Jnl of Ecclesiastical History, *Vol. 53*, *No. 2*, *April 2002*. © 2002 Cambridge University Press
DOI: 10.1017/S0022046902002555 Printed in the United Kingdom

Cyprian's Reconstruction of the Martyr Tradition

by ALLEN BRENT

Cyprian attacked the claim of the confessing martyr to give absolution independent of the more formal authority of a bishop on the grounds that this practice was radically new. But Cyprian ignored the antiquity of the martyr tradition. The act of confession that involved acute physical suffering had itself been sufficient for ordination earlier, just as it had been sufficient to replace baptism. Reconciliation of an apostate previously took place by offering and giving the eucharist without a separate, episcopal act in the form of imposition of hands. Cyprian's case thus rested on a fundamental reinterpretation of the theology of martyrdom in the interests of extending episcopal control into new areas of church life.

Cyprian's earliest writings focus on his dispute with certain confessors, some of whom were presbyters. The confessors around Lucianus and Paulus claimed the right to issue *libelli pacis* to those who had lapsed in various degrees during the Decian persecution. The new demand of the civil government for citizens to acquire certification of their sacrifice at the pagan altars was thus matched by the new practice of Christian confessors issuing a certificate requesting, or even requiring, the readmission to communion of those who had lapsed.

In *ep.* xxvii.1–2 Cyprian informs us that Lucianus has been distributing certificates *en bloc* to large numbers of people in the name of the deceased Paulus and the tortured Aurelius. Cyprian regards this action as a foolish

I wish to acknowledge support from the Leverhulme Trust in my research for this article, and my appreciation of comments made by Dr Lionel Wickham, Professor William Frend, Dr James Carleton Paget, Dr Winrich Löhr and others in the Cambridge Patristics Seminar of 30 November 1998.

Didasc. and *CA* = *Didascalia* and *Constitutiones apostolorum*, ed. F. X. Funk, Paderborn 1905; *ep.* = *Sancti Cypriani episcopi epistularium*, ed. G. F. Diercks, CCSL iiib, iiic, Turnhout 1996; *GCS* = *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, Berlin 1954; *HE* = Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. G. Bardy, SC xli, Paris 1955; *ICUR* = *Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores*, ed. Ioannes Baptista de Rossi and Antonius Ferrua, Vatican City 1971; *TA* = *Traditio apostolica*, ed. B. Botte, in 'La Tradition apostolique de saint Hippolyte: essai de reconstitution', in *Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen*, xxxix, Münster 1963; *VigChr* = *Vigiliae Christianae*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

activity not grounded on Scripture,[1] and as *seditionis origo*.[2] Without doubt the mechanism of certification was a new development, whether in the pagan or in the Christian form that mirrored it. But what did the practice imply about the practice and theology of absolution in the ecclesial tradition prior to Cyprian?

Cyprian objected to the claims of Lucianus and his group on the grounds that they were innovating, in particular in requesting or requiring that presbyters could, without the episcopal act of imposition of hands, reconcile simply by readmission to communion. He writes explicitly, as if the main ground of his objection was simply that the bishop alone had the right to reconcile the lapsed through a rite of imposition of hands, prior to communion which they could then receive separately from the hands of a presbyter. But there were two other claims made traditionally by the confessors, and to which, significantly, Cyprian made no explicit reply. I shall argue that Cyprian was implicitly aware of such claims, as his language makes clear: he chose to ignore them because he found their support, in a long martyr tradition, embarrassing for his claims about the character of episcopal authority.

Firstly, Lucianus and his group could appeal to a long tradition of ordination without the imposition of hands (*ordinatio per confessionem*) that was claimed by virtue of the act that made one a confessor. Secondly they could claim that reconciliation had never previously been given through the imposition of hands but rather by the act of giving communion. In both cases the confessors needed a bishop neither for their own ordination nor, if ordained, to give absolution. In the first case, if the martyrs' confession itself was sufficient for ordination apart from the bishop's hands, then a bishop was unnecessary. In the second case, if a presbyter could offer the eucharistic sacrifice, as Cyprian agreed was possible, then a presbyter had the authority, without formal episcopal ordination, to effect reconciliation independently of an episcopal act. Cyprian opposed both premisses, though they were firmly established in existing ecclesial tradition, because they formed the basis of the challenge by the martyr tradition to his assumptions about episcopal authority.

Without explicitly mentioning *ordinatio per confessionem*, Cyprian shows implicitly that he is aware of claims to this effect made by Lucianus and his group. By insisting that the confessors Aurelius and Celerinus be formally ordained to the office of reader by the imposition of hands, he implicitly negates, by a conscious design or a sleight of hand, the martyr tradition that made them presbyters or deacons by virtue of their suffering as confessors. In consequence Cyprian emerges as the real innovator, whose reconstruction of traditional theology aimed at the destruction of

[1] 'Lucianus … bene minus dominica lectione fundatus': *ep.* xxvii.1.1.
[2] *Ep.* xxvii.13.1

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the theological foundations of the Church of the Martyrs and its claims to a self-authenticating, sacramental ministry.

I will consider in section I of this article both Cyprian's explicit statement of his case, and his implicit recognition of the wider implications of absolution by confessors in the letter of Celerinus to Lucianus preserved in his *dossier*.[3] In section II I will then examine Cyprian's claim that only a bishop's hands can reconcile the lapsed with reference to church order literature, and show that it is without foundation. In section III I will argue that Lucianus derived his authority from the theological tradition that authorised a presbyter to absolve the sin of apostasy by the act of giving communion. We will see reflections of that tradition in the claims of Cyprian's contemporary, Origen. In section IV I examine some early accounts of martyrdoms, and the support that they give to the position of church order literature on *ordinatio per confessionem*, and thus expose the tradition which Cyprian negated, with considerable cunning, while he avowed a partial and possibly pretended reverence for the martyr ideal. In consequence, in section V, I will show how Cyprian's concept of priesthood was also expressed in his revisions to early passages in the church order literature found in the *Apostolic constitutions*. Cyprian skilfully reapplied the theology that validated the sacramental acts of the martyr to those of a priest who could henceforth be validly ordained only by the imposition of episcopal hands.

I

Cyprian insisted that, in the process of reconciliation, absolution was quite distinct from participation in the eucharist. Referring to Lucianus' group he says that

> Whereas they, acting contrary to the law of the gospel, contrary also to your own respectful petition, before penance had been done, before confession of the most serious and grievous of sins has been made, before there has been the imposition of hands by the bishop and clergy in token of reconciliation, have the audacity to make the offering on their behalf and give them the eucharist.[4]

Clearly, for Cyprian, there is an additional stage in the process of reconciliation which must precede first, acts of contrition, second, confession and then the bishop or presbyter, together with a deacon, offering the eucharistic sacrifice on behalf of the penitent.[5] That additional

[3] *Ep.* xxi.

[4] 'illi contra evangelii legem ante actam paenitentiam, ante exomologesim gravissimi atque extremi delicti factam, ante manum ab episcopo et clero in paenitentiam inpositam, offerre pro illis et eucharistiam dare … audeant': *ep.* xv.1.2.

[5] It is to be noted that there is no mention of imposition of hands in *De lapsis* xxviii, written in AD 251, although there is reference to confession ('confitentes exomologesim') 'before the priests of God' ('apud sacerdotes dei').

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

element is the imposition of episcopal hands without which the process of penance cannot achieve its fulfilment. A number of questions arise. First, how ancient and traditional, in fact, was the practice of imposition of hands specifically for this purpose?

The second question must be the more fundamental issue of whether a confessor could grant absolution as a presbyter without imposition of hands and therefore independently of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Cyprian did not acknowledge that Lucianus was ordained, nor did the latter claim to be ordained formally for the role that he played in the Church of the Martyrs. The particular letters that describe the conflict have survived principally because Cyprian or his successors chose to preserve them. No doubt the letter of Celerinus to Lucianus has its place in the *dossier* because its author was to come over to Cyprian's side and be ordained reader by him. Thus *ep.* xxi was preserved by the victorious party in the *dossier* as a glowing monument to the waywardness of a young man. Subsequent to his confession, Celerinus had sought absolution for his lapsed sisters from Lucianus and the martyrs. Afterwards he made peace with the 'true' Church and placed his feet on the first rung of its clerical *cursus honorum*.[6]

The preservation of Celerinus' letter to Lucianus, however, is significant for us in that it reveals the terms in which the latter was regarded by the former before his change of heart, and how his status in the group appeared to his youthful admirer. Celerinus writes: 'For I have heard that you have undertaken to be minister to those who are in the flower of confession, O you blessed one … . And now I understand that you have become God's priest over them, their minister.'[7] Lucianus has therefore become, by his confessorship, not simply a *minister* but *antistes Dei*. Not only was *antistes* the Latin equivalent of προεστώς, as president at the eucharist, and used by Eusebius of bishops, but it was used also by Cyprian of Cornelius.[8] The expression would appear in a particular commemoration of Cyprian in a later, sixth-century inscription around the rim of the baptismal fountain in the excavated basilica of Presbyter Felix at Cape Bon. Here Aquinius and Juliana dedicated the baptistery 'To the most blessed Cyprian, presider, with bishop Adelfius, of this unity'.[9] Clearly it is Cyprian who is commemorated and not simply an episcopal namesake since he is addressed as *beatissimus*: as *episcopus* and *antistes* he is commemorated as defender of the *unitas ecclesiae*. The later

[6] *Ep.* xxxix.

[7] 'et nunc super ipsos factus antistes es dei, recognovi, id est minister.': *ep.* xxi.3.1.

[8] *Ep.* lix.18.3, where he says of Felicissimus and his group: 'et magis petant fundi pro se preces atque orationes antistitis quam ipsi fundant sanguinem sacerdotis'.

