

## THE VISIBLE AND SPIRITUAL CHURCH: CYPRIAN'S PNEUMATOLOGY AMID PASTORAL CRISES

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**Abstract:** *Cyprian of Carthage was arguably the most influential Latin bishop of the mid-third century. During his episcopal tenure, schisms occurred in both Carthage and Rome over how to treat members of the church who had temporarily apostatized during a time of intense persecution. Cyprian intertwined the church and salvation to solve this problem. Much scholarship has noted that he connected the two, but relatively few works have examined how he defended this theology. A study of Cyprian's complete corpus reveals that he turned to pneumatology when faced with the pastoral dilemmas of apostasy and schism. He held to an early notion of a spiritual church, which he defined as those the Holy Spirit indwelt. Cyprian argued that salvation could be found only within the church because the Spirit bestowed his saving presence only upon those within the church. Schism seemed to split the church, but the Spirit of God would not divide himself. Therefore, his presence remained with the one united church. Additionally, the divine Spirit also remained sovereign over the church and salvation. This article therefore contends that Cyprian intertwined the church and salvation through connecting both to the Holy Spirit, but Cyprian's high pneumatology prevented him from conflating the visible church and the spiritual church together.*

**Key words:** *Cyprian of Carthage, Holy Spirit, the church, salvation, early church, schism, ecclesial unity, baptism, authority of bishops, pastoral theology*

Cyprian of Carthage (bishop 248–258) arguably shaped the thought of other patristic writers in the Western church more than any other person besides Augustine of Hippo (bishop 394–430). Cyprian's ideas persisted long after his martyrdom at the hands of Roman officials during the Valerian persecution (256–260). In fact, the Donatist controversy in the fourth and fifth centuries partly involved a dispute over who was following Cyprian's theology better—Augustine or the Donatists.<sup>1</sup> Cyprian's legacy included his arguments for tying together the ministries of the church and the application of salvation.<sup>2</sup> Many works have noted this relationship.

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<sup>1</sup> David E. Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity: An Introduction to a Unique Context and Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2017), 154.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed study of the relationship between the church and salvation for Cyprian, see D. Forrest Mills, "Extra ecclesiam nulla salus: The Relationship between Ecclesiology and Soteriology for Cyprian of Carthage (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021). Both ecclesiology and soteriology in this article have their fullest meanings. In other words, ecclesiology is not limited to governance and polity but includes issues like the sacraments and the *esse* of the church. Likewise, soteriology is not limited to justification and conversion but includes the whole *ordo salutis*, including sanctification.

In contrast, relatively little scholarship has examined how he bound them together.<sup>3</sup> This article contends that Cyprian held to an early notion of a visible and spiritual church that were wed together by the Holy Spirit, whose divine sovereignty kept the two from completely coalescing into one another.<sup>4</sup> When faced with the need to provide pastoral care during a time of ecclesial schism and theological debate, Cyprian turned to pneumatology.<sup>5</sup>

## I. STATE OF THE QUESTION

The idea that Cyprian linked the church and salvation has remained an undisputed fact within scholarship. A few writers have endeavored to show how he linked the two. However, these previous attempts are not without their problems. J. Patout Burns Jr., contended that Cyprian believed Jesus Christ could transfer sanctifying grace through the sacraments administered by the clergy because he had built his church upon the bishops.<sup>6</sup> Essentially, the bishops not only glued the various congregations into one visible church, but they also tied the spiritual church to the visible church.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, to be disconnected from one's bishop meant losing the ability to receive the sacraments and thus losing salvation.<sup>8</sup> Burns rightly noted that the bishops tied the congregations together into one visible church.<sup>9</sup> They did so through corresponding with one another by letters, meeting routinely in regional councils, and sending financial aid when necessary.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, Burns correctly said that the bishops held a major role in the salvation process for Cyprian. However, Cyprian also declared that bishops who had apostatized or who had become schismatics or heretics could never serve in an episcopal role again.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, he

<sup>3</sup> Cyprian, *Unit. eocl.* 4–5; *Ep.* 45.3.2; 66.4.2. Cf. John D. Laurance, “Priest” as Type of Christ: The Leader of the Eucharist in Salvation History according to Cyprian of Carthage, *AUS* 7 (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), 205–9; Arnold Smeets, “Traces of Care and Involvement: A Semiotic Reading of Cyprian’s *De unitate*,” in *Cyprian of Carthage: Studies in His Life, Language, and Thought*, ed. Henk Bakker, Paul van Geest, and Hans van Loon, *Late Antique History and Religion* 3 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 112.

<sup>4</sup> For this article, the definitions for both the visible church and the spiritual church follow Cyprian. He defined the visible church as the congregations that were glued together through the fellowship of their bishops. The spiritual church was all those who had the indwelling Holy Spirit. An evaluation of these definitions is warranted but falls outside the scope of this article. Cyprian, *Unit. eocl.* 4–22; *Laps.* 9, 17–20; *Ep.* 57.3.1–2; 66.8.3; 69.2.2; 74.6–7; cf. Peter Hinchliff, *Cyprian of Carthage* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1974), 113; Paulo Siniscalco and Paul Mattei, *Cyprien de Carthage: L’Unité de L’Église* (Paris: du Cerf, 2006), 80.

<sup>5</sup> For an intensive study concerning Cyprian and the Holy Spirit, see Jordan H. Edwards, “*Promissam Vim Spiritus Sancti*: The Holy Spirit’s Activity in Early Carthaginian Pneumatology” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021), 154–97.

<sup>6</sup> J. Patout Burns Jr., *Cyprian the Bishop* (London: Routledge: 2002), 113, 129, 161.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Hinchliff wrote that “the conventional exposition of Cyprian’s theory of unity” is that the bishops serve as the “glue of the church,” drawing from Cyprian’s language in *Epistula* 66.8.3. Hinchliff, *Cyprian of Carthage*, 113; cf. Siniscalco and Mattei, *Cyprien de Carthage*, 80.

<sup>8</sup> Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 113, 129, 161; cf. Günter Klein, “Die hermeneutische Struktur des Kirchengedankens bei Cyprian,” *ZKG* 68 (1957): 57.

<sup>9</sup> Cyprian, *Unit. eocl.* 4–5.

<sup>10</sup> On Cyprian’s understanding of episcopal collegiality, see Benjamin Safranski, *St. Cyprian of Carthage and the College of Bishops* (Minneapolis: Fortress Academic, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 67–68.

exhorted congregations to depose their bishops who had committed an egregious sin.<sup>12</sup> If the episcopal office served as the only connection between the visible and spiritual church, such admonitions would jeopardize if not revoke the salvation of all those saved under a fallen bishop's ministry. However, Cyprian questioned only the salvation of the apostate bishop, not the salvation of the church members once under his authority, so the episcopal office was not the sole bond of unity between the visible church and the spiritual church.

Besides Burns, other scholarship has held that Cyprian wed the church and salvation either by rejecting the notion of a spiritual church or by conflating the visible and spiritual church together. Phillip Campbell denied that Cyprian held to any notion of an "ethereal invisible church," stating that he believed in a "visible, structural unity" only.<sup>13</sup> Brian Arnold rejected Campbell's position, but he connected the spiritual church and visible church in Cyprian's thought too closely. Arnold wrote that Cyprian joined the church's structure and its nature, so schism did not just break the church's structural unity but tore its very nature apart.<sup>14</sup> This articulation of Cyprian's beliefs melded the visible church and spiritual church together.

The positions of both Campbell and Arnold have issues. The authors rightly saw that Cyprian believed in the visible unity of the church, as he argued in *De ecclesiae catholicae unitate* (hereafter, *De unitate*). Both writers recognized that he saw the church as an essential element in the salvation process.<sup>15</sup> Their views also assumed that he feared the schismatics were splitting the church. However, Cyprian did not argue that schismatics were tearing the church apart but rather that they only seemed to do so. In *De unitate* 6–22, he contended that the visible church and spiritual church remained in one piece because both were established by the Holy Spirit. The schismatics who appeared to be dividing the church had in fact left the spiritual church in their schism and established false congregations devoid of the saving power of God's Spirit.<sup>16</sup> In addition, Cyprian wrote in *De lapsis* 17–20 that entrance into the visible church did not automatically guarantee salvation. Whenever people put forward a false repentance, or if people hid their adherence to heretical beliefs, they would still face divine judgment, even if they were loyal members of a true church.<sup>17</sup> Cyprian must have held an idea of a spiritual church that was not completely merged with the visible church, and the spiritual church consisted of all true believers, whom the Spirit of God indwelt and to whom he applied salvation.

Cyprian's theology on this issue appears most clearly when he responded to two pastoral predicaments in his day: the rise of schismatic congregations and a dispute over the basis for valid baptisms. Within this context, Cyprian did not turn first to the bishops. Nor did he conflate the spiritual and visible church or neglect

<sup>12</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 67–68.

<sup>13</sup> Phillip Campbell, ed., *The Complete Works of Saint Cyprian of Carthage* (Merchantville, NJ: Evolution, 2013), 34n16.

<sup>14</sup> Brian J. Arnold, *Cyprian of Carthage: His Life and Impact* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2017), 95.

<sup>15</sup> Cyprian, *Unit. eccl.* 4, 6; *Laps.* 9; *Ep.* 69.2.2; 74.6–7.

<sup>16</sup> Cyprian, *Unit. eccl.* 7–8.

<sup>17</sup> Cyprian, *Laps.* 17–20; *Ep.* 57.3.1–2.

the spiritual church for the visible one. Rather, Cyprian primarily contended that the Holy Spirit takes true believers within the one visible church and places them within the spiritual church as well. For Cyprian, the saving presence and work of the Spirit of God within the visible church necessarily intertwined it with the spiritual church, though the Spirit's sovereignty kept the two from merging completely.

## II. CYPRIAN'S PASTORAL QUANDARIES

1. *The schism crisis.* Cyprian's view of the church and salvation developed within the context of vitriolic debate and ecclesial schism. Besides persecution and plague, as a bishop, Cyprian faced two major predicaments. First, two schismatic groups arose from disagreement on how to treat *lapsi*, those who had temporarily apostatized during the Decian persecution (250–251). The *lapsi* consisted of both the *sacrificati* (those who had sacrificed) and the *libellatici* (those who had received a certificate of sacrifice without making a sacrifice). While Cyprian believed the former group had committed a more heinous sin, he called both *lapsi*, and all *lapsi* needed to be reconciled with the church.<sup>18</sup> However, up to half his congregation in Carthage might have apostatized during the persecution. The sheer number of *lapsi* created a pastoral and theological dilemma for the bishops as they struggled over what protocols they to while trying to reconcile so many people with the church.

