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ART. I.—*The Donatist Controversy.*

. 1. *The External History.*

DONATISM was by far the most important schism in the history of the ancient church, and involved important principles and measures concerning the true nature and discipline of the church, which reappear from time to time in active conflict, although under ever new forms and aspects; since history never repeats itself except in its general laws of Divine appointment and under providential control, and in its general tendencies of human nature and Christian life. For a whole century this schism divided the Christians of North Africa into two hostile camps. Like the earlier schisms in the preceding age of Cyprian, during the middle of the third century, it arose from the conflict of the more rigid and the more indulgent theories of discipline in reference to the restoration of the lapsed. But through the intervention of the nominally Christianized state since Constantine, it assumed at the same time an ecclesiastico-political character. The rigoristic penitential discipline had been represented in the previous period, especially by the Montanists and Novatians, who were still living;

while the milder principle and practice had found its most powerful support in the Roman church, and, since the time of Constantine, had generally prevailed.

The beginnings of the Donatist schism appear in the Dioclesian persecution, which revived that controversy concerning church discipline and martyrdom. The rigoristic party, favoured by Secundus of Tigisis, at that time primate of Numidia, and led by the bishop Donatus of Casæ Nigræ, rushed to the martyr's crown with fanatical contempt of death, and saw in flight from danger, or in the delivering up of the sacred books, only cowardice and treachery, which should for ever exclude from the fellowship of the church. The moderate party, at whose head stood the bishop of Mensurius and his archdeacon and successor Cæcilian, advocated the claims of prudence and discretion, and cast suspicion on the motives of the forward confessors and martyrs. So early as the year 305 a schism was imminent, in the matter of an episcopal election for the city of Cita; but no formal outbreak occurred until after the cessation of the persecution in 311, and then the difficulty arose in connection with the hasty election of Cæcilian to the bishopric of Carthage. The Donatists refused to acknowledge him, because in his ordination the Numidian bishops were slighted, and the service was performed by the bishop Felix of Aptungis, or Aptunga, whom they declared to be a *traditor*, that is, one who had delivered up the sacred writings to the heathen persecutors. In Carthage itself he had many opponents, among whom were the elders of the congregation (*seniores plebis*), and particularly a wealthy and superstitious widow, Lucilla, who was accustomed to kiss certain relics before her daily communion, and seemed to prefer them to the spiritual power of the sacrament. Secundus of Tigisis and seventy Numidian bishops, mostly of the rigoristic school, assembled at Carthage, deposed and excommunicated Cæcilian, who refused to appear, and elected the lector Majorinus, a favourite of Lucilla, in his place. After his death in 315, Majorinus was succeeded by DONATUS, a gifted man, of fiery energy and eloquence, revered by his admirers as a wonder-worker, and styled THE GREAT. From

this man, and not from the Donatus mentioned above, the name of the party was derived.*

Each party endeavoured to gain churches abroad to its side, and thus the schism spread. The Donatists appealed to the emperor Constantine—the first instance of such appeal, and a step which they afterwards had to repent. The emperor, who was at that time in Gaul, referred the matter to the Roman bishop Melchiades (Miltiades) and five Gallican bishops, before whom the accused Cæcilian and ten African bishops from each side were directed to appear. The decision went in favour of Cæcilian, and he was now, except in Africa, universally regarded as the legitimate bishop of Carthage. The Donatists remonstrated. A second investigation, which Constantine intrusted to the Council of Arles (Arelate) in 314, led to the same result. When the Donatists hereupon appealed from this ecclesiastical tribunal to the judgment of the emperor himself, he likewise declared against them at Milan in 316, and soon afterwards issued penal laws against them, threatening them with the banishment of their bishops, and the confiscation of their churches.

Persecution made them enemies of the state whose help they had invoked, and fed the flame of their fanaticism. They made violent resistance to the imperial commissioner, Ursacius, and declared that no power on earth could induce them to hold church fellowship with the “rascal” (nebulo) Cæcilian. Constantine perceived the fruitlessness of the forcible restriction of religion, and, by an edict in 321, granted the Donatists full liberty of faith and worship. He remained faithful to this policy of toleration, and exhorted the catholics to patience and indulgence. At a council in 330 the Donatists numbered two hundred and seventy bishops.

