much interpretation and speculation which leaves, in reality, much of the authority up to the bishops. They often came to logger-heads as to what the right

interpretation should be. Moreover, we noted in chapter two, the lesser insistence on the Apostles and their mission, which was to prepare the way for God's second coming, and a greater emphasis on deciding the best direction for the Church, and what exactly constituted God's message in the Bible. This was a natural result of being on the defensive for long; the Apologists had to prove that Christians had the right to exist before they had the freedom to pursue large-scale conversions. Yet not all Christians were as devout as the early ones, they forgot quickly, and it is in the role of the "remonstrator" that we will see Cyprian the most. He continually exhorts his flock to remember why God gave his Son to them, and what their one and only mission was as Children of God--to remain pure and loyal until God's judgement. To Church Fathers such as Cyprian, the Apocalypse was "now" in 249 when the Emperor Decius, seeking to rekindle the old loyalty to the gods of Rome, declared the first widespread persecution of the Christians. Cyprian pleads with his flock to remember that:

The spouse of Christ cannot be adulterous; she is uncorrupted and pure. She knows one home; she guards with chaste modesty the sanctity of one couch. She keeps us for God.⁴⁸

Cyprian was apocalyptic, and he will reiterate this familiar message, the Unity, and Purity, again and again, in his Epistles, as well as his treatises like de Unitate and de Lapsis.

In this way Cyprian was conservative, but in the same sense as was Tertullian; it was not their message which changed, but the Church. There were existent during the this time period forces which can only be called "modern"--more so even than Callistus' remission of adultery and homicide. Cyprian will seek to be a beacon in the night fog-confusion reaped by the shifting tides of Novatianists, "traditores" (those who apostatized in the persecutions), and the growing rifts between Christian East and West, as well as North and South, Rome and Carthage. He stands in the 3rd century, at the crossroads of all of these conflicts and battles valiantly for "the camp entrusted to us by God..."⁴⁹ Let us now examine these currents, these conflicting worlds, and Cyprian's role both as a spiritual individual martyred in the battle, and as an arbiter in the conflagration.

For Tertullian, and the other great Apologists, Justin Martyr, Clement, and Origen, the main threat to Christianity besides the periodic animosity of the Empire, was the Gnostics. They attacked at the heart of the unity, by denying the supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the covenant born with it. As we saw in chapter two, it was due to this frontal attack, that the body of Scripture, and religious traditions were codified. In fact, most of the schisms and heresies of the 2nd and early 3rd centuries

centered around the founder of the Christian unity, Jesus Christ. Unity and purity of the flock would still be the hallmarks of Cyprian's time--but for very different reasons. The unity was attacked with violence, from outside, and it was due to the response of Christians like Cyprian, that the unity was shakily maintained. But what this period did do to the Christian community, was to polarize it even more than it already was between the extremes of a "Church of the Spirit" (*spiritualis*), and a "Church of a Community of Bishops" (*ecclesia*), and to entrench even deeper, the animosities that would erupt in the Donatist Schism.

Decius becomes Emperor only one year after Cyprian's ascension to the See of Carthage, and starts the systematic persecution of the Christians. But he was persecuting not an isolated minority, but a unified church. At this time there is general concurrence between about 250 bishops of North Africa. Cyprian and his peers were easily able to communicate with each other over theological matters, and with other parts of the Empire, and they were even able to pay their clergy a stipend.⁵⁰ Circa AD 249, Cyprian calls his congregation "*copiosus*" (abundant), although it was still mostly comprised of women, slaves and peasants.⁵¹ Therefore a severe blow it was when the fire of violence lit Carthage and the surrounding Sees. The severity and totality of this persecution was startling and unheard of. Henry Chadwick credits this to the dominant role of the Emperor:

...it is characteristic of the changed situation of the Church in society in the 3rd century that, whereas earlier persecutions usually depended on local factors, the personal attitude of the Emperor himself now became increasingly decisive in determining the Church's fortunes.⁵²

Thus we note one current in the 3rd century that Cyprian had to contend with; the Church had reached a level of influence by which it sought from the Empire more than merely acceptance, but clemency and protection, and it was more than merely a regional annoyance, but to the likes of Decius and his successor Valerian, a veritable threat to the stability of the Empire. The emperor became more involved in the Church, because the Church was becoming more powerful. In less than fifty years after Cyprian's death, the question will be decided not only by the conversion of Constantine in 312, but by the largely complete conversion of the middle and upper classes to Christianity culminating under Pope Damasus.⁵³

Nonetheless, in 249, Cyprian was faced with a hostile Emperor and a very real threat to his See. He flees (citing the words of Jesus when he says, "come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" Apoc.xviii.4), but it is a testimonial to the growing influence of the Church that he was able to hide on a secluded villa in the Carthaginian countryside. Dionysis of Alexandria went into hiding at the same time and immediately afterwards, the Bishops of Rome,

Antioch, and Jerusalem find the "baptism (in blood)" (martyrdom).⁵⁴

Meanwhile, the vacuum left by the martyrdom of the Bishop of Rome was then filled with dissension for two opposing candidates push their way to the See; Cornelius, a moderate, and Novatian, a conservative. These labels arose because of their two differing stances towards the "libellatici" (from the word "libelli"), those who had lapsed during the persecution of Decius.⁵⁵ Novatian, standing firmly on the ground of the ancient Church as a "Society of Saints" sees no hope for these apostates and pronounces them lost to God. Cornelius, perhaps following the precedent of Callistus, and recognizing the tragedy (some authors use "impossibility") of leaving so many thousands of souls to damnation, counters that no man can judge another lost to God, and that with proper penitence, these sinners can return to the Church to await the judgement of God--the Church as a "School for Sinners". (Augustine will continue this idea by emphasizing man's moral distance from God; from this we note the germination of the seed of "praedestinatio" (predestination)). Therefore, to continue Cornelius' idea, if a man commits a sin of his own free-will, but then is not held accountable for it by being ostracized by the group, why then is the sin proscribed? And if a group cannot judge one of its own to be impure, and therein to be corrupting the purity of the group, how can the Church stay sinless? To follow

Cornelius' interpretation to its logical conclusion is to alleviate man of any responsibility for his own salvation, and thus deny him any free-will to choose the path of right. Importantly, we see the Church again taking a profound step in a new direction simply in pragmatic response to a situation. As Chadwick concludes, "immense numbers of...Christians made it inevitable that Cornelius' policy should win."⁵⁸

Four months later he returns to find a similar crisis to contend with at home; in his absence, the rigorists and laxists had put forward two different candidates for the bishopric, the rigorists being supported by the righteous "confessores" in prison who had denounced Cyprian as a coward and an apostate at his flight. He had a problem. Somehow Cyprian needed to differentiate himself from the many who had lapsed so as to retain his authority as bishop, but at the same time, rebuke those who had sacrificed and thus really were apostates. He succeeds in this by stressing his sanctified role as Bishop of Carthage and the need, therein, of protecting himself (as Jesus remonstrates⁶²). Towards those who did lapse he takes a singularly conservative stance in De Lapsis ("On the Lapsed"):

The wound must be opened, and cut, and healed by the stronger remedy of cutting out the corrupting parts. The sick man may cry out, may vociferate, may complain, in impatience of the pain; but he will afterwards give thanks when he has felt that he is cured.¹⁶⁶

It is in this way that the Church remains pure; "the guilty must be left for God's judgement".⁶⁰ But one must remember that the crisis was of grave proportions; there were three candidates for bishop in both Carthage and Rome, and thousands of lost souls clamoring for readmission to the Church. Cornelius was under siege in Rome by the rigorist Novatian who was spouting a very similar rhetoric to that of Cyprian's; some compromise had to be made because in Cyprian's mind the office of Bishop was a singular and sanctified office throughout the world and there could be no division among those who hold the keys of Heaven. Cyprian needed that ecclesiastical authority desperately for the confessors in his town were busily sowing seeds of strife by declaring themselves "uniquely possessed by the Spirit"⁵⁹, for having been constant in their faith. Thus, Cyprian aligns his stance with Cornelius and states that because "nulla salus extra ecclesiam" (there is no salvation outside the Church)⁵⁷, bishops, endowed with the keys given to Peter by Jesus, while, not forgiving apostates, can allow them to return to the Church, there to perform suitable penitence in awaiting the judgement of God. With this compromise, Cyprian took a step closer towards Callistus' "School for Sinners".⁵⁶ He continues in De Unitate (of the Unity) to buttress his support by emphasizing the pure unity of the Church symbolized by the holy personage of the Bishop who confers the Holy Spirit onto his flock. Now he is arguing against those earlier rigorists who are denouncing both him

and Cornelius as the Anti-Christ. There is no salvation outside the Church; "he cannot have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother."⁶¹ Through this maze of controversy, we see Cyprian walking the fine line between the ancient and the modern ideal of Christianity; for the rigorists, the turn had already been made with the compromises (a Catholic would have called it clemency) of Callistus and Cyprian. In their opinion, their righteous numbers were the only Church purely descended from the Apostles. The Novatianists gradually faded away, but they were only the passing spokespersons for the tenants of the ancient Church; the next time a similar trial was put to the Christians, a new group of rigorists would bring schism to the Church.

This next eruption, only a few years later (AD 255), was this time a schism between North and South, Rome and Carthage, and it threatened to divide the unity which Cyprian had so valiantly struggled to uphold. Cornelius' successor Stephen ascends to the See of Rome in AD 254 and is confronted with thousands of lost souls left when Novatian fled Rome. They apply for readmission to the Church, and Stephen allows them to reenter requiring sufficient contrition, penitence, and the laying on of hands. Cyprian, on the other hand, held that a baptism (given by Novatian) given outside the "spirit-filled" community was no baptism, and therefore the schismatics should either be baptized or rebaptized (whichever the case

may be) into the true Church. According to Bishop Stephen, the sacrament is not man's, or the Church's, but Christ's and only depends on the correctness of form.¹⁶⁷ Cyprian counters with, "For how can he who lacks the Spirit, confer the Spirit's gifts?"⁶⁴ In 256 Cyprian calls the Seventh Council at Carthage of all the North African bishops "lest our numbers should not seem enough"⁶³, and then breaks of communion with Rome. In response, Stephen denounces Cyprian as the Anti-Christ. They never formally resolved this serious break; in 256 Stephen died, and in 258, St. Cyprian was martyred in Valerian's persecution which lasted until the death of the Emperor at the hands of the Persians in AD 260.⁶⁵

After 258, the Church's fortunes again changed. The Empire was being assailed on all fronts by the barbarians under Gallienus (AD 260-270), during which there was a rescript of toleration for the Christians ¹⁶⁸, and Aurelian (AD 270-75) was busy regaining territory for the Empire, so the Church was left to lick her wounds. Yet the questions posed during Cyprian's time still remained: what constitutes the unity of the Church? What is the role of the Holy Spirit? What is the role of the bishop? Why must heretics and schismatics be rebaptized? These were basically the same questions which plagued Tertullian and the other early Apologists; only now, rather than taking place within a small circle of theologians, these questions were being fought for, died for--whole churches were being

excommunicated. As energetically as Cyprian tried, he was never able to find a resolution to these questions for he was in the thick of the battle. What could he do if a lost Novatian came into his Church to worship? Denounce him as a heretic and send him away and leave him lost to God? But what of the purity and salvation of his congregation? Was it better to lose one soul in order to save thousands? That one soul could be Jesus Christ. Thus we see Cyprian pragmatically wrestling with the growing pains of an ever-expanding "world's church" and trying to follow his own heart as well. It was (and is) an insoluble conundrum. These questions will not go away; they will foment and culminate into an all-out war in the late 4th and early 5th centuries. But before we continue into this strife-ridden stage in the Church's growth, let us return to the ten years of Cyprian's bishopric and analyze them to find their greater meaning to our discussion.

