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The Comma Calmly Considered  
Vandals Invade & Council of Carthage 484  
By  
Mike Ferrando

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## **The Comma Calmly Considered : Vandals Invade & Council of Carthage 484**

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## **The Comma Calmly Considered : Vandals Invade & Council of Carthage 484**

### **Introduction**

This is the fourth paper of the series. This essay has selections from my paper “The Witness of God is Greater.” In this essay, my goal is to highlight some of the amazing evidence that I have discovered in collating sources for my paper. I give some comments in order to direct my readers through these points.

- For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. (Psalm 119:89)
- The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. (Psalm 12:6-7)
- Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:105)
- Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. (Matt 24:35)

**Brief Remarks : The Courage of the Martyrs**

It is difficult to write a summary of this event concerning the Heavenly Witnesses. I can only reflect upon my faith and my soul in the sobering reality of the courage and sacrifice of these martyrs. If there can be any “evidence” that these verses were always Scripture, surely this is the event wherein the blood of the martyrs seals the question in the affirmative. I confess that I will say with complete confidence that these verses are part of Scripture. I have this affirmation from the witness of the Spirit through prayer and study. The historical fact that these men, women, and even children, were willing to walk into the valley of the shadow of death confessing their faith, should remove any and all semblance of this question being simply “academic” or a matter of “empirical evidence”. In the same way that the 500 witnessed Christ’s resurrection, so here too the 460 give witness to these verses as part of Scripture. I cannot but ask, what more is necessary? Moreso, I ask, what will you do when the call is made “Who is on the Lord’s side?”. Here we have half of the Roman world assembled, willingly entering into the Lion’s den to affirm a confession that will cost them everything and some even their lives. If only those who have the Spirit would consider this event sincerely and deeply, they would see how unique and incredible, God has arranged for such a test of this question by placing us in the midst of this brutal persecution.

I admit, that this question, of these verses, is not simply academic nor is it a matter of mere “evidence”. How could a handful of manuscripts of unknown provenance or papyri that were picked from a trash heap compare to the witness that was given by these bishops? Yes, there were 460. Yes, it was half of the Christian world present. What more would be needed? I do believe that faith is required to clearly see what God has done here and honestly in the Spirit recognize the divine providence that has brought an irrefutable and undeniable historical event to affirm these verses.

True, some have brought objections to the bar. I will only say this: Carthage is the city of pleaders, and the Roman Empire is full of men educated in both Greek and Latin. This is a fact that I have spent much time demonstrating from scholarly works in my original paper “The Witness of God is Greater.” Further to the point, all of Christendom knew of this event, tracked these men and their lives after the event, and even gave witness to those who could still speak though their tongues had been cut out. These men of the second miracle were living in Constantinople. It is true that this event was well known and the document with names and fates of these 460 demonstrates beyond the event the martyr’s honor these men were accorded in posterity.

I ask your pardon in bringing my feeble words to bear up the history of these martyrs, and I ask too that Jesus might increase my faith through the Spirit that I might be willing to endure persecution than to triumph in intellectual self glory in any discussion of these verses. I am called to simply present this information so that everyone filled with the Spirit can decide for themselves in their own measure of faith. I desire to stand on the Lord’s side on that day. May God grant me this prayer and be with you all in your spirit. Prayers.

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### **Vandals Invade North Africa 429 AD (Council of Carthage 484)**

• In 429, the Vandals, estimated to number 80,000 people, had crossed by boat from Spain to North Africa. They advanced eastward conquering the coastal regions of 21st century Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. In 435, the Roman Empire, then ruling in North Africa, allowed the Vandals to settle in the provinces of Numidia and Mauretania when it became clear that the Vandal army could not be defeated by Roman military forces. In 439 the Vandals renewed their advance eastward and captured Carthage, the most important city of North Africa. The fledgling kingdom then conquered the Roman-ruled islands of Mallorca, Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica in the western Mediterranean Sea. In the 460s the Romans launched two unsuccessful military expeditions by sea in an attempt to overthrow the Vandals and reclaim North Africa. The conquest of North Africa by the Vandals was a blow to the beleaguered Western Roman Empire as North Africa was a major source of revenue and a supplier of grain (mostly wheat) to the city of Rome. The Vandal Kingdom ended in 534 when it was conquered by Belisarius in the Vandalic War and incorporated into the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire. (Vandal Kingdom. Wikipedia. <[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vandal\\_Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vandal_Kingdom)>)

• The Vandal Synod of Carthage (484) was a largely unsuccessful church council meeting called by the Vandal King Huneric to persuade the Nicene bishops in his recently acquired North African territories to convert to Arian Christianity. The Nicene bishops refused and many, including Fulgentius of Ruspe and Tiberiumus, were exiled to Sardinia,[17][18] and some executed. The Notitia Provinciarum at Civitatum Africa says that nearly 500 went into exile. The bishops had requested that Nicene 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. (Councils of Carthage. Wikipedia. <[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Councils\\_of\\_Carthage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Councils_of_Carthage)>)

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### **Hunric becomes King : The Edict**

• [Victor] Following the death of Geiseric, his eldest son, Huniric, succeeded his father. In accordance with the subtlety of the barbarians, at the beginning of his reign he began to act in quite a mild and moderate fashion. This was particularly so with respect to our religion, so that meetings of the people were held even where it had previously been decided under king Geiseric that spiritual assemblies were not to take place. And, to show that he was a man of religion, he decreed that the Manichaeian heretics were to be sought out with painstaking care. He had many of these people burned, and he sold more of them for ships across the seas. He found that nearly all the Manichaeians were adherents of his religion, the Arian heresy, especially its priests and deacons; so it was that, the greater his shame, the more he was kindled against them. ...The tyrant turned his mind to more violent actions against the church of God, so that having cut off some of the limbs he could destroy the whole body by tearing it in pieces. For on the day of the Ascension of the Lord, in the presence of Reginus, the legate of the emperor Zeno, he sent to bishop Eugenius an edict which was to be read out in the middle of the church. Its contents were as follows; he also forwarded it, by speeding post horses, to the whole of Africa.

