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*PROMISSAM VIM SPIRITUS SANCTI:*  
THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ACTIVITY IN EARLY  
CARTHAGINIAN PNEUMATOLOGY

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
Jordan Harris Edwards  
January 2021

**APPROVAL SHEET**

*PROMISSAM VIM SPIRITUS SANCTI:*  
THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ACTIVITY IN EARLY  
CARTHAGINIAN PNEUMATOLOGY

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To Lindsay,

Without whom I never would have completed this arduous task.

“Well, I’m back.”

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACW	<i>Ancient Christian Writers</i>
ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
PL	Patrologia Latina
SC	Sources Chrétiennes



## PREFACE

First and foremost, I need to thank the Lord for preserving me through this process and using it to shape me for his glory. This entire process has made me so painfully aware of my own shortcomings, so the fact that I am writing these thanks at the end of this endeavor is entirely a result of his goodness and sustaining power. I am so thankful that I serve a good God whose lovingkindness has been so evident over the last four years.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the invaluable assistance of so many people. On a professional level, I want to first acknowledge Bing Bayer, James Smith, and Clint Bass for instilling a love of history in me from my undergrad. I also want to thank the entire history department of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for their regular encouragement and support in this process, especially Shawn Wright, Stephen Presley, and John Wilsey. From each of these men, I have learned what it means to be a Christian historian of the highest caliber, and I cannot thank them enough for their investment in me, academically and personally, throughout my PhD program. I also want to thank Gregg Allison for agreeing to serve on my dissertation committee and all of his feedback on this project.

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with me as I have sought to finish this dissertation while working a full-time job. Similarly, I want to thank my church family at Ninth and O, including my pastor Bill Cook and my BFG YC1 for their prayers and investment in me spiritually during this time. Finally, I want to thank Forrest Mills and Josiah Claassen, who have walked alongside me throughout this entire PhD process. Their friendship both in the classroom and in life have provided many of my fondest memories of this doctoral program, and I look forward to a continued friendship in the years to come, no matter where life may take us all.

While all of these individuals have been influential, I never would have reached this stage in my academic career without the guidance and advice I received from my supervisor Michael A.G. Haykin. I owe my love of Church History more broadly, and the early church in particular, to him, for I still remember the moment in his Church History 1 course that I decided to pursue church history as my career. Through countless meals shared together, conversations over tea, passing conversations across campus, and even over Zoom during a pandemic, he has guided and shaped me as a church historian. His support and feedback throughout the entirety of my graduate education has influenced me in more ways than he will ever know, and no amount of thanks will ever convey my profound gratitude for his support.

Finally, without the support of my family and my loving wife Lindsay, I could never have finished this project. I owe a great deal of thanks to my siblings who always encouraged me in the process, even if they had no idea what I was talking about, and my parents who read every draft of my chapters, even when they had to look up words to understand what I was saying. Their unfailing encouragement and assistance often provided that boost I needed to sit down and once again pull up a chapter or pick up a book and get back to work. And to my wife Lindsay, well, it is simply laughable to think that I would have finished this process without your support and assistance. You never ceased encouraging me to press on, while also never pressuring me when I needed to take

a break. You took on so many responsibilities of life so that I could devote as much attention as possible to this project, and you never once complained or ceased to continue encouraging me. Thank you for all of your support throughout this entire process of pursuing a PhD, and truly, no words will ever convey how thankful I am for you.

Jordan Edwards

Louisville, Kentucky

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The importance of the early church for the development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's person and being has been well documented, with figures such as Basil of Caesarea and Augustine rightly being brought to the fore. However, long before the fourth- and fifth-century councils and controversies, the early church was already reflecting upon the Holy Spirit's person and work.

Only a century after the final work of the apostle John, the early Carthaginian church was already writing and teaching about the Holy Spirit's work in the life of the church. While significant work has been undertaken in comprehending Tertullian's understanding of the person of the Holy Spirit, work on the early understanding of the Holy Spirit's activity in the life of the Latin-speaking church is lacking. One explanation for this lack of emphasis comes from Lewis Ayres and Michel Barnes. In 2008, Ayres and Barnes published several articles in the journal *Augustinian Studies* proposing a theory of early Christian pneumatology in three stages.<sup>1</sup> In the first stage, from the time of the apostles to the end of the second century, they argued that the church held a high pneumatology which properly emphasized the Holy Spirit's deity and person. In the

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Barnes, "The Beginning and End of Early Christian Pneumatology," *Augustinian Studies* 39, no. 2 (2008): 169–87; Lewis Ayres, "Innovation and *Ressourcement* in Pro-Nicene Pneumatology," *Augustinian Studies* 39, no. 2 (2008): 187–205. Barnes examines both Tertullian and Origen's statements on the Holy Spirit, and he proposes a philosophical argument that both of their discussions on the economic Trinity and their use of terms like *taxis* reveal a subordination of the Spirit. Such a statement does seem to reflect accurately Origen's discussion of various spheres of influence for each member of the Trinity, with the Father possessing a greater sphere than the Son, and the Son a greater sphere than the Spirit. However, Tertullian's heavy emphasis on the Spirit's divine activity throughout the life of the church contradicts the claim that Tertullian, like Origen, subordinated the Spirit. Rather, Barnes seems to have conflated Tertullian's and Origen's views based upon similar language, rather than recognizing their distinct emphases.

second stage, the church's pneumatology fell into a lower state through the work of figures like Origen, whom Ayres and Barnes argued possessed a subordinationist understanding. This stage of early Christian pneumatology eventually led to the Arian controversy, in which Arius was merely following the trajectory of subordinationism already present in the church's understanding of the Trinity, before the final recovery of a high pneumatology in the fourth-century pro-Nicene fathers. Ayres and Barnes included Tertullian, and by implication Cyprian, in the second stage that began the downward shift in the church's pneumatology. By including both Tertullian and Cyprian in this second phase, they appear to affirm that these men should be understood as belonging to a new wave of early fathers who failed to understand adequately the person of the Spirit.

While much of the argument proposed in their articles mentioned above rings true, Ayres and Barnes seem to have missed the rich pneumatology that the early Latin-speaking church did possess. In response to their articles, this dissertation will be an examination of the Latin-speaking Carthaginian church's (180–260) view of the Holy Spirit's activity, particularly in the works of Tertullian (*fl.* 197–*c.* 220) and Cyprian (*fl.* 246–58). Contrary to Ayres' and Barnes' claims that the early church experienced a downturn in its pneumatology beginning with Tertullian, this examination will show that these early Christians not only recognized the Holy Spirit as divine, but also understood him to be vital to the life of the early church. In particular, this dissertation will focus on the Spirit's activity rather than ontology, for a discussion of the Spirit's work is vital in developing a fully formed doctrine of the Spirit. The distinction between activity and ontology, however, must not be overemphasized, as the Spirit's work in the church revealed his divine nature to the believers. For this reason, though this dissertation will primarily focus on the Spirit's activity, occasional references to ontology may appear when relevant to the discussion as examples of the Spirit's activity pointing to his divinity. Though these early Christians did not write treatises devoted to explaining the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as later fathers would write, their discussion of his divine

work in the life of the church revealed a rich pneumatology, even at this early stage of the church's history.

### Methodology

In order to answer the question of the early Carthaginian church's view of the Spirit's activity, this dissertation will examine the extant primary sources from Tertullian and Cyprian. All of Tertullian and Cyprian's extant works can be found in their original Latin in the *Corpus Christianorum*.<sup>2</sup> For Tertullian, this examination will include his thirty-one extant treatises written between 197 and c.220. For Cyprian, his twelve extant treatises and collection of eighty-one letters will be examined, all written between the time of his conversion in 246 and his martyrdom in 258. In order to gain a proper understanding of each father's view of the Spirit, every mention of the Holy Spirit in this body of texts will be collated, studied in context, and then discussed in the following chapters.<sup>3</sup> Similar texts will be discussed together to show the development of certain emphases throughout the corpus of each father, though priority will be given to understanding the texts in the contexts in which they initially appeared. In addition to the

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<sup>2</sup> Tertullian, *Opera I: Opera Catholica, Adversus Marcionem*, ed. E. Dekkers et al., Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1954); Tertullian, *Opera II: Opera Montanistica*. A. Gerlo et al., Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1954); Cyprian, *Opera I: Ad Quirinum, Ad Fortunatum, De lapsis, De ecclesiae catholicae unitate*, ed. R. Weber and M. Bévenot, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1972); Cyprian, *Opera II: Ad Donatum, De mortalitate, Ad Demetrianum, De opere et eleemosynis, De zelo et livore, De dominica oratione, De bono patientiae*, ed. M. Simonetti and C. Moreschini, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976); Cyprian, *Epistularium: Epistulae 1–57*, ed. G.F. Diercks, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 3B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1994); Cyprian, *Epistularium: Epistulae 58–81*, ed. G.F. Diercks, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 3C (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996); Cyprian, *Epistularium: Prolegomena–Indices*, ed. G.F. Diercks, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 3D (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999); Cyprian, *Sententiae episcoporum numero LXXXVII de haereticis baptizandis*, ed. G.F. Diercks, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 3E (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004); Cyprian, *De habitu virginum; Pseudo-Cyprianea I*, ed. P. Mattei and L. Ciccolini, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 3F (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Both fathers also discuss the Holy Spirit's person and nature, though Tertullian far more than Cyprian, so references not relevant to a discussion of the Spirit's activity in the life of the church or believers will be left aside as outside the scope of this project. For an excellent discussion of Tertullian's understanding regarding the ontology of the Spirit, see Claire Stegman, "The Development of Tertullian's Doctrine of *Spiritus Sanctus*," (PhD diss., Southern Methodist University, 1979). No similar work has been done on Cyprian, on account of the paucity of references by Cyprian to the ontology of the Spirit.

extant primary sources, a host of other secondary sources including monographs and articles from the last seventy-five years will be used to support the argument of this dissertation.

### **Historical Summary of the Research**

Ayres and Barnes have claimed that the early church experienced a loss of a high pneumatology in the third century, and if this claim is correct, then it ought not be surprising that full-length treatments of the Spirit in the third century are few in number compared to monographs on other aspects of third-century Christianity. Nevertheless, several scholars have given attention to the third-century Latin-speaking fathers' understanding of the Holy Spirit's person, though the emphasis has primarily remained on Tertullian. Through his emphasis on the person and work of the Spirit, Tertullian eventually went on to define some of the grammar still used by the Western Church to speak about the Trinity. For this reason, Tertullian has received a significant amount of scholarly attention regarding his ontological designation of the Holy Spirit as fully divine and a full member of the Trinity, with some scholars focusing on the relationship of Montanism to this understanding.<sup>4</sup>

However, like Ayres and Barnes, relatively few scholars have given emphasis to the Spirit's activity throughout all of Tertullian's corpus. In the following discussion of various scholars' comments on Tertullian's understanding of the Spirit's work, the majority of these comments were not made as part of a comprehensive or focused study on the Holy Spirit in Tertullian's corpus. Rather, they were secondary comments made in

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<sup>4</sup> For example, see René Braun, *Deus Christianorum: Recherches Sur Le Vocabulaire Doctrinal De Tertullien*, 2nd ed., rev. (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1977); see also Joseph Moingt, *Théologie Trinitaire De Tertullien: Répertoire Lexicographique Et Tables*, vol. I–IV. Théologie, 75 (Paris: Aubier, 1969); Lawrence B. Porter, "On keeping 'persons' in the Trinity: a linguistic approach to Trinitarian thought," *Theological Studies* 41, no. 3 (September 1980): 530–548; Jaroslav Pelikan, "Montanism and its Trinitarian Significance," *Church History* 25, no. 2 (June 1956): 99–109; James Loxley Compton, *Oikonomia Sacramentum: The Mystery of the Economy in Tertullian's Against Praxeas* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 2010).

the midst of other discussions about various doctrines in Tertullian's works, with many of the comments coming from studies examining a broader spread of figures rather than focusing solely on Tertullian. This lack of emphasis on the Spirit's activity in Tertullian's corpus, when compared to the substantial work on his ontology of the Spirit, thus warrants the phrase "relatively few." Yet, the Holy Spirit's activity played a major role in his thinking, such that Tertullian discussed the Spirit's activity in varying degrees of depth in many of his works.

One key role of the Holy Spirit that Tertullian emphasized was the inspiration of Scripture. Michael Slusser has noted that Tertullian believed the Spirit was the source of the Scriptures, and Laura Nasrallah has similarly shown that Tertullian understood the Spirit to provide both the ability to speak prophetically to the prophets in a state of either ecstasy or dreams as well as the message they were to speak.<sup>5</sup> Highlighting the emphasis on the apostles as being under the influence of the Spirit, Robert F. Evans observed that Tertullian referred to the apostles as men fully endowed by the Spirit to accomplish their vital work.<sup>6</sup>

Tertullian also believed that the Spirit empowered Christians. James Patrick summarized this sentiment well when he wrote that for Tertullian, the possession of the Spirit was synonymous with being a Christian, for no true Christian could fail to possess the Spirit.<sup>7</sup> In light of this possession of the Spirit, both Nasrallah and Johannes Van Oort have emphasized the accompanying spiritual gifts or *charismata* that Tertullian

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Slusser, "The Exegetical Roots of Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 49, no. 3 (September 1988): 476; Laura Salah Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity*, Harvard Theological Studies 52 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 55, 58, 147.

<sup>6</sup> Robert F. Evans, *One and Holy: The Church in Latin Patristic Thought*, Church Historical Series 92 (London: S.P.C.K., 1972), 33.

<sup>7</sup> James Patrick, "Baptism, Unity, and the Ecumenical History of Grace: The Holy Spirit in Individuals and in the Church," *Mid-Stream* 20, no. 3 (July 1981): 233.



understood the Holy Spirit, or Paraclete as he would later call him, to bring to believers.<sup>8</sup> While Nasrallah emphasized the present availability of these gifts, Van Oort has focused more on Tertullian's understanding that these gifts, which Van Oort identified as "prophecy, visionary experiences, spontaneous prayer, glossolalia and healings," became available with the reception of the Spirit at one's baptism.<sup>9</sup>

Other ways in which the Spirit empowered believers were the strengthening of the martyrs and confessors, and the training of believers by leading them into all truth. In his discussion of Tertullian's understanding of patience, M.C. Steenberg argued that Tertullian taught, "before Christ's incarnation there were prophets and kings, but after it there are martyrs who, filled with godly patience borne of the Spirit, endure all things for the Lord: for the Spirit fosters human endurance."<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, looking to the Spirit's role in training believers, P.C. Atkinson has posited that Joel 2:28–29 served as the focal point of Tertullian's understanding that the Spirit was poured out upon believers to help interpret the Scriptures.<sup>11</sup> Kyle Hughes agreed with Atkinson, but specified the role of the Spirit as guiding believers to see God as Triune.<sup>12</sup> In this role of leading the church into truth, William Tabbernee and Ernest Evans have additionally noted Tertullian's view of the Spirit as the *vicarius domini*, who was "presently guiding the church into that moral truth which an earlier Christian age was not able to bear."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Nasrallah, *The Ecstasy of Folly*, 154.

<sup>9</sup> Johannes van Oort, "The Holy Spirit and the Early Church: The Experience of the Spirit," *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68, no. 1 (2012): 4–5.

<sup>10</sup> M.C. Steenberg, "Impatience and Humanity's Sinful State in Tertullian of Carthage," *Vigiliae Christianae* 62, no. 2 (May 2008): 131.

<sup>11</sup> P.C. Atkinson, "The Montanist Interpretation of Joel 2:28, 29," *Studia Evangelica*, vol. VII, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1982), 14.

<sup>12</sup> Kyle R. Hughes, "The Spirit Speaks: Pneumatological Innovation in the Scriptural Exegesis of Justin and Tertullian," *Vigiliae Christianae* 69, no. 6 (November 2015): 469.

<sup>13</sup> William Tabbernee, "Recognizing the Spirit: Second-generation Montanist Oracles," in *Studia Patristica* 40 (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2006), 574; Ernest Evans in Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean Liber: Tertullian's Treatise against Praxeas*, trans. Ernest Evans (London: S.P.C.K., 1948), 2.

Two final themes of the Spirit's work in the writings of Tertullian were the Spirit's roles in salvation and baptism. Andrew McGowan fleshed out Tertullian's view of the Spirit's role in salvation by saying that participation in the Spirit was necessary to know God as Trinity and thus to come into a relationship with him as believers.<sup>14</sup> Finally, though mentioned briefly above in reference to the anointing of the Spirit on individual believers, several scholars have highlighted the importance of the Spirit to Tertullian's understanding of the sacrament of baptism. Kilian McDonnell affirmed that Tertullian held to a view that the Spirit anointed the believer at baptism, and Boris Paschke explained Tertullian's thoughts about the rite further by stating that the Holy Spirit was invoked through the laying on of hands upon the one being baptized.<sup>15</sup>

If the scholarly attention given to Tertullian's understanding of the Holy Spirit's activity seems sparse, nevertheless it still dwarfs the attention given to Cyprian's views on the Holy Spirit. As scholars have examined Cyprian's writings, they regularly compare his pneumatology to that of his Carthaginian predecessor, and the general consensus has been that Cyprian simply did not speak about the Spirit in any significant manner. Scholars including Adhemar d'Alès, Manlio Simonetti, Paul Parvis, Ronald Heine, and Kyle Hughes have all claimed that any discussion of the Holy Spirit was virtually absent from Cyprian's writings, thereby highlighting a discontinuity that would seem to support the thesis of Ayres and Barnes.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew Brian McGowan, "Tertullian and the 'heretical' origins of the 'orthodox' Trinity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14, no. 4 (2006), 80–1.

<sup>15</sup> Kilian McDonnell, "Communion Ecclesiology and Baptism in the Spirit: Tertullian and the Early Church," *Theological Studies* 49, no. 4 (December 1988), 679; see also Boris A. Paschke, "Praying to the Holy Spirit in Early Christianity," *Tyndale Bulletin* 64, no. 2 (2013): 304; Roy Kearsley, *Tertullian's Theology of Divine Power*, Rutherford Studies in Historical Theology (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Published for Rutherford House by Paternoster Press, 1998), 86; Thomas P. O'Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible: Language, Imagery, Exegesis, Latinitas Christianorum Primaeva; Studia Ad Sermonem Latinum Christianum Pertinentia*, Fasc. 21 (Nijmegen, Netherlands: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1967), 81–2.

<sup>16</sup> Adhemar d'Ales, *La théologie de Saint Cyprien* (Paris: G. Beauchesne, 1922), 11; Manlio Simonetti, "Il regresso della teologia dello Spirito santo in Occidente dopo Tertulliano," *Augustinianum* 20 (1980), 655–69; Paul Parvis, "The Teaching of the Fathers: Cyprian and the Hours of Prayer," *Clergy* 69 (1984): 206; Ronald E. Heine, "Cyprian and Novatian," in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frances Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

For some scholars, such a complete dismissal of Cyprian's pneumatology seemed too harsh, so they have instead offered a view that recognizes an implicit focus on the Spirit in Cyprian's corpus. They still admit that Cyprian did not speak about the Spirit's ontological status, but they claim that Cyprian instead recognized the Spirit's work through the various *charismata* given to the church. One such scholar is Cecil Robeck, who has lamented that while such observations show that Cyprian was aware of the Spirit, the absence of any treatise on the Spirit still leaves scholars unsure that he possessed a rich pneumatology.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Maurice Wiles believed that Cyprian possessed a pneumatology, but simply failed to articulate it clearly since he was not pressed to do so within the context of a theological dispute or controversy.<sup>18</sup>

While these two categories of scholars certainly make up the majority of the views on Cyprian's pneumatology, a few scholars have argued that the role of the Holy Spirit in Cyprian's writings has been woefully overlooked and underappreciated. Brian Arnold has noted that Cyprian's understanding of conversion relied deeply upon the Spirit's work, so that Cyprian could not speak of the former without the latter.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Michael A.G. Haykin has noted that "to the end of his life, Cyprian sought to be a Spirit-filled man."<sup>20</sup> Allen Brent also observed that Cyprian believed the Holy Spirit worked to renew all life, both spiritual and physical.<sup>21</sup> Finally, Pierre de Labriolle appealed to

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2004), 156; Kyle R. Hughes, "The Spirit and the Scriptures: Revisiting Cyprian's Use of Prosopological Exegesis," *Journal of Early Christian History* 8, no. 2 (2018): 36.

<sup>17</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage: Perpetua, Tertullian, and Cyprian* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1992), 149.

<sup>18</sup> Maurice Wiles, *Working Papers in Doctrine* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1976), 72.

<sup>19</sup> Brian J. Arnold, *Cyprian of Carthage: His Life & Impact*, Early Church Fathers (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2017), 41.

<sup>20</sup> Michael A.G. Haykin, "The Holy Spirit in Cyprian's To Donatus," *Evangelical Quarterly* 83, no. 4 (October 2011): 329.

<sup>21</sup> Allen Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 28.

Cyprian's status as a bishop to explain the reason for his limited attention on the Holy Spirit. In contrast to his Carthaginian predecessor, Cyprian was not merely a lay member of the church, but instead its leader. As such, his chief concern was shepherding his flock, and thus his writings were concerned with the practical application of the faith and the encouragement of his people in the faith. While Tertullian could boldly write his treatises without concern for how they might be received, Cyprian did not possess that luxury, and thus Labriolle proposed that Cyprian's lack of emphasis on the Spirit was simply situational, not a lack of interest or concern.<sup>22</sup>

### **Argument**

This dissertation adds to the scholarly discussion mentioned above with an examination of the Latin-speaking Carthaginian church's (180–260) view of the Holy Spirit's activity. This dissertation's first chapter will examine the social, philosophical, political, and religious contexts of Roman Carthage during this period through archaeological discoveries and relevant historical texts. The goal for this chapter is to set the early church's emphasis on the Holy Spirit's work in its historical context and recognize the cultural influences upon the church's development of this doctrine.

Next, this dissertation will give two chapters to Tertullian's works, which are the earliest extant documents from a Latin-speaking church father. As mentioned above, though some scholars have noticed elements of Tertullian's understanding of the Spirit's activity in the context of other scholarly discussions, this dissertation will provide a more robust and thorough examination of his views than has previously been undertaken.

Tertullian can be placed at the very end of the first stage of Ayres and Barnes, as both his pre-Montanist and Montanist writings speak of the Holy Spirit's activity, including but not limited to the areas of inspiration, anointing, giving of gifts, the sacraments, and the

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<sup>22</sup> Pierre de Labriolle, *History and Literature of Christianity from Tertullian to Boethius* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1924), 133.

work of salvation. In his Montanist writings, Tertullian's emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit increased as his personal beliefs concerning the Paraclete also increased. Though a definite timeline of Tertullian's works remains difficult to ascertain, the broad categories of pre-Montanist and Montanist works allow for some discussion of his development over time as he shifted toward Montanism. Given the potential impact of Montanism on his pneumatology, a brief discussion of his embrace of Montanism will be provided.<sup>23</sup>

Following the chapters on Tertullian, the dissertation will examine the role of the Holy Spirit's activity in the treatises and letters of the bishop Cyprian. Ayres and Barnes implicitly placed Cyprian in the second stage as one who focused very little on the Holy Spirit, even if he was not subordinationist like Origen. While Cyprian's dates do fall slightly later than Tertullian, Cyprian was the theological heir of Tertullian's understanding of the Spirit's work. For Cyprian, the question of the deity of the Spirit had been settled by his Carthaginian predecessor, which freed him to focus instead on the Spirit's work in the lives of believers and the church as he sought to encourage and lead his congregation through two separate periods of persecution and an outbreak of the plague. Thus, while discussions of Cyprian's pneumatology notice the smaller number of references to the Spirit in his works compared to Tertullian's, the smaller number does not necessarily imply a weaker pneumatology, but rather a difference in focus. This chapter will follow a similar structure to the chapters on Tertullian in order to show that

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<sup>23</sup> For a full history on Montanism, see Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority, and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Trevett and others rightly bring out that the label Montanism is anachronistic, for Tertullian would have known the group as the "New Prophecy." However, most scholars acknowledge this disparity and choose to use the term "Montanism/Montanist" for the sake of continuity and ease, and this thesis will do the same. Since the historical record is so limited, scholars remain divided on the question of Tertullian's affinities in his later years. Though some variances among positions exist, most of the views can be categorized into the following three positions: some call Tertullian a Montanist, others think he was merely sympathetic to the Montanist movement while remaining within the church, others believe he was a Montanist ethically but doctrinally faithful to the church. See chapter four for a lengthier discussion of Tertullian's engagement with Montanism.

Cyprian was still interested in and speaking on the same areas of the Spirit's work, as well as a few areas not discussed by Tertullian. Particular areas of emphasis for Cyprian were the Spirit's intimate involvement in baptism, the inspiration of Scripture, and the indwelling of believers united within the church.

### **Significance**

In today's church, the most well-known North African father on the topic of the Trinity is Augustine, and in one sense rightly so as he further developed the doctrine and overcame some of the difficulties faced by his predecessors in expressing Trinitarian truth. Indeed, Ayres and Barnes have argued that it was not until in the fourth century that the North African church regained a proper and high pneumatology following the downturn in the third century with its accompanying failures to recognize the Holy Spirit properly. Yet the works of Tertullian and Cyprian provide a window into the earliest Christian understanding of the work of the Spirit in the Western Latin-speaking tradition that challenges Ayres and Barnes. Through the works of these early fathers, scholars can see a glimpse of the teachings of the early Christian church in North Africa a mere two centuries removed from Christ himself as the church sought to understand how the Spirit guided and instructed believers in holiness. Although some of these writings are not without their issues, and some of the discussions of the Spirit focused more upon his work than his person, this dissertation will show that the early church's pneumatology was nevertheless robust at this early stage, even if it was not always explicitly discussed.

## CHAPTER 2

### ROMAN CARTHAGE

The Christianity of Latin-speaking Roman North Africa was unique: it was deeply tinged with a rigorist dye. Though these Christians shared the same faith as their Christian brethren throughout the Mediterranean world, their expression of the faith included some particular aspects not found in the East. Moreover, as a part of the Roman empire, these Christians exhibited both Roman interests and patterns of behavior, and yet also differed from their Christian brethren in Italy quite significantly on matters of practice. In her introduction to Christianity in Roman North Africa, Jane Merdinger sought to explain this unique expression of Roman North African Christianity when she wrote: “Judaism remained the most potent element in the new faith, but indigenous Berber cults, harsh Punic rites, punctilious Greco-Roman ceremonies, and exuberant Eastern rituals would stamp North African Christianity with a rigorism peculiarly its own.”<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, many scholars have sought to explain the fundamental features that made the practices of Latin-speaking North African Christianity different from the expression of Christianity in the other regions of the Roman empire. Maureen Tilley’s explanation was that “African Christianity was shaped by an environment marked by the remnants of Punic culture, including its religion, making it different from other forms of Christianity.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, David Wilhite sought to emphasize the African context as the

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” in *Early Christianity in Contexts: An Exploration Across Cultures and Continents*, ed. William Tabbernee (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 223–4.

<sup>2</sup> Maureen A. Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa: The Donatist World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 18.

key factor, claiming that even as the early Christians were *Roman* North Africans, they were also Roman *North Africans*, and thus their cultural context is important to understand their writings, even though assimilation and some blending certainly occurred.<sup>3</sup> Finally, W.H.C. Frend argued that Christianity in North Africa should be understood as follows: “Roman Africa was ostensibly Latin, but beneath the outward form of latinisation, the population retained much of the religious and cultural heritage of Carthage.”<sup>4</sup>

Tertullian and Cyprian were both natives of Carthage, the key city of Roman North Africa, and the distinctives mentioned above can be seen throughout their writings. In order to understand properly the writings of both Tertullian and Cyprian on the Holy Spirit’s activity in the Carthaginian church, their context as citizens of Roman Carthage must be first explored. In the following discussion, the social, philosophical, political, and religious contexts of Carthage will all be examined in order to situate these early North African Christians in their cultural milieu.

### **Archaeological vs Textual**

Before examining the various contexts of these early fathers, a brief word about the sources of this contextual background ought to be mentioned. Abundant evidence remains extant regarding the Roman world toward the end of classical antiquity and into late antiquity, and that material and literary evidence will be invaluable for much of this chapter as seen below. In contrast, several scholars have noted that the archaeological record of Christianity in North Africa during the second and third century remains virtually nonexistent. No Christian inscriptions from North Africa can be dated

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<sup>3</sup> David E. Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2017), 45–52. Emphasis mine.

<sup>4</sup> W.H.C. Frend, “Heresy and Schism as Social and National Movements,” in *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest*, ed. Derek Baker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 39.



prior to the fourth century, and early North African baptistries were very few until the late fourth century.<sup>5</sup> This absence of material evidence has led scholars to propose various theories seeking to account for this lack of information.<sup>6</sup> J. Patout Burns and Robin Jensen have argued that the archaeological record was obscured shortly after the centuries in question, claiming, “the absence of an archaeological record can be accounted for in various ways: the destruction of church buildings during the Diocletian persecution, the extensive renovation and rebuilding projects sponsored by Constantine during the fourth century, and the expansion of the Christian church itself.”<sup>7</sup> Contrarily, Merdinger places the blame on the more recent archaeological efforts, claiming that early archaeological efforts destroyed much of the early evidence for Christianity in the region of North Africa as a result of the archaeologists’ inexperience in uncovering such artifacts.<sup>8</sup>

Whatever the reason for the lack of archaeological data, Merdinger rightly notes, “Scant archaeological data for North African Christianity before the fourth century compels us to rely primarily on literary evidence for Christianity’s origins.”<sup>9</sup> Also appealing to literary evidence, Burns and Jensen have shown that that “literary evidence indicates that Christians did own buildings and already controlled cemeteries or burial areas prior to the Constantinian emancipation,” though the notion of distinctly Christian burial grounds has recently been challenged by some scholars.<sup>10</sup> For the second- and

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<sup>5</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 236.

<sup>6</sup> Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, 58.

<sup>7</sup> J. Patout Burns, and Robin Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa: the Development of its Practices and Beliefs* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), L. This citation comes from the preface of the work, so that the “L” is the page number.

<sup>8</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 236.

<sup>9</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 234.

<sup>10</sup> Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, L; see also Eliezer González, *The Fate of the Dead in Early Third Century North African Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). For scholars challenging the view of Burns and Jensen, see Eric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, trans. Elizabeth Trapnell Rawlings and Jeanine Routier-Pucci, *Cornell Studies in Classical Philology* 59 (Ithaca,

third-century experience of Christianity in Roman North Africa, the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian provide the best sources of information, for “the extensive treatises of Tertullian and the eighty letters associated with Cyprian’s episcopate yield as much information on Christian life as can be gathered in any other region of the Roman world in this period.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian serve to situate both the fathers themselves, as well as Christianity more broadly, within that context.

### **Social**

The first area of context is the social setting of Carthage. In the Roman empire, social standing was essentially linked to one’s class, which in turn was based largely on the possession of wealth. And with the possession of wealth came other social benefits, such as literacy and education.<sup>12</sup> In addition to providing the context of the Carthaginian church, understanding Tertullian’s and Cyprian’s social standing provides insight into their writings on the Spirit’s activity. While both men sought to speak out against many elements of their culture, they were also shaped by it through their education. On a fundamental level, even their ability to write came as a result of their social standing.

### **Wealth**

The aristocracy, or patricians, made up the small percentage of wealthy nobility in the empire, while the plebians were the commoners who made up the majority of the empire’s population. Among the patricians, the classes were further broken down into the senatorial, equestrian, and decurion orders, according to the amount of wealth one possessed, with special emphasis given to land ownership. The senatorial class made

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NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 7–12; see also Karen B. Stern, *Inscribing Devotion and Death: Archaeological Evidence for Jewish Populations of North Africa*, *Religions in the Graeco-Roman World* 161 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 259n11, 294–6.

<sup>11</sup> Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, L.

<sup>12</sup> For a helpful discussion of the Roman social orders, see Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub, 2003), 55–8.

up the smallest class, for only approximately 600 families were of this rank, having either been born into it or having amassed a fortune exceeding 250,000 denarii in property values. The subsequent rank of equestrians had a more manageable 100,000 denarii threshold. Many successful merchants and businessmen found themselves in this second order, for regardless of the quantity of wealth attained by these merchants, involvement in such business affairs was thought to be beneath those of a senatorial rank. Finally, the decurions were largely made up of the local aristocracy throughout the empire, and while some of these decurions possessed substantial wealth and influence locally, they were still viewed as beneath those individuals belonging to the first two orders. Although the social classes did allow for some social mobility, the majority of citizens never possessed the wealth needed to move into the upper social classes, so such mobility was largely within the aristocratic orders themselves. Indeed, the majority of the population of the Roman world lived either near a subsistence level, or even below it, with some scholars proposing that nearly ninety percent of the empire made up this lower tier of society economically.<sup>13</sup>

Within this complex system of social classes, the patron-client relationship became especially important. This relationship was a mutually beneficial, voluntary relationship established between two individuals of varying social classes, and it served as the backbone of Roman society. The patron would receive clients of a lower standing than himself, either economically or socially, as in the case of a general and the people he

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<sup>13</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 55–8. David J. Downs, “Economics, Taxes, and Tithes,” in *The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*, ed. Joel B. Green, and Lee Martin McDonald (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 156–60, helpfully points out that some earlier models depicting the divide between the upper classes and lower classes neglected a small middle class that was far above a subsistence level, though well below the wealth of the upper classes. Walter Scheidel and Steven J. Friesen, “The Size of the Economy and the Distribution of Income in the Roman Empire,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 99 (2009): 84–5, have proposed a middle class of approximately six to twelve percent, while Bruce W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 319–20, proposed a middle group as high as fifteen percent of the urban population. Friesen has also offered a seven-tiered poverty scale trying to show the greater complexity of this economic breakdown in Roman society. All, however, still recognize the substantial gap between the upper and even middle classes with the lower classes near or under a subsistence level.

conquered. The responsibilities of a client were to fulfill one's duty or *obsequium* to the patron, usually through the regular morning ritual of attending upon one's patron to offer salutations in addition to presenting any requests. If the patron had need of a client's services, the client was expected to serve the patron in whatever way he could, and this service brought greater honor and status to the patron. In return, since the patron was better off financially and socially than his clients, he provided services and favors for them in exchange for their support. Some of these services included the use of the patron's physician, or fulfilling a request that a patron assist his client regarding a political or social matter in which the patron's higher standing would carry more weight than the client's own word. Everyone in the empire, from the freedman up to the emperor, was involved in these relationships, and having wealthy and influential patrons often brought substantial benefits to the clients.<sup>14</sup> Within the early church, and especially in Roman North Africa, the bishops often took on the role of patron to their congregation, though this role would differ somewhat from the traditional role seen in society.<sup>15</sup> Cyprian provided a prime example of this relationship through his regular financial gifts to his people along with his desire to care for their wellbeing.<sup>16</sup>

These social strata were present in Carthage as well, for Carthage was the second largest city of the western Roman Empire in the second and third centuries. Having been rebuilt as a Roman colony by Julius Caesar and his nephew Augustus, Carthage had been transformed from the Punic capital of the Phoenicians once feared by the Romans into "an orderly Roman city replete with a theater, odeon, baths,

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<sup>14</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 67–9.

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion on the connections between bishops and patrons, see Charles A. Bobertz, "Cyprian of Carthage as Patron: A Social Historical Study of the Role of the Bishop in the Ancient Christian Community of North Africa" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1988).

<sup>16</sup> A key difference of this role within the church was the bishop's lack of using those under his care for his own social advancement.

amphitheater, and an aqueduct stretching 120 km from mountain headwaters.”<sup>17</sup> As Carthage continued to grow and flourish, it became one of the substantial exporters of wheat, garum, and olive oil for the Roman empire, as well as a highly sought-after type of pottery known as “African red-slip ware.”<sup>18</sup> These exports brought a significant amount of wealth to the city, leading not only to economic growth but also to an increased political and social influence in the region. On account of its size and prosperity, Carthage exerted a sizable influence throughout Roman North Africa, not only in Africa Proconsularis where Carthage was located, but also in Numidia, Mauretania, and Tripolitanea. One example of this social influence can be seen in Carthage’s possession of the largest amphitheater in Roman Africa, capable of holding approximately 36,000 spectators. Although Carthage would experience a number of economic hardships in the mid- to late-third century brought about by famine, wars, and plague, nevertheless, the city remained a key center for the Roman empire throughout the third century.<sup>19</sup>

In his works, Tertullian has provided some insight into the social classes of the Carthaginian Christians. In *Ad Scapulam*, Tertullian made occasional allusions to Christians in the first three orders, showing that Christianity had pervaded all levels of society, but he refrained from providing specific examples. He emphasized, however, the presence of Christians in all levels of society, claiming that if Scapula sought to punish all of the Carthaginian Christians, he would quickly see men and women from his own order and from the leading figures of the city, and thus ought to reconsider his intentions.<sup>20</sup> While these comments reveal that at least some Christians were a part of

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<sup>17</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 228.

<sup>18</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 229.

<sup>19</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 230.

<sup>20</sup> Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam* 5.

these higher orders, Éric Rebillard notes that the “majority of Christians belonged, however, to the urban *plebs*, a mix of highly qualified workers, small shopkeepers, and occasional workers in the harbour, not usually mentioned with much precision in our sources as their integration into the church did not present any problem.”<sup>21</sup> Thus while a small number of Christians may have enjoyed the accompanying benefits of wealth such as literacy and education, the majority of Carthaginian Christians would not have had those luxuries.

### **Literacy**

In second- and third-century Carthage, literacy was a rare privilege primarily found among the noble orders. Among the plebians, literacy was quite rare, for families often could not afford more than a basic rudimentary education for their sons before needing them to join the family business in order for the family to survive. Additionally, professional scribes offered their assistance in creating and reading legal documents, which allowed lower class individuals access to these documents without being literate themselves.

In contrast, Everett Ferguson notes that “a significant minority of the population was literate,” namely the upper levels of society.<sup>22</sup> Among the members of the upper class, literacy was not only more widespread, but W.V. Harris observed: “It was in fact a repugnant thought to upper-class Greeks and Romans that a man of their own class might be illiterate.”<sup>23</sup> Among the North Africans in Carthage, Punic remained the primary

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<sup>21</sup> Éric Rebillard, “The West (2): North Africa,” *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey, and David G Hunter, Oxford Handbooks Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 304–5. See also Georg Schöllgen, *Ecclesia Sordida?: Zur Frage Der Sozialen Schichtung Frühchristlicher Gemeinden Am Beispiel Karthagos Zur Zeit Tertullians*, *Jahrbuch Für Antike Und Christentum: Ergänzungsband 12* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1984), 184, 223, 267. After examining Tertullian’s writings, he concludes that Tertullian likely would have belonged to the equestrian rank.

<sup>22</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 132.

<sup>23</sup> W.V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 250.

dialect, though the wealthy and educated also spoke and wrote in both Latin and Greek as the situation required.<sup>24</sup> Yet even among the noble orders, a “distinction must be made between the top layer of society that was learned and capable of producing their own literature and a much larger number (but still definitely a minority) who had a minimal but functional literacy.”<sup>25</sup> This minimal yet functional level of literacy allowed individuals to conduct and grow their business and examine legal documents, even if they were not capable of producing such texts, or any other works of higher literary value, themselves. For this reason, while the socially mobile individual who had earned his way into a higher order of society might only possess a limited degree of literacy, his sons would have been expected to possess a greater degree of literacy than their father if they hoped to become respectable members of any of the upper levels of society. Harris summarizes his discussion of Roman literacy in Carthage by noting that in spite of the significant presence of literary inscriptions found at Carthage, nevertheless it was “unlikely that the overall literacy of the western provinces even rose into the range of 5–10%.”<sup>26</sup>

The scarcity of literacy among the population helps explain why Tertullian and Cyprian were both so influential in the Carthaginian church. As shown above, the majority of Carthaginian Christians were found among the plebians rather than the noble orders, and thus only a small number of these Christians were literate.<sup>27</sup> Yet among this small number, Tertullian and Cyprian established themselves as exceedingly capable of producing their own literature. Although details of his life remain obscure, Tertullian demonstrated through his brilliantly composed writings that he belonged to that upper

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<sup>24</sup> Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, 52–6.

<sup>25</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 132.

<sup>26</sup> Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 272.

<sup>27</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 235.

level of society, such that Timothy David Barnes can write: “Tertullian was clearly the luminary of his age, and inaugurated the new and living form of Christian Latin literature.”<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Barnes has maintained that Tertullian was the inspiration behind the literary works of Minucius Felix, Cyprian, Arnobius, and Lactantius, for even though these figures avoided citing Tertullian explicitly, “the debt of all four writers to him is undeniable. Tertullian had shown that a Christian could write elegant Latin.”<sup>29</sup> Cyprian, likewise, was well-educated and literate. In becoming a bishop, Cyprian had passed up the opportunity to enter into a chair of rhetoric in Carthage. Such a position would have made him well-known among the social elites, though he gave up all such pursuits upon his profession of faith and subsequent elevation to the episcopate.<sup>30</sup> Having been educated and possessing the ability to read and write with a great degree of skill, both Tertullian and Cyprian were then able to leverage their education in their writings to the church.

## **Education**

In the Greco-Roman world, any secondary education beyond the primary education of reading and writing was a privilege of the wealthy classes, though reading and writing was often limited to these classes as well. Ferguson notes: “The Greek word for education was *paideia*, which meant ‘training, discipline.’ It was translated into Latin as *humanitas*, which expressed the ideal of Hellenistic education—the formation of the human person.”<sup>31</sup> As the goal was to shape and form the entire individual, the secondary education received by children of the upper classes consisted of training in the classics

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<sup>28</sup> Timothy David Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 192, 195. See also Rebillard, “The West,” 305; Schöllgen, *Ecclesia Sordida?*, 176–89.

<sup>29</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 194.

<sup>30</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 192.

<sup>31</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 109.



under a *grammaticus* in the liberal arts: grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music.<sup>32</sup> This education was voluntary, so that children were not required to receive training in all of these disciplines; however, an education in rhetoric was essential for anyone wishing to serve in public life and was thus often pursued by wealthy young men.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Ferguson asserts that one “can hardly exaggerate the influence of rhetorical education on ancient culture and literature.”<sup>34</sup> Rhetorical education provided not only the tools of public discourse, but also the shared repository of examples and precedents from the classics.

An examination of his writings reveals that Tertullian was extensively educated, and one can assume that Cyprian received a similar education given his social status and quality of writing. Tertullian cited from pagan and classical sources with great frequency, often preferring to use the very texts his opponents cited for support to refute them instead. Eric Osborn has helpfully noted,

While his many citations serve different purposes, when taken together they show a positive attitude to culture: in the *apologeticum* alone, Tertullian cites thirty different authors. Tertullian’s literary formation begins from the richer heritage of Carthage rather than Rome and goes on to include Silver Age writers like Pliny, Tacitus, and Seneca. Still further, Homer and Herodotus are fundamental, while his extensive knowledge of Plato’s writings is seen as a late growth from his controversy with Gnostics. Some writers he knows only from anthologies; many of his references are allusions rather than citations ... His corpus of citations goes well beyond the requirement of style and exceeds that of any other early Christian writer. He is reluctant to acknowledge his debts, especially his supreme debt to Cicero; but unacknowledged citation was a common convention of his time.<sup>35</sup>

This rich education helps make sense of statements seen above regarding the quality of Tertullian’s writings and his influence on early North African Christianity. One particular

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<sup>32</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 110.

<sup>33</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 111–2.

<sup>34</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 111.

<sup>35</sup> Eric Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 32–3. See also Barnes, *Tertullian*, 199 for a similar assessment of Tertullian’s education. Barnes is especially impressed with Tertullian’s familiarity with “three Latin writers of the ‘Silver Age’ who endured a long period of unpopularity: Pliny the Younger, Tacitus and Juvenal.”

skill seen in Tertullian's writings was his ability to weave together numerous allusions from a wide array of Greek and Roman sources in support of his position, and Wilhite observes that this use of such a variety of works, both literary and philosophical, demonstrated a high level of education and training.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, Wilhite asserts:

What is clear is just how much Tertullian shaped his arguments in accordance with his training as a rhetorician. In attempting to understand any of these writings, the modern reader must recognize how thoroughly rhetorical Tertullian is in his argumentation. Tertullian studied the best of classical rhetoric, such as can be found in Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintillian, and he employed their tactics of persuasion without hesitation.<sup>37</sup>

Indeed, Tertullian's array of polemical works bears out Wilhite's assertion, as he displayed a willingness to use nearly any means possible to persuade his audience of his point. While Cyprian does not cite or allude to classical authors in the same way as his predecessor, his works nevertheless reveal his high level of education through his use of similar rhetorical devices in support of his various arguments.

### **Philosophical**

In light of the education that both Tertullian and Cyprian received, their philosophical context must also be examined to determine the effect of this philosophy on their pneumatology. In third-century North Africa, Stoicism was the dominant philosophical system that influenced Christianity.<sup>38</sup> Ferguson notes that Christianity used and adopted much of the terminology found in Stoicism, including "Spirit, conscience, *Logos*, virtue, self-sufficiency, freedom of speech, reasonable service, etc."<sup>39</sup> These

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<sup>36</sup> Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, 119.

<sup>37</sup> Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, 118.

<sup>38</sup> Platonism was far more influential in the East in places like Alexandria, and it would become influential in North Africa by the time of Augustine. Yet for the third century, Stoicism briefly takes the place of Platonism as the chief philosophical system influencing the early Latin fathers. Eric Francis Osborn, "The Subtlety of Tertullian," *Vigiliae Christianae* 52, no. 4 (November 1998): 362, notes, "Christian spirituality has commonly turned to Platonism. There is another strain which is found in the Heraclitean Stoicism of Tertullian and Irenaeus. It is joined in Origen and Augustine to Platonism, so that we have, in Daniélou's words, 'a Stoic world under a Platonic heaven.'"

