

Cooke, TonyMiracles and the Supernatural Throughout Church History

14. The Holy Spirit at Work in Northern Africa

This chapter traces Christianity's early spread across North Africa and highlights four influential church fathers from the region who witnessed and taught about the Holy Spirit's supernatural work: Tertullian, Origen, Athanasius (with the monk Antony), and Augustine.

Key takeaways

- Africa was woven into the gospel story from the start: Egypt sheltered the Christ child, Simon of Cyrene carried Jesus' cross, the Ethiopian official was converted, and Cyrenians helped plant the church at Antioch.
- Tertullian (Carthage) coined the term 'Trinity,' defended orthodox doctrine, and testified to healings, deliverances, prophecy, and gifts among believers—urging new converts to ask God for spiritual gifts.
- Origen (Alexandria), nicknamed 'Unbreakable,' reported cures and deliverances done in Jesus' name and grounded the gifts theologically in the work of Father, Son, and Spirit.

- Athanasius defended Christ's deity at Nicaea and recorded the monk Antony's many healings—stressing that Antony always gave God the credit, healing 'not by commanding, but by prayer and speaking the name of Christ.'
- Athanasius noted miracles were not limited to monks; bishops and ordinary pastors worked wonders too—'the crown is given not according to position, but according to action.'
- Augustine (Hippo) was converted reading Romans 13, and in City of God affirmed that miracles still happen, even if quieter and less famous than biblical ones, and that God works through medicine as well.

Passages worth keeping

"The blood of Christians is seed."

Tertullian: persecution multiplied rather than crushed the Church.

"Even now, therefore, many miracles are worked, the same God who worked those we read of still performing them."

Augustine affirms miracles continue in his own day.

How it connects

The common thread is humility: every figure credits God, not themselves, for the Spirit's power—echoing Paul's question, 'What do you have that God hasn't given you?'

Scripture referenced

- **Acts 2:10** -- Africans present at Pentecost
- **Mark 15:21** -- Simon of Cyrene carries the cross
- **Acts 8:26-39** -- conversion of the Ethiopian official
- **Acts 13:1** -- African leaders in the Antioch church
- **1 Corinthians 4:7** -- all gifts are from God, no room to boast
- **Luke 10:20** -- rejoice that your names are written in heaven, not in powers