

Cyprian of Carthage and the Episcopal Synod of Late 254*

The episcopate of Stephen of Rome is generally dated from May 254 to August 257, a period of about three years and three months.¹ During these few years many issues for Christian theology and pastoral practice confronted the churches of the western Mediterranean. They responded to them differently as we can tell from the surviving correspondence which documents the deteriorating relationship between Stephen and Cyprian of Carthage. Much attention concerning these two bishops is given to the 're-baptism' issue rather than to the readmission of lapsed bishops to office, which we find in *Epistula* 67.² In this letter, from Cyprian and thirty-six episcopal colleagues, there is reference to such matters as the appointment of bishops, collegiality, subsidiarity, papal primacy, apostasy, the authority of Scripture, the role of tradition, and the validity of sacraments presided over by unworthy ministers.

* I am grateful for funding from the Australian Research Council, which has made this paper possible.

1. Eusebius, *H.E.* 7.5.3, attributed a period of two years to Stephen, although in *Chron* 2.26 (PG 19.573-574), he gave him four years. The *Liber Pontificalis* claims an episcopate of six or seven years and five months (depending on the edition), though only lasting from the first consulship of Valerian and Gallienus (253) to the third consulship of Valerian and second of Gallienus (255). See Louis Duchesne, *Le Liber Pontificalis: texte, introduction et commentaire*, t. 1 (Paris: de Boccard, 1955 [2nd ed.]), pp.LXXXII-LXXXIII, XCVII. On the difficulty of imperial dating see Andrew Alföldi, "The Reckoning by the Regnal Years and Victories of Valerian and Gallienus," *Journal of Roman Studies* 30 (1940), pp.1-10.

2. E.g., Manlio Simonetti, "The Beginnings of Theological Reflection in the West," in *History of Theology 1: The Patristic Period*, ed. Angelo Di Berardino and Basil Studer, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996 [Eng. ed.]), p.223; Lorenzo Dattrino, "L'ecclesiologia di San Cipriano nel contesto della chiesa del III secolo," *Lateranum* 50 (1984), pp.127-150; Francis A. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops: The Development of the Episcopacy in the Early Church* (New York: Newman Press, 2001), pp.192-216.

In this paper I wish to investigate what the letter can tell us about the way in which Cyprian operated in practice as bishop. This will necessitate facing the question of the chronology of events during the episcopate of Stephen, as revealed in Cyprian's letters, for the date of this letter is important in understanding the sequence of events in their relationship. I shall argue also that this letter ought to be given more attention in discussions about the relationship between them. It contains valuable information about how Cyprian interacted with Stephen in practice that must be taken into account in any consideration of Cyprian's theory of papal primacy. As the discussions of Catholic bishops who met in synod in Rome in October 2001 indicates, the issue of the relationship between bishops (and particularly with the Roman bishop) is one of enduring significance.

I. – DATE OF *EPISTULA* 67

Graeme Clark indicates that the clue to dating *Epistula* 67 comes from the sequence of events narrated in the letter. Basilides, one of the two Spanish *libellatici* bishops at the centre of the controversy, had been replaced as bishop with Sabinus by his community and neighbouring bishops.³ He had travelled to Rome and convinced Stephen that he was the legitimate bishop and ought to be reinstated.⁴ News of this returned to Spain and, in response, the Spanish bishops sent two of their number, Felix and Sabinus, the two replacement bishops, to Carthage to enlist the support of the African bishops.⁵ This letter was the

3. Cyprian, *Ep.* 67.5.2 (CCL 3C.454-455). On whether Basilides and Sabinus were claimants to the church of Legio and Asturica or of Emerita see G. W. Clarke, "Prosopographical Notes on the Epistles of Cyprian – I. The Spanish Bishops of Epistle 67," *Latomus* 30 (1971), pp.1141-1145 and Ramón Teja, "La carta 67 de S. Cipriano a las comunidades cristianas de León-Astorga y Mérida: Algunos problemas y soluciones," *Cristianismo y acculturación en tiempos del Imperio Romano*, Antigüedad y cristianismo: Monografías históricas sobre la antigüedad tardía (Murcia) 7 (1990), pp.115-124.

4. Cyprian, *Ep.* 67.5.3. (CCL 3C.455). Robert B. Eno, *The Rise of the Papacy*, Theology and Life Series 32 (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1990), p.61: "At this point it should be remarked that it is not clear exactly what the bishop of Rome could do in Spain at this time. Could he command a reinstatement or merely urge and recommend it?" All we know is that Basilides *fefellit* Stephen. Exactly what Stephen's reaction was to this 'trickery' is not made clear (perhaps intentionally so by Cyprian). Stephen did accept Basilides' argument, but Eno is correct: we do not know exactly how Stephen supported him. Thus, the statement of Paul Zmire, "Recherches sur la collégialité épiscopale dans l'Église d'Afrique," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 7 (1971), p.27, that "Étienne... l'a rétabli..." does not pay enough attention to exactly what Cyprian did and did not write.

5. Cyprian, *Ep.* 67.1.1 (CCL 3C.447); 67.6.1 (CCL 3C.456). It is possible that Felix and Sabinus only wrote to Africa.

response to that appeal. Many scholars accept its date as autumn 254.⁶ Clarke argues that this would be its very earliest date.⁷

Turner, however, summarised the arguments against dating this synod to 254: the references to Stephen are more hostile than those in *Epistula* 68 and all the thirty-seven bishops reappear at the synod of September 256 and so one could surmise that the smaller gathering immediately preceded or followed that larger assembly.⁸

6. Adolf Harnack, *Die Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius 2: Die Chronologie: Band 2: Die Chronologie der Literatur von Irenäus bis Eusebius* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1904), pp.348-349, saw no compelling reason to date it later than 254; Pierre Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, trans. Henri L. Brianceau (London: Longmans Green, 1911 [Eng. ed.]), p.375; Jules Lebreton and Jacques Zeiller, *Histoire de l'Église depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours*, t.2: *De la fin du I^{er} siècle à la paix constantinienne* (Évreux: Bloud et Gay, 1948), p.198; L. Bayard, ed., *Saint Cyprien, Correspondance 1* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1962 [2nd ed.]), p.LIII; Luc Duquenne, *Chronologie des lettres de S. Cyprien: Le dossier de la persécution de Dèce*, Subsidia Hagiographica 54 (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1972), p.28 (even accepting spring 255 as possible); Géza Alföldi, "Der heilige Cyprian und die Krise des römischen Reiches: Die Bedeutung Cyprians für die Darstellung seiner Zeit," *Historia* 22 (1973), p.488; Jean-Louis Maier, *L'épiscopat de l'Afrique romaine, vandale et byzantine* (Rome: Institut suisse de Rome, 1973), pp.20-21; Roger Gryson, "Les élections ecclésiastiques au III^e siècle," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 68 (1973), p.373; Peter Hinchliff, *Cyprian of Carthage and the Unity of the Christian Church* (London: Chapman, 1974), p.88; Charles Saumagne, *Saint Cyprien, Évêque de Carthage 'Pape' d'Afrique*, *Études d'Antiquités Africaines* (Paris: CNRS, 1975), p.127; Francisco Martínez Bouzas, "Valoración de la epístola 67 de S. Cipriano en el contexto de su concepción del primado y de la autonomía de las iglesias locales," *Revista Española de Teología* 35 (1975), p.4; Joseph A. Fischer, "Das Konzil zu Karthago im Herbst 254," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 93 (1982), p.223; Victor Saxer, *Vie liturgique et quotidienne à Carthage vers le milieu du III^e siècle: Le témoignage de Saint Cyprien et de ses contemporains d'Afrique*, *Studi di Antichità Cristiana* 29 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1984 [2nd ed.]), p.14; Pio Grattarola, "Gli scismi di Felicissimo e di Novaziano," *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 38 (1984), p.387; Stefano Cavallo, "Il magistro episcopale di Cipriano di Cartagine," *Divus Thomas* 91 (1989), p.379, n.19; Maureen A. Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa: The Donatist World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), p.29; idem, "The Collapse of a Collegial Church: North African Christianity on the Eve of Islam," *Theological Studies* 62 (2001), p.5.