This debate led two groups to disfellowship themselves from the other congregations. Cyprian and the other bishops called them schismatics, for in their eyes these professing Christians had broken away from the church. Cyprian's deacon Felicissimus led a laxist party to split from the church in Carthage to form a congregation that allowed *lapsi* to return to the church as full members with little or even no signs of true repentance. This policy had tremendous practical advantages. Laxist bishops did not need to toil over whether to grant someone reconciliation with the church. They also escaped the angry reactions (and even threats) that Cyprian and the other bishops sometimes received from unrepentant *lapsi*.<sup>19</sup> In contrast to the laxist position, a Roman presbyter named Novatian led a contingent of rigorists to form a second church in Rome. Deemed Novatianists, these schismatics believed that the church could never accept apostates back into the church as full members. The *lapsi* should remain among the penitent for the rest of their lives. God might save them based upon their repentance, but only an audacious bishop would assume they were saved and grant them reconciliation with the church.

When confronted with schism, Cyprian turned to the NT and applied an ecclesiological and pneumatological interpretation.<sup>20</sup> He took the commands in 2

<sup>18</sup> Cyprian, *Laps.* 27–28; *Ep.* 55.13–18.

<sup>19</sup> Both Cyprian and Cornelius of Rome (bishop 251–253) received death threats from *lapsi* that were refused immediate readmittance into the church. Cyprian, *Ep.* 59.17.1.

<sup>20</sup> Cyprian's view of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Bible should be noted. While Cyprian respected tradition and tried to follow it, convention could not trump the truths found in Scripture. Cyprian, *Ep.* 74.9.2.181–82, 10.2.205–206; cf. Tertullian, *Virg.* 1.1–2. If a tradition differed from the biblical witness, then the belief was but an error that had persisted in the church for too long. Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.13.3; 74.10.2. Cyprian's high bibliography flowed from his view of the Holy Spirit as the divine

Thessalonians 3:6 and Ephesians 5:6–7 as directed against the church of his day. Citing these verses, Cyprian entreated those who had joined schismatic groups to return because congregations could not be divided from the church and still live.<sup>21</sup> Just as Paul exhorted the Thessalonians and Ephesians to withdraw from those who preached a false gospel, Cyprian urged Carthaginian Christians to avoid schismatics. Like branches that fall off a tree, any congregation that leaves the ecclesial fellowship would die because they had separated themselves from the life-giving Spirit found only within the visibly united church.<sup>22</sup>

Cyprian also referenced Titus 3:10–11 and 1 John 2:18–19.<sup>23</sup> These passages dealt with the eschatological antichrist and how similar people had arisen in the apostolic era. Cyprian applied this warning to his time so that he could call heretics and schismatics “antichrists.” They had forsaken God and left the church. They did not have the Holy Spirit, who remained only with the true church; consequently, schismatic churches were spiritually dead.<sup>24</sup> Cyprian strengthened his argument from these passages by claiming that Paul and John did not grant heretics and schismatics a measure of salvation even before the more infamous ones had appeared (like Marcion and Novatian).<sup>25</sup> Cyprian contended that the church had even greater reason to see the heretical and schismatic groups of the third century as

author of Scripture. In addition, for Cyprian, all biblical passages were perspicuous and directly applicable to the church of his day. For this reason, he often quoted Scripture and then shifted topics, indicating that citing the passage should settle the issue, since biblical texts were clear. Furthermore, while in theory Cyprian believed in progressive revelation, he often interpreted OT passages as if they were in the NT. This practice came partly from his belief that the Spirit had authored the biblical passages, which in turn made them immediately relevant for Christians in the third century. Cyprian thus quoted biblical texts as if the authors had his context in mind when they wrote. Connecting the Holy Spirit with the OT allowed Cyprian to draw both Christological typology and ecclesiological imagery from the OT. Cyprian, *Demetr.* 6, 17, 20; *Fort.* 11; *Test.* 1.20; 2.2, 11; *Pat.* 22; *Dom. or.* 5, 28, 35; *Unit. eocl.* 4–10, 16, 24; *Hab. virg.* 1, 13; *Laps.* 10, 27; *Mort.* 11, 23; *Eleem.* 2, 5, 9; *Zel. liv.* 8; *Ep.* 63.5.1–2. For an index of Cyprian’s quotations from Scripture, see Michael Andrew Fahey, *Cyprian and the Bible: A Study in Third-Century Exegesis*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Hermeneutik 9 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971).

<sup>21</sup> “Let no one deceive you with empty words: for, on this account comes the wrath of God on the sons of willful disobedience. Be unwilling to be their partners” (Eph 5:6–7). “We instruct you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you withdraw from all brothers who walk inordinately and not according to the tradition that they have received from us” (2 Thess 3:6). Cyprian, *Test.* 3.68; *Ep.* 43.6; 59.20; 65.5. Biblical quotations come from English translations of Cyprian’s works to demonstrate what he was reading, since he did not work from the Septuagint, the Greek NT, the Latin Vulgate, nor from modern English Bibles. Quotes from *De unitate*, *De lapsis*, and Cyprian’s *Epistulae* are drawn from the Ancient Christian Writers series (Paulist). Translations of Cyprian’s other writings are from the Ante-Nicene Fathers series. Latin citations are drawn from the Corpus Christianorum series. When this article quotes from the Latin text, it places the line numbers for the text alongside the chapter and section numbers. While three major systems for enumerating Cyprian’s letters exist, since this article works from the Latin texts, it uses the enumeration of the Corpus Christianorum series.

<sup>22</sup> Cyprian, *Test.* 3.68; *Ep.* 43.6; 59.20; 65.5.

<sup>23</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 70.3.2. “You have heard that the Antichrist is coming. But even today there are many antichrists. From that we can recognize that it is the end of time. They have forsaken us, but they were not of us. If they had been of us, they would have remained with us” (1 John 2:18–19). Cf. *Test.* 3.78, 86; *Unit. eocl.* 6, 9; *Ep.* 43.5; 59.7; 69.1.3; 74.2.3.

<sup>24</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 70.3. Cf. *Ep.* 69.10.2.

<sup>25</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 74.2.4–3.1.

among the lost, since they were committing more egregious blasphemies.<sup>26</sup> Cyprian, therefore, urged people to flee from schismatic churches. Their unrepentant attitude and refusal to be reconciled with the true church led the Holy Spirit to remove himself from their lives, thus revoking their membership within the spiritual church.

This biblical reading formed the background for Cyprian's contention against schismatics in *De unitate*. He wrote the treatise primarily against the Novatianists, who were an especially challenging opponent for him, since he leaned more towards rigorism.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, Cyprian exhorted these schismatics to return to the church. They might retain proper views on major doctrines like the Trinity and might keep the practices of the church, but in Cyprian's view they had lost their former place in the spiritual church. The divine presence of the Holy Spirit could not be divided; his presence remained with the united church. Schismatics might

<sup>26</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 74.2.4–3.1. The close relationship between the church and the Holy Spirit explains why Cyprian did not believe salvation extended to virtuous pagans. D. Forrest Mills, "Cyprian the Inclusionist? Cyprian's Soteriology in a Pluralistic World" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the ETS, Providence, RI, 17 November 2020). For a contemporary case for connecting the Holy Spirit to the church, see Michael Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit: God's Perfecting Presence in Creation, Redemption, and Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 289–321.

<sup>27</sup> Scholarship traditionally has seen *De unitate* as combatting the Novatian schism. However, Hugo Koch (1869–1940) questioned this narrative. He claimed Cyprian wrote the work primarily for the schism in Carthage, based upon certain phrases and biblical references in *De unitate* that matched similar usage in letters written to the schismatics in Carthage. Koch also believed Cyprian wrote the work before the spring council of 251. Since the Novatian schism occurred that spring, then he would not have had the time to finish the work before the council if his primary audience were the Novatianists. Hugo Koch, *Cyprianische Untersuchungen* (Bonn: A. Marcus and E. Weber, 1926), 83–110. Similarly, Michael M. Sage believed Cyprian presented the work to the Carthaginian council in the spring of 251. Since the Novatian schism in Rome did not occur until that spring, Sage did not believe Cyprian had the Novatianists in mind as his primary audience while writing the work. Michael M. Sage, *Cyprian* (Cambridge, MA: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975), 241–242n4. However, Bévenot argued that scholarship should date *De unitate* after Novatian attempted to receive recognition from the council of Carthage. Hence, Cyprian wrote the work in response to Novatian's appeals for acknowledgment. Maurice Bévenot, *St. Cyprian* (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1957), 6; Maurice Bévenot, *St. Cyprian's 'De Unitate' chap. 4 in the Light of the Manuscripts*, *Analecta Gregoriana* 11 (Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1937), 66–77. Paulo Siniscalco and Paul Mattei recognized that *De unitate* provided arguments against the Carthaginian schismatics, but they contended that Cyprian had the Novatian schism particularly in mind by the time he was writing this treatise. Siniscalco and Mattei, *Cyprien de Carthage*, 33–35. According to Brent, Cyprian would not have had time to compose either *De lapsis* or *De unitate* until after his return from exile. Thus, Cyprian attempted to restore order through both works, with the first written against the laxist Carthaginian schism and the latter written against the rigorist Roman schism. Allen Brent, ed., *On the Church*, vol. 1, *Select Treatises* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Press, 2006), 145. Uniquely, Hinchliff argued that *De unitate* probably came at the end of Cyprian's life, mostly because most figures in history did not write their *magnum opus* early in their careers. Thus, Hinchliff dated the work to Cyprian's "schism" with Stephen over the rebaptism of schismatics. Hinchliff, *Cyprian of Carthage*, 99. Ultimately, the arguments for the Novatianists as the primary audience of the treatise holds the greatest weight. If *De lapsis* and *De unitate* are compared, the two treatises are seen to address different issues. The former work pointed out the theological and practical problems inherent in the laxist position. In contrast, Cyprian argued against the Novatian schism in *De unitate* by contending for the unity of the church rather than against rigorism. Cyprian was inclined towards rigorism, so for him the greatest sin of the Novatianists was their schism, not so much their rigorism. His approach differs from the one taken by the anonymous work *A Treatise against the Heretic Novatian by an Anonymous Bishop*. Written against Novatian around 255, the author denounced the Novatianists by contending against their rigorism.

seem to have split the church in two, but they had really left both the spiritual church and the visible church behind.