<sup>39</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 368.

similarities, however, went “deeper than individual items to a general atmosphere.”<sup>40</sup> The Stoic emphasis on virtue and *apatheia* appealed to many of the Latin-speaking Christians, who then incorporated some of these thoughts about the need to pursue virtue and resist vice into their ethical and moral systems.<sup>41</sup> In particular, the works of Seneca and Cicero were favored by the Carthaginian Christians, as seen in Tertullian’s *De Anima* 20, where he appealed to Seneca as being on the side of Christians regarding the properties of the soul.<sup>42</sup> Osborn also argues that Tertullian was influenced by Heraclitus, citing Tertullian’s belief that the “world is not a pale copy of eternity, but a beautiful and moving Heraclitean flux, in which God has always been active.”<sup>43</sup>

Throughout his writings, Tertullian regularly made use of Stoic philosophy and style as it suited his purposes. Tertullian often focused on the nature of God, man, and the soul as he sought to provide a proper understanding of these categories against a number of heretical or pagan views. Examining these discussions, Osborn has noted that “Tertullian constantly uses the Stoic terms: body, spirit, substance, nature and word. As a result, his concepts of being, soul, knowledge, God and goodness bear clear marks of Stoic influence.”<sup>44</sup> Brian Daley also observes Tertullian building upon Stoic thought in his Trinitarian analogies. He states,

His use of what were to become three common patristic analogies for the Trinity ... are all, in Tertullian’s treatment, essentially images drawn from the material world, reflecting his general assumption (borrowed from Stoic philosophy) that all real things, even the reality we call ‘spirit,’ are in some sense *material*, if they are not simply mental or imaginary. In this latter sense, Father, Son, and Spirit all share the

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<sup>40</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 368.

<sup>41</sup> Hubertus R. Drobner, “Christian Philosophy,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey, and David G Hunter, 683. Oxford Handbooks Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Tertullian, *De Anima* 20.1.

<sup>43</sup> Osborn, “The Subtlety of Tertullian,” 368.

<sup>44</sup> Osborn, *Tertullian*, 35. See also Michel Spanneut, “Le Stoïcisme des pères de l’église: de Clément de Rome à Clément d’Alexandrie,” (PhD diss., Université de Paris, 1957).

one divine ‘substance’ or ‘stuff’ that issues forth from the Father.<sup>45</sup>

While Tertullian was not attempting to fit the Christian God into the Stoic system of philosophy, he was using philosophical terms familiar to him in order to attempt to express truths about the nature of God, man, and the world, and these terms appear in his pneumatological discussions.

Tertullian also employed the Stoic style in his writings, and especially his polemical treatises. Seneca had previously spoken about his own ability and unceasing desire to censure and castigate vices, and this style was warmly welcomed by Tertullian. Following Seneca’s model, Tertullian rarely acknowledged his opponents’ strengths, instead lambasting their faults without mercy. Yet again appealing to typical Stoic style, he employed the practice of *brevitas* to devastating effect while completely eschewing any meekness in tone, for Stoics did not believe that all offenses ought to receive equal treatment.<sup>46</sup>

For all of his embrace of various terminology and stylistic features of Stoicism, Tertullian still refrained from identifying himself as a Stoic. Tertullian famously made the claim: “Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis? quid academiae et ecclesiae? quid haereticis et christianis? Nostra institutio de porticu Solomonis est qui et ipse tradiderat Dominum in simplicitate cordis esse quaerendum. Viderint qui Stoicum et Platonicum et dialecticum christianismum protulerunt.”<sup>47</sup> Indeed, Tertullian likely would have rejected the attempts of his Alexandrian contemporaries Clement and Origen to reconcile somehow a pagan philosophy with the true faith of Christianity.

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<sup>45</sup> Brian E. Daley, “‘One Thing and Another’: The Persons in God and the Person of Christ in Patristic Theology,” *Pro Ecclesia* 15, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 28.

<sup>46</sup> Osborn, *Tertullian*, 29. See also Seneca, *Epistle* 51.13, for Seneca’s willingness to harangue vice as often as he had opportunity.

<sup>47</sup> Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 7. “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? what between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from ‘the porch of Solomon,’ who had himself taught that ‘the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart.’ Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition!”

He did not, however, dismiss all elements of philosophy as useless, but rather “used the benefits of a traditional education and the fruits of his pagan erudition to defend and to propagate what he considered to be the truth.”<sup>48</sup> Osborn rightly notes: “Tertullian does not reject or accept philosophy as a whole,” and indeed he “knows his philosophers better than do most Greek fathers.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, although he used similar terminology and ideas borrowed from Stoic philosophy, Tertullian reinterpreted and repurposed these terms and ideas to function within a fundamentally different worldview, and thereby gave them a uniquely Christian meaning.<sup>50</sup> This reinterpretation was necessary, for while Stoicism was an exclusive philosophy for the few true adherents, Christianity appealed to all. Similarly, the notion of *apatheia* conflicted with the Christian command to love one’s neighbor. Thus, Tertullian pulled from Stoicism elements that aided his defense of Christianity while jettisoning those elements he found to be at odds with the faith.<sup>51</sup> Wilhite summed up Tertullian’s view on philosophy well when he wrote: “For Tertullian, all truth is God’s Truth; and so when Tertullian finds the philosophers speaking the truth, he happily uses philosophy as a means of grace that can articulate the faith ... For Tertullian, Athens may not necessarily speak the language of Jerusalem, but Jerusalem can speak the language of Athens.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 210.

<sup>49</sup> Osborn, *Tertullian*, 31. Elsewhere, Osborn, “The Subtlety of Tertullian,” 369, writes, “Tertullian’s combination of originality and tradition with a mind entirely formed by the Stoic culture of his time is both unexpected and subtle. If we place Marcus Aurelius beside Tertullian and Celsus beside Clement of Alexandria we are struck by the similarities between the pagan and Christian Stoic and between the pagan and Christian Platonist. For Marcus Aurelius, the world is a living rational unity, within which man lives according to nature and in obedience to reason and law. Its constant change allows him to remain forever young. Human autonomy remains invincible within the everflowing stream and pursues one thing only, virtue, intimate with God and joined by friendship with the human race. Traces of all these elements and their general orientation, are found again in Tertullian; they are not directly borrowed, but reflect the mental environment in which Tertullian lived. He repudiates the idea of a Christian Stoicism (praescr. 7.9-11).”

<sup>50</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 368.

<sup>51</sup> Drobner, “Christian Philosophy,” 683.

<sup>52</sup> Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, 111.

Cyprian was also influenced by Stoicism, though the evidence of this influence is less obvious than in Tertullian. One particular area of Cyprian's thinking that resembled Stoic thought was his understanding that the world was aging and even drawing to a close. Living in the midst of turbulent times, Cyprian viewed the events happening throughout the Roman world as signs that the end of the world was drawing near. In *On Mortality*, Cyprian used the traumatic events in the world to point his people toward heaven rather than focusing on temporal matters. Though the Christians had to share in the troubles of this world alongside nonbelievers for a time, these same troubles had already been prophesied by the Scriptures as events that must happen prior to the return of Christ.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, in his *Address to Demetrianus*, Cyprian declared that such disasters and hardships were only going to increase as time continued, for the world was growing old and fading, and thus decay was to be expected throughout the world. Alongside this physical decay, moral decay among humanity was also going to increase, as seen in the avarice displayed in the midst of the plague.<sup>54</sup>

This notion and illustration of a cosmic decay was similar to a Stoic illustration, and for this reason, scholars like Allen Brent and Jean Daniélou have cited the influence of Stoicism upon Cyprian's understanding and theology of history.<sup>55</sup> However, Cyprian's understanding of this linear view of history was built upon his understanding of biblical eschatology, in which Christ would return and bring about the end of history, rather than appealing to the more Stoic notion of a cyclical history that was drawing to a close in preparation for another cycle to follow. Like Tertullian, Cyprian used familiar terms and illustrations that his readers would have recognized, but he was

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<sup>53</sup> Cyprian, *On Mortality* 2, 8, 17, 25.

<sup>54</sup> Cyprian, *Address to Demetrianus* 3–4, 10–11.

<sup>55</sup> Allen Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 102–5, 108–9; Jean Daniélou, *The Origins of Latin Christianity*, in *A History of Early Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicaea*, vol. 3 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977), 257. Daniélou also believed that Stoicism's influence was clearly seen in Cyprian's ethics.

repurposing the illustrations to fit his own writings rather than adopting them in their original form.

### **Political**

Having discussed the social and philosophical context of Roman Carthage, the next important context is the political environment of Carthage in the late second and early third centuries. This political context was important for Tertullian and Cyprian's pneumatology, as they both understood the Spirit to be working and active in the current circumstances of the church. Thus, the church's often antagonistic relationship to the state provided the arena for significant aspects of the Spirit's activity.

### **Roman Imperial Government**

The Carthage of Tertullian and Cyprian's day was not the same Carthage from the dreaded Punic Wars. Though the original Carthage had been destroyed, during the regimes of Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar it had been rebuilt into the second city of the western Roman Empire. On account of its size and its status as the chief city of the Roman province African Proconsularis, Carthage wielded significant influence over the neighboring provinces of Mauritania Tingitana, Mauritania Caesariensis, Tripolitania, and Numidia.<sup>56</sup> Around the turn of the third century, North Africa was more influential than ever before, for Septimius Severus (193–211) became the first North African emperor.<sup>57</sup> During his reign, Severus gave significant attention to his homeland, resulting in the widespread construction of palaces, temples, and other building projects throughout North Africa. Following Severus' reign, however, a number of political and economic issues arose throughout the empire as a result of the turmoil in Rome and rapid

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<sup>56</sup> Merdinger, "Roman North Africa," 229.

<sup>57</sup> For a fuller treatment of Severus, see Anthony Birley, *Septimius Severus: The African Emperor*, Second ed., Roman Imperial Biographies (London: Routledge, 2015).

succession of emperors. This turmoil began around 235, but would last for the next fifty years as Rome experienced numerous political dynasties marked by intrigue, two separate outbreaks of a plague, and several foreign invasions that all contributed to widespread economic hardship. The empire would not return to a place of stability until the reign of Diocletian in 284.<sup>58</sup> Merdinger notes that the majority of North Africa, however, “weathered the crisis of the late third century relatively unscathed. Municipal projects continued to be funded, and civic life flourished, unlike in other Western provinces where permanent decline commenced.”<sup>59</sup> Frend offers a different perspective, claiming that while the church in North Africa remained steady and weathered the storm, the society around it suffered to a much greater degree.<sup>60</sup>

While the emperor was the chief political figure of the empire, the primary political figure in Carthage was the proconsul. These proconsuls had typically served in other political appointments, and the appointment as proconsul over a provincial government was often the high point of a wealthy Roman’s career. As the proconsul, these men were in charge of enforcing Roman law and imperial edicts throughout the province.<sup>61</sup> J.B. Rives notes, however, that this role was quite vague, for “instead of specific duties, he simply had a general obligation to enforce the *lex* and to maintain order within the province.”<sup>62</sup> In most cases in Carthage, the proconsul was faithful in administering Roman justice and law, and the following section will show that a number of the proconsuls often sought the well-being of their citizens, seeking to restore

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<sup>58</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 230.

<sup>59</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 230–31.

<sup>60</sup> W.H.C. Frend, “Martyrdom and Political Oppression,” in *The Early Christian World, vol. II*, ed. Philip F. Esler (Routledge: London, 2000), 829.

<sup>61</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 40–41.

<sup>62</sup> J.B. Rives, *Religion and Authority in Roman Carthage from Augustus to Constantine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 77.



individuals rather than dole out heavy punishments. Underneath these proconsuls were the local magistrates, who took care of the day-to-day matters, leaving the proconsul free to focus on the larger task of running the province. Thus, many Christians in smaller towns throughout the province would not have had a great deal of contact with the proconsul, while those Christians in Carthage would have likely seen him to a greater degree.<sup>63</sup> Yet these proconsuls were still the primary authority figures for the region, and thus Tertullian and Cyprian both address a number of their writings or statements toward the proconsuls, rather than the emperors or local magistrates.

### **Persecution and Martyrdom**

Within this political context, the legal status of Christianity in Carthage alternated between being tolerated by the political authorities to varying degrees of persecution. Merdinger remarks that “no ancient historian chronicled early persecution in North Africa.”<sup>64</sup> For this reason, accounts of early persecution must be pulled from a number of sources, including the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian. The earliest evidence of persecution in Roman North Africa comes from the work *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*, which documents the trial and martyrdom of twelve Christians from North Africa in 180. The town of Scilli was likely near Carthage, as the proconsul Vigelius Saturninus tried them in Carthage before passing his judgment upon them.<sup>65</sup> Tertullian noted in his work *Ad Scapulam* that this Saturninus was the first Roman official in North Africa to persecute the Christians with the sword.<sup>66</sup> The martyrdom account also revealed the spread of Christianity in North Africa, for nine of the twelve Christians had Latin names, while the other three possessed Berber names; similarly, five martyrs were

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<sup>63</sup> Rives, *Religion and Authority*, 77–9.

<sup>64</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa, 237.

<sup>65</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 233.

<sup>66</sup> Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam* 3.

women and seven were men. These details reveal that Christianity had spread from the major crossroad city of Carthage into the surrounding countryside, as well as reaching to the local peoples in addition to the more Romanized Carthaginians.<sup>67</sup> This work also contains the first reference to the books of Paul reaching North Africa, for the martyr Speratus told Saturninus that he possessed the “books and letters of Paul, a just man.”<sup>68</sup>

While the Scillitan martyrs were the earliest recorded persecuted Christians in North Africa, several additional instances of persecution followed in the third century. In fact, persecution became such a part of the North African Christians’ experience that Frend wrote, “The church in North Africa was the Church of the Martyrs, and it deserved the title thoroughly.”<sup>69</sup> Barnes likewise wrote: “If the year 300 be taken as the terminus, all the genuine *acts martyrum* except one emanate from Africa.”<sup>70</sup> The first occurred during Severus’ reign, for in response to the traditional religion of the empire becoming threatened by the rising number of converts to Christianity, conversion to Christianity became forbidden in North Africa under threat of severe punishment in 202. Christians had been previously persecuted by their fellow citizens and turned over to magistrates to be punished under Trajan’s instructions, and this edict did not lift Trajan’s earlier ruling.<sup>71</sup> Rather, while this edict did not condemn current Christians or clergy, it condemned those who might convert, and was thus designed to stop the spread of Christianity. As a result, the edict set a new procedural agenda for North Africa, for rather than waiting for

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<sup>67</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 233.

<sup>68</sup> A.A.R. Bastiaensen, *Atti E Passioni Dei Martiri*, Scrittori Greci E Latini (Milan: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, 1987). See also Victor Saxer, “L’Afrique chrétienne (180–260),” in *Le nouveau peuple (des origenes à 250)*, ed. Charles Pietri and Luce Pietri, 579–623, 784–815, *Histoire du christianisme*, vol. 1 (Paris: Desclée, 2000).

<sup>69</sup> Frend, “Martyrdom and Political Oppression,” 825.

<sup>70</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 193.

<sup>71</sup> See Pliny the Younger, *Letter* 10.96–7, for Trajan’s policy regarding the Christians.

Christians to be brought before the authorities, the authorities were now instructed to seek out new converts and punish those who did both the converting and proselytizing.<sup>72</sup>

Under this new instruction, the proconsuls were given a great deal of discretionary power regarding how they went about their subjugation of Christian proselytization, with differing results. Paul Allard recounts, “The writings of that time have preserved the legacy of legates and proconsuls who made themselves famous for their cruelty, and of others who applied the authority to prosecute that had been given them moderately, or not at all, and left a reputation for clemency.”<sup>73</sup> Additionally, subsequent emperors varied in their stances regarding the enforcement of Severus’ edict. Some showed more leniency toward Christianity, while others sought to follow Severus’ precedent, with the local magistrates following the emperor’s example.

The most famous martyrdom account that occurred under the Severan persecution was that of Vibia Perpetua and her fellow Christians in 203.<sup>74</sup> Walter Ameling has reflected, “There is no remotely comparable woman’s writing from the high empire, and none at all by a Christian woman.”<sup>75</sup> The very fact that through her prison diary the reader hears the voice of a woman at this point in Christianity’s history lends significance

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<sup>72</sup> Paul Allard, *Christianity and the Roman Empire from Nero to Theodosius*, trans. Anthony P Gythiel, 7th ed. (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2017), 58–9.

<sup>73</sup> Allard, *Christianity and the Roman Empire*, 59. In *Ad Scapulam* 4, Tertullian recounts the proconsul Vespronius Candidus as an example of those who showed clemency to Christians.

<sup>74</sup> In the following discussion, I will primarily be referring to the *Passio*. Though another version of the martyrdom account titled the *Acta Perpetuae* exists, scholars hold that the *Acta* is a later revision of the original text, and thus is not an accurate representation of the Carthaginian views during the period covered in this dissertation. Additionally, the *Passio* focused more on the visions of Perpetua than the more straightforward *Acta*. For a detailed comparison of the *Passio* and *Acta*, see Jan N. Bremmer and Marco Formisano, “Perpetua’s Passions: A Brief Introduction,” in *Perpetua’s Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Passio Perpetuae Et Felicitatis*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and Marco Formisano, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2–5; see also Joseph Farrell, “The Canonization of Perpetua,” in Bremmer and Formisano, 305–8. For a more detailed introduction to the life and setting of Perpetua, see Ross S. Kraemer and Shira L. Lander, “Perpetua and Felicitas,” in *The Early Christian World*, vol. 2, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), 1048–69; see also Thomas J. Heffernan, trans., *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>75</sup> Walter Ameling, “*Femina Liberaliter Instituta*—Some Thoughts on a Martyr’s Liberal Education,” in *Perpetua’s Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Passio Perpetuae Et Felicitatis*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and Marco Formisano, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 79.

to her account. Perpetua was born around the end of the second century into a wealthy, upper class family in Carthage. Her father spent a substantial amount of time teaching her to read and write, an uncommon ability for many women in that period of history, thus demonstrating the depth of his love and care for his daughter. As a young woman, Perpetua was converted to Christianity and became a catechumen awaiting baptism when the Severan persecution broke. Despite her status as a new mother, Perpetua was taken into custody along with several fellow believers, and though her father and the magistrate would urge her to reject Christianity for the sake of her child, she persisted in her belief.<sup>76</sup> Upon her third refusal of the magistrate's exhortation, he condemned her to die in the arena with the other Christians, and thus she was martyred.

Most of the information regarding Perpetua's life and prison experience comes from her prison diary that she kept while in captivity. In this diary, she recounted her struggle with the darkness and heat of her prison cell as well as her fear regarding the fate of her child. However, when urged by her brother to ask for a vision from God, she did so and received a magnificent vision that strengthened her for the task ahead. This diary also recounted the details of a few of her fellow prisoners, namely Saturninus and Felicitas, who would also be martyred alongside Perpetua. While the majority of the work is Perpetua's own hand, with a brief section by Saturus, the introduction and conclusion were compiled by an editor, whose stated goal was to show that the Spirit was still at work in the church and gave strength to the martyrs, of whom Perpetua was a model.<sup>77</sup> In particular, some scholars have recognized that the editor highlighted the gift of

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<sup>76</sup> Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, 89, provides a helpful discussion concerning the Punic aspects of her father's mourning and pleading with his daughter, contra the typical Roman sensibilities that a Roman man ought to convey himself with a certain *gravitas*.

<sup>77</sup> For the view that the editor of the *Passio* was a Montanist and used the martyrdom account to advance Montanism, see Butler, *The New Prophecy & "New Visions."* For the view that both Perpetua and the editor were members of the Carthaginian church, such that *Passio* was not an embrace of Montanism but rather a refutation of its claims, see Megan DeVore, "A Post-Montanist Perspective: The Holy Spirit in a North African Martyr Account," paper presented at the annual meeting for the Evangelical Theological Society, Denver, Colorado, November 13–15, 2018.

martyrdom as a particular gift or *charisma* of the Spirit. Rex Butler noted, “The Holy Spirit continued to administer all the charismata, especially the grace of martyrdom and visions.”<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Eugenio Corsini wrote, “Nel martirio si manifesta una delle ‘virtutes’ dello Spirito, promesso da Cristo, inviato dal Padre per edificare la Chiesa.”<sup>79</sup> For the editor, the experience of martyrdom was only possible through the Spirit’s giving of the *charisma* of martyrdom that strengthened a believer to endure faithfully to the end. Finally, Harmut Böhme observed that although the editor was not an eyewitness, he was following Perpetua’s appeal and the leading of the Holy Spirit to recount the final scene.<sup>80</sup>

The martyrdom account of Perpetua was deeply influential in the North African church. A contemporary of Perpetua, Tertullian made note of her martyrdom in *De Anima* 55 and spoke of her highly, and the similar style of the editor’s comments to some of Tertullian’s works has led some scholars to assume that he was the editor of this prison diary, though that view is no longer widely accepted.<sup>81</sup> As one awaiting martyrdom, Perpetua’s account offers a different perspective on the work of the Holy Spirit in Carthage than Tertullian despite the two being contemporaries, even though they shared similar themes. In Perpetua’s account, she emphasized the Spirit’s empowerment of believers at baptism, a theme that was also addressed by Tertullian. Additionally, the editor addressed some similar themes to Tertullian, including his appeal for

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<sup>78</sup> Rex D. Butler, *The New Prophecy & “New Visions”: Evidence of Montanism in the Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, Patristic Monograph Series 18 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 59.

<sup>79</sup> Eugenio Corsini, “Proposte per una lettura della ‘Passio Perpetuae,’” in *Forma Futuri: Studi in Onore Del Cardinale Michele Pellegrino* (Torino: Bottega d’Erasmio, 1975), 515. “In martyrdom one of the virtues of the Spirit is manifested, promised by Christ, sent by the Father for the edification of the Church.”

<sup>80</sup> Harmut Böhme, translated by Jeanne Riou, “The Conquest of the Real by the Imaginary: On the *Passio Perpetuae*,” in Bremmer and Formisano, *Perpetua’s Passions*, 221.

<sup>81</sup> For a history of views on the identity of the editor, see Christoph Marksches, “The *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* and Montanism?,” in Bremmer and Formisano, 278–82.

understanding the Spirit's work of preserving the martyrdom account as edifying the church and the desire of the Spirit to record and affirm the events of the *Passion*. Augustine, likewise, honored Perpetua and her martyrdom, giving a sermon yearly on the anniversary of her martyrdom. Thus, for the early Latin-speaking church, the martyrdom of Perpetua was a sign of God's faithfulness in granting a woman to have a bold voice for Christ. Through her refusal to submit to her father as the head of the household by recanting her Christian beliefs, instead welcoming death as the act that would unite her with her Lord, she acted in a way totally foreign to the Roman understanding of a woman as submissive to the male authority of the family.

Although local persecution continued in North Africa under figures like the proconsul Scapula in 212, the next major bout of persecution came under the Emperor Decius (249–51).<sup>82</sup> Out of a desire to restore the historic values of the Roman people, on January 3, 250, Decius ordered the entire empire to offer a sacrifice to Jupiter and the Roman gods. This edict was not directly aimed at Christians, but Christians were heavily affected as they were faced with the options of persecution or apostasy. As the newly appointed bishop of Carthage, Cyprian found himself facing a mass apostasy as many professed Christians offered the sacrifice to the Roman gods rather than suffer the punishment, and Cyprian himself had to flee for his own safety in the midst of this persecution. This severe persecution ended quickly, however, as Decius died in battle in 203 and no other plan to subjugate Christians was enacted.<sup>83</sup>

The final bout of persecution that occurred during the time of Cyprian was instituted by the Emperor Valerian (253–60). This persecution in 257 was of a different nature, as Valerian was not merely requiring all citizens to perform a sacrifice, but rather

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<sup>82</sup> Scapula launched persecution in Mauretania and Numidia in 212, as well as beheading Christians in Utica during the late summer of that year. In Carthage, many Christians feared that his persecution would soon reach the Carthaginian Christians, so Tertullian wrote his work *Ad Scapulam* as a plea for clemency and a warning against continued persecution of the Christians.

<sup>83</sup> Frend, "Martyrdom and Political Oppression," 827–9.

targeting Christian clergy.<sup>84</sup> Frend suggests that the relatively stable economic status of the church may simply have been too enticing a target to an empire ravaged by economic instability, though this statement is merely a conjecture.<sup>85</sup> More likely, Valerian desired to regain the favor of the gods, and thus required Christian leaders to worship the Roman gods accordingly. If they would not, then punishments included the confiscation of Christian cemeteries and places of worship, as well as some leaders being sent into exile or hard labor. A year later, the persecution intensified, as the persecution expanded to include lay Christians as well. In addition to arresting Christian leaders, any wealthy Christians were stripped of their property and status, civil servants were enslaved and sent to work the imperial estates, and even the upper-class women were banished. Frend summarized the effects and intent of this edict saying that this new wave of persecution was “an attempt to deprive the church of its leaders, any social standing it possessed, and its property, in effect to root it out.”<sup>86</sup> During this persecution, Cyprian was martyred in 258, as well as a number of Numidian bishops, though after the persecution ended in 260, the church enjoyed a few decades of peace until the reign of Diocletian.<sup>87</sup>

### **Religious**

The final context needed to understand Tertullian and Cyprian’s works is the religious context of Roman North Africa. Given the polytheistic nature of Roman religion, any statements regarding the work of the Holy Spirit had to be carefully distinguished from the culture’s syncretistic religious beliefs.

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<sup>84</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 242. See also Rives, *Religion and Authority*, 252–3; W.H.C. Frend, “Persecutions: Genesis and Legacy,” in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 1, ed. Margaret M. Mitchell et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 515–6.

<sup>85</sup> Frend, “Martyrdom and Political Oppression,” 829.

<sup>86</sup> Frend, “Martyrdom and Political Oppression,” 830.

<sup>87</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 246–9.

## Religious Cults

As both a Roman and a Punic city, Carthage had a wide array of religious cults prior to the arrival of Christianity. Rives observes that “even before the arrival of the Romans, a mix of Libyan, Punic, and Greek deities and practices” existed within Carthage.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, Judaism had a “small but thriving community” in the city by 200.<sup>89</sup> When the city was reestablished under Roman rule, the Romans introduced to these other religious cults the worship of the Capitoline Triad, as well as the imperial cult.<sup>90</sup> This new worship was not imposed upon the former inhabitants of Carthage as a Roman-required religion, but rather was already a part of the Roman settlers’ system of worship. Furthermore, the Romans did not impose one particular form of worship to the exclusion of all other religious cults, but rather asked the inhabitants of Carthage to add the Roman cults to their worship practices in addition to their current cults. In some cases, these cults remained distinct, while in others, the various deities began to merge together. One example of this merger was Carthage’s patron deity, for “Carthage’s patron deity had metamorphosed from the Punic goddess Tanit into the Romano-African goddess Caelestis.”<sup>91</sup> In order to keep up with these various cults, as well as promote the public religion, local magistrates and colleges of priests were assigned the task of promoting and guiding public religion.<sup>92</sup>

Alongside the various religious cults, the imperial cult was required for all inhabitants of the empire. Rives suggests that “perhaps the most important addition to the *sacra publica* of Carthage, and certainly the most relevant to issues of authority, is [the]

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<sup>88</sup> Rives, *Religion and Authority*, 15.

<sup>89</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 231.

<sup>90</sup> Rives, *Religion and Authority*, 39.

<sup>91</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 231.

<sup>92</sup> Rives, *Religion and Authority*, 28–39.



imperial cult.”<sup>93</sup> The imperial cult encompassed a number of features, including local dedications to various deities “*pro salute Imperatoris*,” the creation of images encouraging piety throughout the empire, and sacrifices to the *genius* of the emperor, all with the notion that in sacrificing to the imperial cult, one was asking the gods to bless the emperor, and through him, the world.<sup>94</sup> For this reason, in the Roman government’s eyes, participation in the imperial cult was viewed as a sign of loyalty to the empire, and refusal to participate implied a lack of loyalty or even outright treasonous feelings toward the emperor and the empire. This perspective became especially pronounced under the Decian persecution, for Christians refusing to participate in the imperial cult were punished for their undermining of traditional Roman religion.<sup>95</sup>

### **Roman Views of “Spirit”**

Particularly relevant to this dissertation is the Roman conception of the “spirit” of the gods, for understanding the Roman view highlights the radically different emphasis on the Holy Spirit by Tertullian and Cyprian in the following chapters. For the Romans, emphasis on the “spirit” of the gods occurred in two areas: the *lares* of the household and crossroads, and the *genius* of the emperor. James Jeffers identifies the *lares* as “good spirits associated with certain localities and worshiped at crossroads,” as well as those spirits associated with the “luck of the family.”<sup>96</sup> Ferguson similarly describes the *lares* as the “watchful, protective spirits of the family and household.”<sup>97</sup> These *lares* were given a shrine near the entrance of every Roman home, and in these shrines would be images or

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<sup>93</sup> Rives, *Religion and Authority*, 51. See also Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 231.

<sup>94</sup> For a fuller discussion of the imperial cult, see Rives, *Religion and Authority*, 51–63.

<sup>95</sup> The controversy regarding the *lapsi* caused by this mandate to engage in the imperial cult was at the forefront of Cyprian’s ministry for most of his tenure as bishop.

<sup>96</sup> James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 95.

<sup>97</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 180.

paintings portraying the *lares*, as well as a small altar where various offerings would be given to these protective spirits. Meanwhile, the inscriptions to the *lares* at various crossroads was a recognition and dedication to the spirits asking for protection for travelers, but also for those slaves or freedmen who had no other religious cults in which to belong.<sup>98</sup> Although public religion was often a mere external show of devotion to the traditional gods and lacked any true dedication on the part of the individual, these household spirits received a much more personal form of worship, as being intimately tied to a particular family rather than the empire generally.

In addition to the *lares*, the Roman people worshiped the *genius* of the gods, and later the *genius* of the emperor. The Romans believed the *genius* “referred to the life principle (a kind of *numen*) of the family, especially as embodied in its head. The *genius* was the procreative force of a person.”<sup>99</sup> The *genius* was sometimes identified as a protective spirit or guardian spirit watching over an individual, and it could either be individual or corporate. The personal *genius* of an individual was often simply acknowledged, but not revered, save in the case of the *genius* of the *pater familias* of the household. Often the *genius* of the *pater familias* would be worshiped alongside the *lares*, with a serpent serving as the common image of the *genius*.<sup>100</sup>

Worship of the *genius* transitioned from a personal act to a public act of worship when Augustus tied the imperial cult to the worship of his *genius*. Knowing that Romans would have been hesitant to worship a man, Augustus instead decreed that “Romans should worship not himself but only his *genius*, the divine spirit that presided over his life and from which his power emanated ... [as] simply an extension of the traditional Roman concept that the members of a Roman household were to offer incense

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<sup>98</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 180–81.

<sup>99</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 171.

<sup>100</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 171, 180–81.

to the *genius* of the head of the household.”<sup>101</sup> Thus, Romans could take comfort in knowing that they were still worshipping something divine, for by worshipping the *genius* of the emperor, they were worshipping that spirit which guarded and guided him.

Christians could not offer this worship to the *genius* of the emperor, however, for they recognized that their engagement in the imperial cult was idolatry. Wilhite observes that in the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*, “Speratus and the others refuse [to offer sacrifices to the emperor’s *genius*], knowing that to swear by or offer sacrifices to someone’s *genius* is to acknowledge that person as a *dominus* or lord.”<sup>102</sup> Later, the Decian persecution offered the same temptation, and Cyprian was adamant that in offering incense to the emperor’s *genius*, a person had denied Christ as Lord.

### **State of Christianity**

In this religious context, Christianity sought to exist and thrive both in Carthage and throughout North Africa. When Christianity arrived in North Africa, Merdinger observes that the “topography of Africa Proconsularis proved to be especially conducive for missionizing.”<sup>103</sup> Christian missionaries could travel easily between coastal cities and those cities on major highways, but contrary to the rugged terrain of much of Numidia and the Mauretaniae, Africa Proconsularis was a largely flat plain with a major river running through it. As a result, the soil was rich and fertile for growing wheat, and hundreds of small towns and villages sprung up across the plain, making the distance between towns a mere few kilometers on average.<sup>104</sup> This topography and the presence of so many communities allowed the gospel to spread quickly from town to town across the province.

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<sup>101</sup> Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 101.

<sup>102</sup> Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, 91.

<sup>103</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 232.

<sup>104</sup> Merdinger, “Roman North Africa,” 232.

Although scholars largely agree that Christianity spread rapidly upon arriving in North Africa, they disagree regarding the number of Christians present in Carthage. In his study of Christianity in North Africa, Tabbernee has suggested a more conservative figure of about five to twelve hundred Christians in Carthage around the year 200, though Keith Hopkins has suggested a larger figure between five and ten thousand.<sup>105</sup> By the time of Cyprian's council in 256, however, his writings and the council proceedings identify over one hundred bishoprics. Since not all of the bishops in North Africa corresponded with or fellowshipped with Cyprian, Merdinger has estimated from that number that North Africa may have contained around 150 bishops at that time.<sup>106</sup> Yet even if her estimation is incorrect, the presence of over one hundred bishops in North Africa a half-century after the numbers suggested by Tabbernee or Hopkins suggests the substantial growth of Christianity throughout these provinces.

### **Practice of Christianity**

This significant growth in the number of Christians also affected certain practices among the Carthaginian Christians.<sup>107</sup> During Tertullian's time, the churches originally assembled in wealthier members' homes, and such homes were remodeled to provide more space as their numbers grew. The faithful believers would be gathered together in one room of the house, while any other attendees would be required to sit in an adjoining vestibule, as they were not yet a part of the community.<sup>108</sup> Tertullian noted

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<sup>105</sup> William Tabbernee, "To Pardon or Not to Pardon? North African Montanism and the Forgiveness of Sins," *Studia Patristica* 36 (2001): 380–81n23; Keith Hopkins, "Christian Number and Its Implications," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 202.

<sup>106</sup> Merdinger, "Roman North Africa," 241.

<sup>107</sup> This section will only provide an extremely brief overview of the practice of North African Christianity to set it in its Carthaginian context. For an excellent and detailed study of the North African development of the major Christian practices of baptism, the Eucharist, penance, the clergy, marital practices, death rituals, and other aspects of holy living, see Burns and Jensen's *Christianity in Roman Africa*.

<sup>108</sup> Merdinger, "Roman North Africa," 235.

with some frustration that the Christians' neighbors knew of these meetings, for the Christians were often attacked or obstructed by their neighbors as the Christians attempted to meet together for worship.<sup>109</sup> Yet this opposition did not ultimately prevent them from gathering together, and Tertullian recounted the Christians' regular practice of joining together to partake of the Eucharist, observe baptisms, and worship the Lord together.

By the time Cyprian was appointed as bishop, the Carthaginian church had grown and developed a more identifiable structure. Although Cyprian now had a pulpit and altar, nevertheless the church remained in house churches throughout the third century.<sup>110</sup> Within the church, the leaders were divided into the following seven hierarchical positions: bishop, priests, deacons, subdeacons, acolytes, lectors, and exorcists.<sup>111</sup> While Cyprian was the leader of all of the Carthaginian Christians as the bishop, each of the other positions helped serve and guide the Christian community. The priests' primary duties were teaching and instructing new believers through catechesis, but they also celebrated the Eucharist and reconciled penitents when the bishop was absent. Meanwhile, the deacons handled all of the finances of the congregation and also distributed food to those in need or in prison. By this point in the Carthaginian church's development, the church was even able to pay the higher-ranking clergy a monthly stipend to allow them to devote themselves fully to their work among the people.<sup>112</sup> Yet these ranks did not mean that the higher-level clergy were far removed from the people to whom they ministered, for Cyprian himself ministered to many of the citizens of Carthage who were perishing during the plague. Thus, even as the practice of

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<sup>109</sup> Tertullian, *Ad Nationes* 1.7.

<sup>110</sup> Merdinger, "Roman North Africa," 242.

<sup>111</sup> Merdinger, "Roman North Africa," 241–2.

<sup>112</sup> Merdinger, "Roman North Africa," 241–2; see also Cyprian, *Letter* 39.5.2.

Carthaginian Christianity had developed into a more identifiable structure, it was still a minority and subversive movement during the early third century, and it would remain so until the legalization of Christianity in the early fourth century.

### **Conclusion**

The examination of these various contexts of Roman Carthage provides insights into the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian. Recognizing that these fathers belonged to the upper classes of society on account of their wealth and education provides a deeper understanding of their wholehearted devotion to Christianity through their rejection of their worldly status. Meanwhile, the philosophical context provides the intellectual world from which these fathers came, which gives a richer depth to the Stoic terminology and styles used in their writings, even as Tertullian and Cyprian sought to redefine these terms within their Christian context. Finally, the complex political and religious contexts of third-century Carthage give the reader a window through which to see better the challenges facing the early Carthaginian church. These Carthaginian Christians were despised by their culture and targeted by the government, so that they experienced an array of persecution even as they sought to love their fellow citizens and share a message of salvation. By examining and understanding the range of contexts in which Tertullian and Cyprian lived and ministered, their writings come alive with a new vibrancy as the reader now sees how these fathers sought to present a unique and different worldview than the one from which they came when they embraced the faith.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE SPIRIT'S ACTIVITY IN TERTULLIAN'S PRE-MONTANIST WORKS

In his work *Defending Christ*, Nicholas Thomas writes, “The magnitude of [Tertullian was] arguably unsurpassed in Latin Christianity before Augustine of Hippo.”<sup>1</sup> Yet this important and influential Latin Father has too often been characterized more negatively, leading many scholars to dismiss the majority of his influence on account of his personality and writing style.<sup>2</sup> F. C. Klawiter notes the tension when he describes him as having an “explosive personality”<sup>3</sup> or “pugnacious personality.”<sup>4</sup> B. Nisters more negatively, though memorably, argues that “Tertullian was not quite a psychopath, though paranoid!”<sup>5</sup> These judgments miss his brilliance as a defender of the Christian faith and theologian of the Trinity. Pierre de Labriolle provides a helpful contrast when he notes, “admiration found its way through censures and scandalized looks. And it was for Tertullian’s knowledge that it was especially felt ... what prodigious erudition!”<sup>6</sup> He

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas L. Thomas, *Defending Christ: The Latin Apologists Before Augustine*, *Studia Traditionis Theologiae* 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 103.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the reception of Tertullian throughout history, see Gerald Lewis Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God: Perspectives on the Theology of Tertullian*, in *New Foundations Theological Library* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), 8–31.

<sup>3</sup> F.C. Klawiter, “The New Prophecy in Early Christianity: The Origin, Nature and Development of Montanism AD 165–220” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1975), 248n2.

<sup>4</sup> Klawiter, “The New Prophecy,” 280.

<sup>5</sup> I am indebted to Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority, and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 68, for this translation of B. Nisters, *Tertullian. Seine Persönlichkeit und sein Schicksal*, Münster, 1950, 114. Trevett agrees with Nisters, stating that he may be right about his critique of Tertullian.

<sup>6</sup> Pierre de Labriolle, *History and Literature of Christianity from Tertullian to Boethius* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1924), 57. Labriolle also provides a list of several others who praised Tertullian’s knowledge including Jerome and Vincent of Lerins.

proceeds to discuss Tertullian's competence in philosophy, language, physiology, law, rhetoric, and literature, before culminating with his knowledge of the Scriptures.

Tertullian masterfully used all of the Scriptures to defend the faith with great facility. Robert Sider observes, "One of the first characteristics to strike the reader of Tertullian is his abundant use of Scripture in argument."<sup>7</sup> Across the body of his works, Tertullian "quoted, interpreted, and paraphrased with so much aptness and stubborn desire to convince" that he referenced almost every book of the Scriptures and only rarely misquoted any text of Scripture, even though he quoted primarily from memory.<sup>8</sup> Geoffrey Dunn similarly wrote, "there is barely a chapter in Tertullian that is not a discussion about the proper interpretation of a binding scriptural passage, even though he did not write exegetical commentary as such."<sup>9</sup> When using the Scriptures in his works, Tertullian frequently seemed to translate the Greek text into Latin himself, but when an Old Latin version of the text was available, he made occasional use of the existing Latin translations, emending the Latin texts where he felt they were poor translations.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Dick Sider, *Ancient Rhetoric and the Art of Tertullian* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 8.

<sup>8</sup> Labriolle, *History and Literature*, 58. Labriolle claimed that Tertullian possessed the entirety of the Old Testament in the Alexandrine canon, and the only four books of the New Testament to which he does not make a reference are 2 Pet, 2 John, 3 John, and Jas. Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian* (London: Routledge, 2004), 19, believes a few additional books were missed, so that the texts not mentioned were Ruth, Obad, 1 Chr, Esth, 2 John, and 3 John, but Dunn does not include 2 Pet or Jas in the list of works not cited. Dunn also noted that Tertullian was willing to use certain apocryphal or deuterocanonical works such as *Enoch*, though he was careful to distinguish between the Scriptures and merely helpful works. See also Angus John Brockhurst Higgins, "The Latin text of Luke in Marcion and Tertullian," *Vigiliae Christianae* 5, no. 1 (January 1951): 3. Higgins remarks that Tertullian quotes "very freely and from memory."

<sup>9</sup> Dunn, *Tertullian*, 23.

<sup>10</sup> Dunn, *Tertullian*, 20–21; see also Thomas P. O'Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible: Language, Imagery, Exegesis, Latinitas Christianorum Primaeva; Studia Ad Sermonem Latinum Christianum Pertinentia*, fasc. 21 (Nijmegen, Netherlands: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1967), 2, 62, who argues that Tertullian must have engaged with the Latin text at some points; in contrast, see Higgins, "The Latin text," 3, following G. J. D. Aalders' earlier position from *Tertullianus' Gitaten uit de Evangelien en de Oud-Latijnsche Bijbel-vertalingen* (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1932), 116, 200, that Tertullian relied almost exclusively on the Greek, with which he was extremely familiar, but was also familiar with the Old Latin versions, thus accounting for both the similarities and differences between Tertullian's translations and the Old Latin texts. For a full treatment of the Old Latin texts and manuscript evidence, see H.A.G. Houghton, *The Latin New Testament: A Guide to Its Early History, Texts, and Manuscripts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).



Additionally, Tertullian relied heavily on the rule of faith held by the late second-century Carthaginian church for his theological formulations, which he viewed as the necessary boundary markers for anyone wishing to remain within the church. Furthermore, Tertullian was not content merely to mention another individual's understanding of a subject, instead frequently reading secular writers and the works of heretics so that he was better able to defend Christianity, and often using his opponents' own words against them in his argument.<sup>11</sup>

While Tertullian was certainly a vigorous defender of the faith, an aspect of his writings far too often overlooked is his emphasis on the Spirit's activity in the church and the lives of individual Christians. When the question of Tertullian's view on the Spirit arises, the vast number of scholars move immediately to his Trinitarian formulations in his later work *Against Praxeas*, as well as other works from his Montanist period. They discuss the nature of the Spirit's divinity, the particular language used by Tertullian of the Spirit, and the importance of this language for the history of Western theological formation. However, two major lacunae jump out to the reader who has even a cursory familiarity with Tertullian's works—the lack of focus on the Spirit's activity and the dismissal of his pre-Montanist works in any discussion of the Spirit.<sup>12</sup> While Tertullian

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<sup>11</sup> Jean Daniélou, *The Origins of Latin Christianity, A History of Early Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicaea*, vol. 3 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977), 211.

<sup>12</sup> See for example Timothy David Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Daniélou, *The Origins of Latin Christianity*; Eric Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Additionally, upon examining the papers presented on Tertullian at the International Conference on Patristics held in Oxford across a twenty year period, only a couple even mentioned pre-Montanist works, and those that did still failed to give attention to the work of the Spirit. The one exception is the Spirit's work in baptism on account of Tertullian's treatise *De Baptismo*, but even with that work scholars still largely dismiss his pre-Montanist works. In Andreas J. Köstenberger and Gregg R. Allison, *The Holy Spirit, Theology for the People of God* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 8, the authors argue, "It is certainly not the case that, throughout these theological developments of the person and work of the Father, and the person and work of the Son, the church completely ignored the person and work of the third member of the Trinity." Rather, Allison explains that the controversies regarding the Father and Son in the history of the church necessarily required focus on those two members of the Trinity, yet such attention was rarely seen toward the Spirit until recent years. However, in his own work, he too skips over Tertullian, only mentioning this influential early father twice.

was clearer concerning his pneumatology in his Montanist works than earlier works, his pre-Montanist works still abound with discussions of the Spirit's activity.

### **Tertullian's Life**

Before examining Tertullian's writings, one must first understand the background from which he wrote. Though the years of his birth and death are unknown, most scholars affirm that Tertullian lived in the late second to early third century, writing the majority of his works between the years 195–220 in Carthage, the prominent intellectual and cultural center of North Africa. In his work *De Viris Illustribus*, Jerome wrote that Tertullian was the son of a Roman centurion, a presbyter in the Carthaginian church, and lived to a "decrepit old age."<sup>13</sup> This traditional understanding of Tertullian has been strongly challenged in recent scholarship by the work of Timothy David Barnes. In his seminal work on the subject, Barnes systematically works through patristic references to Tertullian, especially those of Jerome, and dismisses them as either conflating this Tertullian with another individual or, in the case of Jerome, simply being mistaken. Barnes proposes that scholars cannot accurately know much regarding Tertullian's life, though he does affirm that Tertullian was a lay elder in the church at Carthage who clearly had some form of advanced education as seen by his intelligent writing filled with its allusions and wit.<sup>14</sup> While many scholars have accepted Barnes' critiques, Éric Rebillard does qualify Barnes' claims regarding Tertullian's status in the church. Rebillard instead argued, "Because Tertullian, in at least one text, clearly includes himself among the clergy, I see no reason to reject the information given by Jerome, and I accept that Tertullian was a presbyter. Such status would also have lent him more

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<sup>13</sup> Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, trans. Thomas P. Halton, in *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 100 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 74–5.

<sup>14</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 1–59.

legitimacy when addressing Christians on pastoral and disciplinary matters.”<sup>15</sup> While Rebillard’s assertion does warrant consideration, most scholars continue to follow Barnes.

Since the historical record is so limited, one of the most significant questions scholars remain divided on is the question of Tertullian’s affinities in his later years, with some calling Tertullian a Montanist while others claim he was merely sympathetic to the Montanist movement. While the question of Tertullian’s Montanism will be taken up in greater detail in the following chapter, most scholars recognize his involvement with Montanism, to whatever extent that may be, to have begun around 207 or 208, though Barnes does tentatively push that date back to 206.<sup>16</sup> For this reason, the remainder of this chapter will be limited to a discussion of Tertullian’s works believed to have been written prior to 207/8.

### **Disputed Chronology**

Tracing any chronology of Tertullian’s works is an arduous task due to the paucity of biographical information. The traditional chronology as found in the *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina II, has in turn relied upon the work of Adolf von Harnack and P. Monceaux.<sup>17</sup> However, Barnes has offered a different order upon his review of all the evidence afresh, and while his new chronology is still debated, several scholars have

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<sup>15</sup> Éric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200–450 CE* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 10.