7. G. W. Clarke, *The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage 4: Letters 67-82*, *Ancient Christian Writers* 47 (New York: Newman Press, 1989), pp.139-140; idem, "Praecedit Dissertatio Biographica/Chronologica de Cypriani Vita ac Scriptis quam Composuit," in *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera* pars III, 3: *Prolegomena*, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 3D (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), p.703.

8. Cuthbert Hamilton Turner, *Studies in Early Church History: Collected Papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), pp.130-131, n.2. See also L. Nelke, "Die Chronologie der Correspondenz Cyprians und der pseudocyprianischen Schriften *ad Novatianum* und *Liber de rebaptismate*" (diss. Thorn, 1902), p.138; O. Ritschl, "De epistulis cyprianicis," (diss. Halle an der Saale, 1885), pp.40-41; Otto Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur 2: Vom Ende des zweiten Jahrhunderts bis zum Beginn des vierten Jahrhunderts* (Freiburg:

Clarke is careful to point out, even though he favours the autumn 256 date for *Epistula* 67, that “[t]his construction must remain but a convenient and attractive conjecture” and that “[m]ore decisive one cannot be.”⁹ I agree with him that, with the evidence before us, no final decision can be reached. However, I would like to re-examine the basis upon which his inclination towards 256 rests. My purpose is to shift the likelihood of the date of *Epistula* 67 back from 256 to 254.

The first argument that Clarke makes against 254 is the congested timetable. Here I would make my first point. Those who want a later date do so because it is felt that trying to fit everything in from May, when Stephen was elected, to autumn 254 is nearly impossible. What is not usually questioned is the belief that Basilides appealed to Stephen personally rather than just to the incumbent bishop of Rome. I would argue that one ought to look carefully at what Cyprian wrote.¹⁰ He stated simply that Basilides went to Rome and deceived Stephen.¹¹ The events that led to this seem to be that Basilides had obtained his *libellus* (this would be sometime in 250) but had only volunteered to resign his position as bishop after he had blasphemed while ill.¹² After this, he had been content initially to do penance hoping to be readmitted to communion as a lay person (this being allowed to the African *libellatici* after the synod of 251 and adopted by the Roman church shortly thereafter).¹³ Not being satisfied with this, he then sought reinstatement as bishop.

Herder, 1914), p.487; Michael M. Sage, *Cyprian*, Patristic Monograph Series 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975), pp.297-300, 333, dates the synod to 255; J. Patout Burns, “On Rebaptism: Social Organization in the Third Century Church,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993), p.376.

9. Clarke, *Letters* 4, pp.143-144.

10. Christine Mohrmann, *Études sur le latin des chrétiens 1: Le latin des chrétiens* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1961 [2nd ed.]), p.294, found only one example in Cyprian of word-play on two compound forms of the same word and it was in this *epistula* (67.7 [CCL 3C.458]). However, it also displays Cyprian’s love of *paronomasia* with words like *sacerdos*, *sacrilegus* and *sacrificium* (67.3.2 [CCL 3C.451-452]).

11. Cyprian, *Ep.* 67.5.3 (CCL 3C.455): “... Basilides... Romam pergens Stephanum collegam nostrum...fefellit...”.

12. Ibid. 67.6.2 (CCL 3C.456).

13. Ibid. 55.17.3 (CCL 3B.276); 55.6.2 (CCL 3B.262-263); 67.6.3 (CCL 3C.457). See Joseph A. Fischer, “Die Konzilien zu Karthago und Rom in Jahr 251,” *Annuario Historiae Conciliorum* 11 (1979), pp.263-286; Geoffrey D. Dunn, “The Carthaginian Synod of 251: Cyprian’s Model of Pastoral Ministry,” in *I concili della cristianità occidentale secoli III-V*, *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 78, XXX Incontro di studiosi dell’antichità cristiana, Roma, 3-5 maggio 2001 (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2002), pp.235-257. The Italians applied this in the case of the bishop Trofimus (55.11.2-3 [CCL 3B.268-269]) in 251, although he appears to have been a *sacrificatus* rather than a *libellaticus* (hence the need for a further gathering of bishops to discuss this exception to the rule they had established in synod). Unlike G. W. Clarke, *The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage 3: Letters 55-66*, *Ancient Christian Writers* 46 [New York: Newman Press, 1986], p.184 n.51, I am inclined to see the gathering of Italian bishops mentioned in *Ep.* 55.6.2 and 55.11.3 as separate.

Had Basilides appealed to his former Spanish colleagues unsuccessfully before heading to the imperial capital? Did he want instead to secure Roman support before confronting them? Perhaps the latter is more likely, for one would imagine that, if the Spanish bishops had considered Basilides' position twice (once before he went to Stephen and once after he saw Stephen), Cyprian would have mentioned it.

This policy of non-readmission to office was endorsed at the synod of African bishops in spring 252.¹⁴ However, Cornelius, bishop of Rome, in the middle of 251, had readmitted the schismatic presbyter and confessor Maximus to his office.¹⁵ I think this is significant in dating *Epistula* 67, although not many scholars refer to it.