At first glance it would seem that St. Cyprian changed his stance quite often with a singular goal in mind--unity. And indeed, that was his primary aim during these years of turmoil. We could perfectly understand his vacillation in the face of persecution, death and the divergent forces of many lands sharing the same religion. But one must remember that Cyprian is very much of the "Old Church", and it is only because of his circumstances that his rigorist foundations are shaken. Was he really that inconsistent? What single thread can we find running through the years of

persecution, during which he wrote De Lapsis and De Unitate, and the sacramental controversy with Stephen of Rome, which we read about in his Epistles 67-75? That thread is the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, in practical terms, is God on earth; it is this Spirit, the key which Jesus gave to Peter and through him the Twelve Apostles, and thus the bishops. The Spirit unites all bishops in the world into one, single, "conduit" for God's power. "The focus of unity is the bishop. To forsake him is to forsake the Church..."⁶⁶ The Twelve Apostles mission was to spread the Spirit and the Word to the ends of the earth, and like the Apostles, the bishops convey the Word and the Spirit to their congregations, through the laying on of hands and the Sacrament. Without that bond we are just humans, unsaved shells, incomplete halves. The Holy Spirit unites us and makes us a "spirit-filled" group. Thus heretics are those who break away from this bond of the Spirit; only after that bond is reestablished by a sanctified and holy bishop with the power of the keys, can the chain-link be reforged, and that individual readmitted. From this we can easily see Cyprian's reasoning in the conflict with Stephen: any fool can properly perform the sacramental act, but only a chosen few are empowered with the Holy Spirit, the power of God. And what of Cyprian's vacillation during the fiasco of 249-51? At first he is unwilling to even recognize the apostates. Cyprian is firmly entrenched in the "Church of

the Holy Spirit"; repentance is impossible for the three grave sins of apostasy, adultery, and murder. Then he "moves forward" (these words of Henry Chadwick belie a certain bias towards the laxists 169) to the position that bishops could readmit apostates. The reader will remember, readmission did not mean forgiveness, but even so this was a change from the traditional exclusive Church. This was, perhaps, the most insoluble problem left by the transition we noted earlier from Apostolic authority to Biblical authority; the document contains both the ideas of forgiveness and intolerance. For Jesus or one of the Apostles, living in the Age of Prophecy, the decisions were perhaps clearer. But for a persecuted bishop, a man really, the weight of the responsibility was sometimes too great; he could pray, but prayers are not always answered. Thus, with Cyprian we see the birth, of what Augustine later called charity on the part of the Church--a supreme, altruistic act of charity to readmit these errant ones, thus jeopardizing the sanctity of the group, and to pray for God's mercy. This change is more than just a pragmatic and inevitable response to the thousands of apostates, but a gradual shift from an "old testament" Church to a Church of the "new testament" based more on tolerance and clemency than on purity and righteousness. Furthermore, it marks another faltering of the Church's gaze from the ideal of Heaven to life on earth.

We see Cyprian desperately seeking to keep one foot on the iceberg of the "old Church" and one on the iceberg of the "new" as they slowly drift apart. The idea that the Church was a "School for Sinners" rather than a "Community of Saints" was beginning to find voice in the likes of Callistus, Stephen, and Dionysius of Alexandria. However, the ancient Church was kept alive in puritanical (termed so by moderate catholics) heretical sects like the Montanists and Novatians. 200 years earlier, these groups would not have been considered heretics, merely righteous, but now the Church had changed. Yet the most fervent and widespread puritans were only just being born during Cyprian's time, and they were found in his own congregation at Carthage. It is for this reason that it was more difficult for Cyprian to "move forward" to the "modern" Church, because he was raised in an area that had only recently been converted to Christianity, and was still relatively naive to the ambiguities of the religion.

That the North Africans took to Christianity quickly and passionately is readily agreed upon by historians of the Early Church. One reason was that the indigenous social factors were ripe for the Cult of Christ. The land that so easily took to Montanism, and that saw the birth of the fiery Tertullian and the mystical Monica (St. Augustine's mother), had a strong tradition of monotheism with the Cult of Saturn. The similarities with this cult to Christianity should not be overlooked; on mosaics, Saturn is termed "Deus

Aeternus" (Eternal God) and "Numen sanctum" (Holy Spirit) and described as "summus, sine initio, sine prole naturae" (the Supreme Being without beginning or descendant). His female counterpart, Caelestis, was a goddess at once virgin and mother.¹⁷⁰ Popular also was the Cult of the Holy Martyrs which was sanctified with the death of the Scillitans in 180, and again in Carthage with the martyrdom of Perpetua, Felicitas, and Saturus.⁶⁷ A strong streak of the "under-dog" ran strong in a church founded mostly on the oppressed backs of poor peasants and slaves. We note in Tertullian's Scorpiace the almost "islamic" emphasis on the washing of the soul through the blood spilt in the arena, and the beautiful paradise, the life through death, attained by those who die for their faith. "O good mother! I myself wish to be slain by her [wisdom-"sophia"]...I wish to be slain, that I may become a son"⁶⁸; this said by Tertullian the Montanist. We see the existent and real division in the Church which Cyprian so artfully sought to unify, when we compare the passion expressed by Tertullian, and the likes of Callistus and Stephen who emphasized much less the duty of Christians to die for their God than the necessity of correct form and Petrine Primacy. The wound that Cyprian barely bandaged was a fundamental difference in the spirituality of North and South, Rome and Carthage, urban and rural, "modern" and ancient.

Moreover, what we will note in these divisions and what we will see come to fruition in the Donatist Schism of the

5th century is the pairing of Rome and "ecclesia" with North Africa and "spiritualis". To be the ancient, exclusive children of God, meant devout loyalty to his name, even in the face of death, and purity, so as to be a righteous receptacle for his Spirit. The widespread embodiment of this ideal took the form of the Cult of the Martyrs in North Africa. On the other hand, following the death of Stephen, the Catholic Church gradually grew in prestige and social importance. The conversion of Constantine in 313 would bring new acceptance to Christians (as well as further a growing precedent of the key role of the secular power in Church affairs first began in 272 when the Emperor aurelian mitigates deciding against Paul of Samosatsa69). The pontificate (Damasus I was the first Roman bishop to use the terms "Pope" and "pontificate" which suggests that Rome already considered herself the unique holder of the keys of Heaven) of Damasus I would greatly increase the aristocratic patronage of the Church by his insistence on the ancient and grand tradition of Rome as the Spiritual capital of the world. The position of bishop became an influential post, and an efficacious mode of social climbing as demonstrated by the election of the layman, Nectarius, to the See of Constantinople in AD 381.70 In fact, as early as 251 in De Lapsis, Cyprian was denouncing "the very many bishops "who were 'increasing their fortunes by multiplying usuries,' acting as procurators, or 'seizing estates by crafty deceits'".72 The legitimacy and purity of those who held

the keys would become more than a North/South, urban/rural conflict, but as Rome began to assert her preeminence as the home of Peter and Paul, the larger, East/West dynamic became involved.

At the same time, there was what Peter Brown calls a "dangerous degree of 'moral specialization' within the Church. A certain elite of Christians, like monks, bishops, and martyrs, lead the "perfect" life of the spiritual individual, while the "average" Christian was just another of the "passive rank and file".¹⁷¹ The natural laziness of humanity was not wholly responsible for this change; the laity was literally disassociated from the spiritual process. This was due in part to the shift in emphasis from personal spiritual integrity to man's pitiful state of sin. Whether this change took place because of the rapid growth of the Church, and the difficulty in upholding the rigorous standards of ancient Christianity, or by some calculated act on the part of the growing ruling elite of the Church to subordinate and emasculate the laity will have to remain one of History's closely guarded secrets. Nonetheless we note the rapid change. Whereas before the 3rd century, the laity took an active role in the workings of the group by physically (pushing them to the podium) electing the bishop as their representative to God, the emperor and the other bishops gradually assumed the responsibility for raising bishops to their sees (culminating in the 6th century in Merovingian Gaul when we see the bishop as state-controlled

position).⁷⁶ Thus the status of the laity was demoted to that of "hearers" (a Manichean term for the majority of the people who were not chosen to seek wisdom), ones to be taught and guided in the "School for Sinners", with very little spiritual integrity of their own.

In this light we see Cyprian's life and death as a veritable turning point in the evolution of Christianity; he single-handedly kept the divergent streams of "ecclesia" and "spiritualis" together, but after his death the Church literally burst open, not "shifting", or "gradually inching" as it had done in years past, but exploded into ever multiplying conflicts and factions. Cyprian quotes in his Epistle No. 73, "Truth endureth and grows strong to eternity".⁷³ It will take the violence and bloodshed of the 4th and 5th centuries, and the forceful Augustine of Hippo, to decide on exactly what the "truth" of the Christians would be.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Donatist Church

In a sense, this thesis has been geared to the event of the Donatist Controversy because it is the natural outcome of the two forces of "ancient" and "modern" taken to a violent extreme. This extreme came about because each side had a valid argument and thus many proponents. The Donatists of North Africa, who were Catholics and sure of their righteousness, will become the adherents of the ancient ideal of the Church as a "Society of Saints" whereas Augustine, and the "Catholics" will propound the modern church as a "School for Sinners". Moreover, for historians, the ensuing battle is indicative of a more profound conflict than simply a normal theological controversy. As demonstrated by the other heresies we have discussed like the Novations and the Montanists, the controversy usually fizzles out after the charismatic leader has fled or died. This is not the case with Donatists, whose leader, Donatus, died some fifty years before the outbreak of violence. The "Great Schism" was an entirely different situation because more than addressing a doctrinal or ritualistic disagreement (in fact there really was no difference in the two Churches), the Schism had at its heart differing opinions about the relationship between the church group and the Christian individual. Simply put, the Donatists

believed that the spirituality (spiritualis) of each individual defined the spiritual integrity of the group, whereas the Catholics saw the integrity of the Christian group (ecclesia) to remain unchanged by the various spiritual colors of its members. The fundamental nature (that being one of group/individual dynamics) of this conflict is the reason that it lasted so long, with such vehemence, and with so many ready martyrs on both sides. Moreover, the effects of this schism were felt for hundreds of years afterwards for it is the ecclesiology formulated by St. Augustine of Hippo resulting from the Great Schism which would inform the policies of the Catholic Church into the Middle Ages.

Until this schism, "spiritualis" and "ecclesia" have been floating down a river of intermittent calm, together, as Christianity. Then the raft hits some rapids and "spiritualis" and "ecclesia" are both dumped off into the raging water--they come up spewing water and coughing. Then they look at each other, and then at the raft, which is jauntily rolling down the way, and make a mad dash for it. "Ecclesia" shoves "spiritualis" under and then "spiritualis" bites "ecclesia" on the ankle. "Ecclesia" kicks the other in the face, and in return "spiritualis" pulls out a big handful of "ecclesia's" hair. Screaming and fighting they go on like this until they realize, to their mutual chagrin, that the raft is long gone, having floated away during the

fight. They swim to opposite shores, crawl up and flop down, and regard one another, panting.