[9] 'Beatissimo Cypriano episcopo antiste [*sc.* antistite] cum episcopo Adelfio huiusce unitatis'. See N. Duval, 'Notes d'épigraphie chrétienne africaine', *Karthago* ix (1958), 145–9; P. Testini, 'Il complesso cultuale scoperto nella regione di Kelibia (Capo Bon)', *Rivista archeologia cristiana* xxxvi (1960), 123–44; cf. *HE* vi.20.2; Hermas, *Visio* ii.4.3; Justin, *Apologia* 1.65, *PG* vi.428.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Church of North Africa clearly accepted Cyprian's own view of his victory over not only Novatian, but Lucianus, *antistes et minister* of the Church of the Martyrs.

In Lucianus we have an example of a confessor exercising a sacramental ministry without being formally ordained as part of an ecclesiastical hierarchy. Thus Cyprian opposed an ecclesial group making sacramental claims related to the corporate mystery in which they were united through their confessorship: they were indeed the Church of the Martyrs. As such, they could lay claim to a ministry that was independent of episcopal authorisation and thus autonomous.

Let us look, therefore, at the antecedents of Cyprian's two claims that the imposition of episcopal hands alone could reconcile as well as alone ordain, and that therefore there could be neither reconciliation nor ordination that was autonomous and not subject to episcopal authority.

II

Was the imposition of episcopal hands the usual means of absolution for the sin of apostasy as Cyprian claims?

Cyprian appealed to the practice of past confessors,[10] but then insisted that reconciliation cannot take place before due penance has been required and acknowledged, not by the confessors alone, but by the imposition of hands of the bishop and clergy.

But the imposition of episcopal hands, as the completion of the penitential rite, did not exist before Cyprian.[11] *CA* ii.18.7 refers to the imposition of hands after penance ('having laid hands on him, allow him to be for the future in the flock').[12] But these are the words of a document that, as we shall argue, bears the impress of the Cyprianic revolution in its alteration of *TA* 9. In the latter we have simply the imposition of hands by the bishop after baptism.[13] Furthermore, we should not interpret the silence of *TA* as due to the rigorism of the Hippolytan school. As I have shown elsewhere, what Callistus' opponent objected to was not

[10] 'Oro vos … considerantes quae et qualia in praeteritum antecessores vestri martyri concesserint … vos quoque sollicite et caute petentium desideria ponderetis': *ep.* xv.3.1.

[11] 'De toutes les destinations données à l'imposition des mains, celle d'un rite de pénitence apparaît comme la plus tardive': J. Coppens, *L'Imposition des mains et les rites connexes dans le nouveau testament et dans l'église ancienne*, Paris 1925, 374. 'The question of penance and re-admission formed the central difficulty of Cyprian's administration. The previous state of the question is far from clear': M. Sage, *Cyprian*, Cambridge, Mass. 1975, 217.

[12] χειροθετήσας αὐτὸν ἓα λοιπὸν εἶναι ἐν τῷ ποιμνίῳ, which Connolly supplied as the text of *Didasc.* 7, where the Verona Latin failed.

[13] 'Episcopus vero manum illis imponens invocet dicens: Domine Deus, qui dignos fecisti eos remissionem mereri peccatorum per lavacrum regenerationis spiritus sancti inmitte in eos tuam gratiam': *TA* 21.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

a separate rite of reconciliation offered by Callistus but the eucharist itself being given to those whom he had excommunicated.[14]

Callistus himself was criticised for baptising twice, presumably in order to absolve mortal sin, so that clearly he, as the representative of the lax position, had no rite of imposition of hands for those convicted of mortal sin after baptism. His solution was the second baptism that provoked the accusation of innovation from Pseudo-Hippolytus.[15] Tertullian, who attacked Callistus under the pseudonym of Praxeas for absolving without reference to the prophets,[16] had, prior to his adoption of such a Montanist position, made reference to a reconciliatory process that was public and therefore *exomologesis*.[17] However, even in his catholic phase, Tertullian does not make reconciliation dependent on the imposition of episcopal hands. Rather it is the presbyters who, with the gathered community of the baptised, absolve: the penitent is 'to bow before the feet of the presbyters, and kneel at God's altars (*presbyteris aduolui, et aris dei adgeniculari*); to enjoin on all the brethren to be ambassadors to bear his deprecatory supplication. All this *exomologesis* does that it may enhance repentance'.[18] There is no exclusive episcopal rite to absolve through the imposition of hands. Rather the penitents 'kneel at God's altar', presumably to receive communion as the act by which they are declared reconciled.

Stephen, bishop of Rome and Cyprian's contemporary, advocated the imposition of hands for the reception of someone baptised in heresy who wished to be received into the Catholic Church. Stephen of Rome cannot be regarded, however, as a supporter of Cyprian's position regarding absolution being generally given through the imposition of episcopal hands. The particular instance of the reception of someone who has

[14] I have not here entered the debate between Poschmann and Koch regarding the existence, before Cyprian, of a penitential process *per se* for mortal sins after baptism. I accept with Poschmann that there was such an ecclesiastically mediated absolution, but I hold that there was no specific rite separate from the eucharist involving an episcopal imposition of hands. See B. Poschmann, 'Zur Bussfrage in der cyprianischen Zeit', *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* xxxvii (1913), 25–54; 'Die Sichtbarkeit der Kirche nach der Lehre des hl. Cyprian: eine dogmengeschichtliche Untersuchung', in *Forschungen zur Christlichen Literatur und dogmengeschichte*, viii/3, Paderborn 1908; and *Paenitentia secunda: die kirchliche Busse im ältesten Christentum bis Cyprian und Origenes: eine dogmengeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Bonn 1940; H. Koch, *Cyprianische Untersuchungen*, Bonn 1926, 213–85; S. Hübner, 'Kirchenbusse und Exkommunikation bei Cyprian', *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* lxxxiv (1962), 49–84.

[15] Pseudo-Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* ix.12.26, ed. M. Marcovich, Berlin 1986.

[16] For my argument on the identity of Praxeas see A. Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the third century: communities in tension before the emergence of a monarch–bishop*, supplements to *VigChr* xxxi (1995), 503–35.

[17] Tertullian, *De paenitentia* 9, ed. J. G. Ph. Borleffs, CCSL, Turnholt 1954, i.1.10.

[18] Ibid. 9.4–5; 10.6.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

received heretical baptism does not support Cyprian's general case.[19] Between the omission of such a penitential rite in *TA* and its inclusion in *CA* would appear to be *Didasc.* 10 (= *CA* ii.41.1–2), where the imposition of hands is required by proxy for Catholic baptism where baptism has taken place in heresy, and the heretic desires to make peace.[20] But at all events the issue in these examples is not the reconciliation of the lapsed but the extent to which heretical baptism can be regarded as efficacious.[21]

Thus the imposition of hands cannot be shown, as a separate sacrament of reconciliation before communion, to have existed prior to Cyprian. His appeal to antiquity is an example of a *mos maiorum* which was but two days old. Coppens has claimed that Origen is the only other witness to such a rite, though I find his evidence doubtful.[22]

Origen clearly regarded communion after penance as itself the sacrament of reconciliation when he said: 'If someone has sinned, then, after the sin, a request is made for communion.' Such communion will not be restored too quickly so as not to 'destroy the many'.[23] Nor would it seem that Cyprian's formalisation of reconciliation through the joint episcopal and presbyteral imposition of hands was shared by Dionysius of Alexandria in his letter to Fabius, bishop of Antioch. He gives us the famous example of the aged, lapsed Serapion, whose frequent supplications went unheeded. On his deathbed he sent his grandson to summon one of the presbyters. The presbyter was unwell, but, says Dionysius:

> Since I had given instruction that those about to depart this life, if they made petition, and most of all if they had previously been penitents, should be absolved (ἀφίεσθαι), in order that they might die in certain hope, [the presbyter] gave a fragment of the eucharist to the boy (βραχὺ τῆζ εὐχαριστίας ἔδωκεν τῷ παιδαρίῳ) and instructed him to moisten it and to place it in the old man's mouth.

[19] *Ep.* lxxiv. We do not, of course, have Stephen's original letter but simply the gloss that he places upon it.

[20] εἰ δὲ τις ἐπιστραφεὶς μετανοίας καρπὸν ἐπιδείξηται, τότε καὶ εἰς προσευχὴν εἰσδέξασθε αὐτόν ... ὥσπερ τὸν ἐθνικὸν λούσας εἰσδέχῃ, οὕτω καὶ τοῦτον χειροθετήσας ... . πάντων ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ προσευχομένων ἀποκαταστήσεις αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν ἀρχαίαν αὐτοῦ νομήν, καὶ ἔσται αὐτῷ ἀντὶ τοῦ λούσματος ἡ χειροθεσία. καὶ γὰρ διὰ τῆς ἐπιθέσεως τῶν ἡμετέρων χειρῶν ἐδίδοτο τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον: *Didasc.* 10 (= *CA* ii.41.1–2).

[21] Coppens, *L'Imposition*, 380–1.

[22] 'Origène est le premier écrivain qui la mentionne, et son témoignage est confirmé par la *Didascalie des apôtres*': ibid. 374. His evidence is Origen, *In Leviticum homiliae* ii.4, *PG* xii. Here, quite clearly, is the *per paenitentiam remissio peccatorum*, which Origen assimilates to the seeking of medicine ('cum non erubescit sacerdoti Domini indicare peccatum suum et quaerere medicinam'). It is then and then only that he can invoke the anointing of the sick and the imposition of hands in James v.14. The imposition of hands takes place, if this is at all implied, because the penitent believes himself to be sick, and not because he is performing a penance *per se*.

