



BRILL

Tyconius the African: Reassessing the Theory of His Greek Origins

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Abstract

Recent literature on Tyconius has assembled something of a consensus towards Steinhauser's suggestion that Tyconius was an ethnic Greek. This theory was originally proposed to mollify the central riddle of Tyconian studies which has vexed his readers since Augustine: how could he have remained a Donatist? By proposing him as an ethnic outsider to an African controversy, his puzzling ecclesiastical affiliation might thereby be explained. This article seeks to challenge this account in establishing two points. The first is to argue the sincerity of Tyconius as a Donatist, situating him within the diversity of "Donatisms", and examine the principles of his Donatist conviction. Secondly, showing his intense interest in Africa from a theological and ecclesiological perspective, this paper concludes we have no reason to suppose that he was anything other than an African among Africans, and the theory of his Greek origins must be registered with some caution or dismissed.

Keywords

Tyconius – Donatism – North Africa – Greek – *Expositio Apocalypseos* – Augustine

1 Introduction

Tyconius is an attractive figure in Latin patrology, notwithstanding the difficulty of his thought, for his theological subtlety, independence of mind,

and aversion to the narrow-minded provincialism of certain of his fellow Donatists. This appeal is compounded in part by the mystery that surrounds this author, who would come to exercise so definitive and so famous an influence on Augustine. Indeed, ever since Augustine, this dual action of charmed attraction and puzzled mystery have characterised the reception of Tyconius. Augustine himself confessed confusion as to how and why Tyconius could have been a Donatist, given his theology, and remained one, following his excommunication by Parmenian, the Donatist bishop of Carthage.¹ Caveating his endorsement of Tyconius' *Liber regularum*, which secured its later survival and reception, Augustine wrote:

There was a man called Tyconius, who wrote against the Donatists in a manner that it is quite impossible to refute, and whose unwillingness to part company with them completely reveals the utter absurdity of his attachments (*absurdissimi cordis*).²

In his earlier work against Parmenian, he states that Tyconius, *omnibus sanctarum paginarum uocibus circumtunsus*, came to repudiate the Donatist principle that sin was contagious, and came to accept the “catholic” doctrine of the Church’s universal diffusion.³ Tyconius’ theology was evidently suspect enough to the Donatist orthodoxy of Parmenian not only to merit a literary rebuttal from the great successor to Donatus himself, but finally his excommunication.⁴ It is indeed striking why someone so condemned and so repudiated should have remained party to the ecclesiastical body which rejected him, and

1 Traugott Hahn, *Tyconius-Studien*. (Leipzig: Dieterich’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1900), 110n1.

2 *De doctrina christiana* III.30.42; WSA I/11.188; CSEL LXXX.104. He also advises reading Tyconius to the deacon Restitutus in *Ep.* 249—note here that the assumption is that Restitutus is already expected to be familiar with Tyconius, indicating something of his diffusion. I have adjusted this passage, and the one below (n49) to read “Tyconius” rather than “Tychonius” for consistency; the orthography of his name is highly varied in the manuscript tradition. See the discussions in Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l’Afrique chrétienne depuis les origines jusqu’à l’invasion arabe* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1920), 5:166; F.C. Burkitt, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1894), 103; J. van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine’s City of God and the Sources of His Doctrine of the Two Cities* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 255n291.

3 *C. ep. Parm.* I.1.1; CSEL LI.19; also *Ep.* 93.10.44.

4 See *Ep.* 93.10.44, *De bapt.* I.1.1. The letter of Parmenian to Tyconius is that responded to by Augustine (*C. ep. Parm.*); for their debate, and the suggested dates of 378, for the epistolary reprimand, and 380, for the council which excommunicated him, see the *note complémentaire* by Pierre Yves Congar in *Oeuvres de saint Augustin: Traités anti-donatistes* (Bibliothèque augustinienne 28; Bruges: Desclées De Brouwer, 1963), 719.

Augustine certainly did well to scratch his head at what one scholar remarked was a rather “schizophrenic” phenomenon.⁵

Augustine’s confusion has been shared by many modern scholars of Tyconius. Monceaux psychologically probes Tyconius for his strangely abiding loyalty to the party of Donatus, remarking finally that “tout en proscrivant le schisme, il restait schismatique.”⁶ Mandouze declines to speculate, and only comments that he demurred between the two churches “par son indépendance de caractère et la valeur de sa science exégétique.”⁷ In the most recent full monograph on Tyconius, Lynskey does not seek to explain Tyconius’ motives in remaining a Donatist, opting for a sage silence before this problem.⁸ In his work on Tyconius’ *Expositio*, Steinhauser suggests that his failure to quit Donatism after his excommunication was motivated by a sort of stubbornness: “his personal self-identification with the Donatists was simply too great.”⁹ More recently, he ventured further to disentangle this “single most perplexing mystery concerning Tyconius,” that is, the mystery of his “ecclesial affiliation,” by suggesting he was an ethnic Greek and thus something of a cultural misfit caught confusedly in the crossfires of an African ecclesiastical dispute.¹⁰ This view has been received with some sympathy and is the emerging consensus – both of his most recent editors, Gryson and Vercruysse, independently make the same statement in the same words that he is “sans doute d’origine grecque.”¹¹

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- 5 Sean Michael Ryan, “Praising God in Adversity: Tyconius’s Ecclesiological Exegesis of the Celestial Liturgy (Rev. 4–5),” in *The Book of Revelation and Its Interpreters: Short Studies and an Annotated Bibliography*, ed. Ian Boxall and Richard Tresley (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 27–52 at 27.
- 6 Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire*, 5:177. The earliest English-language history of Donatism, of Thomas Long, makes the implausible claim that he “continued in the Schism, when he was convinced that it was so; having espoused the Schisme, and gained great reputation, he knew not how to leave that;” Thomas Long, *The History of the Donatists* (London: Printed for Walter Kettilby at the Bishop’s Head in St. Paul’s Church-Yard, 1677), 58. Long also labours under the misapprehension that Tyconius was a bishop (*ibid.*, p. 57).
- 7 A. Mandouze, *Prosopographie de l’Afrique chrétienne (303–533)*, Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire 1 (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1982), 1127.
- 8 Matthew R. Lynskey, *Tyconius’ Book of Rules: An Ancient Invitation to Ecclesial Hermeneutics* (VCS 167; Leiden: Brill, 2021), 24–25, 254.
- 9 Kenneth B. Steinhauser, *The Apocalypse Commentary of Tyconius: A History of Its Reception and Influence* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1987), 249.
- 10 “As an ethnic Greek, he found himself uncomfortable with the poorer, less sophisticated, rural Donatists as well as with the wealthier, more cosmopolitan, urban Catholics.” Kenneth B. Steinhauser, “Tyconius: Was He Greek?,” *StPatr* 27 (1993): 394–95. This thesis was reiterated in Kenneth B. Steinhauser, “Ticonio: ¿era griego?,” *Augustinus* 40, no. 156–159 (1995): 283–289.
- 11 Jesse A. Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age* (OECs; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 161. Jean-Marc Vercruysse, *Tyconius. Le Livre de Règles* (SC 488; Paris:

However, it perhaps sidesteps the very problem it sets out to solve and runs the risk of flattening our portrait of Tyconius and his contemporary Donatism, by excusing him rather than explaining him. It is the purpose of this paper to situate Tyconius instead as a *bona fide* Donatist and investigate his peculiarly African Christian character, formation, and theological interest.