• [Victor] "Hunirix, king of the Vandals and Alans, to all the homousian bishops. It is well known that not once but quite often your priests have been forbidden to celebrate any liturgies at all in the territory of the Vandals, in case they seduce Christian souls and destroy them. Many of them have despised this and, contrary to the prohibition, have been discovered to have said mass in the territories of the Vandals, claiming that they hold to the rule of the Christian faith in its fullness. And because we do not wish for scandal in the provinces granted us by God, therefore know that by the providence of God and with the consent of our holy bishops we have decreed this: that on the first of February next you are all to come to Carthage, making no excuse that you are frightened, so that you will be able to debate concerning the principles of faith with our venerable bishops and establish the propriety of the faith of the Homousians, which you defend, from the divine scriptures. From this it will be clear whether you hold the faith in its fullness. We have sent a copy of this edict to all your fellow bishops throughout Africa. Given on 20 May 483 in the seventh year of Hunirix."

• [Victor] As soon as those of us who were present came to know this as it was read out, 'our heart was forthwith broken and our eyes grew dim' (Lam 5:17), and in truth, 'the days of our festival were turned to sorrow and our songs to lamentation'(Amos 8:10), since the contents of the edict revealed that a raging persecution was to come, especially where it said 'we do not wish for scandal in the provinces granted us by God,' as if it were saying 'we do not wish there to be Catholics in our provinces.' We discussed what was to be done. No remedy for the calamity which threatened was to be found, except for the proposal, a reasonable one were it possible for a barbarian's heart to be softened, made by the holy Eugenius. ...That day of treachery which the king had appointed, 1 February, was now drawing near. There came together not only the bishops of the whole of Africa, but also those of many of the islands, worn out with suffering and grief.

• Victor Vitensis, Victor of Vita: history of the Vandal persecution, Book 2

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### Confession of the 460 Bishops Read Aloud

- [Victor] Finally the debate took place, needless to say at a place their enemies had selected. Our people chose to avoid the disturbances which loud voices would have caused, in case the Arians were later to say that they had been overpowered by the weight of numbers... Our people turned round and said to Cyrila: "Say what you intend to do." Cyrila said: "I do not know Latin." Our bishops said: "We know very well that you have always spoken Latin; you should not excuse yourself now, especially since you have set this fire going."35 And, seeing that the catholic bishops were better prepared for the debate, he flatly refused to give them a hearing, relying on various quibbles. But our people had foreseen this and wrote a short work concerning the faith, composed quite fittingly and with the necessary detail. They said: "If you wish to know our faith, this is the truth we hold."
- Victor Vitensis, Victor of Vita: history of the Vandal persecution, Book 2.

• [Victor] We are enjoined by a royal command to provide an account of the catholic faith which we hold. So we are setting out to briefly indicate the things which we believe and proclaim, aware of our lack of ability but supported by divine assistance. We recognize, then, that the first thing we must do is give an explanation of the unity of the substance of the Father and the Son, which the Greeks call homousion. Therefore: we acknowledge the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the unity of the divine nature in such a way that we can say with a faithful confession that the Father subsists as a distinct person, and the Son equally exists in his own person, and that the Holy Spirit retains the distinctiveness of his own person, not asserting that the Father is the same as the Son, nor confessing that the Son is the same as the Father or the Holy Spirit, nor understanding the Holy Spirit in such a way that he is the Father or the Son; but we believe the unbegotten Father and the Son begotten of the Father and the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father17 to be of one substance and essence, because the unbegotten Father and the begotten Son and the Holy Spirit who proceeds have one divine nature in common; nevertheless, there are three distinct persons.

• [Victor] And so, no occasion for uncertainty is left. It is clear that the Holy Spirit is also God and the author of his own will, he who is most clearly shown to be at work in all things and to bestow the gifts of the divine dispensation according to the judgment of his own will, because where it is proclaimed that he distributes graces where he wills, servile condition cannot exist, for servitude is to be understood in what is created, but power and freedom in the Trinity. **And so that we may teach the Holy Spirit to be of one divinity with the Father and the Son still more clearly than the light, here is proof from the testimony of John the evangelist. For he says: 'There are three who bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.'**47 Surely he does he not say 'three separated by a difference in quality' or 'divided by grades which differentiate, so that there is a great distance between them?' No, he says that the 'three are one.'

• Latin: Unde nullus ambiguitati relinquitur locus, quin clareat Spiritum sanctum et Deum esse, et suae voluntatis auctorem, qui cuncta operari, et secundum propriae voluntatis arbitrium divinae dispensationis dona largiri apertissime demonstratur. Quia ubi voluntaria gratiarum distributio praedicatur, non potest videri conditio servitutis: in creatura enim servitus intelligenda est, in Trinitate vero dominatio ac libertas. **Et ut adhuc luce clarius unius divinitatis esse cum Patre et Filio Spiritum sanctum doceamus, Ioannis evangelistae testimonio comprobatur. (0228A) Ait namque: Tres sunt qui testimonium perhibent in coelo, Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus sanctus, et hi tres unum sunt (I Ioan. V, 7). Nunquid, ait, tres in differenti aequalitate seiuncti, aut quibuslibet diversitatum gradibus longo separationis intervallo divisi? sed tres, inquit, unum sunt.** (Victor Vitensis, Historia persecutionis Africae provinciae; Migne Latina, PL 58.227C)

- Victor Vitensis, Victor of Vita: history of the Vandal persecution, Book 2.

