Radix catholica

In 1993, I published an article in *Vigiliae Christianae* entitled : "The Significance of the Lists of Roman Bishops in the anti-Donatist Polemic"[1]. In it I argued that the ecclesiological viewpoint of Cyprian was still predominant in the work of Optatus of Milevis and, to a lesser extent, even in Augustine. The continuity of thought among these authors is clear in a variety of ways. In this article, I have chosen to explore in more detail one aspect of vocabulary which is indicative of this unity of thought. *Caput* and *princeps*, for example, may at first sight strike the reader as connoting headship. And a first impression such as this is strengthened when a statement in which these words occur is taken out of context.

So, in Cyprian, *ep.* 59.14, the Christian community of Rome for which certain African dissidents have set sail, is referred to as the "cathedra Petri" and the "ecclesia principalis unde unitas sacerdotalis exorta est"[2]. In the article mentioned above, I suggested that the expression "ecclesia principalis" should be understood in the context of Cyprian's symbolic explanation of the *cathedra Petri*. The adjective "principalis" here pertains to the prestigious, apostolic origins of the Roman church rather than some jurisdictional superiority.

A related example may be found in *ep.* 48 where Cyprian assures Cornelius of Rome of his support. He instructed Carthaginian Christians travelling to Rome to seek out the community led by Cornelius and not that of Novatian, "ut ecclesiae catholicae radicem et matricem agnoscerent ac tenerent"[3]. Many, including Charles Pietri[4], have argued that Cyprian regarded Rome as the

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1. Robert B. ENO, «The Significance of the Lists of Roman Bishops in the anti-Donatist Polemic», *Vigiliae Christianae*, 47 (1993) 158-169. I also wish to thank Allan Fitzgerald, O.S.A. of Villanova University for supplying me with material from the Augustine data bank.

2. Cyprian, *Ep.* 59.14 BAYARD p. 183. The monograph of U. Wickert comments on this text : *Sacramentum unitatis. Ein Beitrag zum Verstandnis der Kirche bei Cyprian*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 1971.

3. Cyprian, *Ep.* 48.3 (*CCSL* IIIB. 229).

4. Charles PIETRI, *Roma Christiana*, Vol. 1, p. 306 (BEFR 224), Paris, de Boccard, 1976.

"matrix et radix". I maintain that philology and the context of letter 48 show rather that the meaning is the following : that Cornelius and Cornelius alone is the "episcopus ecclesiae catholicae" in Rome and that therefore it is to Cornelius and his community that all Catholics should adhere when in Rome because his community is the Catholic Church in Rome. A study of these significant words will, I believe, contribute to an understanding of the North African ecclesiology. Hence this survey of the use of *caput*, *radix*, and *princeps* in the writings of Tertullian, Cyprian, Optatus and Augustine.

TERTULLIAN

Tertullian is, of course, the first important author of Latin North Africa, indeed of western Christendom in general. His vocabulary is of foundational significance for western theology, although in this instance, one may well claim that Cyprian's usage rather than Tertullian's set the ecclesiological agenda for the future.

One way Tertullian uses these "source words" is in the context of the origins of the human race. Each individual soul is "...velut surculus quidam ex matrice Adam in propaginem deducta...". The one nature which God conferred on Adam has become the "matrix omnium". Eve in turn is the "matrix generis feminini"[5].

Proceeding further in the sacred history, Tertullian calls the patriarchs the "originales personae" and the Jews of the Old Testament outstanding because of the justice and faith of their "originales auctores". Christ was the promise made to the tribe of Judah so that they might know that they should look for and find their "matrix religionis et fons" in Jerusalem[6]. Tertullian also used the word "matrix" in a Trinitarian context. The Spirit has gone forth from the matrix but has not been separated from it. The Father is the "caput" of the Son[7].

"Caput" can be used to indicate the essential elements of anything as in "caput fidei" or "caput legis"[8]. Frequently it indicates the source of a vice as in the *De idololatria*. Idolatry produces injustice and any art which produces idols itself becomes the "caput... idolatriae". Even more common here is the word "radix", as in 1 Tm 6.10 where "cupiditas" is the "radix omnium malorum". Conversely, to stop sinning is the "radix veniae"[9].