As an aside, one ought to make mention of the fact that the African synod mentioned in *Epistula* 72, which met in spring 256, wrote to Stephen about their decision to readmit heretic clergy to communion as lay members.¹⁶ It reads as though this issue had not come up between the Africans and Stephen before. However, rather than accept this as an argument for dating *Epistula* 67 after 72, I would point out that the spring 256 synod discussed a new type of problem. In *Epistula* 72 attention was turned to traitors and rebellious clergy (presbyters and deacons – there is no mention of bishops).¹⁷ The two Spaniards who had been deposed were *lapsi*, they were not deposed because they were rigorists or laxists who had left the Church over policy disagreements, as had Novatian. Cyprian, I conclude, felt no need to mention the two Spanish bishops when it came to the readmission of clergy in 256 because he saw the issues as distinct. *Epistula* 72 does not challenge dating *Epistula* 67 to autumn 254.¹⁸

Accepting that Basilides had been readmitted as a lay person, we have to ask why he sought to reclaim his office. We need look no further, I think, than to the

14. Cyprian, *Ep.* 65.1.1 (CCL 3C.426) – Fortunatianus, the former bishop of Assuras, sought to regain his position, probably during 251 (see Clarke, *Letters* 3, p.316), even though he seems to have been an unrepentant *sacrificatus*; 59.10.1 (CCL 3C.353) – although Privatus of Lambaesis was not deposed in connection with the Decian persecution; 64.1.1 (CCL 3C.418) – the premature readmission to communion (but not to office) of the former presbyter Victor by bishop Therapius, while irregular, was allowed to stand. On the synod of 252 see Joseph A. Fischer, "Das Konzil zu Karthago im Mai 252," *Annuaire Historiae Conciliorum* 13 (1981), pp.1-11; Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Cyprian and His *Collegae*: Patronage and the Episcopal Synod of 252," *Journal of Religious History* 27 (2003) (forthcoming).

15. *Ibid.* 49.2.5 (CCL 3B.236). Cf. Eusebius, *H.E.* 6.43.10. For the date see G. W. Clarke, *The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage 2: Letters 28-54*, Ancient Christian Writers 44 (New York: Newman Press, 1984), pp.263-264.

16. Cyprian, *Ep.* 72.2.1-3 (CCL 3C.525-527).

17. *Ibid.* 72.2.1 (CCL 3C.525): "...*perfidii ac rebelles*..."

18. Maurice Bévenot, "Cyprian's Platform in the Rebaptism Controversy," *Heythrop Journal* 19 (1978), p.128, draws a distinction between the decisions of 251 and 256 in that the first dealt with apostate clergy while the second dealt with schismatic and heretical clergy.

emergence in 251 of Novatian as a rival bishop to Cornelius,¹⁹ his appointment of like-minded rigorists as rival bishops in other churches,²⁰ and of another Maximus, a rigorist, and Fortunatus, a laxist, emerging as rival bishops to Cyprian in 252.²¹ In that confusion and uncertainty this would seem to be the most likely moment for Basilides to stake his claim. He might well have aligned himself with the laxist bishops, which could explain why he received recognition from some bishops who seemed to be of that ilk.²² Given that Cornelius faced a rigorist in Novatian and had already shown himself sympathetic to reinstating clergy, at least in one instance, it could be argued that Basilides would have thought of Cornelius as approachable.

I am suggesting that there is nothing in Cyprian's account to prevent us from supposing that Basilides wrote to or set out to visit Cornelius, even as late as summer 253, before news of the Roman bishop's death reached Spain.²³ Perhaps he set out when he heard that Lucius was the new bishop of Rome. Basilides does not have to have gone to Rome only after news of Stephen's election reached Spain.²⁴ If that possibility be admitted then the cramped timetable for a synod in 254 is less crowded.

One could suggest also that the verb Cyprian used (*pergere*)²⁵ (which has the sense of going on, continuing, or proceeding) links that action (going to Rome) very closely with the previous one (Basilides' desire to rescind the episcopal ordination of Sabinus). The verb does convey some sense of continuity and urgency which, I think, would be lost if we argued that Basilides decided early

19. Cyprian, *Epp.* 44.1.1 (CCL 3B.211); 55.24.2 (CCL 3B.285).

20. *Ibid.* 55.24.2 (CCL 3B.286).

21. *Ibid.* 59.9.2 (CCL 3C.351); 59.10.1,3 (CCL 3C.353,354). In 59.10.2-3 (CCL 3C.353-354), Cyprian reported on Privatus appointing Felix as a rival bishop and attracting to his cause the deposed bishops Iovinus, Maximus (a third individual by this name) and Repostus of Sutunurca.

22. *Ibid.* 67.9.1 (CCL 3C.460).

23. Why did Cyprian not inform us explicitly that Basilides set out to visit Cornelius (or Lucius)? One could suggest that, given the high regard in which it was convenient for Cyprian to remember Cornelius (*Ep.* 67.6.3 [CCL 3C.457]), he wanted nothing to connect these former Roman bishops with someone like Basilides. This could explain why Cyprian simply wrote that Basilides went to Rome.

24. If Basilides had seen Lucius (or even Cornelius) we can be assured that the Roman bishop had not made a response by the time he died for, if he had, Cyprian would have reported any negative decision and would have been forced to explain away any favourable decision, as he was doing with Stephen's.

25. This verb was used throughout the works of Cyprian, though one would hardly call it frequent. See Cyprian, *ad Fort.* 10 (CCL 3.200) – quoting Ex. 4:11-12; 11 (CCL 3.210); *idem, de Laps.* 24 (CCL 3.234); *idem, ad Dona.* 12 (CCL 3A.11) – twice; *idem, de Mort.* 14 (CCL 3A.24); *idem, de Zelo* 12 (CCL 3A.81); *idem, de Habi.* 21 (CSEL 3.1.202); 24 (CSEL 3.1.205); *idem, Epp.* 6.1.2 (CCL 3B.30); 6.4 (CCL 3B.37); 60.3.2 (CCL 3C.378); 74.10.2 (CCL 3C.577).

(in 251 or 252) to set himself up as bishop again but then waited and only appealed to Rome sometime after the election of Stephen in 254.

However, one could read this passage in *Epistula* 67 to mean that only sometime (two years or so) after the election of Sabinus, did Basilides try to reclaim his position and almost immediately went off to Rome to see Stephen.²⁶ The problem we are left with is why Basilides would have waited up to two and a half to three years to make his move. The idea that his patience at being only a lay Christian ran out over the course of this time is an option I am not inclined to accept.

The second point I would make to argue in favour of the synod in Africa being late in 254 concerns Cyprian's mention of Stephen being interpreted as a "rather tart and unguarded reference to the relative culpability of Stephen's negligent ignorance..."²⁷ The conclusion is that the "cold and strained" tone to the letter must indicate that it was written at a time when things had turned sour, for Cyprian was generally more tactful with those he did not know.²⁸ One has to ask whether Cyprian's words are really that antagonistic or if he was generally more diplomatic. It has to be remembered that Rome had been under the leadership of Fabian, Cornelius, Lucius and now Stephen, while Cyprian presided in Carthage. He was the most experienced bishop of a major church in the western Mediterranean. He had survived the Decian persecution and had cemented his leadership among the African churches through the successful running of three earlier gatherings of local bishops. Thus, when he wrote about Stephen that "*neque enim tam culpandus est ille cui neglegenter obreptum est...*"²⁹ he was only making a comment about his lack of episcopal experience. This comment is not all that negative. Further, to say that Cyprian was usually more diplomatic and less hostile is to overlook the shaky start Cyprian had in his relationship with Cornelius. As a further example of Cyprian's antagonism towards Stephen, Clarke mentions a particular veiled criticism of the Roman bishop in the

26. Idem, *Ep.* 67.5.3 (CCL 3C.455).

27. Clarke, *Letters* 4, p.143 n.1.

28. Ibid. On the later relationship between Cyprian and Stephen and its social significance see Burns, "On Rebaptism," pp.367-403 and idem, "Social Context in the Controversy between Cyprian and Stephen," in *Studia Patristica* 24, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone, papers presented at the 11th International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford 1991 (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), pp.38-44.