The fresh evidence of the *Expositio Apocalypseos*, carefully edited and compiled by Roger Gryson, has direct bearing on this question, and can help chart a solution. Tyconius was no theological pariah, a Caecilianist misfit in Donatist clothing, but a Donatist convinced of certain fundamental principles of that movement. The fact that his “catholicising” ecclesiology went against the fashion of Parmenian’s official party line shows us only that he was not of one mind with Parmenian and must be accounted for within the wide range of “Donatisms” on offer in the mid to late 4th century.¹² As Tyconius himself decries, his rejection of rebaptism, for example, was perfectly acceptable within certain Donatist circles. It is only through Augustine’s preservation that we learn Tyconius cited a council of ca. 336 in which Donatus, in a council of 270 Donatist bishops, permitted the Mauretians not to perform what we consider a defining practice of the movement.¹³ Tyconius shows himself here supporting his own rejection of rebaptism¹⁴ by earnestly citing precedent within his own movement; he does not understand this as a surrender of Donatist principle. An additional point of interest in this argument is that it challenges the solution advanced by Steinhauser. The *Expositio Apocalypseos* contains precious evidence indicating the African character of Tyconius’ theological and ecclesiological preoccupations. This Afro-centrism detectable in the *Expositio* is difficult to square with him being a non-African, and shows himself a self-aware participant in the great African ecclesiastical dispute du jour.

Cerf, 2004), 13: “Sans doute d’origine grecque” – citing Steinhauser. The same phrase recurs, independently and assertively, in Gryson’s commentary *Tyconius, Commentaire de l’Apocalypse*, ed. and trans. Roger Gryson, Corpus Christianorum in Translation (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 9. Lynskey, more soberly, entertains Steinhauser’s thesis but states that it is “uncertain”; Lynskey, *Tyconius’ Book of Rules*, 23.

- 12 For a plea for moving from a “monolithic” Donatism to a range of “Donatisms” see Maureen A. Tilley, “Redefining Donatism: Moving Forward,” *AugStud* 42.1 (2011): 21–32 at 25.
- 13 Augustine, *Ep.* 93.10.43; see Jane Merdinger, “In League with the Devil? Donatist and Catholic Perspectives on Pre-Baptismal Exsufflation,” in *The Uniquely African Controversy: Studies on Donatist Christianity*, ed. Anthony Dupont, Matthew Alan Gaumer, and Mathijs Lamberigts, *Late Antique History and Religion* 9 (Leuven: Peeters, 2015), 153–178 at 175–76.
- 14 See *Exp. Apoc.* 2.34 in Rev. 6.5–6 and 2.54 in Rev. 7.16.

The riddle of Tyconius' Donatism is more forcefully felt if one only has the *Liber regularum* on their desk; such may not have been the condition of Augustine,¹⁵ but was essentially the condition of modern scholarship until Gryson completed his CCL edition of the *Expositio* in 2011. Before then, as David C. Robinson summarises, scholars "were limited to the citations of later commentators and two fragments: the Budapest Fragment (a short fragment containing Tyconius' commentary on Revelation 6.6–13) and the Turin Fragments (two long fragments containing Tyconius' commentary on Revelation 2.18–4.1 and 7.16–12.6)."¹⁶ Neither of these fragments contain certain passages relevant to Tyconius' thought about Donatism and Africa which I wish to include in this re-assessment. Nevertheless, a persuasive account of Tyconius' good-faith Donatism has been developed and repeated from Hahn¹⁷ to Markus.¹⁸ Jesse Hoover has been the most recent to defend this view, arguing that Tyconius represents a more conservative Donatism, less radicalised than the isolationist reaction that followed the trauma of the Macarian persecution:

Only lately has the essentially Donatist nature of Tyconian exegesis been recognized. Tyconius was not a nervous proto-Caecilianist...Instead, he represents a legitimate Donatist exegetical trajectory that ultimately lost out to a rival vision of the dissident church. Tyconius and Parmenian

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- 15 For the extensive bibliography on Augustine and Tyconius' *Expositio* see n16 in Ryan, "Praising God in Adversity," 46. Monceaux believes Augustine "expressément" mentions the Apocalypse commentary in the famous passage in *De doctrina Christiana* III.30.42; however, the discussion of the angels as churches, which he doubtlessly was referring to, may only be a reference to the *Liber regularum* (2). Yet Augustine's remark that Tyconius concludes this after sustained reasoning does in my view suggest the Apocalypse Commentary. Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire*, 5:197 and 216. For a recent argument that this passage does show Augustine had read the *Expositio*, see Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 36.
- 16 David C. Robinson, *Tyconius: Exposition of the Apocalypse* (FOTC 134; Washington, DC: CUA Press), 4–5.
- 17 Hahn, *Tyconius-Studien*, 99–100.
- 18 R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine*, [Rev. ed.] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 115–16. Ratzinger has one of the finest treatments of Tyconius' ecclesiastical affiliation, explaining his consistency in his refusal to join the Caecilianists. However, he hesitates in conclusion: "Whether it can of course be called Donatist is another question. The Donatists of his day did not think so, and we must not pretend to know better than they do." Joseph Ratzinger, "Beobachtungen zum Kirchenbegriff des Tyconius im Liber regularum," *REAug* 2.1–2 (1956): 173–185 at 185. Frend suggests that "his spiritual home was probably with the Maximianists" due to his principled opposition to persecution; W. H. C. Frend, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 205.

did not disagree over the schismatic status of the Caecilianist communion; the situation was far more complex than that. Rather, the quarrel between their rival ecclesiologies ultimately represents two different reactions to the formative experience of the Macarian persecution.¹⁹

This article wishes to re-consider the question of Tyconius' ecclesial affiliation and African identity, which has only received a brief treatment in the previous scholarship, bringing to bear particularly the evidence of the full text of the *Expositio*. This work can, furthermore, add a new dimension to our understanding of Tyconius' Donatist commitments, and this lies in the revelation of his distinctly African theological concerns. This will involve in turn a revision of Steinhauser's brilliant suggestion, outlined above, by showing that Tyconius was not only, as Gennadius has it, *natione Afer*,²⁰ but that his privileging of Africa in his own theological reflections reflects sensibilities dearer to the Donatist, than the Caecilianist, religious imagination.

2 Tyconius the Crypto-Catholic?

The frequent impression that Tyconius was a "Crypto-Catholic" must first be disabused. Maureen Tilley outlined the two interrelated teachings for which he was both denounced by Parmenian and gratefully but posthumously salvaged by Augustine.²¹ The first regards the universality of the Church, and the second, the rejection of what I call "hamartological contamination,"²² or the doctrine at the heart of Donatist orthodoxy according to which specific sins – especially *traditio* – invalidate guilty ministers and taint those who abide in communion with them. This results, rather clearly in the *Expositio*, in his

19 Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 163.