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5. Tertullian, *De anima*, 19.6 (*CCSL* 2. 811) ; *De anima*, 20.6 (*CCSL* 2. 813) ; *De virginibus velandis* (*CCSL* 2. 1215).

6. Tertullian, *De monogamia*, 7.1 (*CCSL* 2. 1237) ; *Apologeticum*, 21.4 (*CCSL* 1. 123) ; *Adversus Marcionem*, IV.35.10 (*CCSL* 1. 641).

7. Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 21.13 (*CCSL* 1. 125) ; *Adversus Praxean*, 8.7 (*CCSL* 2. 1168) ; 14.10 (*CCSL* 2. 1178).

8. Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, IV.2.2 (*CCSL* 1. 547) ; IV.25.15 (*CCSL* 1. 614).

9. Tertullian, *De idololatria,* 2.5 (*CCSL* 2. 1102) ; 3.2 (*CCSL* 2. 1103), *De pudicitia*, 10.14 (*CCSL* 2. 1301).

"Principalis" is the adjectival form of the word "princeps". It and related forms of "princeps" frequently refer to the temporal or logical priority of some fact or concept. So, for example, idolatry is the "principale crimen" of the human race[10]. Tertullian's great argument against heresy revolved around the temporal priority of truth. And so in the *De praescriptione haereticorum* 31. 1, he contrasted the "principalitas veritatis" with the "posteritas mendacitatis". A little later in the same work, he repeated the point : "posterior nostra res non est, immo omnibus prior est. Hoc erit testimonium veritatis ubique, occupantis principatum"[11].

As with "caput", "princeps" is used by Tertullian to describe Adam, the "princeps et generis et delicti". Satan is also and, more fundamentally, the "princeps transgressionis". God's plan for monogamy derives from the order of creation "determined from the beginning" ("de principali regula"). Ecclesiologically the most important statement of Tertullian using these words is to be found in the *De praescriptione haereticorum* 21. 4 where the apostolic churches are termed the "matrices et originales fidei"[12]. So, even as Tertullian's words are inevitably significant for Latin theology, it is rather to Cyprian that we must turn to look for the usage of these "source-words" that is more important for the theology of the Church.

CYPRIAN

The scope of Cyprian's writings is considerably narrower than that of Tertullian. Tertullian confronted all challengers ; Cyprian was a bishop concerned especially for the unity of the Church. His usage of this vocabulary is accordingly more ecclesiological in aim than Tertullian's. But he has other uses also. He sometimes joins together concepts which convey the same meaning. So, for example, in order to understand jealousy and envy more fully, he says that one must go to their source and origin (*caput atque origo*). He also speaks of the source of virtue or the source of the rival faction of Felicissimus. Abraham by believing was the first to establish the "radix ac fundamentum fidei". In responding to the pagan critic Demetrianus, Cyprian noted that he was

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10. Tertullian, *De idolatria*, 1.1 (*CCSL* 2. 1101).

11. Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 31.1 (*CCSL* 1. 212) ; 35.3 (*CCSL* 1. 216). In the 1954 supplemental volume of Pauly-Wissowa, L.Wickert gives some classical examples of the chronological sense of "princeps", col. 2011.

12. Tertullian, *Exhortatio castitatis,* 2.5 (*CCSL* 2. 1017). See also : *De anima,* 20.6 (*CCSL* 2. 813) ; *De paenitentia,* 2.3 (*CCSL* 1. 322) ; *De virginibus velandis,* 11.2 (*CCSL* 2. 1220) where Eve is included. "Princeps transgressionis", *Adversus Marcionem*, V.6.6 (*CCSL* 1. 679) and *Apologeticum*, 22.2 (*CCSL* 1. 128) ; *De monogamia*, 2.4 (*CCSL* 2. 1230) ; *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 21.4 (*CCSL* 1. 202).

also answering those whom Demetrianus was stirring up against the Christians, i.e. "comites... plures radicis atque originis tuae pullulatione fecisti"[13].

