Containing Various Sections of the Works

Dionysius of Alexandria (d. AD 264)

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I.-From the Two Books on the Promises.

1. But as they produce a certain composition by Nepos, on which they insist very strongly, as if it demonstrated incontestably that there will be a (temporal) reign of Christ upon the earth, I have to say, that in many other respects I accept the opinion of Nepos, and love him at once for his faith, and his laboriousness, and his patient study in the Scriptures, as also for his great efforts in psalmody, by which even now many of the brethren are delighted. I hold the man, too, in deep respect still more, inasmuch as he has gone to his rest before us. Nevertheless the truth is to be prized and reverenced above all things else. And while it is indeed proper to praise and approve ungrudgingly anything that is said aright, it is no less proper to examine and correct anything which may appear to have been written unsoundly. If he had been present then himself, and had been stating his opinions orally, it would have been sufficient to discuss the question together without the use of writing, and to endeavour to convince the opponents, and carry them along by interrogation and reply. But the work is published, and is, as it seems to some, of a very persuasive character;

and there are unquestionably some teachers, who hold that the law and the prophets are of no importance, and who decline to follow the Gospels, and who depreciate the epistles of the apostles, and who have also made large promises regarding the doctrine of this composition, as though it were some great and hidden mystery, and who, at the same time, do not allow that our simpler brethren have any sublime and elevated conceptions either of our Lord's appearing in His glory and His true divinity, or of our own resurrection from the dead, and of our being gathered together to Him, and assimilated to Him, but, on the contrary, endeavour to lead them to hope for things which are trivial and corruptible, and only such as what we find at present in the kingdom of God. And since this is the case, it becomes necessary for us to discuss this subject with our brother Nepos just as if he were present.

2. After certain other mailers, he adds the following statement:-Being then in the Arsinoitic prefecture-where, as you are aware, this doctrine was current long ago, and caused such division, that schisms and apostasies took place I in whole churches-I called together the presbyters and the teachers among the brethren in the villages, and those of the brethren also who wished to attend were present. I exhorted them to make an investigation into that

dogma in public. Accordingly, when they had brought this book before us, as though it were a kind of weapon or impregnable battlement, I sat with them for three days in succession from morning till evening, and attempted to set them right on the subjects propounded in the composition. Then, too, I was greatly gratified by observing the constancy of the brethren, and their love of the truth, and their docility and intelligence, as we proceeded, in an orderly method, and in a spirit of moderation, to deal with questions, and difficulties, and concessions. For we took care not to press, in every way and with jealous urgency, opinions which had once been adopted, even although they might appear to be correct. Neither did we evade objections alleged by others; but we endeavoured as far as possible to keep by the subject in hand, and to establish the positions pertinent to it. Nor, again, were we ashamed to change our opinions, if reason convinced us, and to acknowledge the fact;

but rather with a good conscience, and in all sincerity, and with open hearts before God, we accepted all that could be established by the demonstrations and teachings of the Holy Scriptures. And at last the author and introducer of this doctrine, whose name was Coracion, in the hearing of all the brethren present, made acknowledgment of his position, and engaged to us that he would no longer hold by his opinion, nor discuss it, nor mention it, nor teach it, as he had been completely convinced by the arguments of those opposed to it. The rest of the brethren, also, who were present, were delighted with the conference, and with the conciliatory spirit and the harmony exhibited by all.

3. Then, a little further on, he speaks of the Revelation of John as follows:-Now some before our time have set aside this book, and repudiated it entirely, criticising it chapter by chapter, and endeavouring to show it to be without either sense or reason. They have alleged also that its title is false; for they deny that John is the author. Nay, further, they hold that it can be no sort of revelation, because it is covered with so gross and dense a veil of ignorance. They affirm, therefore, that none of the apostles, nor indeed any of the saints, nor any person belonging to the Church, could be its author; but that Cerinthus, and the heretical sect founded by him, and named after him the Cerinthian sect, being desirous of attaching the authority of a great name to the fiction propounded by him, prefixed that title to the book. For the doctrine inculcated by Cerinthus is this: that there will be an earthly reign of Christ;

and as he was himself a man devoted to the pleasures of the body, and altogether carnal l in his dispositions, he fancied that that kingdom would consist in those kinds of gratifications on which his own heart was set,-to wit, in the delights of the belly, and what comes beneath the belly, that is to say, in eating and drinking, and marrying, and in other things under the guise of which he thought he could indulge his appetites with a better grace, such as festivals, and sacrifices, and the slaying of victims. But I, for my part, could not venture to set this book aside, for there are many brethren who value it highly. Yet, having formed an idea of it as a composition exceeding my capacity of understanding, I regard it as containing a kind of hidden and wonderful intelligence on the several subjects which come under it. For though I cannot comprehend it, I still suspect that there is some deeper sense underlying the words. And I do not measure and judge its expressions by the standard of my own

reason, but, making more allowance for faith, I have simply regarded them as too lofty for my comprehension; and I do not forthwith reject what I do not understand, but I am only the more filled with wonder at it, in that I have not been able to discern its import.

4. After this, he examines the whole book of the Revelation; and having proved that it cannot possible be understood according to the bald, literal sense, he proceeds thus:-When the prophet now has completed, so to speak, the whole prophecy, he pronounces those blessed who should observe it, and names himself, too, in the number of the same: "For blessed," says he, "is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book; and I John who saw and heard these things." That this person was called John, therefore, and that this was the writing of a John, I do not deny. And I admit further, that it was also the work of some holy and inspired man. But I could not so easily admit that this was the apostle, the son of Zebedee, the brother of James, and the same person with him who wrote the Gospel which bears the title according to John, and the catholic epistle. But from the character of both, and the forms of expression, and the whole disposition and execution of the book, I draw the conclusion that the authorship is not his. For the evangelist nowhere else subjoins his name, and he never proclaims himself either in the Gospel or in the epistle.

And a little further on he adds:-John, moreover, nowhere gives us the name, whether as of himself directly (in the first person), or as of another (in the third person). But the writer of the Revelation puts himself forward at once in the very beginning, for he says: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which He gave to him to show to His servants quickly; and He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bare record of the Word of God, and of his testimony, and of all things that he saw. And then he writes also an epistle, in which he says: "John to the seven churches which are in Asia, grace be unto you, and peace. The evangelist, on the other hand, has not prefixed his name even to the catholic epistle; but without any circumlocution, he has commenced at once with the mystery of the divine revelation itself in these terms: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes. And on the ground of such a revelation as that the Lord pronounced Peter blessed, when He said: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And again in the second epistle, which is ascribed to John, the apostle, and in the third, though they are indeed brief, John is not set before us by name; but we find simply the anonymous writing, "The elder.