<sup>16</sup> The following chapter will provide a more detailed discussion of Tertullian’s engagement with Montanism, but a few sources that support this engagement, to whatever extent, are listed here. For Tertullian as sympathetic to Montanism but not a Montanist, see Gerald Lewis Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God*, 55–63. For an argument that he was an orthodox Christian and also a Montanist, see Barnes, *Tertullian*, 130–42; see also Trevett, *Montanism*, 68–9; Jaroslav Pelikan, “Montanism and its Trinitarian Significance,” *Church History* 25, no. 2 (June 1956): 104–5. For the argument that he joined a heretical sect and became a heretic himself, see Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*; see also Thomas P. O’Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible*.

<sup>17</sup> *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina II, 1627–28. This collection in turn quotes Adolf von Harnack, *Die Chronologie der Altchristlichen Litteratur*, II, Leipzig, 1904, 256–296 and P. Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l’Afrique chrétienne* I, Paris, 1901.

accepted it, including this dissertation. Rejecting the earlier views of Monceaux, Barnes proposed his chronology based on the following four criteria: allusions to historical events, internal references to earlier writings, doctrinal developments, and style.<sup>18</sup> These criteria are accompanied and supported by the revised approach given above to understanding Tertullian's biography by departing from several traditional assertions.

For the purposes of this dissertation, the exact chronology of each work is not vital to understanding Tertullian's views on the Spirit's activity. Rather, this dissertation will divide Tertullian's works into those written prior to his engagement with Montanism and those written during his engagement with Montanism. Thus, in this chapter, the following pre-Montanist works will be examined: *De Spectaculis*, *De Idololatria*, *De Cultu Feminarum*, *Ad Nationes*, *Adversus Iudaeos*, *Ad Martyras*, *Apologeticum*, *De Testimonio Animae*, *De Baptismo*, *De Oratione*, *De Paenitentia*, *De Patientia*, *Ad Uxorem*, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, *Scorpiace*, *Adversus Hermogenem*, and *De Pallio*.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Spirit's Activity in Tertullian's Pre-Montanist Works**

The person and work of the Holy Spirit was one of Tertullian's major areas of focus throughout his life, and in his later Montanist period, he would go on to define some of the grammar still used by the Western Church to speak about the Trinity. However, even in his earlier works, the Spirit's activity played a major role in his thinking, and in almost all of his pre-Montanist works, Tertullian mentioned the Spirit's

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<sup>18</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 30–56. This dissertation does take into consideration Barnes' own revision of his chronology offered in his brief postscript at the end of his 1985 edition of the work.

<sup>19</sup> Of these works, Tertullian does not make any reference to the Spirit's activity in *Ad Nationes*, *De Testimonio Animae*, or *De Pallio*, so these works will not appear in the following discussion. Regarding *De Carne Christi*, Barnes proposed either a late pre-Montanist date or extremely early in Tertullian's Montanist period, due to its connection with *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*, while the traditional chronology has classified it as a Montanist work. For this dissertation, the work will be considered in the following chapter as a work at the very beginning of Tertullian's Montanist period, rather than a late pre-Montanist work.

work in varying degrees of depth.<sup>20</sup> For Tertullian, the Spirit's activity could be seen in his work of inspiration, anointing, giving gifts, strengthening and training believers, salvation, and baptism. In all of these areas of emphasis, Tertullian sought to understand the Spirit's work through the dual lens of the Scriptures and the *regula fidei*.

### **Tertullian's Interpretive Principles**

Given the importance of the Scriptures to Tertullian's arguments, a brief discussion on his interpretive methods will prove useful moving forward. Since Tertullian's writings were occasional in nature, he never developed a commentary or systematized his interpretive principles. Yet this lack of such a work does not necessitate a lack of general interpretive principles. Though his interpretations were often focused toward the refutation of a heresy or false teaching, the two overarching principles he used were the rule of faith, discussed in greater detail below, and his emphasis on finding the *sensus vocabulorum* in each of his interpretations of Scripture.<sup>21</sup> For Tertullian, those interpretations that most honor the *sensus vocabulorum* were "*definitionibus certis et simplicibus habent sensum*"<sup>22</sup> in the majority of instances. J.H. Waszink notes that one of Tertullian's leading principles was "the continuous endeavor to exclude by all means arbitrariness from interpretation," since for Tertullian, "the aim is certitude, and the certitude based upon truth has, according to Tertullian's conviction, two main qualities: it

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<sup>20</sup> Contra Claire Stegman, "The Development of Tertullian's Doctrine of *Spiritus Sanctus*," (PhD diss., Southern Methodist University, 1979). Stegman argued that none of Tertullian's mentions of the Spirit prior to his later Montanist works, and particularly *Adversus Praxean*, actually referred to the Holy Spirit. Rather, she called Tertullian binatarian in his understanding of God. However, this view fails to take account of Tertullian's regular mentions of the Holy Spirit as personal and working in his pre-Montanist works, as will be shown in the remainder of the chapter.

<sup>21</sup>"Sense of the word." J.H. Waszink, "Tertullian's Principles and Methods of Exegesis," in *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition: In Honorem Robert M. Grant*, ed. Robert M. Grant, Robert M. Williams R. Schoedel, and Robert Louis Wilken, *Théologie Historique* 53 (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1979), 28.

<sup>22</sup>"Certain definitions and [definitions] having a clear sense." This insight was drawn from Ernest Evans' introductory discussion of Tertullian's interpretive principles across his corpus in Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean Liber: Tertullian's Treatise against Praxeas*, trans. Ernest Evans (London: S.P.C.K., 1948), 103.

is concise, and it is simple.”<sup>23</sup> This dedication to clear communication was necessary in both Tertullian’s polemicism and doctrinal formation. As he sought to refute heretics, he was forced to clearly define all of his terms so that his arguments were perfectly clear and able to avoid being twisted by the heretics. Yet even more important was his need to clearly communicate doctrine free from any confusion. As he made theological arguments, he often went to great lengths to repeat the same argument worded slightly differently in an endeavor to remain abundantly clear in his doctrinal formulations.

Tertullian’s emphasis on the *sensus vocabulorum*, though important, at the same time must not overshadow his rhetorical emphasis. Dunn notes that the Tertullian was a skilled orator, and while his texts were not originally speeches put to paper, “his treatises were written as though they could be delivered as set speeches.”<sup>24</sup> Tertullian’s purpose in using rhetorical devices in his works was to achieve the highest goal of rhetoric, namely, persuasion of the audience. Additionally, in an oral society where literacy was quite limited, “the oratorical qualities of Tertullian’s writing ought not be overlooked.”<sup>25</sup> This understanding of Tertullian’s works helps the reader better understand both the structure of his arguments and the interpretive methods he employed when quoting the Scriptures. Rather than writing systematic treatises, he was writing with a goal to convince his audience of a particular point, and thus all of his interpretations were guided toward a particular end. Dunn colorfully described his method saying, “in every instance Tertullian wrote in order to win arguments. He did not describe, he advocated. It was his overall position about which he was passionate; everything else was

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<sup>23</sup> Waszink, “Tertullian’s Principles,” 19. For support of each quality, see respectively Gottfried Zimmermann’s dissertation *Die hermeneutischen Prinzipien Tertullians* (Leipzig: n.p., 1937) and O’Malley, 117. In his work *Théologie Trinitaire De Tertullien*, Théologie, 68–70, 75 (Paris: Aubier, 1966), Joseph Moingt also notes Tertullian’s attention to the sense of the word and need for clarity when he asserts, “car sauver la lettre, c’est sauvegarder les réalités de la foi” (because to save the letter is to safeguard the realities of faith) 1.177.

<sup>24</sup> Dunn, *Tertullian*, 27.

<sup>25</sup> Dunn, *Tertullian*, 28.

merely there to prove the point.”<sup>26</sup> In this understanding of Tertullian’s work, interpretive principles might change from work to work in order to advance his position best, and weak arguments might be advocated that he personally did not embrace fully but helped to advance the point.

While Dunn’s work helpfully brings out the importance of understanding Tertullian’s rhetorical emphases and structure, Tertullian’s emphasis on the *sensus vocabulorum* and rule of faith must not be forgotten. Tertullian certainly did write with a goal of persuading his audience in mind, and as a result some of his statements throughout his works can seem contradictory at first glance. This goal, however, did not lead him simply to interpret the Scriptures in whatever way best supported his point, for the Scriptures were to serve as the basis for doctrine, not merely as ornamentation. Rather, for Tertullian, the rule of faith set the boundaries of interpretation, and those boundaries combined with his desire to understand the texts of Scripture in their straightforward sense led him then to apply the teachings of Scripture to their greatest rhetorical extent to convince his audience of the truth.

### **Rule of Faith**

The church’s rule of faith or *regula fidei* would guide Tertullian’s writings throughout his life, but in his pre-Montanist works, the role of this rule of faith was far more evident.<sup>27</sup> Tomas Bokedal has argued that the rule of faith used by figures such as Tertullian and Irenaeus was developed in close association with the baptismal rites and pre-baptismal teachings of the first- and second-century church. The early church used this *regula fidei* to respond to questions raised by new believers as well as critiques made

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<sup>26</sup> Dunn, *Tertullian*, 29.

<sup>27</sup> Though Tertullian later provided the rule of faith again in his work *De Virginibus Velandis* 1, he was primarily repeating his earlier argument already made in detail in *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*.

from outside opponents. As a distilled summary of the apostolic teachings and the teachings of Scripture, the *regula fidei* provided the limits within which any future interpretation of the Scriptures and subsequent teaching must remain in order to be called Christian.<sup>28</sup>

Tertullian served as one of the earliest witnesses to the existence of this important rule of faith.<sup>29</sup> Tertullian described the rule in *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 19 where he wrote, “for only where the true Christian teaching and faith are evident will the true Scriptures, the true interpretations, and all the true Christian traditions be found.”<sup>30</sup> By this statement, Tertullian was not trying to subordinate the Scriptures to the rule of faith; rather, he believed that the rule of faith served as the proper hermeneutic to understand the Scriptures, God, and all of Christianity, since this rule was directly descended from the apostles and Christ himself. He went on to argue that the heretics whose interpretations fell outside this rule of faith revealed themselves to be unbelievers by their failure to remain within the bounds established by the *regula fidei*.<sup>31</sup>

Tertullian’s adherence to this rule of faith, especially prior to his interaction with Montanism, is of immense importance for the study of his pneumatological beliefs, for his beliefs arose out of the confessed faith of the early church. In this period of his life, Tertullian’s writings were defenses of Christianity and works on particular Christian doctrines, all based upon this common confession of the church that he felt rightly guided his interpretation of the Scriptures. One particular phrase especially influenced his

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<sup>28</sup> For a fuller treatment of the rule of faith in the early church see Tomas Bokedal, “The Rule of Faith: Tracing Its Origins,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 7, no. 2 (2013): 233–255. For a discussion of the rule of faith across the corpus of Tertullian’s works, see also Eric Francis Osborn, “Reason and the Rule of Faith in the Second Century AD” in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, edited by Henry Chadwick and Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 40–57.

<sup>29</sup> Bokedal, “Rule of Faith,” 234. According to Bokedal, the other two significant early witnesses were Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria.

<sup>30</sup> Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 19.

<sup>31</sup> Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 27.



thinking on the work of the Spirit. In quoting his understanding of the rule he wrote that Jesus, “was caught up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father; that he sent in his place the power of the Holy Spirit to guide believers . . . This rule [was] taught (as it will be proved) by Christ.”<sup>32</sup>

For Tertullian, that small phrase “sent in his place the power of the Holy Spirit to guide believers” was instrumental in understanding the divine work of the Holy Spirit. Though the Carthaginian church in which Tertullian was active affirmed the deity of the Holy Spirit, as evidenced in their baptismal formula and rule of faith, over a period of approximately ten years prior to his involvement with Montanism, Tertullian sought to help the church understand the work of the Spirit in a far greater level of detail. Starting with an affirmation of the Spirit’s deity in the rule of faith, by examining the multitude of ways in which the Spirit leads believers, Tertullian showed that the Spirit’s divinity could be most easily observed through his divine work in the life of the church and her members.

### **Inspiration and Prophecy**

In Tertullian’s pre-Montanist works, one of the largest emphases he gave was to the Spirit’s role in inspiration and prophecy. Tertullian traced the Spirit’s role of inspiration by looking at the Scriptures, the prophets, the Apostles, and the Spirit as the Vicar of Christ.

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<sup>32</sup> Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 13. The full text of his rule of faith reads, “The Rule of Faith—to state here and now what we maintain—is of course that by which we believe that there is but one God, who is none other than the Creator of the world, who produced everything from nothing through his Word, sent forth before all things; that this Word is called his Son, and in the Name of God was seen in diverse ways by the patriarchs, was ever heard in the prophets and finally was brought down by the Spirit and Power of God the Father into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in her womb, was born of her and lived as Jesus Christ; who thereafter proclaimed a new law and a new promise of the kingdom of heaven, worked miracles, was crucified, on the third day rose again, was caught up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father; that he sent in his place the power of the Holy Spirit to guide believers; that he will come with glory to take the saints up into the fruition of the life eternal and the heavenly promises and to judge the wicked to everlasting fire, after the resurrection of both good and evil with the restoration of their flesh. This Rule, taught (as will be proved) by Christ, allows of no questions among us, except those which heresies introduce and which make heretics.”

**Scripture.** For Tertullian, the rule of the faith discussed above was authoritative largely because it was drawn from the words of the Scriptures, which were inspired by the Holy Spirit. In the *Apologeticum*, one of Tertullian's earliest works, he wrote:

But, in order that we might more fully and more energetically approach God Himself as well as His designs and desires, He has added the assistance of books, in case one wishes to search for God ... [written by] men He filled with the Holy Spirit that they might teach that there is but one God who made the universe and formed man from the earth.<sup>33</sup>

This statement in the *Apologeticum* shows the Holy Spirit to be both the author of Scripture and fully God, as there is only the one God. Tertullian affirmed the Spirit's inspiration of Scripture more clearly a few chapters later when he wrote regarding the Scriptures that "the same Spirit animates" all the prophetic utterances and fulfillments of prophecy.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, his work *De Oratione* on the Lord's prayer stated that the apostle Paul was "led by that same Spirit by which ... all Scripture, was compiled."<sup>35</sup> The context for his statement in *De Oratione* 22 was a lengthy discussion of the proper attitude and dress of women, and particularly virgins, in prayer. In this chapter defending his view that virgins ought to be veiled, Tertullian pointed out that the same language used in Genesis 2 regarding Eve prior to her being intimate with Adam was also used by Paul in 1 Corinthians to refer to women generally in such a way that virgins were also included. Yet for Tertullian, this similarity of language was to be expected, since the same Spirit who divinely authored the Scriptures inspired both the writer of Genesis and Paul. These passages show that in Tertullian's understanding of Scripture, the Spirit is the one who inspired the Scriptures through his work in men. This task is one uniquely suited

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<sup>33</sup> Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 18.

<sup>34</sup> Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 20. See also Tertullian, *De Cultu Feminarum* 1.3.

<sup>35</sup> Tertullian, *De Oratione* 22.

for the Spirit, for the Father sends the Spirit to tell his revelation and the revelation of the coming of the Son, yet also the proclamation that there is only one God.

The way in which Tertullian understood the Spirit to be speaking the words of the Father and declaring the revelation of the Son was a method some scholars call prosopological exegesis.<sup>36</sup> Mark DelCogliano noted that this form of exegesis was able “to identify the one speaking, the one spoken to, and the one spoken about in a particular passage ... each of which was recognized as a *prosopon* or *persona*, that is, a distinct character in the narrative.”<sup>37</sup> Applying the method to the early church, Michael Slusser characterized this form of exegesis as, “a method of literary and grammatical analysis of Scripture that provided the early Christian thinkers with a way to talk about God in a Trinitarian fashion.”<sup>38</sup> Slusser thus asserted that for Tertullian, “The Spirit is the source of all the utterances of Scripture, even those in which the Father or the Word express themselves ‘in their own person.’”<sup>39</sup> For Tertullian, this method allowed him to see “traces of divine conversation” throughout the Scriptures, particularly in the Old Testament prophetic passages concerning the Trinity or Incarnation. While this method had been practiced by Justin and Irenaeus prior to Tertullian to a certain degree, in

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<sup>36</sup> This term was not used by Tertullian but has been coined by scholars to discuss the nature of his method, and scholars still debate the proper term to use when discussing this method. For a thorough treatment of this method, see Matthew Bates’ work *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God, and Spirit in New Testament and Early Christian Interpretations of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). See also Kyle Hughes, “The Spirit Speaks: Pneumatological Innovation in the Scriptural Exegesis of Justin and Tertullian,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 69, no. 6 (November 2015): 463–83. Another possible name for this method of exegesis is prosopographical, in which the speakers of a text are identified, rather than focusing on the speakers themselves. For a critique of prosopological exegesis, see Peter J. Gentry, “A Preliminary Evaluation and Critique of Prosopological Exegesis,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 23, no. 2 (Sum 2019): 105–22.

<sup>37</sup> Mark DelCogliano, “The interpretation of John 10:30 in the third century: antimonarchian polemics and the rise of grammatical reading techniques,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 6, no. 1 (2012): 119–20.

<sup>38</sup> Michael Slusser, “The Exegetical Roots of Trinitarian Theology,” *Theological Studies* 49, no. 3 (September 1988): 475.

<sup>39</sup> Slusser, “Exegetical Roots,” 476. Köstenberger and Allison, *The Holy Spirit*, 211–3, argue that the role of speaking can be helpfully understood as being appropriated to the Holy Spirit, without denying the inseparable operations of the Trinity.

Tertullian's writing it became a powerful tool to show the unity of the Trinity through the Spirit's work in the entire canon of Scripture.<sup>40</sup> Through his inspiration of Scripture, and in particular his revelation of the intra-Trinitarian dialogues seen by means of prosopological exegesis, the Spirit both provides men with a certain amount of knowledge about God as well as pointing to his own divinity as a member of the one God who is three persons, for only God could know the mind of God.

In his work *Adversus Hermogenem*, Tertullian did not merely point to the inspiration of Scripture simply as one of the Spirit's many works, but instead as one of the chief works of the Spirit. In chapter 22, Tertullian wrote, "I worship the fullness of the Scripture by means of which He reveals to me both the Maker and the things made; but in the Gospel I find in addition Him who is both the Minister and the Intermediary of the Maker—the Word."<sup>41</sup> This statement was a summary of the entire chapter, for he had been arguing against Hermogenes' view of creation from Matter, instead advocating creation *ex nihilo*. As part of his argument, he asserted that the Spirit had inspired the prophet<sup>42</sup> to write Genesis 1 in such a way that he included both the newly created thing as well as the substance from which it was made, if indeed there was a substance, claiming that "the Holy Spirit has even established this rule for His Scripture."<sup>43</sup> A few sentences later, he wrote similarly, "the Holy Spirit bestowed so much care on our instruction," that having provided the substance from which all things were made throughout the first chapter of Genesis, certainly the Spirit would have also affirmed any

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<sup>40</sup> Tertullian would later heavily employ this model of exegesis in his polemics against Marcion and Praxeas, especially in his discussion of John's gospel.

<sup>41</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Hermogenem* 22.

<sup>42</sup> Tertullian simply used the word "prophet" to speak of the author of Gen in this chapter, so the construction here is not a rejection or questioning of Mosaic authorship by this dissertation, but merely reflects the source material.

<sup>43</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Hermogenem* 22.

substance from which the heavens and earth were made.<sup>44</sup> Given the absence of any provided substance, by his uncharacteristic silence regarding the substance, God must have created the heavens and earth out of nothing. Throughout this argument, Tertullian repeatedly showed the appropriation of the inspiration of Scripture to the Holy Spirit. Additionally, the purpose of that inspiration was nothing less than a bestowal of “so much care on our instruction.”<sup>45</sup> Thus for Tertullian, the Spirit’s work inspiring the Scriptures was of preeminent importance, as a right understanding of the Spirit’s teaching in the Scriptures revealed all necessary truth regarding both God the Creator, his Word, and all of his creation. If the Spirit’s inspired Scriptures provided men with everything that they needed for life, then this work must indeed be one of the Spirit’s chief works.

While the topic of the Spirit’s work in the life of believers will be addressed further below, Tertullian did appeal to the impact of the work of the Scriptures in the life of believers as a sign of the importance of this work of the Spirit. In his work *De Cultu Feminarum* 2.2, he gave an example of the importance of the Scriptures in all areas of a believer’s life. In urging women to a greater care for modesty such that they would not provide by their own beauty a snare for another’s concupiscence, he based his argument on the significant commands from Scripture regarding loving one’s neighbor. Having urged them to modesty, he wrote, “Are we, then, going to paint our faces in order that others may perish? What about the Scripture that tells us: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself? Do not seek only your interests, but those of your neighbor?’”<sup>46</sup> By choosing such widely quoted commands, the first of which appeared in Leviticus 19, Matthew 19, Mark 12, Luke 10, Romans 8, Galatians 5, and James 2, while the second came from 1 Corinthians 10 and Philippians 2, his argument bore even greater weight. Immediately

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<sup>44</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Hermogenem* 22.

<sup>45</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Hermogenem* 22.

<sup>46</sup> Tertullian, *De Cultu Feminarum* 2.2.

following these quotations from the Scriptures, he then argued that “no utterance of the Holy Spirit should be restricted only to its present matter, but must be directed and referred to every occasion to which its application is useful.”<sup>47</sup> For this reason, these commands about loving one’s neighbors also applied to loving them through one’s modesty. If the Scriptures do speak to all areas of the believer’s life, and Tertullian affirmed they did as shown above, then the Spirit’s inspiration of Scripture must be one of his most important and praiseworthy works in light of the Scriptures’ importance for the life of the church.

**Prophets.** In addition to speaking more generally of the Spirit’s inspiration of the Scriptures, Tertullian often spoke more specifically about particular groups or individuals whom the Spirit inspired as he began to create the Scriptures. The first set of people the Spirit inspired was the prophets, whose “words ... are preserved in the treasures of literature.”<sup>48</sup> In some places, Tertullian spoke of this inspiration explicitly, as in his work *Adversus Iudaeos* 5 where he argued against the Mosaic sacerdotal law of Leviticus still held by the Jews, appealing to Malachi 1 to ask, “Why therefore does the Spirit proclaim afterwards through the prophets that it would happen that sacrifices would be offered to God in every place and in every land?”<sup>49</sup> Though he recognized that the Mosaic law once held sway, the later revelation of the Spirit through Malachi revealed a new understanding about the sacrifices. Yet in other works Tertullian so assumed the inspiration of the prophets that he replaced their names with the name of the Spirit. For example, in *De Oratione* 2 he instructed believers that they ought to pray to the Father following the model of the Lord’s Prayer and teachings of Jesus, and indeed, “It is on these grounds that Israel is reproached, because the Spirit calls heaven and earth to bear

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<sup>47</sup> Tertullian, *De Cultu Feminarum* 2.2.

<sup>48</sup> Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 18.

<sup>49</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeos* 5.

witness as he says, ‘I have begotten sons, and they have not acknowledged me.’”<sup>50</sup> While he stated that the Spirit was the one who said this reproach, the quote is from Isaiah 1; Tertullian so assumed the inspiration of Isaiah that he could dispense with the prophet’s name and replace it with the divine speaker of the reproach. This practice would be later adopted and used extensively by the bishop Cyprian, as will be shown in a later chapter.

Along with speaking through the prophets words of reproach, Tertullian also noted that the Spirit particularly speaks of the coming of Christ and subsequent new age, especially in his writings against the Jews. Looking at the prophecies regarding the coming Christ throughout the Old Testament in his work *Adversus Iudaeos*, Tertullian referenced Malachi 3 as he wrote, “the Holy Spirit, speaking from the person of the Father through the prophet, calls John the precursor of Christ, a future angel: ‘Behold, I send my angel before your face’—that is, of the Christ—‘who will prepare your way before you.’”<sup>51</sup> By quoting Malachi here while highlighting the Spirit’s divine authorship of the prophecy, Tertullian showed both his awareness of the Spirit’s inspiration of the prophet as well as the Spirit’s focus on the coming Christ.

In the following chapter, Tertullian turned his focus to prophecies particularly regarding the passion of Christ, walking through the Pentateuch, historical writings, Psalms, and a number of the prophets. After acknowledging the critique that God would not have allowed the Son to suffer on the cross, Tertullian wrote:

And undoubtedly it had been necessary that the mystery of the suffering itself was uttered in prophecies. The more incredible it was, the more it would become a stumbling block if it were prophesied plainly, and the more splendid it was, the more it needed to be obscured, so that the difficulty of understanding might ask for a favour from God.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Tertullian, *De Oratione* 2.

<sup>51</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeos* 9.

<sup>52</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeos* 10.

For Tertullian, the presence of so many predictions of the passion in prophetic utterances throughout the Old Testament caused men to seek wisdom from God for understanding. After walking through multiple such predictions throughout the Old Testament, at the end of this chapter, Tertullian turned to Amos 8:9–10 before explaining how the prophecy in those verses was fulfilled on the day of Christ’s death. He then ended the chapter by stating, “after the suffering of Christ, captivity and dispersion also befell you, having been foretold before through the Holy Spirit.”<sup>53</sup> He had already stated several times that the Christ would suffer to fulfill the words of the prophets, and here at the end of the chapter, he finally noted why these predictions were certain to be fulfilled. The very Spirit of God who inspired these prophetic writings throughout the Scriptures was the same God who was sending the Son to suffer the events of the passion. Consequently, through these examples of the Spirit’s divine inspiration of the prophets both for reproach and prophecy, especially regarding the coming Christ, Tertullian illustrated one particular way in which the Spirit inspired the Holy Scriptures.

**Apostles.** In addition to inspiring the prophets to write the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit also inspired the Apostles in the early church to speak God’s message to the church, both through the creation of the Scriptures and other means of prophetic inspiration. Similar to his discussion of the Spirit’s work in and with the prophets, Tertullian followed the same pattern with the New Testament of explicitly and implicitly showing the Spirit’s direct inspiration and influence on the apostles. In *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 6, Tertullian argued that Paul’s epistles to the Galatians and Titus, as well as others not named, condemned heretics for holding heresies and doctrines that they chose for themselves, and thus argued that the heretics were self-condemned. In contrast, the church held to the same teaching of Christ, as Tertullian explained:

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<sup>53</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeos* 10.



Our authorities are the Lord's apostles, and they in turn chose to introduce nothing on their own authority. They faithfully passed on to the nations the teaching which they had received from Christ. So we should anathematize even an angel from heaven if he were to preach a different gospel. The Holy Ghost had already at that time foreseen that an angel of deceit would come in a virgin called Philumene, transforming himself into an angel of light, by whose miracles and tricks Apelles was deceived into introducing a new heresy.<sup>54</sup>

Not only was the Holy Spirit the one who provided the Scriptures to the church, but also the one who guarded the church from heresies, knowing in advance what heresies would arise to assail the church. In the very act of inspiring the apostles to deliver the true revelation of Christ, the Holy Spirit would simultaneously guide the apostles to condemn heresies so that the church might be forewarned. This work is similar to the Spirit's inspiration of the Old Testament prophets in predicting future judgment lest action be taken.

Yet the Holy Spirit did not only speak of the future, but as in the case of the passage from Isaiah mentioned above, the Spirit also brought a word that had present implications. In the Carthaginian church, certain individuals were seeking to shorten the time of catechesis or dismiss it altogether so that they might be baptized forthwith, citing the example of Philip as the model of providing converts with immediate baptism.

However, Tertullian found that upon examining the account of the meeting of Philip and the eunuch, a more unique situation occurred:

The Spirit had told Philip to turn towards that road. The eunuch himself was found not uninterested, nor as one who of a sudden desired to be baptized: he had set out from home to the Temple to pray, and was intent upon divine scripture. Such is the position a man needed to be found in to whom God, without being asked, had sent an apostle, whom the Spirit a second time ordered to join himself to the eunuch's chariot.<sup>55</sup>

Tertullian did not see the Spirit as guiding Philip through secondary means, but rather as directly engaged in sending Philip to speak God's message to the eunuch. Therefore, the

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<sup>54</sup> Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 6. Apelles was one of Marcion's chief disciples.

<sup>55</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 18. The Philip mentioned here is actually Philip the deacon, not Philip the apostle as Tertullian wrote. However, in Tertullian's understanding, this figure Philip was to be closely associated with the apostles as an early leader in the church, and thus this account still belongs in this section regarding the Spirit's work among the first leaders of Christ's church.

direct intervention of the Spirit in this situation made this immediate baptism the exception to the rule rather than the norm, as the Spirit had particularly led the apostle to act in a certain way for a specific situation.

In looking to the inspiration of the New Testament by the Holy Spirit, Tertullian's most clear statements addressed the writings of the Apostle Paul. In his work *De Patientia*, Tertullian wrote, "the Spirit of the Lord, through the Apostle, has called the desire of money the root of all evils."<sup>56</sup> This passage is a quotation of 1 Timothy 6:10, yet Tertullian leaves out the apostle's name to highlight better the divine author of the text. In another work, Tertullian saw the writings of Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 as so inspired by the Holy Spirit that he could simply replace Paul's name with that of the Holy Spirit. He began by dismissing opposing claims that urged reconsideration of some of Paul's teachings on marriage, instead saying, "Here, surely, there can be no doubt about his meaning, for the precise point which might have been at issue is explained by the Holy Spirit."<sup>57</sup> He almost immediately followed that claim by saying, "That Holy Spirit, therefore, who prefers that widows and unmarried women persevere in chastity and who encourages us to imitate the example he has given us, recognizes no legitimate way of contracting a second marriage except in the Lord. Only when this condition is fulfilled does he allow the sacrifice of one's chastity."<sup>58</sup> S. Thelwall, the translator of this work in the Ante-Nicene Fathers collection, comments on this passage saying, "St. Paul, who, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, is regarded by Tertullian as merged, so to speak, in the Spirit."<sup>59</sup> Thus for Tertullian, to read the writings of Paul in the Scriptures was to read the very words of God inspired by the Spirit.

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<sup>56</sup> Tertullian, *De Patientia* 7.

<sup>57</sup> Tertullian, *Ad Uxorem* 2.2.

<sup>58</sup> Tertullian, *Ad Uxorem* 2.2.

<sup>59</sup> Tertullian, *Ad Uxorem* 2.2n7 (ANF 4:45).

**Vicar of Christ.** In light of all of these areas in which the Spirit inspired the prophets and apostles to write the Scriptures as well as deliver timely prophetic judgments, the nature of the Spirit's inspiration ought to be briefly examined. In refuting heretics in his work *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, Tertullian wrote:

Suppose all have erred. Suppose even the Apostle was deceived when he gave his testimony. Suppose the Holy Spirit had no regard for any church, to guide it into the truth, although it was for this purpose that Christ sent him and asked him of the Father to be the teacher of the truth. Suppose the steward of God, the vicar of Christ, neglected his office, allowing the churches for a time to understand and believe other than as he himself preached through the apostles. Even so, is it likely that so many churches would have erred into one faith?<sup>60</sup>

The Spirit's inspiration of the apostles was a Trinitarian work. The Spirit was sent by Christ, and Christ requested the Father send the Spirit through Christ that the Spirit might teach the church and guide her to all truth. In this passage, Tertullian also noted that the Spirit was *Christi vicarius* or "Vicar of Christ." As the *Christi vicarius*, the Spirit is the only one the Son could trust to guide his people infallibly to the truth, and thus he asked the Father to send the Spirit to the church in John 14 and 15.<sup>61</sup> Upon being sent, the Spirit perfectly fulfilled this role by preaching the revelation of the Son through the apostles and guiding the church into the true faith.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 28.

<sup>61</sup> William Tabbernee, "Recognizing the Spirit: Second-generation Montanist Oracles," in *Studia Patristica* 40 (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2006), 574; Ernest Evans in Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean Liber: Tertullian's Treatise against Praxeas*, trans. Ernest Evans (London: S.P.C.K., 1948), 2.

<sup>62</sup> The translator of this passage in the ANF, Peter Holmes, makes the following ironic observation, "Tertullian knows no other Vicar of Christ than the Holy Spirit. They who attribute infallibility to any mortal man become Montanists; they attribute the Paraclete's voice to their oracle." Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 28n11 (ANF 3:256). At this point, Tertullian was still firmly within the Catholic church, yet even later he would still hold that only the Spirit was infallible. This understanding of Montanists may be an improper application of the Montanism of Asia Minor to Tertullian's understanding, rather than the New Prophecy present in Tertullian's Carthage. See chapter four for a larger treatment of Tertullian's engagement with Montanism.

## Anointing and Giving Gifts

The next key area of focus for Tertullian regarding the Spirit's activity was his act of anointing Christ, the church, and the believers themselves. As part of this act of anointing, Tertullian also saw the Spirit bestowing gifts upon those with whom he dwells.

**Anoints Christ.** In beginning to talk about Tertullian's understanding of anointing, Christ must be the first one discussed, for he is the ultimate anointed one. In fact, the very use of the term Christ shows his anointing, for Tertullian wrote: "That is why (the high priest) is called a christ, from 'chrism' which is (the Greek for) 'anointing': and from this also our Lord obtained his title, though it had been a spiritual anointing, in that he was anointed with the Spirit by God the Father: and so (it says) in the Acts."<sup>63</sup> In making this claim, Tertullian appealed to Aaron's anointing from Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8, but especially Leviticus 4 in the Septuagint, where Aaron twice received the title "ὁ ἱερεὺς ὁ χριστὸς," to show the connection to Christ's name in the New Testament.

Furthermore, this level of anointing of the Son was not repeated in the experience of the believers' later enjoyment of the Spirit's indwelling. Rather, the Son enjoyed the indwelling of the entirety of the Spirit in his incarnation. When showing that Christ fulfilled the prophecies of Isaiah 42, Tertullian wrote, "Now, the Prophet—or, rather, the testimony of God Himself, placing His own Spirit in His Son with all patience—has not lied!"<sup>64</sup> The presence of the Spirit indwelling the Son was thus the proof and surety that the prophecies had been true. In his argument against the Jews in *Adversus Iudaeos*, Tertullian explained this unique anointing as the Spirit resting on Christ. In the Old Testament, the prophets had declared that the Messiah would come from the line of David and from the root of Jesse. Tertullian then quoted Isaiah 11:1–2 from the Septuagint to argue that upon this heir of Jesse would rest "the spirit of God ...

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<sup>63</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 7.

<sup>64</sup> Tertullian, *De Patientia* 3.

the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of knowledge and godliness, the spirit of counsel and courage, and the spirit of the fear of God will bring it to fullness.”<sup>65</sup> From these prophecies, Tertullian drew the conclusion that no other man had the proper spiritual credentials to be this heir from the root of Jesse other than Jesus Christ, the descendant of David born of the virgin Mary. Thus, in his understanding of the Spirit’s anointing of Christ, the Son Incarnate was uniquely situated to enjoy a level of the Spirit’s indwelling that only God himself could enjoy, though the church would receive a measure of this indwelling, however limited it might be.

Yet this anointing of the Son by the Spirit was more than simply an act of showing his unique person as God and man, for the Spirit’s anointing played a role in the redemptive work of Christ on earth. While the redemptive mission of the Son required him to be both fully God and fully man, it was the Spirit’s empowering and supporting presence that enabled him to complete his mission successfully. Furthermore, this mission of the Son allowed humanity to participate fully with God. Reflecting on Tertullian’s *De Patientia*, M.C. Steenberg draws out this implication by writing:

Authentic humanity is the union of body and soul, receiving the life of God in the Spirit. The ‘capacity’ enlarged through Christ’s incarnation is precisely this capacity to receive the Spirit, and as such to be joined to the divine life. Tertullian sees in Christ’s incarnation the advent of a new level of human union with the Spirit, given as the gift of this incarnate one. It is a gift beyond nature, forging a communion deeper even than that known by Adam and Eve. The redemptive work of Christ is thus connected directly to the work of the Spirit. This latter is both received into the human frame by an attitude of patience (which Christ exemplifies and, incarnationally, enables), and fosters the patience by which that receipt becomes ever more potent.<sup>66</sup>

For Tertullian, the mission of Christ the Incarnate Son was only possible with the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man.

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<sup>65</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeos* 9.

<sup>66</sup> M.C. Steenberg, “Impatience and Humanity’s Sinful State in Tertullian of Carthage,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 62, no. 2 (May 2008): 130.

**Anoints the church.** Moving from the anointing of Christ to the church, Tertullian challenged the heretics to examine the apostolic churches in order to determine the veracity of the apostolic tradition and teaching in the true church. After mentioning the apostolic churches in cities such as Corinth, Philippi, Thessaloniki, and Ephesus, Tertullian finally turned to the church of Rome as a preeminent example of a faithful church. Regarding that particular church, he wrote:

Let us see what she learned, what she taught, what bond of friendship she had with the churches of Africa. She knows one Lord God, Creator of the universe, and Christ Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, Son of God the Creator; and the resurrection of the flesh; she unites the Law and the Prophets with the writings of the evangelists and the apostles; from that source she drinks her faith, and that faith she seals with water [of baptism], clothes with the Holy Spirit, feeds with the Eucharist, encourages to martyrdom; and against that teaching she receives no one.<sup>67</sup>

For Tertullian, this statement revealed much of his view of the Spirit's anointing of the church, even though the only explicit statement said that the church was "clothe[d] with the Holy Spirit."<sup>68</sup> Yet this church drew her faith from the writings of the law, prophets, and apostles, all of which were inspired by the Spirit as shown above. Additionally, in the rite of baptism the Spirit anoints the believers and unites them together, as will be shown below. Such a church as this one is marked by the presence and anointing of the Spirit, for she has been led into the truth and the Spirit has revealed the knowledge of God to her.

A final note regarding Tertullian's view of the Spirit's anointing of the church is found in *Adversus Iudaeos* 13, where Tertullian claimed that the Holy Spirit was no longer in synagogues or temples but the church after Christ's coming. Contrary to the Jews' claim that the Messiah was yet to come, Tertullian showed from the prophets, leaning heavily on Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, and Daniel, as well as the Psalms, that the Christ had indeed come just as the prophets predicted, but the Jews had rejected him. He

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<sup>67</sup> Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 36.

<sup>68</sup> Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 36.

wrote, “Without doubt, by not receiving Christ, the fountain of the water of life, they have begun to possess worn-out troughs—that is, the synagogues among the scattering of the Gentiles. The Holy Spirit does not now remain in them, as it used to dwell in the temple in the past, before the coming of Christ, who is the true temple of God.”<sup>69</sup> In their act of not only rejecting Christ, but even killing him, the Jews no longer enjoyed the presence of the Spirit and his anointing of their worship. To further show the lack of the Spirit in the Jews’ places of worship, Tertullian quoted Isaiah 65 with a distinctly pneumatological focus, writing:

For the prophet also proclaimed that they were going to suffer that drought of the divine Spirit, saying, ‘Behold, those who serve me shall eat but you shall starve. Those serving me shall drink but you shall thirst and shall howl from an anguish of spirit. In fact, you shall give up your name for loathing by my chosen ones but the Lord shall kill you. However, those who serve me, to them a new name shall be given which will be blessed in the lands.’<sup>70</sup>

When they rejected Christ, the Jews gave up the presence of the Spirit and condemned themselves to thirsting after God without finding respite. Having left the Jewish temple, with the coming of Christ, “the true temple of God,” the Spirit now dwells in those elect who serve the Lord throughout the world, namely the church.<sup>71</sup>

**Anoints believers.** Moving now to the anointing of individual believers, Tertullian claimed that believers received the Spirit from the Lord. The first anointing of believers occurred at Pentecost as the disciples were gathered together, which Tertullian described as the moment “the Holy Spirit was first poured out.”<sup>72</sup> Following this initial anointing of the Spirit, in his discussion of this anointing in *De Baptismo* 8, Tertullian appealed to the laying on of hands and inviting the Holy Spirit through a benediction and

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<sup>69</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeos* 13.

<sup>70</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeos* 13.

<sup>71</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeos* 13.

<sup>72</sup> Tertullian, *De Oratione* 25.

baptism, with emphasis given to the latter.<sup>73</sup> Regarding the laying on of hands, Tertullian wrote, “shall not God be permitted, in an organ of his own, by the use of holy hands to play a tune of spiritual sublimity?”<sup>74</sup> While Tertullian noted that this custom originally was based upon the practice of the patriarchs, specifically that of Jacob blessing Joseph’s sons by laying hands upon them, this particular phrase “holy hands” was likely pulled from Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 2 instructing men to pray while lifting “holy hands.” Tertullian made it clear in this chapter of *De Baptismo* that while men ought to practice the laying on of hands, without God’s willingness to send the Spirit, such a practice of benediction would mean nothing, even wording the process as “the imposition of the hand in benediction, inviting and welcoming the Holy Spirit” to show that men were not the primary workers of this blessing.<sup>75</sup> Yet in response to the work of these “holy hands,” which had been divinely approved, God produced a spiritual change in that individual through the sending of the Spirit. Even in this instance, however, the practice of laying on hands was integrally connected to the rite of baptism.<sup>76</sup>

In the act of baptism, “that most holy Spirit willingly comes down from the Father upon bodies cleansed and blessed, and comes to rest upon the waters of baptism as though revisiting his primal dwelling-place.”<sup>77</sup> For Tertullian, as with many other early church fathers, the acts of conversion, baptism, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit were a package, with all three acts being necessary for the believer. Though baptism did not

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<sup>73</sup> The Spirit’s work in baptism will be explored further below, so this discussion of baptism will focus primarily on the Spirit’s anointing of believers in the baptismal rite.

<sup>74</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 8.

<sup>75</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 8.

<sup>76</sup> Kilian McDonnell, “Communion Ecclesiology and Baptism in the Spirit: Tertullian and the Early Church,” *Theological Studies* 49, no. 4 (December 1988): 679.

<sup>77</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 8. In this passage, Tertullian appealed to the Spirit’s hovering over the waters in Genesis 1:2 for support, and for a discussion of both the presence of the Spirit over the baptismal waters and the waters in Genesis 1, see the larger discussion on the Spirit’s role in baptism below. In this section, the emphasis will remain on the Spirit’s work of anointing believers that is often associated with baptism, rather than the Spirit’s work in the baptismal rite itself.



always follow immediately after conversion, allowing time for the catechuminate to prepare for baptism, Tertullian believed that the indwelling and anointing of the Spirit occurred at baptism. However, Tertullian argued that only a true Christian could be involved in this practice of baptizing other Christians, given Paul's instructions in Ephesians.<sup>78</sup> James Patrick notes, "since neither sinner nor heretic could possess the Spirit, neither could baptize ... to be a Christian was to possess the Spirit."<sup>79</sup> Thus, while ideally the minister would be the one baptizing new Christians, the key element was the presence of the Spirit in the one baptizing.<sup>80</sup> If a person did not have the Spirit himself, he could not baptize another individual in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit and guide the new believer into the baptism of the Spirit.<sup>81</sup>

While the Spirit is bestowed upon the believer at baptism, the baptism itself is not the act that sends the Spirit. Tertullian affirmed this statement when he recounted that John the Baptist could not bestow the Spirit on his followers, even those who had been baptized.<sup>82</sup> Rather, arguing from John 16, Mark 2, and 1 Thessalonians 4, Tertullian affirmed, "sins are not forgiven, or the Spirit granted, except by God alone. Also our Lord himself said that the Spirit would not come down until he himself should first ascend to the Father. Thus what his Lord was not yet conferring, the servant could have no power to

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<sup>78</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 15.

<sup>79</sup> James Patrick, "Baptism, Unity, and the Ecumenical History of Grace: The Holy Spirit in Individuals and in the Church," *Mid-Stream* 20, no. 3 (July 1981): 233.

<sup>80</sup> In *De Baptismo* 17, Tertullian allowed for the possibility of other Christians, rather than just the bishop or church authorities, to baptize, but he cautioned against expanding the role based upon Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 10. Though it might be lawful, it was not the best practice, and for Tertullian, the act of laymen seeking to take for themselves the function of the bishop was "the mother of schisms." Thus, the wisest practice was to reserve the authority of performing the baptismal rite for the bishop, save in extraordinary circumstances.

<sup>81</sup> One final note regarding the statement from *De Baptismo* 8 quoted at the beginning of this paragraph is that the statement provides another reference to the Spirit's visible anointing and resting upon the Son at his baptism. This visible anointing does not imply the lack of unity between the divine Son and the Father and Spirit prior to the Son's baptism at the Jordan. Rather, this act was a visible one for the sake of those watching.

<sup>82</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 10.

provide.”<sup>83</sup> For this reason, the baptism of the Spirit accompanying the physical act of baptism could not be experienced until Jesus had ascended back to the Father, but following Christ’s ascension, the anointing of the believer with the Spirit accompanied the believer’s baptism as a gift of God.

Finally, believers can offend the Holy Spirit with whom they are anointed by pursuing worldly matters rather than heavenly. Tertullian argued that one’s pursuit of such worldly things, “sins directly against God; for the Spirit, which he has received from the Lord, he agitates in favor of a worldly thing.”<sup>84</sup> By recognizing that believers can offend the Spirit whom they have received, Tertullian affirmed that at some prior point in their Christian lives, they must have been anointed with the Spirit. In addition to remarking that the believers received the Spirit in this passage, Tertullian also demonstrated his understanding of the Spirit as divine, equating offense against the Spirit as sin against God.

**Gives all good gifts.** One work of the Holy Spirit that Tertullian understood to accompany his anointing believers was the giving of all spiritual gifts. In *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, he recounted that the following Christ’s ascension, the apostles, “having obtained the promised power of the Holy Spirit to work miracles and to speak boldly ... set out through Judaea first, bearing witness to their faith in Jesus Christ and founding churches, and then out into the world, proclaiming the same doctrine of the same faith to the nations.”<sup>85</sup> These gifts received by the apostles were not merely for themselves, but rather the Spirit granted them the gifts necessary to preach the faith throughout the world. In particular, the spiritual gift of teaching given to the apostles was

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<sup>83</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 10.

<sup>84</sup> Tertullian, *De Patientia* 7.

<sup>85</sup> Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 20.

used to great effect, as the apostles not only founded churches in every city they visited, but also established a deposit of faith with those churches such that every church could be traced back to the original churches founded by the apostles. These graces or gifts of the Spirit allowed believers to follow after the example of Christ as they sought to spread the gospel throughout the world.

