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TO SHAUNA

τὸν φρονεῖν βροτοὺς ὀδώσαντα
τῷ πάθει μάθος
θέντα κυρίας ἔχειν.
στάζει δ' ἀνθ' ὕπνου πρὸ καρδίας
μνησιπήμων πόνος καὶ παρ'
ἄκοντας ἦλθε σωφρονεῖν.

καὶ ἐξαλείψει πᾶν δάκρυον
ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν,
καὶ ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι,
οὔτε πένθος οὔτε κραυγὴ
οὔτε πόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι...

As true now as then...

Brent D. Shaw

Rulers, Nomads, and Christians
in Roman North Africa



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use until the Islamization of North Africa.⁵⁵ Until the last years of Roman domination in Africa, the primacy of age was thus the decisive factor in the appointment of officers of the Church at the very pinnacle of its hierarchy.⁵⁶

So engrained was the concept and practice of rule by councils of elders, in both sacred and secular contexts, that we should not be surprised at their continuity. But the persistence of the elders within the framework of the Church was a truly remarkable phenomenon, as an epitaph discovered at Qairwān was to reveal:⁵⁷

In no(mine) d(omi)ni. In hoc (tumulo iacet cor)pus Pe(t)ri senioris (qui vixit annos---) et qui[ev]it die sabb(atorum) i(n) anno VI mill[es]o D] XXXXIII indictione) cou(arta)

The text of this stone (and another like it from Qairwān) was at first misinterpreted by Gauckler and Monceaux who believed it to be of Byzantine date. Subsequent analysis, however, points to a date in the *mid-eleventh century*: to be precise, 1050-1051.⁵⁸ The *senior* Peter at Qairwān attests the presence of a Christian community in the capital city established by Sidi Oqba in A.D. 670 and regarded as forbidden to infidels. Whether this community was monastic (Saumagne) or a regular church (Seston) is not possible to answer from the bare record of the inscription alone. A contemporary epitaph (A.D. 1048) from Qairwān, however, marked the grave of a Sisinnus, son of Firmus, the *lector*.⁵⁹ Though both *seniores* and *lectores* were present in monastic communities in Africa during the Romano-Byzantine period, examples are very rare and monasticism was never so highly developed in Africa as to make probable its survival four centuries after the fall of the Byzantine hegemony south of the Mediterranean. Is it not, rather, the continuity of a formidable and basic institution of African society in a Christian *context* even in the last years of its existence? If so, our metaphoric "deep sea diver" has discovered at least one social life form that can be traced over a millennium and more of African and Roman culture in the Maghrib. It was, however, one that was to lose much of its religious power and meaning with the advent of Islam, a religion lacking the formal external structure that could absorb and incorporate the local political authority of village elders. The *shaykh* and the *shiyukh* returned, once again, to the secular world of their distant pre-Christian ancestors.

⁵⁵ In their general surveys of the period, neither W. SESTON, "Sur les derniers temps du Christianisme en Afrique", *MEFR*, 53, 1936, p. 101-24, nor R. A. MARKUS, "Donatism: the Last Phase", in *Studies in Church History*, ed. C. W. DUGMORE & C. DUGGAN, vol. 1, 1964, p. 118-26, emphasize this peculiarity. Yet it is specifically attested in the letters of Gregory the Great, e.g. *Epp.* 72 and 75 (AD 591, *MGHepist.* 1, 1887, 92-93, 95). For the Catholic Primate of Numidia as *senex*, see note 42 above.

⁵⁶ For an earlier example, see the testimony of Crescentianus in the *Gesta apud Zenophilum* which refers to the bishop of Cirta as *senex*, *CSEL* 26 (1893) 196.

⁵⁷ *CIL* viii, 23128a = *ILTun* 269a. See SESTON, *art. cit.*, p. 106 f, pl. 1, fig. 2; SAUMAGNE, *BCHT* (1930-1931) 164; L. POINSSOT & R. LANTIER, *Atti del III° Congresso internazionale di archeologia cristiana* (1932) 401 (Qairawān, AD 1050-51).

⁵⁸ P. MONCEAUX, *RA* (1903) 244-45, and P. GAUCKLER, *NAMS* 15 (1907) 359-60, no. 141, pl. IX.

⁵⁹ *ILTun* 271, cf. SAUMAGNE, *BCHT* (1928-1929) 371 and SESTON (1936) 110-11, fig. 3 (Qairawān, AD 1048).

African Christianity: Disputes, Definitions, and 'Donatists'

Nobis hoc non salvum sit quod non debuimus reticere
It would not be good for us to pass this way in silence
(Petilianus, African bishop of Cirta/Constantine: *GCC*, 1.167)

Drama is anything you can get away with.
(Abbie Hoffman, *Revolution for the Hell of It*)

The important texts for understanding the following essay are two. First of all, *Alice in Wonderland*. In that wonderful piece of childish profundity there is the following bit of repartee between a dubious young girl and a hashish-smoking Caterpillar: 'Who are you?,' said the Caterpillar. (This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation). Alice replied, rather shyly, 'I—I hardly know, Sir, just at present—at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have changed several times since then.' The Caterpillar persisted. 'You!,' said the Caterpillar contemptuously, 'Who are you?' Which brought them back to the beginning of the conversation. Alice...drew herself up and said, very gravely, 'I think you ought to tell me who you are, first.' The second text is from *Through the Looking-Glass*. This time a confrontation between the young girl and a rather large Egg. Exasperated after so much apparent prevarication on the part of the Egg, she objected: 'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things.' 'The answer is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master—that's all.' Identity and some old-fashioned nominalism. Power and drawing lines. Here you will stand. There you will not. Such problems were to confront Christians, with especial force, in the early decades of the

fourth century. And, let's face it, there is probably no better way of finally settling a matter of difference than fighting it out. Face to face. Nothing like an old-fashioned standoff.

In the summer heat of the first day of June, in the year 411, in the center of Carthage, the magnificent metropolis of north Africa—a city second only to Rome itself in importance—two bitterly hostile groups of Christians met in precisely such a great confrontation finally to settle the differences between them.¹ To the heat of controversy was added the fact that the only public venue large enough to contain the numbers on either side were the monumental Baths of Gargilius (*Thermae Gargilianiae*).² So they met, hundreds of them from either party. Ranged on one side of the bath were about 285 'Catholic' bishops. Glaring at them from across the aisle were about the same number of 'Donatist' bishops. 'Catholics' and 'Donatists.' Thus Christians in north Africa had been divided ever since a minor crisis in the

¹ The primary source for this conference has received a masterful edition by Serge Lancel: *Actes de la Conférence de Carthage en 411, t. I: Introduction générale*, Paris, 1972 [= Sources chrétiennes, no. 194]; *t. II: Texte et traduction de la capitulation générale et des actes de la première séance*, Paris, 1972 [= Sources chrétiennes, no. 195]; *t. III: Texte et traduction de la deuxième et de la troisième séance*, Paris, 1975 [= Sources chrétiennes, no. 224]. These will be referred to as Lancel, *Actes*. The final edition by Serge Lancel, *Gesta Conlationis Carthaginensis, anno 411; accedit Sancti Augustini Breviculus Conlationis cum Donatistis*, Turnhout, 1974 [= Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, no. 149A] will be used to provide the basic in-text references to the proceedings [as *GCC*]. Alas, the version we have is not a direct and unmediated report. It is actually derived from a copy kept by one Marcellus (an otherwise unknown personality who held the rank of *memorialis*)—there are no blatant signs of any deliberate tampering with the MSS as he had it, with the obvious exception of the 'table of contents' with which he prefaced the whole (see Lancel, *Actes*, 1, 357-63, and n16 below). Important supplementary historical data, principally the writings of Augustine directly relevant to the Conference and its aftermath, will be cited from the edition of Emilien Lamirande, *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin, t. 32: ser. 4: Traités anti-Donatistes, 5: Breviculus Collationis cum Donatistis; Ad Donatistas post Collationem*, trans. G. Finaert, Bruges 1965 [= Lamirande, *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*]; additional technical materials will be cited from J.R. Martindale, ed., *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, 2: A.D. 395-527*, Cambridge, 1980 [= *PLRE*, 2]; and A. Mandouze, ed., *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire, I: Afrique (303-533)*, Paris, 1982 [= *PCBE*, 1].

² They have not been located at the modern site; cf. Augustine, *Breviculus Collationis*, 1.14, and *Ad Donatistas post Collationem*, 25.43 who places them *in urbe media*; cf. Lancel, *Actes*, 1, 50-53, reviews the literature.

election of a bishop at Carthage in 311/312 had careered vertiginously into a colossal battle over what Christianity was, and was not, to be.³ In this conflict the 'Catholics' had been, in a sense, 'the winners' (or at least had the upper hand), supported, as they were, by all the power and might of the Roman state. The 'Donatists,' on the other hand, were portrayed as schismatics, a querulous faction of trouble-makers, disturbing the peace of the universal Church, deserving of brutal repression. The seizure of their basilicas, churches, and other material assets, and the driving of their priests and bishops from legitimate places, was justified in the name of establishing the 'true' or Catholic church.