This other author, on the contrary, did not even deem it sufficient to name himself once, and then to proceed with his narrative; but he takes up his name again, and says: "I John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. And likewise toward the end he speaks thus: "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book; and I John who saw these things and heard them. That it is a John, then, that writes these things we must believe, for he himself tells us.

5. What John this is, however, is uncertain. For he has not said, as he often does in the Gospel, that he is the disciple beloved by the Lord, or the one that leaned on His bosom, or the brother of James, or one that was privileged to see and hear the Lord. And surely he would have given us some of these indications if it had been his purpose to make himself clearly known. But of all this he offers us nothing; and he only calls himself our brother and companion, and the witness of Jesus, and one blessed with the seeing and hearing of these revelations. I am also of opinion that there were many persons of the same name with John the apostle, who by their love for him, and their admiration and emulation of him, and their desire to be loved by the Lord as he was loved, were induced to embrace also the same designation, just as we find many of the children of the faithful called by the names of Paul and Peter. There is, besides, another John mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, with the surname Mark, whom Barnabas and Paul attached to themselves as companion, and of whom again it is said: "And they had also John to their minister." But whether this is the one who wrote the Revelation, I could not say. For it is not written that he came with them into Asia. But the writer says: "Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem." I think, therefore, that it was some other one of those who were in Asia. For it is said that there were two monuments in Ephesus, and that each of these bears the name of John.

6. And from the ideas, and the expressions, and the collocation of the same, it may be very reasonably conjectured that this one is distinct from that. For the Gospel and the Epistle agree with each other, and both commence in the same way. For the one opens thus, "In the beginning was the Word; "while the other opens thus, "That which was from the beginning. The one says: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father. The other says the same things, with a slight alteration: "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life: and the life was manifested. For these things are introduced by way of prelude, and in opposition, as he has shown in the subsequent parts, to those who deny that the Lord is come in the flesh. For which reason he has also been careful to add these words: "And that which we have seen we testify, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us: that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you. Thus he keeps to himself, and does not diverge inconsistently from his subjects, but goes through them all under the same heads and in the same phraseologies, some of which we shall briefly mention.

Thus the attentive reader will find the phrases, "the life," "the light," occurring often in both; and also such expressions as fleeing from darkness, holding the truth, grace, joy, the flesh and the blood of the Lord, the judgment, the remission of sins, the love of God toward us, the commandment of love an our side toward each other; as also, that we ought to keep all the commandments, the conviction of the world, of the devil, of Antichrist, the promise of the Holy Spirit, the adoption of God, the faith required of us in all things, the Father and the Son, named as such everywhere. And altogether, through their whole course, it will be evident that the Gospel and the Epistle are distinguished by one and the same character

of writing. But the Revelation is totally different, and altogether distinct from this; and I might almost say that it does not even come near it, or border upon it. Neither does it contain a syllable in common with these other books. Nay more, the Epistle-for I say nothing of the Gospel-does not make any mention or evince any notion of the Revelation and the Revelation, in like manner, gives no note of the Epistle. Whereas Paul gives some indication of his revelations in his epistles; which revelations, however, he has not recorded in writing by themselves.

7. And furthermore, on the ground of difference in diction, it is possible to prove a distinction between the Gospel and the Epistle on the one hand, and the Revelation on the other. For the former are written not only without actual error as regards the Greek language, but also with the greatest elegance, both in their expressions and in their reasonings, and in the whole structure of their style. They are very far indeed from betraying any barbarism or solecism, or any sort of vulgarism, in their diction. For, as might be presumed, the writer possessed the gift of both kinds of discourse, the Lord having bestowed both these capacities upon him, viz., that of knowledge and that of expression. That the author of the latter, however, saw a revelation, and received knowledge and prophecy, I do not deny. Only I perceive that his dialect and language are not of the exact Greek type, and that he employs barbarous idioms, and in some places also solecisms. These, however, we are under no necessity of seeking out at present. And I would not have any one suppose that I have said these things in the spirit of ridicule; for I have done so only with the purpose of setting right this matter of the dissimilarity subsisting between these writings.

I. In Opposition to Those of the School of Epicurus Who Deny the Existence of a Providence, and Refer the Constitution of the Universe to Atomic Bodies.

Is the universe one coherent whole, as it seems to be in our own judgment, as well as in that of the wisest of the Greek philosophers, such as Plato and Pythagoras, and the Stoics and Heraclitus? or is it a duality, as some may possibly have conjectured? or is it indeed something manifold and infinite, as has been the opinion of certain others who, with a variety of mad speculations and fanciful usages of terms, have sought to divide and resolve the essential matter of the universe, and lay down the position that it is infinite and unoriginated, and without the sway of Providence? For there are those who, giving the name of atoms to certain imperishable and most minute bodies which are supposed to be infinite in number, and positing also the existence of a certain vacant space of an unlimited vastness, allege that these atoms, as they are borne along casually in the void, and clash all fortuitously against each other in an unregulated whirl, and become commingled one with another in a multitude of forms, enter into combination with each other, and thus gradually form this world and all objects in it; yea, more, that they construct infinite worlds. This was the opinion of Epicurus and Democritus; only they differed in one point, in so far as the former supposed these atoms to be all most minute and consequently imperceptible, while Democritus held that there were also some among them of a very large size.

But they both hold that such atoms do exist, and that they are so called on account of their indissoluble consistency. There are some, again, who give the name of atoms to certain bodies which are indivisible into parts, while they are themselves parts of the universe, out of which in their undivided state all things are made up, and into which they are dissolved again. And the allegation is, that Diodorus was the person who gave them their names as bodies indivisible into parts. But it is also said that Heraclides attached another name to

them, and called them ”weights; ” and from him the physician Asclepiades also derived that name.

