

Ad Quirinum Book Three and Cyprian's Catechumenate

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Although widely viewed as an unorganized catechetical document, Cyprian's *Ad Quirinum* Book Three has not been systematically analyzed for what it might reveal about the third-century North African catechumenate. By mapping discernible patterns in the headings and accompanying Scriptures, I will demonstrate that large sections of Book Three have a logical order, which helped catechists and catechumens memorize and practice the Scriptures. The first twenty-three precepts trained catechumens to practice economic sharing and to nonviolently respond to expected mistreatment. Later sections focus on *disciplina*, biblical book studies, and eschatological and baptismal concerns.

For over a century scholars have periodically studied Cyprian's *Ad Quirinum*¹ to mine it for pre-Vulgate Scripture and to prove the existence of what has come to be known as the *testimonia* tradition. In 1889 Edwin Hatch

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1. *Ad Quirinum* is composed of three separate books. Cyprian sent Books One and Two together along with a prefatory letter to Quirinus. Cyprian separately sent Book Three along with a new preface. Various scholars have researched and debated about who authored *Ad Quirinum*. Most scholars have followed Hugo Koch in seeing Cyprian as the author (*Cyprianische Untersuchungen* [Bonn: Marcus and Weber, 1926], 183–210). The following is an impressive list of scholars who are convinced by Koch's analysis: Berthold Altaner, *Patrology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1960), 196; Jean Daniélou, *Origins of Latin Christianity*, trans. David Smith and John Austin Baker, *A History of Early Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicaea*, vol. 3 (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1977), 293; Michael A. Fahey, *Cyprian and the Bible: A Study in Third-Century Exegesis* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971), 20; Adolf Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1958); Pierre Monat, "Les testimonia bibliques de Cyprien à Lactance," in *Le monde latin antique et la bible*, ed. Jacques Fontaine and Charles Pietri (Paris: Beauchesne, 1985), 503; Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 2 (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1953), 362–63; Victor Saxer, "Les pères latins du IIIe siècle," in *Le monde latin antique et*

used Books One and Two to establish the existence of *excerpta* collections apart from the LXX or the *Vetus Latina*.² Building on Hatch, J. Rendel Harris formulated a *testimonia* hypothesis.³ He imagined a written Testimony Book with Scriptures arranged under topical headings, which Christians would have used polemically against Jews and for christological purposes. After building a list of criteria by which to recognize Scripture taken from the *testimonia*, Harris appealed to Cyprian's *Ad Quirinum* as the paragon for a *liber testimoniorum*.⁴ Utilizing and developing Harris's work,

la bible, 350. The most recent scholar to question Cyprian's authorship is Charles Bobertz; see "An Analysis of *Vita Cypriani* 3.6–10 and the Attribution of *Ad Quirinum* to Cyprian of Carthage," *VC* 46 (1992): 112–28. Even Bobertz maintains that the document is a part of an older tradition. Perhaps then Cyprian cannot be the "author" in an original sense as much as a compiler, which is what Cyprian claimed his role was in the two prefaces accompanying the document. If Cyprian were drawing on a long tradition, this would give the document even more value for studying the third-century catechumenate in North Africa.

2. See Edwin Hatch, *Essays in Biblical Greek* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), 133, 143, 151, 169, 171, 178, 179, 184, 185, 190, 200, 202, 213 (not an exhaustive list). Hatch used only one passage from Book Three in all his examples from *Ad Quirinum*.

3. J. Rendel Harris, *Testimonies*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916). For an overview of the work of J. Rendel Harris, see Alessandro Falcetta, "The Testimony Research of James Rendel Harris," *NT* 45 (2003): 280–99.

4. Harris, *Testimonies*, 5. Harris also argued that it was legitimate "to re-write the title of Cyprian's book from the simple form *Testimonia* into the form *Testimonia aduersus Iudaeos*; or, at all events to regard the longer title as latent in the shorter." It was within this early milieu that Robert Ernest Wallis designated Cyprian's works to Quirinus as "Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews." However, as early as 1912 and again in 1930, C. H. Turner demonstrated that this title is not in the earliest manuscripts, but based on later additions to the work. The best manuscripts never included the words *Liber testimoniorum tres* or *aduersus Iudaeos*; see C. H. Turner, *Studies in Early Church History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), 264. Wallis simply copied the title from Hartel's edition without investigating it. Furthermore, Augustine mentions Cyprian's treatise to Quirinus in two of his works: three times in *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum* 4.21 (CSEL 60:543.5), 4.25 (CSEL 60:552.3), 4.27 (CSEL 60:556.22), and once in *De correptione et gratia* 7.12 (PL 44:923.50). Augustine (*Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum* 4.21 [CSEL 60.543]) claims that Pelagius had written a book of "testimonies" in imitation of Cyprian's work to Quirinus: *Beatissimum, corona etiam martyrii gloriosissimum cyprianum nec africanis atque occidentalibus tantum, uerum et orientalibus ecclesiis fama praedicante et scripta eius longe late que diffundente notissimum etiam ipse heresiarcha istorum pelagius cum debito certe honore commemorat, ubi testimoniorum librum scribens eum se asserit imitari hoc se dicens facere ad romanum, quod ille fecerit ad quirinum*. In addition Jerome mentions the work in *Dialogi contra Pelagianos libri III* 1.33 and titles it simply *Ad Quirinum* (PL 23:525.32.5–7). At most, then, fourth-century writers associated the word *testimonia* with the document, but the words *aduersus Iudaeos*

Cardinal Jean Daniélou argued that Cyprian systematically reworked the *testimonia* tradition, which until his time was used in either anti-Jewish or anti-Marcionite contexts. Cyprian, however, reformulated the *testimonia* according to a third-century creed and used the same citations for catechetical purposes “to confirm and illustrate the faith.”⁵

These scholars have given such strong arguments that *testimonia* collections circulated independent of the New Testament that Martin Albl, in his detailed study of the *testimonia*, claims, “The burden of proof now lies with those who deny that Christians used written scripture collections beginning in NT times.”⁶ Nevertheless, research on *Ad Quirinum* remains incomplete due to the neglect of Book Three. Hatch and Harris barely mentioned Book Three.⁷ Cardinal Daniélou wrote three pages on Book Three, suggesting it was concerned with “traditional Christian catechesis,” but he did not study the work systematically or in detail as he did with Books One and Two. As a result, the document’s significance for early Christian catechesis has only recently been examined.⁸

Alan Kreider is the first scholar to have broken new ground on *Ad*

were not connected to the original work. See also Robert Weber’s comment in the introduction to the Latin edition, “mais qui porte dans les manuscrits le simple titre *Ad Quirinum*, s’adresse très probablement à chrétien de même nom que dans les épîtres 77 et 78” (“Introduction aux ouvrages ‘*Ad Quirinum*’ et ‘*Ad Fortunatum*,” in *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera. Pars 1: Ad Quirinum Et Ad Fortunatum*, ed. Robert Weber and Maurice Bévenot, CCL 3 [Turnhout: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1972], lv).

5. Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, trans. John Austin Baker, *The Development of Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicaea*, vol. 1 (Chicago: The Henry Regnery Company, 1964), 293.

6. Martin C. Albl, “*And Scripture Cannot Be Broken*”: *The Form and Function of the Early Christian Testimonia Collections* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 287.

7. In volumes 1 and 2 of his *Testimonies*, Harris cited *Ad Quirinum* ninety-eight times. Ninety-seven of these citations are from Books One and Two and leaving only one citation from Book Three.