29. Cyprian, *Ep.* 67.5.4 (CCL 3C.455): "For he indeed is not so much to be blamed who has through negligence allowed himself to be duped..." (Eng. trans. from Clarke, *Letters* 4). Cyprian was being rather disingenuous here for, as Fischer, "Das Konzil zu Karthago im Herbst 254," p.238, points out, he did not consult the other side either: "Wie in Rom, so sah man sich auch in Karthago nicht veranlaßt, die andere Partie zu hören; es genügten die vorliegenden Schreiben und Aussagen."

epistula.³⁰ Earlier, however, he had interpreted this not as a reference to Stephen but as one to those Spanish bishops who were quick to accept Stephen's decision.³¹ There is no antagonism towards Stephen here.

The third point I would like to make is rather more complex and concerns the list of bishops who attended the synod mentioned in *Epistula* 67.³² It has to be admitted that finding the names of all the bishops in this *epistula* (allowing for variation in spelling) in the list of the eighty-seven bishops of the synod of autumn of 256 in the *Sententiae Episcoporum numero LXXXVII* is a very strong argument for also dating the *epistula* to the autumn of 256. In contrast, nine of the bishops at the synod in *Epistula* 70 and twelve of its addressee Numidian bishops do not reappear in the *Sententiae*.³³ This *epistula* is dated by Clarke to either spring 254 (six months or so before where I want to date *Epistula* 67) or spring 255.³⁴ Of the forty-two bishops whose names appear in *Epistula* 57, dated to spring 253,³⁵ twenty-seven reappear in *Epistula* 70.³⁶ This could tend to suggest that *Epistulae* 57 and 70 are to be dated close together, before *Epistula* 67 and the *Sententiae*.

30. Clarke, *Letters* 4, p.144 n.1. See Cyprian, *Ep.* 67.9.1 (CCL 3C.460): “*Quare etsi aliqui de collegis nostris extiterint, fratres dilectissimi, qui deificam disciplinam neglegendam putent et cum Basilide et Martiale temere communicent...*”

31. Clarke, *Letters* 4, p.142; Fischer, “Das Konzil zu Karthago im Herbst 254,” pp.235-236.

32. Fischer, “Das Konzil zu Karthago im Herbst 254,” pp.226-227, points out that we are not told whether other clergy and lay people participated in this synod, although the need for notaries would necessitate some involvement. Even if others did participate the emphasis is on the role of bishops.

33. The nine bishops are: Liberalis, Caldonius, Marrutius, Herculaneus, a Donatus, Rogatianus (presuming he was not the Numidian Rogatianus of Nova mentioned in *Sent. Ep.* 60 [CSEL 3.1.455]), Tertullus and two Saturnini (accepting one Saturninus as being Saturninus of Victoriana in *Sent. Ep.* 51 [CSEL 3.1.453]). The twelve bishops were: Maximus, a Victor, Proculus, Modianus, Cittinus, two Gargilii, Eutygianus, a Saturninus, Nampulus, Antonianus, and Honoratus.

34. Clarke, *Letters* 4, p.192. See also Joseph A. Fischer, “Das Konzil zu Karthago im Jahr 255,” *Annuario Historiae Conciliorum* 14 (1982), pp.227-240.

35. Joseph A. Fischer, “Das Konzil zu Karthago im Frühjahr 253,” *Annuario Historiae Conciliorum* 13 (1981), pp.12-26 and Geoffrey D. Dunn, “*Censuimus*: Cyprian and the Episcopal Synod of 253,” *Latomus* (forthcoming).

36. Cyprian, Liberalis, Caldonius, Nicomedes, Caecilius, Iunius, Marrutius, Felix, Successus, Fortunatus, Victor, three Saturnini, Rogatianus, Tertullus, Lucianus [= Lucianus], Sattius, Herculaneus [= Herculaneus], Quintus, Honoratus, Hortensius, two Donati, Pomponius, Polycarp, and Demetrius. Clarke, *Letters* 3, p.216 n.1, mentions only twenty-six. All nine bishops in *Epistula* 70 who do not appear in the *Sententiae* are among these twenty-seven.

Besides those twenty-seven bishops, there are another nine who appear in *Epistula* 57 but who do not reappear in either *Epistula* 70 or the *Sententiae*.³⁷ However, there are a further six bishops who appear in *Epistula* 57 (spring 253) and who do not appear in *Epistula* 70, but reappear in *Epistula* 67 and/or the *Sententiae*.³⁸ So, just as there are very good reasons for associating *Epistula* 67 with the *Sententiae* in late 256, there are other reasons (these six bishops), perhaps not quite so compelling but demanding some explanation nonetheless, for associating *Epistula* 67 closer with *Epistula* 57 in spring 253.

One could argue that bishops like Secundinus, Aurelius, Victoricus and Iambus made it to the synod in spring 253 (*Epistula* 57), but did not make it to that of 254 or 255 (*Epistula* 70), but then did make it to the gatherings in autumn 256 (the *Sententiae* and *Epistula* 67). This would be the interpretation Clarke supports. On the other hand, it is not beyond the realms of possibility that the nine bishops headed by Liberalis and Caldonius made it to the spring synod of 253 (*Epistula* 57), made it to a synod in spring 254 (if we date *Epistula* 70 here), did not make it to the synod in autumn 254 (if we date *Epistula* 67 here), and did not make it to the synod in autumn 256 (the *Sententiae*). One cannot imagine all nine of them dying between spring and autumn 254 but maybe a few of them did and the rest did not make it to Carthage. Given the importance of the synod of autumn 256 (the *Sententiae*) and the seniority of some of these nine bishops, it is surprising that they were not there then unless they had died, and it is more believable that some of them died over the longer two and a half year period (spring 254 – when they last appear – to autumn 256). With this chronology, Secundinus and the other three would have been at the spring synod of 253 (*Epistula* 57), would not have made it to the one in spring 254 or 255 (*Epistula* 70 – the dating makes little difference for this small group of bishops), but made it to the synods in autumn 254 (*Epistula* 67) and autumn 256 (the *Sententiae*). To me it is plausible.

I do not consider that my three arguments are enough to prove that the synod of *Epistula* 67 took place in autumn 254 rather than two years later. If we knew who attended the spring synod of 256 (*Epistulae* 72 and 73.1.2) perhaps this could be resolved with more certainty.³⁹ Hopefully my arguments may be enough to make the date of autumn 254 seem more likely (and autumn 256 seem less likely) when considered together with the arguments advanced by other scholars.

