

Ancient Christian Writers, Vol. XXV

**St. Cyprian  
The Lapsed and the  
Unity of the Catholic Church**

Translated by The Rev. Dr. MAURICE BEVENOT

St. Cyprian's writings give us an insight into the life of the Christian Church in the middle of the third century. The two pastoral addresses of this devoted Bishop which are here translated reveal the aftermath of the persecution of the Emperor Decius (A.D. 250-1): many had betrayed the faith—what was to be done with them? Again, divisions had arisen in certain local churches and threatened to spread—but could the Church of Christ be divided? The Lapsed answers the first question: the guilty must do penance before they can resume their place among the faithful. The Unity of the Catholic Church insists that there is no possible justification for breaking away from the authorities of the Church—the legitimate successors of those whom Christ had appointed Himself, Peter and the other Apostles.

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