Constans, the successor of Constantine, resorted again to violent measures; but neither threats nor promises made any impression on the party. It came to blood. The Circum-

* “Pars Donati, Donatistæ, Donatiani.” Previously they were commonly called “Pars Majorini.” Optatus of Mileve seems, indeed, to know of only one Donatus. But the Donatists expressly distinguish Donatus Magnus of Carthage from Donatus a Casis Nigris. Likewise Augustine: *Contra Cresconium Donat.* ii. 1; though he himself had formerly confounded the two.

celliones, a sort of Donatist mendicant monks, who wandered about the country among the cottages of the peasantry,* carried on plunder, arson, and murder, in conjunction with mutinous peasants and slaves, and in crazy zeal for the martyr's crown, as genuine soldiers of Christ, rushed into fire and water, and threw themselves down from rocks. Yet there were Donatists who disapproved this revolutionary frenzy. The insurrection was suppressed by military force; several leaders of the Donatists were executed, others were banished, and their churches were closed or confiscated. Donatus the Great died in exile. He was succeeded by one Parmenianus.

Under Julian the Apostate, the Donatists again obtained, with all other heretics and schismatics, freedom of religion, and returned to the possession of their churches, which they painted anew, to redeem them from their profanation by the catholics. But under the subsequent emperors, their condition grew worse, both from persecutions without and from dissensions within. The quarrel between the two parties extended into all the affairs of daily life; the Donatist bishop, Faustinus of Hippo, for example, allowing none of the members of his church to bake bread for the catholic inhabitants.

2. *Augustine and the Donatists—Their Persecution and Extinction.*

At the end of the fourth century, and in the beginning of the fifth, the great St. Augustine, of Hippo, where there was also a strong congregation of the schismatics, made a powerful effort, by instruction and persuasion, to reconcile the Donatists with the catholic church. He wrote several works on the subject, and set the whole African church in motion against them. They feared his superior dialectics, and avoided him wherever they could. The matter, however, was brought, by order of the emperor in 411, to a three days' arbitration at

* "Cellas circumientes rusticorum." Hence the name *Circumcelliones*. But they called themselves *Milites Christi*, or *Agonistici*. Their date and origin are uncertain. According to Optatus of Milevi, they first appeared under Constans, in 347.

Carthage, attended by two hundred and eighty-six catholic bishops, and two hundred and seventy-nine Donatist.*

Augustine, who, in two beautiful sermons before the beginning of the disputation, exhorted to love, forbearance, and meekness, was the chief speaker on the part of the catholics; Petilian on the part of the schismatics. Marcellinus, the imperial tribune and notary, and a friend of Augustine, presided, and was to pass the decisive judgment. This arrangement was obviously partial, and secured the triumph of the catholics. The discussions related to two points: 1. Whether the catholic bishops Cæcilian and Felix of Aptunga were traditors; 2. Whether the church loses her nature and attributes by fellowship with heinous sinners. The balance of skill and argument was on the side of Augustine, though the Donatists brought much that was forcible against compulsion in religion, and against the confusion of the temporal and the spiritual powers. The imperial commissioner, as might be expected, decided in favour of the catholics. The separatists, nevertheless, persisted in their view; but their appeal to the emperor continued unsuccessful.

More stringent civil laws were now enacted against them, banishing the Donatist clergy from their country, imposing fines on the laity, and confiscating the churches. In 415 they were even forbidden to hold religious assemblies, upon pain of death.

Augustine himself, who had previously consented only to spiritual measures against heretics, now advocated force, to bring them into the fellowship of the church, out of which there was no salvation. He appealed to the command in the parable of the supper, Luke xiv. 23, to "compel them to come in;" where, however, the "compel" (*ἀνάγκασον*) is evidently but a vivid hyperbole for that holy zeal in the conversion of the heathen, which we find, for example, in the apostle Paul.

New eruptions of fanaticism ensued. A bishop, Gaudentius, threatened that, if the attempt were made to deprive him of his church by force, he would burn himself with his congrega-

* Augustine gives an account of the debate in his *Breviculus Collationis cum Donatistis*. (Opera, tom. ix. p. 545—580.)

tion in it, and vindicated this intended suicide by the example of Rhazis, in the second book of Maccabees, chap. xiv.

