

as a whole and in its officers in particular. Great extensions of this are given by Cyprian, one of the most vocal fathers regarding the study of the church. His strong statements grew from a schism that initiated in Rome. Here are the summary points:

(a) With the varied persecutions of the church it was easy to defect...and when pressure eased, to seek to come back.

(b) The persecution of Decius Trajan was intentionally aimed at eliminating church leaders and weakening the resultant testimony in several ways.

(c) One of these ways consisted of giving release from persecution to those who would recant...knowing that in time they would become a blight for those who did not.

(d) How to handle these after persecution became a trial.

(e) Stephen, bishop of Rome (ca 253) felt they should be allowed back into the church with the first indication of repentance.

(f) His presbyter, Novatian, felt it incorrect and felt that great repentance and public remorse were necessary. He led a schism against his bishop and denounced the weak practices.

(g) Cyprian, bishop of Carthage at the same time, agreed in polity with Novatian and disagreed with Stephen. But he felt that Novatian was wrong in dividing the church...that he should have been obedient to his bishop even though the judgment of the bishop was not correct.

(h) He perhaps felt this way since he had a bishop (Novatus, by name) who disagreed with his "hard line" and was threatening a schism of easy dissent in Carthage. Cyprian felt it necessary to discipline him and, believe it or not, Novatus fled to Rome and joined the Novatians. Their view on the matter was directly opposed to his but their polity regarding the authority of the bishop was what he liked..

(i) The threat of these schisms led Cyprian and others to make strong statements in defense of the bishop's authority. But note that they also saw all bishops as having equal authority and anyone having authority only in the place where he served.

Ecclesiology:

The Novation Problem and the Formulations on the Authority of the Bishop

*No institutionalized Church. It was a localized setting but not universal.*