20 Gennadius, *De vir. ill.* 18, ed. E. C. Richardson, *Gennadius. De viris illustribus* (TU 14.1; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1896), 68–69. Assumed as correct in Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire*, 5:166; Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 202. The structurally coincident attribution to Origen by Epiphanius, that he was *Aiguptios genei* (*Pan.* 64.1) has also been the matter of similar speculation; for which see Mark Edwards, *Origen against Plato* (Ashgate Studies in Philosophy & Theology in Late Antiquity; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 11 and 38n.

21 Maureen A. Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa: The Donatist World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 113.

22 This is the straightforward conclusion of his famous doctrine of the bipartite church, which is both "black and beautiful" (Sgs. 1.5) yet the sins of the fraudulent members of the "Left" side of the Church do not violate the spotless purity (cf. Eph. 5.27) of the Church of the "Right"; *Lib. Reg.* 2.

rejection of Donatist rebaptismal praxis, often held to be the flagship peculiarity of the movement.

He [John] describes the “mystery of iniquity” and “spirits of wickedness in high places,” which are not permitted to invalidate the power of the sacraments either in themselves on account of others, or in others.²³

Again and later in the same book, explaining Rev. 7.16 (*neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat*), he explains:

He [John] says [thereby] that the power of the sacraments is effectual in his [people], and is in no way extinguished by the deception of the sun and hostile moon.²⁴

Clearly, Tyconius’ assertion of the enduring validity of sacraments is of a piece with his rejection of hamartological contamination. Just as he refuses to countenance the idea that sin is contagious and can lead to an annulling pollution of Christians and Christian bodies that have failed to separate, so too are the sacraments immune from being invalidated on account of any adverse sin. This seems like a straightforward rejection of what, to posterity, is textbook Donatism, and accordingly Gryson comments: “Tyconius prend ici le contre-pied des thèses donatistes.”²⁵ But is this really a rejection of “thèses donatistes” altogether? Since the time of Cyprian, it appears Mauretians were hesitant about rebaptism,²⁶ and they retained a traditional opposition to it even as Donatists, which was eventually conceded to them by the great Donatus himself.²⁷ Indeed, our only source for this concession is Augustine, who relies on the report of Tyconius!²⁸ As we discussed above, it appears Tyconius was rather well-informed about exceptions to rebaptism within the Donatist fold, which points to his own interest against rebaptism precisely in the capacity of an insider. In fact, based off the report of Gennadius, Tyconius (in his lost *De bello intestino*) appealed to older synods (*antiquarum*

23 *Exp. Apoc.* 2.34 in Rev. 6.5–6; FOTC 134.72–3; CCL 107A.138–9.

24 *Exp. Apoc.* 2.35 in Rev. 7.16; FOTC 134.87; CCL 107A.150: *Virtutem sacramentorum dicit in suis uigere nec aliqua solis et lunae aduersae deceptione restingui.*

25 Gryson, *Tyconius, Commentaire de l'Apocalypse*, 107n24.

26 Paul Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne depuis les origines jusqu'à l'invasion arabe* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1902), 2:92.

27 Merdinger, “In League with the Devil?” 175–76.

28 *Ep.* 93.10.43.

synodorum) in his defence, and insisted he was a faithful Donatist.²⁹ Tyconius appears as an earnest dissident within the movement, rather than a fifth column surreptitiously smuggling in a Caecilianist ideology which he was unable to follow through to consistency. As Adamiak has recently demonstrated, vacillation and embarrassment over, and even rejection of, rebaptism was current in Donatism and Tyconius is not a lonesome example.³⁰

The same may be said about his commitment to the universality of the Church. The most famous indication is his use of the prophecy in Daniel (2.34–5) of the stone filling the whole earth as proof of the church's universal diffusion in the *Liber Regularum*.³¹ Augustine would happily follow this usage in his own attempts to attack Donatist provincialism.³² In the opinion of Vercruysse, he made mention of it there in a consciously anti-Donatist fashion, noting that “L’universalité de l’Église est l’un des points de divergence essentiels avec la secte.”³³ He returns to this prophecy to the same effect twice in his *Expositio*.³⁴ Tyconius, fastening on the stability of God's promises to Abraham, cannot abide the conclusion that the Church has perished from the face of the earth, reduced only to the faithful Donatists in Africa. When he articulates this doctrine, however, interpreters have unjustly assimilated him too closely to the Caecilianists and pitted him against Donatism simpliciter. For example, while he admits that Antichrist has reared his head in Africa, through the persecution of the Donatist Church there – a point we will return to later – this trial will also happen throughout the whole world, as the whole church will have to contend against him. In this passage, Tyconius takes aim at certain people (*aliqui*)

29 Gennadius, *De vir. ill.* 18 (68–69 Richardson): ... in quibus ob suorum defensionem antiquarum meminit synodorum. E quibus omnibus agnoscitur Donatianae partis fuisse.

30 Stanisław Adamiak, “Who Was Rebaptized by the Donatists, and Why?” *JLA* 12.1 (2019): 46–64. See also Marta Szada, “The Debate over the Repetition of Baptism between Homoians and Nicenes at the End of the Fourth Century,” *J ECS* 27.4 (2019): 635–663 at 641–42.

31 *Lib. Reg.* 1; William S. Babcock, *Tyconius: The Book of Rules* (Texts and Translations. Early Christian Literature Series 7; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 4. Henceforth “Babcock”. I reference this edition, rather than the more recent edition in the Sources Chrétiennes by Vercruysse, since it reproduces (with one emendation) the influential Burkitt text, presents an attractive and helpful paragraph architecture, and gives the best English translation for an Anglophone readership. In any event nothing argued in this article varies given one edition or the other.

32 *In Io. Ev.* 4.4; *C. ep. Parm.* III.5.27; *C. litt. Pet.* II.38.91.

33 Vercruysse sc 488.136n2. Gryson concurs: “elle sert à démontrer, contre les donatistes, que le Christ a rempli la terre entière non pas virtuellement, – en ce sens que son pouvoir s’étendrait à l’ensemble de celle-ci, – mais réellement, par l’intermédiaire de son corps, l’Église;” CCSL 107A.235.

34 *Exp. Apoc.* 1.5 in Rev. 1.15 and 6.14 in Rev. 17.12.

who on the contrary think the Antichrist will only persecute the church in one place (presumably Africa, and presumably because the Church has been extinguished elsewhere).³⁵ In his note to this passage, Robinson straightforwardly identifies these *aliqui* as “[t]he Donatists.”³⁶ While they certainly are Donatists, this suggests again the familiar and flat picture of a monolithic Donatism and a pariah Tyconius. In the following passage, Tyconius explains that the “number of the saints” in the Church cannot be reduced by the “tares”, consistent with his rejection of hamartological contamination, and accordingly takes issue with those who say that the Church is dwindling down to the number of the household of Noah.³⁷ Gryson translates these in a glossing fashion as “nos contradicteurs,” which is surely correct, and in his note also simply identifies them as Donatists.³⁸ Is it right, however, to pit Tyconius against broader Donatism so starkly?