[23] ἡμαρτέ τις, ἐδεήθη μετὰ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν περὶ κοινωνίας: Origen, *In Jeremiam homilia* 12.5, *PG* xiii; cf. K. Hein, *Eucharist and excommunication: a study in early Christian doctrine and discipline*, Bern–Frankfurt 1973, 333.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

There was no other ceremony involved in absolution than the act of communion. The text makes it clear that his receiving the consecrated host was in fact his absolution: 'his sin was blotted out'.[24] Thus absolution was not previously ritually formalised as an event separate from receiving communion: to give communion was to absolve. Reconciliation before his time was not a formal sacramental act detached from the eucharist, requiring the presence of a bishop, and the imposition of hands. It was simply the act of giving or withholding the eucharist whether to an individual as part of the worshipping community or as the *fermentum* exchanged between communities or clinically.[25]

Thus Cyprian's claim that the bishop alone could absolve an apostate, through a ceremony involving the imposition of hands quite distinct from the eucharist, was an innovation designed to increase episcopal power at the expense of the presbyterate. Cyprian might argue that tradition gave to the bishop archieratic powers of 'binding and loosing'. *TA* had described the bishop as having 'power by the high-priestly spirit to forgive sins according to your commandment, to ordain according to your ordinance, and to loose every bond according to the authority which you have given to the apostles'.[26] But if the rite by which he did this is the communication of the eucharist itself, could he deny the power to reconcile to the presbyterate if a presbyter was able, as he was in the Church of North Africa, to offer the eucharistic sacrifice?

Cyprian was anxious to stress that Lucianus and his group were simply claiming that a confessor, by issuing a *libellus pacis*, was recommending that a bishop, or a presbyter ordained by him, should communicate and therefore reconcile, apart from the bishop's imposition of hands. But there was a further dimension to the controversy between Cyprian and the confessors. I would suggest that Lucianus and his group claimed the right to the office of presbyter, and thus president of reconciliation through offering the eucharist, by virtue of their confession alone, and not through the imposition of episcopal hands. Thus they could reconcile an apostate directly with an autonomous ecclesial authority apart from either a bishop or a formally ordained presbyter.

III

In *ep.* xxiii Lucianus wrote on behalf of the confessors using a formal title 'The whole company of confessors to the Holy Pope Cyprian' ('universi

[24] τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἐξαλειφθείσης: *HE* v.44.1–6.

[25] Ibid. v.24.15; cf. P. Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten*, ii, Tubingen 1989, 324–5; Brent, *Hippolytus*, 414–16ff.

[26] τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἀρχιερατικῷ ἔχειν ἐξουσίαν ἀφίεναι ἁμαρτίας κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν σου, διδόναι κλήρους κατὰ τὸ πρόσταγμά σου, λύειν τε πάντα σύνδεσμον κατὰ τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἣν ἔδωκας τοῖς ἀποστόλοις: *TA* 3 (= *Epit.* 4).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

confessores Cypriano Papati S.') that places the confessors before rather than after *papa* Cyprian, contrary to the customary order in addressing a bishop.[27] With an exorcist and reader present as clergy, Lucianus declared that they have 'granted peace' ('dedisse pacem'), and that their act had a quasi-juridical basis in the community; they declare: 'We desire that this decree be made known through you also to the other bishops.'[28] 'Decree' (*forma*) was an appropriate description for decrees of bishops in council.[29] The appeal of the *universi confessores* was then: 'We desire that you have peace with the holy martyrs' ('optamus te cum sanctis martyribus pacem habere').[30]

Lucianus used the phrase 'ad te ratio constiterit', which means 'an account will be established for you' or 'an accurate account will be rendered to you', regarding those to whom peace had been granted.[31] Cyprian quotes this phrase in *ep.* xxvii.2.2, and interprets it in a sense that suggests that the confessors were being more deferential to his authority than in fact they were: Lucianus was not admitting that Cyprian could further deliberate upon, and possibly reject, the *ratio* which was rendered.[32] Rather he was simply giving an account of the absolution that the martyrs had granted and were now recording as a *fait accompli*. Cyprian, on the other hand, assumed that the *ratio* still required episcopal endorsement.

The controversy went deeper than the claim that a confessor could recommend to others the offering of the eucharist sacrifice. Rather it involved the claim to offer that sacrifice for the penitent and to give him communion by virtue of the office of confessor alone. Lucianus was described by Celerinus as 'factus antistes dei, id est minister'. Could Lucianus therefore justify such a claim by reference to an existing theology of martyrdom? Was the real issue between Cyprian and the Church of the Martyrs the argument that only formally ordained bishops

[27] A. A. R. Bastiaensen, *Le Cérémonial épistolaire des chrétiens latins*, Nijmegen 1964, 14, cited in *The letters of St Cyprian of Carthage*, ed. G. W. Clarke, New York 1984, i. 341.

[28] 'hanc formam per te et aliis episcopis innotescere volumus': *ep.* xxiii. For the formal, legal character of his language see A. Beck, *Römisches Recht bei Tertullian und Cyprian: eine Studie zur frühen Kirchenrechtsgeschichte*, Halle 1930, 97; *Letters of Cyprian*, i. 342 n. 4.

[29] Geminius Faustinus has acted 'contra formam nuper in concilio a sacerdotibus datam': *ep.* i.2.1.

[30] 'Par lui (Lucianus) et par les "martyrs" une Eglise s'est ainsi trouvée constituée, qui admet n'avoir que faire des homélies de son évêque, en fuite et discrédité: elle l'a pratiquement déposé, comme par prétérition': C. Saumagne, *Saint Cyprien: évêque de Carthage, "pape" de Afrique, 248–258*, Paris 1975, 62.

[31] Nero is recorded as saying that 'only stingy and niggardly fellows (*sordidos ac deparcos*) keep an account of their expenses (*quibus impensarum ratio constaret*)': Suetonius, *Nero* 30. 1, ed. M. Ihm, in *De vita Caesarum*, Leipzig 1907.

[32] I cannot therefore accept Clarke's translation: 'whose conduct since their fault you shall find to be satisfactory'. There was no admission of Cyprian's authority to query or countermand the *ratio*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and presbyters were able to offer the eucharist, and therefore effect reconciliation, rather than the confessors themselves, by virtue of their office alone, and without formal ordination?

In *ep.* xxiii Lucianus claimed a bond of sacramental communion with departed confessors, who had thus become martyrs. In this respect, regardless of the novelty of its substantive expression in a written *libellus*, his formal principle was not a new one advanced against an established and unambiguous episcopal authority. Almost fifty years previously, the hagiographer wrote of Perpetua and her companions: 'you recognize through what you hear that you have communion with the sacred martyrs and through them with our Lord Jesus Christ'.[33]

The claim of the *universi confessores* to absolve was related in some way to this corporate theology of martyrdom.[34] How could their claim to offer the eucharist sacrifice for the lapsed penitent, and therefore to absolve the sin of apostasy by virtue of their confession, be justified in the context of such a theology?

In the martyrologies we find a number of themes that justify the martyr's confession, with which Cyprian agreed. The martyr is the *miles Christi* overcoming his adversary by *disciplina*,[35] an athlete who by perseverance wins the crown,[36] a victor who reigns with Christ,[37] or a Christian who wins final salvation by confessing Christ, who will not therefore deny him before the angels of God.[38] Martyrdom is the final washing away of one's own sins in blood.[39] All of these explanations of the significance of martyrdom Cyprian employed in his exhortations to the confessors. But one characteristic that he suppressed was the claim that the office of 'martyr' was ecclesial and sacramental.

Pellegrino was conscious of this point, with which he was nevertheless uncomfortable. He clearly admitted that in Cyprian's works 'la valeur de ce sacrifice pour le bien de l'Église n'est pas affirmée explicitement'.[40] But

[33] 'Cognoscitis per auditum communionem habeatis cum sanctis martyribus et per illos cum Domino Iesu Christo.': *Acta Perpetuae et Felicitatis* i. 62, ed. J. Armitage Robinson, Cambridge 1891.

[34] It must be remembered that in any conflict such as that between Cyprian and the martyrs there will always be degrees of support between extreme positions. Hence Cyprian tried to isolate the position of Lucianus by claiming that Mappalicus 'composed no letters in opposition to the gospel' but was only moved by familial piety to absolve his mother and sister. Moreover, the tortured Saturninus produced no *libelli* at all (*ep.* xxvii.1.1). But this is a poor attempt to detach confessors from their support for Lucianus. If the issuing of *libelli pacis* were 'in opposition to the Gospel', they were so if given to a mother and a sister as much as to anyone else. Furthermore Cyprian could not deduce simply from the inactivity of Saturninus that he supported the hierarchical principle.

[35] *Epp.* x.1.1–2,3; xxviii.2.1; lv.9.2; lvii.4.2 etc.

[36] *Epp.* vi.1.2; x.4.1–4; xxviii.1.2; 2.4; lviii.3.1 etc.

[37] *Epp.* vi.2.1; xv.3.1 etc.

[38] *Epp.* xii.1.3; lviii.3.2.

[39] *Epp.* xi.1.2; lvii.4.1; lviii.1.3 etc.

[40] 'Le martyre comme sacrifice est aussi une conception familière de saint Cyprien. Si la valeur de ce sacrifice pour le bien de l'Église n'est pas affirmée explicitement, je crois

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

he proceeded, mistakenly, to see a reference to the redemptive character of the martyr sacrifice in the parallel that Cyprian drew between this and the eucharistic sacrifice. Cyprian rather appropriated the imagery of the redemptive sufferings of martyrdom to the hierarchy and thus brought the grace of martyrdom under due hierarchical control: 'It is the great honour and glory of our episcopate to have given peace to the martyrs in order that we who as priests celebrate the daily sacrifices may prepare sacrifices and victims for God.'[41] Whilst praising the confessors in all other ways, Cyprian here denied what gave them an alternative power of reconciliation in opposition to that of the episcopal hierarchy. Cyprian would not admit that a confessor could extend the merits of his sacrifice to other Christians. On other occasions Cyprian was quite happy that a martyr's suffering washed out his own sins, and was therefore a fitting sacrifice for which the clergy could prepare their flocks. In refusing to extend the merits of such a sacrifice to others, Cyprian denied the very prerogative of the martyrs which Origen, Cyprian's contemporary, acknowledged and justified in terms of Old Testament sacrificial images.