II. A Refutation of This Dogma on the Ground of Familiar Human Analogies.

How, shall we bear with these men who assert that all those wise, and consequently also noble, constructions (in the universe) are only the works of common chance? those objects, I mean, of which each taken by itself as it is made, and the whole system collectively, were seen to be good by Him by whose command they came into existence. For, as it is said, "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. But truly these men do not reflect on the analogies even of small familiar things which might come under their observation at any time, and from which they might learn that no object of any utility, and fitted to be serviceable, is made without design or by mere chance, but is wrought by skill of hand, and is contrived so as to meet its proper use. And when the object falls out of service and becomes useless, then it also begins to break up indeterminately, and to decompose and dissipate its materials in every casual and unregulated way, just as the wisdom by which it was skilfully constructed at first no longer controls and maintains it. For a cloak, for example, cannot be made without the weaver, as if the warp could be set aright and the woof could be entwined with it by their own spontaneous action; while, on the other hand, if it is once worn out, its tattered rags are flung aside.

Again, when a house or a city is built, it does not take on its stones, as if some of them placed themselves spontaneously upon the foundations, and others lifted themselves up on the several layers, but the builder carefully disposes the skilfully prepared stones in their proper positions; while if the structure happens once to give way, the stones are separated and cast down and scattered about. And so, too, when a ship is built, the keel does not lay itself, neither does the mast erect itself in the centre, nor do all the other timbers take up their positions casually and by their own motion. Nor, again, do the so-called hundred beams in the wain fit themselves spontaneously to the vacant spaces they severally light on. But the carpenter in both cases puts the materials together in the right way and at the right time. And if the ship goes to sea and is wrecked, or if the wain drives along on land and is shattered, their timbers are broken up and cast abroad anywhere,-those of the former by

the waves, and those of the latter by the violence of the impetus. In like manner, then, we might with all propriety say also to these men, that those atoms of theirs, which remain idle and unmanipulated and useless, are introduced vainly. Let them, accordingly, seek for themselves to see into what is beyond the reach of sight, and conceive what is beyond the range of conception;

unlike him who in these terms confesses to God that things like these had been shown him only by God Himself: "Mine eyes did see Thy work, being till then imperfect. But when they assert now that all those things of grace and beauty, which they declare to be textures finely wrought out of atoms, are fabricated spontaneously by these bodies without either wisdom or perception in them, who can endure to hear them talk in such terms of those unregulated atoms, than which even the spider, that plies its proper craft of itself, is gifted with more sagacity?

III. A Refutation on the Ground of the Constitution of the Universe.

Or who can bear to hear it maintained, that this mighty habitation, which is constituted of heaven and earth, and which is called "Cosmos" on account of the magnitude and the plenitude of the wisdom which has been brought to bear upon it, has been established in all its order and beauty by those atoms which hold their course devoid of order and beauty, and that that same state of disorder has grown into this true Cosmos, Order? Or who can believe that those regular movements and courses are the products of a certain unregulated impetus? Or who can allow that the perfect concord subsisting among the celestial bodies derives its harmony from instruments destitute both of concord and harmony? Or, again, if there is but one and the same substance in all things, and if there is the same incorruptible nature in all,-the only elements of difference being, as they aver, size and figure,-how comes it that there are some bodies divine and perfect, and eternal, as they would phrase it, or lasting, as some one may prefer to express it; and among these some that are visible and others that are invisible,-the visible including such as sun, and moon, and stars, and earth, and water; and the invisible including gods, and demons, and spirits? For the existence of such they cannot possibly deny however desirous to do so. And again, there are other objects that are long-lived, both animals and plants.

As to animals, there are, for example, among birds, as they say, the eagle, the raven, and the phoenix; and among creatures living on land, there are the stag, and the elephant, and the dragon; and among aquatic creatures there are the whales, and such like monsters of the deep. And as to trees, there are the palm, and the oak, and the persea; and among trees, too, there are some that are evergreens, of which kind fourteen have been reckoned up by some one; and there are others that only bloom for a certain season, and then shed their leaves. And there are other objects, again-which indeed constitute the vast mass of all which either grow or are begotten-that have an early death and a brief life. And among these is man himself, as a certain holy scripture says of him: "Man that is born of woman is of few days. Well, but I suppose they will reply that the varying conjunctions of the atoms account fully for differences so great in the matter of duration. For it is maintained that there are some things that are compressed together by them, and firmly interlaced, so that they become closely compacted bodies, and consequently exceedingly hard to break up; while

there are others in which more or less the conjunction of the atoms is of a looser and weaker nature, so that either quickly or after some time they separate themselves from their orderly constitution.

And, again, there are some bodies made up of atoms of a definite kind and a certain common figure, while there are others made up of diverse atoms diversely disposed. But who, then, is the sagacious discriminator, that brings certain atoms into collocation, and separates others; and marshals some in such wise as to form the sun, and others in such a way as to originate the moon, and adapts all in natural fitness, and in accordance with the proper constitution of each star? For surely neither would those solar atoms, with their peculiar size and kind, and with their special mode of collocation, ever have reduced themselves so as to effect the production of a moon; nor, on the other hand, would the conjunctions of these lunar atoms ever have developed into a sun. And as certainly neither would Arcturus, resplendent as he is, ever boast his having the atoms possessed by Lucifer, nor would the Pleiades glory in being constituted of those of Orion. For well has Paul expressed the distinction when he says: "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. And if the coalition effected among them has been an unintelligent one, as is the case with soulless objects, then they must needs have had some sagacious artificer;

and if their union has been one without the determination of will, and only of necessity, as is the case with irrational objects, then some skilful leader must have brought them together and taken them under his charge. And if they have linked themselves together spontaneously, for a spontaneous work, then some admirable architect must have apportioned their work for them, and assumed the superintendence among them; or there must have been one to do with them as the general does who loves order and discipline, and who does not leave his army in an irregular condition, or suffer all things to go on confusedly, but marshals the cavalry in their proper succession, and disposes the heavy-armed infantry in their due array, and the javelin-men by themselves, and the archers separately, and the slingers in like manner, and sets each force in its appropriate position, in order that all those equipped in the same way may engage together. But if these teachers think that this illustration is but a joke, because I institute a comparison between very large bodies and very small, we may pass to the very smallest.