37. Faustinus, Eutyches, Ampius, the fourth Saturninus, Priscus, Manthaneus, Verianus, the second Fortunatus, and Rogatus.

38. Secundinus, Aurelius, Victoricus, Iambus, Privatus and Monnulus [= Munnulus]. The first four are in both *Epistula* 67 and the *Sententiae*, while the others are not in *Epistula* 67.

39. Joseph A. Fischer, "Das Konzil zu Karthago im Frühjahr 256," *Annuario Historiae Conciliorum* 15 (1983), pp.1-14.

II. – CYPRIAN'S ECCLESIOLOGY IN ACTION

The response of the African bishops was to support and affirm the position of the Spanish bishops in their appointment of Felix and Sabinus as replacements for Basilides and Martialis.⁴⁰ One suspects that the deposed bishops already were back in their former communities after Basilides saw Stephen, attempting to resume their positions by setting up rival communities and by seeking support from sympathetic bishops. They seem to have had some success.⁴¹ Which bishops ultimately triumphed is unknown to us.

What we can tell is that the African bishops were aware that they lacked any authority to bind the Spanish churches to their decision. At the end of the letter, all they did was exhort Spanish Christians not to join the schismatic churches and to remain firm and loyal.⁴² As well, even the 'decision' of the bishop of Rome had not been considered final by a number of the Spaniards because, if it had, there would have been no appeal to the Africans.⁴³ The latter felt no unease at offering a solution at variance with that offered by Rome.

What did Cyprian understand a bishop's responsibilities were in the churches outside his diocese? The first three synods over which Cyprian presided indicate that he held pastoral responsibility not only for the Christians in Carthage but, in some fashion, together with other African bishops, for Christians throughout the

40. Pierre Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, p.376: "The council of Carthage is asked, not exactly to judge, but rather to take cognizance of the sentence passed already in Spain, and to recognise the two bishops who, in Spain, are held to be legitimate." See also Paul Zmire, "Collégialité épiscopale," p.27, who notes that the Spanish bishops "...de s'adresser à l'évêque de Carthage pour obtenir de lui les lettres de communion." If the Africans had offered such letters when these 'legitimate' bishops had first been elected, perhaps now they were asked for some confirmation of that recognition.

41. Cyprian, *Ep.* 67.9.1 (CCL 3C.460).

42. Ibid. 67.9.3 (CCL 3C.462). S. L. Greenslade, "Heresy and Schism in the Later Roman Empire," in *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest*, ed. Derek Baker, Studies in Church History 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p.8, considers the African advice to be perhaps illogical.

43. Fischer, "Das Konzil zu Karthago im Herbst 254," p.237: "Wenn nun Basilides nach Rom ging, wollte er wohl nicht nur das moralische Ansehen des Stuhles Petri für sich in Anspruch nehmen bzw. den neuen römischen Bischof erproben, sondern er war überzeugt, eine rechtsverbindliche Entscheidung zu erlangen, ohne daß man deshalb schon von einem entfaltenen Jurisdiktionsprimat des Papstes und seiner Anerkennung sprechen dürfte." I cannot accept the contrast between the advice offered by the Africans and the decision made by Stephen as found in Werner Marschall, *Karthago und Rom: Die Stellung der nordafrikanischen Kirche zum apostolischen Stuhl in Rom*, Pápste und Papsttum 1 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1971), p.98: "Es handelt sich in seinem Fall wahrscheinlich nur um eine brüderliche Ermahnung, nicht um eine autoritative Aufforderung. Cyprian setzt weder ein noch ab. Demgegenüber vermag der Bischof von Rom mehr zu tun." The presumption he makes is that Stephen offered something more than fraternal admonition.

Roman provinces of western Africa. He accepted local bishops' authority within their own churches, but he sought, through personal visitation, vigorous letter-writing and collegial consultation, to demonstrate the unity of the Church by exercising his persuasion and influence in achieving a uniform outcome.

Outside his own geographic sphere Cyprian's opportunities for personal contact and episcopal gatherings were non-existent, yet his pastoral responsibilities remained. In his previous dealings with Rome Cyprian had relied on the power of his written argument and mutual respect to resolve differences of pastoral practice. We find exactly the same thing at work in *Epistula* 67. The unity of the Church was to be preserved by oratory and tolerance. Cyprian believed he was right about the deposition of Basilides and Martialis and set out to convince any Spanish Christians who held a contrary view that they were wrong and he was right.

Fischer points out that the Africans never said they had any problems with Basilides appealing to Rome.⁴⁴ This I accept. Hence, I cannot agree with Montgomery's assessment that "[i]n this case Stephanus had infringed on the prerogatives of Cyprian and his African colleagues..."⁴⁵ Basilides wanted Stephen to review the decision of the Spanish bishops who had deposed him and Martialis, just as the Spanish bishops wanted their African colleagues to review the same decision. Cyprian did not indicate that the Spanish bishops had complained about Stephen interfering in their churches. We do not know the extent to which Stephen supported Basilides, but it would seem that all he had done was express an opinion in favour of Basilides' legitimacy as bishop. As the Spanish bishops did not like this opinion from the bishop of a church as significant as Rome, they sought to bolster their position by writing to the African bishops.

44. *Ibid.*, p.238: "Cyprian und sein Konzil bestritten spanischen Bischöfen nicht grundsätzlich das Recht der Appellation nach Rom, sie bestritten Basilides aber die Gerechtigkeit seiner Sache und nahmen einen Mißbrauch des Apellationsrechtes und ein Fehlurteil des römischen Bischofs an." One should note Cyprian, *Ep.* 59.14.2 (CCL 3C.362), where the African synod of 251 resolved that cases should be heard where the offence occurred. It did not prohibit anyone informing other churches of the outcome and asking their opinion. This letter to Cornelius points out the futility of Felicissimus trying to get him involved in an African matter. See Maurice Bévenot, "A Bishop is Responsible to God Alone (St. Cyprian)," *Recherches de science religieuse* 39 (1951-1952), pp.403-405. I do not agree with Martínez Bouzas, "Valoración de le epístola 67," p.8: "El Concilio de Cartago no contesta el derecho – el acto mayor dicho – de Basilides de apelar al Obispo de Roma como a una autoridad superior capaz de restablecerle en su sede." Was Stephen in fact capable of giving him his position back?

45. Hugo Montgomery, "Subordination or Collegiality? St. Cyprian and the Roman See," in *Greek and Latin Studies in Memory of Cajus Fabricius*, ed. Sven-Tage Teodorsson, *Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia* 54 (Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1990), p.48.