Origen outlined a theological basis for the practice, however ambiguous its status, of absolution by the martyrs. Martyrdom was clearly related to baptism; it was a second baptism leading to a perfection otherwise unobtainable in view of the fact that baptism in water and the Spirit for the remission of sins was unrepeatable.[42] But if it was a true fulfilment and perfection of the dying and rising with Christ in the baptismal mystery,[43] then the martyr's baptism in blood atoned not for the (mortal) sins of the individual alone after baptism, but for others too:

> Note also that the baptism for martyrdom (τὸ κατὰ τὸ μαρτύριον βάπτισμα), as received by our Saviour, atoned for the world, so too when we receive it, it serves to atone by ministering to the many. Just as they who assisted at the altar according to the law of Moses seemed to procure for the Jews remission for sins by the blood of goats and oxen, so the souls of believers who are beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, do not assist in vain at the altar in heaven.[44]

But Origen went on to argue that, if the martyrs offered themselves as sacrifices, as implied by Apoc. vi.9–10, then they were the antitypes of Old Testament priests:

> And likewise we learn that as the High Priest Jesus Christ offered himself in sacrifice … so the priests whose leader he is also offer themselves in sacrifice … .

qu'il faut la sous-entendre, comme une propriété inhérente au sacrifice même; on remarquera surtout un passage de l'*Épître* 73 [*recte* 74], où le martyre est assimilé au sacrifice liturgique': M. Pellegrino, 'Le Sens ecclésial du martyre', *Revue des sciences religieuses* xxxv(1961), 166.

[41] 'Episcopatus nostri honor grandis et gloria est pacem dedisse martyribus ut sacerdotes qui sacrificia Dei cotidie celebramus hostias deo et victimas praeparemus': *ep.* lvii.3.2.

[42] Origen, *Exhortatio ad martyrium* 30, ed. P. Koetschau, *CGS* i.

[43] Ibid. 11.

[44] Ibid. 30.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

But while some of the priests were without blemish and offered victims without blemish and so performed the divine service, others had blemishes … and were banished from the altar. Who then is the priest without blemish who can offer a victim without blemish, if not he who lays hold of his confession (ὁ κρατῶν τῆς ὁμολογίας) and fulfils every requirement of the concept of martyrdom (ὁ τοῦ μαρτυρίου λόγος)?[45]

Just as the priests who sacrificed offered only unblemished sacrifices which atoned for both the offerer and those who had brought blemished sacrifices that were rejected, so too those who had made their confession offered themselves in sacrifice for those who had failed. Their confession, like their baptism, had made them pure; they were imitating Christ's death and so participating in his redemptive sufferings.

Lucianus and his Church of the Martyrs could well appeal, therefore, against Cyprian to Origen for the theological justification of their position. They were priests offering themselves as sacrifices in their *imitatio Christi*. It was martyrdom and not ordination that gave them the power of absolution since their sufferings redeemed others.

For Cyprian, in *ep.* lvii.3.2, however (contrary to what Origen was asserting at this time), the martyrs are not priests offering their own redemptive sacrifice, that is their physical participation in Christ's suffering of which Origen speaks. For Cyprian it is the hierarchy that sustains the martyrs in their trial – that gives them peace rather than receives it from them – preparing them as 'hostias deo et victimas'. There is no greater expression of hostility to Lucianus' claim than Cyprian's assertion that 'It is the great honour of our episcopate … to grant peace to the martyrs.'[46] Cyprian thus asserted that it was Lucianus and the lapsed whom he has absolved that must have peace ('pacem habere') with him as their bishop rather than with the holy martyrs ('cum sanctis martyribus').

Cyprian, moreover, cannot have been unaware that he was, however surreptitiously, negating Lucianus' ideology. Moses and Maximus, and the rigorist group of confessors around them, although not members of Lucianus' 'laxist' group, nevertheless made the common claim of the martyrs that 'What can be more glorious … than to have been made in the name of Christ a partner (*collega*) in suffering with Christ.'[47] It should be remembered that often *collega* has in Latin the formal sense of a 'partner in office'.[48] It is a short step from claiming the redemptive sufferings of the martyr to that of claiming the authority of the confessor to offer the eucharistic sacrifice and thus to apply to the lapsed the fruits of the redemptive sufferings of Christ in which the lapsed shared. We now

[45] Ibid. [46] 'episcopatus nostri honor grandis est … pacem dedisse martyribus'.

[47] 'Quid enim gloriosius … poterit … quam collegam passionis cum Christo in Christi nomine factum fuisse': *ep.* xxxi.3.1.

[48] *Thesaurus linguae latinae*, Leipzig 1906–7, col. 1586.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

have to consider the justification for such a step given in the martyr tradition that Cyprian opposed, but which Origen had clearly affirmed.

IV

We do not have all Lucianus' letters and those of Cyprian's other opponents, but only those that Cyprian and those who composed his *dossier* have provided for us.[49] But we do possess some surviving witnesses to the martyr tradition that Lucianus represented, which take us beyond hypothesis and conjecture and enable us to establish the justifying argument for his exercising the office of *antistes* as president at the eucharist.

Pellegrino argued correctly that early martyrologies are to be distinguished from later ones by the fact that the former are not about individuals making heroic gestures but rather are about participation in a social body which experienced collectively and mystically a death and rising again with Christ.[50] Lucianus' theology of martyrdom and absolution, in which a special grace could be obtained, not from an individual martyr, but from a martyr acting as part of a group in whom Christ's suffering and resurrection were particularly and really present, was no new one. As such the theology of martyrdom in these early accounts reflects very much both Origen's theology of their priesthood, and Lucianus' view of absolution. We should first examine some early accounts of martyrdom from such a perspective and then see how this perspective is reflected in the church order literature.

The clearest expression of this theology of martyrdom is found in the letter of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne, where it is argued that the lapsed cannot make a second confession without being strengthened and sustained by the eucharist. Eusebius records the authorship of this letter as collective, and Irenaeus as presbyter is commended as having carried it to Eleutheros at Rome.[51] Here the suffering of the martyrs clearly supplied what the fallen had lacked:[52]

Through their patience the mercy of Christ without measure appeared. For through those who were alive the dead were made alive, and the martyrs gave

[49] Thus Sage, *Cyprian*, 213 n. 1, does well to remark that 'Unfortunately, except for the letter of Lucianus, nothing remains of the literature of Cyprian's opponents in the controversy.'

[50] 'Le martyre, dans la pensée chrétienne des premiers siècles, n'est pas seulement le geste héroïque accompli par un chrétien … . Le martyr proclame son appartenance à un corps social qui est poursuivi par les lois; il prie et souffre pour l'Église': Pellegrino, 'Le Sens ecclésial', 152; 'le martyr prend la signification d'une action ecclésiale; d'un moment culminant dans la vie de l'Église' (p. 153); 'La prière atteint son sommet dans le sacrifice, surtout dans le christianisme, où le fidèle est appelé à participer, par son sacrifice mystique, à l'oblation et à l'immolation du Christ, prêtre et hostie' (p. 160).

[51] *HE* v.4.1.

[52] εἰρήνην ἡμῖν παρεγγυήσαντες: ibid. v.2.6–7:

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

grace to those who were not martyrs, and there was great joy for the virgin mother that those whom she had thrust away because they were dead these she received back again alive.[53]

It is important, however, not to read this passage in accordance with a post-Reformation perspective in which grace can be given and received through words and example alone. As we have argued from the example of Dionysius of Alexandria, before Cyprian the sole means of reconciliation following confession was in fact to receive the eucharist duly administered.[54] It is by means of granting communion that the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne could be described as 'having always loved peace and having commended peace to us'.[55] It was the same εἰρήνη/*pax* that Lucianus granted when he readmitted the lapsed by giving them communion.

This passage is highly illuminating for the Cyprianic correspondence since it reveals that the grounds for Cyprian's argument with the martyrs were not new. Cyprian describes the lapsed as 'dead' in *ep*. xxxiii.1.2, just as the Churches of Lyons and Vienne had done. He wrote of an apparently anonymous group who 'with outrageous audacity have been willing to write to me that they compose their letters ''in the name of the Church'', whereas the Church has been established upon the bishop and the clergy and all those who remain faithful'.[56] Thus the *confessores/martyres* had written in *ep*. viii 'in the name of the Church', contrary to Cyprian's position, which they saw as having a different foundation. The lapsed clearly had connections with the confessors who had not fallen, however much Cyprian may write as if the fallen were simply absolving the fallen. Indeed his insistence on the authority of the hierarchy here clearly indicated that 'the dead' did claim the alternative authority of the confessors and martyrs, which he disputed, for their readmission into communion. *Ep*. xxxiii.2.1 makes it quite clear that they were claiming absolution, not from the lapsed (the dead), but from the confessors on the grounds of *libelli* received from them.

Cyprian was initially pastorally insensitive to this dimension of the martyrs' claim, but he was aware of it. It is to such a claim that he made the chilling response in *ep*. xix. Those who will not await the end of the persecution and Cyprian's episcopal assize have the option of simply presenting themselves a second time to the magistrate and washing out their sin in martyrdom. But did not the 'dead' need to be made alive before a second confession, with the total resources of grace that they could not enjoy cut off from the mystical Body of Christ, through which

[53] Ibid. v.1.45

[54] Ibid. vi.44.1–6.

[55] εἰρήνην ἀγαπήσαντες ἀει καὶ εἰρήνην ἡμῖν παρεγγυήσαντες: ibid. v.2.7.

[56] 'miror quosdam audaci temeritate sic mihi scribere voluisse ut ecclesiae nomine litteras facerent quando ecclesia in episcopo et clero et in omnibus stantibus sit constituta': *ep*. xxxiii.1.2.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

alone such grace could be received? Indeed these were just the arguments that Cyprian would later deploy against Novatian and his group once the Decian persecution had ended (AD 251), and once his ecclesiastical council had established a penitential discipline. For the anticipated Valerian persecution, the lapsed must be prepared and strengthened by sacramental grace, and re-admitted by his newly prescribed process of reconciliation.[57] One should not be tempted to see Cyprian behaving inconsistently here. What mattered to him was the establishment of his episcopal authority at the expense of that of the martyrs. A policy of leniency or strictness was clearly but an incidental and political means to that desired end.

