Letters and Treatises (Feltoe translation)

Dionysius of Alexandria (d. AD 264)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

Contents

To Fabian, Bishop of Antioch (Eus., H. E. vi. 41, 42, and 44) 1

To Germanus a Bishop (Eus., H. E. vi. 40 and vii. 11) 6

(To Novatian) (Eus., H. E. vi. 45) 10

To Cornelius, Bishop of Rome, in Reply to a Letter from him about Novatian (circ. 253) 11

To Stephanus, Bishop of Rome (Eus., H. E. vii. 4 and 5) (The First of the Epistles about Baptism) 12

To Xystus (or Sixtus) II (Eus., H. E. vii. 5, 3-6) (The second on the same subject) 14

To Philemon (Eus., H. E. vii. 7) (The third on the same subject) 15

To Dionysius of Rome (Eus., H. E. vii. 7, 6 and 8) (The fourth letter on Baptism) 16

To Xystus (Sixtus) II, Bishop of Rome (Eus., H. E. vii. 9) (The fifth about Baptism) 17

To Conon (Pitra, Spic. Sol. i. 15, from a Bodl. MS. dated 1062) 18

From the Writings about Repentance (Mai, Class. Auct. x. 484, from a Vat. MS.) 19

To Domitius and Didymus (Eus., H. E. vii. 11) (Part of an Easter Letter) 20

To Hermammon (Eus., H. E. vii. 1, 10, 23) (Part of another Easter Letter) 22

To the Brethren in Alexandria (Eus., H. E. vii. 22) (Part of another Easter Letter) 25

To Hierax an Egyptian Bishop (Eus., H. E. vii. 21) (Part of another Easter Letter) 27

(From another Easter Letter) 29

To Basilides, Bishop of the Churches in the Pentapolis (Cyrenaica) 30

“On the Promises” (Eus., H. E. vii. 24 and 25) 33

“On Nature” (Eus., Præp. Evang. xiv. 23-7) 38

“Refutation and Defence” (Eus., Præp. Evang. vii. 19) 43

To Fabian, Bishop of Antioch (Eus., H. E. vi. 41, 42, and 44)

(1) The persecution did not begin amongst us with the Imperial edict; for it anticipated that by a whole year. And the prophet and poet of evil to this city, whoever he was, was beforehand in moving and exciting the heathen crowds against us, rekindling their zeal for the national superstitions. So they being aroused by him and availing themselves of all lawful authority for their unholy doings, conceived that the only piety, the proper worship of their gods was this—to thirst for our blood. First, then, they carried off an old man, Metras, and bade him utter impious words, and when he refused they beat his body with sticks and stabbed his face and eyes with sharp bulrushes as they led him into the outskirts of the city and there stoned him. Then they led a believer named Quinta to the idol-house and tried to make her kneel down, and, when she turned away in disgust, they bound her by the feet and hauled her right through the city over the rough pavement, the big stones bruising her poor body, and at the same time beat her till they reached the same spot, and there stoned her. Thereupon they all with one consent made a rush on the houses of the believers, and, falling each upon those whom they recognized as neighbours, plundered, harried and despoiled them, setting aside the more valuable of their possessions and casting out into the streets and burning the cheaper things and such as were made of wood, till they produced the appearance of a city devastated by the enemy. But the brethren gave way and submitted and accepted the plundering of their possessions with joy like unto those of whom Paul also testified. And I know not if any, save possibly a single one who fell into their hands, up till now has denied the Lord.

Another notable case was that of the aged virgin Apollonia, whom they seized and knocked out all her teeth, striking her on the jaws: then they made a pyre before the city and threatened to burn her alive, if she would not join them in uttering blasphemies. But she asked for a brief respite, and being let go, suddenly leapt into the fire and was devoured by the flames. Sarapion, also, they caught in his own house, and after outraging him with cruel tortures and crushing all his limbs, they cast him headlong from the upper storey. And we could go by no high road,

thoroughfare, or byway, either by day or by night; for everywhere and always there was a constant cry that any one who did not utter words of blasphemy must be dragged off and burnt.

And this state of things prevailed for some time, till the revolution and civil war occupied the attention of these unhappy men and turned on one another their fury against us. And so we had a short breathing space, as they found no leisure for raging against us: but very soon the overthrow of the ruler who had been not unfavourable to us is announced, and our grave fears of being attacked are renewed. And, in fact, the edict arrived, which was itself almost to be compared with that foretold by the Lord, well-nigh the most terrible of all, so as to cause, if possible, even the elect to stumble. Nevertheless all were panic-stricken, and numbers at once of those who were in higher positions, some came forward in fear, and some who held public posts were led by their official duties; others, again, were brought in by those about them, and when their names were called, approached the impure and unholy sacrifices; pale and trembling in some cases as if they were not going to sacrifice but themselves become sacrifices and victims to the idols, so that they incurred ridicule from the large crowd that stood by, and proved themselves to be utter cowards both in regard to death and in regard to sacrificing, whilst others ran readily up to the altar, making it plain by their forwardness that they had not been Christians even before. About such the Lord's prediction is most true that with difficulty shall they be saved.

And of the rest some followed one or other of the above, while others fled or were captured: and of these last, again, some after going as far as chains and imprisonment, and even after being immured several days in certain cases, still, before coming into court, forswore themselves; and others, even after enduring some amount of torment, failed at the last. But the steadfast and blessed pillars of the Lord, being strengthened by Him and receiving due and proportionate power and endurance for the mighty Faith that was in them, proved themselves admirable witnesses of His Kingdom. Foremost among them was Julian, a sufferer from gout, unable to stand or walk; he was brought up with two others, who carried him, of whom the one straightway denied the Faith; the other, Cronion by name, but surnamed Eunous (well-disposed), and the old man Julian himself confessed the Lord and were conveyed on camel's back, and scourged as they rode right through the city—big though it be, as ye know—and at last were burnt with fire unquenchable, whilst all the people stood round. And a soldier who stood by as they were carried along and protested against those who insulted them was denounced and brought up, to wit God's brave warrior Besas, and after heroic conduct in the great war of piety was beheaded. And yet another, a Libyan by race, who rightly and happily was named Mauar (happy), though the judge urged him strongly to renounce the Faith, would not give in, and so was burnt alive.