8. In the preface to Book Three, Cyprian (*Ad Quirinum* 3 [CCL 3:73.4–6]) made its catechetical purposes clear: “You asked me to select from the Holy Scriptures some headings concerning the religious content and process of the moral training of our way of life” (*Petisti, ut ad instruendum te excerperem de scripturis sanctis quaedam capitula ad religiosam sectae nostrae disciplinam pertinentia*). *Disciplina* is a robust concept in Cyprian’s thought. It encompasses much more than teaching. It can mean the content as well as the process of moral training. See Richard Seagraves, *Pascentes Cum Disciplina: A Lexical Study of the Clergy in the Cyprianic Correspondence* (Fribourg: Éditions universitaires, 1993), 177–204. Moreover, in his preface to the first two books Cyprian (*Ad Quirinum* 3 [CCL 3:3.27]) stated that he intended them “to form the first lineaments of faith” (*ad prima fidei liniamenta formanda*).

Quirinum's importance as a catechetical document.⁹ Although he sees Books One and Two as part of the catechetical program, teaching Christology and salvation history, he focuses on Book Three. According to Kreider Book Three's 120 precepts had two functions: they helped form a distinctive community and they aided catechumens in memorizing Scripture.¹⁰ Far from being only concerned with morals, forty-eight precepts have to do with belief.¹¹ Then he notes precepts that teach a shared sense of identity (3.9; 3.34; 3.62; 3.44). The bulk of the precepts, however, deal with behavior and how Christians treat people.¹² Although Kreider sees no particular order to the precepts, he claims that every precept—without systematically sorting them—could fit within the categories belief, belonging, and behavior.

Everett Ferguson has also studied *Ad Quirinum* as a catechetical document. For Ferguson Books One to Three form a coherent whole because each teaches an essential aspect of Christian faith and life: Book One deals with the “historical framework of Christian teaching,”¹³ Book Two is about Christology, and the Book Three is about “moral duties of the Christian life.”¹⁴ He provides evidence that Book Three is useful for studying the catechuminate. He points, for example, to the second to last precept as catechetical: “That the yoke of the law was heavy, which is cast off by us, and that the Lord's yoke is easy, which is taken up by us” (3.119).¹⁵ *Ad Quirinum* 3.97, “We must hasten to the faith and to attainment,” contains the word *consecutio* that signified the grace realized in baptism.¹⁶ He understands Book Three as a series of negative prohibitions arranged in

9. Kreider examines *Ad Quirinum*, especially Book Three, for catechesis in several works; see his *Worship and Evangelism in Pre-Christendom* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 1995), 25; *Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 29–32; “Changing Patterns of Conversion in the West,” in *The Origins of Christendom in the West*, ed. Alan Kreider (New York: T & T Clark, 2001), 7–9; “Conversion and Culture in Early Christianity,” *Journal of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education* 19 (2003–2004): 15–17.

10. Alan Kreider, *The Change of Conversion*, 29.

11. Kreider, *The Change of Conversion*, 29.

12. Kreider, *The Change of Conversion*, 30–31.

13. Everett Ferguson, “Catechesis and Initiation,” in *The Origins of Christendom in the West*, 240.

14. Ferguson, “Catechesis and Initiation,” 240.

15. Ferguson, “Catechesis and Initiation,” 242. ANF translation, which is what Ferguson used.

16. Ferguson, “Catechesis and Initiation,” 241. ANF translation. I should add that heading 3.43 also uses the word: *Posse eum statim consequi qui vere crediderit*.

“random order” for catechetical use.¹⁷ On the whole Ferguson sees the three books as a cohesive collection that “at best would represent a resource, a skeleton as it were for catechists to flesh out in their instruction.”¹⁸

Kreider and Ferguson have provided a deeper level with which to engage *Ad Quirinum*, suggesting that what we learn from *Ad Quirinum* goes to the heart of early North African Christian self-identity.¹⁹ However, since their brief excursions into *Ad Quirinum* were part of larger studies on the catechumenate and in part meant for popular consumption, they did not systematically analyze the text. Therefore some of their suggestions remain untested and many questions remain. Kreider and Ferguson suggest that Book Three’s topics are completely random in order. Indeed, the topics covered in the 120 headings vary widely and seem to lack an immediately discernible order. The following is a sample from the headings that at first seems to confirm the claims of randomness:

46. That a woman ought to be silent in the church.
47. That it arises from our fault and our desert that we suffer, and do not perceive God’s help in everything.
48. That we must not take usury.
49. That even our enemies are to be loved.
50. That the sacrament of the faith must not be profaned.
51. That no one should be uplifted in his doing.
52. That the liberty of believing or of not believing is placed in free choice.
53. That the secrets of God cannot be seen through, and therefore that our faith ought to be simple.
54. That nobody is without filth and without sin.²⁰

Despite this excerpt’s ostensible randomness, there are several reasons to push Kreider’s and Ferguson’s analyses further on this very issue. It is possible that Kreider and Ferguson have missed structures in the Latin

17. Ferguson, “Catechesis and Initiation,” 241–42. On the other hand, Alan Kreider argues that the precepts are not negative. See Kreider, “Conversion and Culture in Early Christianity,” 16.

18. Ferguson, “Catechesis and Initiation,” 242.

19. Alistair Stewart-Sykes, for example, used Alan Kreider’s analysis of North African Christianity to argue that they re-socialized converts into a “contra-culture”; see his “Catechumenate and Contra-Culture: The Social Process of Catechumenate in Third-Century Africa and Its Development,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 47 (2003): 289–306.

20. ANF, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995; reprint, American), 5:529.

text which may be located through key words or phrases. Second, neither Kreider nor Ferguson has scrutinized the Scriptures underneath the headings. Attention to these deficiencies might enable us to discern structure through attention both to keywords and to the underlying Scriptures. Third, Cyprian claims that one reason he compiled the treatise was to aid in memorizing Scriptures:

You are diligently seeking succinct divine readings, so that the mind surrendered to God might not be wearied by long and numerous volumes of books. Instead, being educated by brief heavenly precepts, your mind might have a wholesome and large compendium for promoting its memory. . . . For a few things arranged into an abridged form are both quickly read through and frequently repeated.²¹

Based upon Cyprian's stated intent, it seems unlikely that he would use random notes.²² On the one hand, that Cyprian numbers the precepts one to one-hundred and twenty would aid his hearers' memory. Mary Carruthers has shown that in antiquity people could learn ideas more easily if the ideas were associated with numbers.²³ On the other hand, commenting on medieval florilegium compilations, Carruthers says, "An unorganized compilation could hardly be used unless it were to cue an already formed *memoria*, readers 'slipping' the material into their own heuristic schemes, as they had been taught to do."²⁴ Complete topical randomness, in other words, scarcely aids memory for most people. Furthermore, given that throughout his writings Cyprian accentuated discipline within the church, it seems unlikely he would completely leave the structure for catechists. Might there be another grid for reading Book Three that allows us to see

21. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3 (CCL 3:73.6–10): *Lectionis diuinae succinctam diligentiam quaerens, ut animus deo deditus non longis aut multis librorum uoluminibus fatigetur, sed eruditus breuiario praeceptorum caelestium habeat ad fouendam memoriam suam salubre et grande compendium. . . . dum in breuiarium pauca digesta et uelociter perleguntur et frequenter iterantur.* Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

22. Cyprian's words on memory echo those found in the anonymous Greek textbook *Dialexeis*: "This is the first thing, if you pay attention (direct your mind), the judgment will better perceive the things going through it. Secondly, repeat again what you hear; for by often hearing and saying the same things, what you have learned comes complete into your memory" (quoted in Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966], 29–30).

23. See Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 63.

24. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 177. Carruthers's statement seems to support Kreider's contention that Quirinus was probably a catechist.

some structure within the text? The remainder of this article takes its cues from Kreider and Ferguson, and is meant to test their claims and answer some of the questions that arise as a result. By carefully examining the headings and the accompanying Scriptures, I will argue that large sections of *Ad Quirinum* Book Three have a logical order, which often reveal focal aspects of the third-century North African catechumenate.