This is a characterization of what, thus far, has been the history of the Church; the battle and vying for dominance of these "two completely different interpretations of Christianity", as W.H.C. Frend puts it.⁷⁴ This chapter is the final dual, and (at least temporary) victory of one of these interpretations. Nonetheless, we will note, with Augustine himself, regardless of how the ostensible Church defines itself, the battle goes on within each spiritual individual. It is the song of sadness, frustration, and resentment, that Augustine sings until his death in AD 430, as the city of Hippo Regius is besieged by the Vandals. We have come full circle to our discussion of different worlds; the world of the Empire, of the Catholic Church and her adherents, and of the individual, will all be addressed in this schism. Therefore, our discussion will be divided into three parts: Part First will be a general over-view of the spirituality of the "populus dei" (people of God) of North Africa and the forces for a church such as the Donatists. Part Second will delve into the spirituality of St. Augustine and emerge naturally into the events of the Donatist Schism. Part Third will look at the new and evolved stance of the Catholic Church, her authoritarians, the bishops, and her people, the laity.

PART FIRST: The Christian World and North Africa

In AD 197 Tertullian writes in his Apology of the North African Catholic Church: "We are a society...with a common religious feeling, a unity of discipline and a common bond of hope...In prayer we await the trumpet of the angel".⁷⁵ Only a short time after the martyrdom of the Scillitans, and before the Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas, there existed a trenchant Christianity rooted in the social consciousness of the peasant and artisan classes and centered around the lives and passions of the martyrs. As W.H.C. Frend concludes, "the African Church was a Church of the Martyrs".⁷⁷ During the years following, much of the African countryside came to the Cult of Christ, so that by AD 251, Cyprian termed his congregation, "copiosus". Regardless of the fact that we have already discussed the previous ideas, they merit repeating here before we embark upon our next section. One must keep in mind that by the Great Persecution of 302-3 under the Emperor Diocletian (AD 284-305) there had existed for nearly 100 years a strong Christian tradition unique and particular to North Africa. This will become an important factor later on when we will realize two things: first, to these Christians, the theology of Cyprian, the Church as a "spirit-filled" group, was as much theirs (or more so) as Augustine's and the rest of the Catholic Church. Cyprian expressed the views of individual spirituality and the sanctity of the group which were

greatly meaningful to North African Christians alone. Secondly, rather than being integral in the spirituality of North Africa per se, Augustine entered on hallowed ground as an "outsider", and sought to bring that Church into conformity with the rest of the "world's Church".

By AD 255, Carthage had already seen its seventh council, convened by Cyprian to unify the African Church on the Baptisimal Controversy with Stephen.⁷⁸ After the martyrdom of Cyprian (AD 258) and the rescript of toleration under the Emperor Gallienus in AD 260, due mainly to the strength of the Christian force in the Eastern provinces and the necessity of their loyalty in the face of external threat, there began a steady conquest of rural Egypt, Syria and North Africa by Christianity.⁷⁹ On the eve of the Great Persecution of 302-3, much of the Latin World had come to be counted as Christian, leaving only the upper classes staunchly pagan (with a few exceptions of course). This is Christianity at its grass-roots level; in spite of the number of prominent intellectuals who had converted, it still remained for the power-elite to recognize the religion by its membership. Thus we note the "coming of age" of Christianity for it had split the Empire in two, not only along lines of belief, but of class; it was no longer simply a religious sect, but a vital a productive stratum of society which turned its accusative eyes towards those in power seeing them now as obstructors of God's destiny on earth. Christianity was a threat in the fullest sense. Not

only that, it was an indomitable threat, being fueled by the passions of the lower classes against the upper. Thus, W.H.C. Frend says, "the Great Persecution when it came in 303 was foredoomed to failure."⁸⁰

It was a failure from the perspective of the pagan traditionalists, but a victory, with the cessation of persecution in 305, and the Emperor Constantine's victory at the Milvan Bridge in 312, for the Christians.⁸¹ An unequivocal victory it would have been except for one stumbling block; that was the explosion on the scene of Christians, Donatus and his colleagues in the same year as the Bishop, Caecilian's ascension to the See of Carthage (AD 316)⁸², and the birth of Donatism as a decisive force of dissent in the Christian community.

The Great Persecution, the conversion of Constantine, and the ensuing Donatist controversy, were dramatic changes in the evolution of Christianity. Whereas before, as we earlier noted, the religion divided the Empire along religious and class lines, Donatism, with the symbolic conversion of the Emperor and the resulting steady conversion of the upper-classes (from AD 313 to AD 384 culminating under the pontificate of Damasus I ⁸³), divided the new Christian Empire along ideological lines. The Donatists, along with the other so called "heresies" of the era, replaced the Christians as the persecuted minority in the Empire. Donatists were Christians. The question was no longer, "would the Empire allow Christianity?", but, "how

would the Empire be Christian?" Therefore, the forces motivating Donatism threatened more than just the Church, but now the power-elite and concomitantly, the state. Constantine would start the ball rolling by intervening in the dispute between Caecilian and his opponents in 313, and Augustine would catch that ball as the venerable Bishop of Hippo (AD 395)⁸⁴, raise it up, and with all the religious and secular power he could muster, smash it down on the Donatist Schismatics, thus squashing them as viable opponents to the Church as well as the State.

PART SECOND Augustine and the Donatist Controversy

In this section we will accomplish two things: first, we will examine the personality of Augustine of Hippo, the most famous player in the actual Donatist Controversy (Donatus having been dead many years before the eruption of violence), in order to see what influences motivated his anti-Donatist polemic, and second, we will follow the events of the schism itself. With this section we will discover the lasting legacy of St. Augustine; he succeeded in removing the layman (and woman) from the spiritual experience by envisioning a god omnipuissant and omniscient and thus making the priest or bishop the only means of spirituality, and formulating the doctrine of predestination. In this light the Donatists were fighting

for more than a certain bishop's right to his see, or for official recognition, but for the right to have autonomy over their own spiritual destiny.

When we read of Augustine's conversion in the Confessions we enter a whole new realm of spiritual dialectic, one in which the heart of man and the Spirit of God finally come together in communion. Up to this point the emotions, the pathos of Christian spiritual leaders have been alien to us. And then there is Augustine who puts his soul and his sins right down onto the page for the whole world to see, and single-handedly made the religion more accessible to laymen and laywomen. Yet he was only able to do this after having gone through a considerable struggle, and not one of conversion (although the book would have you think this) either, but of faith--of living with the ramifications of becoming a Christian. For, one must remember that, the Confessions was written a good ten years (AD 396) after his conversion. What happened during those ten years was that the profound weight, the true meaning of Augustine's life as a Christian, settled firmly and heavily on his shoulders. The following quotation from Peter Brown puts it most eloquently:

If to be a 'Romantic', means to be a man acutely aware of being caught in an existence that denies him the fulness for which he craves, to feel that he is defined by his tension for something else, by his capacity for faith, for hope, for longing, to think of himself as a wanderer seeking a country that is always distant, but made ever-present to him by the quality of love that 'groans'

for it, then Augustine has imperceptibly become a 'Romantic'.⁸⁵

Professor Brown captures the meat of the paradox which was St. Augustine's life in this quotation. His conversion was much more than a spiritual turning-point for him, it was the beginning of a love-affair with the one thing, the one ideal under whose yoke he was willing to submit. Yet to Augustine it was a submission of joy and a bond of freedom for therein he was able to "sing my songs of love to Thee, groaning with inexpressible groaning in my distant wandering, and remembering Jerusalem with my heart stretching upwards in longing for it.: Jerusalem my Fatherland, Jerusalem who is my mother..."⁸⁶ With words like these, Augustine embodies the new ideal of the Spiritual Individual which Martin Luther will, later on, seek to recapture in the Reformation; the person gives his heart and soul to God, and receives in return love, hope and infinite blessings.

Yet that which denied "him the fullness for which he craves" was, ironically (and tragic it must have been) was God himself. As any Christian knows, the ways of the Lord are not always clear, and he had given Augustine a calling which would deny him, for the rest of his life, the peace and solitude he craved--that calling was the See of Hippo. It is this fact which makes Augustine's example all the more powerful, for rather than turning on his congregation with resentment and loathing, symbolizing as they did by their very existence, his lost destiny, he took to his calling

patience and obedience. What faith and charity this must have taken! With what diligence did he go about guiding his flock! We see him in 395, sitting "as a bishop on his cathedra with a book across his knees"⁸⁷, not austere raised up above his new congregation, but there, among them, explicating in "word-images" the messages in the Bible. It is with avuncular benevolence thus, that Augustine went about chastising and converting the "Donatii"; like his congregation, like all Catholics in the world, these schismatics were his charges, his duty, and for their eternal salvation, as well as for his own (for it was his calling), he would bring them back to the fold.

Nevertheless in later years (circa 410), Augustine undermines our image of him by doing everything short of murder (as he says many times, to kill one of them would only add to their cause by making them martyrs) in order to coerce the Donatii back to the Catholic Church. How can we give the haughty defender of public order that we come to know in Augustine when he writes, after his victory at Carthage in 411, that the Donatists were "herds of abandoned men...disturbing the peace of the innocent for one reason or another in the spirit of the most reckless madness..."⁸⁸, with what we really know about the Donatists, and of Augustine's sometimes unscrupulous propagandizing against them? How can we reconcile the love and admiration we feel for this human soul laid out for us in the Confessions with this snobbish, self-righteous, almost, gloating old bishop?

Peter Brown follows Augustine's spiritual development with tact and insight in his biography Augustine of Hippo and it is in this work that we get a sense of Augustine's overriding humanity. Powerful bishop he may have been, and he seems to make decisions with ease, but it is as a human soul that he faces death; "almost 10 days before his death...from his sickbed...[he] could see these sheets of paper [the four psalms of David that deal with penance] everyday hanging on his walls, he would read them, crying constantly and deeply."⁸⁹ It is true that we see in Augustine's works towards the "revolt of the monasteries"⁹⁰, towards Pelagius , and the Donatists, a "hard message for a hard age"⁹¹, that of his "praedestinatio", but in the end, we are confronted by the same soul-searching Augustine, who in spite of all the work done in the name of his God, still fears failure and his wrathful judgement.