Yet Tertullian recognized the inherent difficulty of such a task as seeking only spiritual things and not fleshly. One gift that he particularly struggled to exhibit well was the gift of patience, to such an extent that he chose to write an entire work on this gift. Though specifically focusing on the gift of patience, Tertullian extrapolated from that experience of the Spirit's giving gifts to speak more broadly as well. He wrote that he labored to practice patience, "in order to attain the good pleasure of the Lord, inasmuch as it was practised by the Lord Himself as a virtue also of the body; for the soul, as the directing agent, readily shares the inspirations of the Spirit with that wherein it dwells."<sup>86</sup> By this statement, Tertullian articulated the struggle between having the gifts of the Spirit's anointing and yet failing to exhibit well those gifts regularly. Yet Christians must not give up the struggle to follow the Spirit's leading toward the practice of the virtues modeled by the Lord, for, "[w]hen the Spirit of God descends, patience is His inseparable companion. If we fail to welcome it along with the Spirit, will the latter remain with us at all times? As a matter of fact, I rather think the Spirit would not remain at all."<sup>87</sup> By this statement, Tertullian was not implying that the Spirit would abandon the believer, but rather that that believer would cease to endure in the Spirit without practicing those very gifts the Spirit brought to help the believer endure in the faith. The Spirit's gifts are freely bestowed on the believer, but the believer is still responsible to strive toward exercising the gifts received from the Spirit.

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<sup>86</sup> Tertullian, *De Patientia* 13.

<sup>87</sup> Tertullian, *De Patientia* 15.

Writing particularly for women in his work *De Cultu Feminarum*, Tertullian again addressed the tension between embracing the gifts of the Spirit rather than feeding one's fleshly desires. Contrary to flaunting one's beauty for the sake of being exalted by others through their praise or admiration, Tertullian instead urged women to remember that they were to be humble rather than seeking exaltation. While he did not condemn beauty itself, he urged women that "if we must glory in something, let it be in the spirit rather than in the flesh that we wish to please, since we are pursuers of things spiritual."<sup>88</sup> Thus, even if something is not inherently problematic, believers are called to cultivate the Spirit's gifts that lead toward greater holiness, and thereby lay aside earthly pursuits. Though the sinful flesh may resist such a focus on the spiritual, the Spirit's good gifts are not only worth pursuing, but the Spirit himself will aid believers to pursue the very gifts he provides for them.

A final note on the Spirit's giving of gifts involves the presence of peace that necessarily accompanies the presence of the Spirit. To support his argument that the Spirit brought peace to believers, Tertullian appealed to the example of the flood. Following the wrath of the flood, "a dove as herald announced to the earth peace from the wrath of heaven ... by the same (divine) ordinance of spiritual effectiveness the dove who is the Holy Spirit is sent forth from heaven, where the Church is which is the type of the ark, and flies down bringing God's peace to the earth which is our flesh, as it comes up from the washing after (the removal of) its ancient sins."<sup>89</sup> Tertullian drew this image of the Spirit as a dove from the texts of Matthew 3 and Luke 3 describing the baptism of Jesus. Yet he did not merely affirm the Spirit's self-revelation in the form of a dove, but rather expounded upon the Spirit's choice of a dove, saying that the dove was chosen because "thus the nature of the Holy Spirit was clearly revealed in a creature of simplicity and

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<sup>88</sup> Tertullian, *De Cultu Feminarum* 2.3.

<sup>89</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 8.

innocence.”<sup>90</sup> Thus the Spirit’s taking the form of a dove at Jesus’ baptism not only symbolized the peace seen after the flood, but the very nature of a dove spoke to the Spirit’s nature.

Since one of the main characteristics of the Spirit is peace, Tertullian wrote, “God has given us the command both to deal with the Holy Spirit in tranquility, gentleness, quiet, and peace, inasmuch as, in accordance with the goodness of His nature, He is tender and sensitive, and also not to vex Him by frenzy, bitterness of feeling, anger, and grief.”<sup>91</sup> Tertullian wrote this statement in his work *De Spectaculis*, where Tertullian showed how the violent shows were at odds with Christian character. Steenberg helpfully points out, “a proper interior disposition of quietude and calm, engendering receptivity to the Holy Spirit, lies behind his insistence in this passage that public games are unsuitable to Christian audiences.”<sup>92</sup> This disposition was not inherent to the believer, however, as the Spirit brought peace with his coming to the believer, so that the believer would be able to then exhibit peace in his interactions with the Spirit.

Yet Tertullian did not only speak of dealing peacefully in *De Spectaculis*, but also his works *De Patientia* and *Ad Martyras*. Steenberg went on to say that in another of Tertullian’s works, *De Patientia*, Tertullian had in mind several instances in the Old Testament where the people of Israel failed to receive all the good gifts of God due to their impatience over the timing of those gifts.<sup>93</sup> In light of this background, Steenberg posits that for Tertullian, “To ‘deal peacefully with the Holy Spirit’ is not a flourish in the text, it is an essential ingredient ... [for] what is lost through impatience is not only the receipt of particular economic or substantive goods from God, but more particularly the

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<sup>90</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 8.

<sup>91</sup> Tertullian, *De Spectaculis* 15.

<sup>92</sup> Steenberg, “Impatience,” 119.

<sup>93</sup> Tertullian, *De Patientia* 5, 13.

full receipt of the Holy Spirit's presence in the human frame."<sup>94</sup> Indeed, impatience is such an affront to the Spirit that the very life of the Spirit in which the believer is to live is rejected if the individual is too impatient to wait upon the Lord. Furthermore, since Christians have been anointed with the Spirit, who is the bringer of peace, in his work *Ad Martyras*, Tertullian exhorted believers awaiting martyrdom toward peace saying, "for this reason, too, then, you ought to possess, cherish, and preserve it among yourselves that you may perhaps be able to bestow it upon others also."<sup>95</sup> From his discussions on peace and patience, Tertullian used these two gifts of the Spirit as the examples from which he could speak about the other gifts that all Christians receive in some form upon their baptism in the Spirit.

### **Strengthening and Training**

Another key focus for Tertullian in his pre-Montanist works was the emphasis on the Spirit's strengthening and training of believers to stand firm for Christ in a fallen and pagan world. Though he would develop many of these themes further in his later works, the themes are still present in several key early ones.

**Gives strength to the captives.** One key theme Tertullian developed in his pre-Montanist works was the Spirit's giving strength to the captives. In one of his earliest works, *Ad Martyras*, Tertullian encouraged the Christians in prison to stay strong under their present persecution. He did not naively assume that these believers would be released, but rather he argued that the Holy Spirit entered the prison with these Christians destined to be martyrs. Tertullian further argued that had the Spirit not entered the prison with these Christians, they never would have endured as long as they had been

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<sup>94</sup> Steenberg, "Impatience," 119.

<sup>95</sup> Tertullian, *Ad Martyras* 1.

enduring.<sup>96</sup> In light of the Spirit's continuing provision for the Christians awaiting their martyrdom, Tertullian urged them, "See to it, therefore, that He remain with you there and so lead you out of that place to the Lord."<sup>97</sup> Even in the midst of their trials and suffering, the believers could retain hope by holding fast to the Spirit, who would lead them through the suffering to Christ. Paraphrasing Tertullian's message, Carl Volz rendered Tertullian's encouragement as, "the Holy Spirit has been with them in the past, and will not fail them now."<sup>98</sup>

Similarly, in *Scorpiace* 8–9, Tertullian wrote that the reality of believers being arrested and facing martyrdom was not contrary to God's will, but rather the Holy Spirit led believers to martyrdom, that they might serve as witnesses to the very truths they proclaimed to the world.<sup>99</sup> He wrote similarly a few chapters later, reassuring Christians who might face martyrdom with the words of Christ from Matthew 10, that he who loses his life for Christ will find it. Furthermore, Christians who were called to face martyrdom would be given the words to say by the Holy Spirit, whose presence would enable the captives to stand firm in their faith.<sup>100</sup> Even in the midst of suffering, Christians could take heart, remembering that in Revelation 2, the Spirit had told the church in Smyrna that if they remained faithful unto death, they would receive the crown of life. In a beautiful passage at the end of *Scorpiace*, Tertullian encouraged his fellow Christians that the Spirit promised them a far greater reward than anything the world might offer:

To every victor the Spirit promises now the tree of life and pardon from the second death, now the hidden manna with the white pebble and the unknown name, now the power of the iron rod and the brightness of the morning star, now to be clothed in a

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<sup>96</sup> Tertullian, *Ad Martyras* 1.

<sup>97</sup> Tertullian, *Ad Martyras* 1.

<sup>98</sup> Carl A. Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 146.

<sup>99</sup> Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 8–9.

<sup>100</sup> Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 11.

white garment and not to be blotted out from the book of life and to become a column in the temple of God, having been inscribed with the name of God and of the Lord and of the heavenly Jerusalem, now to reside with the Lord on his throne, which once was denied to the sons of Zebedee. Who are these blessed victors if not proper martyrs?<sup>101</sup>

For Tertullian, these soon-to-be-martyrs were greatly blessed by God, for the Holy Spirit would strengthen them, equip them to stand firm, and promised them a great reward for their faithful service.

This encouragement led to his other point, however, for Tertullian also warned these Christians waiting to undergo martyrdom that the prison was the devil's abode. With the arrival of the Christians, the Holy Spirit now entered with them into this stronghold of Satan, and a great battle was ongoing. Tertullian exhorted the believers that "peace among yourselves means war with him," and since the Spirit is the bringer of peace as mentioned above, "for this reason, too, then, you ought to possess, cherish, and preserve it among yourselves that you may perhaps be able to bestow it upon others also."<sup>102</sup> In his characteristic style, however, Tertullian encouraged the believers not only to stand firm, that they might simply resist the devil, but actually seek to defeat him, for:

you have engaged him in battle already outside the prison and trampled him underfoot. Let him, therefore, not say: 'Now that they are in my domain, I will tempt them with base hatreds, with defections or dissensions among themselves.' Let him flee from your presence, and let him, coiled and numb, like a snake that is driven out by charms or smoke, hide away in the depths of his den. Do not allow him the good fortune in his own kingdom of setting you against one another, but let him find you fortified by the arms of peace among yourselves, because peace among yourselves means war with him.<sup>103</sup>

With the Holy Spirit strengthening them for the battle, the believers in prison could have every expectation to remain faithful and defeat the devil, so long as they held fast to the Spirit.

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<sup>101</sup> Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 12.

<sup>102</sup> Tertullian, *Ad Martyras* 1.

<sup>103</sup> Tertullian, *Ad Martyras* 1.



Yet the final goal in all of this struggle was to meet the Lord through a faithful witness even in martyrdom, and thus Tertullian encouraged them as seen above to let the Holy Spirit “lead you out of that place to the Lord.”<sup>104</sup> This theology of martyrdom and the role the Spirit played in martyrdom would be expanded upon in Tertullian’s later writings, with Tertullian going so far at one point as to suggest that rather than flee persecution, Christians should instead willingly face it as a chance to show their devotion to Christ before a pagan world through their martyrdom. The theological basis behind such a claim would be Tertullian’s view that the martyrs were those who “filled with godly patience borne of the Spirit, endure all things for the Lord: for the Spirit fosters human endurance.”<sup>105</sup> While his view in his pre-Montanist works was not yet so strongly developed, he still sought to encourage the martyrs to see themselves as witnessing for Christ through the manner of their deaths.

**Teaches and trains believers.** In addition to strengthening the captives, the Holy Spirit also teaches and trains Christians for a life of Christian mission. When discussing the Spirit’s work of teaching, Tertullian focused especially on the apostles as the teachers of the church. In *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 8, Tertullian noted that the apostles were able to fulfill the Great Commission given to them by Jesus because they were to receive the Spirit, and “the apostles, the appointed teachers of the Gentiles, were themselves to receive the Paraclete as their teacher.”<sup>106</sup> Thus, the apostles themselves were taught by the Spirit, and they in turn instructed the churches. Similarly, in *De Idololatria* 24, Tertullian wrote that the Spirit led the apostles in their teachings regarding the yoke of Christ’s law. Referencing Acts 15, he stated, “At the time of the council of

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<sup>104</sup> Tertullian, *Ad Martyras* 1.

<sup>105</sup> Steenberg, “Impatience,” 131.

<sup>106</sup> Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 8.

the apostles, the Holy Spirit relieved our fetters and our yoke, in order that we should devote ourselves to the shunning of idolatry.”<sup>107</sup> Finally, referencing Paul’s teaching to the Corinthians regarding the virtue of love, Tertullian wrote that love was that virtue, “which the Apostle extols with all the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>108</sup> In Tertullian’s understanding, the Spirit was the one leading the apostles in their work of articulating the proper teaching regarding the laws of God for the universal church.

Yet Tertullian did not merely see the Spirit as a teacher, but also as a trainer. In the same work in which he encouraged the soon-to-be martyrs, Tertullian told the believers that the Holy Spirit had trained them for a great struggle. Jesus was not willing to risk these believers falling away, but rather sent the Spirit to train them prior to those days of struggle so that they might endure to the end and win the prize which he had gone before to prepare for them. Tertullian explained this training to the imprisoned believers writing, “And so your Master, Jesus Christ, who has anointed you with His Spirit and has brought you to this training ground, has resolved, before the day of the contest, to take you from a softer way of life to a harsher treatment that your strength may be increased.”<sup>109</sup> While elsewhere in *Ad Martyras* Tertullian reminded the believers that the Spirit would give them strength to endure in their martyrdom, in *Ad Martyras* 3 Tertullian took a different approach. Albeit knowing that the conflict would be hard and the struggle potentially beyond their strength to bear, Tertullian nevertheless exhorted his fellow Christians to endure this “noble contest in which the living God acts the part of superintendent and the Holy Spirit is your trainer, a contest whose crown is eternity, whose prize is angelic nature, citizenship in heaven and glory for ever and ever.”<sup>110</sup> On

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<sup>107</sup> Tertullian, *De Idololatria* 24.

<sup>108</sup> Tertullian, *De Patientia* 12.

<sup>109</sup> Tertullian, *Ad Martyras* 3.

<sup>110</sup> Tertullian, *Ad Martyras* 3.

their own strength, the captives were likely to fail, so Tertullian reminded them to stand firm and rest in the training they had already received from the one who was far greater than their current oppressors. Upon resting on that training, they would then find that the Spirit would indeed give the faithful believers the strength to stand, having trained them beforehand to do so.

**Leads believers into truth.** Similar to the preceding categories, Tertullian also recognized the role the Spirit played in leading believers to truth. Indeed, this category of Tertullian's statements concerning the Holy Spirit most clearly reflected his understanding of the *regula fidei*. One instance in which his particular interpretation of the Scriptures revealed this emphasis was in a quotation from Colossians. He quoted Paul saying, "Take heed lest any man circumvent you through philosophy or vain deceit, after the tradition of men, against the providence of the Holy Spirit."<sup>111</sup> Yet the end of the Greek text of Colossians 2:8 actually reads, "οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν," while Tertullian rendered the passage to say, "*praeter providentiam Spiritus Sancti*."<sup>112</sup> While this Latin rendering may be simply a result of a faulty translation from Greek to Latin, Tertullian knew Greek well, and as mentioned earlier, he only rarely misquoted Scripture. Additionally, H.A.G. Houghton has attested that although Tertullian had access to some Latin translations of the New Testament, and particularly Paul's letters, he was not working with a fixed structure for the Latin New Testament, but rather made his own translations from the Greek as necessary.<sup>113</sup> Houghton also pointed out that Tertullian's quotations of the same passages of Scripture often differed from one another, even within the same work, suggesting that he may have been using several different versions of the Old Latin texts in conjunction with his own translations from the Greek.

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<sup>111</sup> Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 7.

<sup>112</sup> Peter Holmes, the translator of this work in the ANF, makes this observation. Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 7n22 (ANF 3:246).

<sup>113</sup> Houghton, *The Latin Text*, 6–9.

In light of Houghton's discussion, rather than assuming a faulty translation for this passage, it is more likely that one of the following options was the case. He may have been using a Latin translation that made this emphasis on the Spirit, and so he simply used that text as support for his theological position.<sup>114</sup> More likely, however, is the idea that he made his own translation of the text and emended it to include the language of the Spirit given his understanding of the Spirit's work in the leading of believers into truth and away from error. This rendering would have taken into account the Scripture's broader teaching about not only the work of the Spirit but also the unity of the Trinity, for the one God leads believers to truth, and the process of that leading was seen in the Father's sending the Spirit on Christ's behalf to complete this very work.

In another passage, Tertullian gave one of his clearest pictures of the work of the Holy Spirit in teaching the church and guiding her to truth. Drawing upon Acts 2 and John 16, in *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 22, Tertullian wrote:

At one time, it is true, he did say: 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.' But by adding: 'When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all the truth,' he showed that they who would receive the whole truth through the Spirit of truth, as he promised, were ignorant of nothing. That promise he certainly fulfilled. The Acts of the Apostles proves the descent of the Holy Spirit. Those who reject this book as scripture cannot be of the Holy Spirit since they cannot yet recognize that the Holy Spirit was sent to the disciples. Nor can they maintain that they are the Church, since they cannot prove when and in what cradle this body of theirs had its beginning.<sup>115</sup>

From the very beginning of the church, Christ had ensured that his apostles were equipped to carry forth his message, given that from these men all of the church would receive her teachings. Noting the importance of the apostles' fitness for this task, in the same chapter Tertullian wrote, "Who in his senses can believe that the men whom the

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<sup>114</sup> If this position is correct, then such a translation would reveal a greater emphasis on the Spirit in the early church even prior to Tertullian. However, Tertullian's knowledge of the Greek and willingness to amend the Latin translations whenever necessary seems to imply that the second option is more likely.

<sup>115</sup> Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 22.

Lord gave to be teachers were ignorant of anything?”<sup>116</sup> Tertullian continued on quoting from Mark 4 and Matthew 13 to illustrate that Christ did, in fact, explain his difficult teachings to the apostles so that they might not be confused like many others who heard Jesus’ words. Yet Christ also acknowledged that the disciples were not yet ready for the task while he was still with them, but rather the Spirit whom he would send would lead them to all truth so that they were indeed equipped for this great work. This line of reasoning followed a similar argument as Irenaeus’ argument in book three of *Against Heresies*, and although Tertullian did mention his appreciation of Irenaeus elsewhere, in this passage, the question of Tertullian’s reliance on Irenaeus for this argument cannot be determined.<sup>117</sup> Nevertheless, the presence of this argument in both Tertullian and Irenaeus, with its reliance on the work of the Spirit to lead believers into all truth, revealed a widespread concern by the early church regarding the way in which the church understood its teachings to be the truth.

Contrasted with the church, and particularly the apostles, were the heretics. One way by which the heretics revealed themselves to be heretics was their refusal to follow the Spirit’s leading into all truth. Tertullian concluded the chapter mentioned above by remarking that the reason for this refusal to follow the Spirit’s leading was the likelihood of revealing their own doctrines to have been contrived when exposed by the

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<sup>116</sup> Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 22.

<sup>117</sup> In book three, Irenaeus sought to refute the Gnostics by appealing to the teaching of the apostles as they interpreted the Scriptures for the church. Irenaeus rejected the Gnostic critique that the disciples preached prior to possessing “perfect knowledge.” Indeed, the Gnostics claimed to be wiser than the apostles and thus had no need to heed their teachings. Refuting this claim, Irenaeus argued that the disciples preached under the power of the Holy Spirit, and their message was the one God who both created the heavens and was declared by the prophets as the one Christ foretold, the Son of God come to earth for men. He followed this argument by asserting that truth of this message, for since John 14:6 says Jesus was truth, then his claims to have God as his Father must also be true. Similarly, he appeals to the Holy Spirit’s attribution in the Old Testament of the titles of Lord and God to both the Father and Son, particularly in Pss 110:1 and 45:6–7. Furthermore, he points out that Matt 3:16 recorded that the Holy Spirit descended from the Father on the Son to fulfill Isa 11:1–2. Therefore, if the Son is truth, if both the Son and Father are God and Lord, and if the Holy Spirit is also God descended from heaven on the Son, then the disciples under the power of the Holy Spirit were actually preaching the word of truth and lacked nothing necessary to proclaim God’s message.

very truth that the Spirit reveals.<sup>118</sup> Thus for Tertullian, the true church was the one which followed the Scriptures and understood the Spirit to be the guide for the church, for all other ‘churches’ must necessarily reject the Spirit’s leading and thus cannot know the truth.

Also contrasted with the church were the pagans, and particularly the pagan practice of idolatry. Tertullian’s work *De Idololatria* was dedicated to refuting the practice of idolatry and warning Christians against falling into such error. In *De Idololatria* 4, Tertullian quoted several passages from Isaiah denouncing the practice of idolatry, followed by his own sarcastic critique:

And why should I, a man of limited memory, suggest anything more, why remind you of anything more from Scripture? As if the voice of the Holy Spirit were not sufficient, or as if it deserved any further consideration whether the Lord has not rather cursed and damned the makers themselves of those things, whose worshippers He curses and damns.<sup>119</sup>

Tertullian thus condemned both the makers of idols along with their worshipers, and he affirmed this condemnation a few chapters later when he wrote that the sacraments would oppose the making of idols even if, “no law of God had forbidden us to make idols, if no pronouncement of the Holy Spirit threatened the makers of idols no less than their worshippers.”<sup>120</sup> In both of these critiques, Tertullian mentioned the Holy Spirit’s voice as the voice declaring idolatry to be wicked. In this way too, the Holy Spirit leads believers into truth by showing them error and the path of wickedness, that believers might avoid such paths.

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<sup>118</sup> Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 22.

<sup>119</sup> Tertullian, *De Idololatria* 4.

<sup>120</sup> Tertullian, *De Idololatria* 6.

## Salvation

In addition to Tertullian's major areas of focus on the Spirit's activity given above, a couple of smaller emphases are also present in his pre-Montanist works, and the first of these emphases is the Spirit's role in salvation. In his work on repentance, *De Paenitentia*, Tertullian noted that God "promised the grace with which in the latter days He intended to illumine the whole world through His Spirit."<sup>121</sup> In order to fulfill this promise, God had sent John the Baptist to preach repentance among the people of Israel, so that when the Spirit came, repentance had made "ready the heart as a clean dwelling place for the coming visitation of the Holy Spirit, in order that, with His heavenly blessings, He might gladly take up His abode. There is just one reason why these blessings are conferred, and that is the salvation of man."<sup>122</sup> In Tertullian's understanding, the act of salvation was concomitant with the coming of the Spirit to indwell the believer. Similarly, in *De Cultu Feminarum* 2.1, Tertullian reflected on Paul's teachings in 1 Corinthians 3 as he wrote, "we are all temples of God because the Holy Spirit has entered into us and sanctified us."<sup>123</sup> Again, for Tertullian, the Spirit played an integral role in the salvation of individuals, for the very coming of the Holy Spirit into an individual brought salvation to that individual. As the one through whom God was pouring out his light upon men and washing clean the hearts of men, the Spirit was the person of the Trinity who brought about the salvation of men to make them into the promised "temple of God."

Yet the Spirit was also involved prior to the initial act of salvation itself in the convicting of sin. In *De Paenitentia* 8, Tertullian reflected on the words of the Spirit to the churches in Revelation. Upon noting the Spirit's rebukes of the churches, he also noted that the Spirit "warns them all to repent—even adding threats. But He would not

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<sup>121</sup> Tertullian, *De Paenitentia* 2.

<sup>122</sup> Tertullian, *De Paenitentia* 2.

<sup>123</sup> Tertullian, *De Cultu Feminarum* 2.1.

threaten the impenitent, if He failed to pardon the penitent.”<sup>124</sup> By this statement, Tertullian showed that though the Holy Spirit threatened the churches with divine judgment if they failed to repent, the very act of urging them to repent and avoid such judgment revealed the truth that God stood ready to forgive them if only they would repent. Thus, the Holy Spirit was not merely the one who brought the light of repentance to a person, but also the one who brought about awareness of the darkness of sin and impending judgment without that offered light of repentance. As such a key figure in the act of salvation and necessary prerequisites, the Spirit’s work in this act revealed his divinity and showed him to be worthy of glory and praise.

### **Baptism**

The second smaller emphasis on the Spirit’s activity in Tertullian’s pre-Montanist works is the role of the Spirit in baptism.<sup>125</sup> Tertullian devoted the entire treatise *De Baptismo* to the subject of baptism, and from this treatise he addressed both the Spirit’s involvement in the act itself as well as the faith necessary for the act. In *De Baptismo* 13, Tertullian tied the two together by building upon Matthew 28 and John 3 when he wrote, “When this law [the Great Commission] was associated with that (well-known) pronouncement, ‘Except a man have been born again of water and the Holy Spirit he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,’ faith was put under obligation to the necessity of baptism.”<sup>126</sup> For Tertullian, both the act and the accompanying faith needed careful examination if Christians were to understand baptism properly.

Regarding the act itself, Tertullian believed that the presence of the Holy Spirit at baptism was what made the baptism effective and sanctifying, not the waters

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<sup>124</sup> Tertullian, *De Paenitentia* 8.

<sup>125</sup> This emphasis on the Spirit’s work in baptism is far more substantial than the Spirit’s work in salvation. However, because the discussion is largely limited to a single treatise rather than spread across multiple works, it has been classified as a smaller emphasis rather than one of the larger emphases above.

<sup>126</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 13.



themselves.<sup>127</sup> Tertullian wrote that the primary principle of baptism was that “the Spirit of God, who since the beginning was borne upon the waters, would as baptizer abide upon waters.”<sup>128</sup> This hovering was important for Tertullian, because he believed that the presence of the holy one hovering over something could make the substance hovered over holy. He stated, “Thus the nature of the waters, having received holiness from the Holy, itself conceived power to make holy ... for at once the Spirit comes down from heaven and stays upon the waters, sanctifying them from within himself, and when thus sanctified they absorb the power of sanctifying.”<sup>129</sup> In Tertullian’s understanding of baptism, the act of baptism was powerless without the presence of the Holy One and Spirit of God.

One of the more difficult passages in Tertullian’s pre-Montanist works on the Spirit must be examined with this discussion of the Spirit’s hovering in baptism, and the interpretation of it radically affects the validity of Tertullian’s claims about baptism given above. In *De Baptismo* 3, Tertullian reflected on Genesis 1:2 and the “Spirit of God” who hovered over the waters.<sup>130</sup> One interpretation of this phrase “Spirit of God” as it appears in the text suggests that it could be simply a generic phrase referring to the Divine Spirit who is the Triune God. Because Tertullian’s language here is not explicitly clear, the opposing argument that sees this passage as referring to the Holy Spirit must look at the larger context for support. Thomas O’Malley helpfully provides an extended discussion of Tertullian’s emphasis on the connection of water and the Spirit, stating that Tertullian “constantly expresses the relation of water with the Spirit and the understanding of the

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<sup>127</sup> Roy Kearsley and Rutherford House, *Tertullian’s Theology of Divine Power*, Rutherford Studies in Historical Theology (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Published for Rutherford House by Paternoster Press, 1998), 84.

<sup>128</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 4.

<sup>129</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 4.

<sup>130</sup> “*In primordio, inquit, fecit deus caelum et terram: terra autem erat invisibilis et incomposita, et tenebrae erant super abyssum, et spiritus dei ferebatur super aquas.*”

scriptures.”<sup>131</sup> This relation was not simply drawn from Tertullian’s imagination or literary design, but rather by his exegesis of the Scriptures and drawing upon the water imagery found therein. By examining Tertullian’s references to water, and specifically the connection of this water to the Spirit, O’Malley rightly argues that this passage can be understood as the Holy Spirit, stating that just as the Spirit of God hovered over the waters at creation, so too the Holy Spirit now hovers over baptism.<sup>132</sup>

Yet Tertullian did not fully hold to a notion of baptismal regeneration, but rather insisted that faith, not baptism, was the way men obtain the Holy Spirit. Later in *De Baptismo* 6, he wrote:

Not that the Holy Spirit is given to us in the water, but that in the water we are made clean by the action of the angel, and made ready for the Holy Spirit ... so also the angel, the mediator of baptism, makes the ways straight for the Holy Spirit who is to come next. He does so by that cancelling of sins which is granted in response to faith signed and sealed in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>133</sup>

From this statement, Tertullian showed that he had a broader understanding of salvation than merely baptismal regeneration, though that view of salvation would be expressed elsewhere given his focus on baptism here. Baptism did not save a person, but it did give that person the hope and promise of salvation under the three witnesses of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit given in the Triune benediction conferred at baptism. Reflecting upon the truth that believers were baptized in the Triune name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Tertullian appealed to the words of Deuteronomy 19, later picked up in Matthew 18 and 2 Corinthians 13, when he wrote, “For if in three witnesses every word shall be established ... by the benediction we have the same mediators of faith as we have sureties of salvation. That number of the divine names of itself suffices for the confidence

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<sup>131</sup> O’Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible*, 81–82.

<sup>132</sup> O’Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible*, 78–82.

<sup>133</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 6.

of our hope.”<sup>134</sup> Thus while baptism did not save, it provided assurance of that salvation to the believer.

### Conclusion

Tertullian was a complicated and intense man as seen in his writings. His pre-Montanist works reveal both a gentle and thoughtful brother in the faith encouraging the downtrodden as well as a fierce and vicious defender of Christian orthodoxy, regardless of the cost to the would-be attacker of the faith. Yet from this complicated individual emerged some of the best writings on the Trinity, and particularly the Spirit, before the great fourth-century creeds in the East.

As the first Latin father whose works the church possesses today, Tertullian’s writings on this topic reveal the earliest understanding of the Western church’s views on the work of the Spirit. In today’s church, Augustine far outshines Tertullian on the topic of the Trinity, and in one sense rightly so as he further developed the doctrine and overcame some of the difficulties Tertullian faced in expressing such a doctrine. Yet Tertullian’s works still provide a window into the earliest Christian understanding of the person and work of the Spirit in the Western Latin-speaking tradition. Furthermore, the examination of Tertullian’s pre-Montanist works provides an important view, for Tertullian’s later pneumatological writings came about during his Montanist period in which the Montanist teachings influenced his thought in some manner.<sup>135</sup> Yet his early pre-Montanist works emerge from his reliance on the rule of faith and the teachings of the late second-century Carthaginian church. Thus, in these works, scholars can see a glimpse of the teachings of the early Christian church in North Africa less than two centuries

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<sup>134</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 6.

<sup>135</sup> Scholars disagree on the extent to which Montanism may have affected Tertullian’s pneumatology, but most recognize that some change occurred after the time generally recognized to be the turning point toward Montanism. For two opinions on this affect, see Pelikan, “Montanism,” and Andrew Brian McGowan, “Tertullian and the ‘heretical’ origins of the ‘orthodox’ Trinity,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14, no. 4 (2006): 437–57.

removed from Christ himself. Although Tertullian's earliest writings are not without their issues, in providing a glimpse into the earliest thoughts of the Christians on the divine work of the Holy Spirit, they must not be overlooked.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE SPIRIT'S ACTIVITY IN TERTULLIAN'S MONTANIST WORKS

Tertullian's Montanist works have long been a source of interest to scholars as the earliest Latin texts providing a Trinitarian formula. As such, several scholars have examined Tertullian's Montanist treatises with regard to questions of the Holy Spirit's divinity, his role within the Trinity,<sup>1</sup> and Tertullian's place in the broader spectrum of the early church's pneumatology.<sup>2</sup> Largely overlooked, however, is the subject of the Spirit's work in the church and the lives of Christians as understood by Tertullian in his Montanist works. As seen in the previous chapter, the Spirit's activity was a significant focus for Tertullian, and during his later years this emphasis only increased.

#### **Tertullian's Montanist Works**

Having examined Tertullian's earlier works in the preceding chapter, this chapter will now examine evidence of Tertullian's understanding of the Holy Spirit's activity in his later works. As discussed in chapter 3, Tertullian's corpus has been divided

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see René Braun, *Deus Christianorum: Recherches Sur Le Vocabulaire Doctrinal De Tertullien*, 2nd ed., rev (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1977); see also Joseph Moingt, *Théologie Trinitaire De Tertullien: Répertoire Lexicographique Et Tables*, vol. I–IV, Théologie, 75 (Paris: Aubier, 1969); Lawrence B. Porter, "On keeping 'persons' in the Trinity: a linguistic approach to Trinitarian thought," *Theological Studies* 41, no. 3 (September 1980): 530–548; Jaroslav Pelikan, "Montanism and its Trinitarian Significance," *Church History* 25, no. 2 (June 1956): 99–109; James Loxley Compton, *Oikonomia Sacramentum: The Mystery of the Economy in Tertullian's Against Praxeas* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, in a series of articles, Michel Barnes, "The Beginning and End of Early Christian Pneumatology," *Augustinian Studies* 39, no. 2 (2008): 169–87, and Lewis Ayres, "Innovation and *Ressourcement* in Pro-Nicene Pneumatology," *Augustinian Studies* 39, no. 2 (2008): 187–205, argue that the early church's pneumatology made a downward shift around the early third century with Tertullian and Origen, so that Tertullian, and Cyprian after him, were part of a new wave of early fathers who failed to understand adequately the role of the Spirit. Barnes and Ayres argue that this new wave of poor pneumatology lasted until the fourth century pro-Nicene pneumatology.

into his pre-Montanist and Montanist works, with the shift in his thought and practice occurring around 207/8. In the section below, the question of Tertullian's engagement with Montanism will be discussed in greater detail, but regardless of his affiliation with this group, the works examined in this chapter will be those thought to have been written following that marker of 207/8, though a more precise chronology cannot be determined with certainty. Tertullian's extant works from this period are: *De Carne Christi*, *Adversus Valentinianos*, *De Anima*, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*,<sup>3</sup> *Adversus Marcionem*, *De Corona*, *De Virginibus Velandis*, *De Exhortatione Castitatis*, *De Fuga in Persecutione*, *Adversus Praxean*, *De Monogamia*, *De Ieiunio*, *De Pudicitia*, and *Ad Scapulam*.<sup>4</sup>

### Question of Montanism

Prior to examining Tertullian's views on the Spirit's activity in his later works, the issue of his connection with Montanism must be addressed.<sup>5</sup> Since the historical record is so limited, scholars remain divided on the question of Tertullian's affinities in his later years. Though some variances among positions exist, most of the views can be categorized into the following three positions: 1) some believe Tertullian left the church to become a Montanist, 2) others think he was merely sympathetic to the Montanist

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<sup>3</sup> Historically, this work has been known by the name *De Resurrectione Carnis*. Following the discovery of the Codex Trecensis, which listed the title of the work as *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*, more recent works have likewise referred to this work using the title from the Codex Trecensis rather than the older title.

<sup>4</sup> Tertullian referred to other works he wrote during this period, including: *De Fato*, *De censu animae adversus Hermogenem*, *Adversus Apelleiacos*, *De Spe Fidelium*, and *De Paradiso*. Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 40, also recounted another significant work written by Tertullian during this period titled *De Ecstasi*, which was a defense of either Montanism or Montanist prophecies. However, all of these works have since been lost. Of the extant works, *Ad Scapulam* does not make any mention of the Holy Spirit, and thus will not be included in the following discussion.

<sup>5</sup> For a full history on Montanism, see Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority, and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Trevett and others rightly bring out that the label Montanism is anachronistic, for Tertullian would have known the group as the "New Prophecy," though that term also has its share of problems for the North African context, as will be shown below. However, most scholars acknowledge this disparity and choose to use the term "Montanism/Montanist" for the sake of continuity and ease, and this thesis will do the same.

movement while remaining within the church, and 3) others believe he embraced some aspects of Montanism but remained doctrinally faithful to the church.

The first position holds that, historically, Tertullian has been seen as departing the church and joining a heretical sect around 207 or 208,<sup>6</sup> so that Jerome could remark that he lapsed into Montanism as a result of the envy and reproaches of the Roman clergy.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Augustine included Tertullian in his work on heresies and heretics, although he would occasionally use Tertullian's works without citation.<sup>8</sup> Tertullian was never formally condemned by the church as a heretic, yet his association with a group deemed heretical colored later interpretations. This popular view of Tertullian as a heretic has lasted throughout the history of the church up to the present, so that many scholars still regard Tertullian as a church father who started well and ended poorly.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The issue of the terms "orthodoxy" and "heresy" have been heavily debated since Bauer's *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*, translated into English as Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Robert A Kraft and Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971). For a helpful summary of the debate, see David W. Jorgensen, "Approaches to Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Study of Early Christianity," *Religion Compass* 11, no. 9–10 (September 2017). See also a critique of the Bauer thesis in Paul Hartog, ed., *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christian Contexts: Reconsidering the Bauer Thesis* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 53. Jerome wrote, "Hic cum usque ad mediam aetatem presbyter Ecclesiae permansisset, invidia postea et contumeliis clericorum Romanae Ecclesiae, ad Montani dogma delapsus, in multis libris Novae Prophetiae meminit." For an overview of the reception of Tertullian throughout history, see Gerald Lewis Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God: Perspectives on the Theology of Tertullian*, New Foundations Theological Library (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), 8–31. Montanism was a complicated movement, and thus cannot be reduced to a simplistic definition of its beliefs, as Trevett's work shows. A few key tenets of this movement, however, were: an emphasis on eschatological visions and expectation, a rigorous pursuit after holiness in all aspects of the Christian life, an accompanying renunciation of all the world had to offer, often a glorification of martyrdom, and finally an emphasis on the guiding wisdom of the promised Paraclete to lead believers into all truth. Later Christians condemned Montanism for its ecstatic impulses and schismatic tendencies.

<sup>8</sup> J.P. Migne, and A.G. Hamman, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, vol. 42, Series Latina (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1958), 46–7.

<sup>9</sup> In his work on Tertullian's exegesis, Thomas P. O'Malley laments his fall into heresy. Thomas P. O'Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible: Language, Imagery, Exegesis, Latinitas Christianorum Primaeva; Studia Ad Sermonem Latinum Christianum Pertinentia*, fasc. 21 (Nijmegen, Netherlands: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1967). In a more recent work, F.D. Farnell, "The Montanist Crisis: A Key to Refuting Third-Wave Concepts of NT Prophecy," *Master's Seminary Journal* 14, no. 2 (2003): 242, writes, "The heresy [Montanism] became so acute that it eventually swept away even the church father Tertullian." See also Ernest Evans in Tertullian, *Adversus Praxeas Liber: Tertullian's Treatise against Praxeas*, trans. Ernest Evans (London: S.P.C.K., 1948), 2; William P. Le Saint in Tertullian and William P. Le Saint, *Treatises on Marriage and Remarriage: To His Wife, an Exhortation to Chastity, Monogamy*, Ancient Christian Writers: the Works of the Fathers in Translation 13 (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1951), 3.

Reacting against this position is Gerald Bray, who has argued for a second position that Tertullian did not lapse into Montanism but rather was merely sympathetic to it. In his work *Holiness and the Will of God*, Bray challenged three supporting arguments for the claim that Tertullian converted to Montanism.<sup>10</sup> Bray attempted to show that these common arguments affirming Tertullian's Montanism failed to provide a convincing and definitive case, showing that certain terminology could actually refer to fellow Christians; additionally, Tertullian's teachings remained consistent with the church's teaching across his corpus, if occasionally chastising his fellow Christians for areas of sin in their lives. Yet he insisted that Tertullian nowhere indicated that he left the church to join the Montanists stating, "Montanism, though it was defended by Tertullian, neither conquered his allegiance nor influenced the development of his thought to any great degree."<sup>11</sup> By arguing this position, Bray sets himself in direct opposition to that of Jerome, Augustine, and the tradition, instead claiming that the tradition needs to be reevaluated. Concluding his argument, Bray asserted that Tertullian defended the Montanists because "he saw in them fellow *spiritales*, whose thirst for holiness and concern for discipline equaled his own."<sup>12</sup>

Taking a different approach to the question, several influential scholars argue for the third position in a variety of ways, claiming that Tertullian did embrace some

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<sup>10</sup> Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God*, 56–62. The three particular arguments Bray addressed were thematic similarities, lexical borrowings, and explicit references. Bray shows that in only five of Tertullian's thirty-one treatises does he explicitly mention Montanists by name. Then, he argues that the lexical borrowing of the terms *psychicus* and *Paracletus* is unconvincing, as these terms appeared in the New Testament and not only in Montanist teachings. Additionally, he argues that Tertullian's use of *nos/nostri* and *vos* does not require a sectarian usage that revealed Tertullian to be a part of some other group than the church. Finally, Bray acknowledges that the strong thematic similarities between Tertullian and other Montanist writings on the subjects of martyrdom, marriage, and prophecy, but he remains unconvinced that these were new emphases. Rather, he argues that Tertullian only pulled from Montanist teachings when it suited his purposes, and never to such a degree that revealed his allegiance to Montanism. The Montanist teachings were useful on certain subjects, but not to be adopted entirely.

<sup>11</sup> Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God*, 62.

<sup>12</sup> Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God*, 62. For this position of sympathetic to Montanism but remaining apart from it, Bray is the chief example. The majority of scholars fall into either the first or third views.



facets of Montanism, while remaining doctrinally faithful to the church. One such argument was that Tertullian's interest in Montanism was on account of the Montanists' moral zeal, not their theological novelty, so that he embraced their ethical teachings but not their doctrinal ones.<sup>13</sup> William Tabbernee argues that Jerome's claim of Tertullian's embrace of Montanism should not be understood as Tertullian leaving the church; instead, Tertullian appeared to be one of the leading members of the catholic church in Carthage. He contends that scholars should refrain from thinking that "there was a radical change in Tertullian's theology and practice of Christianity after 208."<sup>14</sup> Rather, Tabbernee proposes that the adherents to the New Prophecy held to strict moral guidelines, and being a rigorist himself, "the Montanist *logia* simply enabled Tertullian more easily to take his own beliefs to their logical conclusions: conclusions he may have reached anyway sooner or later."<sup>15</sup> However, Tabbernee does not want to remove the distinctions altogether. He adds that "the 'catholic' context in which Tertullian's 'Montanist' works were written means that the type of Montanism revealed by these writings may have differed considerably from Phrygian Montanism," as well as Montanism in Rome and elsewhere through the empire.<sup>16</sup> Tabbernee laments that

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<sup>13</sup> Timothy David Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 130–42; see also Trevett, *Montanism*, 68–9; Jaroslav Pelikan, "Montanism and its Trinitarian Significance," *Church History* 25, no. 2 (June 1956): 104–5; K.E. Kirk, "The Evolution of the Doctrine of the Trinity," in *Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation*, ed. A.E.J. Rawlinson, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1933), 214–5; regarding the orthodoxy of Montanism and its relationship to the Church, see also David Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 44. Friedrich Loofs, "Christologie, Kirchenlehre," in *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1898); and Waldemar Macholz, *Spuren binitarischer Denkweise im Abendlande seit Tertullian*, PhD diss., Kämpfe, 1902, offer a nuance of this position arguing that Tertullian did not originally join the Montanists for their theological novelty, but ended up being greatly affected by the Montanists' pneumatology. Pelikan, "Montanism," 105, rightly acknowledges the difficulty of supporting such a claim. However, Loofs and Macholz do still fall under the umbrella of those scholars who hold that Tertullian was both Montanist and orthodox in his doctrine, and indeed argue that the Montanist doctrine assisted Tertullian in furthering his own doctrine of God.

<sup>14</sup>William Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy and Polluted Sacraments: Ecclesiastical and Imperial Reactions to Montanism*, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*, vol. 84 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 131.

<sup>15</sup>Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy and Polluted Sacraments*, 131.

<sup>16</sup> Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy and Polluted Sacraments*, 131. In light of this argument, Tabbernee refutes Ronald Knox's claim, "Montanism, for us, means Tertullian," which virtually equates the two. For this claim, see Ronald A. Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion* (London:

Tertullian's account of Montanism in its unique North African form is the only surviving account, for Tertullian was not representative of Montanism throughout the empire, and yet scholars cannot get a clear picture of Montanism elsewhere without looking through the lens of Tertullian's context.

Jaroslav Pelikan's approach gives the basis for Tabbernee's argument, for Pelikan argues that Tertullian was so forceful in his personality and vigorous mind that he likely changed Montanism in third-century North Africa as much as Montanism changed him.<sup>17</sup> Be that as it may, Pelikan recognizes Tertullian's insistence that the Paraclete came to establish a new discipline rather than a new teaching.<sup>18</sup> Though Montanism would eventually go on to depart from the church's teachings, in Tertullian's context it was the moral rigor and call for a higher standard of holiness that made this movement so appealing, not its theological novelty or innovation.<sup>19</sup>

In his work on Tertullian, Timothy Barnes comes to a similar conclusion though from a different angle. Rather than attempting to defend Tertullian against the charges of heresy, Barnes claims that "Tertullian's Montanism must be assessed dispassionately ... his orthodoxy on matters of doctrine remained impeccable, but his position in the Christian society of Carthage deteriorated."<sup>20</sup> Yet for Barnes, this paradox must be recognized, for "Tertullian helped to rescue the Catholic Church from theological heresy precisely because he was a Montanist."<sup>21</sup> Trevett similarly argues that Tertullian

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Oxford University Press, 1949), 25.

<sup>17</sup> Pelikan, "Montanism," 104. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)*, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 101. Trevett, *Montanism*, 67, makes a similar claim saying, "[Tertullian] was surely capable of using and modifying the Prophecy to his own cherished ends and there is a lot we do not know about the Prophecy in Asia and in Africa."

<sup>18</sup> Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 100.

<sup>19</sup> Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 101–4.

<sup>20</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 142.

<sup>21</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 142.

remained catholic in his thinking even as he embraced Montanism, so that his Montanist treatises speak of doctrines and practices almost identical to his undeniably catholic writings. For Trevett, “Tertullian the Montanist was Tertullian the Montanist catholic.”<sup>22</sup> At the same time, Eric Osborn asserts that Tertullian’s embrace of Montanism came out of his concern for theological precision regarding doctrine. Tertullian’s understanding of the transcendent spiritual nature of the church, and the continuity of this thought through all his works, offers a strong argument against the idea of Tertullian being a schismatic. Thus, while “the church was offended by much that he wrote ... it could never forget him because he so clearly belonged within its life.”<sup>23</sup> Douglas Powell argues in a similar manner for the notion of an *ecclesiola en ecclesia* in which Tertullian embraced many of the principles of the New Prophecy without ever leaving the church.<sup>24</sup> For this position, Tertullian’s adherence to Montanism later in life must be understood as a moral and ethical commitment, even while he remained doctrinally sound and faithful to the true church.<sup>25</sup>

A subset of this position actually holds that the North African Montanists were the reformers of the North African church rather than an errant or schismatic group. Andrew McGowan argues that in “early third-century Carthage, he was ecclesially

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<sup>22</sup> Trevett, *Montanism*, 69, 73–6. Trevett adds that Tertullian did not wish to split apart from the church, but rather wanted to reform it from its moral laxity and worldliness.