While it seems certain that Parmenian held to the consequences of his belief in hamartological contamination and damned the rest of the Christian world as hopelessly defiled pseudo-churches,³⁹ modern scholars have detected greater diversity – and flexibility – within the Donatist fold on this question.⁴⁰ The rigorous strictures according to which Donatists subjected transmarine catholics to rebaptism, as unwashed pagans,⁴¹ must be checked against the occasional Donatist willingness to recruit transmarine churches in their support. For example, that Donatists used, with perhaps more polemical zeal than

35 *Exp. Apoc.* 1.41 in Rev. 3.10; CCSL 107A.126.

36 Robinson, *Tyconius. Exposition*; FOTC 134.56m199.

37 *Exp. Apoc.* 1.42; FOTC 134.57; CCSL 107A.126: *Dicunt ecclesiam deficere et ad numerum domus Noe multis coronam perdentibus posse deduci.*

38 Gryson, *Tyconius, Commentaire de l'Apocalypse*, 90 and 90n51. He makes a similar conclusion in *Exp. Apoc.* 3.60, where, in a passage in which Tyconius commits himself to the Church's universality (*Una est ecclesia in toto orbe*; CCSL 107A.166), he states: “Voilà bien une phrase qu'un donatiste de stricte observance n'aurait jamais pu écrire.” Ibid. p. 142n31.

39 So the classic report in *C. ep. Parm.* 1.3.4–4.6 or Optatus, 11.1 and VI.3; observe the dread of contamination observed in Optatus 11.19 and IV.5. For Parmenian's ecclesiology see Maureen A. Tilley, “The Ecclesiologies of Parmenian and Tyconius,” *StPatr* 33 (1995): 260–65; Maureen A. Tilley, “Sustaining Donatist Self-Identity: From the Church of the Martyrs to the Collecta of the Desert,” *J ECS* 5.1 (1997): 21–35.

40 In particular, Emeritus' comments in *Coll. Carth.* 111.90 have sparked a re-evaluation of the extent to which Donatists entirely rejected the transmarine world; Robert B. Eno, “Some Nuances in the Ecclesiology of the Donatists,” *REAug* 18.1–2 (1972): 48; Maureen A. Tilley, “Dilatory Donatists or Procrastinating Catholics: The Trial at the Conference of Carthage,” *CH* 60.1 (1991): 7–19 at 17.

41 Optatus, 11.11; CSEL XXVI.98: *Adhuc paganus es*. See too his claim that they would rebaptize visitors from far-flung locales like Antioch or Arabia (11.12), reiterated by Augustine, *Enarr.* 10.5 and *Emer.* 9.

historical good sense, a letter from the Eastern council of Serdica to Donatus as authenticating some transmarine recognition,⁴² or Petilian's more magnanimous stance at the 411 Conference towards non-African churches,⁴³ reveals a broader spectrum of attitudes than the brute exclusivism portrayed by Augustine and perhaps embraced by Parmenian.⁴⁴ In this connection we must mention the neglected fact that Tyconius nowhere uses *catholicus* or cognates, a striking omission in an author whose surviving work, though exegetical in nature, is consistently ecclesiological in interest. Why he should be so averse to this word, while insisting so forcefully on the enduring universality of the Church, can only be conjectured, but it does seem to indicate an enduring hostility to the Caecilianists, who by the latter half of the fourth century had so aggressively monopolised and arrogated this term to themselves.

In brief, that Tyconius should be judged a crypto-catholic on the basis of his commitment to the universality of the church, and his rejection of both hamartological contamination and, with it, rebaptism, says more about the success of Augustine in defining Donatism as the inverse, and the consolidation of the Parmenian's Donatist orthodoxy, than it does about Tyconius' own sincerity as a Donatist. His theology was not a flagrant "deviat[ion] from Donatist ecclesiology,"⁴⁵ much less was it "anti-Donatist".⁴⁶ To one evaluatively sympathetic, perhaps he "opens to us the nobler motives of Donatism,"⁴⁷ or else he is merely the most conspicuous examples of legitimate dissent within Donatism. Accordingly, the features of Tyconius' thought which marked him out to Augustine and posterity as a secret Caecilianist are perhaps better appreciated as genuine alternatives within the internal competition over Donatist self-identity in the latter half of the fourth century. Andreicut, in his 2010 PhD

42 Augustine, *Ep.* 44.3.6; *C. Cresc.* 111.34.38.

43 *Coll. Carth.* 111.146.

44 However, as Hoover has shown, the phenomenon of exclusivist, insulated Donatist "remnant" ecclesiology was real and lively, against some of the impetus in 20th century scholarship to downplay the prevalence of Donatist "parochialism"; Jesse Hoover, "Exegeting the Apocalypse with the Donatist Communion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. Colin McAllister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 79–96. And see Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age*, 121–23.

45 Pamela Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius: Its Purpose and Inner Logic* (Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity 2; Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 11.

46 Babcock, *Tyconius*, xi.

47 Egbert C. Smyth, "Tyconius-Studien. Ein Beitrag zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte des vierten Jahrhunderts von Traugott Hahn," *The American Journal of Theology* 6.1 (1902): 154. So also Markus, for whom Tyconius is "the greatest of Donatist theologians;" Markus, *Saeculum*, 115.

thesis, comments rightly that “[d]isagreement with his church certainly does not mean incompatibility with it.”⁴⁸

3 Tyconius the Donatist

Having dismissed the features in Tyconius’ thought that tempt the reader, bespectacled with Augustinian lenses, to see in him a Caecilianist, we must now consider the authentically Donatist lineaments in his writings. Augustine offers one reason why Tyconius held fast to the Donatist sect, in his letter to a Rogatist bishop named Vincent:

Now I could also mention those ideas that Tyconius, a man of your communion, put in his writings, a man who wrote in fact against you in defense of the Catholic Church. He uselessly removed himself from communion with the Africans on the grounds that they were traditors, and by this one fact Parmenian held him trapped.⁴⁹

Augustine suggests here that Tyconius was committed to Donatism out of a desire to separate himself from the *traditores*, and in this letter twice quotes an otherwise unattested dictum of Tyconius: *Quod uolumus, sanctum est*.⁵⁰ For all this, a specific anxiety over *traditio* is not easily discernible in his extant writings.⁵¹ His real antipathy, it appears, regards persecution and the collaboration of the Caecilianists with the imperial government, which is highlighted by Markus and Ratzinger. A closer reading of the *Expositio* bears this out. This too is a solidly Donatist concern: for many Donatists, such as the otherwise unknown Fulgentius preserved in a pseudo-Augustinian response, while the

48 Gavril Andreicut, “The Church’s Unity and Authority: Augustine’s Effort to Convert the Donatists,” PhD thesis; Marquette University, 2010, 96n91.