It is the dichotomy of "spiritual individual" and "public personality" which makes Augustine such a complex figure for us. It was a uneasy symbiosis which was not arrived at easily for Augustine. After his profound conversion, he saw his life as complete; all that was left to do was to enter a monastery and live in communion with God, in order to perfect his spiritual being. But as we have already discovered, God foiled that plan by calling him to the See of Hippo. As Augustine would write later of that time (circa 395), "I feared the office of bishop to such an extent that, as soon as my reputation came to matter among

"servants of God", I would not go to anyplace where I knew there was no bishop."⁹² Nevertheless, he was shoved to the podium at the aging Bishop Valerius' mention of the "urgent needs of the Church" and therein burst into tears, not out of joy, or out of disappointment (as the congregation assumed) at being relegated to the inferior status of priest (being taken as a priest implied inevitably the post of bishop), but out of sadness at having been "condemned". God had "laughed him to scorn".⁹³ At this time his life-long struggle began with the birth of his "public personality" (religiously speaking for Augustine was already a well-known orator and rhetorician); the struggle between being a "servus dei" (servant of God) and a "servus ecclesiae catholicae" (servant of the Catholic Church).⁹⁴

For the world's eyes, as seen through his episcopal writings and those of his biographer, Possidius, Augustine and his contemporaries, Alypius, Paulinus of Nola, and Jerome, created and embodied the ideal of the "monk-bishop"⁹⁵; a man easily able to straddle the secular and spiritual worlds. In reality, this "schizophrenic" ideal was much more difficult. How possible was it to separate the motives of personal spirituality from episcopal authority? Brown's book is dotted throughout with quotations by Augustine lamenting the tedious drudgery of his job, of the lack of solitude to "exercise myself in the Holy Scriptures"⁹⁶--to simply be one with God. Furthermore, we see the ideas of predestination early, in the Confessions

for God had fingered Augustine in the garden in Milan and had again done so by raising him to the See of Hippo. Like his later causes, the Donatists were Augustine's "mission and responsibility".⁹⁷ Furthermore, because of this "crushing sense of mission", their conversion was irrefutably tied up with his salvation. Perhaps it was their stubborn recalcitrance which motivated Augustine's formulation of "praedestinatio". Thus in AD 420 Augustine states, in response to Dulcitius' (the imperial agent in Carthage) shock at the ecclesiastical ferocity in North Africa:

...seeing that God, by a hidden, though just, disposition, has predestined some to the ultimate penalty [of Hellfire], it is doubtless better that an overwhelming majority of the Donatists should have been collected and reabsorbed...while a few perish in their own flames: better, indeed, than that all the Donatists should burn in the flames of Hell for their sacrilegious dissension.⁹⁸

Simply put: Augustine had spent a good quarter of his life trying to coerce the Donatists, and having done all that he could, and having other pressing matters, must leave some to God and hope that he had done enough. Thus, in some sense, we might see Augustine's later insistence on "praedestinatio" as an explanation for what he saw as a partial failure on his part as the Bishop of Hippo. (This is not to intimate that Augustine "invented" the idea of predestination, for there are some scriptural precedents for it: rom.viii.29-30.)

We, as onlookers of history, can see most clearly the changes in Augustine's persona, and the struggle he underwent as both a "child of God" and a "Father" to his congregation. We feel sadness for what the demands of the world wrought on this man. A bishop, due to the demands placed on him by his congregation and the secular world, must know intimately the corruption of the world, "play the game", to attain his ends, but still remained unscathed. Augustine wanted no more of sin; Christianity was supposed to be freedom from sin. As Brown states, "the average Christian bishop could have been coopted readily into the little oligarchies of great landowners, who counted for something in the life of their cities...They would expect the bishop to collude in land-grabbing."⁹⁹ And again later, "Augustine would need their support [big landowners]; and they would need the bishop, for, as legal guardian of minors, he might affect their dynastic policies."¹⁰⁰ Augustine pursued his episcopal goals with admirable integrity (not counting a human and blind singlemindedness), seeking and succeeding to remain always above the fray of the petty machinations of the local oligarchies. But, he was human and he could not remain completely unscathed by his position. This is evident in a fawning letter sent to Augustine by an important magistrate:

In his reaction to the bejewelled eulogies contained in this letter [sent by Count Darius, the imperial agent negotiating with Pope Boniface] we can catch an indirect glimpse of Augustine for the last time--polished, exceedingly

literate, charmingly preoccupied with
the temptations of his own
reputation.¹⁰¹

This, taking place the winter before the Vandals (AD 428-29) is the worldly Augustine we rarely see. This fastidious, human Augustine is endearing compared to his customary righteousness. But he struggles with the dilemma until the end, when he retires to his bed to perform penitence for the pride he had felt in his accomplishments on earth.

Let us now take a look at those accomplishments as they pertain to the Donatists, who looked with fervor to death, and saw there eternal happiness with God the Father.

The origins of the Donatist Schism are thought to have begun with the persecution of Diocletian of AD 303-305.¹⁰² The persecution caught North African Christians by surprise in spite of the early tremors of the martyrdom of Maximilian of Theveste in AD 297 and the Edict against Manichaeism around AD 300.¹⁰³ The first full-fledged "earthquake" came on 19 May 303 when Diocletian circulated his order to surrender Church Scripture, register all Church property, and (probably) to destroy some Church buildings. This was called "dies Traditionis" ("the Day of Treason") and affected primarily the clergy.¹⁰⁴ In the autumn of 303 and into early 304, the "dies Thurificationis" (or "Turificationis"--"the Day of Incense throwing") was instituted which required that everyone should perform some ritual act pledging loyalty to the Emperors and the gods of Rome. Disobedience meant death.¹⁰⁵

The edicts were carried out throughout North Africa rigorously, but carefully, for Christianity had been widely accepted for the last 40 years. As with the Decian and Valerian persecutions, apostasy was rampant; the only difference being the huge increase in numbers this time. As Optatus of Milevis wrote, "the temples were not big enough to hold the crowds of apostates."¹⁰⁶ But there was one other fundamental change--the crowds in Carthage and Cirta (the capital of Numidia in North Africa) testified to the popularity of the "confessores" and the hatred for the "traditores" (those who had apostatized ¹¹⁴). It is here that the fire of Donatism ignited and that we see the roots of the Schism. The attitude of the African higher clergy, their willingness to hand over Scripture and comply with the edicts can hardly be seen as cowardice with the similar action of the Father of North African Christianity, Cyprian. He had advised his colleagues against provoking the authorities, and as we have seen, retired to an estate himself.¹⁰⁷ But he suffered dearly for it in the eyes of his congregation for what they perceived as cowardice. Again this happened. To many the persecution was an opportunity to win glory in the battle against the living, pagan Devil. This fanatical, "anti-hierarchical"¹⁰⁸ element prevailed, and was largely embodied, in the lower classes.

Thus it is significant that we see the persecution falling with disproportionate weight on the native

population outside the urban areas.¹⁰⁹ Numidia in particular, the plains of which supplied much of the grain to the Empire, suffered severely, and it is here that the Cult of the Martyrs was most avidly adhered to. "Memoriae Martyrum" abound throughout the countryside cemeteries; these "uncanonical martyrs" would form the pantheon of the Donatist Schism.¹¹⁰ These were fathers, mothers, children who died simply for their faith; their bloody testament spoke louder than the edicts of the Emperor, or the remonstrations of Augustine. These people followed their own lead. This perhaps explains, in part, the later popularity of Silvanus, the sub-deacon to Bishop Paulus of Cirta. Silvanus enthusiastically handed over not only Scriptures, but chalices, lamps and clothes to the authorities.¹¹¹ Yet this same apostate was later raised on the shoulders of the crowd and pronounced the Bishop of Cirta!¹¹² As W.H.C.Frend concedes, "...there is no rational explanation for this..."¹¹², except for one clue, and that is just this: Silvanus, along with an "acknowledged brigand" Bishop Purpuris of Limata who "inspired terror among the Christians" were responsible for robbing the Imperial Treasury. Bishop Purpuris was prepared to murder the Bishop of Carthage if he compromised with the authorities. These men would naturally come to the fore of a population who had suffered cruelly at the hands of the authorities.¹¹³ We can see the roots of an anti-authority, violent group like the Circumcellions (we will discuss them more later), who

performed justice by the sword on the side of the Lord (and the Donatists), with the popularity of the well-known "tradiator", Silvanus.

Furthermore, there were events in Carthage which had fueled the fire of the Cult of the Martyrs, and paved the way for Silvanus and finally, Donatus. At the end of 303, the Bishop Fundanus of Abitina had become a "tradiator" but his congregation, led by the presbyter Saturninus, continued to meet at the house of a layman. The Acta Saturnini tell how one day the group was worshipping and was surprised by the authorities. They were arrested and taken to Carthage for trial. Frend sees the composition of the group to be significant; they were mostly peasants, artisans, or women, except for one "decurion" (city councillor). These were "...the groups least affected by romanization."¹¹⁵ Through this heroic testimony, we are confronted by a simplicity and steadfastness of faith which harkens back to the first martyrs of the Church. The confessores admit having met together for divine worship. They are put to torture, but "persist in their confessions of faith". The following dialogue is between Anulinus the inquisitor who is torturing Emeritus, one of the Abitinian Martyrs:

Anulinus: "But why did you allow the others to enter your house?"

Emeritus: "...because they are my bretheren, and I could not prevent them from coming."

A: "But you should have prevented them."

E: "Certainly not, we are not able to stand upright without celebrating the Lord."

A: "But the commands of the Emperors and Caesars come first"

E: "God is greater than the Emperor."

A: "Have you any sacred texts in your house?"

E: "I have them in my heart." 116

The charges against these devotees was disobedience to the Imperial Decrees, and although nothing is known of their fate, the Donatist Catholics asserted that they were left in a Carthaginian prison to starve. The huge crowds which kept vigil outside the prison who were trying to feed them, indicated the growing popularity of martyrs in general.117

While in prison, the Abitinian Martyrs denounced the "tradiator" clergy; to alter one word, much less destroy the Holy Scriptures at the command of pagans merited eternal damnation. Whoever maintained contact with these "tradiatores" and was thus defiled, would not be welcome in the Church as in Heaven. One will recall similar words used by the "confessores" to denounce Cyprian of Carthage under the Decian persecution. Now they were denouncing the clergy and all of their congregations, their own included under Bishop Fundanus of Abitina.119

The battle was by no means over after the cessation of persecution in March of 305. The mob took it into their own hand to elect Paulus of Cirta's successor; they chose the tradiator, Silvanus, who was proclaimed bishop, and hoisted

on the shoulders of the quarryman, Mutus.¹²⁰ In the five years following the Great Persecution, opinions seemed to have hardened either for a lenient stance towards the lapsed and the "tradiatores", or for a glorification of the martyrs, and a stern "anti-worldly" and "anti-hierarchical" Christianity.¹²¹ It is during this time as well (circa 311), that we first hear the name Donatus of Casae Nigrae who allied himself with the opposition to Bishop Mensurius of Carthage, who was widely considered to be a laxist. Mensurius fell ill and died, and in the absence of a primate of Carthage, the "seniores" (presbyters) sought to rush through the election of one of their own before the Numidians arrived who, by tradition, had the right of consecrating the Bishop of Carthage. "This in itself suggests the strong rivalry between the churches of Numidia and Carthage..."¹²²; or, as we have noted, a rivalry between rural and urban.