Then we have what follows:-But if neither the word, nor the choice, nor the order of a ruler is laid upon them, and if by their own act they keep themselves right in the vast commotion of the stream in which they move, and convey themselves safely through the mighty uproar of the collisions, and if like atoms meet and group themselves with like, not as being brought together by God, according to the poet's fancy, but rather as naturally recognising the affinities subsisting between each other, then truly we have here a most marvellous democracy of atoms, wherein friends welcome and embrace friends, and all are eager to sojourn together in one domicile; while some by their own determination have rounded themselves off into that mighty luminary the sun, so as to make day; and others have formed themselves into

many pyramids of blazing stars, it may be, so as to crown also the whole heavens; and others have reduced themselves into the circular figure, so as to impart a certain solidity to the ether, and arch it over, and constitute it a vast graduated ascent of luminaries, with this object also, that the various conventions of the commoner atoms may select settlements for themselves, and portion out the sky among them for their habitations and stations.

Then, after certain other matters, the discourse proceeds thus:-But inconsiderate men do not see even things that are apparent, and certainly they are far from being cognisant of things that are unapparent. For they do not seem even to have any notion of those regulated risings and settings of the heavenly bodies,-those of the sun, with all their wondrous glory, no less than those of the others; nor do they appear to make due application of the aids furnished through these to men, such as the day that rises clear for man's work, and the night that overshadows earth for man's rest. "For man," it is said, "goeth forth unto his work, and to his labour, until the evening." Neither do they consider that other revolution, by which the sun makes out for us determinate times, and convenient seasons, and regular successions, directed by those atoms of which it consists. But even though men like these-and miserable men they are, however they may believe themselves to be righteous-may choose not to admit it, there is a mighty Lord that made the sun, and gave it the impetus for its course by His words. O ye blind ones, do these atoms of yours bring you the winter season and the rains, in order that the earth may yield food for you, and for all creatures living on it? Do they introduce summertime, too, in order that ye may gather their fruits from the trees for your enjoyment? And why, then, do ye not worship these atoms, and offer sacrifices to them as the guardians of earth's fruits? Thankless surely are ye, in not setting solemnly apart for them even the most scanty first-fruits of that abundant bounty which ye receive from them.

After a short break he proceeds thus:-Moreover, those stars which form a community so multitudinous and various, which these erratic and ever self-dispersing atoms have constituted, have marked off by a kind of covenant the tracts for their several possessions, portioning these out like colonies and governments, but without the presidency of any founder or house-master; and with pledged fealty and in peace they respect the laws of vicinity with their neighbours, and abstain from passing beyond the boundaries which they received at the outset, just as if they enjoyed the legislative administration of true princes in the atoms. Nevertheless these atoms exercise no rule. For how could these, that are themselves nothing, do that? But listen to the divine oracles: "The works of the Lord are in judgment; from the beginning, and from His making of them, He disposed the parts thereof. He garnished His works for ever, and their principles unto their generations."

Again, after a little, he proceeds thus:-Or what phalanx ever traversed the plain in such perfect order, no trooper outmarching the others, or falling out of rank, or obstructing the course, or suffering himself to be distanced by his comrades in the array, as is the case with that steady advance in regular file, as it were, and with close-set shields, which is presented by this serried and unbroken and undisturbed and unobstructed progress of the hosts of the

stars? Albeit by side inclinations and flank movements certain of their revolutions become less clear. Yet, however that may be, they assuredly always keep their appointed periods, and again bear onward determinately to the positions from which they have severally risen, as if they made that their deliberate study. Wherefore let these notable anatomizers of atoms, these dividers of the indivisible, these compounders of the uncompoundable, these adepts in the apprehension of the infinite, tell us whence comes this circular march and course of the heavenly bodies, in which it is not any single combination of atoms that merely chances all unexpectedly to swing itself round in this way; but it is one vast circular choir that moves thus, ever equally and concordantly, and whirls in these orbits. And whence comes it that this mighty multitude of fellow-travellers, all unmarshalled by any captain, all ungifted with any determination of will, and all unendowed with any knowledge of each other, have nevertheless held their course in perfect harmony? Surely, well has the prophet ranked this matter among things which are impossible and undemonstrable,-namely, that two strangers should walk together. For he says, "Shall two come to the same lodging unless they know each other? "

IV. A Refutation of the Same on the Grounds of the Human Constitution.

Further, those men understand neither themselves nor what is proper to themselves. For if any of the leaders in this impious doctrine only considered what manner of person he is himself, and whence he comes, he would surely be led to a wise decision, like one who has obtained understanding of himself, and would say, not to these atoms, but to his Father and Maker, "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me. And he would take up, too, this wonderful account of his formation as it has been given by one of old: "Hast Thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me as choose? Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews. Thou hast granted me life and favour, and Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit. For of what quantity and of what origin were the atoms which the father of Epicurus gave forth from himself when he begat Epicurus? And how, when they were received within his mother's womb, did they coalesce, and take form and figure? and how were they put in motion and made to increase? And how did that little seed of generation draw together the many atoms that were to constitute Epicurus, and change some of them into skin and flesh for a covering, and make bone of others for erectness and strength, and form sinews of others for compact contexture?

And how did it frame and adapt the many other members and parts-heart and bowels, and organs of sense, some within and some without-by which the body is made a thing of life? For of all these things there is not one either idle or useless: not even the meanest of them-the hair, or the nails, or such like-is so; but all have their service to do, and all their contribution to make, some of them to the soundness of bodily constitution, and others of them to beauty of appearance. For Providence cares not only for the useful, but also for the seasonable and beautiful. Thus the hair is a kind of protection and covering for the whole head, and the beard is a seemly ornament for the philosopher. It was Providence, then, that formed the constitution of the whole body of man, in all its necessary parts, and imposed on all its members their due connection with each other, and measured out for them their liberal supplies from the universal resources. And the most prominent of these show clearly, even

to the uninstructed, by the proof of personal experience, the value and service attaching to them: the head, for example, in the position of supremacy, and the senses set like a guard about the brain, as the ruler in the citadel; and the advancing eyes, and the reporting ears; and the taste which, as it were, is the tribute-gatherer; and the smell, which tracks and searches out its objects: and the touch, which manipulates all put under it.

Hence we shall only run over in a summary way, at present, some few of the works of an all-wise Providence; and after a little we shall, if God grant it, go over them more minutely, when we direct our discourse toward one who has the repute of greater learning. So, then, we have the ministry of the hands, by which all kinds of works are wrought, and all skilful professions practised, and which have all their various faculties furnished them, with a view to the discharge of one common function; and we have the shoulders, with their capacity for bearing burdens; and the fingers, with their power of grasping; and the elbows, with their faculty of bending, by which they can turn inwardly, upon the body, or take an outward inclination, so as to be able either to draw objects toward the body, or to thrust them away from it. We have also the service of the feet, by which the whole terrestrial creation is made to come under our power, the earth itself is traversed thereby, the sea is made navigable, the rivers are crossed, and intercourse is established for all with all things. The belly, too, is the storehouse of meats, with all its parts arranged in their proper collocations, so that it apportions for itself the right measure of aliment, and ejects what is over and above that. And so is it with all the other things by which manifestly the due administration of the constitution of man is wisely secured.