Cyprian accepted that Stephen's opinion was to be sought, respected and heeded, except when he was wrong. While any bishop could look to any other bishop for support, it would appear that the opinions of some bishops carried more weight than that of others. The bishop in the largest city in the Mediterranean world, which was also the imperial capital and the church which Peter himself had led, did have greater prestige than every other bishop. It was the conclusion of the African bishops that, in this instance, because he had been given only one side of the story, Stephen's opinion was ill-considered and deviated from God's will found in Scripture (expounded in 67.1-2 – 67.4.4).

We may consider the following statement by Zmire: "Mais ce rôle de l'évêque de Rome restait toujours symbolique. Ni le pape personnellement ni le corps épiscopal ayant le pape à sa tête n'ont jamais été conçus par lui comme une autorité possédant une juridiction sur les évêques pris individuellement."⁴⁶ I would not agree with him that the bishop of Rome's role was purely symbolic, even though I would agree with him that Stephen possessed no universal jurisdiction. Demoustier, more accurately I think, recognises "une importance particulière à Rome" in Cyprian, but does not see him accepting a Roman universal primacy of jurisdiction.⁴⁷

Why did Cyprian accept other bishops doing things of which he did not approve but did not display the same tolerance towards Stephen's decision? In the other instances, such as his reaction to news from bishop Fidus that bishop Therapius had granted reconciliation to the *lapsus* presbyter Victor (a *sacrificatus*), contrary to the decision of the synod of 251,⁴⁸ Cyprian accepted what a bishop did within his own diocese.⁴⁹ Stephen's decision did not respect the Spanish churches' position. What Cyprian was doing was recognising a priority in the local decision of the Spanish churches over the opinion or decision of a non-local bishop (Stephen). Cyprian made it clear that the power to appoint bishops rested with local churches, not with Rome or Carthage (unless, of course, it was the appointment of bishops in those areas) and other churches could recognise or not recognise that election (depending on whether correct procedures were followed) but could not interfere in it.⁵⁰

46. Zmire, "Collégialité épiscopale," p.55.

47. Adrien Demoustier, "Épiscopat et union à Rome selon Saint Cyprien," *Recherches de science religieuse* 52 (1964), p.353.

48. Cyprian, *Ep.* 64.1.1-2 (CCL 3C.418-419). See Dunn, "Cyprian and His *Collegae*."

49. *Ibid.* 55.21.2 (CCL 3B.280); 57.5.2 (CCL 3B.309); 59.14.2 (CCL 3C.362); 69.17 (CCL 3C.496); 72.3.2 (CCL 3C.528). Bévenot, "A Bishop is Responsible," p.414, concluded that Cyprian's dictum meant that no one must interfere with the actions of a bishop who maintained the unity and discipline of the Church.

50. Cyprian, *Ep.* 67.3.2 (CCL 3C.452). On lay involvement in the election of bishops see Patrick Granfield, "Episcopal Elections in Cyprian: Clerical and Lay Participation," *Theological Studies* 37 (1976), pp.41-52; Paul J. Fitzgerald, "A Model for Dialogue: Cyprian of Carthage on Ecclesial Discernment," *Theological Studies* 59 (1998), pp.236-253.

Even though Cornelius had readmitted Maximus to the presbyterate, there was no precedent anywhere for restoring a bishop to his position in place of a duly-elected successor. Bishops were at the very centre of Cyprian's ecclesiology and one could not tamper with the synodal decisions about their non-reinstatement. Stephen's decision did not respect that. Cyprian, though, did not mention this matter, possibly because the African synod of 253 (*Ep.* 57) had made changes to the position of the 251 synod as circumstances changed (by readmitting repentant *sacrificati* to communion in the face of further impending persecution). He did not want to help Stephen to reach the conclusion that circumstances had further changed and necessitated the readmission of lapsed bishops to their former positions, so he did not mention the decision of the 251 synods at all.

Epistula 67 tells us nothing directly about how Cyprian operated as bishop in Carthage. Yet, by expressing an opinion on the Spanish issue and on the Roman church's opinion on that issue, the African bishops demonstrated that they understood that their duty of pastoral care extended not only from their own church to their province but even beyond there. Legitimate leaders were only those "...non nisi immaculatos et integros antistites... qui sancte et digne sacrificia deo offerentes audiri in precibus possint quas faciunt pro plebis dominicae incolumitate..."⁵¹ and who were appointed "... de uniuersae fraternitatis suffragio et de episcoporum qui in praesentiam conuenerant..."⁵² Stephen's decision not to recognise the legitimate exercise of local authority, while an exercise of his shared catholic responsibility as bishop, was considered to be the wrong one.

III. – CYPRIAN AND PAPAL PRIMACY

This letter shows Cyprian to be no supporter of papal primacy, at least not in the sense that the word is often understood today. Even though bishops had a catholic responsibility that did not mean that, in the ordinary course of events, they could usurp the rights of local churches, particularly if they did not both belong to the same *provincia*. The oneness of the Church did not demand a single leadership, but rather a united leadership.⁵³ As Robert Evans argues,

51. Cyprian, *Ep.* 67.2.2 (CCL 3C.449): "... who are sound and without blemish, men who can offer sacrifice to God in a holy and worthy manner and who can therefore be heard in the prayers they make for the well-being of the Lord's own people."

52. *Ibid.* 67.5.2 (CCL 3C.454-455): "... following the verdict of the whole congregation and in conformity with the judgment of the bishops who had there convened with the congregation..."

53. R. J. Halliburton, "Some Reflections on St Cyprian's Doctrine of the Church," *Studia Patristica* 11, ed. F. L. Cross, papers presented at the 5th International Conference on

bishops, unlike provincial governors, did not have a higher human authority parallel with the emperor.⁵⁴ I see no difference between what we find in this letter and the position Cyprian had put forward in both versions of chapter 4 of *De Ecclesiae Catholicae Unitate*. I accept the interpretation of Maurice Bévenot who stated, when Cyprian himself wrote the *Textus Receptus* to replace the 'Primacy Text' during the rebaptism controversy, that "... this will have been *not* because he had changed his mind about the Papacy, but because Rome was reading more into it than he had intended... He did not, then, repudiate what he had formerly held. He had never held that the Pope possessed universal jurisdiction."⁵⁵ In addition to that, there is nothing in *Epistula* 67 to suggest that

Patristic Studies, Oxford 1967 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1972), pp.196-197; Francine Cardman, "Cyprian and Rome: The Controversy over Baptism," *Concilium* 158 (1982, no.8), pp.33-35.