Cyprian pleaded his case primarily from Scripture. He called schism a demonic ploy in *De unitate* 1–3, and in *De unitate* 4–5 he defined the visible church as the local churches that fellowshipped together through the communion of their bishops.<sup>28</sup> Cyprian's case for the unity of the visible church through the bishops in *De unitate* 4–5 lends weight to Burns's theory that Cyprian saw the episcopal office as the link between the church and salvation. However, if Burns's hypothesis proved true, then readers would expect Cyprian to spend the rest of his treatise pleading for the Novatianists to return to the church, where the true bishops resided. On the contrary, he argued in *De unitate* 6–22 that schismatic congregations had lost salvation not for merely leaving the ecclesial fellowship behind but for departing from the saving presence of the Holy Spirit.

In *De unitate* 6–22, Cyprian took a pneumatological and ecclesiological interpretation of various biblical texts to base the unity of the visible church and spiritual church upon the presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>29</sup> For Cyprian, congregations had to remain visibly united because the person and work of the Holy Spirit could not be divided. The Spirit of God bestowed his presence only upon congregations that remained unified as one visible church. Those outside this fellowship did not have the Spirit and thus did not partake in salvation, even schismatics who otherwise kept proper orthodoxy and orthopraxy.<sup>30</sup> Cyprian thus held to a nascent view of a spiritual church, which he defined as those indwelt by the Spirit of God. Cyprian wed this church to the visible church by linking both to the indivisible presence of the Holy Spirit.

After reading through *De unitate*, the position of either Campbell or Arnold appears correct. However, Cyprian emphasized the unity of the visible church and spiritual church in *De unitate*; in his other writings, he demonstrated more fully that

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<sup>28</sup> Cyprian in *De unitate* 4–5 defined the visible church as the congregations whose episcopal leaders were in fellowship with each another. The bishops administered the sacraments and oversaw the teaching ministry of the church, which sanctified Christians, preserved their salvation, and kept them from error. The bishops also governed their churches. Episcopalianism allowed the church to demonstrate a visible unity to the unbelieving world. The bishops corresponded with one another, routinely held local councils, and sometimes exchanged financial resources. This communion between the bishops glued the local congregations together into one church. Cyprian, *Ep.* 66.8.3. Cf. Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 157, 163. Cyprian could not have envisioned an ecumenical council because such a meeting remained logistically impossible before the Edict of Milan (313), but he believed strongly in the need for regional councils to make major decisions. Cyprian, *Ep.* 59.5.2–3; 68.5.2; 71.3.1–2; cf. Henk Bakker, "Towards a Catholic Understanding of Baptist Congregationalism: Conciliar Power and Authority," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 5 (2011): 166; Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 154–55; Laurance, "Priest" as Type of Christ, 216–17. On how the bishops functioned in the salvation process, see Mills, "Extra ecclesiam nulla salus," 201–232. Cyprian sometimes called the church the "catholic church" (*ecclesia catholica*). By this term, he did not mean modern Catholicism but rather the whole church, as opposed to local congregations. Cf. G. W. Clarke, trans. and eds., *The Letters of St. Cyprian*, vol. 1, *Letters 1–27* (New York: Newman, 1984), 351; Siniscalco and Mattei, *Cyprien de Carthage*, 80.

<sup>29</sup> For a thorough analysis of Cyprian's biblical argument in *De unitate* for the unity of both the spiritual and the visible church, see Mills, "Extra ecclesiam nulla salus," 19–49.

<sup>30</sup> Edwards, "Promissam Vim Spiritus Sancti," 184–87.

he believed the divine presence of the Holy Spirit both intertwined the two and kept them from blending completely. Maurice Bévenot rightly maintained that for Cyprian salvation was applied by the Holy Spirit, not by the church alone, so redemption required true belief, not just participation in certain rites.<sup>31</sup> The bishops played a major role in the salvation process, but the Spirit of God sovereignly bestowed salvation. He could override the bishops when they erred in their judgment of whether someone truly believed or had repented.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, the Spirit bestowed salvation only upon true believers, not necessarily upon every member of a local church. Cyprian claimed that God would judge false Christians in the church because salvation required adherence to true doctrine, not merely church membership.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, Cyprian believed the Spirit of God left people if they would not repent, even if they had received baptism within a true church.<sup>34</sup> Hence, for Cyprian the divine sovereignty of the Holy Spirit granted him the ability to distinguish the spiritual church from the visible church. All true Christians were found within the visible church, but not every member of a local church was also a part of the spiritual church. The Holy Spirit both linked the visible church and the spiritual church and kept them from becoming mixed.

Finally, Cyprian's harsher stance towards the schismatics than to the *lapsi* in his letters and in his treatises (especially in *De lapsis*) gives further proof that he saw the Holy Spirit as the link between the visible church and spiritual church. Cyprian openly declared in *De lapsis* that schism was a worse sin than lapsing (i.e., temporary apostasy).<sup>35</sup> To be sure, he saw the denial of Jesus Christ during persecution as an egregious sin.<sup>36</sup> However, Karl Rahner rightly contended that Cyprian did not believe sin (even an egregious one) automatically led to the loss of the Holy Spirit. A person had to refuse to be reconciled with the church (as the schismatics were doing) to merit such an extreme form of punishment.<sup>37</sup> Cyprian maintained that *lapsi* could still receive a martyr's reward if they truly repented and sought reconciliation with the church.<sup>38</sup> Schismatics, however, could not obtain the martyr's inheritance.

<sup>31</sup> Cyprian, *Laps.* 19; *Ep.* 57.3.1–2; 73.20.1. Cf. Bernhard Poschmann, *Paenitentia Secunda* (Bonn: Hannstein, 1940), 404; Maurice Bévenot, "The Sacrament of Penance and St. Cyprian's *De lapsis*," *JTS* 16.2 (1955): 185–91; Bévenot, *St. Cyprian*, 85.

<sup>32</sup> In fact, the Spirit of God gave the Word and the sacraments the power to sanctify Christians and led them to persevere. The efficacy of the episcopal ministry came from the Holy Spirit. Cyprian, *Demetr.* 18; *Fort.* 10–11; *Pat.* 2, 14; *Dom. or.* 23; *Laps.* 7; *Mort.* 8; *Eleem.* 4; *Ep.* 31, 37, 49, 55–57, 68–75, 78; *Idol.* 11. See Edwards, "Promissam Vim Spiritus Sancti," 187–88, for a discussion on the passages where Cyprian talked about blaspheming the Holy Spirit. The very idea that people could commit blasphemy against the Spirit, along with all the divine works like sanctification that Cyprian attributed to the Spirit, should dispel any reluctance to believing Cyprian saw the Spirit as fully divine.

<sup>33</sup> Although heretics were not saved just by becoming members of a church, they still benefited from remaining within the church because they were exposed to the salvific teaching and grace found only within the church. Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.11.3.

<sup>34</sup> Cyprian, *Laps.* 26.

<sup>35</sup> Cyprian, *Laps.* 15–16, 28–30, 33.

<sup>36</sup> Cyprian, *Mort.* 6; *Idol.* 9.

<sup>37</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 57.4.2; 73.9.2; Karl Rahner, *Penance in the Early Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 200–5.

<sup>38</sup> Cyprian, *Laps.* 15–16, 28–30, 33.

They not only refused to repent of their sin, but more importantly, they were trying to divide the indivisible presence of the Holy Spirit between two churches.<sup>39</sup> However, the Spirit of God cannot be split; instead, they had left his saving presence.<sup>40</sup> Since penitent *lapsi* could die as martyrs, they retained a measure of salvation, and thus were part of the spiritual church, even if they had lost full membership in the visible church.<sup>41</sup> Only by departing from the unity of the visible church did people also lose the saving presence of the Spirit, who linked the visible church with the spiritual church without conflating the two.

Therefore, Cyprian turned to pneumatology when faced with the pastoral dilemma of ministering to *lapsi* amid calls for a church split. He contended not only against the notion that schismatics retained the presence of the Holy Spirit but against the more fundamental idea that schismatics could divide the church at all. While the visible church was not perfect, it was the sole harbor for the spiritual church, as the Spirit only bestowed his presence upon believers within the united church. While not every member of a local congregation was a part of the spiritual people of God, the saving presence of God's Spirit remained with the one church because God cannot be divided.

2. *The baptism debate.* Alongside having to argue against schismatics in Carthage, Cyprian in the latter part of his episcopacy debated with Stephen I of Rome (bishop 254–257) over the validity of the baptismal rituals done in schismatic and heretical congregations. The Roman church viewed baptismal rites done among schismatic and heretical groups as valid but not efficacious. The church in Rome traditionally only laid hands upon former schismatics and heretics when they wanted to come into the true church. In contrast, most churches of North Africa and Asia Minor did not believe heretics nor schismatics could perform valid baptisms. For this reason, baptism became an integral aspect of incorporating former heretics or schismatics into their congregation if they had never gone through a baptismal ritual in a true church before.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Cyprian, *Laps.* 15–16, 28–30, 33.

<sup>40</sup> Cyprian, *Dom. or.* 22–24, 30; *Unit. ead.* 19; *Laps.* 15–16, 28–30, 33; *Eleem.* 3; *Ep.* 15–17, 30–31, 65, 73–75.