The history of this north African Christianity, or 'Donatism' as it has consistently been called (by modern-day historians, who ought to know, and do, better) is especially bedevilled by being the history of a lost cause. There is also the manifest fact of the virtual disappearance of Christianity, of whatever type, from north Africa, and its replacement by Islam (again, of various types) from the mid-seventh century onward. The problems represented by 'Donatism,' however, were revived because of their living relevance during the period of the so-called European Reformation. The battle of an earlier form of rigorist Christianity against a 'corrupt' and 'authoritarian' Catholic Church, a conflict preserved in considerable detail in the early Christian records and writers, struck a responsive chord. So Protestant theologians and historians, especially, had a model and a subject to hand, and, in the latter half of the seventeenth century, poured forth numerous treatises on the subject. But historians should have their own agenda. They are called upon to understand a whole situation—not to exploit the past for present ideological purposes, not to accept existing labels simply for sake of convenience. This primary task of simple understanding and reportage, however banal and obvious its demands, has largely been abandoned by those whose specific duty it is.⁴

³ As it was put in the Catholic *mandatum* of 30 May: the *ecclesia qualis nunc est* as opposed to the *ecclesia qualis futura est*. Other, very important, aspects of this conflict, such as the identification of the so-called *circumcelliones*, the attendant problems of social revolution, mass peasant mobilization, and the connection of these with 'millenarian' aspects of north African Christianity, cannot be dealt with within the scope of this paper (though I do hope to do so elsewhere).

⁴ Take just two examples (others will be referred to as circumstances

An attendant problem that has much afflicted research is the simple fact that historians are lazy. In the existing records (as obviously biased as they are) 'those' people are called 'Donatists.' They are so-called, almost without exception, but then the record itself is, almost without exception, written by the 'winners.' So what else are we to call them but 'Donatists'? Even presuming that modern-day historians did expend some energy on behalf of impartiality, however, and correctly rejected the label 'Donatist' for these north African Christians, they would still run head on into the very ideological success and hegemonic domination of the labelling process itself.⁵ For, if we are not to call them 'Donatists,' what then? After all, we, as historians, need a label for 'them.' They, as we shall see, just wanted to be called 'Christians,' but how are we to distinguish them from the Catholics who successfully swept the field of definitions? We cannot call them simply 'Christians' (as the Catholics also properly were) or negatively 'non-Catholics' (that rings, and is, false). What then? An arbitrary choice has to be made and defended, and my choice is to add the adjective 'African' to the noun 'Christian.' The defence is somewhat as follows. It is not that the Catholic Christians in north Africa were not also 'Africans.'

permit): the classic, and standard, history of north African Christianity by Paul Monceaux treats the conference in some detail: *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne depuis les origines jusqu'à l'invasion arabe*, vol. 4, *Le donatisme*, Paris, 1912, (reprint: Brussels, 1966), ch. 2.4, pp. 388-425, and is characterized by gross types of bias: the African Christians are constantly labelled 'Donatists' or 'les schismatiques' (repeatedly), and are marked by 'leur imprudence'; their declarations 'trahissent la mauvaise humeur, l'intention de se dérober par des faux-fuyants et des chicanes'; 'les schismatiques veulent le désordre,' 'l'on ne peut prendre au sérieux les motifs invoqués dans leur Notaria,' and so on. Similarly, Monceaux wholly buys into the Catholic view that what 'the Donatists' were doing at the conference was nothing but 'les obstructions,' 'une perpétuelle obstruction,' 'toute d'obstructions et de chicanes,' in which 'ils commettaient une grosse imprudence,' and their refusal to be seated can be grouped amongst 'les scrupules bouffons des Donatistes' and can be judged to be 'un intermède héroï-comique.' The standard history in English by W.H.C. Frend (see fn. 7 below) does not do much better: the African Christians continue to be labelled as 'Donatists'

⁵ It is, for example, somewhat depressing to see that an excellent historian like Robert Markus, whose own work has contributed directly to a clear understanding of the insidious nature of this labelling process, himself falls back on the convenient labels in subsequent work—R.A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, Cambridge (1990) 51-53, 79, 85, 92-93, 148.

They were. But from the critical perspectives of power, perception and definition, the Catholics were, as their label suggested, less tied to African traditions and roots than were their opponents. If anything, the critical hallmark of the Christians who so bitterly opposed the Catholic intrusion into their lives was that of being local and derived from north African traditions to the exclusion of outside influences. It was the opposite characteristic that defined the Catholics—they ultimately anchored their legitimacy to a 'universal' orthodoxy. These differences were fundamental, despite the repeated claim that the dispute was 'amongst us Africans.'⁶ The label 'African Christians,' therefore, though not exclusive to the so-called 'Donatists' is at least a more objective descriptor that distances the historian somewhat from the manifestly pejorative labels used at the time, and is a more neutral term, which one suspects the north African Christians of the time might have accepted as a reasonable, if somewhat bland, description of who they were.

The bitter conflicts the historian is called upon to understand, however, were not the result of any ill-health in African Christianity itself. In terms of wealth, numbers, power, size, and resources, the Church in north Africa represented one of the greater, if not greatest, parts of all western Christendom in the first three to four centuries after Christ. The earliest history of the spread of Christian belief and organization in the Maghrib is, however, a hidden book. When Christian churches first appear in our surviving written records, around AD 200, they are already fully developed communities. The courageous obstinacy of African martyrs from small towns like Scillium (in 180) and large ones like Carthage (Perpetua and others, in the years right after 200) attest a strong, multitudinous, and firmly entrenched Christian tradition. Voluminous writers like Tertullian (in the early 200s) and the actions of strong bishops like Cyprian of Carthage (at mid-century) gave African Christians a leading ideological role in western Mediterranean Christian communities of the period. Throughout the third century, African Christianity, so far as can be measured by any docu-

⁶ E. Lamirande, *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, notes complémentaires, no. 12, "Le Donatisme, une affaire d'Africains," 703-04; at least, that is what Augustine reported of the African Christians' feelings on the matter: it was a *disputatio inter Afros* (*Breviculus Collationis*, 3.3.3).

mentation, went from strength to strength. The great problems of division and definition that were to afflict African Christians in the early to mid-decades of the fourth century were simply not of their own making. They were made by the emperor Constantine. The creation of a state-bound orthodoxy in 312/313 raised at a single stroke the problem of 'incorrect' views held by various brands of Christianity that had evolved in different regional and cultural contexts around the Mediterranean.

The final spate of official violence directed by the Roman State, and local non-Christian communities, against Christians (the so-called 'Great Persecution' of 303-05) had created certain internal problems of identification within the African church. When the persecution finally subsided, the critical question, the litmus test of acceptability, concerned the extent to which those who had collaborated with the forces of repression were to be reconciled following the return of official toleration. In north African Christianity a firm line had traditionally been drawn to exclude those who were being considered for church offices: bishops and those who consecrated them in office could not be 'traitors' (*traditores*) who bowed to the forces of persecution. That traditional stance had provoked battles here and there over assignment of positions of power, especially in 312-13 in the election to the most prestigious ecclesiastical position in Africa, the bishopric of Carthage. A substantial part, if not a majority, of bishops at that time refused to accept the ordination of a certain Caecilianus as bishop of Carthage on the grounds that he had been ordained by a 'traitor' (*traditor*). Instead they supported his opponent, Majorinus. On the latter's death they then consecrated a certain Donatus, a former bishop from the village of 'Dark Houses' (*Casae Nigrae*) in Numidia, as his successor. The incident, replete with the sordid machinations and violence usual to such ecclesiastical *affaires*, would have had little further meaning had it not become implicated in the emperor Constantine's drive for the institutionalization of a secular Mediterranean-wide Christian church, and the attendant push for ideological uniformity. In 313 an official commission under Miltiades, the bishop of Rome (therefore, one must believe, already committed to the government's position in the matter) decided for Caecilianus and against the supporters

of Donatus.⁷ After all, that was what was required, politically speaking, for the formation of a universal church. Reconciliation and consensus had to be the order of the day. The dubious actions of Christian leaders in the preceding period of state repression had to be overlooked—and for good reasons. The new hegemonic power of a central and unified church demanded agreement, hierarchical solidarity, and obedience. These needs provoked overpowering secular motives to institute a structural amnesia, and to side with the powers that be. In this case, that was rather easy. It was the Caecilianuses of this world that the new Church wanted, not ideological diversity and the open questioning of each authority's performance in the past. Judgment was given in favour of him and against the 'side of Donatus.'