49 *Ep.* 93.10.43; WSA II/1.402; CSEL XXXIII.487: *Iam si uelim et illa commemorare, quae Tyconius, homo communionis uestrae, scriptis suis inserit, qui magis contra uos pro ecclesia catholica scripsit frustra se ab Afrorum quasi traditorum communionem secernens, quo uno eum Parmenianus suffocat...*

50 *Ep.* 93.10.43 and earlier in 4.14; CSEL XXXIII.487 and 459. Andreicut rightly notes that “Tyconius’ heart was Donatist” and he above all wished to belong to a church not complicit in *traditio* or persecution; Andreicut, “The Church’s Unity and Authority,” 96.

51 He does not discuss the phenomenon nor use the word.

original sin of Caecilianism was *traditio*, its latter-day disgrace was its commission of *persecutio*.⁵² As Markus explains:

The most weighty reason for Tyconius's continuing rejection of the Catholic communion was perhaps the abhorrence with which he viewed its readiness to call in the state to persecute fellow Christians, and, more fundamentally, his underlying sense that it had betrayed the Church of the martyrs by its very being, identified with the Empire and kept in being by this alliance.⁵³

Tyconius would have wholeheartedly agreed to the Donatist response to the Caecilianist *mandatum* in the third session of the 411 Conference: the true church is that *quae persecutionem patitur, non quae facit*.⁵⁴ The notion of the church of the martyrs, so dear to Donatist identity, is certainly to be found in Tyconius: persecutions and martyrdoms have not only not ceased, they happen now within the very Church itself.⁵⁵ What the nature of his contemporary persecution is clear. Tyconius interprets, for example, the five years of the anti-Donatist Constantinian persecution (316–321) as prophesied in the five months of torment inflicted by the locusts in the Apocalypse.⁵⁶ Their bitter sting, to be clear, lies in the fraudulent Caecilianist bishops.⁵⁷ In another passage, again assimilating them to locusts, he observes that the Caecilianists use their sacraments to delude the people and do the will of the devil.⁵⁸

The secular power is negatively portrayed in his theology, making Tyconius perhaps a closer heir to pre-Constantinian suspicions and a striking opposite

52 *Tu, filius eius, non quidem tradidisti, sed nobis persecutionem fecisti*; 16 as reconstructed in Monceaux 5.339. See also the argument of Fortunius apud Augustine *Ep.* 44.3.5: the *transmarinarum partium ecclesias* were damned following their role in the Macarian persecutions; CSEL XXXIV.113.

53 Markus, *Saeculum*, 116.

54 *Coll. Carth.* III.258; SC 224.1195.

55 *Exp. Apoc.* 2.22 in Rev. 5.6; CCSL 107A.135: *Nemo putet solos apostolos esse mortuos pro Christo, et iam cessasse martyrium, et persecutores in ecclesia non esse.*

56 *Exp. Apoc.* 3.35 in Rev. 9.10; CCSL 107A.159: "*Mensibus quinque*" *pro toto tempore persecutionis annorum quique dixit, quae facta est maxime in Africa.* See the note in Gryson, *Tyconius, Commentaire de l'Apocalypse*, 131112.

57 *Ibid.* The bishops are the ones who cause harm, under the headship of the princes of the world who enable them; *Exp. Apoc.* 3.46 in Rev. 9.19. Cf. also *Exp. Apoc.* 4.38 in Rev. 13.10; 4.43 in Rev. 13.15; and 5.41 in Rev. 16.13.

58 *Exp. Apoc.* 4.40 in Rev. 13.12; CCSL 117A.184. Thus Robinson, *FOTC* 134.97, who writes: "This may be an indication of Tyconius' Donatist theological leanings, i.e., that evil bishops in the church administer sacraments illegitimately." So too Gryson, *Tyconius, Commentaire de l'Apocalypse*, 184n16.

to the emerging caesaropapism charted by his Caecilianist contemporaries,⁵⁹ by now something of a founding principle of their church.⁶⁰ The fated *persecutores* of the Church are the *principes huius saeculi*, and the Church will never lack for persecution.⁶¹ In keeping with his critical attitude to government, Tyconius takes the many-headed dragon of Revelation and its kingdoms as symbolising *omnes reges* and *omnia regna*.⁶² Indeed, for Tyconius, when Scripture makes mentions of kings or nations, this is often a simple cipher for the devil and his ilk.⁶³ Such broad-stroke anti-imperial exegesis occurs in the Donatist *Liber genealogus*, which reads the Antichristic Nero “as emblematic of Roman emperors generally.”⁶⁴ Altogether, Tyconius’ special loathing for persecution, and the collusion of the Church and the Empire to effect this among the Donatists, is clear to view. While he may not have thought, as Parmenian did and as Augustine has conditioned us to expect, that Caecilianist assemblies were defiled pseudo-churches with invalid sacraments, nevertheless, he had his own perfectly principled and perfectly Donatist reasons for staying aloof from and disdaining their communion. Not only did he have such a hostile attitude to state persecution in principle,⁶⁵ he was also committed to

59 Optatus, III.3; CSEL XXVI.75: *et cum super imperatorem non sit nisi solus deus, qui fecit imperatorem, dum se Donatus super imperatorem extollit, iam quasi hominum excesserat metas, ut prope se deum, non hominem aestimaret non reuerendo eum, qui post deum ab hominibus timebatur*. See also his rationalisations of the Macarian persecution: I.6; III.5–9; VII.6.

60 The Gratian council in the 340s has its eponymous president open with a triumphalistic rejoicing in divinely-sponsored imperial interventions in church life, thanking God for Constans’ sending of Paul and Macarius, servants of God and agents of church unity: *Gratias deo omnipotenti et Christo Iesu...qui imperauit religiosissimo Constantio imperatori, ut uotum gereret unitatis et mitteret ministros operis sancti, famulos Dei Paulum et Macarium*. in *Conc. Carthag. a. 345–358* prol.; CCSL 149.3. The dating of this council is uncertain and has been dated anywhere between 342 and 348. The range of options is discussed by Munier in CCSL 149.xx, who settles for between 345–348. Shaw persuasively places it in 348; Brent D. Shaw, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 820–21. For its atmosphere of enthusiasm see Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire*, 5:221.

61 *Exp. Apoc.* 2.22 in 5.6; CCSL 107A.135 and also: *Nemo putet solos apostolos esse mortuos pro Christo, et iam cessasse martyrium, et persecutores in ecclesia non esse*.

62 *Exp. Apoc.* 4.10 in Rev. 12.3; CCSL 107A.175. Also *Exp. Apoc.* 6.5 in Rev. 17.3.

63 *Lib. Reg.* 7; cf. Robinson, FOTC 134.161n9.

64 Alan Dearn, “Persecution and Donatist Identity in the Liber Genealogus,” in *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron*, ed. H Amirav and R.B. ter Haar Romeny (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 127–135 at 133.