Moreover, it was also a rivalry between the upper-class and the lower-class as the ensuing events illustrate. The chosen successor to Mensurius was Caecilian who was promptly approved by the citizen body of Carthage but avidly disliked by the people. This was exactly the opposite case with the election of Silvanus of Cirta (in Numidia) where the mob elected him and the citizen body was staunchly against him.¹²³

Caecilian had a long and public record of being an "opponent of what he considered an exaggerated esteem for

martyrs."¹²⁴ Furthermore, it was widely rumored that it was Caecilian the presbyter who was responsible for keeping food from the Abitinian Martyrs. Thus he could not count on popular support, and the opposition, backed in part by rich and devout land-owners like Lucilla, elected a rival candidate, Majorinus (or Maiorinus) to the See of Carthage.¹²⁵ Secundus of Tigisis (the Numidian Primate), kept informed of events by Donatus now a resident-fomenter in Carthage, refused to accept the fait accompli of Caecilian's ordination and arrived at Carthage with seventy other Numidian bishops.¹²⁶ They were warmly received by the anti-Caecilian faction already in Carthage (led by the pious Lucilla), and when informed that Caecilian had been consecrated by only three instead of the customary twelve bishops, and that one of those three was widely expected of being a "tradiator", they were outraged, and consecrated Majorinus Bishop of Carthage.¹²⁷ The Numidian bishops returned home, their work being finished, and Caecilian and his followers condemned them as schismatics. By AD 313 there was a full-fledged schism in the North African Church. All that was needed to fulfill Optatus' phrase, "one altar was set up against another" was an eloquent leader for the Numidian faction--that man was Donatus of Casae Nigrae, who ascended to the See of Carthage in AD 313 at the death of Majorinus.¹²⁸

Donatus would preside over this "other altar", the Donatist Catholic Church, for the next 40 years. Yet he

would die in exile from his see in AD 355.¹²⁹ Both the Donatists and the Caecilianists asked the new Christian Emperor Constantine for a deciding synod and he calls two; Rome in 313 and Arles in 314. After vigorous inquiries by the Emperor, Caecilian was affirmed as the rightful Bishop of Carthage. Donatus flees. Finally in December 320, Silvanus is proven to have been a "traditor" before a council of Numidian bishops and squarely denounced by both Catholics and Donatists alike. At least in the eyes of the Catholic Church, they had won this first battle for the Numidians had been publicly disgraced; but the division within the unity was already so great that the Donatists actually succeeded in glorifying the corrupt Silvanus as a martyr.¹⁵⁹ One battle does not the war win as we shall see for within the next generation, Donatism will become the religion "of nearly all Africa".¹³⁰

It is for the above reasons that in AD 395, when Augustine rises to the See of Hippo, he is truly stepping into an arena from which he has become, to a large part, estranged. The urbane world of rhetoric and Rome shared very little with the peasant Donatists. The motivations behind Augustine's rigorous polemic and coercion of the Donatists are disputed between historians. W.H.C. Frend who stresses the social differences between St. Augustine, born in Thagaste (a Catholic stronghold), matured in the comparatively cosmopolitan centers of Carthage, Rome and Milan, and the fervent and somewhat irrational spirituality

of North African Christians.¹³¹ Peter Brown disagrees, minimizing the radical differences between Augustine and his opponents, and laying more stress on the personal factors behind the bishop's growing impatience and intolerance towards the alternate Church (much of which we have already discussed).¹³² We will take the middle-ground between the two views.

Assuredly, the social distinctions were an integral factor in the formation and the longevity of the Donatist Church. We can see how, to the Donatists, a cultured, romanized North African such as Augustine, would seem suspect and prick at the innate rancor between "rural" North Africa and "cultured" Carthage and Rome. Perhaps the social aspects were much more of a factor for the Donatists than for Augustine from whom we sense a goodly amount of integrity and compassion towards the North Africans as not just his "children" but his "brothers". Yet it is a fact that Augustine sympathized very little with the Cult of the Martyrs. He saw the somewhat mystical and therefore heathen spirituality of the lower-classes, and his congregation as something to be stemmed and rerouted to a higher purpose; for example, he prohibited them from celebrating the feast of a local martyr, Leontius.¹³³ Therefore, in a land steeped in the legends of the Holy Martyrs, this bishop would be at an immediate disadvantage. Finally, both historians agree that Augustine's mission to convert the Donatists was largely and in the long-run unsuccessful; the

two altars will stand until toppled in the fire of Islam in the 8th century.¹³⁴ Social and personality factors were definitely a part of this ultimate failure, but we will see that, rather than placing the blame in either one camp or the other, or both for that matter, the mere existence of the Donatist Church, and its refusal to be put down, indicate that something integral to the Christian religion as a whole was addressed by these events. We will return to this point later.

The threat of the Donatist Catholic Church to the established Catholic Church was two-fold; they posed a spiritual challenge to the Church (as did the Gnostics in Tertullian's day) in attacking at the heart of the Unity by denouncing the Catholic clergy as being touched by the contagion of sin. They posed a physical threat to the peace and stability of the Church and Christian society through armed herds "holy warriors" called "circumcellions".

The circumcellions were the "herds of abandoned men" previously mentioned by Augustine and derived their name from "circum cellas" or "around the shrines". They were devotees of the shrines of the martyrs where they would come to be fed. Many of these shrines have been discovered through archaeological digs to have had what seem to be large grain silos; the troughs lining the grave-sites were filled with food-offerings to the martyrs.¹³⁵ Augustine called these nomadic men and women "agrestes" or people who had given up their holdings of land (he sought to diminish

their standing in the eyes of land-owners).¹³⁶ The circumcellions literally found their life through the graves of the martyrs. As W.H.C. Frend states, they were putting into practice what Tertullian had preached; their end-goal was martyrdom. Their battle-cry was "Deo laudes!" (praise to God!) and they were renowned for their strict observance of the Scriptures and their elaborate ceremonies centered around the tombs of the martyrs.¹³⁷ These "agonistici" (militants) or "soldiers of Christ" roamed the countryside in ascetic habit, performing justice on the side of the righteous (Donatism) like emancipating slaves, or coercing rich land-owners to convert under the threat of their "Israels" (their clubs).¹³⁸

These "terrorists" (as Frend terms them) were unequivocally Donatists, yet they were at once praised and denounced by the Donatist Church. They were the heroes of the people, but at the same time, fueled the antagonism of the Catholic Church and the Empire and were thus shunned as well by the higher Donatist clergy who were seeking acceptance as a "legitimate" church. Generally speaking, we see the glory of the circumcellions coincide with the ascendance of the Donatist Church (up to the year AD 401), and then their likewise widespread denunciation as popularity for the Donatist cause began to wane under systematic persecution under the Edict of Unity of 405 AD and the Conference of Carthage in 411.¹³⁹

The climax of Donatism in Africa and then the ensuing "eclipse of Donatism" 140 after AD 401 coincides with a change in Augustine's tactics. The changes in his attitudes towards the Donatists are less profound (less, I think, than Brown makes of them, who because of his obvious admiration for Augustine, seeks to somewhat mitigate his harsh stance) for he, from the very beginning reacted to them not as religious equals (which they were in every sense of the word), but as heretics. They were sheep who had been led astray by some very shady wolves (one can hardly blame him for this attitude with the likes of Purpuris and Silvanus as proof), and it was only a matter of time, and degree, until they saw the error of their ways. The degree is what changed. At first, Augustine was naively cocky in his confidence of the "rightness" of his ways. He avidly delivered sermons and distributed tracts throughout North Africa. He would go right into a Donatist Church and put up a leaflet, in so doing he sought to convert the Donatists with words and common sense. But as he grew to realize the passion and steadfastness of his opponents, and as the violence of the circumcellions spread, he began to try another tact. He sought change from the top-down, by converting the big land-owners and the government officials who saw the Donatists as a serious destabilizing influence. His polemic became more and more biting, his arguments tighter, stronger. The Donatists were committing schism which was "lack of charity in its grossest form".141 They

belied the fact that they had fallen prey to the greatest sin of all and that was pride, or a "basic denial of dependance, and so of gratitude" 142 to God. By being exclusive and denouncing Caecilian they had broken off communion from the "world's Church" established on the shoulders of Peter. But more than that, the Donatists were denying God's final authority:

...they [Christians] disapprove of men who act in such a way [sin], yet endure them for the peace that is in unity, in a manner deserving all praise. Wherefore you have nothing to bring up against the Lord's wheat, who endure the chaff that is among them until the last winnowing, from whom you never would have separated yourself, had you not shown yourself lighter than chaff by flying away under the blast of temptation before the coming of the Winnower.¹⁴³

What Augustine sought to do was to separate the layman from God so as to give God the final decision, whereas the Donatists emphasized man's integral closeness to God. His ploy was to emphasize the isolationist and exclusivist tendencies of the Donatist Church and juxtaposes to this static group, the ever-popular Catholic "unity of Christ", "which is spread throughout the whole inhabited world, of which it has been predicted that it shall have dominance from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."¹⁴⁴ Yet it is in this work that Augustine belies his own fatal obtuseness; he is arguing that the Donatists are a dead group of apocalyptic puritans which was simply not true. Apocalyptic they were, but their Church was growing;

they actively converted up until the proscription against their activities, and even after that, they were never totally destroyed. Secondly, it is just this type of argument which alienated the Donatists, for they did believe the world was a place of sin, and that in order to return to Christ, they must separate themselves from sin. The fact that Augustine seemed to be boasting of the world-wide popularity of the Church, merely reinforced in their minds the sin and corruption of the Catholics. Finally, Augustine does not recognize, or will not concede, that the Donatists had as good an argument for being the True Church as did the Catholics. They had apostolic succession. They were in active communion with their dioceses. They followed the same Sacrament, used the same Scriptures, and had dignitaries, intellectuals, aristocrats, and peasants alike as adherents. They lived as "tares among the wheat" as well, only there were three tares that were unforgivable, and those were, murder, apostasy, and adultery, all of which had been forgiven by the Catholic Church. The key to understanding the seeming blind inaccuracies of Augustine's later, anti-Donatist writings, is that they were not written to convert Donatists, but to solidify both spiritual and secular support against them. They were propaganda.

It is in AD 400 that Augustine formulates his response to the renegade letters of Petilian, now the leading Donatist spokesperson after the death of Donatus. It is during this period of popular revolts, and rampaging

circumcellions who had pulled Catholic priests and bishops from their churches and literally had torn them limb from limb, that Augustine begins to mobilize secular support against the Donatists. The response to the Letters of Petilian is Augustine at his most one-sided. But by 409 and 410, "Alaric had marched backwards and forwards over Italy" 160, and the Roman government was unable to attend to affairs in North Africa. The secular power withdrew its support from the Church. The Donatist bishop returned in triumph to Hippo, and Augustine was facing the very real threat of ending his life as a martyr.¹⁴⁶ From late 409 to August 410, the laws against heresy were suspended.¹⁴⁷ During this period of seeming triumph for Donatism in North Africa we realize an interesting fact; the ideal of the classic Roman Empire had finally been attained for under the eagle's wings of Rome (now the barbarian's wings) a diversity of religions, paganism, forms of Christianity, Catholicism, Donatism, Arianism, Novatianism, Melitianism, Montanism and of course, Judaism, were coexisting. But now, rather than simply wanting acceptance, the Catholic Church (with St. Augustine is its main spokesperson) would push for more--dominance. Thus at the Catholics' prodding, the Emperor Honorius called a "collatio" (a colloquy) of the bishops of both Churches on 25 August 410.¹⁴⁸ Not surprisingly it was presided over by Flavius Marcellinus, a devout Catholic.¹⁴⁹

The Conference of Carthage was really decided before it began. Augustine certainly did not consider the validity of the Donatist Church an arguable point. By this time, more than at any other, the Empire needed (desperately) a stabilizing force. The Catholic Church would be that force. The Donatist contingent, led by Petilian of Constantine fought valiantly, and seemed to be making ground. But then on the last day, Augustine took the stand, and with customary drama, answered impromptu the manifesto of the Donatists. It was an "astonishing and heartening performance."¹⁵⁰ Seizing the moment, Marcellinus sought the "cause of dissension" rather than the "Case of the Church" and required the Catholics to reconstruct the documents pertaining to the first year of the schism. This belies the obvious bias of the Conference--the Donatists were merely troublesome schismatics, not a real church. Quickly then he delivered his verdict: "the Donatists had no case; 'Let falsehood, once detected, bow its neck to truth made manifest.'"¹⁵¹ The Conference of Carthage was a monumental hoax; rather than looking at the motivations, merits, or validity of the Donatist Church, they treated it just as Augustine had--like a problem, an aberration which had to be fixed. But the Donatist question was long decided, there was no possibility for compromise, because the only reason that the Conference was convened was to realign the secular power with the Catholic Church. This is illustrated by the events following the Conference. In AD 405, the Donatists

were systematically disbanded; the action was specifically geared towards their conversion. They had to pay higher taxes, they could not meet, they were fined for worshipping, and the circumcellions were rooted out and punished. But in AD 412, all layman (not just Donatists) who were not Catholic were punished; a heavy fine was levied on all who did not join the Church.¹⁵² The Donatists became simply a platform from which the Catholic Church sought dominance over the whole world.