Of all these, the intelligent and the unintelligent alike enjoy the same use; but they have not the same comprehension of them. For there are some who refer this whole economy to a power which they conceive to be a true divinity, and which they apprehend as at once the highest intelligence in all things, and the best benefactor to themselves, believing that this economy is all the work of a wisdom and a might which are superior to every other, and in themselves truly divine. And there are others who aimlessly attribute this whole structure of most marvellous beauty to chance and fortuitous coincidence. And in addition to these, there are also certain physicians, who, having made a more effective examination into all these things, and having investigated with utmost accuracy the disposition of the inward parts in especial, have been struck with astonishment at the results of their inquiry, and have been led to deify nature itself. The notions of these men we shall review afterwards, as far as we may be able, though we may only touch the surface of the subject. Meantime, to deal with this matter generally and summarily, let me ask who constructed this whole tabernacle of ours, so lofty, erect, graceful, sensitive, mobile, active, and apt for all things? Was it, as they say, the irrational multitude of atoms? Nay, these, by their conjunctions, could not mould even an image of clay, neither could they hew and polish a statue of stone;

nor could they cast and finish an idol of silver or gold; but arts and handicrafts calculated for such operations have been discovered by men who fabricate these objects. And if, even in these, representations and models cannot be made without the aid of wisdom, how can the

genuine and original patterns of these copies have come into existence spontaneously? And whence have come the soul, and the intelligence, and the reason, which are born with the philosopher? Has he gathered these from those atoms which are destitute alike of soul, and intelligence, and reason? and has each of these atoms inspired him with some appropriate conception and notion? And are we to suppose that the wisdom of man was made up by these atoms, as the myth of Hesiod tells us that Pandora was fashioned by the gods? Then shall the Greeks have, to give up speaking of the various species of poetry, and music, and astronomy, and geometry, and all the other arts and sciences, as the inventions and instructions of the gods, and shall have to allow that these atoms are the only muses with skill and wisdom for all subjects. For ibis theogony, constructed of atoms by Epicurus, is indeed something extraneous to the infinite worlds of order, and finds its refuge in the infinite disorder.

V. That to Work is Not a Matter of Pain and Weariness to God.

Now to work, and administer, and do good, and exercise care, and such like actions, may perhaps be hard tasks for the idle, and silly, and weak, and wicked; in whose number truly Epicurus reckons himself, when he propounds such notions about the gods. But to the earnest, and powerful, and intelligent, and prudent, such as philosophers ought to be-and how much more so, therefore, the gods!-these things are not only not disagreeable and irksome, but ever the most delightful, and by far the most welcome of all. To persons of this character, negligence and procrastination in the doing of what is good are a reproach, as the poet admonishes them in these words of counsel:- ”Delay not aught till the morrow” And then he adds this further sentence of threatening:-

”The lazy procrastinator is ever wrestling with miseries. And the prophet teaches us the same lesson in a more solemn fashion, and declares that deeds done according to the standard of virtue are truly worthy of God, and that the man who gives no heed to these is accursed: ”For cursed be he that doeth the works of the Lord carelessly. Moreover, those who are unversed in any art, and unable to prosecute it perfectly, feel it to be wearisome when they make their first attempts in it, just by reason of the novelty of their experience, and their want of practice in the works. But those, on the other hand, who have made some advance, and much more those who are perfectly trained in the art, accomplish easily and successfully the objects of their labours, and have great pleasure in the work, and would choose rather thus, in the discharge of the pursuits to which they are accustomed, to finish and carry perfectly out what their efforts aim at, than to be made masters of all those things which are reckoned advantageous among men. Yea, Democritus himself, as it is reported, averred that he would prefer the discovery of one true cause to being put in possession of the kingdom of Persia.

And that was the declaration of a man who had only a vain and groundless conception of the causes of things, inasmuch as he started with an unfounded principle, and an erroneous hypothesis, and did not discern the real root and the common law of necessity in the constitution of natural things, and held as the greatest wisdom the apprehension of things that come about simply in an unintelligent and random way, and set up chance as the mistress

and queen of things universal, and even things divine, and endeavoured to demonstrate that all things happen by the determination of the same, although at the same time he kept it outside the sphere of the life of men, and convicted those of senselessness who worshipped it. At any rate, at the very beginning of his Precepts he speaks thus: ”Men have made an image of chance, as a cover for their own lack of knowledge. For intellect and chance are in their very nature antagonistic to each other. And men have maintained that this greatest adversary to intelligence is its sovereign. Yea, rather, they completely subvert and do away, with the one, while they establish the other in its place. For they do not celebrate intelligence as the fortunate, but they laud chance as the most intelligent.

Moreover, those who attend to things conducing to the good of life, take special pleasure in what serves the interests of those of the same race with themselves, and seek the recompense of praise and glory in return for labours undertaken in behalf of the general good; while some exert themselves as purveyors of ways and means, others as magistrates, others as physicians, others as statesmen; and even philosophers pride themselves greatly in their efforts after the education of men. Will, then, Epicurus or Democritus be bold enough to assert that in the exertion of philosophizing they only cause distress to themselves? Nay, rather they will reckon this a pleasure of mind second to none. For even though they maintain the opinion that the good is pleasure, they will be ashamed to deny that philosophizing is the greater pleasure to them. But as to the gods, of whom the poets among them sing that they are the ”bestowers of good gifts,” these philosophers scoffingly celebrate them in strains like these: ”The gods are neither the bestowers nor the sharers in any good thing. And in what manner, forsooth, can they demonstrate that there are gods at all, when they neither perceive their presence, nor discern them as the doers of aught, wherein, indeed, they resemble those who, in their admiration and wonder at the sun and the moon and the stars, have held these to have been named gods, from their running such courses:

when, further, they do not attribute to them any function or power of operation, so as to bold them gods from their constituting, that is, from their making objects, for thereby in all truth the one maker and operator of all things must be God: and when, in fine, they do not set forth any administration, or judgment, or beneficence of theirs in relation to men, so that we might be bound either by fear or by reverence to worship them? Has Epicurus then been able, forsooth, to see beyond this world, and to overpass the precincts of heaven? or has he gone forth by some secret gates known to himself alone, and thus obtained sight of the gods in the void? and, deeming them blessed in their full felicity, and then becoming himself a passionate aspirant after such pleasure, and an ardent scholar in that life which they pursue in the void, does he now call upon all to participate in this felicity, and urge them thus to make themselves like the gods, preparing as their true symposium of blessedness neither heaven nor Olympus, as the poets feign, but the sheer void, and setting before them the ambrosia of atoms, and pledging them in nectar made of the same?