For the present context, the ecclesiological use of these words is of more significance. First, there is tradition. Human error is ended when we return to the "caput et origo" of divine tradition. "We must go back to the Lord as our source and to the tradition of the gospels and the apostles". He exhorted his fellow bishops to return to the "fundamental and original doctrine" of the Lord. (*radix atque origo traditionis dominicae*)[14].

In the fifth chapter of the *De unitate ecclesiae,* Cyprian developed some elaborate comparisons to illustrate the one and the many in the Church, with the emphasis on unity. While the rays of the sun are many, the light is one ; while a tree has many branches, it has one strength from its roots. There are many streams but they derive from one spring. So there are many churches but "unitas servatur in origine". Later in the same chapter, he draws out the comparison further. "She spreads her branches in generous growth over all the earth ; she extends her abundant streams ever further; yet one is the head spring (*caput*), one the source (*origo*), one the mother...". In this same sense of origins, then, and taking into account Cyprian's *cathedra Petri* symbolism, Bevenot has translated the words "ecclesia principalis" of *ep.* 59.14 as "the primordial church"[15].

For Cyprian, the Church is itself the root and the mother. Plumpe many years ago explored the *mater ecclesia* motif[16]. The important text of *ep.* 48.3.1 has already been mentioned in the introduction. The Carthaginian dissidents, acting with perverse obstinacy, Cyprian insisted, had rejected the embrace of their mother and had "cut themselves off from their source of life" (*radix et mater*). Catholics, on the contrary, i.e. Cyprian and those loyal to him, had held to the "ecclesiae unius caput et radicem". Finally in the *Ad Fortunatum*, Cyprian found the foreshadowing of the Church in the mother of the Macchabees : "With the seven children is clearly joined the mother also, their origin and root (*origo et radix*) who later bore seven churches, herself the first and only one founded by the Lord's voice upon a rock[17].

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13. Cyprian, *De zelo et livore*, 3 (*CCSL* IIIA. 76) ; *De bono patientiae*, 3 (*CCSL* IIIA. 119) ; *Ep.*, 43.2.1 (*CCSL* IIIB. 201) ; *De bono patientiae*, 10 (*CCSL* IIIA. 123) ; *Ad Demetrianum*, 2 (*CCSL* IIIA. 36).

14. Cyprian, *Ep.* 74.10.2-3 BAYARD p. 287 ; *Ep.* 63.1.1 BAYARD p. 200.

15. Cyprian, *De unitate ecclesiae* (*CCSL* III. 253). Bevenot's translation : Cyprian, Oxford Early Christian Texts p. 118 (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1971).

16. Joseph PLUMPE, *Mater Ecclesia. An Inquiry into the Concept of the Church as Mother in Early Christianity* (Washington : Catholic University of America Press, 1943), pp. 81-108.

17. Cyprian, *Ep.* 45.1.2 (*CCSL* IIIB. 216) ; *Ep.* 73.2.2 BAYARD p. 263 ; *Ad Fortunatum*, 11 (*CCSL* III. 205-206).

OPTATUS OF MILEVIS

It is my contention that the work of Optatus, the only significant Catholic anti-Donatist polemic before Augustine, remains very much in the line of Cyprian. As I have argued elsewhere, the ecclesiological problems faced by Optatus had moved well beyond the scope of schism within the local church against which Cyprian fought[18]. The Donatist schism was a region-wide split. Yet, despite this, Optatus' words still resound with Cyprianic meanings.