54. Robert F. Evans, *One and Holy: The Church in Latin Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1972), p.50.

55. Maurice Bévenot, *St. Cyprian: The Lapsed, The Unity of the Catholic Church*, Ancient Christian Writers 25 (New York: Newman Press, 1956), p.7. Montgomery, "Subordination or Collegiality?" p.41, misinterprets Bévenot's position when he writes: "In the more general version, the *Textus Receptus*, which Cyprian according to Bévenot wrote later, these words were interpreted in another way." According to Bévenot, they were not interpreted another way but interpreted in the same way, though more precisely, in order to prevent them from being interpreted in another way (as supporting Roman jurisdictional primacy). On the relationship between the two versions of chapter 4, see for example Hugo Koch, *Cyprian under der römische Primat* (Leipzig 1910); idem, *Cyprianische Untersuchungen* (Bonn 1926); and J. Le Moine, "Saint Cyprien est-il bien l'auteur de la rédaction brève du 'De Unitate' chapitre 4?" *Revue bénédictine* 63 (1953), pp.70-115; and Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, trans. J. A. Baker (Peabody, Mass.: Hendricksons, 1997 [2nd Eng. ed.]), p.276, n.54; who all argued for the 'Primacy Text' being a later forgery. John Chapman, "Les interpolations dans le traité de S. Cyprien sur l'unité de l'Église," *Revue bénédictine* 19 (1902), pp.246-254, 357-373; 20 (1903), pp.26-51; A. d'Alès, "Ecclesia principalis," *Recherches de science religieuse* 12 (1921), pp.374-380; E. Caspar, "Primatus Petri," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 24 (1927), pp.253-331; K. Adam, "Cyprians Kommentar zu Mt. 16,18 in dogmengeschichtlicher Beleuchtung," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 94 (1912), pp.99-120, 203-244; idem, "Die Anfänge des Primats," *Theologische Revue* 30 (1931), col. 193-200; and idem, "Neue Untersuchungen über die Ursprünge der Primatslehre," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 109 (1928), pp.165-256; who argued that the 'Primacy Text' was Cyprian's own revision of the earlier *Textus Receptus*. Bévenot's own position is further elaborated and defended in *St. Cyprian's 'De Unitate' chap. 4 in the Light of the Manuscripts*, *Analecta Gregoriana* 11 (Rome 1937); idem, "'Primus Petro Datur': St. Cyprian on the Papacy," *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 5 (1954), pp.19-35; idem, "'Hi qui Sacrificaverunt': A Significant Variant in St. Cyprian's *De Unitate*," *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 5 (1954), pp.68-72; idem, "St. Cyprian and the Papacy: Musings on an Old Problem," *Dublin Review* 456 (1954), pp.161-168, 307-315; idem, *Cyprian: De Lapsis and De Ecclesiae Catholicae Unitate*, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). For those who agree with Bévenot, see P. Batiffol, "Ecclesia principalis," in *Cathedra Petri: Études d'histoire ancienne de l'Église*, Vnam Sanctam 4 (Paris 1938), pp.135-150; D. van den Eynde, "La double édition du *De unitate* de S. Cyprien," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 29 (1933), pp.5-24; O. Perler, "Zur Datierung

Stephen himself considered that he possessed a universal jurisdiction either. Perhaps the fact that we hear no more about this matter could mean that Stephen simply accepted that his opinion had not been adopted by the Spanish bishops.

Martínez Bouzas' argument that the bishop of Rome possessed a symbolic primacy according to Cyprian is fine as far as it goes. However, when he claims that Peter's symbolic primacy was inherited only by the bishops of Rome and bases that on what he reads in Cyprian, he goes too far.⁵⁶ When Cyprian referred to the one man he meant Peter, of course, but he said nothing explicitly about successors.⁵⁷ If he was referring to successors, he meant Peter's successors in each church, not just in the church of Rome.⁵⁸

As far as Cyprian and his African colleagues could tell, Stephen could not justify his decision. Bévenot pointed out, with regard to the later 're-baptism' controversy, that Cyprian never appealed to his independence as a bishop against Stephen. Cyprian's disagreement with Stephen was because "Stephen is wrong... not because he is claiming an authority over other bishops which does not belong to him (of this Cyprian says nothing), but because he is recognising the baptism of heretics..."⁵⁹ Bévenot saw the problem as theological not canonical. It is the same here. Ultimately, Cyprian's optimism that unity could be maintained amidst diverse practice and that persuasion could lead to uniform practice was unrealistic. Yet this was not his concern, for the possibility that unity could be broken was not entertained.

For too long, I believe, scholars have turned to Cyprian's treatises to determine his theology of papal ministry in isolation from the practical realities of how he related with the Roman church. Unless we are to accuse Cyprian of saying one thing and doing another, we must use the information provided in his letters to understand his thinking. A reading of the treatises alone is insufficient.

The problem I have with the interpretation offered recently by Stephen Ray, for example, is that it does not take Cyprian's pastoral practice into full account. He begins his presentation by reproducing the Primacy Text from chapter 4 of

der beiden Fassungen des vierten Kapitels *De unitate ecclesiae*," *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 44 (1936), pp.1-44; C. Butler, "New Light on the De unitate of St. Cyprian," *Downside Review* 56 (1938), pp.452-467; idem, "St. Cyprian on the Church," *Downside Review* 71 (1953), pp.1-13, 119-134, 258-272; Robert B. Eno, "The Significance of the Lists of Roman Bishops in the Anti-Donatist Polemics," *Vigiliae Christianae* 47 (1993), pp.159-161. See also Charles A. Bobertz, "The Historical Context of Cyprian's *De Unitate*," *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 41 (1990), pp.107-111.

56. Francisco Martínez Bouzas, "Valoración de la epístola 67," pp.17-18: "Y esta función de Pedro la hereda únicamente el Obispo de Roma. Así como el poder fundado *super Petrum* se trasmite a todos los sucesores de los Apóstoles, también el signo colocado '*super unum*' se transmite a uno solo: a aquel que le sucede en su sede."

57. Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.11.1 (CCL 3C.541).

58. Ibid. 73.12.1 (CCL 3C.541): "*In hac praesidemus...*" Note the plural.

59. Bévenot, "St. Cyprian and the Papacy II," p.311.

De Unitate together with Bévenot's comments from his translation in *Ancient Christian Writers*. While he accepts that this may have been Cyprian's position at one time, he argues that it was one which the bishop of Carthage later modified.⁶⁰ However, I would argue that we may detect a consistency in Cyprian's dealings with the several bishops of Rome across the decade of his episcopal ministry. My reading of his letters would indicate that when he wrote to Rome it was not because he had come to recognise that his ecclesiology was a practical impossibility, as Ray claims, but precisely in an effort to implement it. When Cyprian wrote to Rome, it was not to receive "determinations," as Ray describes it, but to enlist the support of the largest and most prestigious church in the western Mediterranean or to persuade Rome to adopt his practice or to assure the Roman church of African tolerance.⁶¹

I agree with Ray that one should not expect "the full-blown understanding of the Papacy as expressed in Vatican I..." in Cyprian's writings and I also agree with him that we should not read too little into them either.⁶² Rome was an important and large local church which had the inherited prestige of Peter's presence.⁶³ It was a church with which others need to be in communion, as Ray rightly observes.⁶⁴ However, one can extend this statement further. For Cyprian, every church ought to be in communion not only with Rome but with every other church. The question of communion is different from that of universal jurisdiction.