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- [Victor] When our little book had been presented to them and read out, their blind eyes found it impossible to endure the light of the truth. They raved with intolerable shouts, taking it amiss that in the title of the book we had called ourselves 'Catholics'. Straightaway those liars declared to the king that we had created an uproar while rushing away from the hearing. He was immediately inflamed and, believing the falsehood, lost no time in doing what he wanted to do. He had already drawn up a decree and secretly sent his men with it throughout the different provinces. So, while the bishops were in Carthage, in one day he closed the churches throughout Mrica and he presented all the property of the bishops and churches to his own bishops as a gift.
- Victor Vitensis, Victor of Vita: history of the Vandal persecution, Book 3.



**460 Bishops “stood on the brink of death”**

• [Brownlee] There is no trace of evidence that any of the different sectaries brought an accusation against the Christian fathers of having interpolated this verse. — It is a fact on record that our verse was received by the western churches in Europe, in general, at a very early period. Now on the supposition that this verse had not existed in the ancient genuine MSS. and that the Christian fathers had brought it forward, and quoted it publicly, without effective evidence of its authenticity, how is it to be accounted for, I pray you, that all the sectaries kept silence? The Sabellians, and the Arians, had both the disposition, and the power, and the means in their hands to expose the audacity, and to punish the sacrilegious deed of these fathers, who had committed the interpolation. If they could not discover the first who dared to add to God’s word, they could easily discover the first who dared to make use of the fraud. How can it be accounted for that they never brought any charges of this kind? It cannot be affirmed that our verse never was quoted against them. This was done. It was done publicly by those brave Christian bishops, who, in Africa, “bearded the lion in his den.” I allude to the famous assembly of bishops in Africa, who laid in their solemn testimony before the king of the Vandals, and the Arian bishops. In the year, 484, Hunneric, by an edict did summon all the orthodox bishops of Africa, and the isles dependent on his power, to appear before him in February of the following year, and to defend and establish out of the Scriptures, their doctrine of the unity of the three divine persons; their doctrine of the homoousian. They had nine months allowed them and their antagonists to prepare themselves; to confer, and to collect MSS. and to draw up their confessions of faith respectively. At the time fixed by the royal edict, there appeared, says Gibbon in his Roman History, four hundred and sixty bishops from the orthodox African churches. They presented their confession of faith to the king. They had known their danger from that man of blood. [PAGE 547] They stood on the brink of death. The bar of their God seemed as it were, almost immediately before them. They had made their preparations of proof for nine months. They knew that the eyes of all the churches of the east and west were on them. Would men ready to offer their lives on the altar of martyrdom—men who actually, after this, braved banishment and death—would these men interpolate, or bring forward a quotation, which by one word could be refuted and exposed by their learned and shrewd and powerful enemies? Would they do a deed which would expose their memory to infamy, before the eyes of all the churches? It is surely not supposable. They knew that their enemies had every facility to expose them by the possession of MSS. of the Scriptures.

• [Brownlee] Hence they must have come conscious that what they were going to quote, they could sustain by ancient and authentic MSS. and by the testimony of the fathers. If they did not all this, then their act of quoting what was not scripture, and their offering what was interpolated, and not found in their enemies copies, was little else than a wanton and a gratuitous act of throwing themselves into the fangs and the jaws of the lion—an act of self destruction—when they had abundance of other texts to sustain them in the dispute. Now, the following is the clause of their confession, to which I have alluded. It is from Victor Vitensis. “And further that we may teach it to be clearer than the light, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost have one divinity; it is proved from the testimony of the evangelist John: for he says, there are three that bear testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.”— The Quarterly Review, Mr. Editor, to get rid of this testimony, tried to impeach the authority of Victor Vitensis. But the able refutation by bishop Burgess has shown that Victor is sustained by the most unexceptionable authority—from that of the Emperor Justinian, even unto Gregory the Great. (Bp. Burgess’s Vindication of 1 Jo. v. 7. p. 52. And Horne, vol. iv. p. 448.) Dr. Marsh supposes that the Arians did not stay to reply—or to reason the point. They resorted instantly to violence. But the Arians did reply—not at first by blows—not immediately by cutting out their tongues, but “with the most tumultuous clamours.” They insisted that these words did not prove the point in debate. They insisted that they could not find, in as many words, in the scriptures, the very word — the homoousian — which was the word used by both antagonists in the Arian controversy. (See Kettneri, vol 1, 1719, p. 105.) Hence they did not

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deny our text — but they denied that the homoousian was contained in the Verse. Others of our opponents suppose that the Arians must have objected to this text brought against them: but that this has not been recorded by the orthodox, from whom we have the account. To this it has been justly replied, that if they had objected, we should most assuredly have found on the pages of the orthodox some reply to the objection. For it is evident that these fathers could say enough for it, when permitted — and did persuade the whole western churches to receive it as a genuine portion of the word of God! We feel ourselves fairly entitled to say, that the Arians were silent on this point. They brought no such accusations. And this silence seems to us a proof that they had it in their MS. copies of the Bible.

- Brownlee, [Letter to the Editor], No. IV, in the Christian Advocate, vol 2, 1824, p. 546-547.