The conquest of Africa by the Arian Vandals in 428, devastated the African church, and put an end to the controversy, as the French Revolution swept both Jesuitism and Jansenism away. Yet a remnant of the Donatists, as we learn from the letters of Gregory I., perpetuated itself into the seventh century, still proving in their ruins the power of a mistaken puritanic zeal, and the responsibility and guilt of state-church persecution. In the seventh century, the entire African church sank under the Saracenic conquest.

3. Internal History of the Donatist Schism—Dogma of the Church.

The Donatist controversy was a conflict between separatism and catholicism; between disciplinary rigorism and disciplinary latitudinarianism; between the idea of the church as an exclusive community of regenerate saints, and the idea of the church as the general christendom of state and people. It revolved about the doctrine of the essence of the Christian church, and, in particular, of the predicate of holiness. It resulted in the completion by Augustine of the catholic dogma of the church, which had been partly developed by Cyprian in the conflict with a similar schism.

The Donatists, like Tertullian in his Montanistic writings, started from an ideal and spiritualistic conception of the church as a fellowship of saints, which, in a sinful world, could only be imperfectly realized. They laid chief stress on the predicate of the subjective holiness or personal worthiness of the several members, and made the catholicity of the church and the efficacy of the sacraments dependent upon that. The true church, therefore, is not so much a school of holiness, as a society of those who are already holy; or at least of those who appear so; for that there are hypocrites, not even the Donatists could deny, and as little could they in earnest claim infallibility in their own discernment of men. By the toleration of those who are openly sinful, the church loses her holiness, and ceases to be the church. Unholy priests are incapable of administering sacraments; for how can regeneration proceed

from the unregenerate, holiness from the unholy? No one can give what he does not himself possess. He who would receive faith from a faithless man, receives not faith but guilt.* It was on this ground, in fact, that they rejected the election of Cæcilian—that he had been ordained bishop by an unworthy person. On this ground they refused to recognize the catholic baptism as baptism at all. On this point they had some support in Cyprian, who likewise rejected the validity of heretical baptism, though not from the separatist, but from the catholic point of view, and who came into collision, upon this question, with Stephen of Rome.

Hence, like the Montanists and Novatians, they insisted on rigorous church discipline, and demanded the excommunication of all unworthy members, especially of such as had denied their faith, or given up the holy Scriptures under persecution. They resisted, moreover, all interference of the civil power in church affairs; though they themselves at first had solicited the help of Constantine. In the great imperial church, embracing the people in a mass, they saw a secularized Babylon, against which they set themselves off, in separatistic arrogance, as the only true and pure church. In support of their views, they appealed to the passages of the Old Testament, which speak of the external holiness of the people of God, and the procedure of Paul with respect to the fornicator at Corinth.

In opposition to this subjective and spiritualistic theory of the church, Augustine, as champion of the catholics, developed the objective, realistic theory, which has since been repeatedly reasserted, though with various modifications, not only in the Roman church, but also in the Protestant, against separatistic and schismatic sects. He lays chief stress on the catholicity of the church, and derives the holiness of individual members and the validity of ecclesiastical functions from it. He finds the essence of the church not in the personal character of the several Christians, but in the union of the whole church with

* Aug. contra literas Petil. l. 1. cap. 5 (tom. ix. p. 208): "Qui fidem a perfido sumserit, non fidem percipit, sed reatum; omnis enim res origine et radice consistit, et si caput non habet aliquid, nihil est."

Christ. Taking the historical point of view, he goes back to the founding of the church, which may be seen in the New Testament, which has spread over all the world, and which is connected through the unbroken succession of bishops with the apostles and with Christ. This alone can be the true church. It is impossible that she should all at once disappear from the earth, or should exist only in the African sect of the Donatists.* What is all that they may say of their little heap, in comparison with the great catholic christendom of all lands? Thus even numerical preponderance here enters as an argument; though, under other circumstances, it may prove too much, and would place the primitive church at a clear disadvantage in comparison with the prevailing Jewish and heathen masses, and the Evangelical church in its controversy with the Roman Catholic.