I disagree with Ray on his interpretation of *Epistula* 68.⁶⁵ I think it can be argued that Cyprian urged Stephen to intervene in Arles not because of Rome's "jurisdiction over the universal Church" but because of Rome's jurisdiction over its primatial churches (Gaul being part of the Roman's bishop's *prouincia*).⁶⁶

60. Stephen Ray, *Upon This Rock: St. Peter and the Primacy of Rome in Scripture and the Early Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), p.183 n.68: "However, even in his own lifetime, he saw the impossibility of unity on this unrealistic basis [an 'aristocracy of equal bishops'], which is demonstrated by his frequent appeal to Rome for theological and practical determinations."

61. This answers Ray's question, on p.185 n.72, as to why Cyprian would write to Rome. It was not a case of Rome speaking and finalising matters. It was a matter of securing influential supporters.

62. *Ibid.* p.184 n.70.

63. See Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Peter and Paul in Rome: The Perspective of the North African Church," in *Pietro e Paolo: Il loro rapporto con Roma nelle testimonianze antiche*, *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 74, XXIX Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana, Rome, 4-6 maggio 2000 (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2001), pp.405-413 and Jerónimo Leal, "Hacia una percepción Tertulliana de Simón-Pedro," *ibid.* pp.415-430.

64. Ray, *Upon This Rock*, p.184 n.71.

65. *Ibid.* pp.186-187 n.76.

66. Cyprian, *Ep.* 68 (CCL 3C.463-468). Marschall, *Karthago und Rom*, pp.95-96.

Ray has not considered the evidence of *Epistula 67* and this is the deficiency of his case. He has constructed a theory of Cyprian's attitude towards Rome without taking into account all the evidence about how he dealt with Rome in practice. Stephen's opinion was sought not because he had universal jurisdiction (we do not know whether the Spanish churches had their own primate bishop or to whose *prouincia* they belonged – the fact that they wrote to the African bishops would suggest that they did not belong to Rome's)⁶⁷ but because, like all bishops, he had a responsibility to the universal church and because, unlike other bishops, his opinion carried great weight. Even though all bishops could and should have this responsibility, it was obvious that some opinions were of much more influence and importance than others. This paper does not enter into the legitimacy of later theological developments with regard to papal primacy. My concern is with reading the historical evidence which suggests that Cyprian did not consider the primacy of the Roman bishop to be one of universal jurisdiction. I think we find that Cyprian recognised a Roman primacy that was more than one of honour but less than a universal primacy of jurisdiction. What the bishop of Rome had to say was important and was to be given particular attention yet it could be disregarded if it was in error or interfered with local responsibilities. Primacy was still embryonic and perhaps we could say that Cyprian recognised in an implicit way that some bishops (himself included, but the bishop of Rome pre-eminently) more than others had a primacy of influence ('Patriarchatsverhältnis'). As Ray rightly points out, we should not expect to find that Christians in the third century were aware of the implications of their own actions.

CONCLUSION

If we are able to suggest that the date of *Epistula 67* should be towards the end of 254 rather than in spring 256, then we can see that right from the start of the Roman bishop's episcopate there was a tension between Stephen and Cyprian. When the 're-baptism' controversy emerges in 256 it is understandable that the battle lines were drawn so readily because there had been previous issues, like that of the question of the legitimate bishops in two Spanish churches, where these two had clashed.

Cyprian believed that his pastoral responsibility as a bishop extended from Carthage into the provinces of Roman North Africa and was shared with his colleagues, the other African bishops. Beyond those boundaries his pastoral duty extended to supporting the unity of the Church by recognising the authority of legitimately appointed local bishops. His catholic pastoral responsibility was

67. Martínez Bouzas, "Valoración de la epístola 67," pp.18-19.

not to override the responsibilities of local bishops but to support them. That he thought that Stephen of Rome had not supported the local bishops because he had been given misleading information meant that Cyprian became increasingly concerned with matters of Christian life outside Africa.

This letter is sure and practical evidence that Cyprian did not believe that the bishop of Rome had a universal jurisdiction over the whole Church. An analysis of Cyprian's theory and theological language and ideas, which has been the focus of much of the debate about Cyprian and papal primacy, is insufficient. One must look at him in action. What he did is just as significant as what he thought. This is the importance of *Epistula 67*. Despite knowing that Stephen supported Basilides in some way, Cyprian and the African bishops offered their support to Felix and Sabinus. Whatever primacy the bishop of Rome had, and I think it is clear from his letters that Cyprian did see the Roman church differently from other churches, it was not the kind of primacy that meant the actions of the Roman bishop could be judged by no one.

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ABSTRACT : Cyprian's *Epistula 67* provides evidence for one of the synods of bishops that met in the African provinces of the Roman empire in the middle of the third century. In it we find one of the earliest references to the organisation of Christianity in Spain : two Spanish *libellatici* bishops had been removed from office in the aftermath of the Decian persecution. Anxious to reclaim their positions, one of them, Basilides, travelled to Rome and secured the support of its bishop, Stephen. Other Spanish bishops, who supported the replacement bishops, had written to their African colleagues to enlist their support, which this letter offered. While some scholars wish to date this letter to late 256, this paper argues in favour of a date late in 254 on three grounds. The timetable of events is not so congested as to necessitate a later date if one accepts that Basilides could have gone to Rome to see whoever was bishop rather than Stephen specifically. There is nothing in Cyprian's tone to indicate the antagonism that would be there later in his relationship with Stephen. The lists of bishops who attended the several synods throughout these years can be read in such a way as to suppose that the synod of *Epistula 67* was held in autumn 254. The dating of this letter is important because with it one can argue for a consistency in Cyprian's pastoral responsibility not only in his own church and *prouincia* but elsewhere as well. He exercised his pastoral ministry through the advice and persuasion of letter writing. What this letter tells us is that while Cyprian accepted Stephen's right to offer an opinion, and such an opinion was held to be a significant and influential one, he did not believe that it was Rome's right to impose a solution in Spain nor did he believe, in this instance, that Stephen's opinion was the correct one. This letter has an important place in the history of the question of Roman primacy and as a prelude to the later difficulties between Stephen and Cyprian, and it should not be neglected.

RÉSUMÉ : La lettre 67 de Cyprien fournit un témoignage sur l'un des synodes d'évêques réunis dans les provinces africaines de l'Empire au milieu du III^e siècle. Nous y découvrons l'une des premières mentions concernant l'organisation du christianisme en Espagne, où deux évêques *libellatici*, suspendus à la suite de la persécution de Dèce, avaient tenté de retrouver leur siège. Alors que quelques-uns veulent dater cette lettre de la fin de 256, cette étude conclut pour la fin de 254. Les listes des évêques qui participèrent aux nombreux synodes de ces années peuvent être lues d'une manière qui suppose que le synode dont il est question dans la lettre 67 se tint durant l'automne de 254. Cette lettre nous apprend que Cyprien ne considérait pas que Rome avait le droit d'imposer une solution en Espagne. Cette lettre a une place importante dans l'histoire de la question de la primauté romaine.