<sup>41</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 57.4.2; 73.13.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas M. Finn said that Cyprian wrote *Epistulae* 69–75 against Novatianists who were traveling to North Africa from Rome. However, Karl Shuve rightly pointed out that the letters make more sense if Cyprian was primarily contending against the laxist schism that originated in Carthage. In fact, only his letters to Magnus and Jubaianus dealt specifically with Novatianists. Thomas M. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate: Italy, North Africa, and Egypt* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 129; Karl Shuve, “Cyprian of Carthage’s Writings from the Rebaptism Controversy: Two Revisionary Proposals Reconsidered,” *JTS* 61.2 (2010): 627–43. This article juxtaposes the North African view of baptism held by Cyprian with the Roman view of baptism, as exemplified by Stephen. However, Abraham van de Beek and Bévenot rightly pointed out that nuances existed between bishops within each tradition. Maurice Bévenot, “Cyprian’s Platform in the Rebaptism Controversy,” *HeyJ* 19 (1978): 133; Abraham van de Beek, “Cyprian on Baptism,” in Bakker, van Geest, and van Loon, *Cyprian of Carthage: Studies in His Life, Language, and Thought*, 150–53. For another North African perspective, see *A Treatise against the Heretic Novatian by an Anonymous Bishop*, which was written by one of Cyprian’s fellow bishops in Latin North Africa around 255. For another Roman perspective, see *De rebaptismate*, which was written by a European bishop to counter Cyprian’s arguments during the baptismal controversy. This article explores

When Stephen became bishop of Rome, he tried to foist the Roman tradition upon others to the point that he broke fellowship with some bishops in Asia Minor for not following his directives.<sup>43</sup> Cyprian protested Stephen's actions as stepping outside his sphere of authority; he also argued against seeing heretical and schismatic baptisms as valid.<sup>44</sup> While Cyprian did not write a treatise on baptism, his later letters dealt heavily with the issue. Contrary to Stephen's view of the ordinance, Cyprian contended that the Holy Spirit was primarily responsible for validating a baptismal rite, not the bishops or the right performance of the ritual. Furthermore, the divine Spirit only operated within the one united church. For Cyprian, baptism linked the one spiritual church to the true visible church because an authentic baptism required the presence and work of the Holy Spirit.

Cyprian first contended that the Roman tradition separated baptism and the Holy Spirit too much; they had created a false category of a valid but inefficacious baptism. Stephen claimed heretics and schismatics offered valid baptisms that instilled a measure of salvation that needed to be completed by entering the church and having an authentic bishop lay his hands on them.<sup>45</sup> Since the schismatics administered the ordinance using the correct formula, their baptisms were valid, but the sacrament had no efficacy until they entered the true church. Cyprian turned to pneumatology to contend against this idea, linking baptism to both the spiritual church and the visible church by connecting the ordinance to the Holy Spirit.

Cyprian argued that the true efficacy of baptism stemmed from the presence of the Holy Spirit, who gave himself completely and equally to all who receive a valid baptism. Cyprian made his case by drawing from the parable of the sower. The sower spreads his seeds equally upon all soil, but the soil changes the results

Cyprian's thought. It does not attempt to reconstruct Stephen's view but rather presents his position as Cyprian depicted it.

<sup>43</sup> While found among Cyprian's corpus, his *Epistula* 75 was written to him from Firmilianus, one of the bishops in Asia Minor whom Stephen had disfellowshipped.

<sup>44</sup> Stephen and Cyprian were not able to settle their dispute before both were martyred during the Valerian persecution (Stephen in 257 and Cyprian in 258).

<sup>45</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 69.14, 16. Differences in the Roman baptismal rite versus the Carthaginian one probably served as one reason why Stephen and Cyprian differed over heretical and schismatic baptisms. The anonymous work *De rebaptismate* was written against Cyprian's position. It responded that baptism by itself could never confer complete salvation, even if done within the church. For complete salvation to occur, the sacrament needed to be supplemented with the laying of hands, which fixed any errors that occurred during the ceremony. The North African tradition did not adhere to this notion concerning the laying of hands after baptism. *De rebaptismate* 10–15. The laying of hands in Rome was a separate rite that did not always occur right after baptism. In Carthage, hands were laid upon the new believer immediately after the immersion, making it part of the baptismal process. Stephen's position divided Christian initiation into several rites so that even baptisms administered within the true church were not efficacious until hands were laid on the new believer, but Cyprian looked at the baptismal rite as a unified act. Therefore, unlike Stephen, Cyprian could only claim the whole baptismal ceremony as being authentic or inauthentic. Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 113; Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Validity of Baptism and Ordination in the African Response to the 'Rebaptism' Crisis: Cyprian of Carthage's Synod of Spring 256," *TS* 62.2 (2006): 264–65, 272; Edwards, "Promissam Vim Spiritus Sancti," 179–80; Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 354; J. Ysebaert, "L'Imposition des Mains, Rite de Reconciliation," *La Maison-Dieu* 90 (1967): 101–2.

(Matthew 13).<sup>46</sup> Likewise, people could diminish the grace and impact of the Spirit given at baptism through their personal conduct, but Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit gave themselves equally to all. Since the Spirit of God gave himself either fully or not at all, Stephen's position led to granting both schismatics and heretics full salvation without any connection to the church. If heretics and schismatics could perform valid baptisms, then they had the saving presence of the Spirit and did not need the addition of laying on hands from bishops within the true church. In fact, they did not even need to enter the church to be saved.<sup>47</sup> Cyprian saw this logical conclusion to the Roman position as ridiculous because for him the Holy Spirit applied salvation only to those within the one true church. Since heretics and schismatics did not walk in fellowship with the church, they did not have the Spirit of God or his salvation.

Cyprian's case against baptisms performed within heretical congregations demonstrates more clearly how the Holy Spirit both linked the spiritual church to the visible church and kept the two from being conflated. According to Cyprian, a person had to have proper beliefs concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for a valid baptism to occur.<sup>48</sup> Baptism required more than mere administration by a true bishop or saying the right words at the ceremony. Heretics blasphemed the Trinitarian God, so their baptismal rites necessarily could not be valid.<sup>49</sup> Even baptism within the true church did not save people if they held false beliefs. Cyprian was certain that God would cast some people within the visible church into eternal fire because they refused the orthodox understanding of the Trinity.<sup>50</sup> The Holy Spirit applied salvation only to true believers; he retained his sovereignty over salvation. Thus, for Cyprian the visible and spiritual church were intertwined but not intermixed. Since heretical groups denied the Trinity, they did not have the presence of the Spirit, and they were not saved.<sup>51</sup>

This link between true faith, the Holy Spirit, and baptism can be further seen in Cyprian's bewilderment over Stephen's baptismal theology in his *Epistula* 73 and

<sup>46</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 69.14.2.

<sup>47</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.6.2.108–13. Someone could argue from this text that Cyprian thought people obtained salvation by works via the baptismal rite. However, Cyprian believed that people received forgiveness of sins by Christ's sacrifice upon the cross. That pardon was applied at baptism. *Ep.* 73.22; cf. D. Forrest Mills, "Cyprian and the Atonement," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 12.1 (2020): 35–53.

<sup>48</sup> Bévenot, "Cyprian's Platform," 124.

<sup>49</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.21.3; 74.5.1, 7.3.

<sup>50</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.10.3, 21.3.

<sup>51</sup> "And so, if someone could be baptized among heretics, he could doubtless also receive forgiveness of sins; and if he received forgiveness of sins, he was sanctified. If he was sanctified, then he became a temple of God. But of what God, I ask? The Creator? Not possible, seeing that he does not believe in [him]. Christ, then? But he cannot become [his] temple either, for he denies that Christ is God. Or the Holy Spirit? As these three are one, how can the Holy Spirit look with favor upon him when he is an enemy either of the Son or of the Father.... And they actually judge that they ought to admit to communion without baptism men like that when they come to the [church], not considering that thus they come into communion with other men's sins—and eternal sins at that. For they are letting in without baptism men who are not able to cast off their sins of blasphemy, except by baptism." Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.12.2.197–204, 19.3.355–59. Cf. 73.4.2; 73.18.3; also cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 5; Irenaeus, *Haer.*, 1. Cf. Clarke, *The Letters of St. Cyprian*, vol. 4, *Letters 67–82* (New York: Newman, 1984), 224–25.

*Epistula* 74. The sovereignty of the Holy Spirit meant heretics and schismatics could not perform the rite of baptism, even if some of their bishops had once served within the church, or even though they might use the same baptismal formula.<sup>52</sup> The presence of God's Spirit during a true baptism allowed the sacrament to become a vehicle for joining true believers to the visible church. His sovereignty required true belief for salvation. Cyprian contended that, if those who held the Roman position wanted to remain logically consistent, then they should say that heretics had true faith since that position held that they administered valid baptisms.<sup>53</sup> This statement would have jolted Cyprian's opponents, who knew that heretics did not have the same faith.

Cyprian then took Stephen's position *ad infinitum* to strengthen his case for defining a valid baptism as one that involves a true believer within the visible church. Some heretical groups baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Following the logic of Stephen's position, which placed the validity of baptism upon the performance of the rite, Cyprian concluded that these heretics must be saved: "A man then baptized among heretics, who is able to put on Christ, can all the more easily receive the Holy Spirit, for Christ was the one who sent the Spirit.... As if, indeed, one could put on Christ without the Spirit, or the Spirit could be separated from Christ!"<sup>54</sup> Stephen's baptismal theology not only separated the Holy Spirit from baptism itself; logically, it divorced the Spirit from Christ and from the salvation process entirely. However, for Cyprian, the same faith in Jesus Christ that led to salvation also allowed for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who applied salvation, placed the believer within the spiritual church, and validated a person's baptism into the visible church.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, Cyprian exhorted Stephen either to accept Cyprian's baptismal theology or grant that heretics and schismatics could have the saving presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>56</sup>

In *Epistulae* 69–74, Cyprian turned not just to logic to make a case against the bishop of Rome; he also looked to Scripture. Cyprian cited Jesus Christ in John 3:5: "Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."<sup>57</sup> Cyprian interpreted the passage ecclesialogically. "Born of water and the

<sup>52</sup> Cyprian, *Demetr.* 20; *Test.* 3; *Dom. or.* 2, 11–12, 17, 34–36; *Hab. virg.* 23; *Mort.* 14; *Zel. lin.* 13–14; *Ep.* 4, 58–59, 63–70, 73–75.

<sup>53</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 69.10.2; 74.5.1–3.

<sup>54</sup> "Qui potest apud haereticos baptizatus Christum induere, multo magis potest spiritum sanctum quem Christus misit accipere.... Quasi possit aut sine spiritu Christus indui aut a Christo spiritus separari." Cyprian, *Ep.* 74.5.3.98–99, 102–103; cf. *Ep.* 69.10.2; 74.5.1. "All of you who have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27). Cf. *Unit. eccl.* 7; *Laps.* 30; *Hab. virg.* 13; *Ep.* 62.2; 74.1; 76.2.

<sup>55</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.6.2.

<sup>56</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 69.11.3; 74.5.4.