Optatus' use of the various forms of "princeps" almost always refer to the Donatist founder, Donatus himself and his immediate associates. "Principes vestri" occurs many times and it can be argued, refers not just to those who were chronologically prior and the historical founders but also those who were the sources of the calamity. Donatus was the "fons malarum causarum[19]". Peter, on the other hand, is "princeps noster", the Catholic source. The term "caput" is much less prominent in Optatus but Peter is referred to as the "omnium apostolorum caput" in a passage which also mentions the "cathedra Petri" in its Cyprianic symbolic sense, "... in qua una cathedra unitas ab omnibus servaretur...[20]"

As with Cyprian *radix* is also a very significant term for Optatus' ecclesiology. His task, he asserts, is to demonstrate from what root and from what source (*fons*) came the branches and the streams of the Donatist error. Speaking of the small Donatist community in Rome, he portrayed it as a "branch of your error", having come forth from a lie, "not from the root of truth". Elsewhere he described the Donatist faith as the tattered rags that hang from the one garment and the divided branches from the one root[21]. This last comparison might bring the reader to ask if these rags or branches were still hanging on to the original by a thread, i.e. that they were not yet totally severed.

In any event, it is clearly the Catholics who remain attached to the root. Optatus' writings will show who it is that have remained "... in radice cum toto orbe". While dissidents have deserted their Catholic mother and have been cut off from the root of mother Church, Catholics have remained in the root and are one with all throughout the world. Catholics who have never left are those who live within[22].

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18. Robert B. ENO, «The Work of Optatus as a Turning Point in the African Ecclesiology», *The Thomist*, 37, 1973, pp. 668-685.

19. Optatus, *Contra Parmenianum*, I.10.5 (*SC* 412. 194) ; I.13.3 (*SC* 412. 200) ; I.14.1 (*SC* 412. 202) ; I.15.1 (*SC* 412. 204) ; III.3.1 (*SC* 413. 20) ; VI.3.3 (*SC* 412. 170) ; VII.1.45 (*SC* 412. 216) ; VII.2.1 (*SC* 412. 216) ; "fons" : III.3.25 (*SC* 412. 36).

20. Optatus, II.4.6 (*SC* 412. 250) ; II.2.2 (*SC* 412. 244). Cf. also VII.3 (*SC* 413. 220 ff.).

21. Optatus, I.15.1 (*SC* 412. 204) ; II.4.1 (*SC* 412. 246) ; III.9.2 (*SC* 413. 62).

22. Optatus, I.15.3 (*SC* 412. 206) ; I,11.1 (*SC* 412. 196) ; I.28.3 (*SC* 412. 234) ; III.7.4 (*SC* 413. 52).

AUGUSTINE

The writings of Augustine far outweigh in number those of the three previous North African authors. Yet I believe that his use of the words in question is similar to theirs. First, "princeps" and cognate forms. Such words are sometimes used to indicate beginnings in a general way (e.g. "principia"). For example, Augustine explained in the *Retractationes* that in his attacks against the fundamental letter of Mani, he had discussed only the beginnings of that work. Of his own early writings on the liberal arts, only the beginnings remain. He speaks of the beginnings of Genesis or of the opening lines of the letter to the Romans. For Epicurus, atoms are the "principia rerum". The same word finds some employment in his discussion of the Trinity. There cannot be two independent principia in God. But in some sense the Son is a principium as well as the Father[23].

A more important usage of *Princeps* for Augustine is found when he wishes to speak of some thing or person who is variously the cause, prototype or exemplar of something or someone who comes after. So, Zeno is the "princeps" of the Stoics. Within the Christian realm, Christ himself is our "princeps" in many senses. He is the *princeps martyrum* ; *princeps pastorum* ; *princeps fidei*, the *caput et princeps apostolorum* ; *princeps principum*. Mary is the *virginum princeps*[24].

Satan, on the other hand, is the "princeps peccatorum". He is the "princeps rexque vitiorum" as well as the "princeps omnium fallaciarum et errorum" and the "princeps iniuriarum et iniquitatum omnium". Subordinate in evil but principes in a lesser sense are heretics. Donatus who was "principalis vester" is also the "princeps totius mali". In the Acts of the Conference of Carthage of June, 411, Petilian owned Donatus as his *princeps*. Augustine later accused Julian of Eclanum of having Pelagius and Celestius as his *principes*. As Adam is the "princeps generationis", so Christ is the "princeps regenerationis"[25].