The Church of the Martyrs replied to Cyprian's early rigorism that they needed to give sacramental aid to the fallen in order to empower them for their second confession. Indeed, this theme of the letter of Lyons and Vienne was reiterated by the Roman confessors to the Roman community in *ep.* viii, which had also sounded a note of scepticism regarding Cyprian's reasons for his flight. The Roman confessors claimed Christ's promise to Peter for their authority to act as shepherds of Christ's flock, quite contrary to Cyprian's claim that it is each bishop that succeeds to the *Cathedra Petri*, and to the charge made to him.[58] Of the lapsed they say:

> Those who have been separated from us we have not forsaken. Rather we have exhorted, and do exhort them to do penance in the hope that they may be able to win pardon from him who is able to bestow it. Otherwise our fear is that if they are deserted by us, they may become more sinful still. You see, therefore, dear brothers, that it is your duty also to act likewise, so that even in the case of those who have fallen, you may, by your encouragement, reform their hearts, and thus, if they are arrested a second time, they may become confessors and thereby be able to set right their former error.[59]

The confessors of Lyons and Vienne had done as much: through them the majority of those who denied walked again, were conceived again and

[57] 'Primo idoneus esse non potest ad martyrium qui ab ecclesia non armatur ad proelium, et mens deficit quam non recepta eucharistia erigit et accendit. … Quando autem dictat in traditis atque in confessione nominis constitutis spiritum patris loqui (Matt. x.19–20), quomodo potest ad confessionem paratus aut idoneus inveniri qui non prius pace accepta receperit spiritum patris, qui corroborans servos ipse loquitur et confitetur in nobis?': *ep.* lvii.4.2. For the justification of his *volte face* see *ep.* lv.4–6.

[58] *Ep.* viii.1.1–2, quoting John xxi.17; cf. Cyprian's riposte, quoting Matt. xvi.18 in *epp.* xxxiii.1.1–2; xliii.5.2.

[59] 'Quos quidem separatos a nobis non dereliquimus; sed ipsos cohortati sumus et hortamur agere paenitentiam, si quo modo indulgentiam poterint recipere ab eo qui potest praestare ne si relicti fuerint a nobis, peiores efficiantur. Videtis ergo, fratres, quoniam et vos hoc facere debetis, ut etiam illi qui ceciderunt hortato vestro corrigentes animos eorum, si adprehensi fuerint iterato confiteantur, ut possint priorem errorem corrigere': *ep.* viii.2.3–3.1.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

were rekindled with life and learned to confess, and being alive again and full of vigour, they approached the tribunal.[60]

The Churches of Lyons and Vienne make it clear that the power of forgiveness flowed from imitation of Christ's suffering and reign, and the mystical identification with him that this had secured. The martyrs of Lyons and Vienne were 'emulators and imitators of Christ'.[61] The mob shouted at the aged bishop Pothinus 'as if he were really Christ himself'.[62]

In this respect they articulated a general theology of martyrdom which is also to be found in earlier documents. Polycarp 'lingered in order that he might be delivered up, just as the Lord, in order that we might become his imitators … . For it is the character of true and firm love not only to wish to save oneself but also all the brethren'.[63] The character of his death was a sacrificial offering: he was 'like a distinguished ram from the great flock for sacrifice and prepared to be an acceptable burnt offering'.[64] He desired 'to receive his portion in the number of the martyrs in the cup of Christ' so that he could be 'a fat and acceptable sacrifice'.[65]

Ignatius clearly drew out such theological implications of martyrdom as realising Christ's sufferings in his own flesh. He praised the Ephesians for 'being imitators of God' since they joined themselves to his martyr's procession having been 'kindled with living fire in the blood of God' which they saw in his martyr's bonds.[66] They were to pray for the world in general that, in facing the world, they might be 'imitators of the Lord' in his injury and rejection.[67] To the Romans he pleads: 'Allow me to be an imitator of the sufferings of my God' on the altar of the amphitheatre where he is to be 'poured out as a libation to God'.[68]

Both Polycarp and Ignatius had been bishops. But the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne clearly included lay people such as Alexander the physician.[69]

[60] δι' ἐκείνων γὰρ οἱ πλείους τῶν ἠρνημένων ἀνεμετροῦντο καὶ ἀνεκυίσκοντο καὶ ἀνεζωπυροῦντο καὶ ἐμάνθανον ὁμολογεῖν καὶ ζῶντες ἤδη καὶ τετονωμένοι προσήεσαν τῷ βήματι: *HE* v.1.46.

[61] ζηλωταὶ καὶ μιμηταὶ Χριστοῦ: ibid. v.2.2.

[62] ὡς αὐτοῦ ὄντος τοῦ Χριστοῦ: ibid. v.1.30.

[63] περιέμενεν γὰρ ἵνα παραδοθῇ ὡς καὶ ὁ κύριος ἵνα μιμηταὶ καὶ ἡμεῖς αὐτοῦ γενώμεθα … ἀγάπης γὰρ ἀληθοῦς καὶ βεβαίας ἐστίν μὴ μόνον ἑαυτὸν θέλειν σώζεσθαι ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀδελφούς: *Passio Polycarpi* 1.2, ed. K. Lake, London–New York 1912.

[64] ὥσπερ κριὸς ἐπίσημος ἐκ μεγάλου ποιμνίου εἰς προσφοράν ὁλοκαύτωμα δεκτὸν τῷ θεῷ ἡτοιμασμένον: ibid.

[65] τοῦ λαβεῖν με μέρος ἐν ἀριθμῷ τῶν μαρτύρων ἐν τῷ ποτηρίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ … ἐν θυσίᾳ πίονι καὶ προσδεκτῇ: ibid.14.2.

[66] μιμηταὶ ὄντες θεοῦ, ἀναζωπυρήσαντες ἐν αἵματι θεοῦ: Ignatius, *Ephesians* 1.1, ed. P.-Th. Camelot, *SC* x, Paris 1958. For a more detailed discussion of Ignatius' contrived martyr's procession see A. Brent, 'Ignatius of Antioch and the imperial cult', *VigChr* lii (1998), 30–58.

[67] καὶ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀλλῶν δὲ ἀνθρωπῶν ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε … μιμηταὶ κυρίου σπουδάζωμεν εἶναι, τίς πλέον ἀδικηθῇ; τίς ἀθετηθῇ: Ignatius, *Ephes.* 10.1–3.

[68] ἐπιτρέψατέ μοι μιμητὴν εἶναι τοῦ πάθους τοῦ θεοῦ μου: *Romans* 6.3; πλέον δέ μοι μὴ παράσχησθε τοῦ σπονδισθῆναι θεῷ ὡς ἔτι θυσιαστήριον ἕτοιμον ἐστιν: ibid. 2.2.

[69] *HE* v.1.49.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

If the martyrs conveyed through their prayers the peace bought by Christ's sufferings in absolution and by their sufferings supplied what their fallen brethren lacked, what did this imply about their baptism and indeed their priesthood? Here we come to the ambiguities in the tradition that Cyprian was to seek to clarify in one direction and Lucianus in a quite different one. Christ was therefore present in the martyr, through the latter's *imitatio*. The believer's *imitatio Christi* in the baptism in water was achieved also, and even instead, through the martyr's baptism of blood.

But if martyrdom, and indeed confessorship in which physical torture had been specifically experienced, replaced baptism, could it also replace ordination? Were the martyrs priests who could absolve by virtue of their self-sacrifice?

There was an ambiguity in the tradition because Ignatius and Polycarp had been bishops, though clearly not all the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne held clerical office. Indeed, women confessors formed part of their group, women such as Blandina, who, 'as she hung cross wise (σταυροῦ σχήματι κεκράμενη) … they beheld in the form of their sister him who was crucified for them … she … had put on Christ (Χριστὸν ἐνδεδυμένη)'.[70] The logic of ordination through martyrdom, it can be argued, failed through social prejudice in the case of women, but nevertheless remained potent, as Cyprian was to find, in the case of men.[71]

Were Ignatius and Polycarp then 'imitators (μιμηταί)' of Christ's sufferings, as they clearly claimed to be, by virtue of their status as martyrs or by virtue of their ordination? Ignatius reflected St Paul's desire 'to be poured out as a drink offering'.[72] He claimed that martyrdom was a mark of apostolicity since 'God has declared us apostles to be last in the arena, as destined for death that we might be a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men'.[73] Ignatius clearly believed that it was as bishop that he was 'the type of the Father (τύπος Πατρός)', and bearer of the image of his suffering and dying God,[74] but it may be that he assumed that (good) clerics would always be amongst the martyrs.

Lucianus might well have replied to Cyprian and his episcopal circle that this hardly applied to them. While it is true that Cyprian finally confounded his critics and made his confession, no other contemporary bishop fulfilled the stricter definition of martyrdom. Furthermore, in the letter of Lyons and Vienne, the lay Alexander, a physician by trade,

[70] σταυροῦ σχήματι κεκράμενη … Χριστὸν ἐνδεδυμένη: ibid. v.1.41–2.

[71] So argued in S. G. Hall, 'Women among the early martyrs', in D. Wood (ed.), *Martyrs and martyrologies* (Studies in Church History xxx, 1993), 1–21.

[72] Ignatius, *Rom.* 2.2; cf. Phil. ii.17; 2 Tim. iv.6.

[73] ὁ θεὸς ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀποστόλους ἐσχάτους ἀπέδειξεν ὡς ἐπιθανατίους ὅτι θέατρον ἐγενήθημεν τῷ κόσμῳ καὶ ἀγγέλοις καὶ ἀνθρώποις: I Cor. iv.9.