ECONOMIC SHARING

The initial four precepts form the first discernible unit, teaching economic sharing:

1. On the good of works and mercy.
2. In works and alms, even if less be done by mediocre means, the will itself is enough.
3. That love and fraternal affection ought to be religiously and steadfastly practiced.
4. That we must glory in nothing, because nothing is our own.²⁵

The first Scripture that Cyprian cites in Book Three is Isaiah 58.1–9: “Break your bread with the starving person, and bring those without shelter into your house. If you see someone naked, clothe that person.”²⁶ This is Isaiah’s “true fast” in which pious rituals are held out as futile without active care for the needy. Precept 3.1 is the longest section of Book Three with thirty-six Scripture quotations taking up 142 lines in the *Corpus Christianorum* edition.²⁷ Exhortations from Scripture such as, “Let your abundance supply their scarcity,”²⁸ and, “When you prepare a dinner or banquet call the poor, the weak, the blind and the lame . . .”²⁹ targeted

25. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3 (CCL 3:73–74): I. *De bono operis et misericordiae*; II. *In opere et elemosynis, etiamsi per mediocritatem minus fiat, ipsam uoluntatem satis esse*; III. *Agapem et dilectionem fraternam religiose et firmiter exercendam*; IV. *In nullo gloriandum, quando nostrum nihil sit.*

26. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3 (CCL 3:81.19–21): *Frange esurienti panem tuum et egenos sine tecto induc in domum tuam. Si uideris nudum, uesti.*

27. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.1 (CCL 3:80–89).

28. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.1 (CCL 3:87.120–23): *Vestra abundantia illorum inopiam suppleat, ut et illorum abundantia uestrae inopiae sit supplementum et sit aequalitas.*

29. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.1 (CCL 3:88.137–42): *Cum facis prandium aut cenam, noli uocare amicos tuos neque fratres neque uicinos neque diuites, ne forte et illi reimitent te: et fiet retributum tibi. Sed cum facis epulum, uoca mendicos, debiles, caecos, clodos, et felix eris, quoniam non habent retribuere tibi: restituetur autem tibi in resurrectione iustorum.*

wealthier catechumens for extensive instruction, making it clear to them that caring for the poor within the church was a principal practice they needed to cultivate in order to obtain baptism.³⁰ They were to cultivate this practice without regard for the worthiness of the recipient (Matt 5.42) and were to view the poor person they aided as Jesus himself (Matt 25.42).³¹ Elsewhere Cyprian indicates that giving occurred primarily through official church structures, thus catechumens' giving could be monitored.³²

In precept 3.2 Cyprian also addresses the poor on economic matters.³³ However, he only cites 2 Cor 8.12–13 to encourage them to give from their small means.³⁴ Precept 3.1 may have given the impression that wealth was necessary to please God and to engage in true worship of God. If Cyprian had meant this, it would have been in keeping with much of Greco-Roman philosophy. Aristotle, for example, never envisioned that a poor person could have lived a life of virtue that led to fulfillment and well-being. The poor person would always be focused on gaining money, rather than character. In fact, being born into wealth was a precondition for attaining

30. Most catechumens would not have been as wealthy as Cyprian. Cyprian's liberal education and Carthaginian estate (*horti*) suggest a person born into a local, established family with considerable wealth, perhaps even senatorial rank. See Michael M. Sage, *Cyprian* (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975), 105, and Henry Chadwick, "The Church of the Third Century in the West," in *The Roman West in the Third Century: Contributions from Archaeology and History*, ed. Anthony King and Martin Henig (Oxford: British Archeological Reports, 1981), 7.

31. Both of these positions were counter-cultural. Generosity was only a virtue if given at the right time, in the right place, and to the right people. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1120b, and Cicero, *De officium* 1.42–50. See Peter Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire*, The Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2002), 4–5, on Greco-Roman habits of ignoring the poor.

32. Exactly how they would be monitored is uncertain, but it might have included a mixture of having sponsors to vouch for them and Cyprian's knowledge based on whether a wealthy person offered something during the gatherings. The *Apostolic Tradition* 20, includes evidence of official monitoring of catechumens' economic behavior before they were allowed to be baptized. Catechumens who were ready for baptism were examined as to whether they had "honored the widows, whether they visited the sick, whether they were thorough in performing good works; and if those who brought them bear witness that they have acted thus, so they should hear the Gospel" (*On the Apostolic Tradition*, trans. Alistair Stewart-Sykes [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001], 105–6).

33. Cyprian recognized different levels of poverty. For example, see *Ep.* 5.1.2 in which Cyprian mentions *pauperes et indigentes*.

34. No other church father before or after Cyprian used 2 Cor 8.12–13 in this manner. Moreover, Cyprian only uses the text in *Ad Quirinum* 3.2.

the highest end of human life (εὐδαιμονία).³⁵ Likewise for Plato the truly good person could be neither extremely wealthy nor destitute (πτωχός).³⁶ Breaking with much of Greco-Roman philosophy, Cyprian envisions poor people attaining “the good” of life, which he mentioned in precept one, by means of almsgiving.

In 3.3, Cyprian quotes passages that concern love—such as John 15.12–13 or Matt 18.19–20—and he also cites the apostles who shared their possessions (Acts 4). Thus love and economic sharing are related. Cyprian then braces these economic instructions with theology: “That we must glory in nothing, because nothing is our own” (3.4). This precept reversed the common assumption in Roman society that wealth *per se* merits praise and glory.³⁷ *Gloria* involved seeking power and reputation personally, but also concerned how that power and reputation furthered the Roman Empire’s cause. The powerful elite bestowed *gloria* on a person’s actions in service of the empire.³⁸ Thus catechumens who heard Cyprian’s precepts 3.4 and 3.10 or in numerous biblical passages quoted in Book Three would have unavoidably connected *gloria* with political power, wealth, and personal ambition. The concept itself received scorn from North African Christians. Tertullian, for example, called it “vain” (*uana*) and “disgraceful” (*turpis*).³⁹ Likewise, Minucius Felix wrote, “Do you glory in the symbols of power and in the purple? It is a foolish error of humankind, an empty cult of status.”⁴⁰ The North African church engraved a new content for *gloria* in the

35. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1095a–1095b.

36. See Plato, *Laws* 5.74C.

37. See Ramsay MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976), 116–17.

38. Cicero, for example, defined *gloria* as “praise given to right actions and the reputation for great merits in the service of the Republic, which is approved not merely by the testimony of the multitude but by the witness of all the best men” (*Philippica* 1.29 [ed. André Boulanger and Pierre Willeumier, *Cicero: Discours. Tome xix: Philippiques i–iv* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1998), 70]; *Est autem gloria laus recte factorum magnorumque in rem publicam meritorum, quae cum optimi cuiusque tum etiam multitudinis testimonio comprobatur*). Allen Brent has shown how Cyprian culminated a long tradition of the church fashioning itself as an alternative *imperium* to the imperial order, and thus represented a “contra-culture.” See Allen Brent, *The Imperial Cult and the Development of Church Order: Concepts and Images of Authority in Paganism and Early Christianity before the Age of Cyprian*, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 45 (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 1999).