Augustine also made considerable use of *Caput*. Of course, it may mean the head of the physical body. In innumerable instances, especially in the

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23. Augustine, *Retractationes* II.2 (*CCSL* 57. 91) ; I.6 (*CCSL* 57. 17) ; *Sermo* 1.1 (*CCSL* 41. 3) ; *Ep. ad Rom. inchoata exp.*, 12 (*CSEL* 84. 160) ; *Ep.* 118.4.28 (*CSEL* 34/2. 692) ; *De civitate Dei,* VII.34 (*CCSL* 47. 214 citing Varro) ; *De Trinitate,* V.13 (*CCSL* 50. 220-221) ; *En in Ps.* 109.13 (*CCSL* 40. 1614) ; *Tr. in Jn.,* 39.2 (*CCSL* 36. 345) ; *De fide et symbolo,* 19 (*CSEL* 41. 23).

24. Augustine, *Contra Academicos,* 3.17.38 (*CCSL* 29. 58) ; *Contra ep. Parmeniani* I.14.21 (*BA* 28. 262) ; *S.* 284.2 (*PL* 38. 1289) ; *S.* 309.4 (*PL* 38. 1411) ; *De perfectione iustitiae hominis,* 19.41 (*BA* 21. 210) ; *Tr. in Jn.,* 89.1 (*CCSL* 36. 549) ; *S.* 335B.4 (*PLS* 2. 635) ; *S.* 188.4 (*PL* 38. 1004).

25. Augustine, *Contra Julianum op. imp.*, I.62 (*CSEL* 85/1. 58) ; *De peccatorum meritis et rem*, I.26.39 (*CSEL* 60. 37) ; *De continentia,* 5.13 (*CSEL* 41. 155) ; *Contra Cresconium,* I.11.14 (*BA* 31. 96) ; *Adnotationes in Job,* 35 (*CSEL* 28. 585) ; *S.* 28.5 (*CCSL* 41. 371) ; *Ep.* 43.5 (*CSEL* 34/2. 98) ; *Ps. contra partem Donati,* vs.100 (*BA* 28. 164) ; *Acta conlationis Carth.,* III.32 (*SC* 224. 1004) ; *Contra Jul. op. imp.*, II.187.215 (*CSEL* 85/1. 306 ; 325-326).

Enarrationes on the Psalms, he speaks of Christ as the head of the body, e.g. Christ the Head, the Church the Body. In *Enarr. in Ps.* 71.6, Adam is the "caput mortis nostrae" but Christ is the "caput salutis nostrae"[26].

Capita can also signify the first letters of words. So the first letters of the four winds or of the four corners of the world spell ADAM. In a similar way, he explains the meaning of ichthys. *Caput* can also refer to the beginning of a psalm. After seven days, one returns to the beginning of the week[27].

Caput is also found in Augustine in the meaning of a capital or a leading city. Rome is the "caput gentium" or the "quasi caput Babylonis". The disciples went to Rome so that their teaching could spread more easily to the whole world from the "caput" of the world. Carthage was the caput of Africa and Capernaum the caput of Galilee[28].

Of the use of *caput* in the sense of source, there are many examples. For Augustine, pride (*superbia*) is the root of other vices. It is the *radix* and *caput peccati*, the "caput omnium peccatorum", the "caput et origo omnium malorum", the "initium omnis peccati". The Devil is the "ad haec sacrilegia caput et auctor". As Christ is the "caput iustorum", Judas is the "caput peccatorum". In the polemic against Julian, Augustine said that Pelagius was Julian's "caput" and Julian himself the "caput horum calumniorum". Julian had earlier called Augustine the "caput horum et causa malorum"[29].

In a watery scenario, a fountain is a "caput aquae" and the four rivers of Paradise came forth from such a caput. This image took on ecclesiological ramifications in the closing lines of the letter sent by Augustine and his episcopal colleagues to Pope Innocent in 416 to ask for the condemnation of Pelagius. "We wish to be assured by you that this trickle (*rivulus*) of ours, however scant, flows from the same fountainhead as your abundant stream..." (*ex eodem capite fluentorum*)[30].