[74] Ignatius, *Trallians.* 3.1–3; *Ephesians.* 5.1; *Magnesians.* 13.1; cf. Brent, 'Ignatius', 39–46.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

exhibited virtues in making his confession that caused it to be recorded that 'he was not lacking in the apostolic charism'.[75] Thus he was truly one of those who 'made their confession and were added to the rank (κληρῳ) of the martyrs'.[76] Once again we see an ecclesial claim in the use of κληρός in this context. Ignatius prays too that, by virtue of his imprisonment and his participation in the prayer of the Ephesian community, he may be found, 'in the lot (ἐν κληρῷ) of the Ephesian … Christians who also were ever at one mind with the apostles'.[77] Κλήρος clearly was not yet confined to the clergy alone as the apostolic group marked out or assigned by God as mediators of Christ's redemptive sufferings.

Thus what Origen had argued, as Cyprian's contemporary in Alexandria, shows that Lucianus' position had a considerable history. It was not limited to Africa alone, where, incidentally, the example of Perpetua shows that a theological justification of this sort was quite traditional. We have seen that it was also claimed by the Churches of Lyons and Vienne that 'martyrs gave grace to those not martyrs', and 'in those things in which they had abundance, they supplied those who lacked them'.[78] Both Origen and these early documents bear witness to the fact that priesthood as *sacerdotium* and not simply as *presbyterium* was not exclusively associated with ordination. In one strand of *TA* an Aaronic and therefore sacerdotal imagery is associated with ordination, but, as I have argued elsewhere, sacerdotalism is not represented in other strands of that composite[79] work nor in the Irenaean tradition. Ordination to the presbyterate or episcopate did not, therefore, generally evoke images of an exclusive priesthood.[80]

If we now consider the church order literature itself, as it emerges in AD 217 with *TA*, we find that the ambiguity over whether a person absolved *qua* confessor, *qua* presbyter or *qua* bishop is resolved, but hardly in a way that Cyprian was to allow. Could not the martyr, as Origen had asserted, also possess the 'high priestly spirit' (πνεύμα ἀρχιερατικόν) by virtue of his own sacrifice, or indeed the 'apostolic charism' (ἀποστολικόν χαρίσμα) claimed for the lay Alexander amongst the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne?[81] In other words, does not the act of confession itself qualify someone to function as a presbyter? To answer this question, we may turn to a consideration of examples from the church order literature.

[75] ἠν γὰρ καὶ οὐκ ἄμοιρος ἀποστολικοῦ χαρίσματος: *HE* v.1.49.

[76] ὁμολογοῦντες προσετίθεντο τῷ τῶν μαρτύρων κληρῷ: ibid. v.1.26.

[77] ἐν κλήρῳ' Εφεσίων … τῶν Χριστιανῶν, οἳ καὶ τοῖς ἀποστόλοις πάντοτε συνήνεσαν: Ignatius, *Ephes.* 11.2.

[78] μάρτυρες τοῖς μὴ μάρτυσιν: *HE* v.1.45; ἐχαρίζοντο ἐν οἷς ἐπλεόναζον αὐτοί, τοῦτο τοῖς ἐνδεεστέροις ἐπήρκουν: ibid. vi.2.6–7.

[79] *TA* 3, 6.

[80] Brent, *Hippolytus*, 478–90ff.; cf. A. Ehrhardt, *The apostolic succession in the first two centuries of the Church*, London 1953, 44–61; W. Telfer, *The office of a bishop*, London 1962, ch. iv.

[81] *HE* v.1.49.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

TA 9 answers clearly this question in the affirmative, although the subsequent editing of this passage by the author of *CA* would in fact support Cyprian's contrary position.

In the text attested by the majority of witnesses to *TA* we have a section, headed '9. *De confessoribus*' in Botte's edition.[82] Unfortunately the Verona Latin Palimpsest breaks off half-way through the prayer prior to this section (8. *De diaconis*),[83] the end of which was supplied by Botte from the *Testamentum domini* (*TD*). Section 9, *De confessoribus*, which now follows with the support of S(AE), is marked by a number of changes in later versions, to be precise, in the *CA*, in the *Epitome* of Book VIII of the same, in the *Testamentum domini*, and in the *Canones Hippolyti*. These changes represent a rejection of the ideology which links confessorship with ordination, and thus parallel the shift in Cyprian by which the priest and not the martyr emerges as bearer of the icon of the suffering and rising Christ.

TA 9 informs us that

> A Confessor, however, if he has been in chains on account of the Lord's name, hands shall not be laid on him for the diaconate or presbyterate. For he has the honour of the presbyterate through his confession. If however he is to be ordained bishop, hands shall be laid on him.[84]

In view of the alterations of this text in later versions, it cannot be certain that it stood in precisely this form in the lost sections of the Verona Palimpsest. As it stands, the text supports Lucianus' contention that the confessors perform a presbyteral and diaconal ministry without ordination: martyrdom therefore replaces not only baptism but also ordination as far as presbyters and deacons are concerned.[85] It is not possible to view the text as simply and minimally recommending that a confessor be ordained by a bishop in accordance with the rite prescribed in *TA* 2 but without the imposition of hands. If that had been the case, the text would have included a suitable explanation to that effect. *TA* 2 orders presbyters to keep silent when they join in the imposition of hands at the ordination of a priest.

[82] B. Botte, 'Le Texte de la tradition apostolique', *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* xxii (1955), 177–85, and 'L' Ordre d'après les prières d'ordination', in J. Guyot (ed.), *Études sur le sacrement de l'ordre*, Paris 1957, 13–41.

[83] *Verona Bibl. cap.* LV (53), published as *Didascaliae apostolorum: fragmenta veronensia latina: accedunt canonum qui dicuntur apostolorum et aegyptorum reliquiae*, ed. E. Hauler, Leipzig 1900, 110 (LXXII, 35).

[84] 'Confessor autem, si fuit in vinculis propter nomen domini, non imponetur manus super eum ad diaconatum vel presbyterium. Habet enim honorem presbyteratus per suam confessionem. Si autem instituitur episcopus imponetur ei manus.'

[85] 'Si apprehenditur catechumenus propter nomen domini, ne faciat cor duplex propter testimonium. Si enim violentia ei infertur et occiditur, cum peccata sua nondum remissa sunt, iustificabitur. Accepit enim baptismum in sanguine suo': *TA* 19.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

If this had been the true intention, it would, therefore, have been characteristic for *TA* to have stated in a rubric that a martyr should be ordained in the normal way, but without the imposition of hands. Clearly no one read the text of *TA* 9 as implying ordination by the normal rite with a single omission in the case of a confessor. Furthermore, if the text of *TA* 9 had been so read, this interpretation would have been reflected in subsequent church order literature. If *TA* 9 had borne such an innocuous interpretation, *CA* would not have engaged in the radical alteration of the text that we shall now examine.

The textual relationship between the various works of the church order literature is now very obscure. *TA* was not part of the *Didasc*. until the fourth century when the two were combined to form the *CA*. Thus the next witness to martyrdom and ordination is to be found in *CA* viii.23. 2–4 (= *Epit*. 14.2–3), which clearly reverses the meaning of *TA* 9, *De confessoribus*. A confessor is not honoured for his confession alone, but, 'if there is need for him as a bishop, priest or deacon, he is to be ordained'.[86] The Greek term χειροτονεῖν refers literally, of course, to the imposition of hands. The text then continues with the following proscription:

> If a confessor not having received the imposition of hands shall forcibly steal for himself some such honour as this on the grounds that it is his by confession, he shall be struck off and rejected. For he is not since he has denied Christ's ordinance and 'is worse than an unbeliever'.[87]

Thus we find that, in the so-called *Epitome* which is in fact prior to *CA*, having been written around AD 300, Cyprian's argument against the Church of the Martyrs had prevailed, backed up by a system of episcopal authority based upon mutual recognition and the meeting of synods. *CA* clearly agreed with Cyprian in taking back what *TA* 9 had originally given. There was in the earlier document no specific reference to an express 'ordinance (πρόσταγμα) of the Lord', as the exclusive source of the authority of the bishop alone to 'bind' and 'loose' (Matt. xvi.18), and thus expressly excluding the confessor from ordination through suffering. Clearly the writer is opposing, on the same grounds as those on which Cyprian opposed Lucianus, a living and powerful tradition within the community that conveys authority to the confessors. Cyprian had great difficulties with the ministry of the Church of the Martyrs, which *CA*'s corrections to *TA* show to have been originally independent of episcopal activity, and self-authenticating.

Cyprian constantly refers to the Lord's commandment in Matt. xvi.18, frequently claiming that Lucianus disobeys it; this is arguably the

[86] ἐὰν δὲ χρεία αὐτοῦ ᾖ εἰς ἐπίσκοπον ἢ πρεσβύτερον ἢ διάκονον χειροτονεῖται: *CA* viii.23.2–3 (= *Epit*. 14.2–3).

[87] εἰ δέ τις ὁμολογητὴς μὴ χειροτονηθεὶς ἁρπάσῃ ἑαυτῷ ἀξίωμά τι τοιοῦτον ὡς διὰ τὴν ὁμολογίαν οὕτος καθαιρείσθω καὶ ἀποβαλλέσθω. οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἐπείπερ ἤρνηται τὴν χριστοῦ διάταξιν καὶ ἔστιν ἀπίστου χείρων.: *CA* viii.23.4 (= *Epit*. 14.3).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

'ordinance of Christ' (χριστοῦ διάταξις) to which *CA* here appeals.[88] But his words also imply the way in which a confessor would claim and assume office as presbyter or deacon.

Such a confessor would appear in the community and announce his ordination, if not also his baptism, through blood as a *fait accompli*. There was no polite inquiry as to whether the community would accept the presbyter or deacon without imposition of hands. He was not questioned about the circumstances of his confession before receiving episcopal ordination using the rite in *TA* 7–8, but omitting the imposition of hands prescribed there. *CA* rather shows, in its hostility to the confessor's claims, that the latter appeared to be 'forcibly stealing for himself some such honour as this on the grounds that it is his by confession'.