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### **Hefele : Religious Conference at Carthage, A.D. 484.**

• [Hefele] In the meantime there was held in Africa, if not a Synod proper, yet an unusually numerous and important assembly of bishops. Huneric, king of the Vandals, son of the successor of Geiseric, since his entrance on the government, A.D. 477, had not ceased to persecute the Catholics, and had endeavored by all means of craft and violence to obtain a victory for Arianism, which he and his people professed. To this end he sent out, in May 483, a circular letter to Eugenius of Carthage, and all Homoousion bishops, in which he gave orders that, on the first of February in the next year, they should be present at Carthage, in order to have a disputation with his "venerable" bishops on the Homoousion faith, and to examine whether it were scriptural or not.<sup>2</sup> [2. Mansi, t. vii. p. 1141; Hardouin, t. ii. p. 857.] Eugenius declared that he was willing to attend, on condition that the Catholic bishops from the other side of the Mediterranean, particularly the Church of Rome, should be [PAGE 36] allowed to take part in the disputation, as the controversy would have reference to the Catholic creed, and not to the special creed of the African Church.<sup>1</sup> [1. Mansi, t. vii. p. 1142; Hardouin, l.c.; Victor Vitensis (Victor of Vita), *De persecutione Afric.* lib. ii. in the *Biblioth. Max. PP.*, Lugd. t. viii. p. 682; also in Baron. ad ann. 483, n. 93 sqq.] He made this stipulation particularly, because the bishops who were not under Vandal rule could express themselves with much greater freedom than he and his colleagues who were living under that heavy oppression. King Huneric made the scornful reply: "When you make me master of the whole world, then what you want shall be done," that is to say, then shall the bishops be summoned from the whole world. To this Eugenius returned a befitting answer; but instead of complying, Huneric did the reverse, and drove into exile those Orthodox bishops of Africa who were pointed out to him as peculiarly learned and eloquent.<sup>2</sup> [2. Victor Vitensis, l.c.]

• [Hefele] At last the first of February arrived, and no fewer than 461 Catholic bishops had appeared at Carthage, as is shown by the list of them which is still extant.<sup>3</sup> [fn. 3. In Mansi, t. vii. 1156; Hardouin, t. ii. p. 869. Sixteen sees were then made empty, or the bishops sent into exile, so that the Vandal kingdom counted 447 Catholic bishops.] Most of them were from Africa itself; some were from the islands of Sardinia, Majorica, and Minorca, which belonged to the Vandal kingdom. Huneric had some of the ablest of the Catholic bishops separated from the others and arrested, and Bishop Laetus of Neptis even killed, in order to strike terror into the others. The place of meeting was fixed by their opponents; but the Catholics immediately selected from their number ten speakers, so that the Arians should not be able to say that they were clamored down by the Catholic bishops by reason of their majority. There were, however, no real debates. At the very beginning the Arian Court Bishop Cyrila placed himself in the president's chair, and the Catholic bishops in vain appealed against this, and demanded an impartial president. When the royal notary gave to Cyrila the title of patriarch, the Orthodox asked "by whose authority Cyrila had assumed the title of patriarch"; and when the Catholic spectators made a noise at this, they were driven by blows from the place of [PAGE 37] assembly. Eugenius complained of violence; but, in order to get at the chief matter in dispute, the Catholic speakers requested Cyrila to open the proceedings, and to lay before them the points which were to be discussed. Cyrila replied, "Nescio latine," and persisted in his objection to the speaking of Latin, although he answered that he had elsewhere made copious use of this language. Victor Vitensis maintains (p. 683) that Cyrila had met the Catholic bishops with better preparation and more boldly than he had expected; but that they had taken the precaution of drawing up a confession of faith in writing of which he gives a copy (lib. iii.), and which is also given in Mansi and Hardouin. 1 [fn. 1. Mansi, t. vii. p. 1143; Hardouin, t. ii. p. 857.] Tillemont shows (p. 797) that, in the subscription of this formula, xii. Kal. Mart. instead of Mai. must be read. Huneric now put forth an edict, on February 24, in which he blamed the assembled Orthodox bishops that they had not either at the first or second day of sitting (so that the assembly lasted two days) proved the Homoousion from Holy Scripture, although they had been challenged to do so; but, on the contrary, had occasioned a rising and an uproar

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among the people. He therefore gave orders that their churches should remain closed until they should come and take part in the disputation.

- [Hefele] Further, the laws which the Roman Emperors, misled by the bishops, had promulgated against heretics, should now be directed against the maintainers of the Homoousion. They were therefore forbidden to hold meetings anywhere; they were not to have a church in any city or village; they must not take part in any baptism, ordination, or the like; and in case they continued in their perverseness, they should be punished with exile. Moreover, the laws of the Roman Emperors against heretical layman should now be in force, and they should be deprived of the right to sell, to leave by will, and to succeed to legacies, inheritances, trusts, etc.; and, moreover, those who occupied dignities and offices should be stripped of them, and should be declared infamous. All books in which they defended their error (the Nicene doctrine) were to be burnt. Anyone, however, who should return from his error by the 1st of June, was [PAGE 38] to be free from all punishments. Finally, all the churches, together with church property, in the whole kingdom, were to be made over to the truth, that is, the Arian bishops and priests.<sup>1</sup> [fn. 1. Victor Vit. lib. iv. l.c. p. 687 sqq.; Mansi, t. vii. p. 1153 sqq.; Hardouin, t. ii. p. 867 sqq.; Baron. ad ann. 484, n. 54; Tillemont, t. xvi. p. 562.] Besides this, King Huneric had the Catholic bishops present in Carthage sought for in their lodgings, deprived of their property, their servants, and horses, and driven out of the city. Whoever should receive them was to have his house burnt. Later on they were all excommunicated; the majority (302) being sent to different parts of Africa, where they had to live as country people without any spiritual functions, whilst forty-six were sent to the island of Corsica, where they had to hew wood for the royal ships. Victor adds that twenty eight had escaped, one had become a martyr, one a confessor, and eighty eight had died earlier.<sup>2</sup> [2. Victor Vit. l.c. p. 693; Mansi, t. vii. p. 1164; Hardouin, t. ii. p. 875. Cf. Tillemont, t. xvi. p. 565 sqq.]