<sup>23</sup> Eric Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 257–8, also 212–3.

<sup>24</sup> “A small church within a church.” Douglas L. Powell, “Tertullianists and Cataphrygians,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 29, no. 1 (March 1975): 38. Rankin’s study of the relationship of Montanism to the church further supports this thesis of an *ecclesiola en ecclesia*.

<sup>25</sup> Erich Nestler, “Was Montanism a Heresy?,” *Pneuma* 6, no. 1 (Spr 1984): 75; see also Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, 3rd ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 2:421. Nestler and Schaff both argue a nuanced position within this broad category. Nestler argues that if the distinction between theology and practice can be made, then Montanism was not a heresy, but if the distinction cannot be made, then it must be viewed as a heresy. Yet Nestler wants to caveat his statement, saying “But if one compares Montanism with heretical movements of the second and third century, one cannot help but feel that calling it a heresy would be too harsh a judgement,” 75. Schaff similarly says, “Montanism was rooted neither, like Ebionism, in Judaism, nor, like Gnosticism, in heathenism, but in Christianity; and its errors consist in a morbid exaggeration of Christian ideas and demands” 2:421.

marginal precisely because he was doctrinally orthodox.”<sup>26</sup> By this statement, McGowan asserts that Tertullian adhered to the rule of faith but lived it out under the aegis of the New Prophecy. Frederick Klawiter also affirms this interpretation of North African Montanism stating, “In the West, Montanism was also a protest against a secularization of the church.”<sup>27</sup> He continues by arguing that Montanism, as experienced by Tertullian, was conservative and sought to reform the church and hold it accountable to a higher standard of morality.<sup>28</sup> As the church in North Africa and Rome fell into issues of worldly living and an errant understanding of the monarchy of God leading to an implicit rejection of the Trinity, Tertullian and the Montanists of North Africa were those individuals who defended the trinitarian faith through their emphasis on the Paraclete.<sup>29</sup>

Justo González supports this position when he asserts, “In becoming a Montanist Tertullian claimed for himself the conservative position, over against what he declared to be the innovations of the bishops—especially the bishops of Rome.”<sup>30</sup> Rather than innovating, the Paraclete was simply revealing the implicit instructions of the apostles exactly as Jesus claimed he would in John 16:12–15.<sup>31</sup> By following the Spirit’s

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<sup>26</sup> Andrew Brian McGowan, “Tertullian and the ‘heretical’ origins of the ‘orthodox’ Trinity,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14, no. 4 (2006): 456. See also Hans von Campenhausen, *Die Entstehung Der Christlichen Bibel*, Beiträge Zur Historischen Theologie 39 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1968), 258. Von Campenhausen also argues that Montanism “ist eine eher reaktionäre als revolutionäre Bewegung.”

<sup>27</sup> F. C. Klawiter, “The New Prophecy in Early Christianity: The Origin, Nature and Development of Montanism AD 165–220,” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1975), 17.

<sup>28</sup> Klawiter, “The New Prophecy,” 17–8.

<sup>29</sup> McGowan, “Tertullian,” 449–55. In constructing his argument, McGowan also challenges the view held by many scholars of a doctrinally orthodox but ethically Montanist Tertullian, proposing that Tertullian’s discipline would have stemmed from his doctrine, so that such a divide introduces an arbitrary distinction alien to Tertullian. The distinction of doctrine and discipline does show up in Tertullian, but not in such a developed way as to support the sharp division between the two.

<sup>30</sup> Justo L. González, “Athens and Jerusalem Revisited: Reason and Authority in Tertullian,” *Church History* 43, no. 1 (March 1974): 24.

<sup>31</sup> “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you” ESV.

interpretation of the apostles' teaching, Tertullian and his fellow Montanists were the true heirs of the apostles even as the catholic bishops were abdicating that role through their failure to follow the Spirit's teachings. González does acknowledge that Tertullian was, in fact, involved in introducing some innovation, but recognizes that Tertullian could not see himself in that way.<sup>32</sup> Rather, Tertullian saw himself as a reformer seeking to purify the church from within rather than abandon it for another teaching.

The third category of arguments proves the most convincing of the three major categories, though its internal variances require a few comments regarding the view of this dissertation. David Wilhite affirms the notion of an *ecclesiola en ecclesia*, following Powell and Rankin, but helpfully asks the question of whether such a schismatic structure is necessary to understand Tertullian's Carthaginian context.<sup>33</sup> As mentioned above, Tabbernee laments that Tertullian's writings remain the primary source of the North African expression of the New Prophecy, for Tertullian's writings cannot be compared to others to see their similarities and differences. Following these two scholars, the later Montanism of Asia Minor in the fourth century should not necessarily be read back into the New Prophecy encountered by Tertullian in his second- and third-century North African context. Rather, the situation must be examined in light of Tertullian's comments and similar comments made by other North African figures, such as Cyprian and Perpetua, on the continuation of prophetic activity in Carthage. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that those Christians drawn to the moral and ethical rigor of this new teaching were able to remain within the church while simultaneously holding teachings of the New Prophecy.<sup>34</sup> The following discussion of the Holy Spirit's activity, seen initially in

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<sup>32</sup> For Tertullian, the idea of innovation and new teaching was deeply problematic, for the truth was old and heresy was new. For this argument, see Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 29.

<sup>33</sup> David Wilhite, "Identity, Psychology, and the Psychici: Tertullian's 'Bishop of Bishops,'" *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 5 (January 2009): 5–6, 6n12.

<sup>34</sup> Wilhite fleshes out this view further in his chapter, "The Spirit of Prophecy: Tertullian's Pauline Pneumatology," in *Tertullian and Paul*, ed. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite, Pauline and

Tertullian's later writings but also in Cyprian's, supports the notion that a charismatic group of Carthaginian Christians who held to a rich pneumatological spirituality could coexist within the larger body of the Carthaginian church. Therefore, when discussing Tertullian's affiliation with Montanism in his later years, it is best to refer to Tertullian as an adherent of the New Prophecy who at the same time remained a doctrinally faithful and committed member of the local Carthaginian church.

### **Comparison of Similar Themes**

Tertullian's thoughts on a number of ethical and moral issues developed over the course of his life and writings, yet the similarities between his earlier and later works' emphasis on the Spirit's activity must not be overlooked. For Tertullian, the importance of the Spirit's work in the life of both the church and individual believers was a key facet of his spirituality. As he embraced Montanism and its emphasis on the role of the Paraclete, his view regarding the magnitude of influence the Spirit exerted over the church only increased. Though some of his later works emphasized new aspects of the Spirit's activity, many of his earlier observations and emphases regarding the Holy Spirit's work continued to be developed throughout his corpus.<sup>35</sup>

### **Rule of Faith**

In light of his new emphasis on the Paraclete's role in leading men to greater understanding, one might assume that Tertullian no longer held as tightly to the traditional rule of faith as he had in his earlier writings. This assumption, however, must be challenged, for in one of his strongly Montanist works, *Against Praxeas*, Tertullian presented his own opinion regarding the ongoing importance of the church's rule of faith.

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Patristic Scholars in Debate, vol. 1 (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013), 45-49.

<sup>35</sup> These new areas of discontinuity in his understanding of the Spirit's activity will be discussed beginning on page 135.

Arguing against the monarchian heretic, Tertullian wrote, “We however as always, the more so now as better equipped through the Paraclete, that leader into all truth, believe (as these do) in one only God,” and Tertullian went on to give a similar sounding rule of faith to the one given in his earlier works.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, Tertullian not only provided the text of this rule of faith, but clarified that this text was, in fact, the rule of faith handed down from the apostles. Tertullian went on to write,

That this Rule has come down from the beginning of the Gospel, even before all former heretics, not to speak of Praxeas of yesterday, will be proved as well by the comparative lateness of all heretics as by the very novelty of Praxeas of yesterday. So equally against all heretics let it from now on be taken as already proven that whatever is earliest is true and whatever is later is counterfeit. Still, saving that demurrer, yet everywhere, for the offensive and defensive equipment of certain persons, place must be granted also for further discussions, if for no other reason lest each several piece of wrong-headedness seem to be condemned not after examination but by previous judgement.

This rule of faith protected the church from heresy, and in this particular work, the rule of faith led Tertullian to present the first formulation of the Trinitarian doctrine of God as well as the first Christian use of the term Trinity.<sup>37</sup>

Tertullian’s continued emphasis on the rule of faith as well as his emphasis on the role of the Paraclete’s instruction were not at odds in his own mind. Rather, the Paraclete was simply leading the church by expounding upon the teachings already present in the Scriptures and rule of faith. González observed the concurrent presence of these emphases in Tertullian’s thought commenting, “Scriptures and the rule of faith still hold as the two basic criteria for being able to claim the *auctoritas* of the apostles; but to

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<sup>36</sup> Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 2. See chapter 3 for a discussion of the rule of faith as presented in his pre-Montanist works.

<sup>37</sup> Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 2. Contradicting Praxeas, Tertullian continued by writing, “in particular this one which supposes itself to possess truth unadulterated while it thinks it impossible to believe in one God unless it says that both Father and Son and Holy Spirit are one and the same: as though the one (God) were not all (these things) in this way also, that they are all of the one, namely by unity of substance, while none the less is guarded the mystery of that economy which disposes the unity into trinity, setting forth Father and Son and Spirit as three, three however not in quality but in sequence, not in substance but in aspect, not in power but in (its) manifestation, yet of one substance and one quality and one power, seeing it is one God from whom those sequences and aspects and manifestations are reckoned out in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

these now is added the Paraclete ... Tertullian would say, however, that the Paraclete is no new addition, for his promise is included in the texts of the *auctores* and in the rule of faith.”<sup>38</sup> For Tertullian, the promise of the coming Paraclete who was sent by Christ was present in the Scriptures and the rule of faith, so that those who opposed the Paraclete’s teaching were actually the ones departing from the tradition, rather than those Christians, including himself, who embraced the Spirit’s leading.

### **Inspiration and Prophecy**

Unsurprisingly, Tertullian’s emphasis on the Spirit’s work of inspiration and prophecy remained a key theme throughout his entire corpus. Regarding these particular emphases on the Scripture, prophets, apostles, and the Spirit as the Vicar of Christ, Tertullian’s thought remained largely the same.

**Scripture.** Tertullian’s emphasis on the Spirit’s role in the inspiration of the Scriptures remained one of his key themes, with this emphasis appearing in seven of the fourteen extant Montanist works. One particular way in which the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures was through the direct inspiration of the various men who authored the biblical texts. In his work *De Anima*, Tertullian discussed the nature of the soul, and in doing so appealed frequently to the apostle John’s writings. Near the beginning of the work, Tertullian appealed to the first chapter of the book of Revelation, in which he saw, “John ‘in the Spirit’ saw ‘the souls of them that were slain for the word of God.’”<sup>39</sup> As he later drew *De Anima* to its close, Tertullian returned to Revelation 6 to note that this vision of paradise and the souls of the martyrs was revealed to John in the Spirit.<sup>40</sup> Tertullian was not limited to John for support, however, as seen in his work *De*

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<sup>38</sup> González, “Athens and Jerusalem,” 25.

<sup>39</sup> Tertullian, *De Anima* 8.

<sup>40</sup> Tertullian, *De Anima* 55.



*Virginibus Velandis*. In attempting to build a case for the necessity of veiling virgins from 1 Corinthians 7, Tertullian changed from speaking of the author of the epistle as Paul to the author as the Holy Spirit.<sup>41</sup> This simple replacement of Paul with the Spirit revealed his understanding of Paul's writing, for while Paul may have been the human author physically writing the epistle, it was the Holy Spirit whose words he wrote.

This pattern of pointing first to a human author of some biblical text before switching to a focus on the Spirit as the author showed up frequently in Tertullian's quotations from the Old Testament in his work *Adversus Marcionem*. In book 3.24, Tertullian first quoted Amos 9 and Isaiah 49 as they prophesied about Christ, but then immediately following these prophecies, Tertullian wrote, "Accordingly ... the Spirit says," followed by another quotation from Isaiah 60.<sup>42</sup> He then ended the paragraph stringing together quotations from Paul, Daniel, and Isaiah again. Having shown each of these figures to be prophesying or teaching about the same event of being joined with Christ at his return, Tertullian simply replaced the prophet's name with the Spirit in the middle of the paragraph without any further comment, leaving the reader to discern that the Spirit was the true author of these prophecies. The same pattern occurred again in book 4.11 and 4.40, when Tertullian once more quoted Isaiah 49 and later Isaiah 63, first citing Isaiah and then citing the Spirit as the author and prophetic Spirit, but similarly without further comment.<sup>43</sup>

In other places, Tertullian did make the inspiration of the author more explicit. In book 4.22, Tertullian quoted Habakkuk 3 and argued that the Spirit divinely inspired the prophet to speak about the future transfiguration of Christ standing in between Moses and Elijah. For Tertullian, when "the Spirit speaks in the person of the apostles" of

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<sup>41</sup> Tertullian, *De Virginibus Velandis* 4.

<sup>42</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 3.24.

<sup>43</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 4.11, 4.40.

standing in awe of the Lord's deeds, Tertullian interpreted that prophecy to apply to Peter's reaction to seeing Christ in his glory.<sup>44</sup> Clearer still, in book 5.11 Tertullian left out the author's name and gave the speech entirely to the Spirit, writing, "And of the giving of light to the world, who was it said to Christ, 'I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles' ... to this, by foreknowledge of the future, the Spirit answers in the psalm, 'There hath been set as a sign above us the light of thy countenance, O Lord.'"<sup>45</sup> A few chapters later, Tertullian wrote again, "in another place the Spirit speaks to the Father concerning the Son, 'Thou hast subjected all things beneath his feet.'"<sup>46</sup> In these two passages with their quotes from Psalms 4 and 8, Tertullian explicitly ascribes authorship of the Psalms to the Spirit. In these acts of either swapping out the author's name for the Spirit, or replacing it entirely, Tertullian revealed his understanding of the Spirit as the one who inspired all of the Scriptures through his direct inspiration of the human authors.

Tertullian also showed the Holy Spirit's inspiration of the Scriptures through his divine composition and organization of the text as well as his care for its interpretation. In his work *De Carne Christi*, Tertullian recounted a supposed prophesy of Ezekiel which prophesied the virgin birth, but in a less clear manner than the prophesy of Isaiah 7. In explaining the difficult prophesy, Tertullian wrote, "it is more than likely that by this expression the Holy Spirit, even then having you in mind, censured such as should argue about Mary's womb. Otherwise he would not, with the opposite of his usual clarity, have made a hesitating statement."<sup>47</sup> Similarly, in *Adversus Marcionem* 5.9, Tertullian reflected on Psalm 110 and a phrase that seemed superfluous to the original subject of Hezekiah. However, Tertullian argued that the wording had been chosen carefully, for

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<sup>44</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 4.22.

<sup>45</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.11.

<sup>46</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.17.

<sup>47</sup> Tertullian, *De Carne Christi* 23.

why would the phrase be needed “unless because the Spirit intended it to have a more subtle reference to Christ?”<sup>48</sup> Through these passages, Tertullian argued that the Holy Spirit had a direct hand in the exact wording of the Scriptures for a divinely intended purpose.

The Spirit was also involved in the proper interpretation of his divinely inspired Scriptures. Tertullian provided an example of this work of interpretation regarding 1 Thessalonians 5 in *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* when he wrote, “For this reason the majesty of the Holy Spirit, having discernment of thoughts of that sort, alleges also in the same epistle to the Thessalonians.”<sup>49</sup> Tertullian showed a similar example regarding 1 Corinthians 4 when he wrote that Marcion had twisted the Scriptures, but “to deprive you of this argument the Holy Spirit’s foresight has indicated in what sense he meant” the passage.<sup>50</sup> As part of his inspiration of the Scriptures, he had provided authoritative interpretations through other passages.

Though these mentions are the most explicit regarding the Spirit’s divine provision of proper interpretation, two other works speak of the Spirit’s overall organization of the Scriptures for maximum clarity. In *De Pudicitia* 19, Tertullian noted the need for continuity between the biblical authors, writing, “It is a matter of importance, then, to the Christian religion as such, that one should not believe John granted anything which Paul refused. Whoever regards this consistency of the Holy Spirit will be guided by Him to an understanding of His words.”<sup>51</sup> In order to gain a proper understanding of the text, one must assume that the Holy Spirit divinely inspired the authors to write in harmony with one another, not in contradiction. Finally, in *De*

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<sup>48</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.9.

<sup>49</sup> Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 24.

<sup>50</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.7.

<sup>51</sup> Tertullian, *De Pudicitia* 19.

*Virginibus Velandis* 10, as Tertullian was speaking once again of the Scriptural commands for virgins and women more generally, he wrote that the Holy Spirit could have written something similar about men elsewhere, but he chose not to do so. This comment revealed Tertullian's understanding that the entire Scriptures were inspired by the Spirit, such that the message of the Scriptures is consistent throughout all its writings.<sup>52</sup>

Though these references speak of but a few Scriptural passages for support, Tertullian recognized that he could have said much more. In his work *Against Praxeas*, Tertullian quickly moved through the Psalms and Isaiah saying, "Observe also the Spirit speaking in the third person concerning the Father and the Son ... These are a few out of many: for we make no pretense of turning up the whole of the Scriptures, since even in one passage at a time we bring to witness their plenary majesty and authority, and thus have the advantage in argument in (these) discussions."<sup>53</sup>

**Prophets.** In addition to speaking of the Holy Spirit's inspiration of the Scriptures, Tertullian also spoke of the Spirit's inspiration of prophecy more generally. In particular, John the Baptist was a special focus of Tertullian, and in *De Carne Christi* 21, Tertullian mentioned the encounter from the opening chapter of Luke between Mary and Elizabeth, who carried "within her that infant who as a prophet is already conscious of his Lord, but herself also is filled with the Holy Spirit."<sup>54</sup> In *Adversus Marcionem* 4.18, Tertullian looked once again to John's life as he offered a unique reading of John's learning of Christ's miracles. Since the Lord was now present on the earth and preaching, "it was necessary that that apportionment of the Holy Spirit which, after the manner of what was measured out to the prophets, had in John had the function of preparing the

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<sup>52</sup> Tertullian, *De Virginibus Velandis* 10.

<sup>53</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 11.

<sup>54</sup> Tertullian, *De Carne Christi* 21.

ways of the Lord, should now depart from John, having been drawn back again into the Lord, as into its all-inclusive headspring.”<sup>55</sup> While this reading differs from the majority of the early fathers on this text, it does reveal his understanding that the Holy Spirit inspired John with the gift of prophecy to prepare the way for Christ. Tertullian also pulled from Old Testament texts to support this view of the Spirit’s gift of prophecy, and he used the story of Balaam to illustrate the Spirit’s granting of divine speech. Just as Balaam could only speak the blessing from God toward the Israelites, upon being filled with the Spirit, so too would believers be given the words to say when standing in front of hostile authorities, just like Balaam in front of Balak.<sup>56</sup>

Tertullian also used the Spirit’s prophecies as a tool to refute heretics, particularly Marcion, and those Christians who hold back from following Christ wholeheartedly. Tertullian challenged the god of Marcion regarding his inability to prophesy the future. In contrast, Tertullian declared that the church “for our part shall produce both the Spirit and the prophesyings of the Creator, giving utterance as he directs.”<sup>57</sup> Tertullian then remarked that when the inadequacies of Marcion’s god became known, the church will continue to persevere as “the church of that God who himself exists, whose Spirit also is in operation, and his promise [is] being fulfilled.”<sup>58</sup> Speaking to Christians in the army who sought to avoid detection and subsequent martyrdom, Tertullian wrote, “I should not be surprised if such people were not figuring out how they could abolish martyrdom in the same way as they rejected the prophecies of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>59</sup> For Tertullian, the prophetic activity of the Spirit revealed the reality of eventual

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<sup>55</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 4.18.

<sup>56</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 4.28.

<sup>57</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.15.

<sup>58</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.15.

<sup>59</sup> Tertullian, *De Corona* 1.

suffering for Christians, and thus the Spirit's prophecies convicted these weak Christians who by rejecting such prophecies rejected the Spirit.

**Apostles.** Just as the Spirit inspired the Scriptures and prophets, so too did the Spirit inspire the apostles, and Tertullian heavily focused on the inspiration of Peter and Paul. Looking first at the Spirit's inspiration of Peter, Tertullian recognized that all of the apostles were filled with the Spirit at Pentecost such that they were able to speak in tongues.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, the apostles were able to carefully determine "on the authority of the Spirit," the proper teaching of the church regarding circumcision.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, Tertullian held that "in that well-known dispute about the observance of the Law, Peter was the first of all to be moved by the Spirit."<sup>62</sup> This special inspiration of Peter was also seen later in Peter's rebuke of Simon of Samaria's desire to buy the Spirit's power.<sup>63</sup> As the first leader of the church, Peter was given a special dispensation of the Spirit to carry out his role as the leader of the apostles.

In turning to look at the Spirit's inspiration of Paul, however, Tertullian's language became clearer. In his work *De Corona*, Tertullian observed that when Paul gave advice, Paul recognized that it was not always divinely inspired, but rather stated that God would reveal truth to the one who asked, "since he himself was accustomed to give counsel, when he had no precept of the Lord, and to establish some rules on his own authority, since he was in possession of the Spirit of God, the guide to all truth."<sup>64</sup> Tertullian saw that Paul was self-aware of his unique inspiration by the Spirit, so that he was able to discern when he was speaking in the Spirit as opposed to speaking from his

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<sup>60</sup> Tertullian, *De Ieiunio* 10.

<sup>61</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.2.

<sup>62</sup> Tertullian, *De Pudicitia* 21.

<sup>63</sup> Tertullian, *De Anima* 34.

<sup>64</sup> Tertullian, *De Corona* 4.

own wisdom. Yet in speaking about Paul's self-awareness regarding the Spirit's activity in his life, Tertullian revealed his view of the Spirit's inspiration of the apostles. For Tertullian:

the Apostles have the Holy Spirit in their own special, personal way; not partially, as all others have, but fully, in prophecy, miracles, and the gift of tongues. Accordingly, Paul advances the authority of the Holy Spirit for that course of action which he himself preferred us to follow. Thus it is no longer a mere counsel of the Divine Spirit which is given us but, in view of His majesty, this counsel is a command.<sup>65</sup>

The apostles were not merely average, or even above average, believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Rather, they were uniquely inspired by the Spirit to complete their apostolic work on behalf of the Lord for his church.

**Vicar of Christ.** Though Tertullian only briefly mentioned once this particular phrase in his work *De Virginibus Velandis*, the notion of the Spirit as the Vicar of Christ was still heavily in his mind. Tertullian wrote, "when the Lord sent the Paraclete it was in order that, as human inferiority was not able to grasp all things at once, teaching may be guided and arranged and brought to perfection gradually by that *vicario* of the Lord, the Holy Spirit."<sup>66</sup> The topic of discipline will be examined in much greater depth later, but his emphasis on the Paraclete connects heavily to this notion of the Spirit carrying on his task appointed him by Christ, even though the phrase is not used elsewhere. As the appointed representative of Christ, it was the role of the Holy Spirit to ensure the ever-increasing holiness of the church.

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<sup>65</sup> Tertullian, *De Exhortation Castitatis* 4.

<sup>66</sup> Tertullian, *De Virginibus Velandis* 1. In his critical edition, Dunn translates *vicario* as "substitute," which still carries the same meaning, but to show the connection more clearly, the Latin term has been used here.

## Anointing and Giving Gifts

Across Tertullian's works, the themes of the Spirit's anointing of Christ, the church, believers, and his accompanying gifts to his anointed ones remained consistent. Thus, in these later works, Tertullian simply strengthened his earlier support of these works of the Spirit rather than adding much new material.

**Anoints Christ.** In his later works, Tertullian was particularly focused on proving the true humanity of Christ and the connection between the Christ of the New Testament and the Creator of the Old Testament. To this end, Tertullian relied heavily on the prophecies of Isaiah 11 and 61 in his polemics against Marcion and Praxeas, among others. Looking first to Tertullian's use of Isaiah 11, in *De Corona* 15, he wrote, "Yours is a flower from the root of Jesse, upon which the grace of the divine Spirit has rested in all its fullness, a flower untainted, unfading and everlasting."<sup>67</sup> The Spirit rested upon Christ in his fulness as the promised descendant of David, and Tertullian frequently continued his quotation from the next few verses of Isaiah 11 which expanded upon the Spirit who rested on Christ, noting that the Spirit did so entirely and without measure.<sup>68</sup> Tertullian challenged Marcion's division of the Christ from the Creator by insisting, "there is no one of mankind in whom this diversity of spiritual testimonies has met together, except Christ, who was equated with a flower because of the grace of the Spirit, yet was accounted of the stem of Jesse, being descended from it through Mary."<sup>69</sup>

The other major text Tertullian used to refute the heretics was Isaiah 61 and Jesus' quotation of it in Luke 4. Contrary to Marcion's notion of a lesser Creator, Tertullian showed that it was the Creator who inspired Isaiah to prophesy regarding the Messiah's work among men. Having been the one to prophesy this truth about the

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<sup>67</sup> Tertullian, *De Corona* 15.

<sup>68</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.8.

<sup>69</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 3.17.



Messiah's work, Christ then claimed that very truth, having been sent by the Creator and anointed by the Spirit.<sup>70</sup> Tertullian argued similarly against the heretic Praxeas, showing the Son's connection to the Father through the promised anointing of the Son by the Spirit as prophesied by Isaiah.<sup>71</sup> In his argument against Praxeas, Tertullian also pulled in Isaiah 42 as evidence that the anointing of the Son with the Spirit was evidence that the Son was sent from the Father.<sup>72</sup>

A third key text for Tertullian was the baptism of Christ, at which the Spirit descended upon Christ as a dove. In his work arguing for the true flesh of Christ on earth, Tertullian appealed the coming of the Spirit as a dove as proof that God could add a substance to himself, as in the case of Christ's humanity, without sacrificing or distorting his divinity. Just as the Spirit could descend as a dove while also remaining spirit, so too could Christ take on flesh. Though the purpose of the passage is not a discussion of the Spirit's anointing of Christ, Tertullian does appeal to this anointing as proof of the Spirit's divinity.<sup>73</sup> Additionally, this act of anointing further affirmed his arguments from Isaiah 11 and 61.

**Anoints the church.** In his Montanist works, Tertullian did not expound greatly on the Spirit's anointing of the church, rather emphasizing the Paraclete's leading as shown below. Yet neither did he deny the Spirit's anointing upon the church, for he used the Spirit's anointing as proof that Marcion's god was false. In book 3.23 against Marcion, Tertullian wrote that the Holy Spirit builds the church, "which is the temple and home and city of God."<sup>74</sup> When the church came about following Christ's coming and

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<sup>70</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 4.14.

<sup>71</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 11.

<sup>72</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 11.

<sup>73</sup> Tertullian, *De Carne Christi* 3.

<sup>74</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 3.23.

ascension, the Spirit no longer dwelt with the Jews and house of Israel, but instead the Christians as the body of Christ. For this reason, James Lee affirmed that for Tertullian, “The church is intrinsically linked to the Spirit ... the church is led by the Spirit, for the power and work of the Spirit is demonstrated in and through the church.”<sup>75</sup> Additionally, he called out Marcion for rejecting the Creator as God on the basis of the Spirit’s indwelling of the temple of God. In book 5.6, Tertullian quoted 1 Corinthians 3 regarding the church as the temple of God in whom the Spirit dwelt. He then challenged Marcion, “If man is both the property and the work and the image and likeness of the Creator, and is flesh by virtue of the Creator’s earth, and soul by virtue of his breathing, then Marcion’s god is dwelling entirely on someone else’s property, if it is not the Creator whose temple we are.”<sup>76</sup> Thus the anointing of the church by the Spirit, who is sent by Christ from the Father, who is also the Creator, shows the connection between the Spirit and the Creator. This connection is such that Marcion cannot have a Spirit-anointed church since he rejected the Creator who sends the Spirit.

**Anoints believers.** While Tertullian did affirm that the Spirit anointed the church as a whole, he spent a significant amount of time showing how the Spirit anointed individual believers. One of the key texts he appealed to for this affirmation was Joel 2:28–29, in which God promised to pour out his Spirit upon all people. For P.C. Atkinson, the interpretation of Joel 2:28–29 was the key text for Tertullian, as he argued that the Spirit was poured out upon believers to help them interpret the Scriptures.<sup>77</sup> In his work *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*, Tertullian was defending the value of creation, and particularly humanity, when he appealed to Joel’s prophecy that the Spirit will be poured

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<sup>75</sup> James K. Lee, “The Church and the Holy Spirit: Ecclesiology and Pneumatology in Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine,” *Studia Patristica* 91 (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2017), 190.

<sup>76</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.6.

<sup>77</sup> P.C. Atkinson, “The Montanist Interpretation of Joel 2:28, 29,” *Studia Evangelica*, vol. VII, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1982), 14.

out on all flesh. Although he acknowledged that Isaiah 40 called all flesh to be grass and affirmed that humanity is fallen, nevertheless Joel's prophecy encouraged Tertullian that God was not discarding humanity, but planning to redeem it.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, this outpouring of the Spirit was to come in the last days, so contrary to Marcion's concern with the timing of the events, Tertullian affirmed that God characteristically poured out his Spirit on all flesh at the fulness of time according to his divine plan.<sup>79</sup>

Tertullian did not simply affirm this outpouring, however, but also provided several discussions of the benefits that this outpouring of the Holy Spirit brought to believers. The first of these benefits was assurance of salvation, and Tertullian quoted 2 Corinthians 5 regarding the promise of the Spirit as a pledge of a believer's salvation.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, the Spirit's anointing of the believer enabled that believer to have Christ as one's spouse.<sup>81</sup> Tertullian also discussed this assurance in his work *Adversus Marcionem* 5, where he defended the purpose of God sending his Son, namely the adoption of his people as sons. He combined Galatians 4 with Joel 2 to show that now that Christ had come and his work allowed believers to become children of God, the sending of the Spirit upon all believers was "to make it certain that we are God's sons."<sup>82</sup> Later in the same book, he commented that the promised Holy Spirit was for all nations to whomever trusted in Christ, based upon the promise given in Joel 2.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, near the end of his treatise *Adversus Praxean*, Tertullian again observed Christ's promise that he would send the Spirit as a pledge of their salvation and for their edification and comfort.<sup>84</sup> This

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<sup>78</sup> Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 10.

<sup>79</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.4.

<sup>80</sup> Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 51.

<sup>81</sup> Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 63.

<sup>82</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.4.

<sup>83</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.17.

<sup>84</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 26.

assurance was sure, so that the Spirit prevented Christians from any affliction apart from that which was for the purpose of growing believers in their faith.<sup>85</sup>

The assurance brought about from the anointing and outpouring of the Spirit was an important benefit, but not the only one. In his work *De Anima*, Tertullian developed his discussion of Joel 2 further, noting that the outpouring of the Spirit upon men was accompanied by the presence of visions and prophecies. Tertullian wished to treat the subject of visions carefully, and he affirmed that God could and did send visions that at various times could be: “honest, holy, prophetic, inspired, edifying, and inducing to virtue,” and other such good uses. Not every vision, however, necessarily came from God, for sometimes they were simply a dream or even possibly a deceptive vision. Thus, while these visions accompanying the outpouring of the Spirit on all believers were often to be celebrated, they must also be tested to ensure that they were legitimate.<sup>86</sup>

The final key benefit of the outpouring of the Spirit was the Spirit’s aid in the interpretation of the Scriptures. Tertullian’s comments on this particular benefit come from his work *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*, in which he wrote:

But yet God Almighty, while in these last days, against these devices of unbelief and frowardness, by his most provident grace he pours forth of his Spirit upon all flesh, upon his servants and handmaids, has also put life into the struggling faith of the resurrection of the flesh, and has by clear lights upon words and meanings purged the original documents of all darkness of ambiguity.<sup>87</sup>

With the outpouring of the Spirit, as promised in the prophecy of Joel 2, believers were now able to experience the renewal of their faith and the increased ability to read the Scriptures with clarity through the enlightening of the Holy Spirit. Speaking of the practices surrounding baptism elsewhere in the same work, Tertullian wrote, “the flesh is overshadowed by the imposition of the hand that the soul may be illumined by the

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<sup>85</sup> Tertullian, *De Fuga in Persecutione* 2.

<sup>86</sup> Tertullian, *De Anima* 47.

<sup>87</sup> Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 63.

Spirit.”<sup>88</sup> The practice of invoking the Spirit to anoint a person in conjunction with their baptism was followed by the coming of the Spirit to illuminate that individual such that they were now able to understand better the things of God. One aspect of that illumination was the increased ability to read the Scriptures and discern the truth contained within them.

**Gives all good gifts.** Accompanying the anointing of believers was the bestowal of all of the Spirit’s gifts, though the entirety of Tertullian’s discussion of these gifts during his Montanist period appeared in the fifth book of his work *Adversus Marcionem*. In examining this aspect of Tertullian’s pneumatology, Roy Kearsley remarked that the real power in the church was the Spirit who bestowed the charismata and performed miracles.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, Laura Nasrallah noted that these spiritual gifts were made available to believers through the coming of the Paraclete.<sup>90</sup> These scholars have understood Tertullian rightly, for he understood the Spirit’s work in the life of the church and the believers to be the true sustaining power of the church.<sup>91</sup> In *Adversus Marcionem* 5.8, Tertullian again repeated the promised outpouring of the Spirit by Joel 2, but then spent a significant portion of the text unpacking the accompanying gifts of the Spirit from Isaiah 11. Since Christ has sent the Spirit to dispense spiritual gifts to his people, Tertullian provided a brief discussion of these gifts by comparing the prophecy of Isaiah to Paul’s discussion of the Spirit’s gifts in 1 Corinthians 12. As Tertullian worked through the gifts, he built his argument against Marcion claiming, “see how both when he sets out

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<sup>88</sup> Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 8.

<sup>89</sup> Roy Kearsley, *Tertullian’s Theology of Divine Power*, Rutherford Studies in Historical Theology (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Published for Rutherford House by Paternoster Press, 1998), 87–8.

<sup>90</sup> Laura Salah Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity*, Harvard Theological Studies 52 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 154.

<sup>91</sup> Additional discussions of the Spirit’s gifts and graces to his people will appear throughout the following sections, and especially in the latter portion of the chapter regarding Tertullian’s particularly Montanist teachings. In this section, the presence of spiritual gifts will be treated more generally.

the apportionments of the one Spirit and when he expounds their particular bearing, the apostle is in full agreement with the prophet.”<sup>92</sup> Thus the same Spirit who inspired Isaiah is the one who both inspired Paul and distributes his gifts to the church.

The presence of these gifts or charismata was an important identifier for Tertullian as to the identity of the true church. James Ash noted, “Tertullian also demonstrates that the Montanists fully exploited the Pauline theology of charismata. In *Against Marcion* he lists the charismata of 1 Cor 12 and challenges Marcion to show that any of them exist in Marcionite churches, claiming that they are “forthcoming from my side without any difficulty.”<sup>93</sup> The presence of these spiritual gifts demonstrated the presence of the Holy Spirit who distributed them. Without the Spirit, the charismata too were absent. As a result, a church without the presence of the charismata was subject to questioning whether it was a true church anointed by the Spirit.

### **Strengthening and Training**

This third major area of Tertullian’s writings on the Spirit was the most affected by his interaction with Montanism. In order to show both the continuities and new developments in Tertullian’s thought on the subjects of the Spirit’s strengthening captives, teaching believers, and leading them into all truth, the similarities will be briefly treated first in this section, while the differences will be treated later to see a more complete picture of Tertullian’s pneumatological developments.

**Strength to the captives.** For Tertullian, the Spirit was heavily involved in strengthening the captives in preparation for their impending martyrdom. As Christians, they should expect to suffer as their Lord did while he was on earth, and yet the

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<sup>92</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.8.

<sup>93</sup> James L. Ash, “Decline of Ecstatic Prophecy in the Early Church,” *Theological Studies* 37, no. 2 (June 1976): 241.

Christians could have confidence that they would not be overcome by the suffering. Rather, the Holy Spirit would sustain them through the present suffering. In *Adversus Praxean*, Tertullian affirmed that Christ suffered in the flesh, but it was Christ rather than the Father, and in the flesh rather than in his divinity. He concluded his argument by saying, “neither can we suffer on behalf of God except there be in us the Spirit of God, who also speaks concerning us the things which belong to (our) confessorship, while himself not suffering, but granting us the ability to suffer.”<sup>94</sup> In his understanding, it was the Spirit who provided the believers with the ability to follow the Lord in his suffering.

Since believers were called to follow Christ in his suffering, the threat of death should not cause believers undue concern. Rather, Tertullian cited Paul in his argument against Marcion to show the proper view toward death:

Consequently, because he has shown that this is the better thing, so that we may not be saddened, as perhaps we may, by the anticipation of death, he says that we have from God the earnest of the Spirit, as it were holding the pledge of that hope of being clothed upon; and that so long as we are in the flesh we are absent from the Lord, and therefore ought to think it better rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord: so that we may even welcome death with gladness.<sup>95</sup>

Those believers who had been anointed with the Spirit could have complete confidence in their salvation, such that death was merely the occasion of leaving this world to be with the Lord. Furthermore, afflictions and death were the result of the devil and his host seeking to harm the church, but such attacks need not bring fear to the believers. Rather, Tertullian encouraged his fellow Christians saying, “What room is there for adverse accidents in the presence of God? What room for hostile attacks in the presence of Christ? What room for demonic assaults in the presence of the Holy Spirit?”<sup>96</sup> If the believers were giving themselves fully to God and resting in the power of the Spirit, they

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<sup>94</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 29.

<sup>95</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.12.

<sup>96</sup> Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 58.

were certain to withstand the trials of this life and experience the joy of being united with their Savior after their faithful martyrdom.

**Teaches and trains believers.** The Spirit was not only present in affliction, however, but rather was intimately involved in the Christians' lives in order to train them up in strength in the face of adversity. One of the key works of the Spirit in a believer's life was the gradual mortification of sin and sanctification of the individual. In *De Anima*, Tertullian appealed to 1 Corinthians 15 as he declared that the Spirit would be upon those who walked after God and worked to subdue works of the flesh rather than acting upon carnal desires.<sup>97</sup> This process of walking after the Spirit was not an easy one, and in his work *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*, Tertullian affirmed the teachings of Romans 8 and Galatians 5 regarding the inability of the flesh to produce good works, given that the carnal flesh was at war against the Spirit.<sup>98</sup>

The believer need not despair, however, for the Spirit provided hope by his very presence that the full and complete righteousness by faith would eventually come, and this expectation should encourage believers to strive after holiness all the more.<sup>99</sup> Believers ought to expect growth from this striving, not because of their own efforts, but because the Spirit was working in them to bring about this transformation. Looking to the teaching of Paul in 2 Corinthians 4, the temporal sufferings of this world were but momentary and light afflictions when compared to the weight of glory that awaited believers. Reflecting on this passage, Tertullian wrote, "For the inner man also will here and now need to be renewed by the supply of the Spirit, progressing in faith and doctrine from day to day, not hereafter, not after the resurrection, when we are to be renewed

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<sup>97</sup> Tertullian, *De Anima* 11.

<sup>98</sup> Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 10.

<sup>99</sup> Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 23.



certainly not from day to day but once and for all.”<sup>100</sup> Though the act of walking after the Spirit rather than the flesh was not one that a believer could hope to accomplish in his own power, the Spirit was ready to provide the very power that the believer was lacking.

**Leads believers into truth.** In this category, more than any other, the emphasis of Montanism on Tertullian’s thinking becomes clear, as will be shown later. Nevertheless, Tertullian maintained his belief that the Holy Spirit was the one who revealed God and the things of God to believers. Kyle Hughes observed the importance of this emphasis writing, “In Tertullian’s understanding ... the Spirit’s primary purpose is to guide Christians into an understanding of the Trinity.”<sup>101</sup> As in his pre-Montanist works, the Spirit was fundamental in keeping the church rightly oriented toward the truth and protected against heresies.

In his Montanist works, this emphasis was particularly important in the refutation of the Valentinians and Marcion. Against the Valentinians, Tertullian discussed the benefit of using the dove as a symbol of the Spirit, for just as the dove dwelt in the high places and faced the light, so too did the Spirit dwell in the heavens and pointed toward the light of Christ. In his appearance and his work of pointing men to the Son, the Spirit helped reveal God as Triune and yet still one. Though man could only know God imperfectly in earlier times, they could now know the truth about God.<sup>102</sup> This truth about God contradicted the entire Valentinian system of Aeons, and Tertullian took great delight in mocking their convoluted system.

Yet against Marcion, Tertullian’s polemical rhetoric was even stronger. In book two, Tertullian wrote,

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<sup>100</sup> Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 40.

<sup>101</sup> Kyle R. Hughes, “The Spirit Speaks: Pneumatological Innovation in the Scriptural Exegesis of Justin and Tertullian,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 69, no. 6 (November 2015): 469.

<sup>102</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Valentinianos* 3.

As though you knew God, you admit his existence: as though you did not know him, you make him a subject of discussion: and what is more, you lay complaint against him as though you did know him, though if you really knew him you would neither complain nor even discuss. You grant him the name, while denying the reality behind the name, the reality of that greatness which is described as 'God': and you fail to appreciate that this greatness is such that if a man had been able to know it in all its fullness it would not have been greatness.<sup>103</sup>

Marcion, in his rejection of the Trinity and dualistic beliefs about God, had revealed his own ignorance and lack of the Spirit's leading, and thus revealed himself to be a heretic. Tertullian went on to declare that the Scriptures had already predicted such heretical teachings as far back as the prophecies of Isaiah, who declared that the mind of the Lord and the things of God far surpassed human understanding. Tertullian continued by quoting Romans 11 and 1 Corinthians 2, where Paul reflected on this teaching of Isaiah and noted that only the Spirit could know the mind of God. Thus, Marcion's complete ignorance regarding the true things of God revealed that he lacked the Spirit who provided knowledge of such things, and thus declared himself to be outside the church. Furthermore, this problem was not limited to Marcion, but to all men whose dismissal of God's teachings and laws as foolish revealed their own rejection and lack of the Spirit.<sup>104</sup>

The Spirit's role of guiding men to truth was not merely to uncover heretics, but also to strengthen the church. In *De Corona*, Tertullian noted that when Paul gave advice to any of the churches to whom he wrote, he recognized that it was not always divinely inspired, but rather stated that God would reveal truth to the one who asked. Paul certainly had been given wisdom from the Spirit, and he did provide counsel that was not directly a command from the Lord on a number of occasions regarding particular situations.<sup>105</sup> However, even in these situations, Paul made his listeners aware that he was

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<sup>103</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 2.2.

<sup>104</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 2.2.

<sup>105</sup> One such occasion was 1 Cor 7 on the topic of marriage. Ironically, Tertullian would actually use the fact that Paul had spoken on his own accord rather than providing the direct command of the Spirit to argue for a tighter view on celibacy and marriage in his Montanist works, as will be discussed below.

writing in his own words, but as one “in possession of the Spirit of God, the guide to all truth.”<sup>106</sup> For Tertullian, this divine guidance was key to the health of the church, for though the inspired words of the Scriptures, understood in the context of the rule of faith, held absolute authority, the Spirit still provided guidance regarding particular situations for Christians at the present time.

## **Salvation**

In his Montanist works, Tertullian more frequently discussed his understanding of the Spirit’s work in salvation, though the content of the teaching remained largely the same. His most significant emphasis was upon the Spirit’s work in bringing about salvation and the accompanying sanctification that followed salvation, but he also spoke of the Spirit’s role in the conviction of sin and providing a way to Christ.

Prior to an individual receiving salvation, he had to first become aware that he needed salvation. Tertullian appealed to Christ’s parable of the wedding supper and the unwilling or uninterested invited guests to speak of the role of the Spirit in this work of conviction. Tertullian wrote, “So again he adds: ‘I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets’—this will be the Holy Spirit, giving the summons to the feasters.”<sup>107</sup> Unless the Spirit make men aware of their need for salvation, they will never come willingly. Tertullian did not stop with conviction, however, for once a person has been convicted of sin, he must be pointed to Christ as the Savior. In his opening chapter of *De Anima*, Tertullian wrote, “For, who can know truth without the help of God? Who can know God without Christ? Who has ever discovered Christ without the Holy Spirit? And who has ever received the Holy Spirit without the gift of faith?”<sup>108</sup> Once the

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<sup>106</sup> Tertullian, *De Corona* 4.

<sup>107</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 4.31.

<sup>108</sup> Tertullian, *De Anima* 1.

individual recognized his need for a Savior, the Holy Spirit then directed that individual to Christ. Bray summarized this work of the Spirit well when he wrote:

The goal of the Christian life was not a mystical participation in the ineffable essence of God the Father, but rather the imitation of the Son who had made him known to men. It was the work of the Holy Spirit, therefore, to reveal the will of the Father in the obedience of the Son and to emphasise the complete harmony and equality between them.<sup>109</sup>

Only in knowing the Son could one find salvation, so one of the Spirit's works was to make the Son known to men.

Having an awareness of the Son was the starting point, but changing a person's heart from unbelief to belief and trust in God required the quickening work of the Spirit. Tertullian heavily drew his understanding of the Spirit's work of bringing a person to eternal life from John 3 and 6. The necessity of the Spirit in bringing about salvation and new birth in a person was based upon "the words of Christ: 'Unless a man be born of water and the Spirit, he will not enter into the Kingdom of God'; in other words, he cannot be holy."<sup>110</sup> This statement from the Lord settled the matter in Tertullian's mind, but he reflected upon it further saying:

Therefore, when the soul embraces the faith, it is regenerated by this new birth in water and virtue celestial; the veil of its former corruption is removed and it at last perceives the full glory of the light. Then is it welcomed by the Holy Spirit as, at its physical birth, it was met by the evil spirit. The flesh naturally follows the soul which is now wedded to the Spirit and, as part of the wedding dowry, it is no longer the slave of the soul but the servant of the Spirit.<sup>111</sup>

In this reflection upon John 3 and the Spirit's work in the new birth, Tertullian also appealed to John 6. He affirmed the biblical teaching that men could not inherit the kingdom of God on their own merit, but rather the Spirit was needed to prepare them to inherit the kingdom, quoting John 6 that the Spirit was the one who quickened men while

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<sup>109</sup> Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God*, 91.

<sup>110</sup> Tertullian, *De Anima* 39.