It is against such a background that we can interpret specifically Celerinus' references to Lucianus' authority as that of 'antistes, id est minister'.

In the light of our discussion of *TA* 9, and related texts, we need not ask whence, by imposition of hands, Lucianus received his ordination. The presbyterate or diaconate, conveyed through his martyr's sufferings short of death that made him a confessor, would have sufficed to enable him to bring the only sacrament of reconciliation known in the tradition, namely the offering and communicating of the eucharist to the lapsed penitent.

Cyprian was, however, to attack the Church of the Martyrs by creating a new theology of martyrdom. Accordingly, he broadens the definition of confessorship in *TA* 9, in order that confessors could no longer claim through their suffering a status that he and Cornelius possessed without that suffering. In ignoring, as we have already seen, what Pellegrino described as the 'corporate character' of confessorship, he was also able to ignore the theological implications, drawn by Origen, of a martyr, like Blandina, acting as the icon of the suffering and forgiving Christ. Thus a confessor who assumed the office of presbyter without ordination could be condemned in the terms of the condemnation in *CA* viii. 23.4.

Let us now see how Cyprian was to proceed.

V

The definition of what constitutes a confessor in *TA* 9 reveals the very tradition that Cyprian sought to alter radically. The passage continues:

> If however he is a confessor who has not been led before the authority, nor has been punished in chains, nor has been shut up in prison, nor has been condemned to some other punishment, but only by chance (*per occasionem*) derided on account of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and has been punished with a

[88] *CA* ii.18.2, and references at n. 24 above.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

domestic punishment (*castigatione domestica*), even though he has made a confession, he should have hands laid on him for whatever clerical office he is worthy.[89]

Clearly any confession that involves merely a *castigatio domestica* is inadequate as a substitute for ordination. The kind of beating reserved for a disobedient slave or for a schoolboy will not suffice. There has to be physical suffering involved for all the good reasons adduced by Ignatius the Martyr. Christ really suffered in the flesh, contrary to what the Docetists affirmed, and it was these real sufferings that must be replicated in the confessor commencing the martyr's μίμησις.[90]

Cyprian had thus to face the traditional claim that through physical suffering martyrs could function at least as presbyters and deacons without formal ordination, and hence through the grace of confessorship, they had the power to administer or offer the eucharistic sacrifice. Indeed, it may well be, in view of the later variations on the text, that the original *TA* 9, lacking in the Verona Palimpsest, applied also to a bishop and thus confessorship constituted Lucianus an *antistes/episcopus*.[91] That power, beyond absolute episcopal control, was all that was needed to effect the reconciliation of the lapsed before Cyprian's time. It was in order to make episcopal authority unambiguous that Cyprian had to impose a quite separate act of absolution, in the form of a laying on of hands by a bishop, quite distinct from the function of the presbyters and deacons, and the eucharist that they consecrated and administered.

Cyprian made it clear that the normal practice at Carthage in his time was for presbyters and deacons to administer communion; before his innovations, therefore, they had the power to grant absolution. Cyprian was concerned for the safety of presbyters and deacons who visited the imprisoned confessors.[92] But more than administering an extended communion seems to be implied by the description: 'the presbyters who even there made the offering in the presence of the confessors neither considering the fear of God not the honour of the bishop'. They also consecrated the gifts during their prison visits. Some presbyters had 'moderated the requests of the martyrs by their counsels' but others had decided to readmit the lapsed.[93] Such presbyters had not heeded

[89] 'Si autem confessor est qui non est ductus coram potestate (ἐξουσία) neque castigatus est (κολάζειν) in catenis neque inclusus est in carcere, neque damnatus est (κατακρίνειν) alia poena (καταδίκη), sed per occasionem despectus est tantum propter nomen domini nostri et castigatus est (κολάζειν) castigatione (κόλασις) domestica, si autem confessus est (ὁμολογεῖν) quocumque officio (κλῆρος) sit dignus, imponatur manus super eum': *TA* 9.

[90] Ignatius, *Ephes.* 1.1; *Trall.* 9–10; *Smyrnaeans* 4.2; *Rom.* 6.3.

[91] Such a possibility would imply a pre-Cyprianic view of episcopacy that was congregational and cultural rather than territorial, for which see Brent, *Hippolytus*, chs vi–vii.

[92] *Ep.* v.2.1; *Letters of Cyprian*, i. 187 n. 13.

[93] 'presbyteri quoque qui illic apud confessores offerunt nec timorem Dei nec episcopi honorem cogitantes': *ep.* xv.1.2.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Cyprian's wishes, since 'they had communion with the lapsed and offered and administered the eucharist'.[94]

Cyprian claimed the right to forbid them to offer the sacrifice until the persecution was at an end and their case could be heard by a gathering of clerics, confessors and the laity. It is significant that, in issuing this threat, Cyprian did not appeal to any tradition of previous episcopal prerogatives but claimed to be following Christ's command in a vision.[95]

But how could he support his case against the exercise of *potestas offerandi* or *administrandi* by presbyters and deacons, who could be *confessores* without formal ordination, as in Lucianus' case? As discussed in section III Cyprian pretended that a *libellus pacis* was simply a recommendation to a bishop to absolve one who was lapsed. But this interpretation of his adversary's claim is quite minimalist. We saw that *ratio ad te constituit* meant more than this. Nevertheless Cyprian always assumes that the point at issue is confessors recommending absolution and restoration of communion without having the authority to effect this themselves.

But Lucianus, *antistes et minister*, and others like him, themselves claimed to offer the eucharistic sacrifice solely by virtue of their confessorship. They were not absolutely dependent on the visits of formally ordained clerics, though the food, gifts and prayers that they brought were no doubt helpful. Their need to write a *libellus pacis* to Cyprian and his clergy on behalf of others was rather a consequence of the restraints of physical confinement and torture that prevented the confessors themselves giving the lapsed communion in such a place. Furthermore, they might not survive and, therefore, other clergy needed to know what they had done. The *confessores* were able to act in special, mystical communion with the departed martyrs. In consequence, Cyprian found it difficult to support his authority and insist that all *lapsi* in a state of good health remained unreconciled, whether by means of a *libellus pacis* or not.

Cyprian accepted neither the argument that confessorship eliminates the need for ordination, nor the requirement of vigorous, physical punishment. His masterstroke was now to extend the concept of martyrdom, and in so doing to invalidate physical suffering as the qualification for *ordinatio per confessionem*. In *ep.* xii he commands the presbyters and deacons of Carthage to exercise care for the confessors in prison, but insists that those who die in prison without being tortured were to be added to the blessed martyrs. They had in God's eyes suffered what they had wished that they had suffered.[96] In this way Cyprian could

[94] 'communicent cum lapsis et offerant et eucharistiam tradant': *ep.* xvi.3.2. See also *ep.* xvii.2.1: 'Audio quosdam tamen de presbyteris … cum lapsis communicare coepisse et offerre pro illis et eucharistiam dare.'

[95] *Ep.* xvi.4.2.

[96] 'Corporibus etiam omnium, qui etsi torti non sunt, in carcere tamen glorioso exitu mortis excedunt, inpertiatur et vigilantia et cura propensior. Neque enim virtus eorum aut honor minor est quominus ipsi quoque inter beatos martyres adgregentur. Quod in illis est

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

deprive Lucianus, *antistes et minister*, of the exclusiveness of his claim to exercise a separate ministry to himself. If exile, flight or confiscation of goods can also count as making someone a confessor, then Cyprian and Cornelius will have identical authority to Lucianus and the Church of the Martyrs.

There had been an ambiguity over whether the right to absolve was exercised by Ignatius and Polycarp *qua* cleric or *qua* martyr, and therefore an ambiguity over whether Perpetua and Alexander could also absolve. But once one answered, as Lucianus did, that it was *qua* martyr, then in consequence what was destined to become unambiguously the official hierarchy was deprived of such status as they lacked a confessorship which required physical suffering. Lucianus was claiming, after all, some such status when he commanded them: 'Optamus te cum sanctis martyribus pacem habere.' None of the prominent bishops of Cyprian's own day would have fulfilled the strict definition of suffering required by *TA* 9 in order to be ranked with the confessors, and therefore none could have become presbyters or deacons, if not bishops, without formal ordination by the imposition of hands.

Fabian, bishop of Rome and Cornelius' predecessor, is claimed as a martyr rather early in the persecution, in the first weeks of AD 250.[97] But no account survives of his martyrdom. That he was so regarded seems to rest upon little more than Cyprian's tendency to extend the category of martyr. *Ep*. ix.1.1–2 refers to a letter about Fabian's *gloriosus exitus* of which he had received a 'celebre et inlustre testimonium'.[98]

Cornelius too had the epithets of martyrdom applied to him, but only in Cyprian's extended sense. God protected Cornelius even though he sat in his *cathedra* menaced by the ferocious edicts that he resisted. Therefore 'he must surely be accounted amongst the glorious confessors and martyrs'.[99] Cornelius was exiled to Centumcellae sometime after May 253 when Cyprian wrote *ep*. lx, and he died there of natural causes. But Cyprian did not yet know of his death, and regarded the imprisoned Cornelius as 'leader in the confession for your brethren … the whole Church of Rome has in effect confessed the Lord'.[100] Cornelius is 'the bishop and blessed martyr'.[101] In both letters, Cornelius and Lucius are furthermore held up as validating their orders against Novatian and other heretics by their confession in an extended sense.[102]

toleraverunt quidquid tolerare parati et prompti fuerunt. Qui se tormentis et morti sub oculis Dei obtulit passus est quidquid pati voluit': *ep*. xii.1.2. See also *Letters of Cyprian*, i. 249 n. 8.

[97] January 19: *Liber pontificalis* xxi.1, ed. L. Duchesne, Paris 1886; January 20: *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, ed. H. Delehaye, P. Peeters and M. Coens, *Acta sanctorum Novembris*, ii/2, Brussels 1931, 51.; xiii Kal. Feb: ed. Chronographer of 354, *Depositio martyrum*, ed. T. Mommsen, MGH, Chronica minora, Berlin 1931, ix.lxx, 71.