After them Epimachus and Alexander, when they had remained a long time in bonds and had endured endless tortures from the “claws” and scourges, were also consumed with fire unquenchable. And with them four women: Ammonarion, a holy virgin, though the judge tortured her vigorously for a long time because she had declared beforehand that she would say nothing that he bade her, kept true to her promise and was led off to punishment; and of the rest there was the aged and reverend Mercuria and Dionysia, who, though she had many children, did not love them above the Lord: these the Prefect was ashamed to go on torturing in vain and be beaten by women, and so they died by the sword without further tortures: for the brave Ammonarion had exhausted all their devices.

Then were delivered up three Egyptians: Heron, Ater and Isidore, and with them Dioscorus, a lad of about fifteen. And first of all the Prefect tried to cajole the stripling with words, thinking he could easily be won over, and then to force him by torments, thinking he would soon give in, but Dioscorus was neither persuaded nor forced. So the others he cruelly lacerated, and when they, too, stood firm, handed them over to the fire; but Dioscorus, who had distinguished himself in public and had answered his private questionings most wisely, he let off, saying that he granted him a reprieve for repenting, on account of his age. And now the godly Dioscorus is still with us, having waited for his longer trial and his more determined conflict. Another Egyptian, Nemesion, was falsely accused of being an associate of brigands, but being accused of that most untrue charge before the centurion, he was then denounced as a Christian and came in chains before the Prefect. And he having most unjustly maltreated him with twice as many tortures and stripes as the brigands had received, burnt him to death between them, being honoured, happy man, by the example of Christ.

Again a whole quaternion of soldiers—Ammon, Zenon, Ptolemy and Ingenuus, and an old man, Theophilus, with them, were standing before the judgment seat, whilst some one was being tried for being a Christian, and when he showed signs of denying the Faith they were so provoked as they stood by, nodding their heads, and stretching out their hands and making gestures with their bodies, that they drew the general attention to themselves, and then, before any could seize them, they leapt upon the stand of their own accord, saying they were Christians, so that the Prefect and his assessors were frightened, and those who were being judged seemed to take courage over what awaited them, and their judges lost heart. So these soldiers walked in brave procession from the court and rejoiced in their witness (martyrdom), God giving them a glorious triumph.

(2) And many others in the cities and villages were torn asunder by the heathen (Gentiles), one of which I will mention as an example. Ischyrion acted as steward to one of the authorities at a wage. His employer bade him sacrifice, ill-treated him when he refused, and on his persistence drove him forth with insults: when he

still stood his ground, he took a big stick and killed him by driving it through his vital parts. What need to mention the multitude of those who wandered in deserts and mountains consumed by hunger and thirst and cold and diseases and brigands and wild beasts? the survivors of whom bear witness to their election and victory. Of these, also, I will bring forward one instance by way of illustration. Chæremon was the aged Bishop of what is called Nilopolis. He fled to the Arabian hills with his wife and never returned, nor were they ever seen again by the brethren, who made long search, but found neither them nor their bodies. And there were many who on those very Arabian hills were sold into slavery by the barbarian Saracens, of whom some were with difficulty ransomed at high sums, and others even yet have not been ransomed. And these things I have described at length, brother, not without purpose, but in order that thou mightest know how many terrible things have taken place amongst us, of which those who have had more experience will know of more cases than I do.

Then shortly after he proceeds— (3) Accordingly, the holy martyrs themselves, when still amongst us, who are now the assessors of Christ and partners of His Kingdom, sharing His judgments and decisions, espoused the cause of certain of the fallen brethren who had incurred the charge of having done sacrifice, and seeing their conversion and repentance and approving it as fit to be accepted by Him who desireth not at all the death of the sinner so much as his repentance, received them, summoned them to assemblies, introduced them and admitted them to the prayers and feasts. What, then, do ye counsel us in these matters, brethren? What ought we to do? Shall we acquiesce and assent to them and maintain their decision and concession and treat kindly those to whom they have extended mercy? or shall we hold their judgment wrong and set ourselves up as critics of their decision and vex their kind hearts and reverse their arrangement?

[A further extract on the subject of the lapsed] I will set out the following single example that happened amongst us. There was a certain aged believer amongst us, Sarapion, who had lived blamelessly for a long time but yielded to temptation. This man often begged to be restored, but no one heeded him; for he had sacrificed. But he fell ill, and for three days in succession he remained speechless and unconscious. Then recovering a little on the fourth day, he called to him his nephew and said: “How long, my child, do ye keep me back? hasten ye, I pray, and let me go speedily. Call thou one of the elders (presbyters).” After this he became speechless again. The boy ran for the elder, but it was night and he was ill and could not come. Now I had given instructions that if those who were departing life asked and especially when they chanced to have made supplication even before, they should be absolved in order that they might depart in good hope; he gave the boy, therefore, a morsel of the Eucharist, bidding him moisten it and drop it into the old man’s mouth. The lad went back with it. When he drew near, before he entered, Sarapion revived again and said: “Hast come, child? The presbyter could not come, but do thou

quickly what he bade thee, and let me go." So the boy moistened it and dropped it into his mouth: and the other shortly after swallowing it straightway gave up the ghost. Was he not clearly sustained and kept alive until he was absolved that, with his sin wiped out, he might be acknowledged (by the Lord) for the many good things he had done?