However, in matters which have no relation to us, he introduces into his books a myriad oaths and solemn asseverations, swearing constantly both negatively and affirmatively by

Jove, and making those whom he meets, and with whom he discusses his doctrines, swear also by the gods, not certainly that he fears them himself, or has any dread of perjury, but that he pronounces all this to be vain, and false, and idle, and unintelligible, and uses it simply as a kind of accompaniment to his words, just as he might also clear his throat, or spit, or twist his face, or move his hand. So completely senseless and empty a pretence was this whole matter of the naming of the gods, in his estimation. But this is also a very patent fact, that, being in fear of the Athenians after (the warning of) the death of Socrates, and being desirous of preventing his being taken for what he really was-an atheist-the subtle charlatan invented for them certain empty shadows of unsubstantial gods. But never surely did he look up to heaven with eyes of true intelligence, so as to hear the clear voice from above, which another attentive spectator did hear, and of which he testified when he said, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork.

And never surely did he look down upon the world's surface with due reflection l for then would he have learned that "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord" and that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; " and that, as we also read, "After this the Lord looked upon the earth, and filled it with His blessings. With all manner of living things hath He covered the face thereof. And if these men are not hopelessly blinded, let them but survey the vast wealth and variety of living creatures, land animals, and winged creatures, and aquatic; and let them understand then that the declaration made by the Lord on the occasion of His judgment of all things is true: "And all things, in accordance with His command, appeared good."

III.-From the Books Against Sabellius. On the Notion that Matter is Ungenerated.

These certainly are not to be deemed pious who hold that matter is ungenerated, while they allow, indeed, that it is brought under the hand of God so far as its arrangement and regulation are concerned; for they do admit that, being naturally passive and pliable, it yields readily to the alterations impressed upon it by God. It is for them, however, to show us plainly how it can possibly be that the like and the unlike should be predicated as subsisting together in God and matter. For it becomes necessary thus to think of one as a superior to either, and that is a thought which cannot legitimately be entertained with regard to God. For if there is this defect of generation which is said to be the thing like in both, and if there is this point of difference which is conceived of besides in the two, whence has this arisen in them? If, indeed, God is the ungenerated, and if this defect of generation is, as we may say, His very essence, then matter cannot be ungenerated; for God and matter are not one and the same. But if each subsists properly and independently-namely, God and matter-and if the defect of generation also belongs to both, then it is evident that there is something different from each, and older and higher than both. But the difference of their contrasted constitutions is completely subversive of the idea that these can subsist on an equality together, and more, that this one of the two-namely, matter-can subsist of itself.

For then they will have to furnish an explanation of the fact that, though both are supposed to be ungenerated, God is nevertheless impassible, immutable, imperturbable, energetic; while matter is the opposite, impressible, mutable, variable, alterable. And now, how can these properties harmoniously co-exist and unite? Is it that God has adapted Himself to the nature of the matter, and thus has skilfully wrought it? But it would be absurd to suppose that God works in gold, as men are wont to do, or hews or polishes stone, or puts His hand to any of the other arts by which different kinds of matter are made capable of receiving form and figure. But if, on the other hand, He has fashioned matter according to His own will, and after the dictates of His own wisdom, impressing upon it the rich and manifold forms produced by His own operation, then is this account of ours one both good and true, and still

further one that establishes the position that the ungenerated God is the hypostasis (the life and foundation) of all things in the universe. For with this fact of the defect of generation it conjoins the proper mode of His being. Much, indeed, might be said in confutation of these teachers, but that is not what is before us at present. And if they are put alongside the most impious polytheists, these will seem the more pious in their speech.

IV.-Epistle to Dionysius Bishop of Rome

From the First Book.

1. There certainly was not a time when God was not the Father. 2. Neither, indeed, as though He had not brought forth these things, did God afterwards beget the Son, but because the Son has existence not flora Himself, but from the Father. And after a few words he says of the Son Himself:- 3. Being the brightness of the eternal Light, He Himself also is absolutely eternal. For since light is always in existence, it is manifest that its brightness also exists, because light is perceived to exist from the fact that it shines, and it is impossible that light should not shine. And let us once more come to illustrations. If the sun exists, there is also day; if nothing of this be manifest, it is impossible that the sun should be there. If then the sun were eternal, the day would never end; but now, for such is not really the state of the case, the day begins with the beginning of the sun, and ends with its ending. But God is the eternal Light, which has neither had a beginning, nor shall ever fail. Therefore the eternal brightness shines forth before Him, and co-exists with Him, in that, existing without a beginning, and always begotten, He always shines before Him; and He is that Wisdom which says, "I was that wherein He delighted, and I was daily His delight before His face at all times."

And a little after he thus pursues his discourse from the same point:- 4. Since, therefore, the Father is eternal, the Son also is eternal, Light of Light. For where there is the begetter, there is also the offspring. And if there is no offspring, how and of what can He be the begetter? But both are, and always are. Since, then, God is the Light, Christ is the Brightness. And since He is a Spirit-for says He, "God is a Spirit" -fittingly again is Christ called Breath; for "He," saith He, "is the breath of God's power." And again he says:- 5. Moreover, the Son alone, always co-existing with the Father, and filled with Him who is, Himself also is, since He is of the Father.

From the Same First Book.