New or restored authoritarian orders display a lamentable preference for old collaborators over the old resistance. The former may well be repellent creatures, but they have the sort of character (a tendency to support 'present realities') that any new régime finds more comfortable. Caecilianus was found to be in agreement with the new consensus, the 'right thinking' or orthodoxy established by the center. He was acceptable and in line with 'universal' (catholic) thinking on the matter. Those who opposed him, and, implicitly, the new secular powers of the central Church, were branded as the strange followers of a quirkish personal guru. No longer Christians, therefore, they found themselves labelled, almost overnight, as 'followers of Donatus' or 'Donatists.'⁸ Over a five-year period, from 316-321, the Roman state moved with official coercion against the renegades. But even with the resources of

⁷ For the details, see W.H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa*, Oxford, 1952 (reprint: 1971; rev. ed. 1983) [= *Donatist Church*], chs. 1 & 11; the whole 'dossier' of documents relating to the origins of the conflict, and its subsequent history, is now readily available in J.-C. Maier, *Le dossier du Donatisme*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1987 (= *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur*, Bd. 134 & 135)

⁸ To be technically accurate, and the fine point of detail is worth making, not quite 'overnight.' They were in fact at first labelled 'the party of Majorinus' or 'Majorians' after the first bishop put up in opposition to Caecilianus. It was only Majorinus' death (in the fall of 313?) and the longevity in a position of power of Donatus, his successor, which meant that the Africans came to be labelled 'Donatists' (as we know them today in all our books) rather than Majorians, or such. Which only serves to underscore the contingent nature of the label and the labelling process.

the state at its disposal, the new 'catholic' or 'orthodox' church that supported the faction of Caecilianus was not able to enforce any final claim over its legitimacy to be considered the Christian church in north Africa. The so-called 'Donatists' in fact represented the main-line of regional or local 'orthodoxy' within the north African tradition. In terms of simple belief and action they were nothing other than the continuous line of Christians and Christianity that had been the Church for centuries of the African past.⁹ It must have been a most rude awakening to find themselves labelled, in effect, as non-Christian.

Disoriented and distressed, though naturally disinclined to accept such a situation, they could only be driven from it by the use of force and violence against them. That meant that by end of the fourth century African Christian communities, so-called 'Donatists,' had been largely driven by official persecution, by the use of violence, by confiscation of their goods and other such devices, from the major urban communities where the Catholic church could effectively draw upon the repressive instruments of power of the Roman state. In wide areas of the countryside outside those towns, however, where the mandate of the state could not be effectively enforced, African rather than Catholic Christianity retained its traditional strength.¹⁰ African Chris-

⁹ R.A. Markus, "Christianity and Dissent in Roman North Africa: Changing Perspectives in Recent Work," (in) D. Baker ed., *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest = Studies in Church History* 9, Cambridge (1972) 21-36, at pp. 28-29: "Donatism was no new creation. It was the representative in the fourth century of an older African theological tradition with deep roots in its characteristic religious mentality...[therefore] it would be less misleading to speak of a 'catholic' than of a 'Donatist' schism...Donatism was, quite simply, the continuation of the old African Christian tradition in the post-Constantinian world. It was that world that had changed, not African Christianity." Markus credits the blind scholar Jean-Paul Brisson for these insights—see the latter's, *Autonomisme et christianisme dans l'Afrique romaine de Septime-Sévère à l'invasion vandale*, Paris, 1958, and critique by A. Mandouze, "Encore le Donatisme. Problèmes de méthode posés par la thèse de J.P. Brisson," *L'Antiquité classique* 29 (1960) 61-107.

¹⁰ The work of Emin Tengström, *Donatisten und Katholiken: Soziale, wirtschaftliche und politische Aspekte einer nordafrikanischen Kirchenspaltung*, Göteborg, 1964, is largely responsible for 'inverting' the 'Frend thesis' (see Frend, *Donatist Church*, esp. chs. 3, 'Town and Country in Roman Africa,' and 4, 'The Geographical Distribution of Donatism'). Frend took the recorded 'Donatist' bishoprics, and their geographical distribution, to be proof of a 'nativistic' and rural (even Numidian) base and origin for the 'schism.' This now seems improbable.

tianity probably remained strong in the large cities too, but that strength remains hidden from our view by the systematic official/Catholic ability to remove the institutional supports of their opponents (e.g., basilicas, churches, seats for bishops, formal church organizations) and thereby the signs by which later historians might be able to recognize a 'Donatist' presence in any given town or city. One cannot underestimate violence as the core cause of the definitions that we see in the surviving records. Violence and force were fundamental. They were the very foundation of the later edifice of Christianity in north Africa.¹¹ If they had not been exercised, and, one must suspect, exercised with some success (especially in the urban foyers of Roman power), the peculiar 'remnant' distribution of 'Donatism' would not be there for us to read on our maps.

The labelling of an out-group as something odd and unacceptable was therefore at the heart of the historical process. Hence the paradox that 'Donatists' were artificially created by definitions issued by a central power and that 'they' never existed as such. And, simultaneously, that there were large numbers of humans who were treated as if they were 'Donatists' and who were made to live the sort of experiences that the definition demanded. Thus, the label 'Donatist' was systematically applied to north African Christians who continued to insist on the legitimacy and validity of their own beliefs, practices, and traditions. The label derogated from their legitimacy, as in almost all other such labelling processes—consider the various Carpocratians, Pelagians,

That distribution is actually the result of the African Christian churches being systematically expelled from the urban milieux where the Catholic Church was able to exert force against them. African Christianity, therefore, was Christianity in Africa till the beginning of the fourth century, and was every bit as 'urbane' and 'Latin' as 'Catholicism' was later to appear; see P.A. Février, "Toujours le Donatisme. A quand l'Afrique? Remarques sur l'Afrique à la fin de l'Antiquité. A propos du livre de E. Tengström," *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 2 (1966) 228-40

¹¹ The work of Peter Brown remains fundamental: "Religious Dissent in the Later Roman Empire: the Case of North Africa," *History* 46 (1961) 83-101 = *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine*, London (1972) 237-59; and, "St. Augustine's Attitude to Religious Coercion," *Journal of Roman Studies* 54 (1964) 107-16 = *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine*, London (1972) 260-78, wherein it is made clear that Augustine accepted as an 'unfortunate necessity' the use of 'persuasion' on the 'Donatists,' also accepting that this persuasion was of the bicycle-chain and lead-pipe variety.

Priscillianists, Maximianists, Rogatianists, Valentianists, Arians, and many other such 'personal followings' that marked the theological landscape of early Christianity. By suggesting that the beliefs and practices had no universal aura to them, that they were simply an aberration perpetrated by a solitary human individual to whom they could be attributed—in this case the bishop Donatus—centralist orthodoxy achieved its tactical goal of marginalizing the prey, usually before moving in for the kill. Donatus of *Casae Nigrae* is, in any event, such a shadowy figure that very little is known about him. Neither labelers nor adherents could agree on who he was (or how many of him there were).¹² But labeling is indeed the core of what was happening here. Who could make words, and the attendant concepts, mean what they meant? Who had the power to make those meanings stick? Obviously, Catholic orthodoxy wished to usurp the title of 'Christian' *tout court*, and to sweep the ideological field by allowing no competing claims to the name. What was at stake, however, was not just the fate of aberrant versions of Christianity in any particular social setting in the Mediterranean. It was, rather, a colossal battle over secular power. Who, finally, was to control all the local communities, their peoples, and their material resources, would be determined, to a large extent, by who won the regional battles.

But did the north African Christians who asserted the legitimacy and validity of their traditional beliefs and practices see matters this way? Did they accede at the beginning to being labelled in this way, to seeing themselves as 'Donatists'? Or, in the case that they perhaps did not, did they, over a century or so of persecution and repression, finally relent under the cumulative pressures, overt and insidious, directed against them and come to accept that they were in fact 'Donatists'? Did they come to appropriate or interiorize the external definition?¹³ Precisely a century after the dispute over 'right thinking'

¹² *GCC*, 3, 539-40 (from the 'Capitula' only; the original transcript does not survive for this passage); cf. Augustine, *Breviculus Collationis*, 3.20.38 (= Lamirande, 230-33, with his note no. 31, 'L'attitude de saint Augustin à l'égard de Donat,' pp. 727-28). The entry "Donatus (5)" in *PCBE*, 1, 292-303, is instructive: the evidence is so confused that rigorous modern analysis cannot separate the two men (if duality ever existed).

¹³ There are varying degrees of acceptance here, from, say, the examples offered by the early modern cases of the 'Methodists' or, perhaps, even more to

first erupted the two sides met in a monumental confrontation, one of the largest of its type ever to take place in the history of the early Church. In the year 411, in the Gargilian Baths, in the heart of Carthage, the great metropolis of all north Africa, there assembled hundreds of bishops of the two Christian churches to debate precisely that issue: Who was finally to define what would mean what, and who would have the force to make those definitions stick? It was, of course, as we shall see, a 'set-up' job in which the so-called 'Donatists' were not to be allowed a whisper of a chance of succeeding. But that is not the point here. There are, first of all, some rather interesting preliminary matters about this great meeting that are, how shall we put it, of 'historical' interest.