The most striking use of "caput" as well as of related terms is to be found in the anti-Donatist writings. Early in the *Contra litteras Petiliani* he cites a basic principle of his opponent : "omnis res enim origine et radice consistit, et si caput non habet aliquid, nihil est". Augustine added his own immediate commentary: "... cumque originem et radicem et caput baptizati hominem a quo baptizatur velit intelligi, quid prodest misero baptizato, quod ignorat quam

26. Augustine, *Ep.* 129.2 (*CSEL* 44. 35) ; *En. in Ps.* 71.6 (*CCSL* 39. 975).

27. Augustine, *Tr. in Jn.*, 9.14 (*CCSL* 36. 98) ; *En. in Ps.* 95.15 (*CCSL* 39. 1352) ; *De civitate Dei*, XVIII.23 (*CCSL* 48. 613) ; cf. *En. in Ps.* 30, *en.*, 2, *s.* 1.11 (*CCSL* 38. 199) ; *En in Ps.* 80.22 (*CCSL* 39. 1135) ; *S.* 350A.3 (*PLS* 2. 451) ; *S.* 83 (*PL* 38. 518).

28. Augustine, *S.* 381 (*PL* 39. 1684) ; *S.* 24.6 (*CCSL* 41. 331) ; *En in Ps.* 86.8 (*CCSL* 39. 1205) ; *Ep.* 194.3.7 (*CSEL* 57. 266) ; *S.* 313C (*PLS* 2. 610) ; *De consensu evang.*, II.25 (*CSEL* 43. 161).

29. Augustine, *En. in Ps.* 35.18 (*CCSL* 38. 335) ; *Tr. in Jn.*, 25.16 (*CCSL* 36. 256) ; *De civitate Dei*, XIV.3 (*CCSL* 48. 417) ; *En. in Ps.* 139.13 (*CCSL* 40. 2020) ; *Contra Faustum*, XXII.93 (*CSEL* 25. 699) ; *De pecc. mer. et rem.*, I.15.19 (*CSEL* 60. 19) ; *Contra Jul. op. imp.*, II.104 (*CSEL* 85/1. 235-236).

30. Augustine, *De Gen. ad lit.*, V.7.21 (*BA* 48. 402) ; *Ep.* 177.19 (*CSEL* 44. 688).

malus sit baptizator eius ?" Much of the rest of this work is taken up with discussion of this basic axiom enunciated by Petilian. The discussion is resumed in the *Contra Cresconium*. Cresconius the Donatist grammarian took up the cause of saving the honor of Petilian the Donatist champion when he was attacked by Augustine[31].

Petilian conceded that if, indeed, the apparently virtuous minister of baptism was in reality wicked, then it was Christ who passed on his righteousness to the neophyte. He made use of I Cor 3, 6. But, for Augustine, not even Paul or Apollos could qualify as the source of salvation for those being baptized. Petilian's response to the perennial dilemma posed by Augustine led the latter to quip that since it was preferable to have Christ as one's source and head rather than even the most holy and virtuous minister, then it behooved the baptizand to pray for a wicked minister of baptism so that Christ would be his *origo*, *radix* and *caput*. Of course, for Augustine, such reasoning was absurd.

For Augustine, Christ is always the sole "origo regeneratorum et caput ecclesiae". The Catholic answer to the Donatist question would always be : "origo mea Christus est ; radix mea Christus est ; caput meum Christus est". Catholics, unlike Donatists, never placed their hope in human beings but always in Christ "tamquam ad originem quae non mutatur, ad radicem quae non evellitur, ad caput, quod non deicitur[32]".

The same theme returns in the *Contra Cresconium*. Augustine cites Cyprian's text from the *De unitate* which we have discussed above concerning the many branches and the many streams but the one root and the one source. Augustine is sceptical of the competence of Cresconius as a Donatist theologian and apologist when the latter agrees with him that "Christus est origo christiani, in Christo radicem christianus infigat, Christus christiani sit caput". Returning to more traditional Donatist fare, Augustine rejects Cresconius' charge that his (Augustine's) "creator" and "caput" were *traditores*. His episcopal predecessors neither created him nor were they his "fons" or "caput"[33].