To Germanus a Bishop (Eus., H. E. vi. 40 and vii. 11)

(1) Now before God I speak and He knoweth if I lie; not at all on my own judgment nor yet without Divine guidance did I take flight, but on a former occasion also as soon as ever the persecution under Decius was set up, Sabinus sent a frumentarius to seek me; and I awaited his arrival at my house for four days, while he went round searching everywhere, the streams, the roads and the fields, where he suspected me to hide or go, but he never lighted on my house, being held by blindness: for he did not believe I should stay at home under pursuit. And hardly after the four days when God bade me remove and unexpectedly made a way for me, I and the boys and many of the brethren went out together. And this was ordered by the Providence of God, as after events have shown, in which perchance we have been useful to some.

Further on he proceeds— (2) For about sunset I with my companions having fallen into the hands of the soldiers, was taken to Taposiris, but Timotheus by the Providence of God happened not to be present nor to be caught elsewhere. But arriving afterwards, he found the house empty and servants guarding it, and us carried off prisoners. And further on—

(3) And what is the manner of His wonderful dispensation? for only the truth shall be spoken. One of the rustics met Timotheus as he was fleeing and troubled, and inquired the reason of his haste. And he told the truth, and when the other heard it (now he was going to a marriage revel: for it is their custom to pass the whole night at such gatherings), he entered and informed those who were reclining at table. And they with one consent as if at a signal all arose and came running at great speed and fell upon us with loud cries, and when the soldiers who were guarding us straightway took to flight, they came upon us just as we were reclining on the bare bedsteads. And I indeed, God wot, taking them at first to be bandits who had come for plunder and ravage, remained on the couch where I was, undressed save for my linen under-garment, and began to offer them the rest of my raiment which was at my side. But they bade me rise and go out as quickly as I could. And then I,

understanding why they had come, cried out begging and praying them to depart and leave us, and if they would do us a good turn, I besought them to forestall those who had carried me off and cut off my head themselves. And while I thus cried, as they know who shared and took part in everything, they raised me by force, and when I let myself down on my back to the ground, they took and led me out, dragging me by the arms and legs. And there followed me those who had been witnesses of all this, Gaius, Faustus, Peter and Paul, and they also helped to carry me out of the township in their arms, and then putting me on a barebacked ass, led me away.

[Another extract from the same letter given by Eusebius in another part of his History, and referring to a somewhat later period in Dionysius's life]

(4) I am really in danger of falling into much foolishness and want of right feeling through being compelled of necessity to narrate God's wondrous dispensation concerning us. But since "it is good," it says, "to keep close the secret of a king but glorious to reveal the works of God," I will come to close quarters with our violent accuser, Germanus. I came before Æmilian not alone; for there followed with me my fellow-presbyter Maximus, and deacons Faustus, Eusebius and Chæremon. And one of the brethren who was present from Rome came in with us. Now Æmilian did not say to me at the start, "Do not summon" (the brethren for public worship): for that was superfluous and the last thing (to insist on), since he was going back to the very beginning of the matter. For the question was not about summoning others but about not being Christians ourselves, and it was from this that he bade us desist, thinking that if I should change my mind, the others would follow me. And I answered not unsuitably nor yet very differently from the words: "We ought to obey God rather than men," but I testified outright that I worship the only God and none other, nor will I ever alter nor desist from being a Christian. Upon this he bade us go away to a village on the borders of the desert named Cephro. Listen then to what was said on both sides as it was (officially) recorded:

Dionysius, Faustus, Maximus, Marcellus and Chæremon being brought in, Æmilian the Prefect said: "In the course of conversation also I described to you the clemency which our Sovereigns have displayed towards you. For they gave you opportunity of being liberated if you would adopt a natural line of conduct and worship the gods who protect the Empire and give up those who are contrary to nature. What say ye then to this? for I do not expect you will be ungrateful for their clemency when they invite you to a better course. Dionysius answered: "It is not a fact that all men worship all gods, for each worships certain whom he believes in. So with us, we worship and adore the One God, the Creator of all things, who has entrusted the Empire also to the most religious Emperors, Valerian and Gallienus; and to Him we pray without ceasing for their Empire that it may abide unshaken." Æmilian the Prefect said, "But who prevents you from worshipping him also, if he be god,

with the natural gods? for you were ordered to worship gods and those which all know. Dionysius answered: "We worship none other but Him." Æmilian the Prefect said to them: "I observe that you together are both ungrateful and insensible of the leniency of our Emperors. Wherefore ye shall not be in this city but shall be dismissed to the parts of Libya and stay in a place called Cephro, which I have chosen at the bidding of our Emperors.

And both you and others will be absolutely forbidden either to hold meetings or to enter the cemeteries so-called. And if any one were to appear not to have arrived at the place I have ordered or were found at any assembly, he will do so at his own risk. For the necessary penalty will not be wanting. Be off therefore where ye were bidden. So he hurried me away even though I was sick, granting me not a day's respite. What leisure, then, had I to call assemblies or not?

Further on he says—

(5) But we did not abstain even from the visible assembling of ourselves together in the Lord's presence, but those who were in the city (Alexandria) I the more earnestly urged to assemble, as if I were still with them, being absent in the body, as it says, but present in the spirit. And at Cephro also a large number of the Church were sojourning with us, consisting of the brethren who had followed us from the city or were present from other parts of Egypt. There, too, the Lord opened us a door for the word. And at first we were pursued and stoned, but later not a few of the Gentiles left their idols and turned to God. Thus the word was first sown through us in their hearts who had not previously received it. And as it were for this cause God having led us to them, led us away again when we had fulfilled this ministry. For Æmilian wished, as it seemed, to transfer us to rougher and more Libyan-like parts, and bade those who were scattered in every direction to draw together to the Mareotis, assigning to each party one of the villages of the district, but us he put more on the road so that we should be the first to be arrested. For he evidently managed and arranged so that he might have us easy of capture whenever he wished to seize us.