From the objective character of the church as a divine institution flows, according to the catholic view, the efficacy of all her functions, the sacraments in particular. When Petilian, at the *Collatio cum Donatistis*, said: "He who receives the faith from a faithless priest, receives not faith but guilt," Augustine answered: "But Christ is not unfaithful (*perfidus*), from whom I receive faith (*fidem*), not guilt (*reatum*). Christ, therefore, is properly the functionary, and the priest is simply his organ. My origin," said Augustine, on the same occasion, "is Christ, my root is Christ, my head is Christ. The seed, of which I was born, is the word of God, which I must obey, even though the preacher himself practise not what he preaches. I believe not in the minister by whom I am baptized, but in Christ, who alone justifies the sinner and can forgive guilt."†

* Augustin. ad Catholicos *Epistola contra Donatistas*, usually quoted under the title: *De unitate ecclesiæ*, c. 12 (Bened. ed., tom. ix. p. 360): "Quomodo coeptum sit ab Jerusalem, et deinde processum in Judæam et Samariam, et inde in totam terram, ubi adhuc crescit ecclesia, donec usque in finem etiam reliquas gentes, ubi adhuc non est, obtineat, scripturis sanctis testibus consequenter ostenditur: quisquis aliud evangelizaverit, anathema sit. Aliud autem evangelizat, qui periisse dicit de cætero mundo ecclesiam et in parte Donati in sola Africa remansisse dicit. Ergo anathema sit. Aut legat mihi hoc in scripturis sanctis, et non sit anathema."

† *Contra literas Petiliani*, l. i. c. 7. (*Opera*, tom. ix. p. 209): "Origo mea Christus est, radix mea Christus est, caput meum Christus est." . . . In the

Lastly, in regard to church discipline, the opponents of the Donatists agreed with them in considering it wholesome and necessary, but would keep it within the limits fixed for it by the circumstances of the time and the fallibility of men. A perfect separation of sinners from saints is impracticable before the final judgment. Many things must be patiently borne, that greater evil may be averted, and that those still capable of improvement may be improved, especially where the offender has too many adherents. "Man," says Augustine, "should punish in the spirit of love, until either the discipline and correction come from above, or the tares are pulled up in the universal harvest."* In support of this view, appeal was made to the Lord's parables of the tares among the wheat, and of the net which gathered together of every kind. (Matt. xiii.) These two parables were the chief exegetical battle-ground of the two parties. The Donatists understood by the field, not the church but the world. According to the Saviour's own exposition of the parable of the tares,† the catholics replied, that it was the kingdom of heaven, or the church, to which the parable referred as a whole, and pressed especially the warning of the Saviour not to gather up the tares before the final harvest, lest they root up also the wheat with them. The Donatists, moreover, made a distinction between unknown offenders, to whom alone the parable of the net referred, and notorious sinners. But this did not gain them much; for if the church compromises her character for holiness by contact with unworthy persons at all, it matters not whether they be openly unworthy before men or not, and no church whatever would be left on earth.

On the other hand, however, Augustine, who, no more than

same place: "Me innocentem non facit, nisi qui mortuus est propter delicta nostra et resurrexit propter justificationem nostram. Non enim in ministrum, per quem baptizos, credo; sed in eum qui justificat impium, ut deputetur mihi fides in justitiam."

* Aug. contra Epistolam Parmeniani, l. iii. c. 2, § 10—15. (Opera, t. ix. p. 62—66.)

† Breviculus Collat. c. Don. Dies tert. c. 8, § 10. (Opera, t. ix. p. 559): "Zizania inter triticum non in ecclesia, sed in ipso mundo permixta dixerunt; quoniam Dominus ait, *Ager est mundus.*" (Matt. xiii. 38.) As to the exegetical merits of the controversy, see Trench's *Notes on the Parables*, p. 83, seq. (9th Lond. edit. 1863,) and Lange's *Commentary on Matt. xiii.*

the Donatists, could relinquish the predicate of holiness for the church, found himself compelled to distinguish between a *true* and *mixed*, or merely apparent, *body of Christ*; forasmuch as hypocrites, even in this world, are not in and with Christ, but only appear to be.* And yet he repelled the Donatist charge of making two churches. In his view it is one and the same church which is now mixed with the ungodly, and will hereafter be pure, as it is the same Christ who once died, and now lives for ever, and the same believers, who are now mortal, and will yet put on immortality.†

With some modification we may find here the germ of the subsequent Protestant distinction of the visible and invisible church; which regards the invisible, not as another church, but as the *ecclesiola in ecclesia*, (or *ecclesiis*,) as the smaller communion of true believers among professors, and thus as the true substance of the visible church, and as contained within its limits, like the soul in the body, or the kernel in the shell. Here the moderate Donatist and scholarly theologian, Tychonius,‡

* *Corpus Christi verum atque permixtum, or verum atque simulatum.* Comp. De doctr. Christ. iii. 32, as quoted below in full.

