

B. The Persecution Schisms

I would be surprised if there were not more of these than the ones of which we have definitive knowledge. The two major ones have been mentioned on page 35 of this syllabus and I will try at this point to offer somewhat fuller details on these...they are symptomatic of many later schisms.

1. Novatianism

There are two major issues involved: 1) the return of those who have lapsed and 2) the role of authority in ordering church practice.

a. The Situation in Rome

Novatian, the presbyter, and Stephen, the bishop.

b. The Situation in Carthage

Novatus, the presbyter, and Cyprian, the bishop.

While the first of our issues is clearly the most apparent and probably the most important, the second is one of emotion and indignance and issues like this often overrule the sorts in the former category.

2. Donatism

Very similar to Novatianism except that the first issue is not so clearly defined. It was asserted (I am not sure it was proved) that Felix of Aptunga was a traditor and when the north African churches allowed him to participate in an investiture service they were dishonoring the martyrs. In this dispute a few items are of special interest:

a. The Synod of Arles

b. The Donatist claims

c. The later position and argument of Augustine

And in leaving these we may just note a bit of their overall influence in the church of that time.