Historians are by nature much 'taken' by the simple existence of evidence, but even more so by the sort of direct evidence of speech and action that allows them to breathe their prey, to set their fangs into human flesh. In this particular case, quite rightly so. The number of extensive verbatim reports we have of any collective encounter in the world of Graeco-Roman antiquity, including its later Christian periods, are so few as to be derisory. It is not that assemblies were not a normal part of the collective life of Mediterranean communities. For the tens of thousands of meetings of that august governing body, the Senate of imperial Rome (whose proceedings were indeed recorded), however, there survives not one complete (or indeed partial) verbatim transcript.¹⁴ And only scrappy portions survive of the tens, if not hundreds of thousands of council meetings held in the hundreds of municipalities scattered over the length and breadth of the Mediterranean during the first four or five centuries after Christ.¹⁵ Similarly, the actual words

the point (given the element of personal labelling) that of the 'Lutherans.' Both were able successfully to appropriate and defuse the derogatory connotation of the labels foisted upon them by those hostile to them.

¹⁴ R.J.A. Talbert, "Records and their Use," ch. 9 (in) *The Senate of Imperial Rome*, Princeton (1984) 303-37; R.A. Coles, *Reports of Proceedings in Papyri*, Brussels, 1966 (Papyrologica Bruxellensia, no. 4, pp. 55-61); cf. B. Baldwin, "The *acta diurna*," *Chiron* 9 (1979) 189-203, and A. Lintott, "*Acta Antiquissima: A Week in the History of the Roman Republic*," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 54 (1986) 213-28.

¹⁵ E. Posner, *Archives in the Ancient World*, Cambridge, Mass. (1972) 203-04, 219-21; reference to such in north Africa in *GCC*, 1.177-80 (*gesta municipalia*).

uttered in the debates that took place in almost all of the great Church conferences have also been lost (most often, if there were any formal declarations or rules issued, it is those that we happen to have).¹⁶

Set against these losses, the conference held at Carthage in the summer of 411 is a great exception—the explicit verbal content of its participants has survived in startling detail. Because of the minute notarial precautions taken and because of the historical importance of the debates for the ecclesiastical battles being waged at the time, the word-by-word record of what the participants said over the days between first and eighth of June of that year has survived, mostly intact.¹⁷ In fact, the detailed description of the painstaking scribal and notarial provisions made for the conference have given us one of the clearest pictures of how such records were kept in the Roman world.¹⁸ The great efforts exerted by both sides to ensure the preservation of a

¹⁶ The Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) is a striking exception, and so provides an interesting historiographical parallel to our document (with attendant potential for exploitation by historians—a great opportunity that, to the best of my knowledge, has not yet been taken up).

¹⁷ Even for this almost-complete document, alas, it is clear that part of the proceedings of the third session (of 8 June) is missing (i.e., the ‘Capitula’ at the head of the document indicate that chapters 282-585—303 chapters—or a little more than the last half of the original have been lost). What remains, however, is a detailed verbatim record of what was said for all of the first and second sessions, and a substantial portion of the third—at any rate, more than enough for our purposes.

¹⁸ The study of Emin Tengström, *Die Protokollierung der Collatio Carthaginiensis. Beiträge zur Kenntnis der römischen Kurzschrift nebst einem Exkurs über das Wort scheda (schedula)*, Göteborg, 1962, is fundamental; for a synopsis of his findings, see Lancel, *Actes*, 1, 342-53. First of all, heading the ‘secretarial team’ were six secretaries (*scribae, exceptores*) of various ranks attached to the *officia* of various imperial officials in Carthage, who were assisted by two secretaries (*notarii*) from each church. The actual note-taking was assigned to four stenographers (*exceptores*) from official sources, plus four stenographers assigned by each church. The final ecclesiastical stenographic teams were deliberately ‘mixed’ and were composed of four persons, two selected from each side. These teams were then rotated through the day, recording the day’s proceedings. Since each team had both ‘Donatists’ and ‘Catholics’ on it, the opposing members acted as a check on each other’s versions. When each scribal team left the Conference hall, its notes were counterchecked by a team of *custodes codicum/chartarum/tabularum* (guardians of the documents) as they were variously called, again composed of both ‘Catholics’ and ‘Donatists,’ who placed their seal on the documents (*tabulae, codices*) in the presence of Marcellinus.

verbatim record, not only succeeded at the time, but have succeeded historically. This record is not without its peculiar technical problems and biases (which I shall attempt to make clear at any point of relevance). But the transcript was systematically checked by both sides in the debate, and it is extensive and highly detailed. Each speaker had his words recorded. There was a team of scrutineers from either side who checked that record. Each speaker was then asked to authenticate, to sign and notarize that his words had been accurately taken down. He did so by writing in his own hand the word ‘Recognovi’ (‘I have reviewed, inspected’ and therefore have ‘authenticated, accepted, certified’) at the end of transcript of his words. Moreover, a study of the syntax and grammar of the Latin reveals that, whatever subsequent subediting took place, that the document bears vestiges of the original oral character of the proceedings. Men who were otherwise renowned as complex and artful writers and highly skilled rhetoricians fell back on a limited real-time speech vocabulary, full of repetitions, rhetorical interjections, and the sudden lapses and shortcuts of actual talk.¹⁹ Therefore, an almost unprecedented quality of recording. A real gem of hard reportage. What does it tell us?

The conference is an interesting historical laboratory. The position of the participants in it broadly reflected the main powers and forces on either side. The meeting was, not to ‘mince words,’ a kangaroo court. The prefabricated directives under which it operated reflected in miniature the power situation of either side. The Catholics entered it with all of the force of the Roman state behind them. The man whom the emperor Honorius appointed to preside over the conference, and to direct it to its end, the *tribunus et notarius* Flavius Marcellinus, was a faithful orthodox Catholic and a close friend of the man who was arguably the most prestigious of the Catholic bishops in north Africa, Aurelius Augustine.²⁰ Augustine had an intimate correspondence

¹⁹ Lancel, “Etude linguistique,” ch. 4 (in *Actes*, 1, 289-335, esp. 309 ff.

²⁰ There seems no good reason to doubt Marcellinus’ inclinations in this matter—though, given both his behaviour in the matter, and the chronology of Augustine’s dealings with him, we might be very cautious in accepting too ‘total’ a pre-commitment on his part. Augustine’s correspondence with him does not begin until the time of the Conference itself, and much follows in the aftermath (including the dedication of *The City of God*). It would seem to me that an equally convincing case could be made that Marcellinus was heavily

with Marcellinus, and was later to dedicate the grandest of all his writings, *The City of God (De Civitate Dei)*, to him.²¹ The imperial mandate given to Marcellinus, and the wording of his own decrees regarding the setting up of the conference, guaranteed that it was to be a puppet trial, the conclusion of which was already decided in advance of the debates themselves. The emperor Honorius had ordered the holding of the conference, under force of compulsion if necessary. The 'Donatists' were to come whether they liked it or not. If they decided not to come, they were to be judged as guilty for reasons of contumacious behaviour (because of their refusal to attend). Once they attended, the sole declared purpose of the conference was to find them guilty, to stamp out 'this seditious superstition' as the emperor put it in his directive to Marcellinus.²² A monumental Catch-22 faced the local African church leaders. If they refused to attend, they were guilty; if they did attend, they were still guilty. The Catholics already knew as much. It was precisely for reasons of show that they wanted the conference, not for any decision to be arrived at as the result of free debate. It was the ceremonial display of power, the witness and seeing of it, that mattered. 'So,' as Augustine puts it with his characteristic harsh realism, 'in seeking this conference with you, we are not looking

'lobbied' by Augustine from the inception of the Conference, and that much that followed between them is better read in the light of his successes in that regard. Marcellinus' behaviour, therefore, must be read in a more narratological manner—his attempts at moderation and 'impartiality' were, no doubt, a response in part to his recognition of the 'realities' of the situation he faced when he got to north Africa (when he surely realized he could not crudely impose the mission in the stark terms presented in the imperial edict). Madeleine Moreau, "Le Dossier Marcellinus dans la correspondance de saint Augustin," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 9 (1973) 3-181, has the full record—of which the chronological sequence is rather significant.

²¹ See "Fl. Marcellinus (10)" in PLRE, 2, 711-12; and the extensive notice, "Flavius Marcellinus (2)," in PCBE, 1, 671-88. Augustine dedicated the first three books of *De Civitate Dei*, which he composed and published in the immediate aftermath of the Conference, to Marcellinus by summer of 413; he temporarily discontinued the rest when Marcellinus was executed: T.D. Barnes, "Aspects of the Background of the *City of God*," (in) C. Wells ed., *L'Afrique romaine/Roman Africa*, Ottawa (1982) 69-85, at pp. 70-71.

²² *C(odex) Th(eodosianus)* 16.11.3 (Honorius' edict of 14 October 410): 'Emperors Honorius and Theodosius Augustuses to their dear friend, Marcellinus, Greetings. We abolish the new superstition, and We command that those regulations in regard to the Catholic law shall be preserved unimpaired and inviolate...'

for yet another 'final decision' on this matter, but to have what has already been settled (in our minds) made known, especially to those who seem to be unaware that it is so.'²³

The 'laws' or regulations by which meeting was to be conducted were a series of ground-rules dictating the constraints within which the game was to be played. The African Christians' expectations and desires, their assumed model of what a Church conference should be like (which they expressed for the record) meant that they saw these rules as unfair. Their natural expectation of a church conference was one of more democratic and egalitarian dimensions—a meeting in which each and every bishop would be allowed to speak and to have his say in turn.²⁴ Instead, the elaborate rules established by Marcellinus for the confrontation, apparently according to the prior wishes of the Catholic side, were intended to restrict both discussion and membership. Each side was to select only seven representatives or agents who were to be empowered to speak on behalf of all the bishops of their party. Each group of seven was to have access to a further group of seven who were to act as advisers, but who were not to be allowed to speak. In addition to these fourteen persons, each side was to be permitted to appoint a team of four persons who were to act as invigilators of the verbatim transcript of the proceedings.