6. But when I spoke of things created, and certain works to be considered, I hastily put forward illustrations of such things, as it were little appropriate, when I said neither is the plant the same as the husbandman, nor the boat the same as the boatbuilder. But then

I lingered rather upon things suitable and more adapted to the nature of the thing, and I unfolded in many words, by various carefully considered arguments, what things were more true; which things, moreover, I have set forth to you in another letter. And in these things I have also proved the falsehood of the charge which they bring against me-to wit, that I do not maintain that Christ is consubstantial with God. For although I say that I have never either found or read this word in the sacred Scriptures, yet other reasonings, which I immediately subjoined, are in no wise discrepant from this view, because I brought forward as an illustration human offspring, which assuredly is of the same kind as the begetter; and I said that parents are absolutely distinguished from their children by the fact alone that they themselves are not their children, or that it would assuredly be a matter of necessity that there would neither be parents nor children. But, as I said before, I have not the letter in my possession, on account of the present condition of affairs;

otherwise I would have sent you the very words that I then wrote, yea, and a copy of the whole letter, and I will send it if at any time I shall have the opportunity. I remember, further, that I added many similitudes from things kindred to one another. For I said that the plant, whether it grows up from seed or from a root, is different from that whence it sprouted, although it is absolutely of the same nature; and similarly, that a river flowing from a spring takes another form and name: for that neither is the spring called the river, nor the river the spring, but that these are two things, and that the spring indeed is, as it were, the father, while the river is the water from the spring. But they feign that they do not see these things and the like to them which are written, as if they were blind; but they endeavour to assail me from a distance with expressions too carelessly used, as if they were stones, not observing that on things of which they are ignorant, and which require interpretation to be understood, illustrations that are not only remote, but even contrary, will often throw light.

From the Same First Book.

7. It was said above that God is the spring of all good things, but the Son was called the river flowing from Him; because the word is an emanation of the mind, and-to speak after human fashion-is emitted from the heart by the mouth. But the mind which springs forth by the tongue is different from the word which exists in the heart. For this latter, after it has emitted the former, remains and is what it was before; but the mind sent forth flies away, and is carried everywhere around, and thus each is in each although one is from the other, and they are one although they are two. And it is thus that the Father and the Son are said to be one, and to be in one another.

From the Second Book.

8. The individual haines uttered by me can neither be separated from one another, nor parted. I spoke of the Father, and before I made mention of the Son I already signified Him in the Father. I added the Son; and the Father, even although I had not previously named Him, had already been absolutely comprehended in the Son. I added the Holy Spirit; but, at the same time, I conveyed under the name whence and by whom He proceeded. But

they are ignorant that neither the Father, in that He is Father, can be separated from the Son, for that name is the evident ground of coherence and conjunction; nor can the Son be separated from the Father, for this word Father indicates association between them. And there is, moreover, evident a Spirit who can neither be disjoined from Him who sends, nor from Him who brings Him. How, then, should I who use such names think that these are absolutely divided and separated the one from the other?

After a few words he adds:- 9. Thus, indeed, we expand the indivisible Unity into a Trinity; and again we contract the Trinity, which cannot be diminished, into a Unity.

From the Same Second Book.

10. But if any quibbler, from the fact that I said that God is the Maker and Creator of all things, thinks that I said that He is also Creator of Christ, let him observe that I first called Him Father, in which word the Son also is at the same time expressed. For after I called the Father the Creator, I added, Neither is He the Father of those things whereof He is Creator, if He who begot is properly understood to be a Father (for we will consider the latitude of this word Father in what follows). Nor is a maker a father, if it is only a framer who is called a maker. For among the Greeks, they who are wise are said to be makers of their books. The apostle also says, "a doer (scil. maker) of the law." Moreover, of matters of the heart, of which kind are virtue and vice, men are called doers (scil. makers); after which manner God said, "I expected that it should make judgment, but it made iniquity."

11. That neither must this saying be thus blamed; for he says that he used the name of Maker on account of the flesh which the Word had assumed, and which certainly was made. But if any one should suspect that that had been said of the Word, even this also was to be heard without contentiousness. For as I do not think that the Word was a thing made, so I do not say that God was its Maker, but its Father. Yet still, if at any time, discoursing of the Son, I may have casually said that God was His Maker, even this mode of speaking would not be without defence. For the wise men among the Greeks call themselves the makers of their books, although the same are fathers of their books. Moreover, divine Scripture calls us makers of those motions which proceed from the heart, when it calls us doers of the law of judgment and of justice.

From the Same Second Book.

12. In the beginning was the Word. But that was not the Word which produced the Word. For" the Word was with God." The Lord is Wisdom; it was not therefore Wisdom that produced Wisdom; for "I was that" says He, "wherein He delighted Christ is truth; but "blessed," says He, "is the God of truth."

From the Third Book.

13. Life is begotten of life in the same way as the river has flowed forth from the spring, and the brilliant light is ignited from the inextinguishable light.

From the Fourth Book.

14. Even as our mind emits from itself a word, -as says the prophet, "My heart hath uttered

forth a good word," -and each of the two is distinct the one from the other, and maintaining a peculiar place, and one that is distinguished from the other; since the former indeed abides and is stirred in the heart, while the latter has its place in the tongue and in the mouth. And yet they are not apart from one another, nor deprived of one another; neither is the mind without the word, nor is the word without the mind; but the mind makes the word and appears in the word, and the word exhibits the mind wherein it was made. And the mind indeed is, as it were, the word immanent, while the word is the mind breaking forth. The mind passes into the word, and the word transmits the mind to the surrounding hearers; and thus the mind by means of the word takes its place in the souls of the hearers, entering in at the same time as the word. And indeed the mind is, as it were, the father of the word, existing in itself; but the word is as the son of the mind, and cannot be made before it nor without it, but exists with it, whence it has taken its seed and origin. In the same manner, also, the Almighty Father and Universal Mind has before all things the Son, the Word, and the discourse, as the interpreter and messenger of Himself.

About the Middle of the Treatise.

15. If, from the fact that there are three hypostases, they say that they are divided, there are three whether they like it or no, or else let them get rid of the divine Trinity altogether.

And Again:

For on this account after the Unity there is also the most divine Trinity.

The Conclusion of the Entire Treatise.

16. In accordance with all these things, the: form, moreover, and rule being received from the elders who have lived before us, we also, with a voice in accordance with them, will both acquit ourselves of thanks to you, and of the letter which we are now writing. And to God the Father, and His Son our Lord Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Canon I.

Dionysius to Basilides, my beloved son, and my brother, a fellow-minister with me in holy things, and an obedient servant of God, in the Lord greeting.