"At the death of Augustine the alliance between Church and Empire had become complete."¹⁵³ It was an alliance based on mutual need; both the Church and the State had great stake in the maintenance of the status quo. Now bishops were leading, powerful figures in their towns. Now someone like Nectarius, a layman who rose to the See of Carthage (above page 56), could have the Emperor's ear. Now to be a religious dissenter meant to be a religious and societal dissenter as well. Now the integral dynamic of the Catholic Church was less vital; whereas before, one's faith was strong because one was persecuted for wanting to have the freedom to love God and follow his commandments, now (at least for the middle and upper-classes) the world beyond and the battles of Good and Evil paled in the light of new vistas of a Christian world.

Interestingly, Augustine took this all as a matter of course. The alliance was a practical necessity; a "sine quo non"¹⁵⁴ of the Catholic Church. It would be invoked again

against the Pelagians and other heretics. Augustine had always had ties to the upper-classes such as friends, Bishop Evodius (a security official) and Hilarius (a senior administrator). He diminished the importance of strict asceticism, emphasizing that "riches were in themselves no bar to entry into the Kingdom of Heaven."¹⁵⁵ And in fact, about this time, we see the Church becoming one of the largest land-owners in Empire; rich families left large tracts of their land upon the death of a family member.¹⁵⁶ Yet for the aging Augustine, all of these grandiose things seemed to have waned after the battle with the Donatists. Perhaps it was his close brush with death at the hands of the circumcellions, or the sack of Rome by Alaric which signified the end of a Golden Age, or the seeming staunchness of some of the Donatists. He simply lost interest in what was only a few years before, in "the heady confidence of the 400's"¹⁵⁷ an all-consuming fire. Brown writes, "For now that he no longer needed to convince others, Augustine seems to have lost conviction himself."¹⁵⁸ We have already noted Augustine's response (page 68 above) to the violent epidemic of Donatist and circumcellion suicides; this cold-hearted, even jaded response is understandable, but from what we know of the "old Augustine's" love and passion, it is rather startling.

As with St. Cyprian we see St. Augustine, now the representative for the World Church of the Catholics, contending with divergent forces; "spiritualis" and

"ecclesia", class strife, rigorists and laxists and the Roman Empire. But Augustine took Cyprian's "reaction-response" a step further to an "active-offensive" response at synthesizing these forces. Stressing unity under which the whole world could find salvation with the Cult of Christ, he was forced to enlarge the chasm between "man the sinner" and God the Winnower" in order to include all possible levels of spirituality; he generalized the spiritual experience, thus disassociating the laity from a vital, individual interaction with God. At the same time he cemented the ideal of the Church being a "School for Sinners", the bishop being the fatherly teacher, and the Emperor as "God's avenger".¹⁶¹ Augustine took equally as his mission the conversion of Pagans, of Donatists and the Roman Empire alike. He showed how the goals of Church and State could be, to a large part, the same goals. But as in the years 409-410, when the Empire was vacillating on support of the Catholic Church, the State revealed itself to be a fickle bed-partner indeed, entering into an uneasy alliance only when it suited the needs of good government. Augustine's lasting legacy was to build a bridge between the goals of Christianity and the State under the rubric: suppression of dissension for the survival of the group.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The Two Streams

In terms of our discussion of the evolution of Christianity as a religion, what do the actions of our three spiritual individuals reveal? We have laid out before us three-hundred years of Christian religious history; we have traced the changes in spiritual thought through the "populus dei", our three spiritual individuals, and the institution of the Catholic Church. We see that while, the eras of Tertullian and Cyprian were important as a basis, the life and acts of Saint Augustine were the veritable climax of our story. The Donatist era was the Cataclysmic battle between the two divergent streams in Christianity, running head to head from the very nascence of the religion. They are what W.H.C. Frend calls, "...two completely different interpretations of Christianity"¹⁶²:

On the one hand, there is the Orthodox Catholic Church, prepared to compromise on the evils of this world for the sake of unity and peaceful progress. Its organization was based on an urban episcopate and an ordered hierarchy. On the other hand, there is the Church of the Holy Spirit, of enthusiasm, of open hostility to the world, individualistic, and intolerant...Both could with some justification be considered the true bearer of the original Christian message...¹⁶³

We saw in Tertullian's time the slow transition from a religion based on the living prophecy of apostles to a religion based on a codified liturgy--the Bible. The Bible

contains these two streams. From the Donatist perspective, the Catholic Church after the persecutions was the Church of Judas standing in opposition to their church, the Church of Peter.¹⁶⁴ The events of the day bore witness to the divine truth of the prophecy in the Bible. Yet, the Catholics used the same argument. The Donatist Schism demonstrates the ambiguity and inherent conflict in the Bible and as soon as it began to be emphasized as the prime authority of God on earth, the battle between the two streams began. This was the idea alluded to at the conclusion of Chapter 4; if it were not for the prevailing circumstances of the North African Church being so much younger than the rest of the Catholic Church, and therefore still living in the Apocalyptic Age in the 4th century, there never would have been a Donatist Schism. It was a case of the proverbial "generation gap". The casualties of this battle between the two streams are scattered throughout the pages of history. Tertullian from the very beginning emphasized the ancient ideal of Christianity; pure, mystical, individualistic, and anti-worldly. The fact that the Montanists (and thus Tertullian) were rejected by the status quo of the Catholic Church marked the death of the Age of Prophecy. The battle came to the boiling point in Cyprian's time. He was a man who felt deeply his spirituality, but at the same time the important, pragmatic necessities of his office. He sought a synthesis of the two streams, and succeeded for ten years only to be beheaded in Valerian's persecution. He therefore

became the hero for both the spiritual and ecclesiastical streams, and the ideal for Donatist and Catholic alike. The struggle came to violence in the Augustinian Era. We see the two streams, "spiritualis" and "ecclesia", both with valid arguments, both with equal claims to the Keys of Heaven, come to loggerheads in a battle with no foreseeable truce. The inability of each side to see that of the other, the intransigence of belief, cannot be accounted for as only the trenchant stubbornness of the players involved. There must be another explanation found in the religion itself. Evidence of this is that, in spite of "the overwhelming numbers...reabsorbed", Donatism was never stamped out. Both streams were eventually swept away in the raging river of Islam; a religion which had none of these ambiguities, for to die for the unity of Islam, meant immediate and eternal salvation for each individual. The Church did take a decisive step in the direction of "ecclesia" with St. Augustine. By using the secular power to suppress the individualistic, spiritual stream embodied by the Donatist movement, Christianity was changed forever and began a march towards extreme corruption and worldliness which prompted the ideas of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation. Indeed, Martin Luther bears witness to the fact that "spiritualis" never died.

The conflicts taking place today between Protestant and Catholic, the rise in popularity of "humanistic" religions which harken back to the "hey-day" of Gnosticism, and the

likes of Martin Luther and the Pilgrims, all bear witness to the still existent "spiritualis" and the continuing battle between the two streams. "Spiritualis" did not die with the Edicts of Carthage of AD 411, it was only driven underground, into the backwaters of rural areas where the mystery cults of Saturn, Caelestis, and the Martyrs and the relics of the Saints and the occult all mixed with Christianity to make a vital religion for the people. And indeed, "spiritualis" still existed in the hearts and minds of Catholics; Christianity could still be a vital religion for those in the middle and upper classes, who were literate and educated, and had the opportunity to pursue God in the classic ideal represented by Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine. For the lower classes "spiritualis" still existed in their frustrated yearnings at being denied a complete spirituality by their inability to read the Bible. But the more accepted and solidified became the religion, and the more ritualized its actions, the less freedom did each individual have to express himself spiritually.

Regardless of the mystical events which dot Augustine's Civitas Dei, there was a growing sense, since Tertullian's time, that there simply were no more wonders or miracles. As W.H.C. Frend says of Christianity, "...its practice tended to sink to the standard of the laxer members."¹⁶⁵ Thus in the wake of the victory of "ecclesia" there no longer existed in the established Church a living ideal of the intense spirituality represented by the martyrs. These

individuals, drunk on the heady wine of "spiritualis" played a necessary role in the Christian group as examples, as "spiritual goals", for the rest of the members and thus, tended to raise the degree of spirituality of the whole group. But these tendencies were no longer accepted in the status quo of Christianity. After the alarming trends of the circumcellions, any action reeking of mysticism, extreme asceticism, or fanaticism, were eyed with suspicion and distaste.

For the lower classes, whose spirituality had always been mixed with other native cults and superstitions, "spiritualis" continued to thrive. They were largely left alone, but no organization, or mass movement centered around the spiritual stream was tolerated; there would be no threat to the civilized unity of the "ecclesia". Instead, there began to be popular assumptions about the "masses"; that their spiritual capacities were somehow brutish and low, and that they, by their position in society (and not in the Church) were somehow less able to grasp the heady concepts found in the Bible and in the other works of theologians. The reader will remember how, in Cyprian's time, Christianity had split the Empire along class lines--it was basically a poor man's and woman's religion. Now we see the religion and not the state split along those same class lines. After Augustine's time, the immutable framework of the polity was assimilated by the Church, and became the framework of Christianity. But who suffered under this

transformation? Who now was denied "the fulness for which he craved" (Brown's words about Augustine)? Members of the lower strata of society and women of all classes. The people who had been denied since time immemorial individual liberties and freedom, given readily to the men of the middle and upper classes, had found a haven of expression in the new force of Christianity. After the years of the Donatist Schism they no longer had autonomy even over their own souls, and if anything, had less freedom of spirituality than under the pagan Empire of the Classical Era when a diversity of religions were at least nominally accepted. The wondrous hope proffered by the outstretched hand of Jesus Christ, the peace and beauty of the world beyond, and the close sense of community and fellowship which at the nascence of Christianity, had crossed all social barriers, had been won at a dear price to these people. The cost was their freedom.

Epilogue: Death of a Religion

What can this history teach us about the individual/group dynamic and the interaction between religion and the state? It is possible to see this history from the standpoint of a cyclical paradigm; what I will term the Evolution of Religion. This paradigm addresses both of the main topics of our previous discussion; the transformation of the Church from a purely religious group to a religious/political group, and the battle between the two streams of "spiritualis" and "ecclesia".

The paradigm is in four main stages and is illustrated in Appendix B of this thesis:

The Base Step is the first stage of the Spiritual Individual. This step is motivated by the individual, spiritual desire to find an explanation for being, some hope in life, or an alleviation of ills and hardships. I believe that this desire is innate in all humans. During our period, we see the Roman Empire, and thus the Cult of the Emperor, lose its ability to be a vital and creative force for the people. The world was rapidly changing, and as the Empire faltered, the lower classes were oppressed even more. Thus the Roman people were ready for the apocalyptic message of the Cult of Christ, and the hope in the

afterworld. A spiritual individual has one of two options: he/she can either go off alone, denouncing the community, and pursue his spirituality in his own way, or find other individuals who share his belief and band together to form a "Society of Spiritual Individuals".