- Hefele, A History of the Councils of the Church, From the Original Documents, 1895, vol 4, p. 35-38.

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### **Notitia Provinciarum et Civitatum Africae (List of the Provinces and Cities of Africa)**

• The Notice of the Provinces and Cities of Africa (Latin: *Notitia Provinciarum et Civitatum Africae*) is a Byzantine-era document listing the bishops and sees in the Roman provinces of North Africa.[1] The cause of its preparation was the summoning of the episcopate to Carthage on 1 February 484 by the Arian king of the Vandals, Huneric (477–84). The *Notitia Provinciarum et Civitatum Africae* [Migne Latin, PL 58.267] is the conventional title long, in Latin but it is also known as the *Notitia* or *Notitia Africae* which is in turn, abbreviated in NA.[6] it is a record of the Bishops of North Africa[7] and represents a register of the provinces and cities of Africa, and the Organization of the Catholic Church (?) in North Africa at the end of the 5th century, an important time in the development of Catholic dogma. It also by inference describes the extent of the Vandal Kingdom at that time. **The Notitia lists the Catholic Bishops (nomina episcoporum catholicorum) who participated in the conference held at Carthage, February 1 484,[8] convened by Huneric. It summarizes the total number of bishops, in North Africa, the number of those who died in the Vandal Persecution, those who remained alive and, among these those who were relegated [exiled] (exiled), and those who fled (fugerunt).** It lists four hundred and eighty-three dioceses in seven provinces, five of which follow the secular Roman provinces. The order of the provinces seems to follow the chronological order of the creation of the primaties. Arranged according to provinces in this order: Proconsularis, Numidia, Byzacena, Mauretania Caesariensis, Mauretania Sitifensis, Tripolitana, Sardinia. **It also names the exiled bishops and vacant sees, and is an important authority for the history of the African Church and the geography of these provinces. It is incorporated in the only extant manuscript to the history of the Vandal persecution by Bishop Victor Vitensis.** (*Notitia Provinciarum et Civitatum Africae*. Wikipedia. <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Notitia\_Provinciarum\_et\_Civitatum\_Africae>)

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### **Appendix: Historical Points : Ben David & Ambrosius Dorhout**

• [Ben David] The verse is quoted by above four hundred orthodox bishops, in a confession of faith presented to Hunneric, King of the Vandals, in Africa. This was in the year 484, and the confession has these words, which they ascribe to John the Evangelist: "Tres sunt qui testimonium perhibent in coelo. Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus Sanctus." Observe, this is not a quotation of one writer, but of all the heads of the churches in Africa, [PAGE 280] in the Mediterranean islands, in Greece, in Rome, and in other places. The quotation, therefore, virtually presents the united testimony of all the learned throughout the whole Christian world to the genuineness of the text of the three Heavenly Witnesses. The king, who summoned them to appear at Carthage, was a furious Arian, bent on exterminating the orthodox. They produced the verse, they said, as placing the divinity of Christ in a point clearer than light. Could they hope by forging it, to impose upon a powerful enemy, surrounded by all the Arian bishops, who were ready to refute or expose any unfair dealings in their opponents? The thing is impossible: they all knew that, though their interpretation of the verse was opposed, the authenticity of it could not be called in question. ('Ben David' [John Jones], 'Letters to the Editor', The Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature, vol 21, 1826, 279-280.)

• [Dorhout] Thus Victor: The book is said to be the one on the Catholic Faith by the Bishop of Carthage Eugenius, but it is not [written by Eugenius]. Victor, who composed the history of the Vandal persecution and was an eye- and ear-witness to the events, clearly relates that the members of this whole African Catholic council, all the bishops of Africa and of many islands, used this weapon against the Arians. That means that they recognized the authenticity of John's passage [1 John 5:7] and were aware that the Arians could bring up nothing against it; otherwise they would have been foolishly charging at the enemy with a leaden sword. We may therefore state as extremely likely that all the Scripture codices of the time, at least those in use in the whole of Africa and among the islanders, contained these words of 1 John 5:7, since not even the Arians were able to deny it. This one passage in Victor's work that we are citing is tantamount to hundreds of reputable 5th-century codices. So one wonders how those who hold the opposite view can argue that the oldest codices for the most part do not recognize those words. (Dorhout, Ambrosius. Ambrosii Dorhout V.D.M. Dokkumani, Animadversiones in loca selecta V.T. ... Annexæ sunt III Dissertationes, 1765. vol. 1, 275-276; Translated by Sarah Van der Pas, correspondence, June 2021)

**Appendix: Invasion, Conquering North Africa, and Persecution**

• [Victor] It is evident that this is now the sixtieth year since the cruel and savage people of the Vandal race set foot on the territory of wretched Africa [429 AD]. They made an easy passage across the straits, because the vast and broad sea becomes narrow between Spain and Africa, which are separated by only twelve miles. A large number made the crossing, and in his cunning duke [King] Geiseric, intending to make the reputation of his people a source of dread, ordered then and there that the entire crowd was to be counted, even those who had come from the womb into the light that very day. Including old men, young men and children, slaves and masters, there was found to be a total of 80,000. News of this has spread widely, until today those ignorant of the matter think that this is the number of their armed men, although now their number is small and feeble. Finding a province which was at peace and enjoying quiet, the whole land beautiful and flowering on all sides, they set to work on it with their wicked forces, laying it waste by devastation and bringing everything to ruin with fire and murders. They did not even spare the fruit-bearing orchards, in case people who had hidden in the caves of mountains or steep places or any remote areas would be able to eat the foods produced by them after they had passed. So it was that no place remained safe from being contaminated by them, as they raged with great cruelty, unchanging and relentless.