And as for me, when I was ordered to depart to Cephro, I did not even know in what direction the place lay, hardly having heard so much as the name before; and yet I went off willingly and without trouble. But when it was told me that they would remove me to the parts of Colluthion, all who were present know how I was affected. For here I will accuse myself. At first I was vexed and took it very ill. For though the place happened to be better known and more familiar to us, yet people said it was devoid of brethren and respectable folk, being exposed to the annoyances of wayfarers and the attacks of robbers. But I found consolation when the brethren reminded me that it is nearer to the city, and that, while Cephro gave much opportunity of intercourse with brethren from Egypt in general, so that one could draw congregations from a wider area, yet at Colluthion we should more

constantly enjoy the sight of those who were really loved and most intimate and dear. For they would be able to come and stay the night and there would be district-meetings as is the case with outlying suburbs. And so it turned out.

And lower down again he writes this about what had happened to him— (6) Many indeed are the confessions of faith over which Germanus prides himself: many are the things which he has to mention as having happened to him. Can he reckon up as many in his own case as I can in mine—condemnations, confiscations, sales by public auction, spoiling of one's possessions, loss of dignities, despisings of worldly honour, contempt of commendations by Prefects and Councils and of opponents' threats, endurance of clamourings and dangers and persecutions and wanderings and tribulations and much affliction, such as are the things which have happened unto me under Decius and Sabinus and up to the present time under Æmilian? But where did Germanus appear? What talk was there of him? However, I withdraw from the much foolishness into which I am falling through Germanus; wherefore I refrain from giving a detailed account of events to the brethren who know all.

(To Novatian) (Eus., H. E. vi. 45)

If it was against thy will, as thou sayest, that thou wast promoted, thou wilt prove this by retiring of thine own accord. It were good to suffer anything and everything so to escape dividing the Church of God. And martyrdom to avoid schism is no less glorious than martyrdom to avoid idolatry. Nay, it is to my mind greater. In one case a man is a martyr for his own single soul's sake. But this is for the whole Church. Even now wast thou to persuade or constrain the brethren to come to one mind, thy true deed were greater than thy fall. This will not be reckoned to thee, the other will be lauded. And if thou shouldest be powerless to sway disobedient spirits, save, save thine own soul. I pray for thy health and thy steadfast cleaving to peace in the Lord. [I have to thank the editors and publishers for leave to reprint the above translation by Archbishop Benson from his Cyprian, p. 142.]

To Cornelius, Bishop of Rome, in Reply to a Letter from him about Novatian (circ. 253)

Eusebius (H. E. vi. 46) quotes only one short sentence from Dionysius's letter, which refers to the death of Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem, one of Origen's distinguished pupils and supporters. Alexander twice boldly confessed Christ in the Governor's Court at Cæsarea and died at last in prison. The sentence is as follows—"The admirable Alexander entered into a blessed rest whilst in custody." According to Eusebius, the letter also mentioned the invitation which Dionysius had received from the Bishops of Asia Minor to attend a synod at Antioch at which "they tried to suppress the schism of Novatian."

To Stephanus, Bishop of Rome (Eus., H. E. vii. 4 and 5) (The First of the Epistles about Baptism)

(1) Know now, brother, that all the Churches in the East and even further afield which were divided, have been united: and all their rulers everywhere are of one mind, rejoicing exceedingly at the unexpected peace which has come about, Demetrian in Antioch, Theoctistus in Cæsarea, Mazabbanes in Ælia, Marinus in Tyre, Alexander having fallen asleep, Heliodorus in Laodicea, Thelymidrus being at rest, Helenus in Tarsus and all the Churches of Cilicia, Firmilianus and all Cappadocia. For I have mentioned only the more prominent of the Bishops, in order that I may not make my letter too long nor my narrative wearisome. Nevertheless, the whole of Syria and Arabia, districts whose needs ye from time to time supply and to whom ye now have sent an epistle, Mesopotamia also and Pontus and Bithynia, and, in one word, all men everywhere exult in the harmony and brotherly love displayed and praise God for it.

[The two following extracts are translated from Syriac versions, and I am indebted for them to Mr. N. MacLean of Christ's College, Cambridge. The first has been put together out of two MSS. in the British Museum, neither of which contains the whole, and was printed by Pitra, Analecta Sacra, Vol. IV. The Greek original of most of the first sentence is preserved in a catena on Deuteronomy, Cod. Vat. 1521, fol. 591, and was first printed by Simon de Magistris in his edition of our author, p. 200. There is much probability that this extract formed part of the same letter to Stephanus as the extract from Eusebius which precedes it here. The second extract is found in three other Syriac MSS. in the British Museum, but is less certainly part of this letter, or indeed authentic at all.]

(2) If so be that any man speak a wicked thing of God like those who call Him unpitying or any man living in the fear of other gods, the Law has commanded that

such a one be stoned: but we would stone these men with sound words of faith. Or if a man receive not at all the mystery of Christ or alter and distort it—(saying) that He is not God, or that he did not become a man, or that He did not die, or that He did not rise, or that He will not come to judge the quick and the dead—or preach anything else apart from what we preached, let him be a curse, says Paul. Or if so be he have wronged the word concerning the resurrection of the flesh, let him be already reckoned with the dead. For we speak in carefulness concerning these things—in order that we may be in agreement one with another, churches with churches, bishops with bishops, priests with priests. And in regard to causes and affairs about matters which concern individual men—how it is right to receive him who approaches from without and how him who comes from within—we counsel to obey those who stand at the head of every place who by Divine election are put into this ministration—leaving to our Lord the judgment of all things which they do.

(3) Those who were baptized in the name of the three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—though they were baptized by heretics who confess the three Persons, shall not be re-baptized. But those who are converted from other heresies shall be perfected by the baptism of the Holy Church.

To Xystus (or Sixtus) II (Eus., H. E. vii. 5, 3-6) (The second on the same subject)

(1) (Stephen) therefore had sent word concerning Helenus and concerning Firmilianus, and all the bishops of Cilicia and Cappadocia and (be it noted) of Galatia and all the neighbouring churches likewise—to the effect that he would not hold communion with them for this same reason, since, he says, they re-baptize the heretics. And observe the importance of the matter. For decrees had really been passed about it in the largest synods of the bishops, as I am informed, so that those who come over from heretical bodies, after a course of instruction, are washed and cleansed from the defilement of the old and unclean leaven. About all this also I have written asking him for information. (2) To our beloved fellow-presbyters also, Dionysius and Philemon, who had formerly sided with Stephanus and were correspondents of mine on the same matter, I have written briefly the first time and more fully now.