<sup>111</sup> Tertullian, *De Anima* 41.

the flesh profited them none whatsoever. Indeed, only the presence of the Spirit and his work in men's lives was sufficient to grant entrance into the kingdom of God.<sup>112</sup>

In his polemic against Marcion, this emphasis on the Spirit's role in salvation became even stronger as Tertullian sought to show that the God of the Old and New Testaments was the one Creator God. Throughout book five of *Adversus Marcionem*, Tertullian placed Old and New Testament passages side by side to provide support for his argument that the one God was the author, as seen by the consistent and harmonious teaching of both testaments. Regarding the Spirit's role in salvation, Tertullian argued that the same God who announced in Joel 2 that he would pour out the Spirit on all men also proclaimed through Paul in 2 Corinthians that the law brought death while the Spirit brought life. He then makes the connection still more explicit claiming, "by the letter he kills through the law, and by the Spirit he makes alive through the gospel."<sup>113</sup> This act of quickening through the Gospel was the same act mentioned above, namely the Spirit's work in pointing men to Christ and bringing about the new birth. He makes a similar argument a few chapters later, this time using a discussion of circumcision from Jeremiah, Moses' words in Deuteronomy, and Paul's epistle to the Romans. Just as the Jews had to circumcise themselves in the Old Testament for their hardness of heart, the "Spirit who circumcises the heart will be his whose is the letter that slices off the flesh."<sup>114</sup> From both of these arguments, Tertullian showed that the Spirit was the one through whom the fleshly and natural body would be raised to eternal life with Christ, but only the Spirit could bring about this change in men.<sup>115</sup> Bray is helpful again here, succinctly proposing, "It was the work of the Holy Spirit to make this act of redemption

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<sup>112</sup> Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 50.

<sup>113</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.11.

<sup>114</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.13.

<sup>115</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.10.

effective in the life of the Christian, so that he might live the life of the incarnate Son of God as an end in itself.”<sup>116</sup>

Related to the Spirit’s work in bringing about salvation was the Spirit’s ongoing work in sanctification. Having performed the initial new birth in the hearts of men, the Spirit then continued the work to purge further from men’s hearts all earthly pursuits in order to replace them with spiritual and heavenly things.<sup>117</sup> Even as far back as creation, the plan of God had been to create men in his image, to send the Son to take on human nature to provide the means for salvation, and then to send the Spirit to sanctify men and conform them to the image of the Son.<sup>118</sup> This mortification of sin would not be an easy task, and indeed not possible for those still walking in the flesh without the aid of the Spirit, but Christians now had the Spirit to help them in the task. The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead, made the Christians’ formerly dead hearts alive, and now dwelt in the believers—this Spirit was the one whom was working in the lives of believers to mortify sin and the deeds of the flesh to bring about greater sanctification.<sup>119</sup> As a final encouragement, Tertullian also mentioned that the receipt of the Spirit at the time of salvation, and his subsequent indwelling of the believer, provided a sweet assurance for believers regarding the validity of their salvation and their new relationship with God marked by an ever-increasing holiness on the part of the believers.<sup>120</sup>

## **Baptism**

This final section on the continuities of Tertullian’s teaching is also the smallest, for the majority of Tertullian’s discussion of the Spirit’s work in baptism

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<sup>116</sup> Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God*, 90–91.

<sup>117</sup> Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 46.

<sup>118</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 12.

<sup>119</sup> Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 46.

<sup>120</sup> Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 26; also *Adversus Marcionem* 5.3.

occurred in his pre-Montanist works. In his Montanist works, Tertullian only directly tied the Spirit's work to baptism in the first book of his polemic against Marcion. Tertullian challenged Marcion to account for the use and value of baptism given his dismissal of so many other Christian doctrines. In doing so, Tertullian proposed several possible answers that Marcion could have provided, followed by a refutation of each answer. One of these answers was that baptism bestowed upon the believer the Holy Spirit. Tertullian adamantly refused to allow Marcion this answer, instead saying, "how can one grant the Spirit who has not first supplied a soul? For soul is in some sort that on which the Spirit constructs its abode."<sup>121</sup> He then summarized his list of refutations in his typical concise style: "Thus [the Spirit] sets his seal upon a man who has never to his mind been unsealed: he washes a man never to his mind defiled: and into this whole sacrament of salvation he plunges flesh which has no part or lot in salvation. Not even a rustic will go and water land which is to return no fruit—unless he is as stupid as Marcion's god."<sup>122</sup> In this small paragraph, Tertullian showed that his beliefs regarding the work of the Spirit in baptism had remained consistent, for the Spirit provided life to the believer and then washed the new Christian clean in the waters of baptism.<sup>123</sup> Yet without the Spirit first providing new life, as in the case of the heretic Marcion and his disciples, the sacrament of baptism did nothing, for the Spirit would not wash that individual he had not first brought to salvation.

### **Examination of Different Themes**

As shown above, Tertullian's views on the Holy Spirit's work had numerous continuities across both his pre-Montanist and Montanist writings. While these

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<sup>121</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 1.28.

<sup>122</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 1.28.

<sup>123</sup> For Tertullian's views on baptism, in addition to the discussion in the preceding chapter of Tertullian's *De Baptismo*, see also Kearsley, *Tertullian's Theology of Divine Power*, 83–4; Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God*, 91–2.

continuities help assert that the work of the Spirit was an important theme for Tertullian throughout his life, several new developments appeared in his Montanist writings. A number of these themes appeared in some of his earlier writings but are pressed further in his later writings, while others were completely new ideas that he had not previously discussed in his pre-Montanist works. Additionally, some of these developments may have been the product of a growth in Christian maturity and knowledge, but others were almost certainly a result of his interaction with Montanism. The most significant themes from these writings are the emphasis on ecstatic prophecies and the new understanding of truth brought by the Paraclete; before moving into these larger themes, however, a few smaller themes will first be examined.

### **Incarnation**

Throughout his later writings, Tertullian was engaged in conflicts with various heretics, and in his polemics against Marcion and Praxeas, one recurring theme was the importance of the Incarnation. In defending the two natures of the Incarnate Son, Tertullian referenced Christ's divine conception through the work of the Holy Spirit. In his work against Marcion, Tertullian defended the doctrine that Christ was sent to the world from the Creator, and that he was the one who not only fulfilled but promoted the law. In the midst of his discussion about Christ's coming to earth, Tertullian also took a brief moment to assert the true humanity of Christ against any claim that he was merely appearing to be man, calling Christ, "'one new man, making peace'—if really new, then really a man, not a phantasm, but himself new, and born in a new manner, of a virgin, by the Spirit of God."<sup>124</sup> Though the statement is rather small in the midst of a larger discussion, it nevertheless shows Tertullian's acknowledgement of the role of the Spirit in the Incarnation through the work of divine conception. Tertullian defended the

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<sup>124</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.17.



Incarnation more explicitly in his treatise against Praxeas, who had not only made distinctions between the Father and Son, but subsequently made distinctions between the two natures of Christ. In refuting this distinction, Tertullian wrote, “For certainly it was of the Holy Spirit that the virgin conceived, and what she conceived that she brought to birth.”<sup>125</sup> Again, the Spirit’s work in the Incarnation was not a focal point for Tertullian, but such an indisputable fact that he could use this work of the Spirit to help prove his point about the two natures of Christ.

### **Persecution**

One theme which experienced significant development from Tertullian’s earlier to later writings was the Christian response to persecution. In his pre-Montanist works, Tertullian had presented the view that while Christians ought to expect persecution for their faith, the Spirit would sustain them through the persecution. This persecution was not to be sought out, but rather endured faithfully. In his Montanist works, however, Tertullian presented a different view, seen especially in his work titled *De Fuga in Persecutione*. In *De Fuga in Persecutione* 6, Tertullian argued that the command in Matthew 10 to flee from persecution was limited to the apostles, for the circumstances were specific to their time and situation. Instead, in his current time, and especially since the Holy Spirit had now been poured out upon all believers, the command to flee persecution no longer remained applicable to the church.<sup>126</sup> Later in the work, Tertullian argued that if one was attentive to the leading of the Spirit, he would recognize that the Spirit condemned those who fled.<sup>127</sup> Bray astutely observed that in Tertullian’s Montanist works, “the answer was that persecution was not really an evil but a test of faith. For

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<sup>125</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 27.

<sup>126</sup> Tertullian, *De Fuga in Persecutione* 6.

<sup>127</sup> Tertullian, *De Fuga in Persecutione* 11.

those who walked in the Spirit there was nothing to fear; rather they rejoiced that the judgment of God had vindicated their faith.”<sup>128</sup> In light of persecution being such a test of faith, Tertullian pushed the issue still further, looking to 1 John for support as he wrote, “if you ask counsel of the Spirit, what will He approve more than that counsel of the Spirit? Indeed, by it almost all are advised to offer themselves for martyrdom, never to flee from it.”<sup>129</sup> The true Christian walking fully in the Spirit not only endured martyrdom, but sought the opportunity to prove his faith true.

This new attitude toward persecution served to increase Tertullian’s teaching on the Spirit’s role of giving strength to believers that they might endure their impending martyrdom. Kearsley notes that in Tertullian’s Montanist writings, all Christians enjoyed a level of assistance from the Spirit to help them in the midst of persecution.<sup>130</sup> Rachel Moriarty also observed that for Tertullian, martyrs “demonstrate the continuing active witness of Spirit-filled confessors.”<sup>131</sup> Tertullian’s writings support her observation, for Tertullian continued in *De Fuga in Persecutione* by reminding Christians that they were called to follow after the narrow way of the Lord. For this reason, “the Paraclete is needed, the guide to all truth, the source of all endurance. Those who have received Him will never care to flee from persecution or basely to buy their freedom, for they will have Him who will be at our side, ready to speak for us when we are questioned as well as to comfort us in suffering.”<sup>132</sup> Though Christians were likely to be tormented and killed, they need not fear given the presence of the Spirit who would sustain them in faithfulness to the end. Indeed, the embrace of martyrdom was one of the characteristic differences

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<sup>128</sup> Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God*, 46.

<sup>129</sup> Tertullian, *De Fuga in Persecutione* 9.

<sup>130</sup> Kearsley, *Tertullian’s Theology of Divine Power*, 86.

<sup>131</sup> Rachel Moriarty, “The Claims of the Past: Attitudes to Antiquity in the Introduction to *Passio Perpetuae*,” in *Studia Patristica* 31 (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1997), 309.

<sup>132</sup> Tertullian, *De Fuga in Persecutione* 14.

between the pagans and the Christians for Tertullian. In his work *De Anima*, Tertullian wrote, “if you lay down your life for God as the Paraclete recommends, then it will not be of some gentle fever in a soft bed, but in the torture of martyrdom. You must take up your cross and follow Him, according to the precept of Christ.”<sup>133</sup> In the act of remaining faithful unto martyrdom, Christians revealed their wholehearted devotion to God above all else, even their own lives.

### **Ecstasy/Ecstatic Visions**

A new and substantial emphasis in Tertullian’s Montanist works was the importance of ecstatic prophecies or visions that revealed truth to the church. In his most explicit extant statement about the presence of ecstatic prophecy and its role in the church, Tertullian wrote:

We attribute corporeal extension to the soul not merely because of the influence of our reasoning as to its corporeal nature but also because of the conviction we have from Revelation. For, since we acknowledge the existence of spiritual *Charismata*, we have deserved to enjoy the gift of prophecy after the death of John. There is among us a sister who has been favored with wonderful gifts of revelation which she experiences in an ecstasy of the Spirit during the sacred ceremonies on the Lord’s day. She converses with the angels and, sometimes, with the Lord Himself. She perceives hidden mysteries and has the power of reading the hearts of men and of proscribing remedies for such as need them. In the course of the services, she finds the matter of her visions in the Scripture lessons, the psalms, the sermon, or the prayers.<sup>134</sup>

Tertullian recounted his fellow Christian sister’s experience with ecstatic prophecy, and the benefits which came from such an encounter. At the end of this discussion, he mentioned that these visions occurred while she “was rapt in the Spirit.” Nasrallah helpfully expounds upon Tertullian’s understanding of this ecstasy explaining that the ecstasy accompanying prophecy was a power of the Holy Spirit which effected prophecy,

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<sup>133</sup> Tertullian, *De Anima* 55.

<sup>134</sup> Tertullian, *De Anima* 9. Tertullian’s work *De Ecstasi* likely included a fuller discussion of ecstatic prophecy, but regrettably has been lost, and thus this statement is the most explicit in his remaining works.

and prophecy was the guarantor of truth.<sup>135</sup> Thus for Tertullian, the fact that this woman was ecstatically prophesying lent a strong proof regarding the accuracy of her prophecies.

This account was not the only discussion of ecstasy for Tertullian, but rather simply a current example of a practice that occurred throughout the Scriptures. A few chapters after the account provided above from *De Anima*, Tertullian also argued that Adam experienced a state of ecstasy when his words regarding marriage actually predicted the greater relationship of Christ and the church. As Adam began to make his proclamation, “there descended upon him that ecstasy, the power of the Holy Spirit which produces prophecy.”<sup>136</sup> Nasrallah again helps explain Tertullian’s view in this passage saying: “Tertullian thus maintains that Adam in his ecstasy prophesied about Christ and the church, but that this prophecy is due to an *accidens* of the Holy Spirit—which he also called an *ecstasis*—that is set in apposition to *sancti spiritus vis*—a power of the Holy Spirit, which is an *operatrix prophetiae*.”<sup>137</sup> Tertullian also mentioned Adam’s prophecy in *De Ieiunio*, lamenting that Adam failed to follow God faithfully even “after the spiritual ecstasy in which he had prophetically interpreted that ‘great sacrament’ with reference to Christ and the Church.”<sup>138</sup> Tertullian went on to say that Adam’s failure to remain faithful cost him his ability to comprehend and grasp the leadings of the Spirit, and thus he fell into temptation and sin.

Tertullian also argued that the transfiguration of Christ on the mountain caused Peter to enter into an ecstatic state. When the gospel mentioned that Peter was unaware of

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<sup>135</sup> Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly*, 133, 147.

<sup>136</sup> Tertullian, *De Anima* 11.

<sup>137</sup> Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly*, 58.

<sup>138</sup> Tertullian, *De Ieiunio* 3.

his own speech, Tertullian understood that to mean that he was in a state of ecstasy.

Tertullian answered the question of its meaning by asserting that Peter was unaware:

For the reason by which we, in our argument for the new prophecy, claim that ecstasy or being beside oneself is a concomitant of grace ... For when a man is in the Spirit, especially when he has sight of the glory of God, or when God is speaking by him, he must of necessity fall out of his senses, because in fact he is overshadowed by the power of God—on which there is disagreement between us and the natural men ... And so it was not possible for him to know what he had said when in the Spirit, and not in his natural senses.<sup>139</sup>

The language mentioned in this passage was similar to the language Tertullian used to speak of the Christian woman in Carthage who experienced ecstatic visions, for in both cases, being fully caught up in the Spirit allowed the individual to see some of the glory of God and lose a certain sense of oneself on account of being overwhelmed by God. Tertullian used the ecstatic vision of Peter, as well as referring to the woman mentioned in *De Anima*, to refute Marcion's god. Tertullian challenged Marcion to provide any examples of ecstatic prophetic activity occurring as a result of the Spirit's movement among his followers, but asserted that no such examples existed. In contrast, Tertullian affirmed that examples were readily available from within the church; furthermore, these examples agreed with the "rules and ordinances and regulations of the Creator."<sup>140</sup> The presence of these ecstatic prophecies that were in accordance with the teachings of God thus revealed the Spirit to be at work within the true church. Additionally, in light of Tertullian's claims that these prophecies were not contradicting the teachings of the church, but rather in line with the church's doctrines, some scholars such as James Ash have argued that the prophecies of Montanism were not rejected on theological grounds, but rather sociological. Ash writes, "The Church was undergoing the profound changes of becoming an establishment. The pressures of institutional success demanded an authority

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<sup>139</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 4.22.

<sup>140</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.8.

structure dominated by responsible establish-mentarians, not erratic ecstasies.”<sup>141</sup> This argument may somewhat over-simplify the complex situation, but nevertheless highlights Tertullian’s claims that the ecstatic prophecies occurring in the Carthaginian church remained within the bounds of the rule of faith.

### **Paraclete**

The most recognizable and important development in Tertullian’s understanding of the Spirit’s activity was his emphasis on the Paraclete. Though the term itself was simply another name for the Holy Spirit, in the teachings of Montanism, the Paraclete took on special importance. As mentioned above, later Montanist teachings would elevate the Paraclete’s importance to an improper level, but in Tertullian’s experience of the New Prophecy in North Africa, this increased emphasis on the Paraclete led him to think deeply about the extent and manner of the Spirit’s activity in the Carthaginian church. Yet this emphasis on the Paraclete cannot account entirely for Tertullian’s discussion of the Spirit’s activity. Bray helpfully asserted, “Tertullian’s pneumatocentric theology was not the product of a diluted Montanism, but the logical consequence of his whole approach.”<sup>142</sup> Bray went on to argue that for Tertullian, the Paraclete was not ushering in new knowledge or doctrinal teachings, but rather bringing “the power to put the teaching and example of Christ into practice.”<sup>143</sup> Indeed, this use of the term *Paracletus*, taken directly from Jesus’ promise to send the Spirit to the disciples following his ascension, emphasized “as nothing else could do the close link between the work of the Holy Spirit and the Person of Christ.”<sup>144</sup> González argued similarly that for Tertullian, the Paraclete merely revealed more clearly the teachings of apostles that

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<sup>141</sup> Ash, “Decline of Ecstatic Prophecy in the Early Church,” 249.

<sup>142</sup> Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God*, 73.

<sup>143</sup> Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God*, 107–8.

<sup>144</sup> Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God*, 108.

Tertullian felt the church had abandoned. While González was not convinced that some of these teachings were not, in fact, innovations, he nevertheless affirmed that Tertullian remained certain that he was not introducing any new teachings that differed from the intended meaning of the Scriptures.<sup>145</sup> In the following sections, the various areas of Christian practice in which Tertullian saw the Paraclete providing greater clarity will be examined.

**Leading into new truth.** At the most fundamental level, the Paraclete's role was to fulfill Christ's promise in John 16 that the promised Spirit would lead the apostles, and indeed all Christians, into all truth. Though they were unable to bear the full weight of that truth at the time Jesus spoke with them, they could rest assured that the coming Paraclete would lead them into the full measure of truth necessary for the church. In his work *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*, Tertullian affirmed that the promised Paraclete now provided the full interpretation of the Scriptures, so that "he has, by the new prophecy pouring in from the Paraclete, dispelled all former ambiguities, and what they will have it are parables, by an open and clear preaching of the whole mystery: and if you drink his fountain, you will be athirst for no doctrine."<sup>146</sup> Although some of the more difficult passages had challenged the apostles prior to the Paraclete's arrival, the Paraclete illuminated the Scriptures so that the apostles could rightly understand them and teach the church accordingly. Similarly, Tertullian opened his work *De Virginibus Velandis* with a discussion that the Paraclete has now brought a new standard of righteousness by his work of making the Scriptures clearer. In the beginning the people of God had the Old

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<sup>145</sup> González, "Athens and Jerusalem," 25.

<sup>146</sup> Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 63.

Testament, then the gospels, but now that the Paraclete had come to speak what was commanded by Christ, a new standard of righteousness was established.<sup>147</sup>

The goal of this increased clarity and greater understanding of truth was to allow believers to comprehend the nature of God more fully and rightly. In refuting Praxeas, Tertullian argued that the church affirmed the divine economy of the Trinity, so that they properly affirmed the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as God. Yet the way in which the church came to this affirmation was because they “by the grace of God examine both the occasions and the intentions of the Scriptures, especially as being disciples not of men but of the Paraclete.”<sup>148</sup> Later in his polemic against Praxeas, Tertullian asserted in greater detail the important work of the Holy Spirit:

This is he [Christ] who meanwhile has poured forth the gift which he has received from the Father, the Holy Spirit, the third name of the deity and the third sequence of the majesty, the preacher of one monarchy and also the interpreter of the economy for those who admit the words of his new prophecy, and the leader into all the truth which is in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit according to the Christian mystery.<sup>149</sup>

For the believers to have any chance of rightly understanding God as Triune in the persons of the Father, Son, and Spirit, they needed the Spirit who would interpret the Scriptures and lead them into the truth. This need for the Spirit to help believers understand the God they worshipped formed the basis of Tertullian’s vehemence toward Praxeas, who advocated a monarchian heresy arguing that any distinction and personhood of the Son and Spirit robbed the Father of his full divine monarchy. Contrary to his opponent, Tertullian argued that the Spirit’s teaching led believers to see that the Trinity was the proper understanding of God and in no way overthrew the monarchy of the Father. Thus, by his false teaching and his desire to drive out the Paraclete who taught the

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<sup>147</sup> Tertullian, *De Virginibus Velandis* 1.

<sup>148</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 13.

<sup>149</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 30.



truth regarding God as Triune, Praxeas was actively involved in leading the church astray.<sup>150</sup>

Another way in which the Paraclete led believers into all truth was through the expounding of previous teachings. In *De Ieiunio*, Tertullian called the Paraclete, “the confirmer of all such things ... the guide of universal truth.”<sup>151</sup> Tertullian was adamant that the Paraclete was not revealing new truth contrary to the Scriptures, however, but instead more fully expounding upon them. Building upon Christ’s promise in John 16, he acknowledged in his work *De Monogamia* that the teachings on monogamy and celibacy brought forth by the Spirit might initially seem to be novel, for they had not been clearly revealed until the Paraclete made them known. Yet the apparent novelty of these teachings did not require divergent teachings, and Tertullian refuted the Psychics for arguing that apparent novelty required diversity. He acknowledged that any divergence from the rule of faith and discipline handed down by the church ought to be suspect, for such divergence was an act of heresy. In contrast, the Paraclete’s teaching would first point to Christ and glorify him, and only after doing so would he begin to reveal his exposition of the teaching regarding particular disciplines.<sup>152</sup> Bray summarized Tertullian’s position saying, “Always his aim was to be more, rather than less, traditional, and any notion of novelty, either in the Paraclete’s revelations or in his own arguments, was specifically rejected.”<sup>153</sup> Through the Paraclete’s fuller exposition of certain teachings regarding discipline, he helped the believers better understand the teachings of Christ and the Scriptures, which then granted believers a greater ability to pursue sanctification.

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<sup>150</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 1.

<sup>151</sup> Tertullian, *De Ieiunio* 10.

<sup>152</sup> Tertullian, *De Monogamia* 2.

<sup>153</sup> Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God*, 64.

**Discipline.** As mentioned above, one of the primary ways the Paraclete led believers into all truth was providing further clarity on matters of discipline and practice. In the opening chapter of *De Virginibus Velandis*, Tertullian wrote, “when the Lord sent the Paraclete it was in order that, as human inferiority was not able to grasp all things at once, teaching may be guided and arranged and brought to perfection gradually by that substitute of the Lord, the Holy Spirit.”<sup>154</sup> If the purpose of the Paraclete was to help believers gradually grow in their sanctification through a proper understanding of discipline, “What then is the function of the Paraclete if not this: that teaching is directed, the Scriptures are made known, understanding is reformed, and that it is advanced towards better things?”<sup>155</sup> By providing this understanding of the Paraclete’s work as establishing discipline, Tertullian was thus emboldened in his desire to lead both himself and others toward a greater standard of holiness. Although believers had been unable to follow Christ’s example and commands in their own power, the Paraclete provided them with the ability to follow Christ’s example more closely, even as he showed them how far they still had to go to follow such an example.<sup>156</sup> Tertullian did not assume that believers could be perfect in this life, but that inability should never stop them from seeking an ever-increasing level of sanctification through the power of the Paraclete.

Having stated that the Paraclete’s purpose was to bring a greater understanding regarding Christian discipline for the purpose of greater sanctification, Tertullian also clarified the nature of that discipline.<sup>157</sup> Tertullian wrote, “Hardness of heart prevailed until the coming of Christ; it should be enough that infirmity of the flesh prevailed until

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<sup>154</sup> Tertullian, *De Virginibus Velandis* 1.

<sup>155</sup> Tertullian, *De Virginibus Velandis* 1.

<sup>156</sup> Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God*, 108–9, 112.

<sup>157</sup> Discipline will be treated more generally here, with the specific themes of marriage, fasting, and forgiveness examined individually below.

the coming of the Paraclete.”<sup>158</sup> In both *De Monogamia* and *De Pudicitia*, Tertullian particularly emphasized the Paraclete’s role in subduing the flesh in order to pursue the things of the Spirit. In *De Monogamia*, Tertullian expounded upon Christ’s statement to the disciples at Gethsemane from Matthew 26 that the Spirit was willing but the flesh was weak. He challenged his readers to reflect upon the length of time that they were willing to use Christ’s statement regarding the flesh’s weakness as an excuse to avoid following him as they ought. Instead, the believers ought to focus on the promise that the Spirit is willing and ready, so that they rely on this promise to use the Spirit’s help in defeating the flesh, for the weak flesh will not be able to stand against the ready and willing Spirit.<sup>159</sup>

Similarly, Tertullian argued in *De Pudicitia* that none were able to be holy before the Spirit was sent from heaven, who “came from heaven to establish this discipline.”<sup>160</sup> The state of men prior to Christ’s coming was a state of slavery to the flesh while being underneath the judgment of the law. In such a state, men were only interested in the things of the flesh. The coming of the Spirit, however, brought about a change in state; having been freed from that slavery to the flesh and sin, men were now able to walk according to the Spirit’s new teachings and discipline.<sup>161</sup> Bray states, “For [Tertullian] asceticism was an internal affair, and proceeded from a mind transformed by the Spirit. Virtue was not a matter of fanatical rejection but of reasoned restraint, governed by a will fortified with the indwelling presence of the Paraclete.”<sup>162</sup> Without the presence of the Paraclete, men could not hope to practice the proper discipline taught by the Paraclete.

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<sup>158</sup> Tertullian, *De Monogamia* 14.

<sup>159</sup> Tertullian, *De Monogamia* 14.

<sup>160</sup> Tertullian, *De Pudicitia* 11.

<sup>161</sup> Tertullian, *De Pudicitia* 17.

<sup>162</sup> Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God*, 130.

This notion of needing the Paraclete to follow the stricter disciplines the Paraclete himself taught was at the base of many of Tertullian's conflicts with others in the Carthaginian church. He called these individuals Psychics, since they refused to receive the promised Paraclete's teachings, and in his intense desire for the church's sanctification, he turned his sharp wit and style typically reserved for heretics on his fellow Christians. Tertullian saw their refusal of the Spirit's teaching as a natural consequence of their refusal to accept the Paraclete at all, and he likewise anticipated their subsequent and precipitous fall into a lusting after the things of the flesh. The more they resisted the Spirit, and thus pursued their own natural impulses, the more they became estranged from the Spirit. He then cited God's statement regarding the wicked world at the time of Noah, for God declared that his Spirit would not abide with men on account of their wickedness and lusting after the flesh.<sup>163</sup> Elsewhere, Tertullian recounted a declaration which he believed the Paraclete had uttered through Prisca, which condemned those who rejected the Paraclete as being carnal themselves, even as they supposedly affirmed that they hated the things of the flesh.<sup>164</sup> In the very process of denying the discipline required by the Paraclete regarding the subjugation of the flesh, they inadvertently revealed themselves to be living in accordance with the flesh rather than pursuing the things of God.

Tertullian was not content, however, only to speak generally regarding their failure of pursuing their own interests rather than practicing the Spirit's discipline. Rather, he decided to point out particular ways in which the Psychics' rejection of the Spirit's discipline led them to indulge carnal desires. In *De Ieiunio*, Tertullian appealed to the apostles' teaching in Acts 15 regarding the key areas that the Holy Spirit led the apostles to emphasize: the avoidance of sacrifices, sexual immorality, and blood. He then

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<sup>163</sup> Tertullian, *De Monogamia* 1.

<sup>164</sup> Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 11.

asserted that the Psychics had practiced a life of self-indulgence through their insistence on pursuing adultery through the practice of remarrying after one's spouse was divorced or deceased.<sup>165</sup> A fuller discussion of Tertullian's understanding of the Paraclete and marriage will be discussed in the following section, but in both *De Ieiunio* and *De Pudicitia*, he accused the Psychics of failing to follow the teachings of Scripture and pursue holiness. In his characteristic style, he argued that anyone who affirmed that remarriage was acceptable for a Christian was "a most faithful advocate, surely, of adulterers, fornicators and the incestuous, since it is to honor such as these that he has taken up this case against the Holy Spirit—that he should read out in public a statement which bears false witness against His Apostle."<sup>166</sup> In Tertullian's understanding, any action that was not growing the believer in greater sanctification was having the opposite effect, especially if the Paraclete had given particular instructions regarding a certain discipline or practice that were failing to be followed. As part of his consuming desire to be holy before the Lord and see his fellow Christians stand before God holy as well, Tertullian was willing to unleash a barrage of arguments and attacks against any who might resist such a growth in holiness. The Paraclete's discipline was not merely beneficial for living one's life, but essential for any believer seeking true holiness.

**Marriage.** As mentioned above, one of the particular disciplines instituted by the Paraclete was the requirement that Christians only marry one time, if at all. Tertullian and the Montanists arrived at this conclusion from a particular reading of Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 7. While Tertullian recognized that the original command of God in Genesis was to be fruitful and multiply, he argued that the same God who gave that command was able to update the command as it best fit his plan. For this reason,

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<sup>165</sup> Tertullian, *De Ieiunio* 11–2.

<sup>166</sup> Tertullian, *De Pudicitia* 16.

“there is a limitation imposed upon intercourse—a limitation which, on the authority of the Paraclete, is justified among us by that spiritual reckoning which permits only one marriage while in the faith,” and thus ought to be followed by all Christians.<sup>167</sup> Carrying this argument further, Tertullian argued that just as Christ abrogated certain commands of Moses as not being the best command but rather an indulgence, so too the Paraclete could do for Paul regarding the indulgence of a second marriage.<sup>168</sup>

Tertullian’s argument for monogamy and the repudiation of second marriages was based upon the placement of a high value on virginity. In speaking about the advantages of virginity over marriage, he noted that marriage distracted a person from the Holy Spirit and worship of God. Given this unfortunate truth, Tertullian continued, “if spiritual insensibility, which results from the use of sex in even a single marriage, repels the Holy Spirit, how much more will this be the case if the practice continues in a second marriage!”<sup>169</sup> In Tertullian’s mind, one should never wish for an indulgence when a better option was available. Tertullian anticipated resistance from the Psychics on this issue, but he argued that the Spirit had already foreseen that this resistance would take the form of an appeal to all things being lawful for Christians, which was the reason that the Scriptures affirmed that even if all things were lawful, not all were helpful. Additionally, this discipline applied to all believers, not merely those in leadership within the church, so that no one could work his way out of conforming to the Spirit’s discipline.<sup>170</sup>

Tertullian also expected the critique that the Montanist view of monogamy was novel, and thus subject to scrutiny regarding its legitimacy. Writing to refute such a critique, Tertullian declared, “This, then, it what we prove: the law of monogamy is

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<sup>167</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 1.29.

<sup>168</sup> Tertullian, *De Monogamia* 14.

<sup>169</sup> Tertullian, *De Exhortatione Castitatis* 11.

<sup>170</sup> Tertullian, *De Monogamia* 12.

neither new or foreign to our way of life. Rather it is a law of long standing and one proper to Christianity. Therefore, we ought to acknowledge that the Paraclete has re-established it, and has not promulgated it for the first time.”<sup>171</sup> To support this declaration, Tertullian appealed to God’s creation of man and woman in Genesis. He argued that God had created a single helper for man, rather than multiple, and he appealed to the union of the two into one flesh, which again precluded a third. If God had intended humans to engage in second marriages, he would not have established the practice of a single marriage at the beginning; any option of second marriages was merely an indulgence to the frailty of humanity, but the coming of the Paraclete rendered such an indulgence unnecessary and void. Furthermore, he attempted to show that the indulgence of even a single marriage was truly an indulgence, citing Paul’s desire that all would be single so as to devote themselves fully to the Lord. Knowing the weakness of his people, however, the Paraclete allowed the continued existence of a single marriage as a kindness through his role as the Comforter, rather than requiring perfect continence.<sup>172</sup>

If monogamy was the prescribed option, and second marriages forbidden, then it followed that those practicing second marriages were, in fact, digamists needing to be excommunicated from the church. Tertullian’s insistence on such a response stemmed from his desire to honor the Lord, for he wrote, “we excommunicate digamists as persons who bring disgrace upon the Paraclete by their irregular discipline. We set the same liminal limit for adulterers and fornicators also. They will shed tears barren of peace and receive from the Church nothing more than the publication of their shame.”<sup>173</sup> This strong response again revealed Tertullian’s wholehearted commitment to pursue holiness regardless of the cost, and on this particular issue, he believed it better to dismiss those

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<sup>171</sup> Tertullian, *De Monogamia* 4.

<sup>172</sup> Tertullian, *De Monogamia* 3.

<sup>173</sup> Tertullian, *De Pudicitia* 1.

who sinned rather than seek restoration with them.

**Fasting.** Another discipline that the Paraclete taught believers was the importance of regular fasting. Tertullian asserted that his opponents especially disliked the Montanists for this particular discipline, for:

It is these which raise controversy with the Paraclete; it is on this account that the New Prophecies are rejected: not that Montanus and Priscilla and Maximilla preach another God, nor that they disjoin Jesus Christ (from God), nor that they overturn any particular rule of faith or hope, but that they plainly teach more frequent fasting than marrying.<sup>174</sup>

In his critique of the Psychics, he argued that they simply wished to indulge their appetites for both food and marriage more than they wished to pursue God. Tertullian took his critique of the Psychics still further when he argued that even the heretics were more religious than the self-indulgent Christians who refused to fast. While the pagans were willing to fast on behalf of their idols, these carnal Christians refused, to which Tertullian sharply responded, “For to you your belly is god, and your lungs a temple, and your paunch a sacrificial altar, and your cook the priest, and your fragrant smell the Holy Spirit, and your condiments spiritual gifts, and your belching prophecy.”<sup>175</sup>

On the contrary, the Montanists were not so concerned about their appetite; Tertullian sarcastically remarked that they were aware that the Spirit was not bestowed upon men in proportion to their weight.<sup>176</sup> Yet even among the Montanists, the discipline of fasting was not to be observed beyond the bounds of Scripture, but rather in accordance with the teachings of the apostles. Tertullian asserted that while the apostle spoke of abstaining from meat, “he does so from the foresight of the Holy Spirit, precondemning already the heretics who would enjoin *perpetual* abstinence to the extent

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<sup>174</sup> Tertullian, *De Ieiunio* 1.

<sup>175</sup> Tertullian, *De Ieiunio* 16.

<sup>176</sup> Tertullian, *De Ieiunio* 17.



of destroying and despising the works of the Creator; such as I may find in the person of a Marcion, a Tatian, or a Jupiter, the Pythagorean heretic of today; not in the person of the Paraclete.”<sup>177</sup> Thus for the Montanists, the fasts served a positive purpose rather than a negative one.

The reason for the Montanists’ insistence upon regular fasts was their belief that the act of fasting was a weapon of spiritual warfare. Tertullian cited both Peter’s and Paul’s act of fasting before entering into hardship or spiritual battle, and he reflected upon whether the act of fasting was a tool used by the Spirit to gain entrance into men’s hearts who might otherwise have been resistant.<sup>178</sup> Similarly, Tertullian wrote that the Holy Spirit, as the Paraclete, issued his mandates regarding fasting and abstinence on account of his foresight of future temptations facing the believers, so as to strengthen the prayers of believers in the midst of their fasts.<sup>179</sup> With this understanding of the value of fasting, the resistance of the Psychics toward the practice of fasts not only was an affront to the direct mandates of the Paraclete, but also a disregard for one’s fellow believers and countrymen. While Tertullian’s harsh rhetoric ought not be completely excused, his vehemence toward them is better understood in light of his views on this particular discipline.

**Forgiveness.** Having examined the Paraclete’s expounding of discipline, as understood by Tertullian and his fellow North African Montanists, the final area of forgiveness must be inspected. As mentioned earlier, Tertullian appealed to Acts 15 for a list of particularly important commands from the Holy Spirit. While believers were to practice holiness in all aspects of their lives, the particular issues of sacrifices to idols,

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<sup>177</sup> Tertullian, *De Ieiunio* 15. Italics original.

<sup>178</sup> Tertullian, *De Ieiunio* 8.

<sup>179</sup> Tertullian, *De Ieiunio* 13.

sexual immorality, and blood were especially terrible sins. As the first rule given by the apostles with the authority of the Holy Spirit, failure to abstain from such actions was such a reprehensible sin that it was not eligible for repentance. Regarding those particular actions, “clearly enough He has refused to pardon those sins which He has set aside for retention. He has refused what He has not definitely granted.”<sup>180</sup> In the same work, Tertullian appealed to Hebrews with its warnings that those who have participated in the Spirit and found repentance will not again receive it if they fall away.<sup>181</sup>

Tertullian recognized that God alone had the power to forgive sins, and those who sinned directly against God could only be forgiven by God. Contrary to the Psychics who claimed that the church could forgive sins, Tertullian declared that the Paraclete had spoken through one of the new prophets to instruct the church that even if the church could forgive sins, they ought not, for the individual might just commit other sins or lead others to sin as well. This statement did not mean that the Spirit would never forgive any sins, but rather those particular sins clearly stated in Acts 15 were of a certain degree more terrible than other sins.<sup>182</sup> While Kearsley rightly acknowledges that the Spirit brought forgiveness to believers in the first place, Peter Kaufman also observed that in addition to bringing discernment and improving discipline, the Paraclete also “redistributes the power to pardon.”<sup>183</sup> This understanding of forgiveness was later called a rigorist understanding, but for Tertullian, such a high emphasis on holiness was appropriate, for the Paraclete not only informed believers of the proper discipline, but also gave them the strength and ability to act in accordance with his discipline.

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<sup>180</sup> Tertullian, *De Pudicitia* 12.

<sup>181</sup> Tertullian, *De Pudicitia* 20.

<sup>182</sup> Tertullian, *De Pudicitia* 21.

<sup>183</sup> Kearsley, *Tertullian's Theology of Divine Power*, 86–7; Peter Iver Kaufman, “Tertullian on Heresy, History, and the Reappropriation of Revelation,” *Church History* 60, no. 2 (June 1991), 177.

## **Conclusion**

The subject of the Holy Spirit's activity in the life of the church and individual believers remained important for Tertullian throughout his corpus. Many of the Spirit's activities Tertullian observed in his earlier works continued to provide material for further reflection throughout his Montanist works, while other activities appeared for the first time in those later works. As a polemical apologist, Tertullian did not provide a sustained, systematic presentation of the Spirit's activities; rather, his discussion of the Spirit's work was tied to the issues he was confronting at any given time. Be that as it may, the very fact that Tertullian did mention the Spirit's work to such a great extent even in the context of his polemical writings reveals the importance of this topic to his thinking.

In his Montanist works, Tertullian's emphasis on the Paraclete and his teachings has led some scholars to accuse Tertullian of lifting up novel doctrines and teachings to the level of the Scriptures. For Tertullian, however, any hint of novelty was a source of distrust and suspicion, and he remained convinced that the Paraclete's work expounding upon the teachings of the Scriptures was a fulfillment of Christ's promise rather than the introduction of novel doctrine. Admittedly, he advanced rigorist positions whose basis was a particular reading of the Scriptures, and these positions led him to be at odds with many of his fellow Carthaginian Christians. These positions do not require, however, that Tertullian was either a schismatic or even a heretic. Rather, he possessed a strong personality that clashed with many of his fellow believers and was thus likely a source of contention within the church, but he remained committed to that church his entire life. In fact, it was a love for the church that saw him urging all believers to follow the disciplines and teachings of the Paraclete, that they might all grow in greater sanctification.

Following Tertullian's death, little is known of Montanism in North Africa, and Montanism's condemnation by the church as a heresy served to tarnish Tertullian's legacy. His successors in North Africa only rarely mentioned his name, though they

occasionally used some of his teachings. In the following chapters, the bishop Cyprian will be shown to have followed the man he called “the master” in many of his pneumatological emphases, even if Tertullian’s name remained unmentioned. Regarding Montanism and its emphasis on ecstatic prophecy, Ash provides an insight regarding the transition from Tertullian in the early third century to Cyprian a few decades later. Ash writes:

Cyprian unquestionably venerates ecstasy, and himself has revelations through visions which he records in the form of oracles, ordering them circulated for all to read. In short, he is able to do virtually everything that the Montanists do. Yet because he is a bishop, and because, like Ignatius, he has claimed that ‘if any one be not with the bishop... he is not in the Church,’ he is able to condemn the Montanists without even blinking. He condemns them not for prophesying but because ‘they have separated themselves from the Church of God...where the elders preside.’ In Cyprian, office and charisma are thus combined.<sup>184</sup>

In spite of his relative ambiguity in the subsequent centuries, Tertullian’s emphasis on the Spirit’s activity proved vital for the spirituality of the Carthaginian church during his life, and his teachings continued to influence the Latin-speaking North African church throughout the third century.

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<sup>184</sup> Ash, “Decline of Ecstatic Prophecy in the Early Church,” 250; Cyprian, *Letters* 68, 74.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE SPIRIT'S ACTIVITY IN CYPRIAN'S WORKS

The differences between the fiery rigorist Tertullian and his successor, the irenic bishop Cyprian of Carthage, were stark. Tertullian desired to be a part of a church marked by its exceedingly high standard of holiness, and often had no place for struggling sinners, however repentant they might be. On the other hand, Cyprian sought a more gracious approach that both required repentance for sin while also allowing for repentant sinners to come back to the church. These often radically different approaches have led scholars to conclude that Cyprian deliberately distanced himself from his predecessor, so that even in his works on similar subjects, he avoided any mention of his problematic countryman.<sup>1</sup>

This assumption regarding Cyprian's distancing himself from Tertullian becomes especially relevant on the subject of the Holy Spirit's activity. Regarding Cyprian, Brian Arnold wrote, "The role of the Holy Spirit in conversion is under appreciated in Cyprian scholarship, which would have profoundly bothered him, for Cyprian could not speak of his conversion without tracing the Spirit's involvement."<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Michael A.G. Haykin has argued that Cyprian sought to be a "Spirit-filled man" in all his life.<sup>3</sup> Yet compared to his North African predecessor Tertullian, several

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see the similarities between Cyprian's *On the Dress of Virgins* and Tertullian's *De Virginibus Velandis*. Cyprian seemed to draw upon many of Tertullian's arguments, even as he avoided mentioning Tertullian directly.

<sup>2</sup> Brian J. Arnold, *Cyprian of Carthage: His Life & Impact*, Early Church Fathers (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2017), 41.

<sup>3</sup> Michael A.G. Haykin, "The Holy Spirit in Cyprian's To Donatus," *Evangelical Quarterly* 83, no. 4 (October 2011): 329.

scholars have seen a decline in the focus on pneumatology within Cyprian's writings. Adhemar d'Alès wrote that in Cyprian's works, "le Saint-Esprit n'apparaît presque pas."<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Manlio Simonetti found a "regresso" in third-century theology.<sup>5</sup> Paul Parvis simply called Cyprian's works "untheological," while Ronald Heine mentioned they lacked in "speculative theology."<sup>6</sup> Kyle Hughes also supported this notion as he sought to provide "another window into the extent of the discontinuity between Tertullian and his Carthaginian successor Cyprian with respect to their views of the Holy Spirit."<sup>7</sup> Finally, in the articles of Ayres and Barnes discussed in chapter one, Cyprian remains conspicuously absent, having been dismissed as lacking any value for a discussion of early Christian pneumatology. Indeed, for Ayres and Barnes, Cyprian is part of the downward shift in the church's pneumatology that started with Tertullian and was only reversed in the fourth century.<sup>8</sup> Thus, while some of these scholars acknowledge that Tertullian had focused greatly on the Spirit's person and work, they simultaneously see a distinct lack of focus on the Spirit in Cyprian's corpus.

In contrast to these views, however, some scholars have instead recognized an implicit focus by Cyprian on the Holy Spirit. These scholars argue that although Cyprian did not take up the person and work of the Spirit in a formal way, he still addressed the work of the Spirit in several different writings. Cecil Robeck noted, "As we approach the

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<sup>4</sup> Adhemar d'Ales, *La théologie de Saint Cyprien* (Paris: G. Beauchesne, 1922), 11. "The Holy Spirit hardly appears."

<sup>5</sup> I am indebted to Haykin's "The Holy Spirit," 327, for this understanding of Manlio Simonetti, "Il regresso della teologia dello Spirito santo in Occidente dopo Tertulliano," *Augustinianum* 20 (1980), 655–69.

<sup>6</sup> David J. Downs, "Prosopological Exegesis in Cyprian's De Opere et Eleemosynis," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 280. Downs helpfully cites Paul Parvis, "The Teaching of the Fathers: Cyprian and the Hours of Prayer," *Clergy* 69 (1984): 206; Ronald E. Heine, "Cyprian and Novatian," in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frances Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 156.

<sup>7</sup> Kyle R. Hughes, "The Spirit and the Scriptures: Revisiting Cyprian's Use of Prosopological Exegesis," *Journal of Early Christian History* 8, no. 2 (2018): 36.

<sup>8</sup> Barnes, "The Beginning and End of Early Christian Pneumatology," 169–87; Ayres, "Innovation and *Ressourcement* in Pro-Nicene Pneumatology," 187–205.

midpoint of the third century, it is obvious that Cyprian was aware of the presence of certain charismata of the Spirit which functioned in Carthage during his lifetime, but he has left us no comprehensive treatment of the subject.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Maurice Wiles has observed, “There are, however, other elements in the teaching of Cyprian, which were not so clearly formulated as conscious theological ideas in his own mind and which were not taken up in the same way in contemporary controversy or debate. It is at these points that Cyprian’s influence upon us today, though less obvious, is liable to be more far-reaching.”<sup>10</sup>

In addition to general statements that such an implicit pneumatology existed in Cyprian, some scholars seek to explain this issue further. Allen Brent understood Cyprian as recognizing the Holy Spirit as the renewer of the world and the enabler of all life, physical and spiritual.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, Pierre de Labriolle actually compared Cyprian to Tertullian to show the differences in their emphases. While Tertullian spoke more strongly and boldly on the Spirit, this boldness of speech and approach also led him into trouble with other Christians. For Cyprian the bishop, such an approach was not an option. Rather, Labriolle proposed, “When a man knows that the opinion which he is defending, that the measure which he is putting in force will affect a whole body of people who trust in him and who consider him as the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit, he is readily inclined to keep himself from all exaggeration and to remain carefully within the bounds of what is reasonable.”<sup>12</sup> Thus the difference in focus should not be understood as

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<sup>9</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage: Perpetua, Tertullian, and Cyprian* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1992), 149.