• [Victor] In particular, they gave vent to their wicked ferocity with great strength against the churches and basilicas of the saints, cemeteries and monasteries, so that they burned houses of prayer with fires greater than those they used against the cities and all the towns.<sup>4</sup> When they happened to find the doors of a sacred building closed they were keen to open up a way with the blows of their hatchets, so that of them it could then rightly be said: 'They broke its doors in pieces with their axes as if they were in a forest of trees; they cast it down with axe and hatchet: they set your sanctuary on fire: they cast the tabernacle of your name to the ground and defiled it.' (Ps 73:5-7 Vulg) How many were the distinguished bishops and noble priests put to death by them at that time with different kinds of torments, as they tried to make them give up any gold or silver belonging to themselves or the churches! And so that the things which were in their keeping would be brought forth more easily under the pressure of pain, they inflicted cruel torments a second time on those who produced things, asserting that they had produced a part but not the whole, and the more a person gave, the more they believed he had still more.

• [Victor] Some had their mouths forced open with poles and stakes, and disgusting filth was put in their jaws so that they would tell the truth about their money. They tortured others by twisting cords around their foreheads and shins until they snapped. Devoid of mercy they offered many people sea water, others vinegar, the lees of olive oil, fish sauce and many other cruel things, while full wineskins were placed near their mouths. Neither the weaker sex, nor regard for nobility, nor reverence for the priesthood softened those cruel hearts; on the contrary, when they caught sight of some officeholder worthy of honour, the wrath of their fury was thereupon increased. I am unable to recount the number of the priests and men holding the rank of *inlustris* on whom they placed enormous burdens, as if they were camels or other kinds of baggage animals, and forced to walk using iron goads. Some of them breathed their last in wretched fashion under their burdens. Mature age and that greyness, worthy of veneration, which whitens the hair of the head so that it looks like shining wool, obtained no mercy from the enemy.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, in their barbaric frenzy they even snatched children from their mothers' breasts and dashed the guiltless infants to the ground.<sup>7</sup> They held others by the feet, upside down, and cut them in two from their bottoms to the tops of their heads; then it was, perchance, that captive Zion sang: 'My enemy said that he would bum my lands, kill my little children and dash my infants to the ground.' (cf II Kings 8: 12)

• [Victor] In some buildings, namely great houses and homes where fire had been of less service to them, they smashed the roofs in pieces and levelled the beautiful walls to the ground, so that the former beauty of the towns cannot be deduced from what they look like now. And there are very many cities with few or no

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inhabitants, for after these events the ones which survive lie desolate; for example, here at Carthage they utterly destroyed the odeon, the theatre, the temple of Memoria and what people used to call the Via Caelestis. To speak only of the most noteworthy things, in their tyrannical presumption they delivered over to their religion the basilica of the Ancestors where the bodies of SS Perpetua and Felicitas are buried, the basilica of Celerina and the Scillitani, and others which they had not destroyed. But where there were some defensive works against which the hostility of their barbaric frenzy was unable to prevail, countless throngs were brought together at the walls of the towns. These they put to death with their savage swords, so that when the corpses had rotted away they were able, by means of the stench of the decaying bodies, to bring about the death of those whom they had not been able to approach because of the sheltering walls which protected them. Who will be able to declare how many and how numerous were the bishops who were then tortured by them? For it was then as well that Pampinianus, the venerable bishop of our town, IO was burnt all over his body by plates of glowing iron; in the same way Mansuetus of Urosi (Henchir Sougga) was burnt in the Porta Fornitana. At this time the city of Hippo Regius (Annaba), which the blessed Augustine, worthy of all praise, governed as its pontiff, was besieged.

- Victor Vitensis. Victor of Vita:History of the Vandal persecution, Book 1.



**Appendix: Prayer of Eugenius : 1st Miracle**

• [Victor] But when the fire of persecution was already kindled and the flame of the attacking king burned everywhere, our God displayed through his servant Eugenius a miracle which I must not pass over. In that same town of Carthage there was a certain blind man, a citizen very well known in the town, whose name was Felix. This man was visited by the Lord and was told by him in a vision one night, when the day of the Epiphany was dawning, "Rise, go to my servant bishop Eugenius, and tell him that I have sent you to him. And at the time when he blesses the font so that those coming to the faith may be baptized, he will touch your eyes. They will be opened and you will see the light." Having been instructed by this vision, the blind man believed that he had been deluded by a dream, as often happens, and decided not to get up. But while he was sinking back to sleep, he was urged in the same fashion to go to Eugenius. Again he paid no attention, and a third time he was threatened, speedily and fiercely. He roused the boy who usually guided him by the hand, and went with all speed to the basilica of Faustus. When he came there he prayed with many tears and asked a deacon, Peregrinus by name, to announce his arrival to the bishop, indicating that he had a secret of some kind to make known to him. Hearing of this the bishop ordered the man to come in. Because of the feast day that was being celebrated, the hymns of the night were already resounding throughout the church as the people sang. The blind man told the bishop the story of his vision and said to him: "I will not let you go until you let me have my sight back, just as you have been ordered by the Lord." The holy Eugenius said to him: "Depart from me, brother, for I am an unworthy sinner (cf Luke 5:8) and a wrongdoer above all men, seeing that even in these times I have been preserved."