To the Catholics, this was the long-awaited (and demanded) final verbal confrontation. The local African church leaders, however, had no reason to see this as but one more battle in a century-long fight against attempts to outlaw and belittle their view of Christianity, and the defence of the centuries-old African traditions. They came knowing full well the purpose of the conference and its avowed aim. But they could ignore the pre-set end, and join the battle in the trenches over symbols and display, over the assertion of labels and words, and what they were to mean. The Catholics could be confident that the final judgement of Marcellinus, their man, was 'in the bag,' but it would be a hollow victory indeed if it was perceived by north Africans in general as imposed by force, the coercive act of an imperial and secular power, and just another in the long line of attempts by 'the Catholic side' to impose its illegitimate views on local society. What would

²³ Augustine, *Ep.*, 88.10

²⁴ Frend, *Donatist Church*, 280-81

happen between the opening and the finale of the Conference, was, therefore, grand theater of some importance. The dramaturgical aspects were not lost (at least in retrospect) on the foremost of the Catholic bishops, Augustine of Hippo. As he vividly remembers: "Bishops are assembled from all of Africa...The orators charged with speaking on behalf of all of them are selected. The site worthy of such a great event is located in the city-center. The two sides assemble. The judge is present. The books are opened. Every heart is in suspense, waiting on the finale of such a great confrontation."²⁵ Flavius Marcellinus, the president of the conference, was surrounded by a resplendent *officium* of twenty-three persons. The struggle was to be a great public contest, a battle between the finest and most eloquent on both sides. It is in these acts and words that the historian might properly seek the self-definition of the African Christians.

When the bishops of either side assembled in the Baths of Gargilius on 1 June, the presiding officer Marcellinus had the edict of the emperors Honorius and Theodosius of 14 October 410 read aloud to them all. The imperial edict repeatedly emphasized the emperor's concern with the maintenance of 'Catholic law.' He thought it good that 'terror and dire warnings' had been used against 'the Donatists' whose 'hollow error and sterile disagreements have polluted Africa, the greatest part of our empire.' The words of the edict labelled the opposition as 'Donatist bishops,' and foresaw the only possible result of the arguments at the conference as being 'a refutation of superstition by manifest reason' [1.4]. There followed a reading of Marcellinus' own edict, again with the identification of the two sides as 'Catholic' and 'Donatist' [1.5]. Although the end was set, the Africans could assert their identity in words and acts that could demonstrate their power separate of the terms imposed by the imperial power.²⁶

The extensive and detailed 'table of contents' (*capitula gestorum*) that prefaces the current manuscript identifies the two sides quite clearly the Catholics (*catholici, pars catholicorum*) on the one side and 'Donatists' (*donatistae, pars donatistarum*) on the other.²⁷ The problem is that the table is a later addition to the main account and is

clearly an official or Catholic gloss or guide to the contents of the original transcript. It cannot therefore be used for any other purpose than to demonstrate the obvious—that the Catholic church and the imperial power identified their opponents as 'Donatists' and used that label as the means of marking them. In the text itself, however, the individual speakers on either side are not so identified. Whereas the Catholic bishops are clearly marked as such (e.g., 'Augustinus, episcopus ecclesiae catholicae, dixit,' 'Aurelius, episcopus ecclesiae catholicae, dixit,' or 'Alypius, episcopus ecclesiae catholicae, dixit'), their opponents never identified themselves as 'Donatists,' 'of the Donatist Church' or anything of the sort, but merely as a 'bishop' (e.g., 'Emeritus, episcopus, dixit' or 'Petilianus, episcopus, dixit'). The only thing the African bishops assented to being called, therefore, was 'bishop' (that is, of the Christian church). They did not recognize, or accept, any more specific designation, least of all that of being a 'Donatist.' However this was done (and there are clear indications of how), the African bishops managed to enforce this perception of themselves throughout the entirety of the official transcript.

The matter of who was being identified as whom became a critical center of dispute on the opening of the second day's proceedings (5 June) in the Baths—probably because by then the African bishops had had the opportunity to read the identification foisted on them in the official record. The descriptive introduction to those days in the proceedings specifies the two men, Ianuarius and Vitalis, who were the secretarial team of the 'Catholic church' (*notarii ecclesiae Catholicorum /Catholicae*) and those, Victor and Crescens, who were those of 'the Donatist Church' (*notarii ecclesiae donatistarum*) [2.1]. The introduction of the debating teams assigned by either side is marked by a similar identification: from one side enter the bishops of the Catholic Church (*episcopi ecclesiae catholicae*) and from the other, those of 'the Donatist side' (*episcopi partis Donati*) [2.2]. The conference secretary (*exceptor*), Martialis, informed the president Flavius Marcellinus of the notification which 'the Donatist bishops' had presented to 'your Nobility' on the previous day [2.8]. These very words provoked an immediate response from Petilianus, the leading African spokesman, in which he made it about as clear as he could, that he and his fellow bishops were not at all prepared to accept this identification: "We are simply bishops of the truth of Christ, our Lord—so we call ourselves

²⁵ Augustine, *Ad Donatistas post Collationem*, 25.43 (= Lamirande, 352-53)

²⁶ P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge, 1989

²⁷ Lancel, *Actes*, 2, 420-557

and so it is usually noted in the public records. As for Donatus of holy memory, a man of a martyr's glory—although he is our predecessor and an embellishment of the Church of this city, we (only) accord him the sort of honor and status he deserves." [2.10] The correction obviously hit at the heart of the Catholic attempt to label the African Christians, and so provoked a carping response from the Catholic bishop Possidius: "Bishops of the truth! That's something for them to prove and not simply to assert" [2.11]. The objection was all the more powerful, however, in that the Africans apparently made it stick. The president of the court Marcellinus accepted that the statements 'of either party' were to be recorded (*Utrarumque partium prosecutiones gesta retinebunt*) [2.12]. From that point on in the record the so-called 'Donatists' are never so-called again. Henceforth, when Marcellinus referred to the two groups he was careful to refer to 'either side' in the dispute (e.g., 2.19 & 24). Martialis, the court notary who had made the reference to 'the Donatists' that provoked the objections by Petilianus in the first place, now corrected the record to read 'bishops and defenders of the church of the truth' (*episcopi et defensores ecclesiae veritatis*) [2.12]. It is probably with this particular episode in mind that the African bishops insisted on their legal right to reread and correct the transcripts of the first day's proceedings [2.25]

What is the significance in this brief encounter over definition for a better historian's understanding? It is still a puzzle why a minimum of impartiality in the writing of history, of a subject technically so remote in time and place, seems so difficult for historians to achieve. Simple reportage of what happened has been, and continues to be, one of the basic requirements of writing history. But there still seems to be an overwhelming tendency to write the history of the period from the perspective of the 'winners.' Strange 'winners' indeed—they lost the great game (the fate of Christianity in Africa), but won the game of historical records. Paradoxically, the Catholic labelling process won where it actually lost. Even simple technical entries of an encyclopaedic type, the supposed reportage of mere fact, are full of primary bias. Take the following entry on Marcellinus, the tribune and notary appointed to head the conference: 'He presided over the Council of Carthage, 411 June 1-26, at which the catholic and Donatist bishops of Africa met to discuss their differences. He restored order to the African

church, both by his decisions at the Council in favour of the catholics, and also by subsequent disciplinary measures against the recalcitrant Donatists.²⁸ On the other hand, if we begin with the rejection of this identification, we can begin to make sense of what has otherwise been portrayed as a 'lost cause.' The behaviour of the African bishops summoned to the confrontation in the summer of 411 is a pedagogy for the persecuted. Their actions were far from those who regarded themselves as amongst the defeated. Improvisation, the gaining of space, the insistence on the meaning of words, the refusal to concede automatic obedience—all of these tactics, and more, worked, and worked against legitimizing the 'final verdict' of the court because they contested precisely the grounds for which Augustine, and the Catholics, wanted the conference—the legitimation of their cause through ceremonial public advertisement.²⁹ The African bishops, it must be remembered, still had very great numbers of the local people with them—so their audience was more than worth the effort.