<sup>57</sup> "Nisi quis natus fuerit ex aqua et spiritu, non potest introire in regnum Dei." Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.21.3.390–91. To connect the Holy Spirit with baptism, Cyprian also turned to the deuterocanonical work Sirach 34:25: "If a man is baptized by one who is dead, what does his washing avail him?" While written concerning Jewish baptism, Cyprian applied the text to Christian baptism. Heretics and schismatics were spiritually dead because only the true church had the Spirit. As spiritually dead "churches," they could not perform valid baptisms, which marked the point in a Christian's life when the person became spiritually alive. Cyprian, *Ep.* 70.1.3.

Spirit” referred to baptism, a singular event when the Holy Spirit applied salvation; thus, baptism (or at least the intent to be baptized) was essential for salvation.<sup>58</sup> Since this passage connected the Holy Spirit to baptism, Cyprian contended that Christians could not argue for valid baptisms within heretical and schismatic congregations by separating the Spirit’s work from the ordinance.<sup>59</sup>

Along with citing Jesus Christ, Cyprian also referenced the bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles (Acts 10). They received the Spirit prior to their baptism, but Peter baptized them immediately because he knew that they had the Spirit, who would validate the ceremony.<sup>60</sup> G. W. Clarke noted that Cyprian pointed to Peter as an example that Stephen should follow since he sat in Peter’s chair.<sup>61</sup> Peter baptized those who had the Holy Spirit; he did not separate the Spirit and the ordinance. Likewise, Peter’s successor should acknowledge the Spirit’s authority in validating Christians and their baptisms, as he linked the spiritual church to the visible church through the ordinance.<sup>62</sup>

Those who followed the Roman tradition argued from Acts 8, where Peter and John merely laid their hands upon the Samaritans rather than baptizing them. Stephen saw this verse as evidence that bishops should only lay their hands upon repentant schismatics and heretics, not baptize them. In response, Cyprian claimed they were missing a key element of the story. The Samaritans did not need to be baptized because they had already received a valid baptism into the true church from Philip, a deacon of the true church.<sup>63</sup> Like Peter and John, Cyprian did not require every repentant schismatic or heretic to be baptized, only those who had not gone through the ceremony within a true church. If the baptisms were conducted within the united church, then the Holy Spirit had confirmed their baptisms. People were only baptized once, so Cyprian did not require re-baptism from baptized believers who had departed from the true church and later repented and returned. The divine Spirit remained sovereign in linking the spiritual church and the visible church. He left people when they departed from the unity of the church, even if they had received a true baptism prior to their break from the church. Likewise, he returned once they repented and were reconciled with the church, and the Spirit did not need people to go through the baptismal rite a second time for him to indwell them again. The sovereign Spirit, not baptism, was the true bond between the spiritual and visible church. The Holy Spirit did not allow the sacrament to control the salvation process.

<sup>58</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.21.3.

<sup>59</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 72.1.2; 73.21. “Unless a man has been born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Cf *Test.* 1.12; 3.25; *Dom. or.* 17; *Mort.* 14; *Sent.* 87.5.

<sup>60</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 72.1.2; 73.24.3.

<sup>61</sup> Clarke, *The Letters of St. Cyprian*, 4:217.

<sup>62</sup> In addition, Cyprian pointed to the ministry of John the Baptist. Cyprian questioned how his opponents could say that heretics and schismatics performed true baptisms when the baptisms administered by John the Baptist did not initiate people into the church, even though he was filled with the Holy Spirit, was the herald for Jesus Christ, and had baptized Christ himself. Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.24.3–25.1.

<sup>63</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.9.2.151–155; cf. Edwards, “*Promissam Vim Spiritus Sancti*,” 180.

To combat Cyprian's argument presented above, Stephen linked the validity of baptism partly to a bishop's ordination. Many schismatic bishops were former bishops within the true church. By elevating the importance of the bishop, Stephen hoped to salvage some baptisms performed within the schismatic congregations.

Stephen's high view of the bishops in some ways mirrored Cyprian's own; so his argument should have appealed to the bishop of Carthage. Cyprian viewed bishops as an essential part of the baptismal rite, as John Alfred Faulkner and G. S. M. Walker rightly maintain.<sup>64</sup> For baptism to grant initial sanctification, it had to be administered (or at least overseen) by a bishop the Spirit had sanctified.<sup>65</sup> However, basing the validity of baptism upon the bishops would have shifted the role of the Holy Spirit in joining the spiritual church to the visible church through his presence in the sacrament. Therefore, Cyprian retorted that the validity of the ordinance did not stem from episcopal ordination or from the baptismal formula alone. Rather, the presence of the Holy Spirit within an authentic bishop allowed him to administer valid sacraments and perform his other duties, like praying efficaciously.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, Bévenot rightly pointed out that Cyprian emphasized the Spirit as the one who empowered the episcopacy. Thus, when Puppianus questioned Cyprian's ordination, Stephen would have responded by laying out how Cyprian was ordained properly. Cyprian, however, defended himself by pointing out the ways the Holy Spirit had worked through him as the bishop of Carthage.<sup>67</sup>

Therefore, the relationship between authentic bishops and valid baptisms was more of a correlation than a causation for Cyprian. The Spirit of God indwelt and empowered bishops to administer the sacraments and minister within the church. The presence of the same Spirit during a baptismal rite validated the ordinance and allowed it to link true believers to the visible church.<sup>68</sup> The bishops did not have sovereignty over baptism, much less over the Spirit of God. The wedding of the spiritual church with the visible church was based upon the Holy Spirit, whose presence joined the two but whose sovereignty kept them from mixing.<sup>69</sup>

Finally, Cyprian had to deal with a similar query: Did bishops who had been ordained within the true church retain forever the ability to administer valid baptisms after committing an egregious sin? This question was not just theoretical.

<sup>64</sup> John Alfred Faulkner, *Cyprian: The Churchman* (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, 1906), 43; Paul J. Fitzgerald, "A Model for Dialogue: Cyprian of Carthage on Ecclesial Discernment," *TS* 59.2 (1998): 250; G. S. M. Walker, *The Churchmanship of St. Cyprian* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1969), 37.

<sup>65</sup> "Oportet uero mundari et sanctificari aquam prius a sacerdote, ut possit baptismo suo peccata hominis qui baptizatur ablueri." Cyprian, *Ep.* 70.1.3.29–31. Cf. *Ep.* 70.2.3.

<sup>66</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 70.2.2–3.

<sup>67</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 66.5.2. Cf. Bévenot, "Cyprian's Platform," 123. Puppianus was a prominent lay leader within the Carthaginian church and was likely one of those who protested the ordination of Cyprian as the new bishop. Pontius of Carthage, *Vita Cypriani*, 5. Puppianus was from a senatorial family, whereas Cyprian probably came from the decurion class. The weight of Puppianus's social rank, combined with his status as a confessor garnered him much influence among Carthaginian Christians and made him a major threat to Cyprian's authority with the church. G. W. Clarke, trans. and eds, *The Letters of St. Cyprian*, vol. 3, *Letters 55–66* (New York: Newman, 1986), 323–24.

<sup>68</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 70.2.3. Cf. Bévenot, "Cyprian's Platform," 140; Tertullian, *Praescr.* 37.

<sup>69</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.7.2.

Some bishops had become *lapsi* but were now repentant.<sup>70</sup> Others had initially sided with the schismatics but later returned to the ecclesial fellowship.<sup>71</sup> The church had to decide how these men could serve in the church after their repentance. To accept them back as full bishops was the quickest and most realistic solution, one that appealed to many. Stephen rejected the idea that former lapsed or schismatic bishops could return with full episcopal privileges. Instead, he proposed that they should be treated like heretical and schismatic bishops; they could administer valid but not efficacious baptisms. Cyprian rejected both solutions for the same reason he believed schismatics and heretics could not administer valid but inefficacious baptisms. The Spirit's presence validated a baptism, not the bishop's ordination.<sup>72</sup>

Cyprian drew from certain biblical passages in saying that baptism was linked to the spiritual church via the presence of God's Spirit. First, John the Baptist was said to be filled with the Holy Spirit even in his mother's womb (Luke 1:15).<sup>73</sup> Cyprian interpreted John as a type for a bishop so that the passage indicated only true bishops in line with the Holy Spirit could baptize because they were properly sanctified and indwelt by the Spirit.<sup>74</sup> Second, Cyprian drew heavily from Leviticus 19:2, Numbers 19:22, and Ezekiel 36:25–27. The former passages dealt with purification rituals under the old covenant, and the latter spoke about spiritual renewal. Cyprian gave them ecclesiological interpretations so that they taught that God (via his Spirit) cleansed a bishop so that he could perform his duties.<sup>75</sup>

After pointing to these biblical passages, Cyprian questioned, "How, we ask, can a man possibly cleanse and sanctify water when he is himself unclean and when the Holy Spirit is not within him.... How can a man who has himself lost the Holy Spirit perform actions of the Spirit?"<sup>76</sup> A valid baptism had to be administered by a man who had himself been cleansed from his sins by the Holy Spirit and who retained the indwelling Spirit by remaining with the united church.

<sup>70</sup> Cyprian, *Laps.* 16–18.

<sup>71</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 55.11–12; cf. Burns, *Christianity*, 377.

<sup>72</sup> "And it is not possible for some part of their baptism to be void while another part of it is valid. If a man has power to baptize, he also has the power to confer the Holy Spirit; conversely, if he cannot confer the Holy Spirit (being outside the [church] and therefore not with the Holy Spirit), neither can he baptize anyone who seeks baptism. There is but one baptism, and one Holy Spirit, and one [church]." Cyprian, *Ep.* 70.3.1.72–77.

<sup>73</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 69.11.2.

<sup>74</sup> Bévenot claimed that Cyprian saw Jewish baptism under the old covenant as valid; Everett Ferguson clarified that Cyprian saw Christian baptism as superior. To be more accurate, Cyprian did not view baptism under the old covenant as legitimate *per se* but as valid only in that it served as a type for baptism under the new covenant. For Cyprian, John the Baptist was a valid baptizer under the old covenant, but he did not baptize people as members of the new covenant. John served as a type for a bishop; he was not a bishop himself. Bévenot, "Cyprian's Platform," 123; Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 357.

<sup>75</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 70.1.3, 2.3. "Be holy, for I, too, am holy, says the Lord" (Lev 19:2). "And everything which the unclean touches shall be unclean" (Num 19:22). "And I shall sprinkle over you clean water, and from all your uncleanness and from all your idolatry you will be cleansed. And I shall cleanse you, and give to you a new heart, and a new spirit I shall give within you" (Ezek 36:25–27). Cf. *Ep.* 69.12.

