

In a few more years there would be a similar division in North Africa (315 AD) after the matters of the Diocletian persecution and the rejection of a bishop in the north African churches. This will be the "Donatist" schism and we may say a few words about it but it was essentially the same problem as the Novationist trial.

(4) On the Sacraments, (ordinances, if you will, friends), Baptism is given great stress as the gate through which life is entered... communion is given great stress on the way in which life is maintained. There is no suggestion of sacred ritual beyond these two and they are popularly treated as the carryover of circumcision and Passover.

b. Selected Readings (Suggested)

- (1) Cyprian: Almost any of the Letters.
- (2) Martyr: First Apology: 61  
Dialogue with Trypho: 14:1.29
- (3) Irenaeus: Against Heresies: 3.3.2

c. Observations

(1) The basic key to the ecclesiology of the fathers is the sense of oneness and mission. The key to understanding many of their pronouncements and insistent advice in practical matters is the matter of purity and order.

(2) Otherwise much of the fatherly concept of the church is geared to individual matters...advice to one another, etc., on particular problems.

(3) There is no suggestion of an hierarchy proper, however, the bishops being men of equal rank who are powerful in their own charges but not of must strength in a neighboring charge.

6. Eschatology, the doctrine of "last things" has had more stress laid on its expression in the last century than in the previous 18 or so. It is, in some ways, a "luxury" doctrine...one that is studied when there is leisure and opportunity for speculative thinking.

a. Summary:

(1) The earlier ante-Nicene fathers viewed eschatology from the framework of the Old Testament prophecy. It allowed them to stress:

Ecclesiology:

Selected Readings

Observations

Eschatology:

Summary