39. See Tertullian, *De corona militis* 13.7 (CCL 2:1062.49).

40. Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 37.10 (ed. Jean Beaujeu, *Minucius Felix. Octavius* [Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1974], 64); *fascibus et purpuris gloriaris? vanus error hominis et inanis cultus dignitatis, fulgere purpura, mente sodescere*.

hearts of converts, as the martyrs Montanus and Lucius illustrated when they proclaimed from prison, “The glory of imprisonment!”⁴¹

NONVIOLENCE

The next four precepts teach nonviolence:

5. That humility and quietness should be maintained in all things.
6. That all good and just people are oppressed more, but ought to endure because they are being tried.
7. That we must not grieve the Holy Spirit whom we accept.
8. That anger must be overcome, lest it force us to sin.⁴²

Under heading 3.5, Cyprian cites Luke 9.48, “The one who will be the least among you, this one shall be the greatest.”⁴³ Elsewhere he uses this text to teach against jealousy and envy saying, “There ought to be no contention among us for exaltation.”⁴⁴ Without *humilitas*, a giver simply doing acts-of-love-of-honor (*euergesia* or φιλοτιμῆμα) would expect worldly *gloria*. Cyprian hopes to avert rivalry that could seep into Christian charity. In 3.6 he warns catechumens to expect oppression as a result of their counter-cultural practices of vulnerability: “I have spoken these things to you, so that you might have peace. In the world you will have afflictions, but have *faith*, because I have overcome the world” (John 16.33).⁴⁵ Cyprian exhorts the catechumens to theological virtue as a result of afflictions:

41. *Passio sanctorum Montani et Lucii* (ed. Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972], 218): *gloriam uinculorum!* The tension that developed later in Cyprian’s ministry between the martyrs and Cyprian touches this concept of *gloria*. The lapsed who tried to buy their forgiveness were using this means—means that Cyprian thought a threat to church discipline—to once again undercut church order. Cyprian repositions the martyrs, who had previously enjoyed an autonomous power, and places them under the bishop’s authority in order to redirect the flow of power and cut-off the wealthy from forms of power that could elevate them; see J. Patout Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 82–83.

42. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3 (CCL 3:74): V. *Humilitatem et quietem in omnibus tenendam*; VI. *Bonos quosque et iustos plus laborare, sed tolerare debere, quia probantur*; VII. *Non contristandum spiritum sanctum quem accepimus*; VIII. *Iracundiam uincendam esse ne cogat delinquere*.

43. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.5 (CCL 3:74.9): *Qui minimus erit in omnibus uobis hic erit magnus*.

44. Cyprian, *De zelo et livore* 10 (CCL 3A:80.172–73): *Exaltationis aput nos non potest esse contentio*.

45. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.6 (CCL 3:95): *Haec locutus sum uobis, ut in me pacem habeatis, in saeculo autem praessuram: sed fideate, quoniam ego uici saeculum*.

We glory in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also glory in oppression: knowing that oppression produces fortitude; and fortitude, experience; and experience, *hope*: and hope does not confound, because the *love* of God is infused in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given to us.⁴⁶

Cyprian focuses upon the catechumens' response to affliction: faith, hope, and love figure prominently as virtues strengthened by oppression.

Precept 3.7 strengthens Cyprian's teaching that how catechumens react to being mistreated is a matter of salvation. "Bitterness, anger, indignation, battle-cries, and blasphemies" all "grieve the Holy Spirit" (Eph 4.30–31).⁴⁷ In *De bono patientiae* he quotes this same Scripture and elaborates:

For if a Christian has withdrawn from the fury and contention of the world as well as from the storms of the sea, and has already begun to be tranquil and gentle in Christ's harbor, then that Christian ought to admit neither anger nor discord into his or her heart, for it is not lawful for a Christian to return evil for evil or to hate.⁴⁸

Retaliation, therefore, grieves the Holy Spirit. To prevent retaliation "anger must be overcome, lest it force us to sin" (3.8). Under this precept, Cyprian cites Prov 16.32: "A patient person is better than a strong one; for one who restrains anger is better than one who captures a city." Jean-Michel Hornus described early Christian *patientia* as "enduring the present evil with the certainty of a final victory over it" and that *patientia* was "what we today call nonviolence."⁴⁹ In *De bono patientiae* Cyprian queries:

How then will you be able to endure these things: neither to swear nor curse, not to demand back what has been stolen from you, on receiving a slap to offer the other cheek to the one hitting you, to forgive your brother who sins against you not only seventy-seven times, but all his

46. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.6 (CCL 3:95): *Gloriamur in spe claritatis dei: non solum autem, sed et gloriamur in praessuris scientes quoniam praessura tolerantiam operatur, tolerantia autem probationem, probatio autem spem. Spes autem non confundit, quia dilectio dei infusa est cordibus nostris per spiritum sanctum qui datus est nobis.*

47. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.7 (CCL 3:96): *Omnis amaritudo et ira et indignatio et clamor et blasphemia auferantur a uobis.*

48. Cyprian, *De bono patientiae* 16 (CCL 3A:128): *Si enim christianus a furore et contentione carnali tamquam de maris turbinibus excessit et tranquillus ac lenis in portu christi esse iam coepit, nec iram nec discordiam debet intra pectusmittere cui nec malum pro malo reddere liceat nec odisse.*

49. Jean-Michel Hornus, *It Is Not Lawful For Me To Fight: Early Christian Attitudes Toward War, Violence and the State*, trans. Alan Kreider and Oliver Coburn (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980), 214.

sins without exception, to love your enemies, to pray for your adversaries and persecutors, if you do not have the steadfastness of patience and forbearance.⁵⁰

In this passage, Cyprian concretely describes what *patientia* looks like in language reminiscent of the Sermon on the Mount. What we today call “nonviolence” stands out in this passage as definitional to *patientia*.

In a letter to the anti-Christian Demetrian, Cyprian describes how Demetrian would come to Cyprian and argue with him. Frequently, Cyprian says, Demetrian would speak “impious words” and “shout with noisy words” insisting on his own views “rather than listening patiently to our [Cyprian’s] own.”⁵¹ Cyprian claims that in response, he thought it best to “overcome impatience with patience,” which in this case, concretely looked like “ignoring with silence . . . rather than provoking with speech” and showing “kindliness.”⁵² *Patientia* in this particular case looked a lot like what some modern Christians have called nonresistance.⁵³

50. Cyprian, *De bono patientiae* 16 (CCL 3A:127): *Quid deinde, ut non iures neque maledicas, ut tua ablata non repetas, ut accepta alapa et alteram maxillam uerberanti praebeas, ut fratri in te peccanti non tantum septuagies septies sed omnia omnino peccata dimittas, ut diligas inimicos tuos, ut pro aduersariis et persecutoribus preceam facias? poteris ne ista perferre nisi patientiae et tolerantiae firmitate?*

51. Cyprian, *Ad Demetrianum* 1 (CCL 3A:35).

52. Cyprian, *Ad Demetrianum* 1 (CCL 3A:35).

53. In his study of Cyprian, Tertullian, and Augustine’s treatises on *patientia*, Kossi Adiauu Ayedze claims that by *patientia* Cyprian meant “non-retaliation”: “No reader of *De bono patientiae* would doubt that its author is exhorting his audience or readership to an ethic of non-retaliation” (“Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine on Patience: A Comparative and Critical Study of Three Treatises on a Stoic-Christian Virtue in Early North African Christianity” [PhD Dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 2000], 208). Ayedze claims the same thing about Tertullian’s use of *patientia*; see Ayedze, “Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine on Patience,” 162. Robert Kaster has argued that “*patientia* could be said to define the essence of slavery” (“The Taxonomy of Patience, or When is Patientia not a Virtue?,” *Classical Philology* 97 [2002]: 138). Slaves were expected not to resist the commands they were given. In this sense, *patientia* represents a type of nonresistance. In addition, P. G. Walsh in describing the Roman attack on Tusculum states that the Tusculum “policy of non-resistance (*patientia*), which the Romans had not hitherto experienced, ensured that the city was not harmed” (“Livy’s Preface and the Distortion of History,” *The American Journal of Philology* 76 [1955]: 379).