One stratagem was to win the battle of 'public opinion.' To make a decisive visual impact on the great numbers of people who would be in Carthage to witness the 'exterior' effects of the conference (but who could not participate in its inner workings—a distribution of

²⁸ So *PLRE*, 2, 'Marcellinus (10),' p. 711 [1980]

²⁹ The same approach was utilized, for example, by defendants in the trial of the 'Chicago Eight' in 1969, where the charges of 'conspiracy' were manifestly casuistic means used by the formal powers of the time which were guaranteed (so they thought) to rid them of political undesirables. The reaction of certain of the defendants was to reject the basic legitimacy of the court itself by turning it into countertheater: 'For Abbie [Hoffman] and Jerry [Rubin]...the courtroom was a new theater, perhaps a purer kind of theater than anything in previous Yippie history. More than any of the other defendants, they wanted to create the image of a courtroom shambles.' The proponents of such tactics accepted that the final verdict would go against them (as it did): '...as Abbie said, the trial would be "a victory every day until the last".' Tom Hayden disagreed with these tactics ('Then we would be sentenced for contempt. We could strip away the authority of the judge and prosecution but not their power.'), but he was finally constrained to admit that they worked: 'In the end, Dave [Dellinger] and Abbie were right in their argument that a symbolic stand would move people.' (T. Hayden, *Trial*, New York (1970) 69-72). These tactics were castigated by supporters of the powers of the *status quo* at the time as 'silly,' 'a waste of court time,' 'absurd,' 'needless delaying tactics,' 'comic,' 'childish antics,' 'nihilistic,' and so on—that is to say, much the same sort of formal charges levelled by Augustine against the actions of the African bishops.

power that would be to the advantage of whoever could manipulate their desire, and need, to know). That could be achieved by some sort of public demonstration of power outside the confines of the conference proper. There were many potential spectators in Carthage, the metropolis of all Africa and one of the largest cities of the empire. Such a great event must naturally have had a popular audience.³⁰ The Catholic bishops therefore resolutely resisted their opponents' demand for a full conference for fear of the popular tumult that might result.³¹ The African Christians, however, turned this popular element to their advantage by staging an ostentatious parade of their bishops and priests, and their attendants, into Carthage and through its streets, on 18 May.³² The parade by which the bishops entered Carthage was so impressive that Augustine later remarked on it with a sarcasm that betrays the clear impact it made: "So many bishops were gathered from all of Africa. They entered Carthage with the great pomp and ceremony of a magnificent parade, so that they turned the eyes and attention of the inhabitants of the great city on themselves."³³ In other words, the plan to affect public sentiment worked. Even before the first formal words of the conference had been uttered, the African bishops had struck their first collective blow.

The problem for historians in evaluating events like the parade is that they tend to lock themselves within the highly artificially defined world of the conference itself—not to raise their eyes outside the retaining walls of the Baths of Gargilius. That means that the views of the bishops, mostly rather elderly males, are taken to define the limits of power.³⁴ But that is a clear mistake. There was an enormous

³⁰ The presence of crowds and the possible 'tumult' that they might cause are occasionally referred to: e.g., *GCC*, 2.72

³¹ Augustine, *Breviculus Collationis*, 1.7

³² *GCC*, 1.14.7-11; 1.29.2-4; cf. Augustine, *Breviculus Collationis*, 1.4; for the utility of parade-like demonstrations of power (and why this one might have had such effect) see E.E. Rice, *The Grand Procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus*, Oxford, 1988; S. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1981; and M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West*, Cambridge, 1987, on 'adventus' ceremonial with which the bishops must have been familiar.

³³ Augustine, *Ad Donatistas post Collationem*, 25.43 (= Lamirande, 352-53)

³⁴ Just how 'old' and decrepit is difficult to say, but probably older in

'audience' outside, and whether or not they were persuaded by the highly defined proceedings inside was precisely what was at issue. That audience included vast numbers of Christians, young and old, male and female, who were not at the conference itself. We cannot overlook them—they and their actions could be as decisive as anything that happened within the confines of the baths.

After all, the whole thing began with a kiss and a woman. A kiss is something, the sheer power of which historians, such as the one writing these words, have not always fully recognized. The woman was named Lucilla. She was a very wealthy person of senatorial rank resident at Carthage in the early fourth century. A woman of independent disposition, even in matters religious, she had carried on her devotions in a manner that seemed appropriate to her—which, on one occasion, included bestowing a kiss on a holy relic.³⁵ For this act of 'excessive' devotion she was harshly disciplined by Caecilianus, the (then) arch-deacon of Carthage. Angered by his unwanted interference in what she deemed to be her own affairs, she aligned herself and her resources with one Majorinus whom she encouraged in his opposition to Caecilianus in the forthcoming election to the bishopric of Carthage in 311. Her encouragement did not require any extraordinary exertions on her part since Majorinus, though a man, was directly in her power—he was, in fact, a servant in her own household.³⁶ So it was her power,

north Africa than elsewhere: see B.D. Shaw, "The Elders of Christian Africa," (in) P. Brind'Amour ed., *Mélanges offerts à R.P. Etienne Gareau*, Ottawa, Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa = numéro spéciale de *Cahiers des études anciennes* (1982) 207-226; and "Latin Funerary Epigraphy and Family Life in the Later Roman Empire," *Historia* 33 (1984) 457-97, on the factor of patriarchy and seniority in north African society in general, and in the church in particular. The roll-call of the bishops seems to guarantee as much—extraordinary numbers, up to about a third from either side, were absent because of sickness, other weaknesses of old age, or death itself (not a few of the latter occurring *en route*).

³⁵ F. Dölger, "Das Kultvergehen der Donatistin Lucilla von Karthago. Reliquienkuss vor dem Kuss der Eucharistie," (in) *Antike und Christentum*, 3 (1932/1950) 245-52: that she is pre-emptively designated 'a Donatist' by Dölger says a lot about the haste with which historians rush to accept *ex post facto* labels; see Frend, *Donatist Church*, 18-21 for context.

³⁶ Optatus, 1.19: 'Majorinus, qui lector in diaconio Caecilianii fuerat, domesticus Lucillae, ipsa suffragante episcopus ordinatus erat' ['Majorinus, who was a reader under the deacon Caecilianus, a household servant (or even slave) of Lucilla's, was ordained bishop because of her support']. Of course, the historian

her wealth, and her force of personality that provided the basic resources that organized and financed the dissident conference of seventy bishops at Carthage that elected Majorinus primate of Africa and, in effect, created the 'Donatist' schism.³⁷ Hence an absolutely critical historical actress, whose actions were a crucial determining element in what happened to the course of north African Christianity. Analyses of the conference of 411 that remain within the defined walls of the conference halls simply miss all of those who, like Lucilla, were 'defined out' of its proceedings.³⁸ And yet it is precisely all of the Lucillas of that world whose voice and power must be restored if one is to begin to understand what the verbal battles within the walls of the baths were all about, and, perhaps more important, about their probability of success in persuading those on the outside.

The question of which side deserved recognition as the Christian Church in Africa also hinged, for example, on a clear demonstration that neither was just some fringe sect, but had a numerous and widespread representation from all parts of Africa. The importance of numbers was recognized by both sides. Following the first long roll-call (of the Catholic bishops), Marcellinus wished to get out of repeating the lengthy and time-consuming procedure for the Africans. But, since the compelling of an impartial count could be used to dramatic effect by them, they insisted on the duplication. Petilianus objected that the whole purpose was to give each bishop a chance to make his own

must make due allowance for the exploitation of the female image in the hostile male rhetoric; such 'bad women' seen at the heart of black conspiracies and evil machinations had a long history in Latin writing. Livy's account of the Bacchanalian conspiracy of 186 BC, Cicero's portrait of Sassia in the *Pro Cluentio* or his Clodia of the mid 50s BC, and Sallust's Sempronia in his *Bellum Catilinum*, are some amongst many predecessors of a common theme that heavily marked imperial historiography as well (e.g., the 'bad wives' of emperors).

³⁷ The sources are outlined in *PCBE*, 1, 'Lucilla (1),' p. 649; cf. *PLRE*, 1, 'Lucilla,' p. 517; note their open hostility: Optatus, 1.16 'potens et factiosa femina.'

³⁸ Such powerful and wealthy women were still wielding decisive rôles in the era of the Conference itself. If any evidence has to be adduced in support of an obvious continuity, then it is provided by Augustine (*Ep.* 43.9.26 and *Sermo in Ps.* 36.19 = *PL*, 36, 377) who refers to another woman (unnamed, as usual) who was 'a second Lucilla' involved in conflicts within the church at Carthage in the 390s, being central to the creation of yet another division within the African church, that of the 'Maximianists.'

declaration (e.g., making quite clear publicly where there existed no Catholic bishop opposite them) and thereby to demonstrate, for example, the absolute numerical superiority of the African Christians in Numidia. Further, Petilianus argued, the distribution revealed by such a roll-call would be a manifest way of demonstrating that they had maintained their numbers by peaceful means, whereas the Catholics had achieved theirs by force (*GCC*, 1.165). Such public demonstration of quantity was, in part, the purpose of the great parade of bishops that preceded the conference itself, as Augustine later recognized.³⁹ That is why the African Christians had persevered with the tactic from the beginning. Thus, when the Catholic bishops, in obedience to the orders of Marcellinus turned up at the Baths on the morning of 1 June with their full complement of 18 bishops to represent them, the African Christian bishops turned up *en masse*.