65 Markus, *Saeculum*, 15–16.

a theological narrative which privileged Africa as the first arena for the imminent, yet always imminent, eschatological great persecution.⁶⁶

Tyconius thinks here with a Donatist mind and feels with a Donatist heart. He feels himself to be in the midst of a great persecution of the state against the true (Donatist) Church in Africa, which itself is warred against by a schismatic pseudo-church. Tyconius explains that now “in Africa” the forces of diabolical hypocrisy hidden within the Church have now come out in the open:

They [surely the Caecilianists] were revealed already a short time ago when they were expelled from the church [i.e. the Donatist Church]. But what is taking place in Africa is a figure of the future revelation of Antichrist throughout the world (*Sed quod in Africa geritur exemplum est per orbem futurae reuelationis anitchristi*).⁶⁷

That is to say, the eschatological separation (the *discessio*) of the false and the true has occurred in Africa, but not yet throughout the world. Thus, Tyconius’ “catholicity” is couched within a fundamentally Donatist perspective: the hidden internal trials of the Church, between the Right and the Left, the Wheat and the Tares, has broken out into the open in Africa, as it will eventually everywhere with the progress of the final trial.

It is interesting to note in this connection that while Tyconius does not accept the particularist interpretation of Sgs. 1.7 that we know was advanced by certain Donatists,⁶⁸ he does agree with the Donatist tradition in interpreting its all-important *meridies* as a geographical designator meaning the

66 E.g. *Lib. Reg. I*; Babcock p. 14: *Istius nobis iugis aduentus cavendus est, donec de medio [2 Thess. 2.7] eius discedat Ecclesia*. Anderson translates it as “immediate advent;” Anderson, “The Book of Rules of Tyconius,” 40. For the debate regarding his calculus of 350 years after Christ for the eschaton see Paula Fredriksen, “Tyconius and the End of the World,” *RÉAug* 28.1–2 (1982): 59–75 at 63. This was the verdict of Hahn, followed by Bonner. Anderson, whose work was not yet published, also sees in it a literal calculus: 350 marked “the specific number of years that the created world order would exist following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ;” Anderson, “The Book of Rules of Tyconius,” 163n57.

67 *Exp. Apoc.* 2.35 in Rev. 6.7–8; CCSL 107A.141; FOTC 134.76. Ryan helpfully comments on this passage: “In this regard, Tyconius is convinced that the persecutions suffered by the Donatist church are a proleptic fulfillment of the eschatological tribulations;” Ryan, “Praising God in Adversity,” 39.

68 Anthony Dupont and Matteo Dalvit, “From a martyrological *tabernacula pastorum* towards a geographical *in Meridie*: Augustine’s representation and refutation of the Donatist exegesis of Sg 1, 6–7,” *RHE* 109.1–2 (2014): 5–34; Hoover, “Exegeting the Apocalypse,” 88–91.

“South”.⁶⁹ Tyconius elsewhere also follows Donatist exegesis in interpreting the “South” (*auster*, as in Isa. 46.3) as *Africa*,⁷⁰ and he seems to appropriate this tradition in order to avoid any particularising exegesis. Hoover has highlighted how he diverges from this other Donatist tradition in “recast[ing]” it as a “universal metaphor”.⁷¹ Anderson detects the same strategy, but notes that his “choice of labels indicated the high esteem Tyconius had for the Donatist Church” as opposed to the Caecilianists, who were oriented to the “North”.⁷² Another element of Afro-centrism detectable in his exegesis is his interest in Ezekiel’s Prince of Tyre, a hot verse in the Caecilianist-Donatist dispute. No doubt following Vergil’s appellation of Carthage as Tyrian,⁷³ Optatus openly,⁷⁴ and Augustine more circumspectly,⁷⁵ sought to execrate Donatus as the condemned purpled Prince.⁷⁶ In a passage that is unhelpfully unclear, Tyconius writes that the *rex Tyri* stands for the entire body of the adversary (*id est omne corpus adversum*), after which he provides a lengthy citation of Ezekiel 28.2–19.⁷⁷ Bright notes that his identification of the Prince of Tyre remains uncertain,

69 *Lib. Reg.* 7; Babcock pp. 120–1: “There are two parts in the church, one of the south, and one of the north. The Lord abides in the southern part, as it is written: “where you graze your flock, where you abide in the south.” [Sgs 1.7] But the devil abides in the north... (*Duae sunt partes in Ecclesia. Austri et Aquilonis, id est meridiana et septentrionalis. In parte meridiana Dominus manet, sicut scriptum est: Ubi pascis, ubi manes in meridiano. Diabolus vero in Aquilone...*)”

70 Michael G. Cox, “Augustine, Jerome, Tyconius and the Lingua Punica,” *Studia Orientalia* 64 (1988): 83–105 at 101.

71 Hoover, “Exegeting the Apocalypse,” 89. I would add the interesting parallel, unnoticed by Donatist scholars, that Porphyry assigns special spiritual significance to the south, the region of the gods or those ascending to the gods (*De antro* 3).

72 Douglas Leslie Anderson, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius: An Introduction and Translation with Commentary* (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1974), 192n2. He treats this passage very well in *ibid.* 201n32: “North” and “South” are figurative ways of describing spiritual realities; for as Tyconius so carefully explained, God does not have a literal throne in some geographically locatable place. The throne of God is in the hearts and minds of individual believers, and the kingdom of God is defined as the power which God exercises over the wills of those who believe in and trust in Him (see Rule 111). Likewise, the devil’s domain is that which consists of those individuals who are not reconciled to God and who will to be self-serving. Consequently, Tyconius held that these kingdoms were universal. He also believed that there could be true Christians living in the North, as well as false brothers in the South...these domains were spiritual realities.”

73 *Aen.* 1.12–14.

74 Optatus, *De schismate* 111.3.

75 Augustine, *De unitate* 16.42.

76 For a good discussion about the Prince of Tyre in the dispute see Mark Edwards, “The Donatist Schism and Theology,” in *The Donatist Schism: Controversy and Contexts*, ed. Richard Miles (TTH Contexts 2; Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 110–11.

77 *Lib. Reg.* 7; Babcock p. 128.

and he cannot be judged a stand-in for the Caecilianist episcopate.⁷⁸ Maureen Tilley, however, brilliantly unpacked his identification with the Prince of Tyre as a figure of the *Donatist* Church itself: his “fall from grace” and subsequent need for repentance was an image of the true Church and its mixed status.⁷⁹ He could not indicate the Caecilianists, who were no true Church at all. Indeed, to support Tilley’s reading, Tyconius later explains that the Prince of Tyre will be punished by foreigners (*alienos*), showing in the general sense (*in genus*) that God allows for foreigners to persecute his Church – here, the Prince of Tyre is a symbol of the Church as a whole.⁸⁰ The result discloses Tyconius as earnestly interested in both reconciling his theology of the incommunicability of sin with the identification of the true Church as the Donatist one, and in terms that foregrounded its African (Tyrian/Phoenician) identity.