(3) The teaching which is now at work in Ptolemais of Pentapolis, is impious, full of blasphemy about the Almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and full of unbelief about His only begotten Son, the First-born of all creation, the Incarnate Word, and displays want of perception concerning the Holy Spirit. And therefore, when both official communications from both parties arrived and some of the brethren sought personal interviews with me, I wrote what I could by the Divine assistance and gave a somewhat methodical explanation of the matter, a copy of which I have sent you.

To Philemon (Eus., H. E. vii. 7) (The third on the same subject)

(1) I read both the critical researches and the traditional treatises of the heretics, defiling my soul a little with their abominable opinions and yet gaining this advantage from them, that I could refute them for myself and abhor them much more thoroughly. And indeed when a certain brother among the presbyters tried to restrain me and frighten me from contaminating myself with the mire of their iniquity (he said I should ruin my soul, and, as I perceived, there was truth in what he said), a heaven-sent vision came and strengthened me, and words came to me which expressly ordered me thus: "Read all that may come to thy hands: for thou art competent to sift and test everything, and that was the original reason of thy accepting the Faith." I acknowledged the vision as in agreement with the apostolic voice which says to the more able: "Approve yourselves bankers of repute."

(2) This cause and rule I received from our blessed Father Heraclas. For those that came over from the heretics, although they had apostatized from the Church—or rather had not even done that but were informed against as resorting to some heretical teacher, though still reputed members of our congregations—these he repelled from the Church, and did not restore them at their request until they had publicly and fully stated all that they had heard among those who set themselves against us; and then he admitted them without requiring them to be re-baptized: for they had received that holy gift already. (3) I have learnt this also, that the brethren in Africa did not introduce this practice (of re-baptism) now for the first time, but it was also adopted some time ago among our predecessors as Bishops, in the most populous churches and well-attended synods of the brethren, viz. in Iconium and Synnada, and I cannot bring myself to reverse their decisions and involve them in strife and controversy. For "thou shalt not remove," it says, "thy neighbour's boundaries, which thy fathers set."

To Dionysius of Rome (Eus., H. E. vii. 7, 6 and 8) (The fourth letter on Baptism)

For with Novatian we are reasonably indignant, seeing that he has cut the Church in two and dragged certain of the brethren into impieties and blasphemies and introduced the most unholy teaching about God and accuses the most gracious Jesus Christ our Lord of being without pity, and besides all this sets at nought the holy laws and overthrows the confession of faith before baptism, and altogether banishes the Holy Spirit from them, even though there were some hope of His remaining or even of His returning to them.

To Xystus (Sixtus) II, Bishop of Rome (Eus., H. E. vii. 9) (The fifth about Baptism)

I truly desire counsel, brother, and ask an opinion from you, being afraid lest after all I am wrong in my treatment of a case that has come before me as follows— One who is reckoned faithful among the brethren who meet together, of old standing, having been a member even before my ordination (as Bishop), and I fancy even before the appointment of the blessed Heraclas, had been present at a recent baptism and heard the questions and answers (in that service). He came to me weeping and bemoaning himself and falling at my feet, confessing and protesting that the baptism he had received among the heretics was not this, nor had anything in common with it: for that was full of impiety and blasphemies: and he said that he was now sore pricked in the soul and had no courage even to lift up his eyes to God, because he had started with such unholy words and rites, and so he begged to obtain this thorough means of purification and acceptance and grace. But this I did not venture to do, saying that his so long being in communion with us was sufficient for the purpose. For as he had heard the Giving of Thanks (Eucharist) and joined in saying the Amen, and stood at the Table and stretched forth his hands to receive the holy Food and had taken it and partaken of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ for a considerable period, I should not venture to put him back to the beginning once more. So I bade him take courage and approach for the receiving of the Holy Things with sure faith and good hope. But he ceases not to grieve, and shrinks from approaching the Table and can with difficulty be persuaded to stand with (the Consistentes) for the Prayers.

To Conon (Pitra, Spic. Sol. i. 15, from a Bodl. MS. dated 1062)

As to those who are nearing the end of life, if they desire and beg to obtain absolution, having before their eyes the judgment to which they are departing, considering what is in store for them, if they are handed over thereto bound and condemned, and believing that they will gain relief and lightening of punishment there, if they be loosed here—for these the approval of the Lord is true and assured—these, too, it is part of the Divine mercy to send on their way free. If, however, they afterwards continue to live, it does not appear to me consistent to bind them again and load them with their sins. For when once absolved and reconciled to God, and pronounced again to be partakers of Divine grace and dispatched as free to appear before the Lord, so long as nothing wrong has been done by them in the meantime to bring them back into bondage for their sins were most unreasonable. Shall we after that impose on God the limits of our judgment, to be kept by Him while we observe them not ourselves, making parade of the goodness of the Lord but withholding our own? Nevertheless if any one, after recovery, should show himself in need of further treatment, we counsel him, of his own accord, to humble and abase and lower himself, with a view to his own improvement and also to what is seemly in the eyes of the brethren and irreproachable before those without. If he consent to this, he will be the gainer: but, if he should object and refuse, then no doubt that will be a sufficient ground for a second exclusion.

From the Writings about Repentance (Mai, Class. Auct. x. 484, from a Vat. MS.)