<sup>10</sup> Maurice Wiles, *Working Papers in Doctrine* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1976), 72. Wiles went on to add: “There is a tendency to combine elements of the earlier Christian tradition in a way which, while it obscures the novelty of what is being said, really represents a very significant development of ideas,” 80. Thus for Wiles, Cyprian’s pneumatology was still developed, but in a different way than Tertullian. Since the Spirit was not at the center of a debate in which Cyprian engaged, the bishop’s mentions of the Spirit come in the midst of his thoughts on other subjects.

<sup>11</sup> Allen Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 28.

<sup>12</sup> Pierre de Labriolle, *History and Literature of Christianity from Tertullian to Boethius*

a decreased interest, but a different situation with different immediate concerns. Labriolle's conclusion was echoed by José Maria Esteban Cruzado, who made the argument that contrary to distancing himself from Tertullian, Cyprian was instead dependent on Tertullian for much of his theological development, even though certain differences and nuances did appear in Cyprian's corpus.<sup>13</sup> In the following examination of Cyprian's statements on the Holy Spirit's activity, the position of Labriolle and Cruzado will be shown to reflect more accurately Cyprian's pneumatology.

### **Cyprian of Carthage's Life**

Born into a wealthy family in the upper tiers of Roman society, Cyprian received a quality education as an orator. In *To Donatus* 3, Cyprian recounted the various feasts, honors, and luxuries enjoyed by the wealthy individuals in Roman society in such detail that it appears he was recounting specific memories of events he had participated in himself. Unfortunately for the historian, the biography written by his deacon Pontius shortly after his death skipped entirely over the events of his early life, instead starting at the beginning of Cyprian's new life in the faith. This omission was intentional, for Pontius wrote, "the doings of a man of God should not be reckoned from any point except from the time that he was born of God. He may have had pursuits previously, and liberal arts may have imbued his mind while engaged therein; but these things I pass over."<sup>14</sup> While an admirable theological point, the resulting lack of information on Cyprian's life prior to his conversion renders a detailed analysis of his upbringing impossible.

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(London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1924), 133.

<sup>13</sup> José María Esteban Cruzado, "La Virginitad Cristiana En Cipriano de Cartago," *Anuario de Historia de La Iglesia* 23 (2014): 540–47.

<sup>14</sup> Pontius, *The Life and Passion of Cyprian* 2.



Around 246, Cyprian experienced conversion and quickly became a prominent member of the Carthaginian church. Having been a member of the higher ranks within the Carthaginian society prior to his conversion, Cyprian's robust education set him apart as a gifted individual within the church. A mere two years after his conversion, Cyprian was elected by the Carthaginian Christians to become the new bishop, and he would hold the position of bishop for the next decade. Wiles helpfully observes: "What then did he seek to put in place of the pagan literary tradition upon which he was trying to turn his back? The answer would seem to be, in short, the Bible and Tertullian."<sup>15</sup> If indeed Cyprian did devote his time to studying the Scriptures and his Carthaginian forerunner, it comes as no surprise that many of Cyprian's discussions of the Holy Spirit fall into similar categories as Tertullian, albeit with some unique additions on account of his own context.

As the bishop, Cyprian sought to shepherd the church through the midst of turbulent circumstances. During Cyprian's tenure as bishop, the church experienced two separate bouts of persecution, an outbreak of plague, and the general instability experienced by the larger Roman world in the third century. As he navigated these uncertain waters, he relied heavily on the Spirit-inspired Scriptures to provide a beacon for the church, which he attempted to share with all those individuals under his care. Arnold observed, "When Cyprian's training and education as an orator were lit by the Holy Spirit, he became a powerful communicator of God's word."<sup>16</sup> Though he would endure not only these hardships, but also the subsequent struggles and debates within the church as a result of some of these events, nevertheless Cyprian devoted his life to serving his Lord's church. After a decade of service, Cyprian was eventually martyred in

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<sup>15</sup> Wiles, *Working Papers in Doctrine*, 69. John Alfred Faulkner, *Cyprian: The Churchman. Men of the Kingdom* (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, 1906), 14, echoes a similar thought, arguing that following his conversion, "Cyprian fed his soul on [Tertullian]."

<sup>16</sup> Arnold, *Cyprian of Carthage*, 57.

the Decian persecution, and his actions during the events of his martyrdom reveal a character that remained steadfastly confident in the Lord, so that to “the end of his life, Cyprian sought to be a Spirit-filled man.”<sup>17</sup> This understanding of the Holy Spirit’s work in the life of the church and believers shaped him to a far greater degree than many scholars have noticed, as seen in the discussion below.

### **The Spirit’s Activity in Cyprian’s Works**

As mentioned above, the Spirit’s activity permeated Cyprian’s works, so that nearly all of his treatises, and a great many of his letters, contain references to the work of the Spirit in the life of the church and believers.<sup>18</sup> Some scholars have dismissed Cyprian’s discussions of the Spirit’s work as a sort of Stoic influence, so that for Cyprian, “it is the Holy Spirit now that is the life force permeating all things. The Spirit both renews the world with its animating power, and enables those who are thus empowered to divine future destiny.”<sup>19</sup> This understanding, however, misses the vitality of Cyprian’s view of the Holy Spirit. Instead, Arnold’s description of Cyprian’s “rich pneumatology” rightly acknowledged Cyprian’s conversion as the basis for his love of the Spirit. Cyprian knew firsthand the effects of the Spirit, having been drastically changed by the Spirit’s sanctifying work, which led him to teach that Christians should desperately desire the Spirit to fill them.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, Cyprian understood that the Spirit was active in the church, and he wrote in *To Donatus* 5 that the Spirit “possesses its own liberty of action.”<sup>21</sup> Haykin writes, “The key to understanding this passage is the pneumatological

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<sup>17</sup> Haykin, “The Holy Spirit,” 329. For a discussion of these final actions of Cyprian, see Pontius, *Life*, 14–8.

<sup>18</sup> For the purposes of this dissertation, an exact chronology of Cyprian’s works is not necessary, as Cyprian’s comments regarding the Spirit’s work often come in the context of other larger debates, rather than developing as a systematic treatment of the Spirit.

<sup>19</sup> Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 28.

<sup>20</sup> Arnold, *Cyprian of Carthage*, 42.

<sup>21</sup> Cyprian, *To Donatus* 5.

affirmation that there is no limit to the Spirit's sovereign and free presence," and if a Christian wishes to flourish, he or she must "draw upon the Spirit's sovereign power."<sup>22</sup>

Although Cyprian did not provide a sustained discussion of the Holy Spirit's activity, his occasional comments and reflections throughout his works provide a window into his pneumatological views. Many of these comments or reflections fall into similar categories as Tertullian, which should not be surprising given his reliance upon Tertullian for much of his early theological development. Therefore, when appropriate, his comments will be categorized under similar headings to show the continuity of pneumatological thought with his Carthaginian predecessor, while also highlighting Cyprian's unique contributions when his comments diverge from these categories of activity.

### **Inspiration and Prophecy**

For Cyprian, the Holy Spirit's work of inspiration was one of the Spirit's chief, and therefore most important, works. Like Tertullian, Cyprian also saw the Spirit's work in inspiring the Scriptures more broadly, as well as the prophets and apostles.<sup>23</sup> While many scholars recognize that Cyprian did understand the Spirit to be involved in the process of inspiration, in recent years a discussion has emerged over the nature of that inspiration. Downs has argued that Cyprian, like Tertullian before him, saw the Holy Spirit as speaking prosopologically in the Old Testament Scriptures.<sup>24</sup> This method allowed Cyprian to appeal to the direct speech of the Holy Spirit in his ethical appeal to almsgiving, and it also helps protect Cyprian from the charge of proof-texting.

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<sup>22</sup> Haykin, "The Holy Spirit," 325. Arnold, *Cyprian of Carthage*, 42, also added that Cyprian drew this idea of the Spirit's moving where he willed from John 3.

<sup>23</sup> Unlike Tertullian, however, Cyprian does not refer to the Holy Spirit as the vicar of Christ.

<sup>24</sup> Downs, "Prosopological Exegesis," 293. Downs focused specifically on Cyprian's use of this method in *De Opere et Eleemosynis*. For a brief discussion of Tertullian's use of prosopological exegesis, as well as other sources providing a fuller treatment of this method of exegesis, see chapter three of this dissertation.

In response to Downs' argument, Hughes has argued for a revised approach, believing that Cyprian's approach in the work Downs examined, *De Opere et Eleemosynis*, failed to display all of the criteria necessary for a prosopological approach. Rather, Hughes believes that the Holy Spirit's role was more as a secondary inspiring agent, working with the human author, rather than a prosopological role of direct speech. For this reason, Hughes cautions: "One must exercise extra caution in not reading Tertullian's understanding of the Spirit and his method of prosopological exegesis into the writings of Cyprian."<sup>25</sup> Although Hughes wishes to resist seeing the Holy Spirit's work of inspiration as too important of a topic for Cyprian, he nevertheless acknowledges that Cyprian did regard the Holy Spirit as involved with the inspiration process in some manner. This acknowledgement, while begrudging, is necessary in order to account for the sheer number of references to the Holy Spirit's work in inspiration across Cyprian's corpus.

**Scripture.** Throughout his writings, Cyprian was convinced of the role of the Holy Spirit in the inspiration of the Scriptures. Michael Fahey asserts that Cyprian believed that the Holy Spirit was the author of Scripture who moved the writers and prophets to declare God's word.<sup>26</sup> Agreeing with Fahey, Haykin declares, "Cyprian habitually thinks of the Holy Spirit as the prophetic Spirit, the inspirer of the Scriptures."<sup>27</sup> Robeck similarly states that Cyprian recognized the Scriptures as the Old Testament, the "apostolic tradition," and the "evangelical authority," and these writings were inspired by the Holy Spirit and declared God's truth.<sup>28</sup> These scholars have all rightly recognized that for Cyprian, the source of the Scriptures was fundamental to the Christian faith. Fahey

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<sup>25</sup> Hughes, "The Spirit and the Scriptures," 43.

<sup>26</sup> Fahey, *Cyprian and the Bible*, 45–6.

<sup>27</sup> Haykin, "The Holy Spirit," 327.

<sup>28</sup> Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage*, 150. For Cyprian, the "apostolic tradition" was the Gospels and the "evangelical authority" was the collection of epistles written by the apostles.

notes particularly well, “The clearest influence on Cyprian was Scripture itself. In this sense Cyprian was a man of a single book.”<sup>29</sup> Using the Scriptures as the foundation for all of his writings, teachings, and debates, the importance Cyprian placed upon the Scriptures as the divinely revealed Word of God was significant.

This foundational truth was not a point to be argued, however, but rather a starting point, for Cyprian did not attempt to argue that the Spirit inspired the Scriptures, but instead assumed inspiration and built upon this assumption. One example of Cyprian’s affirmation of the Spirit’s work across the entirety of the Scriptures comes in his treatise *On Works and Alms*, in which Cyprian sought to provide a biblical defense for the giving of alms as an act of mercy. To this point, Cyprian wrote that the admonitions of the Scriptures, both old and new, have always urged God’s people toward acts of mercy, and through the “exhortation of the Holy Spirit,” those who have been instructed in the truths of the kingdom of God have likewise been exhorted by the Spirit to give alms.<sup>30</sup>

Far more frequent than the above general statement regarding the Spirit’s inspiration, however, are the repeated instances of the Holy Spirit “speaking” particular passages of Scripture. One of the most regularly cited books is the Psalms. In Cyprian’s *On the Unity of the Church* 8, he appeals to the unity and sense of agreement within the true church writing, “this home, this dwelling of concord is indicated and foretold by the Holy Spirit when he says in the Psalms: [Ps 67].”<sup>31</sup> Moreover, two chapters later Cyprian again appealed to the Spirit’s inspiration of the Psalms concerning bishops who take that title outside of the church, for they are those whom:

the Holy Spirit describes ... as sitting in the chair of pestilence; they are pests and plagues to the faith, snake-tongued deceivers, skilled corruptors of the truth, spewing deadly venom from their poisonous fangs; whose speech spreads like a

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<sup>29</sup> Fahey, *Cyprian and the Bible*, 28.

<sup>30</sup> Cyprian, *On Works and Alms* 4.

<sup>31</sup> Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church* 8.

canker; whose preaching injects a fatal virus in the hearts and breasts of all.<sup>32</sup> For Cyprian, the Psalms could be used to great effect to defend the identity of the true church, being inspired by the Spirit.

In addition to these general statements of the Spirit speaking through the Psalms, Cyprian also used more explicit statements to reveal his understanding of the Spirit's inspiration of the text. In his *Exhortation to Martyrdom* 10, Cyprian wrote, "And even more strongly the Holy Spirit, teaching and showing that the army of the devil is not to be feared ... lays down in the twenty-sixth Psalm," followed by Cyprian's direct quotation of the psalm.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, in *On Jealousy and Envy* 8, Cyprian wrote, "And accordingly the Holy Spirit says in the Psalms, '[Ps 37:7].' And again, '[Ps 37:12-13].'"<sup>34</sup> This pattern can also be found in *On the Dress of Virgins*, *On the Lapsed*, *On Works and Alms*, *On the Lord's Prayer*, and seven of his letters.<sup>35</sup> Working often from memory, some of the citations from Psalms involved his own paraphrasing of the text, while others aligned more closely with the Septuagint or the Old Latin translations of the Psalms.

Cyprian also frequently appealed to the wisdom literature, especially the book of Proverbs, using the similar formula of "the Holy Spirit warns/teaches/speaks" followed by a quotation from the text. In several passages, such as *On Works and Alms* 9, Cyprian included the human author: "The Holy Spirit speaks by Solomon, and says, '[Prov 28:27].'"<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, in other references to Proverbs, as well as his references to Song of Songs, he omitted the human author, as in *An Address to Demetrianus* 17: "And again the Holy Spirit forewarns, and says, '[Prov 20:22].'"<sup>37</sup> In both types of quotation,

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<sup>32</sup> Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church* 10.

<sup>33</sup> Cyprian, *Exhortation to Martyrdom* 10.

<sup>34</sup> Cyprian, *On Jealousy and Envy* 8.

<sup>35</sup> See *On the Dress of Virgins* 1; *On the Lapsed* 27; *On Works and Alms* 5; *On the Lord's Prayer* 35; *Letters* 4, 10, 63, 67, 69, 70, 73, and 76.

<sup>36</sup> Cyprian, *On Works and Alms* 9. See also *Letter* 59, 63.

<sup>37</sup> Cyprian, *An Address to Demetrianus* 17. See also *On Works and Alms* 2; *Letter* 69; and *On*

however, Cyprian's easy use of the Holy Spirit either speaking through Solomon or speaking without reference to Solomon reveal Cyprian's understanding of the Spirit's work of inspiration in these texts. Within the category of wisdom literature, Cyprian also appealed to the Spirit's teaching through the text of Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon, using the same formula to cite these works in *On Mortality* 23, *On Works and Alms* 2, *Exhortation to Martyrdom* 12, and *Letter* 64.

Although Cyprian's use of this formula of direct speech by the Holy Spirit appeared primarily in his quotations of Psalms or the wisdom literature, he also used it a few times for other passages of Scripture, particularly when speaking of the Holy Spirit's warnings. In *On Mortality* 11, Cyprian wrote that in the book of Deuteronomy, "the Holy Spirit warns by Moses and says, '[Deut 8:2].' And again: '[Deut 13:3].'"<sup>38</sup> Similarly, in *On the Unity of the Church* 24, Cyprian stated, "We are admonished by the Holy Spirit: '[1 Pet 3:10–11].'"<sup>39</sup> Although this formula was used only minimally outside of references to Psalms and the wisdom literature, it does help demonstrate that Cyprian understood the Spirit to inspire all the writings of Scripture, and not merely the Old Testament.

**Prophets.** In addition to the passages in which Cyprian asserted the direct speech of the Holy Spirit, Cyprian also regularly pointed to the Spirit's divine inspiration of the prophets. Speaking of the Spirit's inspiration of the prophets collectively, Cyprian wrote in *On the Lapsed* 7, "Was it not foretold by the prophets before he came, and by his Apostles since? Were they not inspired by the Holy Spirit to predict that the just would always be oppressed and ill-treated by the gentiles?"<sup>40</sup> He asked a similar question in

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*the Unity of the Church* 4 in the second edition of the text.

<sup>38</sup> Cyprian, *On Mortality* 11.

<sup>39</sup> Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church* 24.

<sup>40</sup> Cyprian, *On the Lapsed* 7.

*Letter 58*: “and what of the prophets whom the Holy Spirit quickened with foreknowledge of the future?”<sup>41</sup> His purpose in asking these questions was not to discuss the work of the Holy Spirit in the inspiration of their message, but rather he assumed the Holy Spirit’s inspiration as the divine basis for their messages being authoritative.

One of the most significant prophets Cyprian cited as divinely inspired by the Spirit was Isaiah. The formula used for Isaiah is similar to the one seen above regarding the Spirit’s direct speech, but when discussing Isaiah, Cyprian often added a phrase highlighting his inspiration. In *On the Dress of Virgins* 13, Cyprian wrote, “Isaiah, full of the Holy Spirit, cries out.”<sup>42</sup> Similarly, in *On the Lapsed* 10, he wrote, “Hear the warning of the Holy Spirit through his prophet, [Isa 52:11].”<sup>43</sup> This added emphasis on the Spirit’s inspiration did not apply solely to Isaiah, however, for Cyprian used similar language of the prophet being filled with the Spirit as he quoted the prophecies of Jeremiah, Hosea, Haggai, Habakkuk, and Malachi.<sup>44</sup> In each case, Cyprian made particular mention of the Holy Spirit’s work of filling, inspiring, or speaking through the prophet, followed by a direct quotation of their prophecy.<sup>45</sup> Cyprian also saw the Holy Spirit as inspiring individuals to prophesy at the time surrounding Jesus’ life. Cyprian appealed to the infancy narrative of Luke’s gospel to show that the Holy Spirit inspired

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<sup>41</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 58.6.1.

<sup>42</sup> Cyprian, *On the Dress of Virgins* 13.

<sup>43</sup> Cyprian, *On the Lapsed* 10. See also *On the Lord’s Prayer* 28; *Letters* 59, 63.

<sup>44</sup> In the order listed above, see *Letter* 73, 69; *Address to Demetrianus* 6, 20; *On the Advantage of Patience* 22. Cyprian also used this formula for apocryphal prophecies, citing Daniel’s inspiration regarding Bel and the Dragon in *Exhortation to Martyrdom* 11, as well as Jeremiah’s inspiration in *On the Lord’s Prayer* 5 regarding the work Baruch.

<sup>45</sup> A unique inspiration of a figure in the Old Testament was Moses. Rather than following the formula of the Spirit inspiring the words of Moses, in Cyprian’s *Three Books of Testimonies* 3.101, he mentioned the Holy Spirit’s appearance in fire, particularly at Mount Sinai and in the burning bush. By appealing to both Exod 3 and 19, Cyprian’s interpretation of those passages would imply that the Holy Spirit was the person of the Trinity who spoke to Moses in the fire, and thus inspired his words. Cyprian also believed that the Holy Spirit appeared in fire when the Lord dramatically accepted sacrifices throughout the Old Testament, further strengthening his argument that the Holy Spirit was the one in the fire with Moses.



both Zachariah and Elizabeth to prophesy regarding the coming Christ. In both references, Cyprian used the familiar formula of “[person] was filled with the Holy Spirit,” followed by the individual’s prophetic speech.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to the divinely inspired prophetic speech in the Scriptures, Cyprian also saw the Spirit inspiring martyrs to prophesy. These prophecies were not on the level of Scripture, but they were still true and only possible as a result of the Spirit’s inspiration. In *Letter 55*, Cyprian used the account of Daniel’s friends in the furnace to serve as proof of Christ’s statement in Matthew 10 regarding the Spirit speaking on behalf of the captives and giving them the words to say. Cyprian wrote, “from their lips there burst forth the Holy Spirit in all his undefiled and unconquerable might, thus revealing the truth of the Lord’s pronouncement which he made in his gospel,” followed by a direct quotation of Matthew 10:19–20.<sup>47</sup> In another letter, Cyprian recounted that the Holy Spirit prophesied through the mouth of the martyr Mappalicus, and the prophecy was fulfilled the following day. He went on to explain that the only way the martyr could have been correct in his prophecy was if he was indeed filled with the Holy Spirit and inspired to prophesy.<sup>48</sup> For Cyprian, seeing Spirit-inspired prophecies in his day further convinced him of the validity of the Spirit’s inspiration of the prophetic speech in the Scriptures.

**Apostles.** Cyprian’s understanding of the Holy Spirit’s inspiration was not limited to prophecy, for he also saw the Holy Spirit inspiring the teaching of the apostles, and especially Paul. In his work *On the Lord’s Prayer* 34, Cyprian recounted that the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and thus “fulfilled the grace of the Lord’s

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<sup>46</sup> Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies* 2.7–8.

<sup>47</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 58.5.2.

<sup>48</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 10.4.1.

promise.”<sup>49</sup> Additionally, in *On the Unity of the Church* 4, Cyprian stated that Jesus “assigns a like power to all the Apostles after his resurrection,” followed by a quotation from John 20:21–22 about receiving the Holy Spirit.<sup>50</sup> In these statements, Cyprian affirmed that the Spirit was the one guiding the apostles in their teaching, and one particular example of the Spirit’s inspired guidance came from the end of Revelation. In his work *Three Books of Testimonies* 2.19, Cyprian supported his claim that Christ was the bridegroom with the church as his bride through his quotation of Revelation 21, in which John was taken “in the Spirit” to a mountain to see Jerusalem coming down from heaven.<sup>51</sup> Though these particular statements from Cyprian do not develop that thought any further, they nevertheless reveal his foundational belief that the Spirit revealed the truth to the apostles.

Cyprian was clearer, however, regarding the Spirit’s divine inspiration of the apostle Paul. In *On the Advantage of Patience* 2, Cyprian wrote, “Moreover, the blessed Apostle Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, and sent forth for the calling and training of the heathen, bears witness and instructs us, saying, ‘[Col 2:8,10].’”<sup>52</sup> Through the use of this formula both here and in *On Works and Alms* 9, albeit slightly modified in the latter, Cyprian demonstrated his belief that the same Spirit who was inspiring the prophets was also at work in the apostle Paul.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, in *On the Unity of Church*, Cyprian twice instructed his readers that the Holy Spirit “forewarns” the church through the writings of the apostle Paul, quoting both 1 Corinthians and 2 Timothy as examples of this Spirit-

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<sup>49</sup> Cyprian, *On the Lord’s Prayer* 34.

<sup>50</sup> Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church* 4, from the second edition of Cyprian’s text.

<sup>51</sup> Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies* 2.19.

<sup>52</sup> Cyprian, *On the Advantage of Patience* 2.

<sup>53</sup> In *On Works and Alms* 9, Cyprian refers to Paul’s writings in 2 Cor 9, using the phrase, “the blessed Apostle Paul, full of the grace of the Lord’s inspiration, says.” Although he does not specifically mention the Holy Spirit, in the context of the passage, the Holy Spirit is likely in view for Cyprian.

inspired warning.<sup>54</sup> Through this inspiration of Paul, as well as the rest of the Scriptures, the Spirit led the church into all truth, and thus the inspiration of the Scriptures proved to be one of the chief works of the Holy Spirit.

### **Anointing and Giving Gifts**

A second key work of the Holy Spirit was his act of anointing Christ, the church, and believers. Once again, Cyprian's writings revealed an indebtedness to Tertullian's teaching on this subject, for he often assumed Tertullian's conclusions in his arguments rather than proving the conclusions himself. This assumption resulted in an occasional lack of explicit reference to the Spirit's anointing, with a greater focus on the question of how the Spirit's anointing affected the church's self-identity and practices.

**Christ.** Although Cyprian affirmed the Holy Spirit's anointing of Jesus, he only made a couple of brief references to this work in his *Three Books of Testimonies*. As part of Cyprian's argument that Christ was both man and God in 2.10, he quoted Isaiah 61 to show that the Spirit's anointing of Christ was a key sign in understanding Christ as the mediator between God and men.<sup>55</sup> In the following chapter, Cyprian then quoted the prophecy of Isaiah 11 to confirm still further that the Spirit's resting on Christ served to set the man Jesus apart as the divinely anointed Christ, who was both God and man.<sup>56</sup> In using these prophecies from Isaiah, Cyprian revealed that he did affirm the Spirit's anointing of Christ, and indeed appealed to the Spirit's anointing as a key component of Christ's ministry. His lack of a discussion of this anointing in greater depth does demonstrate, however, that Cyprian was not merely restating Tertullian's arguments, but rather had his own emphases and areas of focus.

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<sup>54</sup> Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church* 10; 16.

<sup>55</sup> Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies* 2.10.

<sup>56</sup> Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies* 2.11.

**Church.** Cyprian's argument regarding the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church as an identifying sign of the true church will be discussed in greater detail later, but Cyprian also spoke of the effects of the Spirit's anointing of the church on the body of believers. Affirming that the church was the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, Cyprian quoted the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, at which time all the disciples were filled with the Spirit.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, in a letter that Cyprian wrote to the Numidian bishops, he quoted 1 Corinthians 3 as he spoke about believers being the temple of God in which the Spirit of God dwelt.<sup>58</sup> This foundational understanding of the Spirit indwelling the church then led him to consider the effects of that indwelling presence in the congregation of believers, for as Lee rightly recognized, "The Spirit works precisely through the visible church."<sup>59</sup>

In *On the Unity of the Church* 9, Cyprian reflected on the Spirit's manifestation as a dove to discern what the church might learn about the Spirit through his choice of the dove. In a beautiful passage, Cyprian wrote:

That is also the reason why the Holy Spirit comes in the form of a dove: it is a simple joyous creature, not bitter with gall, not biting savagely, without vicious tearing claws; it loves to dwell with humankind, it keeps to one house for assembling; when they mate they hatch their young together, when they fly anywhere they keep their formation, the resorts they live in are shared in common, by their billing too they pay tribute to concord and peace, in all things they fulfil the law of unanimity. The same is the simplicity of the Church which we need to learn, this is the charity we must acquire.<sup>60</sup>

In Cyprian's understanding of the Spirit's work, the Holy Spirit came to bring peace to the church, rather than coming as a violent, avenging presence. Brent confirms this observation, noting that the symbol of the dove points to the peace associated with the

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<sup>57</sup> Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies* 3.101.

<sup>58</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 62.2.1.

<sup>59</sup> Lee, "The Church and the Holy Spirit," 204.

<sup>60</sup> Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church* 9.

Holy Spirit's indwelling of the body.<sup>61</sup>

For Cyprian, this peace, when rightly acknowledged as coming from the indwelling Spirit, ought to bear forth unity among the believers. Elsewhere in *On the Unity of the Church*, Cyprian cited Ephesians 4 as the proper teaching on the unity of believers. Since Paul had taught that believers ought to be, "supporting one another with love, striving to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," Cyprian believed that the presence of unity within the church revealed that gift of peace that accompanied the Spirit's indwelling.<sup>62</sup> Lee wrote similarly that Cyprian understood the church's visible unity as a sign of the invisible union of the Spirit.<sup>63</sup> Finally, in a letter written to Stephen in Rome regarding a man named Marcian who had joined with the Novatians, Cyprian revealed the depth of this unity. He declared, "For it was not possible that there should be divergence of opinion among us, seeing that there was in us but one and the same Spirit. Hence it is plainly evident that a man does not hold the truth of the Holy Spirit with the rest of his colleagues when we find that his opinions are different from theirs."<sup>64</sup> Although Cyprian had a great deal more to say about the Spirit's presence in the true church alone, this statement revealed the reason for his other statements. Since the coming of the Holy Spirit is accompanied with peace that bears forth unity among the brethren, any group lacking this divinely given unity could not be the true church.

**Believers.** Similarly to his Carthaginian predecessor, Cyprian also distinguished between the Spirit's anointing of the church more generally as well as believers individually. In his work *On the Lord's Prayer*, he encouraged his fellow Christians that they were now able to fulfill the Lord's command to his disciples

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<sup>61</sup> Brent, *Cyprian's On the Church*, 156.

<sup>62</sup> Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church* 8.

<sup>63</sup> Lee, "The Church and the Holy Spirit," 191.

<sup>64</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 68.5.2.

regarding the need to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. After noting that Christ had foretold that the hour would come for this worship, Cyprian exhorted his fellow Christians saying, “and he thus fulfilled what he before promised, so that we who by his sanctification have received the Spirit and truth, may also by his teaching worship truly and spiritually.”<sup>65</sup> Cyprian went on to clarify that the Spirit had been given to believers by Christ, asking: “For what can be a more spiritual prayer than that which was given to us by Christ, by whom also the Holy Spirit was given to us?”<sup>66</sup> Cyprian asserted a similar claim in *To Donatus*, claiming that since the “heavenly Spirit infuse[d] itself” into believers, the believer was now the temple of God “in which the Holy Spirit has begun to make his abode.”<sup>67</sup> In these references, Cyprian had turned his focus from the Spirit’s work among the body as a whole to the Spirit’s work in the lives of individual believers.

This emphasis on the Spirit’s anointing of individual believers was especially relevant to Cyprian’s understanding of baptism.<sup>68</sup> For Cyprian, the Spirit’s anointing of an individual happened at the time of his or her baptism, and he appealed to Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 3 for support, in which Paul declares believers to be the temple of God in which the Spirit abides.<sup>69</sup> Upon being baptized, the bishop laid hands on the individual, and in the acts of baptism and the imposition of hands, the Spirit descended and anointed the believer. Cyprian spoke more specifically regarding the baptismal rite in

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<sup>65</sup> Cyprian, *On the Lord’s Prayer* 2.

<sup>66</sup> Cyprian, *On the Lord’s Prayer* 2.

<sup>67</sup> Cyprian, *To Donatus* 14–5. In *Letter* 69.15.2, Cyprian reflected upon this indwelling, arguing that following the anointing of a person with the Holy Spirit, wicked spirits were no longer able to remain in a person.

<sup>68</sup> Similar to the preceding chapters on Tertullian, the Spirit’s work in baptism will be explored in much greater detail further below, so this discussion of baptism will focus primarily on the Spirit’s anointing of believers in the baptismal rite.

<sup>69</sup> Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies* 3.27. This particular passage does not have an overt reference tying the Spirit’s anointing and indwelling to baptism. However, Cyprian used it in his work as a general support that the Spirit indwelt believers, and as he believed that this indwelling occurred at baptism, as seen elsewhere in his works, he deemed it appropriate to use this passage to support his larger argument.

his letter to the Christians at Thibaris, in which he wrote, “whereby our brow may be shielded so as to preserve intact the sign of God.”<sup>70</sup> In his explanatory notes on this phrase, Phillip Campbell writes that this passage refers to “the ‘sealing’ of the believer in the Holy Spirit ... imparted by the tracing of the sign of the cross on their forehead in blessed oil.”<sup>71</sup> Burns and Jensen similarly write that after a person was baptized, “the bishop then traced the sign of the cross of Christ on the forehead of the neophytes, marking them as elect of God, destined for eternal life.”<sup>72</sup> However, Burns and Jensen disagree somewhat with Campbell, arguing that the sealing associated with the oil was not necessarily tied to the Spirit, but rather the Spirit’s anointing accompanied the ritual imposition of hands on the believer that immediately followed the believer’s anointing with oil.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to writing about the timing of the Spirit’s anointing at baptism, Cyprian also spoke about the proper recipients of that anointing. Within the context of baptism, Cyprian denied that God gave grace in differing degrees to adults or children, instead stating, “in truth, the Holy Spirit is not measured out but is conferred equally upon all through the bounty and loving-kindness of the Father.”<sup>74</sup> For this reason, Cyprian was an advocate of giving baptism to infants, and in accordance with his views connecting the Spirit’s anointing and the baptismal rite, the Spirit still came upon the individual at the time of his or her baptism, regardless of age. Cyprian was not simply ambivalent, however, regarding the subject of the Spirit’s anointing at baptism, for in a letter to the bishop Jubaianus on the subject of the baptism of heretics, Cyprian wrote,

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<sup>70</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 58.9.2.

<sup>71</sup> Phillip Campbell, *The Complete Works of Saint Cyprian of Carthage*, 424n.335.

<sup>72</sup> J. Patout Burns, and Robin Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa: the Development of its Practices and Beliefs*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 179.

<sup>73</sup> Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 178.

<sup>74</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 64.3.1.

“we have received the Spirit of God; we ought, therefore, to have jealous concern for the faith of God.”<sup>75</sup> As seen above, those upon whom the Spirit descended and indwelt shared a unique bond of unity, and Cyprian believed that individuals who had not received a proper baptism within the church ought not to be understood as being anointed by the Spirit, for their lack of unity demonstrated a lack of the Spirit.

**Gives good gifts.** Cyprian also believed that the indwelling and anointing of the Spirit was accompanied with a number of spiritual gifts. In Cyprian’s *To Donatus*, he told Donatus that the Spirit flowed freely without being checked in its abundance, and Christians must be ready to receive the gifts the Spirit brought.<sup>76</sup> Lee points out that one obvious example of a gift brought by the Spirit was: “The church’s unity in charity in the unity of the Trinity, as a gift given by the Holy Spirit and mediated through the sacraments.”<sup>77</sup> Unless the Spirit provided the gift of peace and unity to the church, the believers would be unable to live in such a manner.

In addition to the more general gifts brought by the Spirit, Cyprian also referred to the charismatic gifts of the Spirit in some of his letters.<sup>78</sup> In a letter written to some of his fellow clergy, Cyprian admonished certain priests who had too rashly granted reconciliation to the lapsed on the basis of the martyrs’ requests, for the persecution was still ongoing. Furthermore, these priests had neglected to consult with the bishops regarding this grant of reconciliation, and thus the church was allowing those individuals who had denied Christ entrance into the church without the permission of the bishop. In

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<sup>75</sup> Cyprian, *Letter 73.10.2*. The location of Jubaianus’ ministry remains unknown. Clarke, ACW 47:221, suggests that his absence from any of the recorded councils in Carthage might imply a remote location, such as Mauretania, though he adds that any presumption of a location is tenuous.

<sup>76</sup> Cyprian, *To Donatus 5*.

<sup>77</sup> Lee, “The Church and the Holy Spirit,” 191.

<sup>78</sup> While it is important to note that both Tertullian and Cyprian experienced the presence of the charismatic gifts in Carthage into the middle of the third century and wrote favorably of them, any argument advocating for either a continuationist or cessationist position based upon their discussion falls outside the scope of this dissertation.



response to the errant priests, Cyprian noted that the Spirit was warning the church against such a practice saying, “For in addition to visions of the night, during the day also innocent young boys, who are here with us, are being filled with the Holy Spirit, and in ecstasy they see with their eyes and they hear and they speak the words of warning and instruction which the Lord in his goodness gives to us.”<sup>79</sup> In addition to the visions brought by the Spirit to certain mature believers, even boys were being used by the Spirit to warn the church as they spoke about the ecstatic visions they had received. In light of Cyprian’s letter, Robeck observes, “As we approach the midpoint of the third century, it is obvious that Cyprian was aware of the presence of certain charismata of the Spirit which functioned in Carthage during his lifetime, but he has left us no comprehensive treatment of the subject.”<sup>80</sup>

Cyprian was not only aware of the presence of these charismatic gifts, but also experienced them personally. In a letter to Cornelius regarding the question of granting peace to the lapsed, Cyprian asserted that he believed the Holy Spirit had instructed both himself and the other bishops to grant peace to these lapsed individuals. He wrote that he had come to that position “prompted by the Holy Spirit and counselled by the Lord through many explicit visions.”<sup>81</sup> Robeck again provides insight to Cyprian’s comments in this letter, remarking that Cyprian received visions throughout his life, and “the Spirit was the source of these revelations since they took place when the subject was filled with the Spirit.”<sup>82</sup> For Cyprian, these visions were a divine gift from the Spirit for the purpose of showing both Cyprian and the other Christian leaders the way in which they ought to

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<sup>79</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 16.4.1.

<sup>80</sup> Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage*, 149.

<sup>81</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 57.5.1. This point is also observed by Ross S. Kraemer and Shira L. Lander, “Perpetua and Felicitas,” in *The Early Christian World*, vol. 2, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), 1061.

<sup>82</sup> Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage*, 149.

guide the church. While some scholars have debated on whether Cyprian believed that these charismatic gifts were reserved for the bishops alone or were available for all members of the congregation, Cyprian's comments in these letters appeared to recognize the Spirit's bestowal of charismatic gifts on any believer was in accordance with the Spirit's purpose for that gift. In bringing good gifts to the church, the Spirit was at work to strengthen the church, and this work of strengthening and teaching the church will be examined below.<sup>83</sup>

### **Strengthening and Training**

Another key aspect of the Holy Spirit's work for Cyprian was the Spirit's role in providing strength to the captives and training up all believers in the faith. Cyprian's circumstances of being a bishop in the midst of two bouts of persecution and an outbreak of plague made these foci particularly relevant to his context. As shown above, Cyprian affirmed that the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures and anointed his church. Building upon these affirmations, this category of the Spirit's work in the life of the church asserted that God sent his Spirit to anoint the church in order to provide the strength and training necessary to follow the commands given in his inspired word.

**Strength to the captives.** As a result of ministering during times of persecution, Cyprian frequently found himself encouraging those believers who were imprisoned and awaiting martyrdom. Although he mentioned in a few treatises the Spirit's work in giving these captives the strength to endure, the majority of his encouragements regarding the Spirit's aid appeared in his letters to believers, whether those under his care or his fellow bishops and priests.

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<sup>83</sup> Shults and Hollingsworth argue, "Cyprian of Carthage, for example, argued that the gifts of the Spirit continued after the apostolic age, but that they were reserved for bishops (like himself)," 23–4. Lee argues to the contrary claiming, "The charismatic gifts of the Spirit are given to laity and clergy alike," 195.

One prominent theme of his exhortations was the words of Christ from Matthew 10, where Jesus encouraged his followers that when they faced persecution, they need not fear what to say, for the Spirit would speak through them in that hour. In his *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, Cyprian encouraged Fortunatus to avoid giving into fear regarding the likelihood of martyrdom, for the Spirit would be with him and speak on his behalf.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, in his *Three Books of Testimonies*, Cyprian again quoted this passage as he recounted the many benefits of martyrdom for the believer, so that believers need not fear martyrdom; indeed, the Spirit's confession of faith on behalf of the believer will result in the reception of these awaiting rewards.<sup>85</sup>

Cyprian's reminder of Christ strengthening his followers with the promise of the Spirit's aid appeared in *Letters* 10, 57, 58, and 76 as well.<sup>86</sup> In *Letters* 10 and 76, his reminder was simply to quote Matthew 10. In *Letters* 57 and 58, however, Cyprian expounded upon this quotation further. In *Letter* 57, Cyprian quoted Matthew 10, but then added that the Spirit spoke specifically in those who had been delivered up and "are in the act of confessing the Name." Yet one could not be prepared for that confession "if he has not first, by the reception of reconciliation, received the Spirit of the Father ... For he is the one who gives strength to his servants and who himself speaks and confesses within us."<sup>87</sup> Arguing similarly in *Letter* 58, if the believer was set in the confession, then Cyprian affirmed that the Spirit, "as he neither departs nor is parted from those who confess him, he is the one who not only speaks but also is crowned in us."<sup>88</sup> Thus the

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<sup>84</sup> Cyprian, *Exhortation to Martyrdom* 10.

<sup>85</sup> Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies* 3.16.

<sup>86</sup> Cyprian, *Letters* 10.3; 57.4.2; 58.5.2; 76.5.1. In letter 76, Cyprian used the exact wording of Jesus' statement from Mark 13, but it is nearly identical to Jesus' statement in Matt 10, and thus made the same point.

<sup>87</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 57.4.2. Campbell, *The Complete Works of Saint Cyprian of Carthage*, 402n.272, believes that this statement by Cyprian has the implication "being that the grace of the Holy Spirit is imparted through the mediation of the sacramental ministry of the church."

<sup>88</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 58.5.2.

same Spirit who spoke through the believer would also remain with the believer to the end.

Another theme in Cyprian's exhortations to the martyrs was the promised power of the Spirit to resist temptations and endure suffering. In his letter to believers at Thibar, Cyprian spoke about the armor of God, and particularly encouraged them to arm themselves with the sword of the Spirit, "so that they may boldly spurn the deadly sacrifices."<sup>89</sup> He continued by encouraging them that the Holy Spirit will enable believers to reject the imperial sacrifices that lead to the situation of the lapsed, and thus to stand firm in their faith. In another letter to Sergius and his fellow confessors in prison, Cyprian wrote, "There should now be found in your hearts and minds nothing but those divine precepts and heavenly ordinances whereby the Holy Spirit has ever encouraged us to endure sufferings."<sup>90</sup> Haykin summarizes this theme by stating that the Spirit strengthens martyrs in their times of trials, and Robeck similarly condensed Cyprian's exhortation as saying "the confessors have been promised the presence and power of the Spirit in the time of persecution."<sup>91</sup>

Cyprian did not merely offer exhortations regarding the promise of the Spirit's power, but also recognized the Spirit's presence in a number of the martyrs. In *Letter 68*, Cyprian was engaged in a controversy against the Novatians, and in his request to Stephen for assistance, he appealed to the martyrs Cornelius and Lucius in support of his position, both of whom had been "filled with the spirit of the Lord and the glory of martyrdom."<sup>92</sup> Cyprian observed a similar special indwelling of the Spirit in the martyrs in his letter to Florentius Pupianus. In this letter written to defend himself against slander,

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<sup>89</sup> Cyprian, *Letter 58.9.2*.

<sup>90</sup> Cyprian, *Letter 6.2.1*.

<sup>91</sup> Haykin, "The Holy Spirit," 328; Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage*, 176.

<sup>92</sup> Cyprian, *Letter 68.5.1*.

Cyprian pointed to the martyrs who were “filled with the Holy Spirit and were already, through their sufferings, very close to the vision of God and his Christ” as those who supported the legitimacy of his ministry.<sup>93</sup> Thus Cyprian could exhort those Christians awaiting martyrdom both from the Scriptures and also from the Spirit’s work indwelling those believers who had since experienced martyrdom.

As a final encouragement to believers suffering for the faith, Cyprian urged them to look past their suffering to the coming glorious rewards that awaited them upon their deaths as martyrs. In his correspondence with Lucius and the believers with him, Cyprian encouraged the believers that the Holy Spirit would see them through their sufferings, that they might receive the heavenly rewards and crown of martyrdom.<sup>94</sup> Cyprian also wrote to several confessors, including Moyses and Maximus, that “the spirit does not countenance the bonds of charity to be parted.”<sup>95</sup> Cyprian was not merely speaking of their temporal love on earth, but also of their bond of love in the Lord, which would endure beyond death. Campbell helpfully explains that this principle is “behind the communion of the saints: Christians, united in the Spirit, cannot have their love separated by earthly trials, not even death. Christian love continues even after death, because in Christ all are made alive.”<sup>96</sup> Thus, even though the earthly suffering might be terrible, through the Spirit’s work of uniting believers and knitting them together in mutual communion with one another and the Lord, any earthly trial paled in comparison to the heavenly rewards awaiting the martyrs.

**Teaches and trains believers.** The Spirit was not only involved in the strengthening the martyrs at their time of trial, but also engaged in teaching and training

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<sup>93</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 66.7.2.

<sup>94</sup> Cyprian, *Letters* 77–8.

<sup>95</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 37.1.2.

<sup>96</sup> Campbell, *The Complete Works of Saint Cyprian of Carthage*, 322n87.

believers up in holiness. One key element of this teaching was the instruction that believers ought to be living by the Spirit and thus practicing spiritual things, rather than giving in to the desires of the flesh. Cyprian clearly stated this thought in *On the Lord's Prayer* 11, in which he urged his fellow believers: "Let us converse as temples of God, that it may be plain that God dwells in us. Let not our doings be degenerate from the Spirit; so that we who have begun to be heavenly and spiritual, may consider and do nothing but spiritual and heavenly things."<sup>97</sup> He stated similarly in another work, "the man who has already become filled with the Holy Spirit, and a Son of God by heavenly birth, should observe nothing but spiritual and divine things."<sup>98</sup> Through an appeal to Romans 14, Cyprian sought to demonstrate that the person filled with the Holy Spirit should act spiritual through participation in the righteousness, peace, and joy together in the Holy Spirit, rather than caring for the things of the world like food and drink.<sup>99</sup>

This goal of living by the Spirit rather than the flesh, however, was not without its share of difficulty. In his work *On the Advantage of Patience*, Cyprian wrote regarding patience, "in harmony with the Holy Spirit, associated with what is heavenly and divine, it struggles with the defense of its strength against the deeds of the flesh and the body, wherewith the soul is assaulted and taken."<sup>100</sup> This notion of the flesh assailing the Christian was also picked up in Cyprian's *Address to Demetrianus*. In that work, Cyprian encouraged Demetrianus that regardless of any adversity from without or from the body itself, "living by the Spirit rather than by the flesh, we overcome bodily weakness by mental strength. By those very things which torment and weary us, we know and trust

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<sup>97</sup> Cyprian, *On the Lord's Prayer* 11.

<sup>98</sup> Cyprian, *On Jealousy and Envy* 13.

<sup>99</sup> Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies* 3.60.

<sup>100</sup> Cyprian, *On the Advantage of Patience* 14.

that we are proved and strengthened.”<sup>101</sup>

For Cyprian, this notion of living in the Spirit as the key to overcoming the flesh was based upon Paul’s teaching in Romans 8, Colossians 3, and Galatians 5. Through the Spirit, Christians were able to mortify the deeds of the flesh, so that “having received the Holy Spirit, we are living holily and spiritually,” in order to do only those things which were worthy of God while exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit.<sup>102</sup> Thankfully, however, the Holy Spirit had not laid a heavy burden on believers, but rather the Lord’s burden was light, so that “the greater holiness and truth of the repeated birth belongs to you, who have no longer any desires of the flesh and of the body. Only the things which belong to virtue and the Spirit have remained in you to glory.”<sup>103</sup> Though the struggle against the flesh would be long and hard, Cyprian offered encouragement that the Spirit-filled believer was promised success in the struggle.