<sup>76</sup> "Quomodo autem mundare et sanctificare aquam potest qui ipse inmundus est et apud quem sanctus spiritus non est.... Quis autem potest dare quod ipse non habeat, aut quomodo potest spiritualia gerere qui ipse amiserit spiritum sanctum?" Cyprian, *Ep.* 70.1.3.35–37, 2.1.3.62–64.

Men ordained within heretical and schismatic churches were false bishops who were devoid of the Spirit's saving power; likewise, true bishops could permanently lose the ability to celebrate the sacraments through becoming schismatics or heretics.<sup>77</sup> If an ecclesial leader left the visible fellowship of the other bishops, he also separated himself from the Spirit of God and left the spiritual church. Without the Holy Spirit, that man could not administer an authentic baptism. Those he had baptized previously were baptized since the ordinance was celebrated while the Spirit was still upon him.<sup>78</sup> Any baptisms performed by him after his sin were invalid. If the bishop returned to the true church, he did not regain the ability to administer the ordinances because the heinousness of his sin disqualified him from ecclesial leadership, even if he brought his congregation back with him.<sup>79</sup> The divine Spirit decided who could administer valid baptisms; he was not required to follow the ordination practices of the church.

In sum, salvation was found only within the one united church because it alone had the Holy Spirit, whose presence during the baptismal celebration allowed the ordinance to link the spiritual church to the visible church.<sup>80</sup> Cyprian contended in his later letters that people could not receive baptism from a "church" that could not administer the rite because they did not have the Holy Spirit and thus were not part of the spiritual church. At best, baptismal rites in heretical and schismatic congregations were simply not baptisms.<sup>81</sup> At worst, they stained and polluted those who partook of them because they were false sacraments.<sup>82</sup> For Cyprian, receiving a valid baptism required more than going to an authentic bishop or celebrating with a specific rite; a person had to have true faith and obtain baptism from a true church, which was the temple of the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, people were merely getting wet when they immersed, since their ceremony was devoid of the Spirit's presence. Without the Spirit of God, a baptismal ritual might initiate a false believer into local church membership, but it could not bring people into the spiritual church. For baptism to bond the spiritual church with the visible church, both the one baptizing and the one being baptized needed the presence of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>77</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 59.9.3; 65.2; 67.3; 72.2. Cf. Augustine, *Bapt.* 1.1; 6.15; *Ep.* 43.5; Campbell, *The Complete Works*, xi; Dunn, "Validity of Baptism and Ordination," 266–73; Joseph H. Fichter, *Saint Cecil Cyprian: Early Defender of the Faith* (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1942), 1, 197; Patrick Granfield, "Episcopal Elections in Cyprian: Clerical and Lay Participation," *TS* 37.1 (1976): 96n7; Lauren Hudson, "Cyprianic Ecclesiology: Redefining the Office of the Christian Bishop" (MA thesis, Georgia Southern University, 2013), 45–46, 52; Laurance, "Priest" as *Type of Christ*, 202–203, 209–15; Sage, *Cyprian*, 304, 307.

<sup>78</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 69.10.1; 70.1.3, 2.1–3.

<sup>79</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 70.2.3; 72.2.2. Cf. *Dom. or.* 22–24, 30; *Unit. eccl.* 19; *Laps.* 15–16, 28–30, 33; *Elem.* 3.

<sup>80</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 72.1.2. "For if it is the case that the [church] is not with the heretics for the reason that the [church] is one and cannot be divided, and if the Holy Spirit is not with them for the reason that the Spirit is one and cannot be with outsiders and aliens, then it indeed follows that baptism cannot be with heretics either, for baptism is only to be found within that same unity: baptism can be separated neither from the [church] nor from the Holy Spirit." Cyprian, *Ep.* 74.4.2.80–85.

<sup>81</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 71.1.3; 72.1.3; 73.1.1.

<sup>82</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 72.1.1–2. Cf. *Ep.* 70.3.1; 73.1.2; 74.12.

## III. THE SPIRITUAL CHURCH AND THE VISIBLE CHURCH

Cyprian thus turned to pneumatology when faced with his two greatest pastoral challenges. Therefore, Gerald M. Fagin and Burns rightly contended against A. D'Alès that pneumatology held a foundational place in Cyprian's theological framework.<sup>83</sup> D'Alès did not believe Cyprian possessed much of a pneumatology.<sup>84</sup> However, Cyprian linked both his soteriology and his ecclesiology to the work and presence of the Holy Spirit. The third person of the Trinity was involved in each step of the salvation process. Through the ministries of the church, the Spirit applied salvation to those he knew were true believers. The visible church thus mirrored the spiritual church in many ways, even if they were not exactly the same thing. Cyprian understood the Spirit of God as the link between the spiritual and visible church, as well as between the church and salvation; the Spirit bound them together but not to the extent that the two became equivocal or to the point that he relinquished any of his divine sovereignty.

The Holy Spirit began the process of salvation prior to baptism by convicting individuals of sin, illuminating their minds through the preaching and reading of the Word, and converting them as they put their faith in Jesus Christ. Jordan Edwards called Cyprian's view of the Spirit's role in conversion an "over-looked emphasis in Cyprian's writings."<sup>85</sup> Arnold similarly wrote, "The role of the Holy Spirit in conversion is under appreciated in Cyprianic scholarship, which would have profoundly bothered him, for Cyprian could not speak of his conversion without tracing the Spirit's involvement."<sup>86</sup> Both Edwards and Arnold followed Michael A. G. Haykin, who argued that the relationship between the Spirit and conversion can clearly be seen in Cyprian's early treatise *Ad Donatum*.<sup>87</sup> In that work, Cyprian gave the Spirit of God a sovereign role in conversion. Through the outreach of a man

<sup>83</sup> Fagin and Burns believed Cyprian tied the Spirit's work to the bishop's succession from the apostles, and they said that for Cyprian the bishop could forgive sins and sanctify the church. J. Patout Burns Jr. and Gerald M. Fagin, *The Holy Spirit* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984), 80. On the contrary, Cyprian did not think that the validity of an ordination stemmed from a line of similar ordinations to the apostles but rather that the bishop had received his ordination within the true church. Cyprian, *Ep.* 72.2.1. Additionally, Cyprian did not believe bishops could forgive sins but rather that God alone pardons them. Cyprian, *Laps.* 26–27.

<sup>84</sup> A. D'Alès, *La théologie de saint Cyprien* (Paris: G. Beauchesne, 1922), 11.

<sup>85</sup> Edwards, "Promissam Vim Spiritus Sancti," 174.

<sup>86</sup> Arnold, *Cyprian of Carthage*, 41.

<sup>87</sup> For thorough exegesis of Cyprian's letter to Donatus, see Michael A. G. Haykin, "The Holy Spirit in Cyprian's *To Donatus*," *EpQ* 83.4 (2011): 321–29. Scholars have debated whether to include *Ad Donatum* among Cyprian's letters or his treatises, partly because it drew from the genre of scenic dialogue (e.g., Minucius Felix, *Octavius*) to create the new genre of scenic monologue. For discussion of the genre of *Ad Donatum*, its placement among Cyprian's treatises, and a defense of labeling it a scenic monology, see Mattias Gassman, "Directing the Eye of the Soul: Form and Function in an Ancient Scenic Monologue (Cyprian, *Ad Donatum*)," *JECs* 29.3 (2021): 371–96. Most scholarship has claimed *Ad Donatum* was written just after Cyprian's conversion, or at least right after he became a presbyter. For the dating of the treatise, see Brent, *On the Church*, 1:47; Sage, *Cyprian*, 110, 118, 380, 383. The date is not certain, and Gassman has argued that Cyprian wrote it immediately after he became a bishop, in order to rebut critics who were protesting his ordination. Mattias Gassman, "Cyprian's Early Career in the Church of Carthage," *JEH* 7.1 (2019): 1–17.

named Caecilius, who was a member of the church in Carthage, the Spirit opened Cyprian's eyes to the truth of the gospel and softened his heart to make it susceptible to receive it. This work of the Third Person of the Trinity led to Cyprian's conversion, which for him was the point when someone decided to enter the church by becoming a catechumen. When Cyprian accepted the gospel, the Holy Spirit made him a new man, even prior to his baptism, and the Spirit empowered him to live a virtuous life as he pursued entrance into the church.<sup>88</sup>

The Holy Spirit, therefore, granted believers a measure of salvation, even before they received baptism. He not only illuminated their minds and empowered them, but he gave them spiritual safety. If catechumens died during persecution prior to receiving baptism, Cyprian believed they were still saved from divine condemnation because they had true faith and were intending to enter the church.<sup>89</sup> The Holy Spirit thus worked through the outreach of the church to lead people toward conversion, which gave them their first tastes of salvation.

Although the Holy Spirit began the process of salvation prior to church membership, baptism into the visible church was the seminal moment of the Christian life for Cyprian. Edwards notes that Cyprian saw baptism as a key element in Christian discipleship: "In contrast to the relative brevity given to the Spirit's work in salvation, Cyprian's discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in baptism was one of his most significant themes."<sup>90</sup> Edwards observed correctly that much of Cyprian's literature talks about baptism as opposed to conversion, especially considering that many of his later letters were written to debate Stephen's baptismal theology. Additionally, Cyprian could not have imagined a plan of discipleship that did not include baptism. However, baptism for Cyprian was not just a facet of Christian discipleship; it was an integral part of the salvation process itself because the Spirit bestowed his presence upon believers at their baptism.

Cyprian developed his baptismal theology more fully later in his career during the baptismal debates with Stephen, but Cyprian's earlier writings reveal that he linked the Spirit with baptism from the beginning. Cyprian drew his theology from Peter's sermon in Acts 2, where he told the Jews to repent and be baptized to be saved.<sup>91</sup> Cyprian took a literal interpretation of these texts so that baptism (or at least the intent to receive baptism) was fundamental to saving faith. Cyprian also read Paul's words in Galatians 3:27: all who have been baptized have put on Jesus Christ. When explaining this verse, Cyprian linked Christ and the Spirit, which then led him to interpret Paul to mean Christians received the Spirit of God when they put on the Son of God at baptism.<sup>92</sup> At baptism, the Spirit indwelt new believers,

<sup>88</sup> Cyprian, *Don.* 4–5, 14–15.