But now we do the contrary. For him whom Christ in His goodness seeks when wandering upon the mountains, and calls to Himself when fleeing, and lays upon His shoulders when found at last, him we resolutely repel when he approaches. Nay, let us not adopt so evil a counsel for our own sake, nor drive the sword into our own heart. For they that endeavour to injure or, on the other hand, to benefit others, may not altogether have the effect they desired upon them, but they do bring about good or evil for themselves and replenish their store either of heavenly virtues or of undisciplined affections. And these taking good angels as their companions and fellow-travellers, both here and hereafter, in all peace and freedom from every evil, will be allotted the most blessed inheritances for eternity and will ever be with God, the greatest good of all; and those will forfeit at once the peace of God and their own peace, and both here and after death will be handed over to tormenting demons. Let us then not repel those who return, but gladly welcome them and number them with those who have not strayed, and thus supply that which is wanting in them.

To Domitius and Didymus (Eus., H. E. vii. 11) (Part of an Easter Letter)

(1) It is superfluous to mention by name the many members of our body, who are unknown to you: but you should know that men and women, young and old, soldiers and civilians, every class and age, some by the scourge and fire and some by the sword have conquered in the fight and carried off their crowns, while with some even a very long period did not prove sufficient to show them acceptable to the Lord (as martyrs), as in fact seems to be the case even now with me. Wherefore I have been put off until a time which He Himself knows to be the right one by Him who saith: "In a time acceptable I heard thee, and in the day of salvation I succoured thee." For since you inquire and wish to be informed how we fare, by all means hear our experiences: how that when we were being led away prisoners by a centurion and duumviri with their soldiers and servants, viz. myself and Gaius, Faustus, Peter and Paul, certain of the inhabitants of the Mareotis came upon us, and with violence dragged us off against our will and in spite of our protests. And now I with Gaius and Peter only, deprived of the company of the other brethren, am shut in a desolate and dreary part of Libya, three days' journey from Parætonium.

And further on he says— (2) In the city there have concealed themselves, secretly looking after the brethren, from among the presbyters Maximus, Dioscorus, Demetrius and Lucius (for Faustinus and Aquila, who were better known in the world, are wandering in other parts of Egypt), and of the deacons Faustus, Eusebius and Chæremon, who survived those who perished in the pestilence. Eusebius was he whom from the beginning God strengthened and inspired to perform many services for the confessors in prison with all energy, and to carry out at no small risk the last offices for the perfect and blessed martyrs in decking out their bodies (for burial). For up till now the Prefect does not cease from cruelly slaying some of those who are brought before him, as I have already said, and from tearing others in pieces with instruments of torture, while he crushes the spirits of others again

with chains and imprisonment, forbidding any to visit them and making search lest any should be found doing so. Nevertheless, God gives them some respite from their miseries through the zeal and steadfast efforts of the brethren.

To Hermammon (Eus., H. E. vii. 1, 10, 23) (Part of another Easter Letter)

(1) Even Gallus did not know the flaw in Decius's policy, nor did he foresee what it was that upset him, but stumbled over the same stone that was right before his eyes. For, though his reign was prospering and things were going according to his mind, he drove into exile the holy men who were interceding with God for his peace and health, with the effect that with them he drove out also their prayers on his behalf. So far on that point, and then again he discourses about Valerian in the same letter—

(2) To John also it is revealed in like manner, when he says: "There was given him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemy, and there was given him authority and forty-two months." And both these things are to be wondered at in the case of Valerian, and of them it is especially to be observed how his prosperity lasted so long as he was gentle and well-disposed towards the men of God. For none of the Emperors before him were so kindly and favourably affected towards them, not even those who were said to have been openly Christians, as he manifestly was, receiving them at the beginning in a most familiar and friendly spirit: indeed, his whole house was filled with devout persons and was a veritable Church of God. But he was persuaded to abandon this treatment by that tutor and chief ruler of Egyptian magicians, who instructed him to slay or persecute, as adversaries and hinderers of his vile and detestable sorcerers, the pure and holy persons, who are and were able to confound the devices of accursed demons by being present and seen and merely breathing on them and uttering words, while he also incited him to perform unholy rites and detestable juggleries and abominable sacrifices such as the killing of wretched boys and the slaying of unhappy fathers' children and the dividing of new-born entrails asunder and the cutting up and mutilating of bodies which are God's creation, in the hope that such doings would bring them Divine favour.

And to this he adds as follows— (3) Fine offerings at all events did Macrianus make to them (sc. the demons) to propitiate them for the Empire which he hoped for, when, in his former position as so-called officer in charge of the Emperor's general (καθόλου) accounts he entertained no reasonable (εὔλογον) nor catholic (καθολικόν) sentiments, but fell under the prophet's curse, who says: "Woe to those who prophesy out of their own heart and see not the general (τὸ καθόλου) view." For he did not understand the workings of Universal (καθόλου) Providence, nor suspect the approach of Judgment on the part of Him who is before all things and through all things and over all things. Wherefore he has become also the enemy of His universal (καθολικῆς) Church and has alienated and estranged himself from God's mercy and banished himself as far as possible from his own salvation, verifying in this his personal name.

And again further on he says— (4) For Valerian, through being persuaded to this policy by him, exposed himself to insults and injuries according to that which was said to Isaiah: "And these men chose their ways and their abominations which their soul desired, and I will choose their mockings and will recompense them their sins." But this man (Macrianus) in his mad lust after imperial power for which he had no qualifications, being unable to deck his own crippled body with the imperial robes, put forward his two sons, who thus became liable for their father's sins. For the prophecy clearly applies to them which God spake: "visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." For he brought upon his sons' heads his own evil desires in which he had succeeded and involved them in the consequences of his own wickedness and hatred of God.

Then there is a section in which he refers to the peaceful times under Gallienus— (5) So after thus inciting one of the Emperors before him and attacking the other, he speedily vanished with all his family, root and branch, whilst Gallienus was proclaimed and acknowledged by all, being at once the old and the new Emperor, having preceded the usurpers and remaining after them. For, in accordance with that which was spoken to the prophet Isaiah, "behold the things predicted from the beginning have come to pass, and new things which will now arise." For as a cloud having overcast the sun's rays and screened them for a while shades it and shows itself in its stead, and then when the cloud has passed off or been dissipated the sun which was shining before emerges and shines forth again, so it is with Macrianus; after coming forward and gaining access for himself to the imperial power which belonged to Gallienus, he ceases to be, since he was of no account, and the other resumes the position he had before. And the Empire, having cast off, as it were, its old age and purged itself of its former badness, now bursts into greater splendour, is seen and heard from afar and pervades the whole world.

