

# Non-Ecumenical Councils

## Synod<sup>i</sup> of 251

In May 251 a [synod](#), assembled under the presidency of [Cyprian](#) to consider the treatment of the [Lapsi](#)<sup>ii</sup>, [excommunicated](#) Felicissimus and five other [Novatian](#) bishops (Rigorists), and declared that the lapsi should be dealt with, not with indiscriminate severity, but according to the degree of individual guilt. These decisions were confirmed by a synod of [Rome](#) in the autumn of the same year. Other Carthaginian<sup>iii</sup> synods concerning the lapsi were held in 252 and 254.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Synod of 256

Two synods, in 255 and 256, held under [Cyprian](#), pronounced against the validity of heretical [baptism](#), thus taking direct issue with [Stephen I, bishop of Rome](#), who promptly repudiated them. A third synod in September 256, possibly following the repudiation, unanimously reaffirmed the position of the other two. Stephen's claims to authority as bishop of bishops were sharply resented, and for some time the relations of the Roman and African sees were severely strained.<sup>[2]</sup>

- A variety of unresolved issues related to restoration of the lapsed in faith and the actions of those who had been considered heretics remained to be dealt with at the [first ecumenical council](#). The eighth canon of the council in particular addressed Novationists<sup>iv</sup>.

## Synod of 345

Around 345–349 under Gratus a [synod](#) of orthodox bishops, who had met to record their gratitude for the effective official repression of the Circumcelliones ([Donatists](#)), declared against the [rebaptism](#) of any one who had been baptized in the name of the Trinity, and adopted twelve canons of clerical discipline.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Synod of 397

The Council of Carthage, called the third by [Denzinger](#),<sup>[5]</sup> issued a [canon](#) of the [Bible](#) on 28 August 397. The primary source of information about the third Council of Carthage comes from the *Codex Canonum Ecclesiae Africanæ*, which presents a compilation of ordinances enacted by various church councils in Carthage during the fourth and fifth centuries. In one section of this code the following paragraph concerning the [canon of Scripture](#) appears.<sup>[6]</sup>

16 It was also determined that besides the Canonical Scriptures nothing be read in the Church under the title of divine Scriptures. The Canonical Scriptures are these: [Genesis](#), [Exodus](#), [Leviticus](#), [Numbers](#), [Deuteronomy](#), [Joshua the son of Nun](#), [Judges](#), [Ruth](#), four books of [Kings](#), two books of [Paraleipomena](#)<sup>v</sup>, [Job](#), the [Psalter](#), five books of [Solomon](#), the books of the [twelve prophets](#), [Isaiah](#), [Jeremiah](#), [Ezekiel](#), [Daniel](#), [Tobit](#), [Judith](#), [Esther](#), two books of [Esdras](#), two [Books of the Maccabees](#).

17 Of the New Testament: [four books of the Gospels](#), one book of the [Acts of the Apostles](#), thirteen [Epistles of the Apostle Paul](#), one epistle of the same [writer] to the [Hebrews](#), two [Epistles of the Apostle Peter](#), three of [John](#), one of [James](#), one of [Jude](#), one book of the [Apocalypse of John](#).

18 So let the church over the sea be consulted to confirm this canon. Let it also be allowed that the Passions of Martyrs be read when their festivals are kept.

20 Let this be made known also to our brother and fellow-priest Boniface, or to other bishops of those parts, for the purpose of confirming that Canon. Because we have received from our fathers that those books must be read in the Church.

## Conference of 411

The Conference of Carthage, held by the command of the Emperor [Honorius](#) in 411 with a view to terminating the Donatist schism, while not strictly a synod, was one of the most important assemblies in the history of the African sees, and of the whole [Catholic Church](#). It was presided over by [Marcellinus of Carthage](#) who found in favour of the Catholic party, which led to the violent suppression of the Donatists.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Council of 418

On 1 May 418 a great synod ([Augustine of Hippo](#) called it A Council of Africa), which assembled under the presidency of [Aurelius, bishop of Carthage](#), to take action concerning the errors of [Caelestius](#), a disciple of [Pelagius](#), denounced the [Pelagian](#) doctrines of [human nature](#), [original sin](#), grace, and perfectibility; and it fully approved the contrary views of [Augustine](#). Prompted by the reinstatement by the [bishop of Rome](#) of a deposed African priest ([Apiarius of Sicca](#)), the synod enacted that whoever appeals to a court on the other side of the sea (meaning [Rome](#)) may not again be received into [communion](#) by any one in Africa (canon 17).<sup>[8]</sup>

## Council of 419

During the Council [Saint Augustine](#) and [Saint Aurelius](#) condemned [Pope Zosimus](#) for interfering with the African Church's jurisdiction by falsifying the text of Canon 5 of the [First Council of Nicaea](#). They further warned Pope Zosimus, and later [Pope Celestine I](#), not to "introduce the empty pride of the world into the Church of Christ" and to "keep their Roman noses out of African affairs". The Council ruled that no bishop may call himself "Prince of Bishops" or "Supreme Bishop" or any other title which suggests *Supremacy*(Canon 39). It also ruled that if any of the African clergy dared to appeal to Rome, "the same was *ipso facto* cast out of the clergy". (Canon 34)<sup>[9][13]</sup>

## Synod of 484

The **Vandal Synod of Carthage (484)** was a largely unsuccessful [church](#) council meeting called by the [Vandal](#) King [Huneric](#) to persuade the [Catholic bishops](#) in his recently acquired North African territories to convert to [Arian Christianity](#). The

Catholic bishops refused and many, including [Fulgentius of Ruspe](#) and Tiberiumus, were exiled to [Sardinia](#),<sup>[14][15]</sup> and [some executed](#). The *Notitia Provinciarum at Civitatum Africa* says that nearly 500 went into exile. The bishops had requested that Catholic bishops from outside Huneric's dominions be allowed to attend but this was refused, the king saying "When you make me master of the whole world, then what you want shall be done". The synod appears to have been an exercise in royal browbeating more than a genuine debate, with bias toward Arian bishops.<sup>[16]</sup>

**The deuterocanonical (*Apocrypha*) scriptural texts are:**

- Tobit.
- Judith.
- Additions to Esther (Vulgate Esther 10:4-16:24, but see also Esther in the New American Bible)
- Wisdom.
- Ben Sira, also called Sirach or Ecclesiasticus.
- Baruch, including the Letter of Jeremiah (Additions to Jeremiah in the Septuagint)
- Additions to Daniel: ...
- 1 Maccabees.

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<sup>i</sup> **Synod** - an assembly of the clergy and sometimes also the laity in a diocese or other division of a particular church.

<sup>ii</sup> **Lapsi** were apostates in the early Christian Church, who renounced their faith under persecution by Roman authorities

<sup>iii</sup> *Carthage* was the center or capital city of the ancient *Carthaginian* civilization, on the eastern side of the Lake of *Tunis* in what is now the *Tunis* Governorate in *Tunisia*. The city developed from a Phoenician colony into the capital of an empire dominating the Mediterranean during the first millennium BC.

<sup>iv</sup> Novationists It held a strict view that refused readmission to communion of Lapsi, those baptized Christians who had denied their faith or performed the formalities of a ritual sacrifice to the pagan gods, under the pressures of the persecution sanctioned by Emperor Decius, in AD 250. The *Novationists* were declared heretical.

<sup>v</sup> [Paraleipomena](#) (in the Vulgate Bible and some other versions) the name of the books of Chronicles, regarded as supplementary to the books of Kings.