The reader will note in the illustration, that the first choice of a spiritual individual, to go off and deny the group, is always an option.

Step Two is the stage of "a community within a community". Each spiritual individual exists within a State; as Socrates developed, if he renounces that State, then he has no claims to the benefits of that State. Creating a religious group within the established group entails losing societal privilege; to the state, religious dissenters can be societal dissenters as well. The benefits for spiritual individuals in forming a spiritual group are a sense of acceptance, fraternity, and protection. But there are results of this formation, and sacrifices too. The main result is that the group's spirituality takes precedent over each individual's spirituality; this communal spirituality is defined by rules and a group ethos and morality. As the group grows, it develops its own history, liturgy, ritual, and an ordered hierarchical power structure. This is

often dissatisfying for the members, who feel restricted by the group, disagree with its policies, or consider it to have "fallen away" from its original credo. Again one option is to leave the group; sometimes they leave the group by suicide. The second thing we notice in this stage is, especially when the group grows large, the selection and edifying of certain individuals who symbolize the spirituality of each of the other individuals. I call them "Surrogate Individuals". Examples of surrogate individuals are the bishop, who is the surrogate for his congregation, or Jesus Christ who is the surrogate for all of God's children. Surrogates intensify the religious experience of the group by acting as intermediaries between God and man, or between Death and man (as a martyr or someone who committed suicide might be). Surrogates can also be relics, tombs, or sacred texts. Surrogates symbolize the individuality of all laymen and laywomen. The other thing we note with large spiritual groups is that the number of dissenters grows, and often, they will break away together, from the larger group. I call these "Splinter Groups" and the Donatists are an example. (note: there are examples of splinter groups of splinter groups like the many different types of

Protestants in the world) The original, established group will seek, because of the threat the dissenting group poses, to either reassimilate it or suppress it.

The next stage, Step Three, is paradoxical. One must remember that this spiritual group is growing and evolving within the constraints of the state. The group can only grow to such an extent, or reach a certain level of influence, until the State seeks to either control the group or destroy it. At the same time, the original spiritual group will respond in the same way towards the splinter group. In this way the religious group and the state share a common goal which is to control dissenters. The one difference is that the religious group is only concerned with the one splinter group, whereas the state will support the most powerful and stable group, either the original or the splinter, because it simply does not want dissension and has very little scruple in attaining this goal. The state will not be loyal to a group which upsets its own stability. So often there is an alliance between Church and State against the dissenters. But the odd thing is that the religion is transformed in this agreement and becomes integrally changed. Its goals, its values, and very often its people are

the same. In seeking to use the secular power, the religion becomes secularized, and often, is in turn used by the state for its own ends.

The last stage, Step Four, is the reaffirmation of spiritual autonomy. This is evident on both an individual and communal level. As always, the spiritual individual has the option to leave the group or commit suicide. Interestingly, these individuals often become the Surrogate Individuals for the group; surrogates are not always accepted by the group's hierarchy, and their veneration is often discouraged because these "renegades", by symbolizing a freedom which perhaps the other individuals long for, play a strong dissenting role. After the Augustinian Era, there was a rise in popularity of cults worshipping surrogate individuals, like the Cult of the Saints or of the Virgin Mary. This reaffirmation can also take place on a group level as with the revolt of the monasteries during Augustine's time, or the Protestant Reformation. Finally we will note that after the reaffirmation of individual spirituality on a communal level in Step 4, the paradigm begins again its evolution, but this time at Step 2.

I believe this progression is obvious in our earlier discussion of history. Most of this thesis was concerned with the progression of the Church from Step Two to Step Three and the concomitant birth of a splinter group-- the Donatists. Yet we see the beginnings of a Step Four, reaffirmation of spirituality, with the rise of the monastic and ascetic movement of the time. Oddly enough, the conclusion at which I have arrived by both a study of this transformation of Catholicism, and the formulation of the paradigm is completely different from the assumption that I made at the nascence of my idea. It is in this way that my spiritual search is tied up integrally with this study. I too am a spiritual individual. At first, looking at Catholicism of today, I assumed that something had taken place in history to change it so drastically from a vital, living religion, to the secular, worldly, oppressive power that it has been since the Middle Ages. For this reason, in my opinion, the Catholicism that we have in its present form is a dead religion because it denies so totally the irrational, spiritual stream of "spiritualis". It denies humanities role in religion; they are just so many babies to christen, bodies to bury, spirits to save. That assumption was correct, and we saw the beginnings of this transformation with the Donatist Controversy. But my next assumption was wrong, and belies my own "anti-institutional", cynical bias: I assumed that the reaffirmation in Step Four was necessarily the reaffirmation

of individual against group, and that the paradigm would revert back to Base Step and from there begin again. Furthermore, that the reaffirmation would result in the formation of a different group. The Protestant Reformation was the reaffirmation of this type I had in mind. But what I realized was that the reaffirmation can be of a beneficial rather than a schismatic nature; that is, that there can be a reaffirmation of individual spirituality within the established group and thus a revitalization of the religion. Monasticism played this role in the Catholic Church for awhile. Unfortunately, this revitalization could never restore the autonomy and spiritual freedom enjoyed by early Christians. Whether the reaffirmation is of a beneficial or a schismatic nature depends on the flexibility of the religion, and the degree of the lacking of the laity. Thus to be a "living" religion, Christianity must have the interaction and the tension between the two streams of "spiritualis" and "ecclesia"; likewise must the Catholicism of today have a reaffirmation of individual spirituality within to become again the meaningful and profound force it once was.

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. Peter Brown, Augustine of Hippo.
2. W.H.C. Frend, The Early Church.
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89. Sancti Augustini Vita a Possidio episcopo, xxxi.1-3.
90. Brown, A.H., p399.

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98. *ibid*, pp335-336.
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- 170. Frend, D.C., p78.
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CHRONOLOGICAL GUIDE: EVENTS RELEVANT
TO CHURCH HISTORY TO 461

- 30/3 The Crucifixion.
- 37 St. Stephen's martyrdom and conversion of St. Paul.
- 47-9 St. Paul's first missionary journey.
- 49 The Council of Jerusalem.
- 49-62 St. Paul's letters to the Churches.
- 50-8 Further Pauline missionary journeys.
- 60 St. Paul in Rome.
- 63(?) St. Peter's mission to Rome (?).
- 64 The great fire at Rome and the Neronian persecution. Deaths of SS. Peter and Paul.
- 66-73 The first Jewish war.
- 70 The fall of Jerusalem to Titus.
- 70-90 Pastoral and Catholic Epistles.
- 81 Accession of Domitian to imperial throne.
- 95 Action by Domitian against aristocratic Christians in Rome, followed by a persecution in Asia.
- circa 95 The Revelation of St. John the Divine and Johannine letters.
- 96 Murder of Domitian, September; succeeded by Nerva and relaxation of measures against Christians and Jews.
- 98 Death of Nerva and the accession of Trajan as Emperor.
- circa 100 1 Clement.
- circa 107 Ignatius's Seven Letters.
- 108 Polycarp's letter to the Philipppians.
- 112-13 Pliny in Bithynia.
- 115 The Jewish Revolt in Mesopotamia, Cyrenaica, Egypt and Cyprus.
- 117 Hadrian succeeds Trajan as Emperor.
- 124 Hadrian's rescript to Minucius Fundanus, governor of Asia, concerning the Christians.
- 132-5 The second Jewish war.
- 138 Antoninus Pius, Emperor.
- 133-60 Activities of Basilides and Valentinus at Alexandria.
- circa 150 Valentinus in Rome.
- 144 Marcion expelled from the Roman community.
- 150 Justin Martyr's *First Apology*.
- 154-5 Polycarp in Rome. His discussion on the date of Easter with Bishop Anicetus.
- 161 Death of Antoninus Pius: succeeded by Marcus Aurelius.
- 165 Execution of Justin Martyr at Rome.
- circa 165 Martyrdom of Polycarp at Smyrna.
- circa 165 Lucian of Samosata's satire on 'The Death of Peregrinus'.
- 166-75 Germanic barbarian threat to Roman frontiers.
- 172 Outbreak of the Montanist movement in Phrygia.
- 175-7 More martyrdoms in Asia Minor. *Apology* of Meletius of Sardes.
- 177 *Apology* of Athenagoras.
- 177 Martyrdoms at Lyons, 1 August.
- circa 178 Celsus writes against the Christians.
- circa 178 Irenaeus becomes Bishop of Lyons.
- 180 Death of Marcus Aurelius and accession of his son Commodus.
- circa 180 Founding of the Catechetical School at Alexandria by Pantænus.
- 180 Martyrdom of the Scillitans in North Africa. First appearance of the North African Church.
- 183 Execution of Apollonius at Rome.
- circa 185 Irenaeus's five books *Against the Heresies*.
- 186 Birth of Origen.
- 189 Victor, the first Latin-speaking Bishop of Rome.
- 189 Election of Demetrius as Bishop of Alexandria. Rules forty-three years.
- 190 Serapion, Bishop of Antioch.
- 192 Murder of Commodus 31 December. Period of uncertainty and civil war until Septimius Severus becomes sole Emperor in 197. Severan dynasty lasts until 235.
- 190-200 Clement of Alexandria.
- circa 195 The Easter Controversy in Rome.
- 197 Tertullian writes his *Apology*.
- 200-10 The Monarchian controversies in Rome.