This Donatist line of argumentation resurfaced at the Conference of Carthage in June 411. On the third day when discussion of what Augustine considered the substantive issues had begun, Petilian asked him whether he was a "son of Caecilian" or not. Petilian had already claimed that Donatus was his "princeps". Augustine retorted with the Gospel exhortation to call no one on earth your father. But Petilian persisted and added that if Augustine had neither "origo" nor "pater", he must be a heretic. Augustine granted that Caecilian was a brother in the faith. Whether he was a good or a bad brother could be answered only by history, since he was also an older brother[34].

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31. Augustine, *Contra litteras Petiliani*, I.4.5 (*BA* 30. 142).

32. Augustine, *Contra lit. Pet.*, I.5.6 (*BA* 30. 142) ; I.6.7 (*BA* 30. 144) ; I.7.8 (*BA* 30. 146) ; III.52.64 (*BA* 30. 720) ; I Cor. 3.6 : "I planted, Apollos watered but God caused the growth".

33. Augustine, *Contra Cresconium*, III.7.7 (*BA* 31. 280) ; III.37.41 (*BA* 31. 352).

34. *Acta Conl. Carth.*, III.221 (*SC* 224. 1162) ; III.32 (*SC* 224. 1004) ; III.222 (*SC* 224. 1162) ; III.229, 231 (*SC* 224. 1168, 1170) ; III.230, 233 (*SC* 224. 1170, 1172).

But Petilian would not give up and insisted : "Non enim potest aliqua res sine generatore suo nasci, aut sine capite incipere aut sine radice sua crescere". Going on, he demanded to know what bishop had ordained Augustine. In his earlier work, Petilian had attacked Augustine personally by reviving stories concerning the primate of Numidia, Megalius, who had hesitated to ordain Augustine to the episcopate on the strength of reports about his Manichaeism. Finally, Augustine claimed that the Donatists taught that children were affected by the sins of their parents. In an ironic reversal, Augustine, the great theologian of original sin, observed that children were affected by their parents' sins only by imitating them ![35].

For Augustine, the meaning of root depends on the context and the context is frequently a discussion either of Jn 15, the vine and the branches in an ecclesiological setting, or of Rm 11.16ff, the Gentiles grafted on to the root of the Hebrew patriarchs and prophets. He elaborated on this theme in *Tr. in Jn.* 16.5 among other places.

The proud branches (The Jews of the time of Christ and since) have been broken off but the root of the patriarchs remains. At the root of this vine are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the *Adv. Jud.* he adds the prophets as well. In the *Contra adversarium legis et prophetarum*, he mentions David as well as the root into which the wild olive tree is grafted. Even further back, Adam is the "radix vitiata" of the human race[36].

As with *caput*, the use of *radix* in the anti-Donatist works is most significant from an ecclesiological viewpoint. Schism, for Augustine, is a sin against charity whereas heresy is a sin against faith. The Donatists were branches that had been severed from the root. In order to have life restored to them, unity must be re-established. They must return to live in the *radix*. In *ep.* 52.2 he noted in particular that the Donatists had been cut off "ab illa radice orientalium ecclesiarum". The Catholic Church (*radix catholica*) doggedly seeks reunion with the Donatists[37].

Another of Augustine's themes was that while the Donatists had many things that Catholics had, they in fact had only the outward appearance, not the inner reality. "You have the form but I seek the root". The essence of the difference is that the Donatists in sinning against unity lack charity. But this is the only foundation of salvation : viz. "habere radicem caritatis". The outward form is useless without the root. Charity in the root means life. These points are made again and again in the anti-Donatist works. So, for example, in the earliest such work, Augustine wrote for his people : "Do you want to know who speaks the

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35. *Acta Conl. Carth.*, III.236 (*SC* 224. 1174) ; III.243 (*SC* 224. 1180) ; On Megalius, see A. MANDOUZE ed., *PCBE* Afrique, pp. 741-742. Augustine, *Breviculus Collationis,* III.9.17 (*CCSL* 149A. 284).