• [Victor] But that man held onto his knees and said nothing beyond what he had said earlier: "Restore my sight to me, as has been ordered." Eugenius paid attention to his reverent trust and, because time was now pressing, he proceeded with him to the font in the company of the officiating clergy. There, immovable on his knees and groaning deeply, he disturbed heaven with his sobs. He blessed the rippling baptismal pool,<sup>29</sup> and when he had completed his prayer he arose and replied to the blind man in this way: "I have already told you, Felix my brother, that I am a sinful man; but may he who has deigned to visit you act in accordance with your faith and open your eyes." At the same time he signed his eyes with the standard of the cross, and immediately the blind man received his sight, as the Lord gave it back. The bishop kept him with him until all had been baptized in case the crowd, excited by such a great miracle, should crush the man who had received the light. Afterwards the miracle was made public throughout the church. The man who had been blind went forward to the altar with Eugenius to return to the Lord a thank offering for the restoration of his health, in accordance with the custom. The bishop received it and placed it on the altar. In the joy that followed, an uproar which could not be controlled arose from the people. Immediately, a messenger went to the tyrant. Felix was seized, and he was asked what had happened and how he had received the light. He explained everything in proper order, and the bishops of the Arians said: "Eugenius did this through sorcery."

• Victor Vitensis, Victor of Vita: history of the Vandal persecution, Book 2.

**Appendix: African Confessors : 2nd Miracle**

• [Victor] But let us go on quickly to tell what was done to the glory of God in the town of Tipasa (Tifech) in greater Mauritania. When they saw that a former notary of Cyrila had been ordained as the Arian bishop for their town, to the perdition of souls, the entire town fled together all at once on the next sailing to Spain, leaving behind only a few who had not been able to sail.<sup>14</sup> The bishop of the Arians began to put pressure on these people, first by blandishments and later by threats, in an attempt to make Arians of them. But they were strong in the Lord: not only did they laugh at the madness of the man who was exhorting them, but they also began to celebrate the divine mysteries in public, gathering together in a house. When the bishop found out about this, in secret he sent to Carthage a report about it which was hostile to them. When this came to the attention of the king, in his wrath he sent a count with orders that the entire province was to be gathered together in the middle of the forum, and that he was to cut the tongues and right hands of these people completely off. But when this was done, thanks to the operation of the Holy Spirit they spoke, and continued to speak, just as they had spoken before. And if anyone finds this hard to believe, he should go to Constantinople now, and there he will find one of them, the subdeacon Reparatus, speaking correctly and in a faultless manner. For this reason he is held to be worthy of reverence in the palace of the emperor Zeno, and the queen in particular venerates him with an extraordinary devotion. (Victor Vitensis, *Victor of Vita: history of the Vandal persecution*; Translated by Moorhead, Liverpool Press 1992)

• [Twistleton] After several preliminary remarks, and after referring to the passage in Victor Vitensis, which I have already translated somewhat more fully, Dr. Newman translates the evidence of six writers, viz. i) Aeneas of Gaza; ii) Procopius of Caesarea; iii) the Emperor Justinian; iv) Count Marcellinus; v) Victor bishop of Tonno; vi) Pope Gregory I. [Newman, *Two Essays on Biblical and on Ecclesiastical Miracles*, 1892, §222-§230] Their evidence is set forth by him as follows:

• 1. Aeneas of Gaza was the contemporary of Victor. When a Gentile, he had been a philosopher and a [PAGE 37] rhetorician, and did not altogether throw off his profession of Platonism when he became a Christian. He wrote a dialogue on the 'Immortality of the Soul and the Resurrection of the Body;' and in it, after giving various instances of miracles, he proceeds, in the character of Axitheus, to speak of the miracle of the African Confessors: 'Other such things have been and will be; but what took place the other day I suppose you have seen yourself. A bitter tyranny is oppressing the greater Africa, and humanity and orthodoxy have no influence over tyranny. Accordingly this tyrant takes offence at the piety of his subjects, and commands the priests to deny their glorious dogma. When they refuse, O the impiety! he cuts out that religious tongue, as Tereus in the fable. But the damsel wove the deed upon the robe, and divulged it by her skill when nature no longer gave her power to speak; they, on the other hand, needing neither robe nor skill, call upon Nature's Maker, who vouchsafes to them a new nature on the third day, not giving them another tongue, but the faculty to discourse without a tongue more plainly than before. I had thought it impossible for a piper to show his skill without his pipes, or harper to play his music without his harp; but now this novel sight forces me to change my mind, and to account for nothing fixed that is seen, if it be God's will to alter it. I myself saw the men, and heard them speak; and wondering at the [PAGE 38] articulateness of the sound, I began to inquire what its organ was; and distrusting my ears, I committed the decision to my eyes, and opening their mouth, I perceived the tongue entirely gone from the roots; and astounded, I fell to wonder not how they could talk, but how they had not died.' He saw them at Constantinople.

• 2. Procopius of Caesarea was secretary to Belisarius, whom he accompanied into Africa, Sicily, and Italy and to Constantinople, in the years between 527 and 542. By Belisarius he was employed in various political matters of great moment, and was at one time at the head of the commissariat and the

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fleet. He seems to have conformed to Christianity, but Cave observes, from his tone of writing, that he was no real believer in it, nay preferred the old Paganism, though he despised its rites and fables. He wrote the history of the Persian, Vandalic, and Gothic war, of which Gibbon speaks in the following terms : "His facts are collected from the personal experience and free conversation of a soldier, a statesman, and a traveller ; his style continually aspires, and often attains, to the merit of strength and elegance ; his reflections, more especially in the speeches which he too frequently inserts, contain a rich fund of political knowledge, and the historian, excited by the generous ambition of pleasing and instructing posterity, appears to disdain the prejudices of the people and the flattery [PAGE 39] of courts." Such is Procopius, and thus he speaks on the subject of this stupendous miracle : "Huneric became the most savage and iniquitous of men towards the African Christians. For forcing them to Arianize, whomever he found unwilling to comply, he burnt and otherwise put to death. And of many he cut out the tongue as low down as the throat, who even as late as my time were alive in Byzantium, and talked without any impediment, feeling no effects whatsoever of the punishment. But two of them having allowed themselves to hold converse with abandoned women, ceased to speak."