Where, as we saw, Tyconius opposed Donatist particularism by stating that the Church is universal and the revelation of the Antichrist and his trials will be experienced everywhere, not only in Africa, he nevertheless agrees that the persecution in North Africa against his Donatists is a special prefigure of the final persecution.⁸¹ While Africa is not, in the extreme strictures of some of his fellow Donatists, the last remnant of the world, it remains still a special light to the whole world in the upcoming last days: “For from Africa it will be shown what the whole church must suffer, not expecting anything else from the world but what Christ himself suffered as an example.”⁸² The Donatist Church has a special mission: because it endured these persecutions, after which (*post africanas persecutiones*) the final and global ones will be patterned, what the Donatist Church now preaches in Africa “are the things that she [the global church] will similarly preach everywhere” precisely “[b]ecause it will be like the situation in Africa.”⁸³ The conflict between the false elements in the Church and the true, which has erupted into the open in Africa with the latter siding with the persecuting state, will be the pattern of the future

78 Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius*, 174.

79 Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa*, 127.

80 *Lib. Reg.* 7; Babcock p. 132. I would add furthermore that this kind of vacillation between two significances (negative, then generally of the Church) may be compared with his discussion of the Jezebel in *Exp. Apoc.* 1.27–28 in *Rev.* 2.18–19.

81 *Exp. Apoc.* 3.23 in *Rev.* 9.2. See also Gryson’s comment in *Tyconius, Commentaire de l’Apocalypse*, 131n10. See also Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire*, 5:208.

82 *Exp. Apoc.* 3.38 in *Rev.* 9.14; FOTC 134.80; CCSL 107A.160: *ex Africa enim manifestabitur quid omnis ecclesia pati oporteat, nec aliud ab orbe sperandum quam quod ipse Christus in exemplum passus est.*

83 *Exp. Apoc.* 3.60 in *Rev.* 10.10–11; FOTC 134.108; CCSL 107A.166: *quae [sc. ecclesia] praedicat in Africa, ipsa ubique similiter praedicabit; propterea uelut africanae dixit [sc. Christus] etc.*

trials everywhere. If Tyconius is a “Catholic”, he is still a Donatist one: there will be, in due time, a “Donatist” resistance of the true faithful throughout the world, when apocalyptic push goes to eschatological shove. Accordingly, using his understanding of “recapitulation”, Tyconius begins his exegesis of Rev. 14.6ff by stating that the author *recapitulat a tempore persecutionum in Africa gestarum*.⁸⁴ He explains there that the singular significance of what has happened in one place in Africa (*uno in loco in Africa fit*) is a kind of signal announcement of what will happen everywhere when the Church withdraws from the midst of Babylon.⁸⁵

4 Tyconius the African

The theory that Tyconius was not an African, which as we have seen has been so widely received, stands therefore in need of some review. Given the foregoing, we do not need to suppose, as Steinhauser suggests, that his ethnicity explains his only apparent idiosyncrasy. When it comes to the more definite historical reasons for this supposition, Steinhauser comments on the Greek character of Tyconius’ name, expecting that it should be a Fortunatus or Fortunatianus if in Latin.⁸⁶ However, one may note plenty of examples of Greek names of otherwise presumably African and presumably Latin figures in North Africa, such as Theogenes, Adelphius, and Irenaeus, in Cyprian’s day,⁸⁷ or Theodorus,⁸⁸ Didymus, and Theasius in Augustine’s.⁸⁹ Next comes his knowledge of Greek,

84 *Exp. Apoc.* 5.1 in Rev. 14.6; CCSL 117A.188.

85 *Exp. Apoc.* 5.1 in Rev. 14.6–7; CCSL 117A.189: *Ad hoc enim uno in loco in Africa fit, ut notum sit quod in omni gente fiet, et ecclesia, quae in parte praedicat in Africa, ea ratione in omni gente sic praedictet, cum de medio istius saeculi Babylonis exierit.* Commentators have recognised (Robinson, *FOTC* 141n2, cf. Markus, *Saeculum*, 116) the same approach visible in the *Lib. Reg.* 6 (Babcock, pp. 110–111): “Often ... recapitulations ... appear as a likeness of what is to come, as when the Lord says, “when you see what was mentioned in the prophet Daniel, then let those in Judea take flight to the mountains,” and goes on to speak of the end. But what Daniel mentioned is happening now in Africa, and not at the time of the end (*quod autem Danihel dixit in Africa geritur, neque in eodem tempore finis*).”

86 Steinhauser, “Tyconius: Was He Greek?,” 396. These suggestions, from names attested at the 411 Conference, are based on the convertibility of the Greek *tyche* with the Latin *fortuna*. For further comments on Tyconius’ name within onomastic studies in Christian North Africa see Vercruyse in SC 488.13.

87 Bishops in Cyprian’s 256 Council; *Sent. Episc.* 14, 35, and 54; CSEL III.433, 449, 454.

88 Bishop in the 393 Hippo synod; CCSL 149.269; also the name of several in Augustine’s correspondence.

89 Augustine, *Ep.* 175.

the apparent influence of certain Greek theologians on him,⁹⁰ and his liberal use of the Greek scriptural text.⁹¹ But these mark out no more than his erudition, not his background. There are certain locutions of Tyconius' which would challenge this easy assumption. For example, he talks about writing in "the manner of the Greeks (*secundum Graecos*),"⁹² an oddly othering expression if it came from the mouth of a Hellene. Indeed, Tyconius may perhaps best be compared with his contemporary, a fellow countryman and another eccentric lay theologian, Marius Victorinus. Marius Victorinus, like Tyconius, frequently leverages his profound knowledge of Greek in his scriptural commentary,⁹³ but also uses such othering expressions when he talks of Greeks⁹⁴ – of course, his own background is not a matter of contention. Augustine's limping facility with Greek⁹⁵ has perhaps conditioned scholars to expect too little of educated Africans; the other lay theologians, and Africans too, to whom Tyconius may be compared – Arnobius and Lactantius – show a more than common facility with the language. If we look for contemporary Greeks in Africa, our attention is immediately arrested by the most conspicuous specimen, Augustine's episcopal predecessor, the Greek Valerius. He may have, as Mandouze suggested, come to Africa via the extensive and well-established trade routes,⁹⁶ but, unlike our Tyconius – and like a good Greek – his Latin never seemed to have risen above the merely adequate.⁹⁷

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- 90 Steinhauser, "Tyconius: Was He Greek?," 397–98. The only example adduced there—that of his metaphor of the trees in the beginning of the *Liber regularum* – is certainly slight. Contrast Bright's sustained comparison with Hilary, which is tantalising but, as she ultimately confesses, "inconclusive"; Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius*, 170–75.
- 91 Discussed in detail in Gryson's introduction and examined with great attention in the notes, e.g. *Tyconius, Commentaire de l'Apocalypse*, 711n6, 172n7.
- 92 *Exp. Apoc.* 4.46 in Rev. 13.18; CCL 107A.187: *Quem [numerus] faciamus secundum Graecos, maxime quia ad Asiam scribit: Ego, inquit, sum A et ω.*
- 93 He was careful in reconstituting the exact text of the letters – he compares many codices of the text in Latin and also often to the Greek (e.g. *Gal.* 2.4–5; *Phil.* 3.8–9; *Eph.* 2.2). On this see Pierre Hadot, *Marius Victorinus: recherches sur sa vie et ses oeuvres* (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1971), 290. See also Souter, who gives a lengthier list of examples; Alexander Souter, *The Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul: A Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 23–24.
- 94 E.g. *Eph.* 1.4 (*Graeci vocant*) or 3.18 (*Graeci dicunt*).
- 95 For the most recent treatment on this vexatious question, see the more optimistic evaluation in Mark DelCogliano, "Augustine and Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus," in *Augustine and Tradition: Influences, Contexts, Legacy*, ed. David G. Hunter and Jonathan Yates (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 268–70.
- 96 Mandouze, *Prosopographie de l'Afrique chrétienne (303–533)*, 1139–41.
- 97 Possidius, *Vita Aug.* 5; see especially pp. 5–11 in Michael Cameron, "Valerius of Hippo: A Profile," *AugStud* 40.1 (2009): 5–26.