36. Augustine, *Tr. in Jn.*, 16.5 (*CCSL* 36. 168) ; *Contra adversarium legis...*, 2 .2.6 (*CCSL* 49. 95) ; *Adversus Judaeos*, 6.7 (*PL* 42. 55) ; *En. in Ps.* 65.5 (*CCSL* 39. 843) ; *De civitate Dei* XIV.26 (*CCSL* 48. 450).

37. Augustine, *Ep.* 53.1 (*CSEL* 34/2. 195) ; *Ep.* 61.2 (*CSEL* 34/2. 224) ; *Ep.* 185.10,44 (*CSEL* 57. 38) ; *Ep.* 52.2 (*CSEL* 34/2. 150) ; *Ep.* 128.4 (*CSEL* 44. 33).

truth ? Those who have remained in the root". And : "Of what use is the outward appearance (*forma*) to them, if they do not live in the root"[38].

Finally, in the *Contra litteras Petiliani*, as we have already seen, *caput* and *radix* are often linked in both Petilian's formula and Augustine's counter-arguments. Donatists must be "restored to the Catholic root" in order to "bear the fruits of charity". If they return, they will not be rebaptized but, having been rejoined to the root of charity and unity, they will be restored to life[39].

CONCLUSION

In this brief survey of North African authors, I have emphasized that their use of words like "caput", "radix" and "princeps" can have a specialized meaning different from the obvious first meaning. In particular, my purpose has been to demonstrate that the words in question have the sense of origin or source as well as the meaning of power, authority or headship.

To this development, Tertullian contributes little. Here Cyprian is the foundational author with Optatus following largely in his footsteps. Did the theme of the root derive primarily from the imagery of the root and the branches in Jn 15 ? The role of Augustine is the most difficult to evaluate. Most of his ecclesiologically significant use of these words comes in the anti-Donatist works. But this is hardly a surprise. He is also the one who puts so much stress on Jn 15. Yet despite this, one also has the feeling that he is reacting to the Donatists, especially to Petilian when he makes use of such imagery and terminology. Perhaps here too the Donatists had captured the heritage of Cyprian to the degree that Augustine and the Catholics were forced into a defensive and reactive stance.

It becomes even more significant with the rise of Donatism and the questions of legitimacy which it inevitably raised. If we have a more adequate understanding and appreciation of their use of such words, we shall also begin to have a deeper knowledge of their thought on the Church.

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38. Augustine, *Tr. in Jn.,* 13.16 (*CCSL* 36. 139) ; *Tr.Ep.Jn.,* 2.9 (*PL* 35. 1994) ; *En. in Ps.* 36, s. 1.3 (*CCSL* 38. 340) ; *Ps. contra partem Don.,* vs.43 (*BA* 28. 156) ; vs. 235 (*BA* 28. 182).

39. Augustine, *Contra lit. Pet.* I.1.1 (*BA* 30. 132) ; *Contra Cresc.* IV.61.75 (*BA* 31. 624, 626) : "reviviscant".

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SUMMARY : The question of roots, sources and successions holds an important place in the North African ecclesiology. Certain expressions in Tertullian, Cyprian, Optatus of Milevis and Augustine, especially those involving *caput*, *radix*, *princeps* and a few related words should at times be understood as indicating the source out of which something comes rather than as words indicative of power and authority.

RÉSUMÉ : La question des racines, des sources et des successions tient une place importante dans l'ecclésiologie nord-africaine. Certaines expressions de Tertullien, de Cyprien, d'Optat de Milève et d'Augustin, particulièrement celles qui comportent *caput, radix, princeps* et quelques mots apparentés, doivent parfois être entendues comme indiquant la source d'une chose, plutôt que comme des mots signifiant pouvoir et autorité.