You have sent to me, most faithful and accomplished son, in order to inquire what is the proper hour for bringing the fast to a close on the day of Pentecost. For you say that there are some of the brethren who hold that that should be done at cockcrow, and others who hold that it should be at nightfall. For the brethren in Rome, as they say, wait for the cock; whereas, regarding those here, you told us that they would have it earlier. And it is your anxious desire, accordingly, to have the hour presented accurately, and determined with perfect exactness, which indeed is a matter of difficulty and uncertainty. However, it will be acknowledged cordially by all, that from the date of the resurrection of our Lord, those who up to that time have been humbling their souls with fastings, ought at once to begin their festal joy and gladness. But in what you have written to me you have made out very clearly, and with an intelligent understanding of the Holy Scriptures, that no very exact account seems to be offered in them of the hour at which He rose. For the evangelists have given different descriptions of the parties who came to the sepulchre one after another, and all have declared that they found the Lord risen already. It was ”in the end of the Sabbath,” as Matthew has said; it was ”early, when it was yet dark,” as John writes; it was ”very early in the morning,” as Luke puts it;

and it was ”very early in the morning, at the rising of the sun,” as Mark tells us. Thus no one has shown us clearly the exact time when He rose. It is admitted, however, that those who came to the sepulchre in the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, found Him no longer lying in it. And let us not suppose that the evangelists disagree or contradict each other. But even although there may seem to be some small difficulty as to the subject of our inquiry, if they all agree that the light of the world, our Lord, rose on that one night, while they differ with respect to the hour, we may well seek with wise and faithful mind to harmonize their statements. The narrative by Matthew then, runs thus: ”In the end of the Sabbath as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. And his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment

white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said.

Now this phrase ”in the end” will be thought by some to signify, according to the common use of the word, the evening: of the Sabbath; while others, with a better perception of the fact, will say that it does not indicate that, but a late hour in the night, as the phrase ”in the end” denotes slowness and length of time. Also because he speaks of night, and not of evening, he has added the words, ”as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week. And the parties here did not come yet, as the others say, ”bearing spices,” but ”to see the sepulchre; ”and they discovered the occurrence of the earthquake, and the angel sitting upon the stone, and heard from him the declaration, ”He is not here, He is risen. And to the same effect is the testimony of John. ”The first day of the week,” says he, ”came Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Only, according to this ”when it was yet dark,” she had come in advance. And Luke says: ”They rested the Sabbath-day, according to the commandment. Now, upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared; and they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. This phrase ”very early in the morning” probably indicates the early dawn of the first day of the week;

and thus, when the Sabbath itself was wholly past, and also the whole night succeeding it, and when another day had begun, they came, bringing spices and myrrh, and then it became apparent that He had already risen long before. And Mark follows this, and says: ”They had bought sweet spices, in order that they might come and anoint Him. And very early (in the morning), the first day of the week, they come unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. For this evangelist also has used the term ”very early,” which is just the same as the ”very early in the morning” employed by the former; and he has added, ”at the rising of the sun. Thus they set out, and took their way first when it was ”very early in the morning,” or (as Mark says) when it was ”very early; ”but on the road, and by their stay at the sepulchre, they spent the time till it was sunrise. And then the young man clad in white said to them, ”He is risen, He is not here. As the case stands thus, we make the following statement and explanation to those who seek an exact account of the specific hour, or half-hour, or quarter of an hour, at which it is proper to begin their rejoicing over our Lord’s rising from the dead.

Those who are too hasty, and give up even before midnight, we reprehend as remiss and intemperate, and as almost breaking off from their course in their precipitation, for it is a wise man’s word, ”That is not little in life which is within a little. And those who hold out and continue for a very long time, and persevere even on to the fourth watch, which is also the time at which our Saviour manifested Himself walking upon the sea to those who were then on the deep, we receive as noble and laborious disciples. On those, again, who pause and refresh themselves in the course as they are moved or as they are able, let us not press very hard: for all do not carry out the six days of fasting either equally or

alike; but some pass even all the days as a fast, remaining without food through the whole; while others take but two, and others three, and others four, and others not even one. And to those who have laboured painfully through these protracted fasts. and have thereafter become exhausted and well-nigh undone, pardon ought to be extended if they are somewhat precipitate in taking food.

But if there are any who not only decline such protracted fasting, but refuse at the first to fast at all, and rather indulge themselves luxuriously during the first four days, and then when they reach the last two days-viz., the preparation and the Sabbath-fast with due rigour during these, and these alone, and think that they do something grand and brilliant if they hold out till the morning, I cannot think that they have gone through the time on equal terms with those who have been practising the same during several days before. This is the counsel which, in accordance with my apprehension of the question, I have offered you in writing on these matters.

Canon II.

The question touching women in the time of their separation, whether it is proper for them when in such a condition to enter the house of God, I consider a superfluous inquiry. For I do not think that, if they are believing and pious women, they will themselves be rash enough in such a condition either to approach the holy table or to touch the body and blood of the Lord. Certainly the woman who had the issue of blood of twelve years' standing did not touch the Lord Himself, but only the hem of His garment, with a view to her cure. For to pray, however a person may be situated, and to remember the Lord, in whatever condition a person may be, and to offer up petitions for the obtaining of help, are exercises altogether blameless. But the individual who is not perfectly pure both in soul and in body, shall be interdicted from approaching the holy of holies.

Canon III.

Moreover, those who are competent, and who are advanced in years, ought to be judges of themselves in these matters. For that it is proper to abstain from each other by consent, in order that they may be free for a season to give themselves to prayer, and then come together again, they have heard from Paul in his epistle.

Canon IV.

As to those who are overtaken by an involuntary flux in the night-time, let such follow the testimony of their own conscience, and consider themselves as to whether they are doubtfully minded in this matter or not. And he that doubteth in the matter of meats, the apostle tells us, "is damned if he eat." In these things, therefore, let every one who approaches God be of a good conscience, and of a proper confidence, so far as his own judgment is concerned. And, indeed, it is in order to show your regard for us (for you are not ignorant, beloved,) that you have proposed these questions to us, making us of one mind, as indeed we are, and of one spirit with yourself. And I, for my part, have thus set forth my opinions in public, not as a teacher, but only as it becomes us with all simplicity to confer with each other. And when you have examined this opinion of mine, my most intelligent son, you will write back to me your notion of these matters, and let me know whatever may seem to you to be just and preferable, and whether you approve of my judgment in these things. That it may fare well with you, my beloved son, as you minister to the Lord in peace, is my prayer.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.