The president could have demanded that all except the deputized speakers and their assistants should leave the Baths venue. But he was trapped by the ensuing arguments which led to demands from both sides to check, by way of public declaration, the presence of the bishops who had signed the mandate empowering their respective deputies (*GCC*, 1, 186). The Africans declared 279 signatories—exclusive of six of their representatives, which brought their full total to 285. The Catholics, on the other hand, objected to absent bishops, and even one dead one, on the list. The Catholics then declared 266 subscribers. That left them in an apparent minority. The bishop Alypius was sent out to drum up another twenty Catholic bishops who were at least capable of walking into the Baths. Once recognized, they brought the Catholic total to 286—one more than the Africans—a critical, even if the smallest, margin of difference.⁴⁰ The African bishop from Cirta, Petilianus, began by challenging the veracity of the Catholic signatories. He wanted to see each Catholic bishop in person. He was able to cite cases from personal experience of the Catholic creation of shadow bishoprics (*GCC*, 1.59, 61). Moreover, by forcing an in-person parade of bishops of either side, the Africans could demonstrate that they too had the numbers, and were no trivial sect (*GCC*, 1, 89-93).

³⁹ Augustine, *Ad Donatistas post Collationem*, 24.41

⁴⁰ The best discussion of the numbers is to be found in Lancel, *Actes*, I, 110-18; each side claimed about 400+ bishoprics in total in north Africa.

But the challenges issued by either side ultimately played into the hands of the Africans because it provoked another bit of drama: a second parade of bishops. In order to match names against signatures, claims of bishoprics against actual bishops, the president agreed to a roll-call of all bishops on either side. The agreed procedure was that the name of the Catholic bishop was read out first (if he existed)—he declared his presence ('Present'). Then the African bishop from the same see would declare his presence (normally by saying 'I recognize him'—i.e. his opposing number).

The interest in this one-on-one confrontation lies less in the checking of numbers and identities of bishops on either side, than in the dramatic way in which each bishop walked forward to the center of the Baths, made a declaration of his identity, and placed that identification within the context of his relationship to an opponent. Each confrontation became a mini-drama of self-assertion. Bishops who had driven all contesters from their see (mostly Catholics) could vaunt the fact when they came forward to identify themselves, as in the case of Aptus, Catholic bishop of Tigias: 'Present. I have not had, and do not have, any Donatist bishop in my place' (*GCC*, 1.120). Or, Innocentius, Catholic bishop of Germania: 'Present. I have no adversary' (*GCC*, 1, 121). Urbicosus, Catholic bishop of Igilgili, could declare, belligerently: 'Present. My town has been entirely Catholic for a very long time' (*GCC*, 1.121). Compare similar exhortations such as 'Totally Catholic,' 'My community has been Catholic from its beginning,' or 'I have no competitors, no heretics' (*GCC*, 1.126). Denigrating the status of the opponent was another favourite tactic: Privatus, Catholic bishop of Usula: 'Present. I don't have any bishop against me—just a priest' (*GCC*, 1.126). Or frank admissions meant to frighten, as made by Trifolius, Catholic bishop of Abora: 'Present. Anyone known as one of them in my see is stoned' (*GCC*, 1.133.84-85). Naturally, the African bishops could also use the parade to make their point. So, Honorius, African bishop from Vartani identifying his Catholic counterpart Victor: 'I have had the pleasure of making his acquaintance recently because of the harm he has done me' (*GCC*, 1, 126). Or one could combine denigration and a jab of personal betrayal: so Donatus, African bishop of Vamacurra, of his opposite number: 'I recognize him. He was once my priest' (1.128). Another African bishop claimed to have been driven from his seat by violence. 'He's just lying,'

replied the Catholic. 'It's simple terror and nothing else that's driven everyone out,' retorted the African. 'He's lying' (1.134.1-13). One could rub in an insult: 'I have Felix opposite me—but he only has one parishioner!' (1.135. 1-6). Or, to play a final card, one could deny the very existence of the other. Asterius, the Catholic bishop of Vicus: 'In this place there is no other bishop but me.' Urbanus, his opposite number, could trump that: 'With God as my witness, I don't even recognize this man' (1.143.56-61). Others put the matter more bluntly: 'I don't know him any more than he knows me!' (1.133.13). Such game-playing could finally exasperate the judge. Following on another such standoff, Marcellinus finally blurted out: 'Well, do you at least recognize his face?' (1.177-179).

Such repartee could exploit familiar Mediterranean themes, like threats of vengeance. When, in one of usually feisty retorts, Petilianus drew to the Catholics' attention that one day there would be revenge for the hurt they had done the Africans (1.169), that too was another part of getting the matter 'on the record.' Earlier, in his personal 'identification routine' with his Catholic opposite, Fortunatus of Constantine, Petilianus had made the point in an angry exchange about the violence that had been vented on him and his followers. He ended: 'Let the transcript of these proceedings record that you are a persecutor. In the right time and place you will hear what you deserve' (1.139). Such pointed references to future times and places of reckoning were intended to make the adversary realize that, although he might have the upper hand now, there would be vengeance one day. So Dativus the African bishop of Petra, northwest of Diana Veteranorum: 'And I don't have any adversary, because it is there where our 'Lord' (i.e., the martyr) Marculus lies, for whose blood God will exact vengeance on the day of judgment' (1.187.73-76).

The identification parade also opened up other possibilities for labelling the opposition, such as the deployment of the collective slur. If a dispute was to be made over numbers, then the quality of those numbers could be drawn into question. Halfway through the African Christians' declarations of their bishoprics, Alypius, the Catholic bishop from Thagaste (Augustine's old home-town) objected that most of them were mere rural estates (*villae*) or farms (*fundi*). In raising this point, Alypius was not just making some technical point about the location of these bishoprics, but was playing on a deeply rooted prejudice

of the time amongst cultured men against the countryside and a near-racial bias against those who lived in it as somehow distinctly and permanently inferior to city-dwellers. Given the pervasive nature of those assumptions, the moral stain of having most of your bishops derived from a context of rural idiocy was a near-impossible one to refute. Petilianus did his best: the Catholics, he said, had many rural bishops as well. They shouldn't talk too much. Too bad, too, that *they* had almost no parishioners in theirs (*GCC*, 1.181-182).

Of course, it is only the written record we have. Hence, certain caveats. It catches very little of the world of gesture and expression (especially facial) that must have marked these confrontations. Only a very small part of this world of movement and appearance is available to us through chance remarks in the record. And the act of refusal to recognize could be publicly signalled in such small acts. For example, the simple ritual of making the body obey implicit orders. Rational people will sit down together to discuss their differences. The mere act of sitting down together, as the African bishops recognized, was already a surrender to the organization of space by their opponents. But in their *guerrilla*, the Africans were to begin by challenging the minutiae of the organization of space itself. Early in the course of the first day's proceedings, the presiding judge Marcellinus issued what must have seemed to him an innocuous invitation: to be seated [*GCC*, 1.144]. The African bishops objected. They would not sit. They would stand.⁴¹ There was good historical precedent. Christ had stood before his persecutors. So would they (*GCC*, 1.145). The meeting of the second day brought another invitation from the court president for the participants to be seated (*GCC*, 2.3). Once again, the Africans ostentatiously refused. They would stand. After all, they had biblical authority on their side. The righteous should not sit down with sinners (*GCC*, 2.4). Did not the Psalmist say, 'I have not sat among worthless men, nor do I mix with hypocrites; I hate the company of evil men, I refuse to sit down with the wicked' (*Ps.* 26.4-5). What was the presiding officer, Marcellinus, to do? To get proceedings under way, he conceded. The Africans literally stood their ground.

⁴¹ Again, a political management of space. Just as, on the twenty-fourth day of their trial, the Chicago Eight ostentatiously refused to stand, and so, with their bodies, denied the legitimacy of the court.

All the rhetorical and behavioural microrebellions clearly had the disruption of the 'normal course' of the conference as part of their objective. Theirs was a 'little war' meant to challenge the legitimacy of the proceedings. In this they succeeded.⁴² They proved to be a source of immense frustration, both to the civil authorities charged with conducting the trial, above all Flavius Marcellinus, and to the Catholic bishops who had hoped for a quick and decisive final confrontation. Marcellinus finally had to use his superior force simply to declare a sudden end to the conference, bringing proceedings to an abrupt halt on the third day, and calling the bishops back together later the same evening to hear his 'final sentence' in the candle-lit darkness of the baths. That matters did not proceed smoothly to their foreordained end was something that had a great impact on the participants. Augustine, who has given the most extensive set of *ex post facto* 'debriefings' in his subsequent writings relevant to the conference, repeatedly labels the actions of the African Christians as nothing more than purposeful and perverse 'delays' (*delationes* and *morae*, repeatedly), obstructions, roadblocks, actions intended to do nothing other than waste time and deviate proceedings from their proper course.⁴³ That modern-day historians have so consistently bought into this one-sided interpretation of what the African Christians were trying to do is a condemnation of their science as historians, and has added nothing to our understanding of what those human beings were doing in the June days of 411. 'Delays' and 'deliberate obfuscations,' to be sure—but to what end? Were the African Christians summoned merely to play the imperial State/Church's game? Under the assumption that they too were human, are historians not to grant a rationality to their resistance?