[98] *Letters of Cyprian*, i. 220, 221 n. 4. [99] *Ep*. lv.9,2. [100] *Ep*. lx.1.2.

[101] *Ep*. lxi.3.1. [102] *Epp*. lx.3.1; lxi.3.1.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Certainly there is archaeological evidence for initially bracketing together Fabian and Cornelius and not including either within the stricter definition of confessorship in the church order literature. In the so-called tomb of the popes in the Callistan complex there are sepulchral inscriptions for both Fabian and Cornelius. In the case of Fabian, a different and later hand has clearly added 'MR'.[103] Cornelius is commemorated as *episcopus* and *martyr* in the same hand, but the addition of the latter is an afterthought.[104] Clearly the letters of Cyprian to the Roman community had not been without effect in diffusing his novel and extended view of the concept of confessorship, which the church order literature had not recognised. Though Fabian's epitaph might withhold the title, Cornelius' clearly incorporated it, if only as part of a later addition to the original inscription.

In an argumentative *tour de force*, Cyprian now applied Lucianus' argument for the sacramental validity of the ministry of the martyrs to that of the formally ordained clergy. Their authority could be derived both from their confessorship and from the imposition of hands in ordination. Cyprian was to claim the status of confessor for himself.[105] In so doing, he was able to appropriate the image of martyr as *sacerdos* to that of episcopus as *sacerdos*.

That Cyprian felt the force of such a tradition is further evidenced in the way in which he was prepared to ordain confessors by means of the imposition of hands, and so extinguish the possibility of sacramental ministry *qua* confessor and not *qua* cleric. Cyprian wrote of the youthful Aurelius, whom he claimed by his double confession to be a confessor according both to his extended category of martyrdom and the stricter, traditional one. In the first confession he 'suffered exile' ('factus extorris'), while in the second he 'overcame the tortures'. However he is not to be a presbyter or deacon though 'such a man deserved higher grades of clerical appointment and greater advancement'.[106] Cyprian did not admit, of course, that confessorship granted such offices according to *TA* 9. Cyprian decided, in defiance of that tradition, that, for the time being, Aurelius should begin with the office of reader.

Cyprian's grounds for dispensing with the usual examination and election by clergy and people to ordained offices were significant. He claimed that 'the votes of God take precedence' ('praecedunt divina suffragia').[107] Cyprian's justification was almost Origen's in that Christ is specially present in the confessor: 'the voice which confessed' is 'to read the gospel of Christ whereby men become his witnesses'. But Cyprian followed neither Origen's logic, nor the injunction of *TA* 9. Only episcopal authority could admit Aurelius even to the lower ranks of the clergy, and only time and further examination, with the necessary

[103] *ICUR* iv.1094. [104] Ibid. iv.9367. [105] *Ep.* il.2.4.
[106] *Ep.* xxxviii.1.2–2.1. [107] *Ep.* xxxviii. 1.1.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

imposition of episcopal hands, would admit him later to the diaconate and presbyterate. 'Such a man merited further grades of clerical ordination, and greater advancement … but for the time being it is resolved that he will begin with the office of reader.'[108] All was now subjected to Cyprian's *placet*.

Interestingly Aurelius behaved rather like the condemned stereotype of *CA* viii.23.4 who sought 'to steal by force the honour of ordination' (IV). But Cyprian did not treat his behaviour as *seditio* but rather as youthful impatience when, apparently without sanction, the confessor simply assumed the office of reader and read.[109] Clearly, however, when Cyprian appointed as reader, it was on the implied condition that, if he were to progress to the diaconate or presbyterate, it could only be through the imposition of the bishop's hands. Thus Cyprian violated the martyr tradition of *TA* 9. The confessor was no longer to possess a self-authenticating ministry.

The appointment of Aurelius is associated with that of Celerinus in *ep*. xxxix. Here was definitely a proselytizing *coup* as Celerinus was originally identified with Lucianus' Church of the Martyrs in *ep*. xxi. Celerinus too was offered the prospect of progression to a higher grade, but one to which, according to Cyprian, his confessorship alone did not entitle him. Only the office of reader was fitting for the youthful confessor at this time, and, 'it will be seen whether there may be a higher grade in the Church to which it will be possible to progress'.[110] Both Celerinus and Aurelius were to take their seats with the presbyterate when they were older, but in the meantime they were to receive presbyteral allowances.[111]

Cyprian thus appeared to agree with the martyr tradition regarding self-authenticating ordination whilst in practice negating all possibility of actually following that tradition. The formally ordained clergy were to absorb into their numbers the confessors on Cyprian's own terms, and to assimilate the image of the martyr to that of the priest.

From the cult of the martyrs Cyprian appropriated his general theology of the priest as imitator of Christ at the eucharist as the following words make clear:

> For if Christ Jesus … is himself the great high priest (*summus sacerdos*) … and if he offered himself as a sacrifice to the Father (*sacrificium patri*) … and directed

[108] 'Merebatur talis clericae ordinationis ulteriores gradus et incrementa maiora … sed interim placuit ut ab officio lectionis incipiat.': *ep*. xxxviii. 2.1.

[109] 'Since joy causes over-hastiness (*quoniam semper gaudium properat*), and rejoicing cannot tolerate delay (*nec potest moras ferre laetitia*), he read for us on Sunday (*domenico legit interim nobis*)': *ep*. xxxviii.2.2.

[110] 'ulterior gradus ad quem profici in ecclesia possit': *ep*. xxxix.4.2.

[111] 'Hos tamen lectores interim constitutos sciatis … . Ceterum presbyterii honorem designasse nos illis iam sciatis, ut et sportulis idem cum presbyteris honorentur et divisiones mensurinas aequitatis quantitatibus partiantur, sessuri nobiscum provectis et corroboratis annis suis': *ep*. xxxix.2.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

that this should be done in remembrance of him, then without doubt a priest truly serves in Christ's place (*vice Christi*) who imitates (*imitatur*) what Christ did, and offers up a true and complete sacrifice (*et sacrificium verum et plenum*) …[112]

TA 3 had spoken of the bishop as high priest loosening every bond and offering propitiatory sacrifices in the sanctuary. But here for the first time Cyprian associated the action of the priest as the μίμησις specifically of Christ's sacrificial suffering previously associated with the martyr. For Ignatius the bishop had sat in the sanctuary on the seat of God the Father, and the presbyters had represented the apostles. The deacons represented the service rather than the sacrifice of Christ. It is the μίμησις of Ignatius *qua* martyr that is here, in *CA*, assimilated exclusively to the function of the priesthood in a way that Ignatius had never envisaged.

We have already noted in *CA* alterations to the martyr tradition that mirror Cyprianic developments. Here too we find the Cyprianic revolution that attributed the μίμησις of the martyr to the office of the priesthood, particularly in the priestly function of giving absolution. Bishops are to become imitators of Christ in taking away sin through the 'binding and loosing' of the penitential discipline.[113] Bishops, deacons and deaconesses, in laying down their lives in the service of the Church, become also, like the martyrs, μιμηταί of Christ's service and suffering, 'since we are imitators of him and assigned to Christ's place', in a passage where *CA*'s Greek is very loose.[114]

The theme of μίμησις in Ignatius was by contrast primarily that of the martyr. Whereas the Constitutionalist's bishop imitated Christ by taking away the people's sins in absolution, in Ignatius 'imitation' is closely allied with sharing Christ's suffering in martyrdom, as we saw in Ignatius' *Romans* and in *Ephesians*. *CA*, on the other hand, preferred to apply the term to the clergy in the context of purity and of giving absolution. Indeed, in his addition to the Didascalian text the author of *CA* remedied this paucity of references to μίμησις in the book on martyrs. When the *Didasc*. simply pronounced blessed someone arrested trying to give help to imprisoned martyrs, *CA* added: 'because he has become a partner of the martyrs and an imitator of Christ's sufferings',[115] though 'imitators' does occur once in the Syriac text in a reference to the martyrs.[116]

[112] *Ep*. lxiii.14.4; cf. J. D. Laurance, '*Priest' as type of Christ: the leader of the eucharist in salvation history according to Cyprian of Carthage*, New York 1984, 224–5.

[113] *CA* ii.25.9.

[114] 'quia imitatores eius sumus et locum Christi sortiti': ibid. iii.19.4.

[115] κοινωνὸς μαρτύρων καὶ μιμητής: ibid. v.2.3.

[116] With v.6.10 cf. R. Hugh Connolly, *Didascalia apostolorum: the Syriac version translated and accompanied by the Verona Latin fragments*, Oxford 1929, 164, line 24. For an earlier version of my comparison here see A. Brent, 'The relations between Ignatius and the *Didascalia*', *Second Century* viii (1991), 129–56.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In the sense of being imitators, therefore, bishops become the mediators between God in Christ and the laity subject to them. Because they forgive sins in God's place they can become 'mediators between God and the faithful (οἱ μεσίται θεοῦ καὶ πιστῶν)'.[117] In order to absolve from sin they must be free from sin,[118] and in the act of absolution they imitate or become patterns of Christ's passion: 'For you are imitators (μιμηταί) of Christ, and as he himself "bore the sins of all of you" so also you ought to make away with (ἐξιδιοποεῖσθαι) the sins of the people.'[119] The martyrs likewise are found pure because they imitate Christ's passion.[120]

No clearer commentary can be given on the theological logic that enabled Cyprian and his successors to obliterate the suffering and absolving Christ from the face of the martyr, and inscribe it anew on the face of the priest-bishop. In Cyprian's conflict with the circle of Lucianus, we have traced the different patterns within that logic and have shown how they underlay his carefully contrived political stratagems. We have also shown how certain changes in church order literature mirror Cyprian's work.

[117] *CA* ii.25.7. [118] Ibid. ii.1.8; 11.1. [119] Ibid. ii.25.9. [120] Ibid. v.8.1.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046902002555 Published online by Cambridge University Press