- 3. Our next witness, and of the same date, is the Emperor Justinian, who, in an edict addressed to Archelaus, Praetorian Prefect of Africa, on the subject of his office, after Belisarius had recovered the country to the Roman Empire, writes as follows : "The present mercy which Almighty God has deigned to manifest through us for his praise and his Name's sake, exceeds all the wonderful works which have happened in the world — viz., that Africa should through us recover in so short a time its liberty, after being in captivity under the Vandals for ninety-five years, those enemies alike of soul and body. For such souls as could not sustain their various tortures and punishments by rebaptizing, they translated into their own misbelief; and the bodies of free men they subjected to the hardships of a barbaric yoke. Nay, the very churches sacred to [PAGE 40] God did they defile with their deeds of misbelief ; some they turned into stables. We have seen the venerable men who, when their tongues had been cut off at the roots, yet piteously recounted their pains. Others, after diverse tortures, were dispersed through diverse provinces, and ended their days in exile."

- 4. Count Marcellinus, chancellor to Justinian before he came to the throne, is the fourth layman to whose testimony we are able to appeal. He, too, as two of the former, speaks as an eyewitness, and the additional circumstances with which he commences seem to throw light upon Aeneas's singular account, that the confessors spoke "more plainly than before." "Through the whole of Africa," he says, in his Chronicon, under the date 484, "the cruel persecution of Huneric, King of the Vandals, was inflicted upon our Catholics. For after the expulsion and dispersion of more than 334 bishops of the orthodox, and the shutting of their churches, the flocks of the faithful, afflicted by various punishments, consummated their blessed conflict. Then it was that the same King Huneric ordered the tongue to be cut out of a Catholic youth who from his birth had lived without speech at all ; soon after he spoke, and gave glory to God with the first sounds of his voice. In short, I myself have seen at Byzantium a few out of the [PAGE 41] company of the faithful religious men, with their tongues cut off and their hands amputated, speaking with perfect voice."

- 5. Victor, bishop of Tonno, in Africa, Proconsularis, another contemporary, and a strenuous defender of the "Three Chapters" (Latin: *Tria Capitula*), which were condemned in the Fifth Ecumenical Council, has left behind him a Chronicon also, which at the same date runs as follows : "Huneric, King of the Vandals, urging a furious persecution through the whole of Africa, banished to Tubunnae, Macrinippi, and other parts of the desert, not only Catholic clerks of every order, but even monks and laymen, to the number of about four thousand, and makes confessors and martyrs, and cuts off the tongues of the confessors. As to which confessors, the royal city where their bodies lie attests that after their tongues

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were cut out they spoke perfectly even to the end. Then Laetus, bishop of the Church of Nepte, is crowned with martyrdom, &c. It is observable from this statement that the miracle was recorded for the instruction of posterity at the place of their burial.”

- 6. Lastly, Pope Gregory I. thus speaks in his Dialogues :”In the time of Justinian Augustus, when the Arian persecution raised by the Vandals [PAGE 42] against the faith of Catholics was raging violently in Africa, some bishops, courageously persisting in the defence of the truth, were brought under notice ; whom the King of the Vandals, failing to persuade to his belief with words and offers, thought he could break with torture. For when in the midst of their defence of the truth, he bade them be silent, but they would not bear the misbelief quietly, lest it might be interpreted as assent. Breaking out into rage, he had their tongues cut off from the roots. A wonderful thing, and known to many senior persons, for afterwards, even without tongue, they spoke for the defence of the truth, just as they had been accustomed before to speak by means of it. These then, being fugitives at that time, came to Constantinople. At the time, moreover, that I was myself sent to the emperor to conduct the business of the Church, I fell in with a certain senior, a bishop, who attested that he had seen their mouths speaking, though without tongues, so that with open mouths they cried out, 'Behold, and see ; for we have not tongues and we speak.' And it appeared to those who inspected, as it was said, as if their tongues were being cut off from the roots, there was a sort of open depth in their throat, and yet in that empty mouth the words were formed full and perfect. Of whom one, having fallen into licentiousness, was soon after deprived of the gift of miracle.”

- [Twistleton] Dr. Newman then recapitulates the evidence as [PAGE 43] follows :”Little observation is necessary on evidence such as this. What is perhaps most striking in it, is the variety of the witnesses, both in their persons and the details of their testimony, together with the consistency and unity of that testimony in all material points. Out of the seven writers adduced, six are contemporaries ; three, if not four, are eye witnesses of the miracle ; one reports from an eye witness ; and one testifies to a permanent record at the burial-place of the subjects of it. All seven were living, or had been staying at one or other of the two places which are mentioned as their abode. One is a pope, a second a Catholic bishop, a third a bishop of a schismatical party, a fourth an emperor, a fifth a soldier, a politician, and a suspected infidel, a sixth a statesman and courtier, a seventh a rhetorician and philosopher. ‘He cut out the tongues by the roots,’ says Victor, Bishop of Vite ; ‘I perceived the tongue entirely gone by the roots’ says Aeneas ; ‘as low down as the throat,’ says Procopius ; ‘at the roots,’ say Justinian and St. Gregory. ‘He spoke like an educated man without impediment,’ says Victor of Vite ; ‘with articulateness’ says Aeneas, ‘better than before’ ; ‘they talked without impediment,’ says Procopius ; ‘speaking with perfect voice,’ says Marcellinus ; ‘they spoke perfectly even to the end,’ says the second Victor ; ‘the words were formed full and perfect’ says St. Gregory.”

- Twisleton, Edward Turner Boyd. *The Tongue Not Essential to Speech; With Illustrations of the Power of Speech in the African Confessors*. London: J. Murray, 1873, p. 36-43.

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[For a full bibliography : See my paper "The Witness of God is Greater"]

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