ECONOMIC SHARING REVISITED

Cyprian returns to economic sharing in the next four precepts:

9. That Christians ought to sustain one another.
10. That we must trust in God alone and we must glory in God.
11. That one who has gained faith, abandoning the former person, ought to ponder only celestial and spiritual things, and pay no attention to the world that he or she has already renounced.
12. That we must not swear oaths.⁵⁴

In precept 9 Cyprian only cites Gal 6.1–2: “Each one should have others in mind, so that you will not also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”⁵⁵ Cyprian uses this verse in a few places to show that Christians should care for one another’s physical and spiritual needs.⁵⁶ This precept clarifies that Christian economic aid pertains to necessitous believers rather than to care for the poor outside of the church. Thus this training buttresses social boundaries between the church and the rest of society.⁵⁷

54. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3 (CCL 3:74): IX. *Inuicem se fratres sustinere debere*; X. *In deum solum fidendum et in ipso gloriandum*; XI. *Eum qui fidem consecutus est exposito priore homine caelestia tantum et spiritalia cogitare debere nec adtendere ad saeculum, cui iam renuntiauit*; XII. *Non iurandum*.

55. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.9 (CCL 3:97.1–3): *In contemplatione habentes unusquisque, ne et uos temptemini. Alterutrum onera sustinete et sic adimplebitis legem christi*.

56. See *Ep.* 55.18.2 and 15.22, where Cyprian encourages Christians to bear the burdens of repentant *libellatici*, who were “wounded” siblings needing care and concern. Economic sharing could atone for the sins of *libellatici*. In *De lapsis* 35 he warned the repentant: “Your property ought not to be retained now or to be cherished, by which one has been both deceived and conquered. Wealth is to be avoided as an enemy, as a thief to be fled, as a sword to be feared by those who possess it, and as a poison.” In addition, Cyprian’s contemporary, Origen, after quoting Gal 6.1–2 says: “By burdens he means the needs of the body. So to the extent that anyone is rich in resources, he is called to bear the poor person’s burden and relieve poverty by his abundance” (*Commentary on Romans*, 10.6, trans. Thomas P. Scheck. FC 104 [Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2002]).

57. See also *Ad Quirinum* 3.34, 3.44, and 3.62, which starkly divide Christians from non-Christians. Christians who needed to change jobs, refugees because of persecution, widows, orphans, those condemned to the mines, are all examples of persons who benefited from the church’s funds to aid the poor in the church. At the same time, however, Cyprian urged Christians to care for sick and dying non-Christians when the plague began to devastate Carthage. Pontius relates that Cyprian urged Christians to care for non-Christians infected with the plague as obedience to the command to love enemies; see Pontius, *Vita Cypriani* 9.

In 3.10, Cyprian cites Jer 9.23–24, which connects wealth and violence by warning catechumens not to “glory” in their wisdom, courage (*fortitudo*), or wealth (*dives*).⁵⁸ In 3.11 Cyprian cites several verses from the Sermon on the Mount about not worrying about food and drink and Matt 8.20 where Jesus says he has no place to rest his head. Luke 14.33 also appears exhorting catechumens to forsake everything and follow Christ.

“That we must not swear oaths” (*non iurandum*) forms the next teaching (3.12). Cyprian cites Matt 5.34, 37, Exod 20.7, and Sir 23.11.⁵⁹ “Oaths,” according to Everett Ferguson, “were the very foundation of society.”⁶⁰ In the Greco-Roman world, when a person borrowed money they gave a written formulaic guarantee, which invoked the gods. Tertullian described this process in *De idolatria* 23 and challenged Christians who were willing to write the oath but not to speak it aloud. This was still swearing an oath, according to Tertullian, and therefore violated the Gospels. He had little patience for circumvention, stating that Christians should pray that the need for borrowing not fall on them, and that if it did they should pray to God for aid through fellow believers or give them courage (*constantia*) to resist so that their words would not come back to haunt them on judgment day.⁶¹ Thus economics and oaths were bound together in the Greco-Roman world. Cyprian here simply teaches what Tertullian and other Christians had taught about oaths, which applied most directly to economic concerns.

58. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.10 (CCL 3:97.2–7): *Apud hieremiam: non gloriatur sapiens in sapientia sua nec gloriatur fortis in fortitudine sua nec gloriatur dives in divitiis suis, sed in hoc gloriatur qui gloriatur intellegere et nosse quoniam ego sum dominus, qui facio misericordiam et iudicium et iustitiam super terram, quoniam in his est uoluntas mea, dicit dominus.*

59. Fahey notes that Cyprian’s audience would not likely have been familiar with Jewish swearing (by Jerusalem), therefore Cyprian trimmed Matt 5.34, 37 (*Cyprian and the Bible*, 277). Exod 20.7 and Sir 23.11 only appear in 3.12 in all Cyprian’s corpus. Sir 23.11 does not appear in any other patristic text.

60. Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 236. See also Alan Kreider, “Oaths,” in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson, 2nd ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 823–24.

61. Tertullian, *De idolatria* 23 (CCL 2:1122–24). Clement of Alexandria also wrote that those who took on “any oath about what is being sold” in the local market should be excluded from worship.

NONVIOLENCE REVISITED

In precepts 13–20, Cyprian returns to teachings on nonviolence:

13. That we must not slander.
14. That we must never murmur about anything that occurs, we should bless God.
15. That people are tempted by God so that they are proven.
16. On the good of martyrdom.
17. That what we suffer in this world is less than the reward which is promised.
18. That nothing must be placed first to the love of God and Christ.
19. That we must not obey our will but God's will.
20. That fear is the foundation and support of hope and faith.⁶²

Cyprian cites seven passages to support heading 3.13: “That we must not slander.” Passages such as: “Do not allow any evil speech to proceed from your mouth” (Eph 4.29) and “Anyone who says to their brother, ‘O fool!’ will be subject to the gehenna of fire” (Matt 5.12)⁶³ indicate that Cyprian is concerned not with ritual curses, but with normal speech that does not promote peace. Elsewhere he observes that the devil “provokes the tongue by abuse.”⁶⁴ For Cyprian, word-care is a nonviolent reaction to an abusive world. He even forbids “murmuring” (3.14). In support of this prohibition, he quotes Acts 16.25 in which Paul and Silas pray while in prison, thanking God within earshot of other prisoners, to show that even under persecution, word-care is extremely important. Precepts 15–17 deal with suffering persecution and martyrdom, topics inherently dealing with not retaliating for wrongs suffered.⁶⁵

62. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3 (CCL 3:74): XIII. *Non maledicendum*; XIV. *Numquam mussitandum, sed circa omnia quae accidunt benedicendum deum*; XV. *Ad hoc temptari homines a deo ut probentur*; XVI. *De bono martyrii*; XVII. *Minora esse quae in saeculo patimur quam sit praemium quod promissum est*; XVIII. *Dilectioni dei et christi nihil praeponeendum*; XIX. *Voluntati non nostrae sed dei obtemperandum*; XX. *Fundamentum et firmamentum spei et fidei esse timorem*.

63. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.13 (CCL 3:104–5): *Omnis sermo malus de ore uestro non prodeat, sed bonus ad aedificationem fidei, ut det gratiam audientibus. . . . qui dixerit fratri suo: fatue, reus erit in gehenna ignis*.

64. Cyprian, *De zelo et livore* 2 (CCL 3A:75.26): *Linguam conuicio prouocat*.

65. In relation to precepts 3.16–20, Ferguson notes that precept 3.16 “and the following four *topoi* . . . are related to this theme [of martyrdom]. . . . Cyprian in his correspondence showed an interest in catechumens. He knew that the ‘hearers’ were in danger during persecution (*Ep.* 18.2), and he declares that catechumens who were martyred received a baptism of blood (*Ep.* 73.22)” (Ferguson, “Catechesis and Initiation,” 239, 240).