<sup>89</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.22.2. Cyprian argued that catechumens could receive a baptism by blood if killed during persecution; in contrast, schismatics and heretics could not since they were outside the church and were not seeking baptism into the church. Cyprian, *Dom. or.* 24. Cf. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 360.

<sup>90</sup> Edwards, "Promissam Vim Spiritus Sancti," 177.

<sup>91</sup> Cyprian, *Don.* 3–4; cf. *Ep.*, 73.7.2, 17.2.

<sup>92</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 69.11. Cf. Bévenot, "Cyprian's Platform," 125; Edwards, "Promissam Vim Spiritus Sancti," 177; Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 358.

sanctified them, and applied many other aspects of salvation. The ordinance initiated people into a new life to the extent that their time prior to baptism was of little consequence. In fact, when Cyprian's deacon Pontius wrote the first biography on Cyprian just after his martyrdom, Pontius intentionally started at Cyprian's baptism, not his natural birth, because life prior to baptism held little significance for Christians in the mid-third century.<sup>93</sup>

Cyprian wrote *Ad Donatum* 3–4 soon after he became a Christian, and this text especially demonstrates that he did not change his earlier position on baptism during his debates with Stephen. Even as a new convert, Cyprian believed baptism could only link the spiritual church with the visible church because of the presence of the Holy Spirit. In *Ad Donatum* 3–4, Cyprian interpreted Titus 3:5 ecclesiologically. He saw the language of Titus 3:5 as referring to baptism, which he called a laver of saving water and water of regeneration because the Spirit applied many aspects of salvation at baptism.<sup>94</sup> The Spirit's work of salvation through the celebration of baptism by the visible church allowed the ordinance to serve as a connecting point between the spiritual church and the visible church.

Therefore, for Cyprian several aspects of salvation were applied by the Holy Spirit during a true baptism. First, Cyprian probably believed regeneration occurred when believers were baptized into the visible church. He described regeneration as a singular, perfect act, when the Spirit of God indwelt new believers, washed away their pre-baptismal sins, and gave them a spiritual rebirth. This work of salvation was done completely and did not need to be perfected.<sup>95</sup> For Cyprian, baptism by itself did not save people. However, this indwelling, expiating, and regenerating work of the Holy Spirit occurred when a member of the spiritual church was baptized into the visible church.<sup>96</sup>

Second, Cyprian especially believed he had biblical warrant to link sanctification with baptism, not because the waters channeled sanctifying grace, but because

<sup>93</sup> Pontius of Carthage, *Vita Cypriani* 2.

<sup>94</sup> Cyprian, *Hab. virg.* 23; *Ep.* 64.

<sup>95</sup> "For we have put off our earthly birth and are now created and regenerated by the Spirit." Cyprian, *Demetr.* 20. See also Cyprian, *Test.* 3.25, 65; *Dom. or.* 12; *Hab. virg.* 23; *Eleem.* 2, 25; *Ep.* 13.5; 27.3.3; 62.2.2; 63.8.1; 64.5.2; 69.1.1, 2.2, 8.3, 13.1; 73.12.1; 74.5.4, 7.3. Cf. Bévenot, "Cyprian's Platform," 124; Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 354; David Paul Knierim, "Christ, the Gospel, and the Church: The Church's Participation in the Salvation of Its Members" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 15; Laurance, "Priest" as Type of Christ, 154, 161; Van de Beek, "Cyprian on Baptism," 144–46. Around 255, Cyprian wrote *Epistula* 63 as a circular letter for churches in North Africa. The letter argued that bishops had to mix water and wine when celebrating the Lord's Supper, contrary to those who only used water. To make his point, he applied a Christological interpretation to Christ's statement in John 7:37–39. Since for Cyprian the split rock served as a type for Christ, the passage taught that Jesus Christ bestows the Holy Spirit upon Christians at their baptism. Cyprian, *Ep.* 63.8.3.123–28. Cf. *Test.* 1.22; *Ep.* 73.11. Since Cyprian interpreted Titus 3:5 ecclesiologically, he probably placed regeneration at baptism rather than at conversion. What he called "the illumination of the Spirit" fulfilled the role often given to regeneration in Reformed theology. Cyprian's theology was appropriated by Augustine, who wrote that he would not have converted if God had not turned his affections first. Augustine, *Conf.* 8; cf. D. Forrest Mills, "Augustine's Conversion in His Confession 8: Some Disputed Issues," *EpQ* 90.4 (2019): 326–41.

<sup>96</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.12.1; 74.5.4, 7.3.

the divine Spirit indwelled believers during that rite. Looking at the OT, Cyprian noted in Genesis 2 that God first formed Adam and then breathed into him. Applying an ecclesiological and pneumatological interpretation, Cyprian believed the Holy Spirit sanctified new believers when they were immersed. After he had sanctified them during the immersion, he then could indwell them at the end of the baptismal rite, when the administrator laid his hands upon them.<sup>97</sup> The act of immersion and laying on hands did not control the Spirit, as he remained sovereign over the salvation process.<sup>98</sup> However, the Spirit applied salvation at these moments, which led to a wedding of the spiritual and visible church.

Cyprian also drew from the NT to contend that the Holy Spirit sanctified believers during their baptism. Cyprian read the words of Jesus Christ in John 20:21–23: “‘As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When [Jesus] had said this, [he] breathed on them and said: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you shall forgive, they will be forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain, they will be retained.’”<sup>99</sup> Jesus Christ had given his disciples the Holy Spirit. His Spirit-filled apostles (and the bishops afterwards) could then administer valid baptisms, at which point new believers encountered the sanctifying presence of the divine Spirit. Additionally, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:11 that Christians were washed and were sanctified in the name of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Interpreting the passage ecclesologically, Cyprian believed that “washed” referred to baptism. Therefore, sanctification was linked to Christ and the Spirit, as well as baptism. Sanctification was based upon Christ’s work, and it was applied by the Spirit during the rite of baptism.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, Burns aptly noted that for Cyprian the Third Person of the Trinity was essential for any amount of sanctification; people could not sanctify themselves.<sup>101</sup>

Third, Cyprian held that the Holy Spirit indwelled believers at their baptism into the visible church, and this act of God’s Spirit determined whether someone was a member of the spiritual church. Cyprian argued for this view from the baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19. For Cyprian, baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit necessarily meant that salvation was a Trinitarian act. It came from the Father and was applied by the Spirit at baptism upon the basis of the Son’s work.<sup>102</sup> This passage demonstrated for Cyprian both the divinity of the Spirit as well as his presence when a valid baptism was practiced. Matthew 28:19 for Cyprian encapsulated the idea that the spiritual and visible church were wed together through the Spirit’s operation during baptism. At the same time, the Spirit’s full

<sup>97</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 74.7.1. Cf. Laurance, “*Priest*” as *Type of Christ*, 153–56, 178–79.

<sup>98</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 70.2.3; 73.11.3.

<sup>99</sup> “Sicut misit me pater, et ego mitto uos. Hoc cum dixisset, inspirauit et ait illis: accipite spiritum sanctum. Si cuius remiseritis peccata, remittentur illi: si cuius tenueritis, tenebuntur.” Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.7.2.119–22; cf. *Ep.* 69.11.1.

<sup>100</sup> Edwards, “*Promissam Vim Spiritus Sancti*,” 179.

<sup>101</sup> Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 113.

<sup>102</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.18.3.

divinity as taught by the passage meant the spiritual and visible church could not completely fold into one another.<sup>103</sup>

The Spirit's role in uniting the spiritual church to the visible church continued after the ceremony of baptism was complete. Salvation for Cyprian was a lengthy process that began prior to conversion and ended in the eschaton.<sup>104</sup> Just as the Spirit of God began his work of salvation prior to baptism, he progressively sanctified and purified believers throughout the Christian life until the resurrection and glorification of the body, long after the baptismal ceremony ended. Edwards contended rightly that Cyprian drew from Romans 14 to argue that the Holy Spirit continues to sanctify believers after their baptism.<sup>105</sup> Similarly, he continued to illuminate the minds of believers through the teaching ministry of the church, leading them toward greater truth.<sup>106</sup> The power of the church to disciple new believers and train leaders came not from the church itself but from the Holy Spirit, who bound the spiritual church to the visible church.

In addition, the Spirit's indwelling presence that was received at baptism also played a major role throughout the Christian's life. Cyprian claimed Christians experienced victory over sin. This triumph came not from human strength but from the Spirit's divine power over demonic forces. Theologically, the Holy Spirit indwelt believers at their baptism, and demons could not stay where the Spirit remained because the Spirit was God.<sup>107</sup> Biblically, Cyprian turned to 1 Corinthians 10. He interpreted Paul's mention of the crossing of the Israelites over the Red Sea in that passage as a type for baptism. Even as Pharaoh maintained power over the Israelites until he was washed away by the Red Sea, so do demonic forces retain

<sup>103</sup> "Baptism, we conclude, cannot be common to us and to heretics, for we have in common with them neither God the Father nor Christ the Son nor the Holy Spirit nor faith nor [church] itself." Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.21.3.383–86; cf. *Ep.* 27.3.3. Cyprian argued from Matthew 28:19 that an authentic baptismal rite was done in the name of the triune God. Cyprian developed this theology amid heretical groups that were baptizing in the name of only one or two persons of the Trinity. Marcionites baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Cyprian asserted that true congregations baptized in the name of the Trinity because Christians were saved by the Trinity and not just by Jesus Christ. Cyprian, *Ep.* 27.3.3; 73.21.3.

<sup>104</sup> For Cyprian's view of death, see his *De mortalitate*. For his understanding of martyrdom, see his *Ad Fortunatum*. Sometimes scholarship has connected the church and salvation in Cyprian's thought by claiming he held a form of works-based salvation. However, Cyprian held a robust view of sin, including believing that people inherited a complete depravity and a sinful will from Adam. Cyprian, *Demetr.* 10; *Pat.* 11; *Mort.* 7; *Ep.* 55; 64.5.2. Cyprian argued in *Ad Demetrianum* that sin not only impacted individual lives but shaped societies and the cosmos. Therefore, people could not save themselves through their own works but needed God to rescue them. This work occurred upon the cross, when Jesus Christ sacrificed himself for humanity, thus freeing believers from the power of sin and Satan. For Cyprian's view of atonement, see Mills, "Cyprian and the Atonement," 35–53.