Then in due order he indicates the date of this letter in these words— (6) And once more it occurs to me to consider the days and years of this period of the Empire.

*TO HERMAMMON (EUS., H. E. VII. 1, 10, 23) (PART OF ANOTHER EASTER LETTER)*24

For I observe that the ungodly persons (I have mentioned) after a short period of honourable mention have lost their good name, but (Gallienus) who was more righteous and loved God better, having completed the seven years' period, is now passing through his ninth year: therefore let us keep the Feast.

To the Brethren in Alexandria (Eus., H. E. vii. 22) (Part of another Easter Letter)

(1) Other men would not think the present a time for "keeping festival: nor, indeed, is this nor any other such a time to them; I speak not of times obviously sorrowful, but even of such as they might consider most joyful. In these days there are lamentations everywhere, and all are mourning: wailings resound through the city by reason of the number of the dead and the dying day by day. For, as it is written about the firstborn of the Egyptians, so now also "a great cry arose: for there is not a house in which there is not one dead. I would, indeed, there were but one; for the things that have before now befallen us were truly many and grievous. First of all they drove us into exile and we kept the feast then too by ourselves, persecuted and harried to death by all, and every place where each particular affliction befel us became the scene of our festal assembly, open country, desert, ship, inn or prison, and our perfect martyrs spent the brightest of all feasts, being entertained in heaven above. But after this war and famine seized us, which we endured in common with the Gentiles, having undergone alone all the injuries they had inflicted on us and then having to share in the evils they wrought on one another and suffered: and once more we rejoiced in the peace of Christ, which He has given to us alone.

But now after we and they had obtained a very brief respite, this pestilence has overtaken us, which is to them a more fearful thing than all former fears and more terrible than any calamity whatever, and to quote an expression of an historian of their own, "a thing which alone has exceeded all men's expectation," while to us it was not so much that as a discipline and a testing no less severe than any of the rest: for it did not spare us, though it attacked the Gentiles in great force.

To this he adds as follows— (2) At all events most of the brethren through their love and brotherly affection for us spared not themselves nor abandoned one another, but without regard to their own peril visited those who fell sick, diligently looking

after and ministering to them and cheerfully shared their fate with them, being infected with the disease from them and willingly involving themselves in their troubles. Not a few also, after nursing others back to recovery, died themselves, taking death over from them and thus fulfilling in very deed the common saying, which is taken always as a note of mere good feeling; for in their departure they became their expiatory substitutes. At all events, the very pick of our brethren lost their lives in this way, both priests and deacons and some highly praised ones from among the laity, so that this manner of dying does not seem far removed from martyrdom, being the outcome of much piety and stalwart faith. So, too, taking up the bodies of the saints on their arms and breasts, closing their eyes and shutting their mouths, bearing them on their shoulders and laying them out for burial, clinging to them, embracing them, washing them, decking them out, they not long after had the same services rendered to them; for many of the survivors followed in their train. But the Gentiles behaved quite differently: those who were beginning to fall sick they thrust away, and their dearest they fled from, or cast them half dead into the roads: unburied bodies they treated as vile refuse; for they tried to avoid the spreading and communication of the fatal disease, difficult as it was to escape for all their scheming.

To Hierax an Egyptian Bishop (Eus., H. E. vii. 21) (Part of another Easter Letter)

But what is there surprising in its being difficult for me to correspond even by letter with those who are sojourning at a distance, seeing that it has proved impossible to talk even with myself and to take counsel with my own soul? At all events, with my own kith and kin, with the brethren of my own house and life, citizens of the same Church, I have to communicate by letters and to get them through seems impracticable. For it were easier for one to pass, I say not across the frontier, but even from East to West, than to visit one part of Alexandria from another. For that vast, pathless desert which it took Israel two generations to traverse is not so impassable and hard to cross as the central street of the city, nor is the sea, which they had for a carriage-road when the waters were parted asunder to make a passage through. And our still and waveless harbours have become an image of those in the passing of which the Egyptians were overwhelmed; for they have often appeared like the Red Sea from the blood which was in them. And the river which flows past the city at one time appeared drier than the waterless desert and more parched than that which Israel crossed over when they were so thirsty that Moses cried out and drink flowed out of the steep rock from Him that worketh wonders:

and at another time it was so full as to overflow the whole neighbourhood, both roads and fields, and to threaten a return of the flood which occurred in the days of Noah. But in either case it runs polluted with blood and slaughter and drowned corpses, as under Moses it happened to Pharaoh, when the river turned to blood and stank. And what other water could cleanse all this but the water which itself cleanseth all things? How could the mighty ocean which man cannot cross, overspread and sweep away this horrid flood? or how could the great river that goeth out of Eden wash off the stain, though it were to divert the four heads into which it is divided into the single head of the Gihon? or when would the air, reeking everywhere with the evil exhalation, become pure? For such mist from the ground and

breezes from the sea, airs from the rivers and vapours from the harbours are given off that for dew we have the impure fluids of corpses rotting in all their component elements.

After all this do men wonder, are they at a loss, whence come the continual pestilences, whence the dire diseases, whence the divers ravages, whence the wholesale destruction of life, why the largest city no longer contains in it its former multitude of inhabitants, from infant children to the most advanced in years, whom it used to nourish in other days to a green old age, as the saying went, whereas these from forty up to seventy years of age were so much more numerous then that their number is not now reached even when all from fourteen to eighty are enrolled and put together for the public distribution of food, and thus those whose looks show them to be quite young have become as it were of equal age with those who have long been advanced in years. And though they see the race of man on earth thus dwindling ever and being exhausted, they do not tremble, as its total extinction proceeds and draws near.