In 3.18, Cyprian quotes Matt 10.37–38 emphasizing the priority of God over one's family. What would this have looked like in Cyprian's time? In *De opere et eleemosynis*, citing Matt 10.37, he insisted that believers not show partiality towards their own children in economic matters.⁶⁶ He argued that the best way to love one's children was to give them a righteous example and to purchase heavenly reward for the family that would not be taken by the state.⁶⁷ All of this provided fertile ground for hostility within the natural family. Cyprian provided new ways of seeing and acting that would not unduly aggravate the situation.⁶⁸

In 3.19—*voluntati non nostrae sed dei obtemperandum*—Cyprian cites a group of New Testament Scriptures (John 6.38; Matt 26.39, 6.10, 7.21; Luke 12.47; 1 John 2.27) to show that God's will is what Jesus taught and did. Jesus is the model for Christian action and Christians ought to pray for the strength to imitate Jesus. Central among the things that God desires is for Christians to accept death:

We should remember that we ought to do, not our will, but God's will, according to what our Lord has commanded us to pray daily. How preposterous and how perverse it is that although we ask for God's will to be done, when God calls us and summons us out of this world, we do not immediately obey the order of his will.⁶⁹

Oriented towards the eschaton, Christians need not fear death and can suffer violence, disease, and torments. Cyprian also quotes Matt 26.39, "Father, if possible, let this cup pass by me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will."⁷⁰ Jesus chooses to suffer, rather than commit violence

66. Cyprian, *De opere et eleemosynis* 16 (CCL 3A:65).

67. Cyprian, *De opere et eleemosynis* 19 (CCL 3A:67). In his work on the *Didache*, Aaron Milavec argued that the primary "enemies" the *Didache* trained novices to love were family members, particularly fathers, who could seize their sons' property for using their family wealth to aid the destitute or the needy poor (*The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Love of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50–70 C.E.* [New York: Newman Press, 2003], 743–68). Milavec's massive 985 page work demonstrates the *Didache's* unity and that the first thing it taught is nonviolence and almsgiving (in that order) as part of a re-socialization process.

68. This is not to discount that the Roman authorities were considered enemies, especially in light of the persecutions, but to claim that the immediate abusers would be friends, family, and neighbors first and foremost.

69. Cyprian, *De mortalitate* 18 (CCL 3A:26): *Meminisse debemus uoluntatem nos non nostram sed dei facere debere secundum quod nos dominus cottidie iussit orare. Quam praeposterum est quam que peruersum, ut cum dei uoluntatem fieri postulemus, quando euocat nos et accersit de hoc mundo deus, non statim uoluntatis eius imperio pareamus!*

70. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.109 (CCL 3:113.4–5): *Pater, si fieri potest, transeat a me calix iste: uerum tamen non quod ego uolo, sed quod tu.*

and rebel against human and divine authority. Cyprian then cites five passages in support of precept 3.20, “That fear is the foundation and support of hope and faith.”⁷¹ Among other passages counseling fear of the Lord, Cyprian cites Isa 66.2b, “And upon whom else will I look, if not upon the one who is humble and quiet and trembles at my words?”⁷² The humble social status and the peaceable lifestyle that Cyprian advocates receive God’s notice.

ECONOMIC SHARING RE-REVISITED

Citing Luke 6.37, “Do not judge, so that you will not be judged, do not condemn, so you will not be condemned,” Cyprian, in Precept 3.21, seems to return to economics: “That we must not hastily judge another person.”⁷³ Although he did not use this passage in any other writing, and as such it is impossible to say with certainty how he applied the verse, other theologians used this verse to make points about economics. Clement of Alexandria quoted Luke 6.37 and warned his readers, “Do not judge for yourself who is worthy or who is unworthy” to receive alms.⁷⁴ Augustine

71. H. L. Ramsay (“On Early Insertions in the Third Book of Cyprian’s Testimonia,” JTS 2 [1901]: 276–88) showed that the remaining fifteen texts are Donatist interpolations. Ramsay found evidence that large portions of Book Three (3.20, 29, and 59) were inserted into the original text: the sections are only found in four early manuscripts; two passages from Revelation significantly differ from the way Cyprian normally cited the passages; the remaining Revelation quotations conform to Donatist manuscripts, suggesting a Donatist interpolation; and the formula for introducing quotations diverges from how the rest of *Ad Quirinum* introduces them. Ramsay’s work raises the possibility that Cyprian might have compiled Book Three from a traditional quotation manual because others would have more liberty to alter such a collection. Other scholars before Ramsay had recognized that these sections were insertions as well; see Giovanni Mercati, *D’alcuni nuovo sussidi per la critica del testo di S. Cipriano* (Rome: Tipografia Poliglotta, 1899).

72. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.20 (CCL 3:114.6–8): *Et super quem alium respiciam, nisi super humilem et quietum et trementem sermones meos?*

73. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.21 (CCL 3:118): *Non temere de altero iudicandum.*

74. Clement, *Quis dives salvetur?* 33 (ed. G. W. Butterworth, *The Exhortation to the Greeks. The Rich Man’s Salvation. To the Newly Baptized*, LCL 60 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919], 338, 340): σὺ μὲν μὴ κρῖνε, τίς ἄξιός καὶ τίς ἀνάξιός. Cyprian, in contrast to Clement, who made Jesus’ teaching on wealth a matter of the inner attitude of the rich towards their wealth, takes a harder stand on wealth and was less prone to explaining away the literal meaning of the text than Clement had been. Cyprian (*De dominica oratione* 20 [CCL 3A:102]) states that Christ “teaches that not only should riches be despised but they are also dangerous, in riches is the root of alluring evils” (*Docet non tantum contemnendas sed et periculosas esse diuitias, illic esse radicem malorum blandientium*). The entire point of

also connected the passage with almsgiving. He preached that failure to share surplus goods is theft and—quoting part of Luke 6.37—stated that there were two kinds of almsgiving: “giving and forgiving.”⁷⁵ This is the final time Cyprian returns to economics in this section of his catechetical instruction.

NONVIOLENCE RE-REVISITED

Christians who gave money or aid to people that society deemed unworthy often suffered society’s scorn. Cyprian’s training on how to respond to others’ derision had two parts: forgiveness and refusal of violence: “When we have undergone an injustice, we must absolve and forgive it” (3.22) and “evil must not be returned for evil” (3.23).⁷⁶ In his treatise *De bono patientiae*, Cyprian grounds Rom 12.21 (*Ad Quirinum* 3.23)—that we must not return evil for evil, but overcome evil with good—in Christology. Jesus was patient with those who were unkind and arrogant towards him, and he was nonviolent towards those who inflicted violence upon him. Chapter 6 of the treatise recounts Jesus’ example of patience in the face of all manners of persecution. Through his patience, Jesus was seeking “to win over the murderers of the prophets and those who always rebel against God.”⁷⁷ “If,” Cyprian states, “he himself is the way of our salvation, let us who follow in Christ’s salutary footsteps walk by Christ’s example.”⁷⁸ For Cyprian, therefore, because nonviolence imitates Jesus, it both transforms the believer from a sinner into a little Christ and is a missionary strategy to win over those who are still trapped in the sins of war, hatred, and all manners of violence.⁷⁹ Catechumens, like all Christians,

Cyprian’s catechumenate was to reform the Carthaginian church, which had become wealthy, bringing down upon themselves God’s judgment in the form of persecution. See Cyprian, *De lapsis* 6, 7.

75. Augustine, *Sermon* 206.2, in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament III: Luke*, ed. Arthur A. Just (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 110.

76. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.22, 23 (CCL 3:74): XXII. *Accepta iniuria remittendum et ignoscendum. XXIII. Vicem malis non reddendam.*

77. Cyprian, *De bono patientiae* 6 (CCL 3A:118): *prophetarum interfectores et aduersus deum semper rebelles . . . colligere!*

78. Cyprian, *De bono patientiae* 9 (CCL 3A:123): *Si ipse est salutis nostrae uia, qui christum uestigiis salutaribus sequimur per christi exempla gradiamur.*

79. See also *Ad Quirinum* 3.39 (CCL 3:131): *Datum nobis exemplum uiuendi in christo.* Furthermore, in *Ad Donatum* 6 and 7 Cyprian explicitly denounces Roman conceptions of virtue centered on killing in the amphitheaters, capital punishment, and war.

were being transformed into people who by their actions invited others to join with them: “We do not speak great things but we live them.”⁸⁰

* * *

As we have seen, in *Ad Quirinum* Book Three the pattern of economic sharing followed by nonviolence was repeated three times. Far from being random and chaotic, this entire section, 3.1–23, presents a coherent and distinct pattern.⁸¹ Cyprian returns to both of these themes in Book Three, but this section represents a more rigorous training on the themes.⁸²

80. See also *Ad Quirinum* 3.96 (CCL 3:78): *Factis, non uerbis operandum*. In addition see Cyprian, *De bono patientiae* 3 (CCL 3A:119): *qui non loquimur magna sed uiuimus*. This also imitates Jesus who “taught not only with words, but also completed them with deeds” (*De bono patientiae* 6 [CCL 3A:121]: *Iesus christus dominus et deus noster tantum uerbis docuit, sed impleuit et factis*).

81. With this section, Cyprian seems to have intended to reform the church, which had become wealthy and lazy in caring for the poor, neglect of which Cyprian cited as cause for the Decian persecution (see *De Lapsis* 11). By the Valerian persecution, the catechesis Cyprian set in motion had guided many to a new life. For example, half of the Scriptures cited in the *Passio sanctorum Montani et Lucii* also appear in Book Three. In their letter from prison to the Carthage church, Montanus and Lucius emphasized their continued love for one another, highlighted being “peacemakers” (*pacifici*) and provided an example of what peacemaking looks like in the community. A quarrel between Montanus and Julian resulted in a dream that Montanus’s clothing would be stained at his martyrdom because he had not “at once making up with Julian.” Then the author exhorts the Carthaginians to “cling to harmony, peace, and unanimity in every virtue.” Montanus envisions what theologians call the eschatological community: “Let us imitate here what we shall be there” (11.6; *Imitemur iam hic esse quod ibi future sumus*). Furthermore, as the martyrs were led out into the field to be killed, a crowd followed them, “in accordance with the piety and the faith which they had learned from Cyprian.” Cyprian figures in the story at the exact point that the Christians must learn to reconcile with one another. The martyr stories from early 259 C.E., which appeared just after Cyprian was martyred in late 258, reveal the extent to which the catechumenate Cyprian put into place worked (see *Passio sanctorum Montani et Lucii* and also *Passio sanctorum Mariani et Iacobi*). In addition, nearly half the Scriptures that Augustine records the Donatist bishop Petilian using, can be found in *Ad Quirinum* Book Three, suggesting that these Scriptures had become part of the air the North Africans breathed.

82. On economics see *Ad Quirinum* 3.48, 3.60, 3.61, 3.75, 3.81; on nonviolence see 3.49, 3.106. When these are added to the first section over one-fourth of the precepts and nearly half of the Scripture citations deal with these two themes. Moreover economics and nonviolence feature prominently and repeatedly in Cyprian’s other writings. His treatise *De opera et eleemosynis*, for example, treats economics at length. *Ad Donatum* repeatedly brings up the theme of Roman violence and the Christian’s counter-cultural life of peace and *De bono patientiae* calls upon Christians to imitate Jesus’ patience with his enemies.

THE REST OF AD QUIRINUM BOOK THREE

The remainder of Book Three also has sections that exhibit some discernible order. Precepts 3.24–27 form a unit on baptism while 3.28 states that a person who renounces Christ cannot be forgiven in the Church. Precepts 3.66–68 revolve around the concept of *disciplina*; each of the precepts includes this word in the title:

66. *Disciplinam dei in ecclesiasticis praeceptis obseruandam.*
67. *Praedictum quod disciplinam sanam aspernaturi essent.*
68. *Recedendum ab eo qui inordinate et contra disciplinam uiuat.*

More significantly, several sections resemble studies of biblical books:

- 3.70–73 revolve around Eph 6
- 3.74–77 are concerned with 1 Tim 5
- 3.81–85 focus on Lev 19
- 3.88–89 center on 1 Thess
- 3.90–94 are concerned with 1 Cor 7–11
- 3.98–99 center on Rom
- 3.95–97, 102–5, and 106–13 deal with Wisdom literature
- 3.95–97 have to do with Sir
- 3.102–5, 107–8 address Prov
- 3.109–11 have to do with Sir again
- 3.112–13 quote Solomon again

These “book study” sections make up over one-fourth of the precepts (37 out of 120). These sections fit well with Cyprian’s stated intent to provide Christians with a “compendium” of Scriptures that allows for easier memorization.⁸³

The final seven precepts, 114–20, seem to have eschatological conclusions that closely relate to the final period of baptismal preparation. In North African ecclesiology the church is God’s kingdom and sets the boundaries of that kingdom. Therefore, when catechumens enter into the church through baptism, they also enter into the kingdom of heaven. Before entering into the kingdom of heaven—the church—catechumens had to internalize the “teachings of heaven,” which were the new laws of that kingdom (the yoke of 3.119). Thus North African Christians understood the church as an eschatological community that lived as a “spiritual

83. Given that previous scholars have generally been interested in *Ad Quirinum* for its Scriptures, it is interesting that no scholar to date has noted these book study sections.

camp” (i.e. a spiritual military camp) in a hostile and sinful world. The North African catechumenate served as a gatekeeper by requiring personal transformation prior to baptism. Upon baptism people were called to completely renounce the world⁸⁴ and to perfect what they had already begun, to “be what you began to be [as a catechumen].”⁸⁵ Upon seeking baptism, catechumens went through specific times of intense prayer, fasting, vigils, penance, and confession. Tertullian described this stage:

Those who are ready to begin to receive baptism ought to pray constantly, to fast, to kneel, and to keep watch through the night, along with confession of all their past sins so that they imitate John’s baptism, which says, ‘They were baptized, confessing their sins.’ . . . For we simultaneously make amends for former sins by struggling with the flesh and the spirit, and prepare a defense against subsequent temptation.⁸⁶

Precepts 3.114–20 seem to roughly follow some of the pattern Tertullian described:

114. That while one is in the flesh, one ought to make confession of sin.
115. That flattery is pernicious.
116. That God is more loved by the one who has had many sins forgiven in baptism.
117. That the struggle against the devil is vigorous; therefore we ought to bravely resist so that we can be victorious.
118. Likewise, on the antichrist, that he will come as a human.
119. That the yoke of the law—which is abandoned by us—was heavy; and that the Lord’s yoke—which is taken up by us—is light.
120. That we should persist in prayers.⁸⁷

84. See Cyprian, *Ep.* 13.5.3 (CCL 3B:77.90): *Saeculo renuntiaueramus cum baptizati sumus.*

85. Cyprian, *Ad Donatum* 5 (CCL 3A:5.83): *sis tantum quod esse coepisti.*

86. Tertullian, *De baptismo* 20.1 (CCL 1:294): *Ingressuros baptismum orationibus crebris, ieiuniis et geniculationibus et peruigiliis orare oportet [et] cum confessione omnium retro delictorum, ut exponant etiam baptismum iohannis: tinguebantur, inquit, confitentes delicta sua. . . . simul enim de pristinis satisfacimus conflictatione carnis et spiritus, et subsequitur temptationibus munimenta praestruimus. Vigilate et orate, inquit, ne incidatis in temptationem.*

87. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3 (CCL 3:79–80): *CXIV. Dum in carne est quis, exhomologesin facere debere; CXV. Adulationem perniciosam esse; CXVI. Plus ab eo diligi deum, cui baptismo plura peccata dimittuntur; CXVII. Fortem congressionem esse aduersus diabolum et ideo fortiter nos stare debere ut possimus uincere; CXVIII. Item de antichristo quod in homine ueniat; CXIX. Graue fuisse iugum legis quod a nobis abiectum est et leue esse iugum domini quod a nobis susceptum est; CXX. Orationibus insistendum.*

In 3.114 Cyprian sets the stage for entering into the community through the confession of faith.⁸⁸ For the precept 3.115 Cyprian quotes only Isa 3.12, “They who call you blessed, lead you into error, and trouble the paths of your feet.”⁸⁹ At first it is not clear how this passage may relate to baptismal preparation and entrance into the eschatological community. However, Cyprian also cited this passage in a letter to his fellow clergy (*Ep.* 34.2.1), in which he expresses approval of the clergy who had excommunicated a presbyter and a deacon who had repeatedly admitted the lapsed to communion before any council had been held to determine their status and without requiring proper penance. In the letter he used Isa 3.12 as a proof-text to argue that those who prematurely granted peace to the lapsed had also denied them the healing medicine of penance and consequently had cut them off from community. Cyprian, therefore, connected Isa 3.12 with those who make entrance and return to the church easy. I suggest that Cyprian used this verse in Book Three to warn catechumens against assuming they did not need the rigorous prayer and fasting associated with baptismal preparation. Anyone who flattered the catechumens into believing that they did not need such spiritual discipline did them a disservice.

Precept 116, “That the one who has had many sins forgiven in baptism loves God more,” explicitly connects to baptism. Precept 117, “That the struggle against the devil is vigorous; therefore we ought to bravely resist so that we can be victorious,” cites Eph 6.12–17. Sometime in May 253 C.E., Cyprian used the same passage in correspondence with a fellow clergy member, warning him of an impending outbreak of persecution (which never actually materialized).⁹⁰ What is interesting about this letter is that Cyprian urged Christians to prepare themselves through spiritual disciplines, which he detailed from Paul’s spiritual weapons. Thus, in *Ad Quirinum*, Cyprian warned catechumens that they would face a hard struggle on the way to baptism. Tertullian offered similar advice to those preparing for baptism, advising them to prepare a defense against subsequent temptation.

Cyprian quotes Isa 14.15 as his only text for precept 118, “Likewise,

88. “In the flesh” may refer to the status of the catechumen prior to baptism and be a synonym for “in this life.”

89. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.115 (CCL 3:176): *Qui uos felices dicunt in errorem uos mittunt et semitam pedum uestrorum turbant.*

90. Cyprian, *Ep.* 58.8.3. For dating see G. W. Clarke, trans. *The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*, Vol. 3. *Letters 55–66*, Ancient Christian Writers 46 (New York: Newman Press, 1986), 226.

on the antichrist, that he will come as a human.” This is the only place where Cyprian cites this particular part of the Isaiah passage. However he uses the surrounding verses in *Ep.* 59.3.2 and applies them as well to the antichrist. What is most interesting, however, is that Cyprian used the term “antichrist” to label those who lack discipline and allowed the lapsed into the fold without penance. Later in his career Cyprian reached back into these passages and used them in a new way. Whereas Cyprian had previously used these passages for initiation and the discipline involved, later in his career he used them for the return of the lapsed to the community.⁹¹

The Scriptures that Cyprian used for 3.119, “That the yoke of the law—which is abandoned by us—was heavy; and that the Lord’s yoke—which is taken up by us—is light” (3.119), he also used in 1.13, “That the old yoke was to be made void, and a new yoke was to be given.” In 1.13 he cited Ps 2.1–3, Matt 11.28–30, and Jer 30.8–9. In 3.119 he dropped the Jeremiah passage and added Acts 15.28–29:

For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to impose no other burden than those things which are out of necessity: that you all abstain from idolatry, and from blood, and from fornication. And whatever you all would not want to be done to yourselves, do not do to others.⁹²

Notice that the end of this passage has an altered form of Luke 6.31 attached rather than the actual ending of Acts 15.29.⁹³ It contains a negative prohibition rather than the positive command that Jesus spoke in Luke. Many church fathers quoted Luke 6.31 (or Matt 7.12), but only the *Didache* 1.2 changed it to a negative prohibition. In any case, Cyprian alludes to the first part of this passage in a letter written in 253 C.E., after a

91. The eschatological urgency that characterized Cyprian’s later views is absent from Book Three, which further shows it was written before the Decian persecution. After the persecution Cyprian thought that history was drawing to a close (*Ep.* 63.16) and that the sufferings the world was experiencing were merely signs of this (e.g. *De mortalitate* 25). The *disciplina* that Book Three tried to instill, however, instilled a new gravity to Cyprian’s eschatology after Decian.

92. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.119 (CCL 3:178–79): *Visum est sancto spiritui et nobis nullam uobis imponere sarcinam, quam istam quae ex necessitate, sunt abstinere uos ab idolatriis et sanguine et fornicatione. Et quaecumque uobis fieri non uultis, alii ne feceritis.* Tertullian (*De pudicitia* 12.5 [CCL 2:1302.17–18]) comments on this passage saying, “For the prohibition against blood we shall understand to be a prohibition much more on human blood” (*Interdictum enim sanguinis multo magis humani intellegemus*). Tertullian goes on to say that the church cannot grant forgiveness to anyone who commits idolatry or sheds human blood (*Hinc est, quod neque idololatriae neque sanguini pax ab ecclesiis redditur*).

93. Fahey (*Cyprian and the Bible*, 417–18) did not mention this.

council in which forty-two bishops agreed to allow the penitent lapsed to re-enter the church because of an impending persecution.⁹⁴ In other words, he connects the passage to entry into the church. In addition, Ps 2.1–3 ends with a clear call to move out of one kingdom and into another type of living: “Let us break our chains and throw their yoke away from us.”⁹⁵ The general tenor of this precept is that of moving from one mode of life to another.

Cyprian ends the work with, “That we should persist in prayers.” The two Scriptures under this heading, Col 4.2 and Ps 1.2, point towards a rigorous and watchful prayer time. The Psalm in particular points towards a vigil, “. . . in His law he will meditate day and night.” This sense of urgency and steadfastness fits very well with the final period of baptismal preparation.

CONCLUSION

In my analysis of Book Three, I have attempted to show the coherence of sections of this text. While the numbered precepts would have helped in memorization, the logical order of other sections would have helped catechists and catechumens alike to memorize Scriptures within the loose framework Cyprian provided.⁹⁶ The first twenty-three precepts form a coherent training on economics and nonviolence, later sections deal with baptism, *disciplina*, biblical book studies, and a final section on eschatological and baptismal concerns. When all of this is added together seventy-three out of one hundred and twenty precepts have a discernible logical order. The document as a whole exhibits a strong beginning in moral training on economics and peace and ends with eschatological expectation in baptism.

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94. See *Ep.* 57.5.1. On the date see Clarke, *The Letters of St. Cyprian*, 213–16.

95. Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.119 (CCL 3:184.6): *Disrumpamus uincula eorum et abiciamus a nobis iugum eorum.*

96. In contrast to Book Three, Books One and Two form a narrative. Luigi Fatica has argued that the first two books function as a narrative by virtue of the chapter headings. The precepts function in such a way as to put an interpretive grid on the proof-texts. Cyprian, thus tells a story, complete with a beginning and ending, for which narrative theology is more appropriate than systematics; see his “*Ad Quirinum* Di Cipriano: possibile lettura in chiave di teologia narrativa,” in *La narrativa cristiana antica: codici narrativi, strutture formali, schemi retorici: XXIII incontro di studiosi della antichità cristiana*, 5–7 Maggio 1994 (Roma: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1995), 478–89.

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