On the contrary, the Latin style of Tyconius has been well-regarded by commentators: artfully “frugal”,⁹⁸ “forceful, logical ... sparse ... minimalistic ... every word weighted for value...sober”,⁹⁹ with even Steinhauser registering himself in this consensus.¹⁰⁰ Any reader of the famous preface to the *Liber regularum* will find themselves impressed by his powers of composition. Despite his knowledge of Greek, Tyconius exhibits a marked deference to the African Old Latin text hallowed among the Donatists, and its peculiar Africanisms preserved.¹⁰¹ The conclusions of Monceaux, a fine and expert judge of style for all things dealing with African authors, may be briefly recalled, seeing as such considerations have fallen by the wayside in the discussion of Tyconius’ origins. Aided by Burkitt’s *Index* to the *Liber regularum*,¹⁰² we may conclude that his language, despite his innovative character, was thoroughly traditional: classical in foundation, it is unremarkably constant with “la langue commune aux auteurs chrétiens d’Afrique dans la seconde moitié du quatrième siècle.”¹⁰³ His summary is worth repeating:

This fidelity to traditional vocabulary, and this regular appearance of the syntax, clearly show that Tyconius was an able writer. Indeed, he dealt with difficult, abstract, obscure questions, questions of exegesis; and he treated them thoroughly. It is almost a feat to have written the *Regulae* in the common language of the Christian communities of the time: a language which until then, in the West, had been adapted only to the needs of preaching and polemic. All this confirms what we already knew: that Tyconius had received a very complete education in schools, and that he knew his profession as an author very well.¹⁰⁴

What we may have judged in his theology is borne out then by his writing: Tyconius’ literary and ecclesiastical culture was Latin, and Latin African, at that.

If Tyconius shows an uncommon familiarity with Punic, this should further complicate the new consensus that he was of foreign origin or character.

98 Lynskey, *Tyconius’ Book of Rules*, 53.

99 Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius*, 35–36.

100 Steinhauser, *The Apocalypse Commentary of Tyconius*, 241–42.

101 Burkitt, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius*, lxxviii–cvi.

102 *Ibid.*, 110–14.

103 Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire*, 5:212. The few new terms noted (212n3–4) include a few substantive in *-tia* or *-tio* (e.g. *dinoscentia*, *prophetatio*) or some adjectives in *-bilis* or *-trix* (*demonstratrix*, *impalpabilis*).

104 *Ibid.*, 5:213. Translation mine.

This has been argued meticulously by Cox,¹⁰⁵ whose conclusions may be even more briefly summarised here, and whose argument has not been taken into consideration by any of the proponents of Tyconius' putatively Greek character. Cox adduces five examples where Tyconius seems to emend his Latin text *against* the LXX (with which it is generally in agreement) in a way more faithful to the Hebrew.¹⁰⁶ That Punic could be leveraged to gather some sense of the Hebrew text is famously in evidence in Augustine,¹⁰⁷ and their linguistic proximity, while a matter of debate, is such that familiarity with Punic could be used with some good sense and competence to peer into the Hebrew behind the LXX. There is, furthermore, the possibility that Tyconius' use of Zezabel (a neo-Punic name), rather than Jezebel, reflects again a local African tradition, either oral or else a conscious assimilation.¹⁰⁸ If any of these considerations approximate with any probability something of the truth, they further shore up the impression of Tyconius' African character.

What may we say then, of the hypothesis of Greek origins? The evidence is too slight, the explanatory force too modest, and the countervailing indications too great, for it to be as easily accepted as it has been. The proposal, of Steinhauser at least, is modest: his *family* was Greek – hence the name, hence the ecclesiastical oddity proper to a “minority”.¹⁰⁹ But, as we have seen, his mode of thinking, his literary culture,¹¹⁰ his Christian formation, his theological interests, are entirely that of Latin African Christianity. To ascribe too much to his pedigree is to risk the unattractive conclusion that, despite all this, the (putatively) Greek colour of his blood somehow, through some kind of race consciousness, is what explains his odd standing in the Caecilianist-Donatist crossroads. There is, however, no need for such an explanation: Tyconius was a sincere Donatist, only of a perhaps more conservative mould. African

105 Cox, “Augustine, Jerome, Tyconius and the Lingua Punica,” 98–102.

106 *Ibid.*, 100.

107 *Ser.* 113,13; *De ser. Dom.* 11.14,47; *In ev. Io.* 15,27; *Enarr.* 136.18; cf. *Loc. Hept.* 1.24. The Greek Valerius however also could exploit a very basic Punic as a mnemonic pun, as in Augustine, *Ep. ad Rom. inch. exp.* 13.1–2.

108 *Exp. Apoc.* 1.27 in *Rev.* 2.20; Cox, “Augustine, Jerome, Tyconius and the Lingua Punica,” 101–2. Cox admits that this could be a copyist's error, the automatic assumption. I have looked more closely and there are in fact other occurrences of Zezabel over Jezebel which are certainly of this nature (in Ambrose and Ambrosiaster).

109 Steinhauser, “Tyconius: Was He Greek?,” 398.

110 For Tyconius' study of Cyprian, for example, see Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius*, 176–77; Robert A. Kugler, “Tyconius's *Mystic Rules* and the Rules of Augustine,” in *Augustine and the Bible*, Bible through the Ages 2 (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 132. For a specific use of Cyprian's testimonial works see Gryson, *Tyconius, Commentaire de l'Apocalypse*, 122n48.

Christianity was his spiritually native climate, and we can detect no minority Greek ecclesiastical culture in his formation. His fondness for and deep immersion in the Old Latin in use betrays that it was likely his cradle text. We have no reason to suspect even, for example, that he frequented Greek services – as his contemporary considered above, Marius Victorinus, might well have when he was in Rome!¹¹¹ If his culture, churchmanship, and tongue were that of Latin African Christianity, the oddity of his name or the putative Hellenism of his heritage surely cannot bear much if any explanatory burden for his theological character or ecclesiastical identity. His genetic record will have to remain unknown to the historian, but his output reveals him to be an African among Africans.

111 Marius Victorinus (*Adv. Ar.* 11.8.34–35) records the anaphora (*oratio oblationis*) in Greek, leading several liturgical scholars to suppose he frequented Greek liturgies in Rome or else that the Roman liturgy was still in Greek; this is rejected as hasty and discussed in Hadot, *Marius Victorinus*, 251–52.