† *Breviculus Collationis cum Donatistis, Dies tertius, cap. 10, § 19 and 20. (Opera, ix. 564):* “Deinde calumniantes, quod duas ecclesias Catholici dixerint, unam quæ nunc habet permixtos malos, aliam quæ post resurrectionem eos non esset habitura: veluti non iidem futuri essent sancti cum Christo regnaturi, qui nunc pro ejus nomine cum juste vivunt tolerant malos. . . . De duabus etiam ecclesiis calumniam eorum Catholici refutarunt, identidem expressius ostendentes, quid dixerint, id est, non eam ecclesiam, quæ nunc habet permixtos malos, alienam se dixisse a regno Dei, ubi non erunt mali commixti, sed eandem ipsam unam et sanctam ecclesiam nunc esse aliter tunc autem aliter futuram, nunc habere malos mixtos, tunc non habituram . . . sicut non ideo duo Christi, quia prior mortuus postea non moriturus.”

‡ Or Tichonius, as Augustine spells the name. Although himself a Donatist, he wrote against them, “qui contra Donatistas invictissime scripsit, cum fuerit Donatista,” (says Aug. De doctr. Christ. l. iii. c. 30, § 42.) He was opposed to re-baptism, and acknowledged the validity of the catholic sacraments; but he was equally opposed to the secularism of the catholic church and its mixture with the state, and adhered to the strict discipline of the Donatists. Of his works only one remains, viz. *Liber regularum* or *de septem regulis*, a sort of Biblical hermeneutics, or a guide for the proper understanding of the mysteries of the Bible. It was edited by Gallandi, in his *Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum*, tom. viii. pp. 107—129. Augustine notices these rules at length in his work, *De doctrina Christiana*, lib. iii. c. 30, sqq. (Opera, ed. Bened. tom. iii. p. 57, sqq.) Tychonius seems to have died before the close of

approached Augustine; calling the church a *twofold body of Christ*,* of which the one part embraces the true Christians, the other the apparent.† In this, as also in acknowledging the validity of catholic baptism, Tychonius departed from the Donatists; while he adhered to their views on discipline and opposed the catholic mixture of the church and the world. But neither he, nor Augustine, pursued this distinction to any clearer development. Both were involved, at bottom, in the confusion of Christianity with the church, and of the church with a particular outward organization.

By Rev. J. K. Wright,

ART. II.—*Modes of Evangelization.*

It has come to be a question of no small interest, and one the importance of which will increase as the activities of the church are aroused, What is the proper method of directing these activities, or in other words, what is the proper mode of evangelization? It is manifest that much of the efficiency of our efforts must depend on the manner in which they are carried on. It is not sufficient to attempt to do a thing—we must know how to do it. We may, with the best desires, take hold of any reform, and accomplish but little, simply from wrong plans, just as one might wish to heal a sick person, and labour with the best of motives, and yet be of no service. Knowledge

the fourth century. Comp. on him Tillemont, *Memoires*, tom. vi. p. 81, sq., and an article of A. Vogel, in *Herzog's Real-Encyclopædie*, vol. xvi. pp. 534—536.

* “*Corpus Domini bipartitum.*” This was the second of his rules for the true understanding of the Scriptures.

† Augustine objects only to his mode of expression, *De doctr. Christ.* iii. 32, tom. iii. 58: “*Secunda [regula Tichonii] est de Domini corpore bipartito: non enim revera Domini corpus est, quod cum illo non erit in æternum; sed dicendum fuit de Domine corpore vero atque permixto, aut vero atque simulato, vel quid aliud; quia non solum in æternum, verum etiam nunc hypocritæ non cum illo esse dicendi sunt, quamvis in ejus esse videantur ecclesia. Unde poterat ista regula et sic appellari, ut diceretur de permixta ecclesia.*” Comp. also Dr. Baur, *K. G. vom 4—6 Jahr.*, p. 224.