<sup>105</sup> Edwards, "Promissam Vim Spiritus Sancti," 171; cf. Cyprian, *Test.* 3.60.

<sup>106</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 73.13.1; cf. Edwards, "Promissam Vim Spiritus Sancti," 173–74. Van de Beek contended that Cyprian's stress on the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit might have stemmed from his reading of Tertullian, though Van de Beek rightly noted that Cyprian did not fall into the Montanism of his theological predecessor. Van de Beek, "Cyprian on Baptism," 146.

<sup>107</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 69.15.2; 74.5.4; cf. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 359–60; Van de Beek, "Cyprian on Baptism," 144.

control over people until their baptism, because at that point Christians receive the indwelling of the Spirit.<sup>108</sup>

Moreover, Cyprian drew from his personal experiences in developing this theology. He pointed to such phenomena as serpents and scorpions losing their ability to harm others when cast into water. As natural types for demons, this occurrence typified the spiritual reality that demons no longer have power over believers after they go through baptism because of the Spirit's presence within them.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, Cyprian had seen unbaptized people tormented by evil spirits. Sometimes exorcists could not get rid of these demons, or the exorcists could remove them only temporarily. However, after baptism, these tormented individuals were never bothered by demons again. They fled from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>110</sup> Possibly drawing from Minucius Felix, Cyprian saw demonic forces as a major cause of illnesses.<sup>111</sup> Thus, he also claimed that he had seen people healed by going through baptism. These experiences further proved for Cyprian that at baptism a person became freed from demonic forces because of the Spirit's presence upon a member of the spiritual church during baptism into the visible church.<sup>112</sup> Since true believers within the church retained the Spirit's presence throughout their Christian lives, they remained freed from demonic control, unless they returned to their old sins.<sup>113</sup> After going through baptism, the Spirit's continuing company preserved believers against the forces of hell and formed them into Christ's military camp, ready to do spiritual battle.<sup>114</sup>

Therefore, Haykin, Arnold, and Edwards stated that Cyprian ascribed his ability to conquer sin primarily to the power of the Holy Spirit as he worked through the ministries of the church.<sup>115</sup> Cyprian pointed to Romans 8, Galatians 5, and Colossians 3 to teach that believers needed to walk in step with the divine Spirit if they wanted to overcome their sinful desires.<sup>116</sup> The sanctification that the Spirit bestowed upon Christians through the ordinances and ministries of the church should make them gentler over time, like the Spirit, who manifested himself as a dove.<sup>117</sup> The Spirit of God did not eliminate the ability to commit sin in the future. However, he did cleanse Christians from their sins at their baptism, and he empowered them to live holy lives through the Lord's Supper and the teaching of the bish-

<sup>108</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 69.15.1. "I would not have you ignorant, my brothers, that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized in Moses both in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor 10:1–2). "All these things came to pass as symbols for us" (1 Cor 10:6). Cf. *Test.* 1.4.

<sup>109</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 69.15.2.

<sup>110</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 69.15.2–16.1.

<sup>111</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 63.15–16; cf. Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 27.2.

<sup>112</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 69.16.1.

<sup>113</sup> People also became ill through the natural degeneration of the world, regardless of their faith; so Cyprian did not hold to an early version of prosperity gospel. Cyprian, *Ep.* 69.16.1.

<sup>114</sup> Cyprian, *Don.* 14–15; *Fort.* 10; *Test.* 3.117; *Ep.* 55.27.2; Edwards, "Promissam Vim Spiritus Sancti," 172–73; cf. M. Réveillaud, "Note pour une Pneumatologie Cyprienne," *StPatr* 6 (1962): 184.

<sup>115</sup> Arnold, *Cyprian of Carthage*, 41–42; Edwards, "Promissam Vim Spiritus Sancti," 172–73; Haykin, "The Holy Spirit in Cyprian's *To Donatus*," 323.

<sup>116</sup> Cyprian, *Test.* 3.64, 119; *Hab. virg.* 23; *Zel. liv.* 14; cf. Edwards, "Promissam Vim Spiritus Sancti," 172.

<sup>117</sup> Cyprian, *Unit. eccl.* 9.

ops.<sup>118</sup> Through these ministries of the church, the Spirit of God instructed Christians and shaped them more into the image of Christ.<sup>119</sup> Hence, the foundational efficacy behind the Lord's Supper and the teaching of the church for Cyprian was the work of the Spirit, who operated through the church and the bishops to sanctify and transform Christians.<sup>120</sup>

Finally, the Spirit's presence within the church on earth helped generate a visible peace that mirrored the unity among the members of the spiritual church. Without the Holy Spirit, the church's unity fell apart. Allen Brent, James K. Lee, and Jordan Edwards argued that for Cyprian peace in the visible church was based on the presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>121</sup> More specifically, however, the Spirit indwelt the spiritual church and linked the spiritual church to the visible church, allowing for the unity and peace of the former to be mirrored in the latter. As mentioned previously, Cyprian likened the Spirit to a gentle dove. Those who had the Spirit and thus were part of the spiritual church mirrored his gentleness in the visible church through their peace and love for other Christians.<sup>122</sup> Similarly, Cyprian gave a pneumatological interpretation to Paul's arguments for ecclesial unity in Ephesians 4, so that peace and unity in the church was based on the presence of the indwelling Spirit within true believers.<sup>123</sup> The Spirit not only reconciled believers with God and freed them from demonic forces; he also generated peace among the members of a local congregation, a unity that echoed the spiritual church.

Finally, while the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit linked members of the spiritual church to local congregations, his sovereignty also prevented any person in the church from gaining the power to forgive sins or grant salvation. The spiritual church and visible church were intertwined for Cyprian but not intermixed because the unity of the two was founded upon a divine person, who retained his sovereignty. For this reason, Cyprian in his twenty-seventh letter denounced Lucianus (a layperson in Cyprian's congregation) for giving the martyrs and confessors the divine prerogative to forgive sins. Cyprian contended that the spiritual and visible church should not be conflated. Only God could grant the forgiveness of sins, not martyrs and confessors; people were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not in the names of other Christians, even notable ones. People could not rely upon the words of a martyr or a confessor that their sins had been forgiven. Elevating the power of the confessors and martyrs too highly was equiva-

<sup>118</sup> Cyprian, *Dom. or.* 34; *Ep.* 25–27, 69–70, 73–75; cf. Edwards, “*Promissam Vim Spiritus Sancti*,” 172.

<sup>119</sup> Cyprian, *Elem.* 1, 25.

<sup>120</sup> Cyprian wrote, “What is received [i.e., the elements of the Lord's Supper] brings no blessing to the unworthy since the Holy One [i.e., the Holy Spirit] has fled and the saving grace is turned to ashes.” In other words, if the *lapsi* would not repent, then they would lose the Holy Spirit. Without his presence while celebrating communion, the ordinance at best had no positive benefits and at worst had harmful consequences. Cyprian, *Laps.* 26. For analysis of Cyprian's view of the Lord's Supper, see Mills, “*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*,” 177–199.

<sup>121</sup> Brent, *On the Church*, 1:156; Edwards, “*Promissam Vim Spiritus Sancti*,” 161–62; James K. Lee, “The Church and the Holy Spirit: Ecclesiology and Pneumatology in Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine,” *StPatr* 91 (2017): 191.

<sup>122</sup> Cyprian, *Unit. eccl.* 8–9.

<sup>123</sup> Cyprian, *Unit. eccl.* 8.

lent to proclaiming another gospel. God forgave sins at baptism, and he continues to pardon them after the rite.<sup>124</sup>

Hence, all aspects of salvation that the church enjoyed came from the Holy Spirit, who wed the visible church to the spiritual church without conflating them. The same Spirit that bound members of the spiritual church to local congregations also remained sovereign over salvation. Only true believers who sought entrance into the church received his saving presence, not orthodox schismatics outside the ecclesial fellowship or false believers within the church. The spiritual church and visible church were joined, but they would not completely coalesce until the eschaton. Nevertheless, since the Spirit operated through the ministries of the visible church to those within the spiritual church, the former necessarily bore many attributes of the latter, including a supernatural unity that formed one true church.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In the face of pastoral dilemmas, Cyprian tied salvation to the church by linking both to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God formed one spiritual church through granting his saving presence to believers who had entered the one visible church, which for Cyprian was the various congregations linked together through the fellowship of their bishops. Cyprian did not conflate the spiritual and visible church because the divine Spirit remained sovereign over the salvation process. He worked through the ministry of the leaders of the church; the bishops did not have control over the Spirit's impartation of salvation. The spiritual and visible church were not the same for Cyprian. Nevertheless, he assumed an ecclesial unity when he approached the pastoral problems that stemmed from a crisis over schisms and a debate over baptism. Salvation was found only within the one visible church, which could not truly split in two because the divine Spirit could not be divided. Cyprian mined this pneumatology from his reading of Scripture, and he forged it in the fires of pastoral care during a time of persecution and disunity. For Cyprian, the spiritual and visible church were necessarily different but intertwined by the divine presence and saving work of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>124</sup> "I am astonished that in this way you are so quickly turning away to another gospel from him who has called you to grace. But there is in fact no other gospel; all that there is, are some people who are confusing you and whose aim is to pervert the gospel of Christ. But should we or should an angel from heaven preach a different message from what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. We have already declared it—and now I say it a second time: should anyone preach to you a different message from what you have received, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:6–9). Cyprian, *Ep.* 27.3.3. Cf. *Ep.* 63.10; 73.12.1, 20.1. Some confessors and martyrs wrote *libelli pacis* during the Decian persecution. *Libelli pacis* were letters that stated certain *lapsi* should be reconciled with the church immediately, without first having to demonstrate true repentance before a bishop. Some of Cyprian's congregants believed that the martyrs and confessors had merited forgiveness through their confessions and that they could transfer this pardon to others via *libelli pacis*. Cyprian combatted this idea, not by pointing to the bishops or to the church as the ones who pardon sins, but by claiming only God forgives sins. Cyprian, *Laps.* 17–20; *Ep.* 57.3.1–2; 73.12.1, 20.1; cf. Burns and Fagin, *The Holy Spirit*, 80; Bévenot, "The Sacrament of Penance," 175–213; Fahey, *Cyprian and the Bible*, 472; Rahner, *Penance in the Early Church*, 195.