Augustine had declared the purpose of the Conference: it was a blatant propagandistic machine designed even before it started to achieve two ends: persuasion and legitimation. That the African Christians

⁴² So the contempt charges issued by Judge Julius Hoffman in the trial of the Chicago Eight for having brought the court into disrepute were a confession that the 'contumacious' tactics of the defendants had in fact succeeded in delegitimizing the authority of the court.

⁴³ For example, Augustine's recapitulation of his view of matters in the *Breviculus Collationis*, 1.9, 2.3 (twice), 3.2, 3.3, 6.7, 8.10; a point he frequently reiterates elsewhere, e.g., *Ad Donatistas post Collationem*, 24.42

would do everything possible to delegitimize the proceedings in the Baths of Gargilius is surely both rational and understandable. From their point of view, the more the 'debates' were reduced to a chaos and a shambles, the better. It appears that far from being 'beaten' in this aim, they largely succeeded.⁴⁴ That was why the court president Marcellinus was constrained to bring the whole show to a sudden halt. If anything, the response by the leading Catholic bishops afterwards, above all that of Augustine, is surely to be read as a type of 'damage control.' His 'little and brief account of the Conference' (the *Breviculus Collationis*), produced hastily in the aftermath of the assembly for widespread distribution, is therefore noteworthy not so much for its outright lying (of which there is some) as for its slanted and selective reportage. Augustine rapidly synthesizes the first two days of the proceedings so that he can concentrate on what he wishes to be accepted as the substance of the Conference—the extended theological debate of the third session. Gone are any references to the calculated embarrassments caused by the African Christians—above all, their clear and pointed demand that they *not* be labelled 'Donatists' (a self-identification which Augustine, of course, cavalierly disregards throughout his 'summary'). Augustine's much vaunted insight—to have foreseen the importance of entering the fray at a popular level in order to persuade ordinary people by readable 'digest' versions of the conference, by the composition of simple 'ABC' folk songs, and other such 'pop' media—is rather significant. It does indeed impart a distinctive modern character to the propaganda battles.⁴⁵ But the recourse to these radical new tactics was not so much a marvel of

⁴⁴ Again, the words of William Kunstler, the defence attorney in the Trial of the Chicago Eight: 'The significance of the trial is that it showed...for the first time how ingenious defendants can use a courtroom to get their point across and not to be afraid of authority.' Which is all true, except for the claim about 'the first time.'

⁴⁵ This unusual 'modern' element in the struggle, *une chose avant son temps*, so to speak, has been noted by several scholars; see Lamirande, *Oeuvres de Saint Augustine*, 'Le caractère populaire de la lutte anti-donatiste,' 217-20; and Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire*, 7, 193-199; the references to earlier concerns with popular persuasion that precede the conference (e.g., *Contra litt. Petil.* 1.1.1, or *Contra Crescionum*, 1.3.4-5.7) are not very persuasive on that score; his great concern with entering the battle at a popular level seems to date from the year of the Conference.

prescience as it was a response compelled from the bishop by the failure of the Conference to achieve its set end.

The conference's consequence? It is ordinarily portrayed by historians as a great Catholic victory. The final death blow to 'Donatism.' After 411 it was all downhill and decline for the African Christians.⁴⁶ A decline not without its own ironies. Flavius Marcellinus, a direct party to the 'defeat,' the judge appointed to assess the African's deviations, was himself executed on 13 September 413, about two years after delivering his final judgement, in Carthage, the very city in which he had given it.⁴⁷ The problem is, once again, one of definition, power, and the sorts of evidence left for historians to interpret. If, as has been argued, the so-called 'Donatists' never existed except insofar as a Catholic Church, backed by the power of the Roman state, was able to label and to define them, then, logically, when the latter no longer had the authority and the sheer force to keep that definition alive, no more 'Donatists' would exist. Rather, the traditional Christians of north Africa would continue to exist as *they* always had. The precipitate collapse of the political and military structures of the Roman state in the west, first in 410 and then, finally, in 476, meant that the critical conditions for the existence of 'Donatism' simply no longer existed. That, in turn, will produce a problem with the evidence—drastically affecting the ability of historians, like us, to sight 'Donatists.' There is, of course, the additional problem of the extreme paucity of evidence for the period (especially following the death of Augustine, and the Vandal presence in north Africa after AD 430). Even so, there is enough evidence to refute both easy theories about the decline of traditional north African Christianity or the 'sudden and great' victory

⁴⁶ Implicit in the account of Frend, *Donatist Church*, throughout, but especially in his chs. 17, 'The Aftermath of the Conference, 412-29,' and 18, 'The Last Phase: Donatism in Vandal and Byzantine Africa'; his final judgment is an outrage both against the canons of historical research and common sense: 'The Donatists had come to a conference, been out-argued, and proscribed by the due process of the law' (p. 289).

⁴⁷ *Plus ça change*...it was not the first or last time that irony was to happen—compare the fate of Jean de Coras, the investigating judge in the Martin Guerre case (Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, Cambridge, Mass., 1983, 114-15, 154n2). There is some speculation that the African bishops condemned by him in 411 were involved in Marcellinus' denunciation for treason and his execution—a sweet revenge for them, if true.

of orthodox Catholicism.⁴⁸

Of course, the conference at Carthage was also part of a long battle not just over some notorious ecclesiastical *causes célèbres* in north Africa, but also over the larger problem of what Christianity was to be. Perhaps lost in the minutiae and heat of individual exchanges, it is itself a matter worth brief recapitulation, and some reconsideration. The Catholic position was clear and coherent. There was one world, one Church, one belief, and hence only a single unity. And that clearly meant that there could be only one Christian path to the future. Hence all had to be compelled to it. To think otherwise was to accede to becoming lost, and damned, in the process. The African vision was significantly different, even if not as coherently elaborated as the Catholic view—after all, the Africans, as part of their natural history, had never really considered the Catholic position to be a necessary one. It was one that they had consciously to face only following their being labelled ‘heretics’ after 311/312. Their counter-vision ran something like this. Each region, each culture, had developed its own Christianity. What is ‘universal’ in the Christian message, its moral center, is to be found in each peculiar expression given to it. That meant that each local tradition, each individual view, had its own legitimacy, and did not require instruments of repression and persecution to enforce a universal uniformity. As I’ve said, a rather different view of Christianity from Catholic orthodoxy, but, given our current circumstances (maybe especially because of them) perhaps every bit as compelling. It was certainly a perspective that had strikingly different implications for definition and identity.

Who are you? ‘The answer is which is to be master—that’s all.’ Well, as the African Christians at Carthage in the summer of 411 knew, not quite ‘all.’

⁴⁸ The evidence is assembled, almost against his own conclusions, by R.A. Markus, “Reflections on Religious Dissent in North Africa in the Byzantine Period,” (in) G.J. Cuming ed., *Studies in Church History*, 3, Leiden (1966) 140-49, and his, “Donatism: the Last Phase,” (in) C.W. Dugmore & C. Duggan eds., *Studies in Church History*, 1, London (1964) 118-26.

CRITICAL BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ADDENDA

The following notes are intended to guide the reader through some of the recent research pertinent to my essays on the history of the ancient Maghrib collected in the two volumes of the *Variorum Reprint* series. They are not meant to be comprehensive bibliographic guides or updates to the subjects concerned, but rather are intended to draw the reader’s attention to debates and controversies in the field where they traverse subjects dealt with in the collected studies. I have tried, where possible, to highlight alternative interpretations or analyses that have questioned hypotheses for which I argued in the reprinted articles. The addenda move in sequential order through the subject matter of the articles as reproduced, with the volume number (Arabic numeral) and chapter sequence (Roman numeral) in the volume referred to at the head of each section in bold (e.g., **1.III** = Volume 1, article 3 of the reprint edition) to cue the reader to the original publication that is being discussed.

In referring to periodical and serial publications, as well as to corpora of primary data (principally epigraphical) the following conventional abbreviations have been used:

<i>AAR</i>	African Archaeological Review
<i>AAT</i>	Atlas archéologique de la Tunisie, ed. René Cagnat and Alfred Merlin (Paris, 1914-1926)
<i>AE</i>	L’Année épigraphique
<i>AntAfr</i>	Antiquités africaines
<i>Atl.arch.</i>	Atlas Archéologique de l’Algérie, ed. Stéphane Gsell (Paris, 1911)
<i>BAA</i>	Bulletin d’Archéologie Algérienne
<i>BASOR</i>	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
<i>BCTH</i>	Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques
<i>CIL</i>	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
<i>CRAI</i>	Comptes Rendus de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres
<i>ILAFr</i>	Inscriptions Latines d’Afrique: Tripolitaine, Tunisie, Maroc, ed. René Cagnat, Alfred Merlin, and Louis Chatelain (Paris, 1923)