Another key element of the Spirit’s training was to prepare believers for battle against the evil one. Mentioned already above regarding Cyprian’s view of the Spirit’s inspiration of Scripture, in his *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, Cyprian wrote that the Holy Spirit trained believers for the conflict by “teaching and showing that the army of the devil is not to be feared, and that, if the foe should declare war against us, our hope consists rather in that war itself; and that by that conflict the righteous attain to the reward of the divine abode and eternal salvation.”<sup>104</sup> Similarly, Cyprian wrote that Christians were prepared to conquer in the conflict with the devil by donning the armor of God and wielding the sword of the Spirit, namely the inspired Scriptures.<sup>105</sup> In light of this

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<sup>101</sup> Cyprian, *Address to Demetrianus* 18.

<sup>102</sup> Cyprian, *On Jealousy and Envy* 14; see also *Three Books of Testimonies* 3.64.

<sup>103</sup> Cyprian, *On the Dress of Virgins* 23; see also *Three Books of Testimonies* 3.119.

<sup>104</sup> Cyprian, *Exhortation to Martyrdom* 10.

<sup>105</sup> Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies* 3.117.

training, Cyprian urged the Numidian bishop Antonianus to remain aware that “evil deeds do not proceed from the Holy Spirit but from the promptings of the Enemy.”<sup>106</sup> Though Christians were going to be assaulted by the evil one, they had been trained by the Spirit to remain steadfast in the face of this adversity, even unto martyrdom.

A final element of the Holy Spirit’s teaching of believers was his role in leading them into all truth. The church had been given the Scriptures to guide them, as well as the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit. In a letter to the bishop Jubaianus, Cyprian argued that it was right to understand that the Spirit would lead the church into a proper understanding of the truth regarding the baptism of heretics.<sup>107</sup> In response to those individuals who were arguing for the baptism of heretics, Cyprian denounced them for their continued and stubborn ignorance in their refusal to follow, “whatever improvement the Holy Spirit may have revealed.”<sup>108</sup> Abraham van de Beek has observed that Cyprian developed three sources of truth: reason, the inspiration of the Spirit, and the canon. He continues:

The inspiration of the Spirit implies that older customs in the church must be corrected because of newer insights ... It is possible to interpret ‘inspiration’ as the inspiration of Scripture, but elsewhere Cyprian elaborates the topic more extensively, and there it is clear that he is speaking of the ongoing work of the Spirit in the Church. The Spirit can change the customs of the church ... Of course, this implies the risk of arbitrariness: anyone can call on the Spirit in order to push forward his own ideas. Therefore, we need the community of believers.<sup>109</sup>

Through the Spirit’s guidance of the church into all truth, old or errant customs ought to be reevaluated. In addition to the Spirit’s leading, the other main source of truth that would override arbitrariness was the Spirit’s inspired words in the Scriptures. Thus,

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<sup>106</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 55.27.2.

<sup>107</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 73.

<sup>108</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 73.13.1.

<sup>109</sup> Abraham van de Beek, “Cyprian on Baptism,” in *Cyprian of Carthage: Studies in His Life, Language and Thought*, ed. Henk Bakker, Paul van Geest, and Hans van Loon, 146, *Late Antique History and Religion*, 3 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 152–3.



through the Spirit's guidance of believers at that time, or through his inspired Scriptures, and most likely through a combination of the two, the Spirit was active in leading the church into all truth.<sup>110</sup>

## Salvation

An often-overlooked emphasis in Cyprian's writing is the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion.<sup>111</sup> As mentioned above, Arnold insightfully observes, "The role of the Holy Spirit in conversion is under appreciated in Cyprian scholarship, which would have profoundly bothered him, for Cyprian could not speak of his conversion without tracing the Spirit's involvement."<sup>112</sup> For Cyprian, the Spirit was not only the one who led men to the Father, but also applied the Son's work of salvation to men, that they might be saved.

In Cyprian's understanding of salvation, the Spirit's regenerating work brought men to the Father. In *On the Lord's Prayer*, as Cyprian exhorted his fellow believers to prayer, he concluded, "New-created and newborn of the Spirit by the mercy of God, let us imitate what we shall one day be ... Since we are to pray and give thanks to God for ever, let us not cease in this life also to pray and give thanks."<sup>113</sup> Cyprian also appealed to Paul's teaching in Ephesians 2 that through Christ, and having been born of the Spirit, believers now "have access in one Spirit unto the Father."<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, Cyprian appealed to Jesus' teaching in John 3 that one could not enter the kingdom of God unless

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<sup>110</sup> In the same passage quoted above, Van de Beek, "Cyprian on Baptism," 152–3, also argues that this notion of the Spirit changing older customs, seen in Tertullian who influenced Cyprian, should be best understood as a notion in the minds of the Carthaginian church at this time. Though Cyprian did not take it as far as Tertullian, the idea was nevertheless still present in his thinking.

<sup>111</sup> For an excellent treatment of Cyprian's full understanding of soteriology, see D. Forrest Mills, "*Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus: The Relationship between Ecclesiology and Soteriology for Cyprian of Carthage*" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021).

<sup>112</sup> Arnold, *Cyprian of Carthage*, 41.

<sup>113</sup> Cyprian, *On the Lord's Prayer* 36.

<sup>114</sup> Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies* 2.27.

he had been born of water and the Spirit. Only through the Spirit's regeneration could one become spiritual and begin "to be of heaven."<sup>115</sup>

Speaking more specifically, Cyprian saw the Spirit as applying the love of God and work of Christ to individuals, thereby resulting in their regeneration. In *To Donatus* 3–4, Cyprian spoke of his own conversion, noting that at first he had been tossed about in darkness, and though he desperately wished and desired to be free of his bonds chaining him to his errors, his best efforts were futile. At the point where he had begun to despair of ever being free, so that he even began to indulge his sins, suddenly "by the agency of the Spirit breathed from heaven," light was infused into his reconciled heart at the second birth, so that he was now "animated by the Spirit of holiness."<sup>116</sup> Arnold picks up on this phrase to explain the role of the Spirit in Cyprian's conversion by noting, "he experienced freedom through the indwelling of the Spirit of holiness," and indeed Cyprian did feel a great freedom from his sinful flesh upon receiving the Spirit's animation.<sup>117</sup> He also recounted to Donatus that he remained well aware that the gift of the Spirit who brought him out of darkness was the pure gift of God, and thus his conversion was an aid to help keep him in a state of gratitude toward God.

In his efforts to teach the Spirit's regenerating work, Cyprian often used the words of the Scriptures to express his own thoughts. In *On the Lord's Prayer* 12, Cyprian quoted 1 Corinthians 6:9, "but you are sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God," but immediately followed the quotation by stating, "he says that we are sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God."<sup>118</sup> For Cyprian, the words of Scripture so aptly stated his point, that all he could do

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3.25. <sup>115</sup> Cyprian, *On the Lord's Prayer* 17. See also *On Mortality* 14; *Three Books of Testimonies*

<sup>116</sup> Cyprian, *To Donatus* 3–4.

<sup>117</sup> Arnold, *Cyprian of Carthage*, 42.

<sup>118</sup> Cyprian, *On the Lord's Prayer* 12.

was to repeat them once again, rather than attempt his own statement on the matter. Cyprian followed this same practice three other times in his *Three Books of Testimonies*. In 3.6, Cyprian quoted Romans 5, “the love of God is infused in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,” as part of his argument that the righteous will endure to the end because of the promises of God and the Spirit’s sustaining work.<sup>119</sup> Continuing the same thought, Cyprian then cautioned against grieving the Spirit through the words of Ephesians 4, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in which you were sealed in the day of redemption.”<sup>120</sup> Finally, in 3.58, Cyprian reminded his audience that death was not a cause of sadness for the Christian, since Ezekiel 37 had promised, “I will put my Spirit upon you, and you shall live.”<sup>121</sup> These passages of Scripture were instrumental in Cyprian’s understanding of the Spirit’s role in bringing an individual to salvation, and thus he appealed to their words directly rather than attempting to articulate his own wording of their truths.

Yet for Cyprian, the Spirit was involved in more than simply the regeneration of a person, but also the sanctification of that person throughout his or her life. In his *Address to Demetrianus*, Cyprian exhorted Christians that they should not lose hope in this world, but rather await the coming heavenly rewards, “for we who have put off our earthly birth, and are now created and regenerated by the Spirit, and no longer live to the world but to God, shall not receive God’s gifts and promises until we arrive at the presence of God.”<sup>122</sup> Similarly, Christians would still be subject to the struggles of the flesh and humanity in this life, until “this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this

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<sup>119</sup> Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies* 3.6.

<sup>120</sup> Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies* 3.7.

<sup>121</sup> Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies* 3.58.

<sup>122</sup> Cyprian, *Address to Demetrianus* 20.

mortal receive immortality, and the Spirit lead us to God the Father.”<sup>123</sup> Though this theme received a smaller degree of attention compared to his other statements regarding the Holy Spirit’s work, nevertheless for Cyprian, it was impossible to speak of salvation without also speaking of the Spirit’s regenerative work in men.

## **Baptism**

In contrast to the relative brevity given to the Spirit’s work in salvation, Cyprian’s discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in baptism was one of his most significant themes.<sup>124</sup> For Cyprian, in addition to several other early fathers, the believer’s reception of the Spirit was tied to the practice of baptism. Cyprian based his position upon the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, looking to the gospels for Jesus’ teaching that entrance into the kingdom of God required the baptism of both water and the Spirit.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, in a letter to Jubaianus, Cyprian first quoted John 20 to show that Jesus had given the Spirit to the apostles, so that upon receiving the Spirit they might have the power to baptize and thus grant remission of sins according to Jesus’ command. He then looked to Peter’s sermon at Pentecost as the fulfillment of Jesus’ teaching, for Peter instructed the Jews to repent, be baptized for the remission of sin, and then receive the gift of the Spirit.<sup>126</sup>

Building upon this biblical foundation, Cyprian’s baptismal theology focused heavily on the Spirit. Frans Gistelinck argued that, for Cyprian, the Spirit was both the source and the core of Cyprian’s baptismal theology, and Cyprian’s writings support his

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<sup>123</sup> Cyprian, *On Mortality* 8.

<sup>124</sup> Rather than implying this theme’s lesser significance by its placement so late in the chapter, the placement of this section reflects a desire to follow the same pattern as the preceding chapters when speaking of similar themes held by both men, so as to allow for a better comparison of the two figures’ understanding of each theme.

<sup>125</sup> Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies* 1.12. Cyprian specifically appealed to passages such as Matt 3:11 and John 3:5–6.

<sup>126</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 73.7.2; 73.17.2.

observation.<sup>127</sup> In one of his most explicit statements, Cyprian wrote in a letter to Caecilius that “it is through baptism that we receive the Spirit,” and thus all Christians ought to receive the Spirit, as all Christians ought to be baptized.<sup>128</sup> In another letter to Magnus, Cyprian specifically addressed the issue of the mode of baptism in reference to those who had been baptized while ill, arguing that the mode of baptism was not the key issue at stake.<sup>129</sup> Cyprian noted that some were arguing regarding the ill “that while they have indeed obtained the Lord’s grace, they have gained the Holy Spirit and the gifts of God only in a smaller and lesser measure: they are certainly to be reckoned as Christians but not to be put all the same on an equal level with other Christians.” He answered this argument with a resounding negation: “Here they need reminding that the Holy Spirit is not given by measure but is poured out completely upon the believer,” regardless of the mode of baptism.<sup>130</sup>

Cyprian did not merely affirm the Spirit’s reception at baptism, but also his work that accompanied baptism. Gistelinck again is helpful here, writing that Cyprian believed baptism was the gift of the Holy Spirit, so that in the baptismal pool, sins were forgiven, men were reborn by the power of the Spirit, and believers could now live a new life in the Spirit.<sup>131</sup> In Cyprian’s *On the Dress of Virgins* 23, he wrote, “all indeed who attain the reward of a greater grace by the sanctification of baptism, therein put off the

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<sup>127</sup> Frans Gistelinck, “Doopbad En Geestesgave Bij Tertullianus En Cyprianus,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 43, no. 3–4 (November 1967): 554.

<sup>128</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 63.8.3.

<sup>129</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 69. Cyprian does not appeal to Magnus as a fellow bishop, nor does he include him in the first person plural as a fellow leader of the church. Furthermore, no evidence for an African bishop named Magnus during this time has been found. These observations allow for the possibility that Magnus was simply a lay member of a church some distance away from Carthage, given that Magnus wrote to Cyprian rather than speaking with him in person. In the conclusion of the letter, however, Cyprian wrote that each bishop could determine his own opinion and views, and he encouraged Magnus to do so. For this reason, it is likely that Magnus was, in fact, a bishop of a church, though his identity remains uncertain.

<sup>130</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 69.13.3–14.1.

<sup>131</sup> Gistelinck, “Doopbad,” 553.

old man by the grace of the saving laver, and, renewed by the Holy Spirit from the filth of the old contagion, are purged by a second nativity.”<sup>132</sup> Cahal Daly more concisely worded Cyprian’s position on baptism as, “sinful flesh [is made] holy by the holiness of the Spirit of God.”<sup>133</sup> In the same letter to Magnus mentioned above, Cyprian adds that “the Lord proves and declares in his gospel that sins can only be put away by those who have the Holy Spirit,” before quoting John 20 for support here as well.<sup>134</sup> Finally, supporting his claim that sins were cleansed at baptism, Cyprian quoted 1 Corinthians 6, in which Paul writes, “And these things indeed you were: but you are washed, but you are sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God,” as a clear sign that baptism washed a person’s sins away while also serving as the place of a person’s reception of the Spirit.<sup>135</sup> Arnold summarized Cyprian’s position by stating, “It was the reception of the Spirit at baptism that transformed him into a new man,” for although baptism washed away one’s sins, “it was the Spirit that gave him ‘a real measure of moral victory over his sins.’”<sup>136</sup>

In some of his letters written during the baptism controversy, Cyprian specified more clearly the process by which the Spirit was received at baptism, namely the laying on of hands.<sup>137</sup> Looking to John 3:5, Cyprian believed that the water and Spirit mentioned

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<sup>132</sup> Cyprian, *On the Dress of Virgins* 23.

<sup>133</sup> Cahal B. Daly, *Tertullian: The Puritan and His Influence: An Essay in Historical Theology* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1993), 18.

<sup>134</sup> Campbell makes an argument here that many theologians understood this passage of Scripture to refer to penance, rather than baptism, but Cyprian was clear that he took the passage to be discussing baptism, and thus used it in support of his argument regarding baptizing the Novatians. Thus, Campbell’s argument here seems to be reading a later understanding of Roman Catholic doctrine into Cyprian’s writings.

<sup>135</sup> Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies* 3.65.

<sup>136</sup> Arnold, *Cyprian of Carthage*, 41–2, quoting Haykin, “The Holy Spirit,” 323.

<sup>137</sup> Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 256; see also Gistelinck, “Dooopbad,” 552. Brent makes the general observation that “in the church the Holy Spirit is given in baptism . . . through the imposition of hands.” Gistelinck similarly that the Holy Spirit had gained a wider place in baptismal theology as the third century progressed, so that baptism had come to be not only for the remission of sins, but was also accompanied by the laying on of hands to receive the Spirit.

were two parts of one ritual act, so that immediately following a person's baptism, the bishop ought to lay hands on the new believer and thus invite the Spirit to indwell that individual. Even in the extraordinary case of Cornelius and his family receiving the Spirit prior to their baptism, Cyprian pointed to Peter's instruction that they be baptized because he "wanted it seen that nothing should be omitted: the teaching of the apostles should in every particular conform to the law enjoined by the Lord and the Gospel."<sup>138</sup> Again looking to Peter as an example, Cyprian wrote to Jubaianus using Peter and John's encounter with the Samaritans as the model practice of granting them the Holy Spirit. He wrote that the Carthaginian church followed Peter's example: "those who are baptized in the Church are presented to the appointed leaders of the Church, and by our prayer and the imposition of our hands they receive the Holy Spirit and are made perfect with the Lord's seal."<sup>139</sup> Burns observed, "Because the gift of the Holy Spirit was essential for any sanctifying action, the ritual of baptism could not be divided into parts."<sup>140</sup> Cyprian clarified his position still further, however, in his letter to Pompey, where he argued, "Furthermore, it is not by the laying-on of hands (when the Holy Spirit is received) that a man is born, but it is in baptism: he must be born already, that he may receive the Spirit."<sup>141</sup> Thus for Cyprian, the baptismal rite was both the act of baptism and the accompanying imposition of hands that immediately followed baptism, all for the purpose of washing one's sins and receiving the Holy Spirit.

In the rebaptism controversy, however, Cyprian had to define the importance of the Spirit for baptism still further.<sup>142</sup> Baptism was only for the true church and could

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<sup>138</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 72.1.2.

<sup>139</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 73.9.2.

<sup>140</sup> Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 113.

<sup>141</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 74.7.1.

<sup>142</sup> The rebaptism controversy was a larger issue than discussed here, but this dissertation will focus particularly on Cyprian's understanding of the Spirit's work as seen in this controversy.

be performed only once, because “the gift of the Holy Spirit was essential for any sanctifying action.”<sup>143</sup> Van de Beek concurs saying, “It would be a denial of the first baptism that cannot be denied since it is administered by the one holy Church in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Christ cannot undo Himself.”<sup>144</sup> In some of his letters written during this controversy, Cyprian’s arguments revealed another facet of his understanding of the Spirit’s work in baptism. In a letter to Jubaianus, Cyprian challenged the notion that a heretic could receive proper baptism outside the true church, for:

If someone is able to receive baptism and to obtain forgiveness of sins according to his perverted faith, then he can obtain the Holy Spirit as well by virtue of that same faith. In that case, when he comes to us, there is no need for hands to be laid upon him so that he may receive the Spirit and be sealed. Either he can obtain both outside through his faith or, being outside, he receives neither of them.<sup>145</sup>

Cyprian continued his challenge by condemning any church who might receive a heretic’s baptism as legitimate, for an endorsement of the individual’s baptism must include an endorsement of his remissions of sins and receipt of the Holy Spirit, as that individual would be part of the temple of God. He then declared, “But of what God, I ask? The Creator? ... Christ, then? ... Or the Holy Spirit? As these three are one, how can the Holy Spirit look with favour upon him when he is an enemy either of the Son or of the Father?”<sup>146</sup>

In another letter to Pompey, Cyprian made his position on the controversy definitively clear. He wrote:

For if it is the case that the Church is not with heretics for the reason that the Church is one and cannot be divided, and if the Holy Spirit is not with them for the reason

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<sup>143</sup> J. Patout Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, Routledge Early Church Monograph (London: Routledge, 2002), 113.

<sup>144</sup> Van de Beek, “Cyprian on Baptism,” 146. For this reason, Michael Fahey, *Cyprian and the Bible: A Study in Third-Century Exegesis*, Beiträge Zur Geschichte Der Biblischen Hermeneutik, 9 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971), 50, states that the Holy Spirit also instructs catechumenates to avoid heretical baptism.

<sup>145</sup> Cyprian, *Letter 73.6.2*.

<sup>146</sup> Cyprian, *Letter 73.12.2*.



that the Spirit is one and cannot be with outsiders and aliens, then it indeed follows that baptism cannot be with heretics either, for baptism is only to be found within that same unity: baptism can be separated neither from the Church nor from the Holy Spirit.<sup>147</sup>

He followed up his statement with a series of penetrating questions. His first question asked that if a person could be baptized by the name of Christ alone, then why could he not also receive the Holy Spirit when men laid hands upon him by the same name? Second, if anyone could be born outside the church and yet still be a temple of God, then why could the Holy Spirit not be poured out on that temple outside the church? Third, if someone had been sanctified and received the remission of sins in baptism, then that individual must now be fit to receive the Holy Spirit, so if a proper baptism could happen outside the church, then so could the reception of the Holy Spirit. If this possibility were not true, then the person being baptized was evidently able to separate the Spirit from Christ. He then ridicules the position by asserting, “given the fact that that our second birth is a spiritual birth and by it we are born in Christ through the waters of regeneration, it is equally absurd for them to argue that anyone can be thus born spiritually among heretics, while still denying that the Spirit is with them.”<sup>148</sup> He thus concluded:

Water by itself cannot cleanse sins and sanctify man unless it possesses the Holy Spirit as well. Thus either they have to allow that the Spirit is also to be found where they argue there is baptism, or there is no baptism where there is no Spirit, for there cannot be baptism without the Spirit.<sup>149</sup>

For Cyprian, baptism was simply not an option outside the true church in which the Spirit dwelt, because without the Spirit’s presence, the ritual was meaningless and ineffective.

In addition to the question of the validity of baptism outside the church was the question of whether a bishop outside the church had the ability to impart the Holy Spirit to others at baptism if he himself never had the Spirit imparted to him in baptism. Arnold

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<sup>147</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 74.4.2.

<sup>148</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 74.5.4.

<sup>149</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 74.5.4. See also Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 266; Labriolle, *The History and Literature of Christianity*, 140; Brent, *Cyprian On the Church*, 27.

observes that for Cyprian, “Those who started their own church separated themselves from the true church, the rightful bishop, the saving sacraments, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>150</sup> Thus Daly can assert that the “threefold unity of the Holy Spirit, the Church, and baptism, is for St. Cyprian indissoluble.”<sup>151</sup> In many of the same letters cited above, Cyprian categorically rejected the possibility that a bishop outside the true church could baptize others, while not having the Holy Spirit himself. In a letter to the Numidian bishops, he posed the question, “How, we ask, can a man possibly cleanse and sanctify water when he is himself unclean and when the Holy Spirit is not within him,” or how “can a man who has himself lost the Holy Spirit perform actions of the spirit?”<sup>152</sup> He then answered the question by explaining that if the bishop was able to baptize, then he must necessarily give the Holy Spirit to those whom he baptized. Since he does not have the Spirit himself, however, as evidenced by his separation from the true church, then he has no ability to grant the Holy Spirit, and thus his baptism is invalid.<sup>153</sup>

Similarly, in a letter to Magnus, Cyprian remarked that even the supporters of these heretical baptisms acknowledged that their baptisms were without the Holy Spirit, though they still affirmed that they were able to baptize. To Cyprian, such an argument was completely groundless, and he related to Magnus, “[t]hat is just where we have got them: we can prove that they cannot possibly baptize who do not possess the Holy Spirit.”<sup>154</sup> He then appealed to the Scripture’s account of John the Baptist for support, demonstrating that:

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<sup>150</sup> Arnold, *Cyprian of Carthage*, 88. Upon expressing faith, being baptized, and having the bishop lay hands on a believer, the Spirit would come to dwell within that believer.

<sup>151</sup> Daly, *Tertullian: The Puritan*, 62. See also Labriolle, *History and Literature*, 140.

<sup>152</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 70.1.3–2.3.

<sup>153</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 70.3.1. Cyprian makes a very similar argument in his *Letter* 74.7.2 to Pompey, where he declared, “Thus the Spirit cannot be received unless there exists already the person to receive it,” that is, the person has had a proper baptism within the church.

<sup>154</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 69.10.2.

Christ our Lord himself was to be baptized by John, but John received beforehand the Holy Spirit while he was still in his mother's womb. This was done to make it absolutely clear that only those who possess the Holy Spirit are able to baptize. We challenge, then, those who espouse the cause of these heretics and schismatics to answer us this: do they, or do they not, possess the Holy Spirit?<sup>155</sup>

In Cyprian's mind, this account of John's receiving the Spirit in the womb provided a Scriptural model for requiring those who baptize to have the Spirit, and those without the Spirit were therefore disqualified from administering baptisms. Arnold explains this idea further: "The reason a bishop lays hands on the one baptized is to signify the reception of the Holy Spirit. Those who do not have the Holy Spirit to begin with are not able to baptize and impart the Spirit."<sup>156</sup> In light of Cyprian's extensive and significant emphasis on the Spirit's work in baptism, Haykin argues, "this controversy is usually described as a controversy about rebaptism, though, in many ways, the real issue at stake had to do not so much with baptism as with the Spirit."<sup>157</sup>

### **Additional Themes**

In addition to the themes that he shared with Tertullian regarding the Holy Spirit's activity, Cyprian also had some unique foci regarding the work of the Spirit in the life of the church.

**Identity of the true church.** In addition to discerning a proper understanding of the Spirit's work in baptism during the rebaptism controversy, Cyprian also had to answer the question of the Spirit's work regarding the lapsed and the rigorists. In a letter written to the Numidian bishop Antonianus, who was inclined toward a rigorist and Novatianist position, concerning Cornelius and Novatian, Cyprian quoted Paul's teaching in Ephesians 4 instructing believers to endeavor to "preserve the unity of the Spirit in the

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<sup>155</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 69.11.2.

<sup>156</sup> Arnold, *Cyprian of Carthage*, 88.

<sup>157</sup> Haykin, "The Holy Spirit," 324.

bond of peace.”<sup>158</sup> Cyprian went on to say that the one who neither maintained the unity of the Spirit nor the bond of peace and separated himself from the church and assembly of priests could not be a bishop. Indeed, the visible unity of the Christians with one another in the Holy Spirit was a mark of being a member of the true church, for the reception of the Holy Spirit was impossible outside the church.<sup>159</sup> For this reason, Cyprian advised Epictetus of Assuras, regarding the conflict with the lapsed bishop Fortunatianus, “But if these madmen should continue incurably insane and if they should remain in the blindness of their night in which they now find themselves upon the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit,” then Epictetus ought to lead his people to cease having fellowship with Fortunatianus so that no other believers are led astray into error.<sup>160</sup> Cyprian continued by declaring that because those outside the church had rejected the presence of the Spirit, the Lord will not listen to their prayers. Nevertheless, these individuals still had an impact on the life of the church, as some even slandered Cyprian. In his defense against this slander, Cyprian replied bitterly, “as if those who have apostatised and are now renegades outside the Church, from whose breasts the Holy Spirit has departed, can offer anything but a wicked heart and a deceitful tongue, and, therefore, hatred and sacrilegious lies.”<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 55.24.4.

<sup>159</sup> Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 266. See also Cyprian, *On the Church: Select Treatises*, trans. Allen Brent. St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press Popular Patristics Series 32 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2006), 27; Daly, *Tertullian: The Puritan*, 18, 26.

<sup>160</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 65.4.1. Assuras was a town to the southeast of Carthage. Clarke argues that Cyprian’s address to Epictetus lends itself toward the conjecture that Epictetus was the bishop of Assuras, though only for a short tenure of a couple of years at most. Clarke emphasizes, however, that this conjecture lacks any supporting external evidence.

<sup>161</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 66.2.2. Cyprian spoke similarly in *Letter* 59.17.2, “That, therefore, a mere handful of foolhardy criminals forsake the ways of the Lord that lead to heaven and salvation and are, accordingly, abandoned by the Holy Spirit for their unholy actions, this provides no reason why we, like them, must be forgetful of the divine teachings; there are no grounds for us to suppose that the crimes of these madmen can prevail over the judgments passed by bishops nor for us to believe that the efforts of mere men can be more powerful in attack than the providence of God shall be in defence.” Arnold, *Cyprian*, 88, put it bluntly, “Those who started their own church separated themselves from the true church, the rightful bishop, the saving sacraments, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.”

Cyprian did not merely condemn those who had left the church, but he also affirmed the Holy Spirit's work within the true church as a contrast. As Angelo di Berardino states Cyprian's position in a beautiful turn of phrase: "The Holy Spirit acts only within the boundaries of the garden and the fountain."<sup>162</sup> Similarly, Daly noted that the reason that someone outside the church could not possess the Spirit is, "the Catholic Church alone possesses the Spirit of God, the author of all holiness and all sanctifying power."<sup>163</sup> In the same letter where he condemned those who slandered his name, Cyprian called for Pupianus, a prominent Christian in Carthage who had been among those slandering Cyprian, to vindicate him now as a legitimate bishop, that none might think "that a whole new flock of converts may have received through us no grace of baptism and the Holy Spirit."<sup>164</sup> Cyprian firmly believed that he was a legitimate bishop of the true church, and thus he was capable of administering baptisms and granting the Holy Spirit.

This work of the Spirit within the congregation had the effect of bringing about unity among the believers. James Lee highlights this unifying work of the Spirit saying, "The Spirit works precisely through the visible church," and thus the church's visible unity is a sign of the invisible union of the Spirit.<sup>165</sup> Indeed, Burns and Fagin write, "The Spirit was identified through his peculiar effects, all of them associated with the Christian community."<sup>166</sup> Burns and Fagin argue still further by claiming, "Cyprian's theology

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<sup>162</sup> Angelo di Berardino, "Preface," in Bakker, van Geest, and van Loon, xii. Di Berardino points to the notion of the church as a fountain and garden as seen in several of Cyprian's letters.

<sup>163</sup> Daly, *Tertullian: The Puritan*, 27.

<sup>164</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 66.5.2.

<sup>165</sup> James K. Lee, "The Church and the Holy Spirit: Ecclesiology and Pneumatology in Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine," in *Studia Patristica* 91 (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2017), 204, 191.

<sup>166</sup> J. Patout Burns, and Gerald M Fagin, *The Holy Spirit, Message of the Fathers of the Church*, vol. 3 (Wilmington, DE: M. Glazier, 1984), 88. See also F. LeRon Shults, and Andrea Hollingsworth, *The Holy Spirit, Guides to Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub, 2008), 23–4. Shults and Hollingsworth argue that Cyprian believed the gifts of the Spirit continued beyond the apostolic age but were limited to the bishops on account of their authority.

effectively locked the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit into the one Catholic communion and located it in the person of the bishop.”<sup>167</sup> Labriolle recognized this emphasis as well stating, “Throughout the crises which one after the other had failed to weaken the Church ... the Episcopate had become more and more strengthened as the guardian of the rule of faith, and as the authorized interpreter of the Spirit.”<sup>168</sup> Thus for Cyprian, the Spirit was still greatly active in the church, but only in the true church among believers.

**Sinning against the Spirit.** Another theme Cyprian noted was the issue of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, particularly among the lapsed. In a letter written to a number of clergy shortly after the Decian persecution had ended, Cyprian rebuked several priests who had granted reconciliation to some of the lapsed, but they had done so while the persecution was still ongoing and without the approval of their bishops. In his rebuke, Cyprian quoted Jesus’ warning regarding blasphemy against the Holy Spirit from Mark 3 as an unforgivable sin in the context of other sins one might commit, for one could not sin and then partake of the Supper without proper repentance.<sup>169</sup> By allowing these lapsed to come back into fellowship without proper repentance, these priests were aiding them in committing blasphemy.

Looking to those still within the church, Cyprian also provided warnings against blaspheming the Spirit. In his *Three Books of Testimonies* 3.28, he simply affirmed that forgiveness was not available to the one who sinned against the Holy Spirit by blaspheming him, and he quoted Jesus’ words from Matthew 12 and Mark 3.<sup>170</sup> He also warned against failing to fulfill one’s vows, and urged his people to repay their vows

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<sup>167</sup> Burns and Fagin, *The Holy Spirit*, 80.

<sup>168</sup> Labriolle, *History and Literature*, 146.

<sup>169</sup> Cyprian, *Letter* 16.2.2.

<sup>170</sup> Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies* 3.28.

quickly, citing the account of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. In lying to the Holy Spirit, Ananias and Sapphira had lied to God, and they were struck dead accordingly. Through his discussion of this account, Cyprian strongly cautioned his people to avoid lying to the Spirit by their failure to fulfill their vows.<sup>171</sup>

### **Conclusion**

As a bishop in the midst of a turbulent period of the church's history, Cyprian wrote primarily on issues that the church was facing, such as the proper response of a Christian to persecution or the conflict with various schismatic groups. Yet this focus on ecclesial matters did not necessarily result in Cyprian lacking a rich pneumatology. Contrary to the detractors mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Cyprian had a great deal to say about the Holy Spirit's activity. Admittedly, he did not offer up precise theological definitions of the Spirit's person in relation to the other two members of the Trinity, as did Tertullian before him. Additionally, he did not leave a formal and systematic treatise on the subject of the Holy Spirit's work in the life of the church, as some of the church fathers would write in the following century. Yet to accuse Cyprian of failing to possess a robust pneumatology, or to dismiss him as having nothing noteworthy to contribute, is simply a failure to recognize the way in which Cyprian spoke of the Holy Spirit.

For Cyprian, the Spirit's work undergirded much of his own work in the church. The Spirit inspired the Scriptures, anointed believers, and taught them how to live holy lives. Furthermore, the presence of the Spirit was absolutely essential in identifying the true church, for the true church was that which was indwelt by the Holy Spirit. For this reason, Cyprian spoke more about how the Spirit's work impacted the life of the church, rather than providing formal definitions. He accepted the teachings of the

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<sup>171</sup> Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies* 3.30.

apostles as well as those of his predecessor Tertullian, and building from their teachings on the Holy Spirit, Cyprian showed how the Spirit's work was vital for the lives of the Christians under his care. Thus, while Cyprian may not have much to offer in a discussion of the ontological status of the Holy Spirit, he nevertheless maintained a robust pneumatology that shaped the way he approached his ministry.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> This statement is not to say that Cyprian never commented on the ontological status of the Holy Spirit, but rather that he only rarely did so, especially in comparison with his Carthaginian predecessor. In one particularly important comment, Cyprian wrote in *On the Unity of the Church* 6, "Our Lord says: 'I and the Father are one'; and again, of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit it is written: And the three are one." When Cyprian made this argument, he was more concerned about showing that the Father and Son were one, but in speaking of the oneness of God, he necessarily spoke of the Trinity. Nevertheless, this quotation does reveal that Cyprian both acknowledged and affirmed that the Holy Spirit was one with the Father and Son.

This passage has received significant attention by scholars, for Cyprian's particular quotation of 1 John 5:7–8 appeared to be one of the earliest appeals to the Johannine comma. In 1 John 5:7, the text reads "for there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood." However, the Johannine comma inserted the phrase, "the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one," before the second set of three. The Greek texts of 1 John left this phrase out, and it only began to appear in the Latin manuscripts of the Vulgate in the eighth century, and particularly those manuscripts coming out of Spain. The comma had, however, appeared in a number of works discussing the Trinity as early as the fourth century with Priscillian, and then throughout the fifth and sixth centuries. For a fuller discussion of this history of the Johannine Comma, see Teófilo Ayuso Marazuela, "Nuevo Estudio Sobre El 'Comma Ioanneum,'" *Biblica* 28, no. 2 (1947): 216–35.

In the works of Tertullian and Cyprian, however, as well as those of the later Latin father Augustine, this reference to the three being one does not necessitate the use of the Johannine comma. Rather, it is more likely that these fathers were reflecting upon the actual wording of the text of 1 John 5:7–8 and seeing in the text an allusion to the Trinity. However, Bévenot observes, "it is likely enough that the subsequent creation of verse 7 (in Spain, middle of the 4th century) was prompted by Cyprian's words here" (ACW 25:109). For a detailed analysis of the third-century Latin fathers' use of this passage and an accompanying discussion of the potential Latin origins of the comma, see Rodrigo Galiza, and John W Reeve, "The Johannine Comma (1 John 5:7–8): The Status of Its Textual History and Theological Usage in English, Greek, and Latin," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 56, no. 1 (Spr 2018): 63–89.



## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

For Tertullian and Cyprian, the Christian life was initiated, sustained, and guided by the Holy Spirit's work. Indeed, neither of these men could speak of the church without reference to the Spirit, for the very identity of the church as a true church was tightly bound with the presence of the Spirit in that church. In light of this reality, the theory proposed by Ayres and Barnes mentioned at the beginning of this work needs to be amended. Contrary to their claim that the early Carthaginian church suffered a downturn in its pneumatology at the beginning of the third century until a recovery in the fourth century, this dissertation has demonstrated that this church possessed a robust pneumatology through its emphasis upon the divine work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church and individual believers. While lengthy discussions of the Spirit's ontological status are fewer than those found in the subsequent century, the emphasis on activity instead of ontology does not necessitate the claim that this church possessed a weaker pneumatology during this period.

In order to situate the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian in their historical context prior to examining their pneumatological statements, this dissertation opened with a discussion of the social, philosophical, political, and religious contexts in Roman Carthage at the end of the second century through the middle of the third. Socially, Carthage reflected much of the Roman Empire at the time, with the small wealthy minority possessing the vast majority of resources. This gulf between the wealthy nobility and the poor populace was further highlighted through an examination of the difference in literacy rates, educational opportunities, and career possibilities. By placing Tertullian and Cyprian in their social context as members of the upper classes, their

intellectual abilities and corpora of works can be better understood. Similarly, the philosophical context of Stoicism provided categories from which both men drew some of their thoughts and vocabulary to speak on matters of the soul and virtue. Tertullian especially imbibed much of the style of Stoic writing with its emphasis on *brevitas* and the use of rhetoric to lambast one's opponent.

At the same time, both Tertullian and Cyprian found themselves at odds with the Roman government on account of their adherence to Christianity. Throughout the early- to mid-third century, varying levels of persecution were enacted against the Christians, with often devastating effects. While the earlier bouts of persecution simply sought to limit the expansion of Christianity and curb any proselytization, later bouts specifically targeted the Christians, and especially the leaders and educated members of the congregation. For the Roman imperial government, this new religion could no longer be tolerated, and instead had to be curtailed, if not completely eradicated whenever possible. Yet in the midst of these trials, many Christians provided tremendous examples of faithfulness to Christ through their martyrdoms, including the Scillitan martyrs along with Perpetua and her companions.

Finally, the religious context of Carthage showed the contemporary understanding of the Carthaginian people concerning spirits and deities. Contrary to the exclusive monotheistic worship of the Christians, the majority of the Roman world worshiped a pantheon of state and local gods, in addition to paying reverence to local and familial spirits. In spite of this religious confusion, however, Christianity spread rapidly throughout Latin-speaking North Africa, and in particular Africa Proconsularis, so that Carthage soon became a key center for Christianity in the west. These Christians met in house churches, though they would develop more formal structures as Christianity became increasingly established during the third century. All of these contextual discussions provide the necessary and helpful background of Tertullian and Cyprian's writings on the Holy Spirit, for they were members of a culture and society and

influenced by their context, even as they sought to speak truth against many elements of that context.

From his earliest writings, Tertullian sought to emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. Though some attention had been given previously to Tertullian's views on the Spirit's activity in his Montanist writings, the role of the Spirit in his pre-Montanist writings has historically been overlooked. Yet in these earlier writings, Tertullian established the foundation of his teachings that he would continue to emphasize throughout his life. In particular, Tertullian stressed the importance of remaining within the bounds of the rule of faith handed down by the apostles, for any teaching that strayed outside the limits of the rule was false and heretical. This emphasis on the rule would be especially important in his later writings, for in spite of some historical condemnations that Tertullian eventually became a heretic himself, this emphasis on the rule of faith prevented him from straying outside the boundaries of the apostolic teaching.

Within these writings, Tertullian emphasized the Spirit's work in a number of areas. He highlighted the Spirit's work in the inspiration of the Scriptures, arguing that the Spirit inspired the prophets and apostles who penned the texts. Being fully divine, the Spirit was able to speak the words of God to men and simultaneously ensure that these men communicated God's words correctly in the texts. The Spirit was also involved in the anointing of believers, both corporately and individually, and this anointing was often accompanied with the giving of spiritual gifts for the benefit of the church. A particularly key emphasis was the strengthening and training of believers, for Tertullian saw the Spirit at work both in guiding believers into all truth, as well as preparing them for the eventual test of faith that would come from the imperial government. He urged his fellow believers to remain strong in the faith, but also encouraged them that they were being prepared by the Spirit in the present and would be sustained by the Spirit at the time of trial. Within the life of the church, Tertullian also saw the Spirit at work in the process of salvation and

baptism. Writing an entire treatise on the latter, Tertullian attributed the application of salvation and the cleansing believers of sin through the waters of baptism as the work of the Spirit. Without the active Spirit's involvement in both areas, no person could experience freedom from sin.

Tertullian established the foundation of his understanding of the Holy Spirit's activity in his early writings, but he built upon this foundation greatly in his later Montanist writings. As mentioned above, Tertullian remained committed to the church throughout his life, and thus it is natural that his writings reveal similar foci on the Spirit's activity. In these later writings, Tertullian continued to emphasize the Spirit's work in the inspiration of the Scriptures, his anointing of the church and believers, his strengthening the believers and guiding them in the truth, and his work in salvation and baptism. Furthermore, Tertullian's teachings on the majority of these areas remained consistent throughout his life.

Some discontinuity between his earlier and later works, however, did arise as a result of his engagement with Montanism, also called the New Prophecy. The teachings of Montanism strongly accentuated the role of the Paraclete in bringing the church new understanding of the Scriptures. Though the Montanism of Asia Minor was condemned as a heresy by the church, Tertullian's engagement with the expression of Montanism found in early third-century North Africa did not result in him leaving the church, whether voluntarily as a schismatic or forcefully as a heretic. Rather, Tertullian believed that the Paraclete was further guiding believers just as Christ had promised, and those within the church who refused to heed the Spirit's teaching were revealing themselves to be weak Christians. If anything, Tertullian wanted to see his fellow Christians ignited with a passion for holiness empowered by the work of the Paraclete.

As part of this engagement, his teachings did change to varying degrees on the subjects of persecution, marriage, and general issues of discipline. In these later works, Tertullian's writings took on a harsher edge that emphasized a strongly ascetic notion of

holiness. On the question of persecution, he moved away from his initial teaching that the Spirit would sustain believers through persecution and martyrdom, and he instead taught that the Spirit actually prepared believers for martyrdom. Thus, not only should believers cease to fear persecution and death, but instead they should seek it out as a means of glorifying the Lord through total devotion. Similarly, on the issues of remarriage, fasting, and forgiveness, Tertullian believed that while Christ in the Scriptures had made concessions for weak and sinful people in the past, the Paraclete now strengthened believers so that such concessions were no longer needed. As a result, remarriage was now viewed as adultery, fasting was required rather than recommended, and forgiveness was limited, especially regarding these matters. Tertullian wholeheartedly affirmed that Christ could forgive any sins he desired to wash away, but the believers on earth could not forgive sins committed by individuals whose lives proved them to be too unconcerned with total holiness. These harsher teachings made him many opponents within the church, but Tertullian remained steadfast in his belief that the Holy Spirit was at work in the life of the church; since the Spirit provided the divine power and strength necessary for believers to live as the holy people of God, then such holiness ought to be practiced in every area of life.

Transitioning to the mid-third century, Cyprian emphasized many of the major themes first discussed by Tertullian, though without the Montanist influence. For Cyprian, the hardships endured by two separate bouts of persecution as well as a plague made the Holy Spirit's work in strengthening and sustaining believers all the more gracious. Throughout his letters, Cyprian regularly encouraged those awaiting persecution or martyrdom by reminding them that the Spirit would enable them to endure torment while remaining faithful to their Lord. Another of Tertullian's themes adopted by Cyprian was the appeal to the Spirit as the author of the Scriptures, for Cyprian's writings often omitted the name of the human author in favor of explicitly identifying the words as coming from the Spirit.

As a bishop, however, Cyprian also had unique concerns that prompted reflections on the Spirit's work not found at length in Tertullian's writings. Against a number of schismatic figures who sought to form their own churches apart from what Cyprian believed was the true church, Cyprian appealed to the Spirit's presence as a key identifying marker of the true church. The bishop was anointed by the Holy Spirit to serve the church and proclaim the gospel, and only as a consequence of this anointing did the bishop have the authority and power to lay hands on new believers, thereby invoking the Spirit to enter into them. Similarly, the Spirit was a full member of the Trinity, and as the one God, the Spirit could not be at work in any other assembly than the one church. Another consequence of the Spirit's work in the one true church was his role in baptism, for the Spirit's presence over the waters of baptism made a believer's baptism efficacious, so that any baptism performed outside the true church was meaningless, being devoid of the Spirit's presence. In baptism, the Spirit washed a believer clean in preparation for indwelling that individual. Thus, for Cyprian, the question of the Holy Spirit's work was not merely one of recognizing God's actions, but actually served as the key identifier of the true church. If the Holy Spirit was not present, the assembly was not a church.

Though neither perfect nor comprehensive, these writings and reflections of both Tertullian and Cyprian nevertheless provide a window into the rich pneumatology of the Latin-speaking Christians in Roman North Africa during the early third century. Too often overlooked in favor of the rich pneumatological treatises of the fourth century, the writings of these African fathers reveal a robust understanding of the Holy Spirit and his work in the church a mere two hundred years after Christ, and thus ought to be consulted when scholars seek to paint the portrait of early Christian beliefs on the Holy Spirit. Tertullian said it best when he wrote that Christ's final teaching to the apostles to go and teach all nations in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and thus the charge that

still lay upon all believers, was only possible after the believer received the “*promissam vim spiritus sancti*.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 20.

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## ABSTRACT

### *PROMISSAM VIM SPIRITUS SANCTI:* THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ACTIVITY IN EARLY CARTHAGINIAN PNEUMATOLOGY

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In 2008, Lewis Ayres and Michel Barnes published several articles in the journal *Augustinian Studies* proposing a theory of early Christian pneumatology in three stages. They argue that each successive stage marked a downturn in the church's pneumatology, progressing from a high pneumatology eventually down to the subordinationism that led to Arianism. This dissertation adds to that discussion with an examination of the Latin-speaking Carthaginian church's (AD 180–260) view of the Holy Spirit's activity. The first major chapter examines the social, philosophical, political, and religious contexts of Roman Carthage during this period to set the early church's emphasis on the Spirit's work in its historical context and recognize the cultural influences upon the church's development of this doctrine.

Next, this dissertation will give two chapters on Tertullian's works, which are the earliest extant documents from a Latin-speaking church father. Tertullian can be placed at the very end of the first stage of Ayres and Barnes, as both his pre-Montanist and Montanist writings speak of the Spirit's activity, including but not limited to the areas of inspiration, anointing, giving of gifts, the sacraments, and the work of salvation. An examination of his significant emphasis on the Holy Spirit's activity throughout his works pushes back on the theory that the church was beginning to hold a diminished pneumatology at the beginning of the third-century.

The final chapter of the dissertation will examine the role of the Spirit's activity in the treatises and letters of Cyprian. Ayres and Barnes place Cyprian in the second stage as one who focused very little on the Holy Spirit. However, as the theological heir of his predecessor's understanding of the Spirit's work, for Cyprian, the question of the deity of the Spirit had been settled by Tertullian, which freed him to focus instead on the Spirit's work in the lives of believers and the church. Thus, while Cyprian did not often address the ontological status of the Spirit, his works nevertheless contain a multitude of references to the Spirit's activity in the life of the church.

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