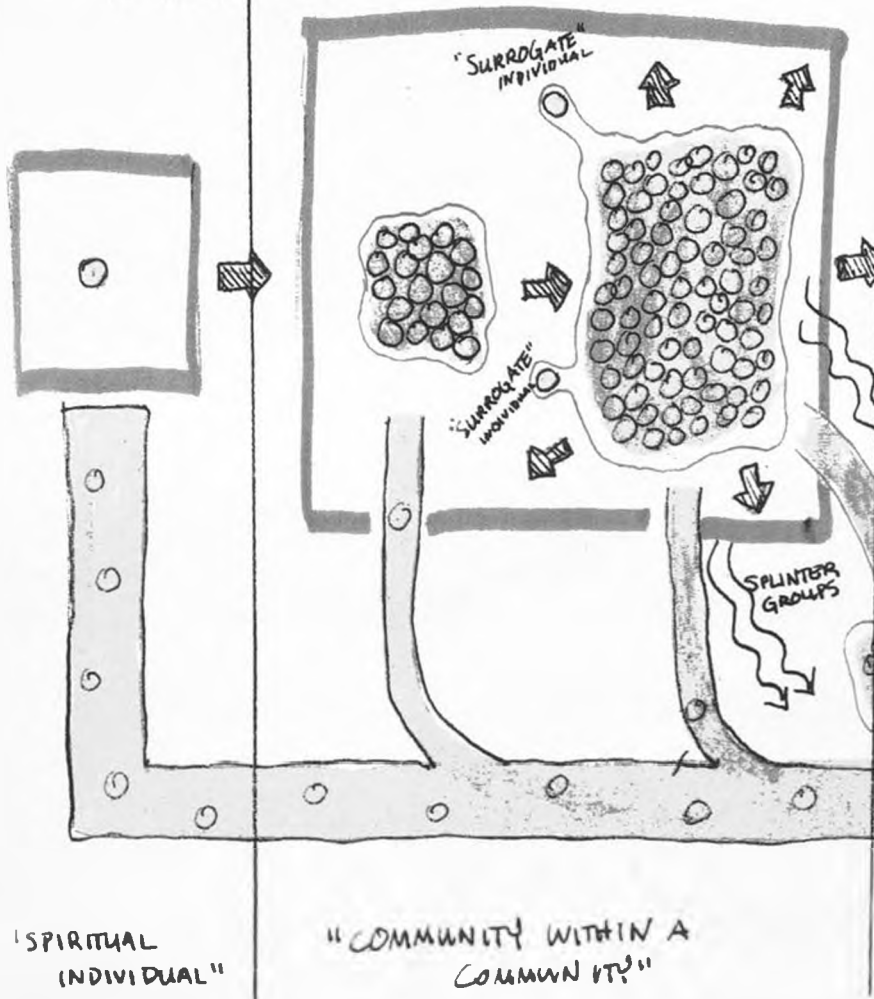
- 202-3 Persecution aimed at Christian proselytes. Death of Leonides at Alexandria. Origen head of Catechetical School. Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas at Carthage.
- 207 Tertullian becomes a Montanist.
- 212 The Constitutio Antoniniana confers Roman citizenship on nearly all free men in the Empire.
- 213 Tertullian's *Adversus Praxean*.
- circa 215 The salon of Julia Domna.
- 217 The Roman bishop's edict relaxing some aspects of Church discipline. Controversy with Hippolytus of Rome and Tertullian.
- circa 218 Origen visits Rome.
- 222-35 Reign of Alexander Severus. Period of security and toleration for the Church.
- 220-9 Origen's first period of literary activity. Beginning of the Hexapla, the *De Principiis* and *Commentary on John*.
- 229-31 Origen leaves Alexandria, is ordained to the priesthood in Palestine. His breach with Demetrius and exile to Caesarea.
- 232 Origen visits Julia Mamaea at Antioch.
- 232 Construction of the Christian Church at Dura-Europos.
- 235 Revolution by Maximin Thrax overthrows Severan dynasty.
- 235 Persecution directed against the Christian leaders. Origen writes the *Exhortation to Martyrdom*.
- 238-49 Reigns of the Gordians and Philip provide another period of peace for the Church.
- 242 Mani begins his preaching in Persia.
- 243 Beginning of the missionary activity of Gregory the Wonderworker in Cappadocia and Pontus.
- circa 245 Conversion of Cyprian of Carthage.
- circa 245 Novatian's *De Trinitate*.
- 247 Secular games celebrate 1,000 years of Rome.
- 248 Anti-Christian riot in Alexandria.
- 248 Cyprian becomes Bishop of Carthage.
- 249 Decius becomes Emperor.
- 249-50 General persecution against the Christians.
- 251 Cyprian's *De Unitate Ecclesiae* against the Novatianists in Rome. Holds council in Carthage (April) to deal with the problem of the lapsed. Death of Decius (June).
- 253/4 Death of Origen at Tyre.
- 255-6 The Baptismal Controversy in Carthage. Cyprian's Seventh Council, 1 September 256.
- 257 Persecution by Valerian. Attack on clergy and corporate life of the Church, followed by (August 258) the executions of Christian leaders such as Bishop Nysus of Rome and Cyprian of Carthage.
- 259-64 Dionysius of Alexandria controverts Chiliasm and Sabellians. Controversy between Dionysius of Rome and Dionysius of Alexandria.
- 260 Capture and death of Valerian at the hands of the Persians.
- 260/1 Gallienus's rescript of toleration.
- 268 Condemnation of Paul of Samosata.
- 270-5 Reign of Aurelian. Restoration of the frontiers of the Empire.
- 270-300 Steady conquest of rural Egypt, Syria and North Africa by Christianity.
- 284 Accession of Diocletian as Augustus, 17 September.
- 286 Diocletian chooses Maximian as co-Augustus, 1 April.
- 292 Galerius and Constantius, Caesars.
- 296-7 Galerius's Persian campaign.
- 293 Beginning of repressive measures against the Christians.
- 303 Beginning of the Great Persecution, 23 February.
- 304 The 'Fourth Edict' of Persecution.
- 305 Diocletian and Maximian abdicate, 1 May.
- Cessation of persecution in the West.
- 309(?) Council of Elvira.
- 311 Death of Galerius, 5 May.
- 312 Constantine's victory at the Milvian Bridge, 28 October, ends the era of persecution.
- 313 'The Edict of Milan', February. Proclaimed in Nicomedia by Licinius, 13 June.
- 313 Constantine intervenes in the dispute between Caecilian and his opponents.
- 314 The Council of Aries, 1 August.
- 316 Caecilian declared innocent of charges brought by Donatus and his colleagues against him, November.
- 319 Beginnings of the Arian controversy.

- 324 Constantine defeats Licinius at Chrysopolis, 18 September, and becomes sole ruler of the Roman world.
- 325 The Council of Nicaea, June-July.
- 326 The judicial murders of Crispus and Fausta.
- 328 Athanasius elected Bishop of Alexandria, June.
- 330 Constantinople becomes Constantine's capital.
- 333 The Council of Tyre. Condemnation of Athanasius, August.
- 335 Council of Jerusalem, September. Exile of Athanasius to Trier, October.
- 337 Death of Constantine, 22 May.
- 339 Death of Eusebius of Caesarea.
- 340 Constans defeats Constantine II and becomes sole ruler of the West.
- 341 The Dedication Council at Antioch.
- 342 or 343 The Council of Serdica.
- 346 Death of Pachomius. Athanasius returns from second exile.
- 350-3 Civil war in Empire from which Constantius II emerges as supreme ruler of Roman world.
- 355 Death of Donatus of Carthage in exile.
- 356 Death of Antony. Athanasius again exiled.
- 357-9 Synods of Sirmium.
- 359-60 Synods of Ariminum-Seleucia.
- 361-3 Reign of Julian. Pagan reaction. Return of Athanasius. Donatist triumph in Africa.
- ✓ 364 Valentinian I Emperor in the West. Valens Emperor in the East.
- 366-84 Pontificate of Damasus I.
- 370 Basil becomes Bishop of Neo-Caesarea (dies 379).
- 373 Death of Athanasius: Ambrose becomes Bishop of Milan, 7 December.
- 375 Beginnings of the Apollinarian controversy.
- 378 Battle of Adrianople and death of Valens, 9 August.
- 379 Theodosius Emperor in the East, January.
- 380 Edict of Theodosius against Arianism, 28 February.
- Council of Saragossa condemns Priscillian.
- 381 Second Ecumenical Council, summer. Council of Aquileia, September. Condemnation of the Western Arians.
- 383 Death of Ulfilas, evangelizer of the Goths.
- 384 Altar of Victory controversy.
- circa 385 Jerome leaves Italy for Bethlehem.
- 386-7 Conversion and baptism of St. Augustine at Milan.
- 388 Civil war resulting in victory of Theodosius over Magnus Maximus, 28 July.
- 390 The Massacre of Thessalonica. Ambrose's intervention.
- 391 Death of Parmenian Donatist Bishop of Carthage and his Catholic rival Genethlius.
- 392 Theodosius's anti-heretical law.
- 395 Death of Theodosius, 17 January. Arcadius Emperor in the East; Honorius in the West. Augustine Bishop of Hippo.
- 396-7 Augustine's *Confessions*.
- 397 Death of Ambrose, 6 April.
- 398 Gildo's revolt in Africa. Crushed, end July. John Chrysostom becomes Bishop of Constantinople, 26 February.
- 403-4 Theophilus of Alexandria's intervention in Constantinople. Synod of the Oak. Exile of John Chrysostom, 20 June.
- 408 Death of Arcadius, 1 May. Accession of Theodosius II as Emperor in the East. Murder of Stilicho, Honorius's chief minister.
- 410 Sack of Rome by Alaric, 24 August.
- 411 Conference of Carthage. Condemnation of the Donatists, May-June. Pelagius and Celestius in North Africa. Augustine begins the *De Civitate Dei*.
- 413 Augustine's *De Spiritu et Lettera*. Beginning of the Pelagian controversy.
- 415 Synod of Jerusalem: Augustine's *De Trinitate*.
- 417-18 Fiasco of Pope Zosimus's pontificate.
- 418 and 419 Important Catholic councils at Carthage. Pelagius condemned.
- 418 Visigothic occupation of Aquitaine.
- 423 Death of Honorius, 15 August.
- 426-9 Rivalry between Count Boniface and Aetius. Boniface appeals to the Vandals for help.
- 428 Nestorius elected Patriarch of Constantinople, 10 April.
- 429 Vandals invade Africa, May.
- 430 Death of St. Augustine, 28 August, during the siege of Hippo.
- 431 Council of Ephesus. Deposition of Nestorius.

BASE STEP

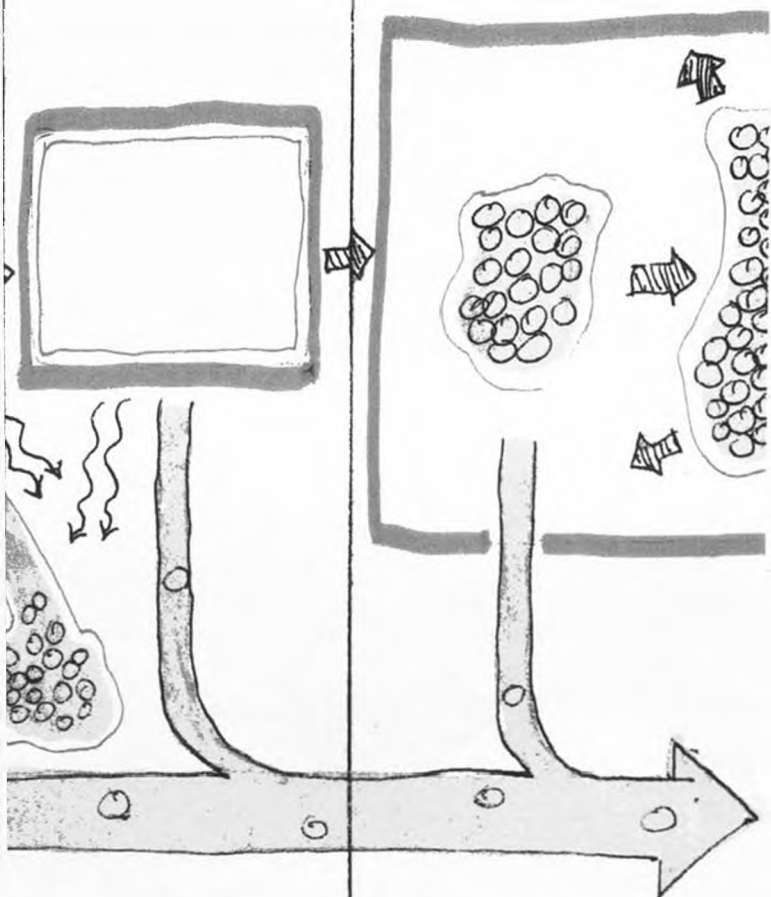
STEP TWO

STATE
RELIGION
INDIVIDUAL



STEP THREE

STEP FOUR



"TRANSFORMATION"

"REAFFIRMATION"