(From another Easter Letter)

[This fragment is given in the Sacra Parallela Rupefucald., fol. 70 and 71, where it is ascribed to Dionysius's "Fourth Easter Letter." It is by no means clear which Letter is meant, but the main thought (of the cunning devices by which Love wins its way) is quaintly beautiful and well worthy of our author] Love leaps out in utmost eagerness to confer some benefit even on an unwilling object: yea, often on one who shrinks in shame and tries to shun kind treatment from dislike of being burdensome to another, and would fain put up with his annoyances alone, in order not to cause trouble and inconvenience to any. He that is full of Love craves leave to suffer and endure: to be in evil case, he thinks, gives opportunity for being helped, and he will do the greatest favour to another, not himself, if through that other the evil, which is his own, is made to cease.

To Basilides, Bishop of the Churches in the Pentapolis (Cyrenaica)

[This canonical Letter was accepted at the third Council of Constantinople in Trullo (A.D. 680)] Dionysius to Basilides my beloved son and brother and godly fellow-worker, greeting in the Lord.

(1) You sent to me, my most faithful and learned son, to inquire at what hour one ought to end the fast before Easter. For you say that some of the brethren maintain one should do so at cockcrow: and some at evening. For the brethren in Rome, so they say, await the cockcrow: but concerning those in the Pentapolis you said they broke the fast sooner. And you ask me to set an exact limit and a definite hour, which is both difficult and risky. For it will be acknowledged by all alike that one ought to start the feast and the gladness after the time of our Lord's resurrection, up till then humbling our souls with fastings. But by what you have written to me, you have quite soundly and with a good insight into the Divine Gospels established the fact that nothing definite appears in them about the hour at which He rose. For the Evangelists described those that came to the tomb diversely—that is, at different times, and all said that they have found the Lord already risen: it was "late on the Sabbath day," as S. Matthew puts it: and "early while it was yet dark," as S. John writes; and "at early dawn," as S. Luke; and "very early … when the sun was risen," as S. Mark. And when He rose, no one has clearly stated;

but that "late on the Sabbath day, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week," about sunrise on that day those who arrived at the tomb found Him no longer lying in it, that is agreed to. And we must not imagine that the evangelists are at variance and contradict one another: but even if there seem to be some small dispute upon the matter of your inquiry—that is, if though all agree that the Light of the world our Lord arose on that night, they differ about the hour, yet let us be anxious fairly and faithfully to harmonize what is said.

What is said, then, by Matthew runs thus: “Late on the Sabbath day, as it began to dawn towards 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 an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the watchers did quake 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 hath been crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, even as he said. As to this word which he uses for “late,” some will think, in accordance with its common acceptation, that the evening of the Sabbath is signified; but others, understanding it more scientifically, will say it is not that, but “the dead of night,” the word used signifying an advanced stage of lateness. And because he means night and not evening, he adds “as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week” and (the women) had not yet come, as the rest say, “bringing spices” but “to see the sepulchre. And they found the earthquake had occurred and the angel seated on the stone, and heard from him the words: “He is not here: he is risen. Similarly, John says:

“On the first day of the week came Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the tomb, and seeth the stone taken away from the tomb. However, by this account, “when it was still dark” although towards dawn, He had gone forth from the tomb. But Luke says: “On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. But on the first day of the week at early dawn (the women) came unto the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. “Early dawn” indicates, perchance, the morning light appearing before (the sun itself) on “the first day of the week. In consequence, it was when the Sabbath had now completely passed, with the night that followed, and when a new day was beginning that they came bringing the spices and ointments, by which time it is clear that He had risen long before. To this, also, corresponds what Mark says: “(The women) brought spices that they might come and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week they come to the tomb, when the sun was risen. For he, too, says “very early,” which is the same thing as “at early dawn”: and he has added, “when the sun was risen. For their start and their journey began, it is clear, “at early dawn” and “very early”: but they had gone on spending time both on the road and around the tomb until sunrise.

And on this occasion also the white robed young man says to these women: “He is risen: he is not here.”

As things stand thus, we pronounce this decision for those who inquire to a nicety at what hour or what half-hour, or quarter of an hour, they should begin their rejoicing at the Resurrection of our Lord from the dead: those who are premature and relax before midnight, though near it, we censure as remiss and wanting in self-restraint;

for they drop out of the race just before the end, as the wise man says: “that which is within a little in life is not little.” And those who put off and endure to the furthest and persevere till the fourth watch, when our Saviour appeared to those who were sailing also, walking on the sea, we shall approve as generous and painstaking. And those midway who stop as they were moved or as they were able, let us not treat altogether severely. For all do not continue during the six days of the fast either equally or similarly: but some remain without food till cockcrow on all the days, some on two, or three, or four, and some on none of them. And for those who strictly persist in these prolonged fasts and then are distressed and almost faint, there is pardon if they take something sooner. But if some, so far from prolonging their fast do not fast at all, but feed luxuriously during the earlier days of the week, and then, when they come to the last two and prolong their fast on them alone, viz. on Friday and Saturday, think they are performing some great feat by continuing till dawn, I do not hold that they have exercised an equal discipline with those who have practised it for longer periods. I give you this counsel in accordance with my judgment in writing on these points.

[Three rulings follow on points which it is not necessary to set out here] (2) These answers I give you from respect for you, beloved, not because you were ignorant of the subjects of your inquiry but to render us of one mind and soul with yourself, as indeed we are. And I have set forth my opinion for you to share not as a teacher but as it becomes us to discuss one with another in all simplicity: and when you have considered it again, my most sagacious son, you should write again and tell me whatever seems to you better or what you judge to be as I have said. I pray that you may prosper, my beloved son, as you minister to the Lord in peace.

“On the Promises” (Eus., H. E. vii. 24 and 25)

(1) Seeing that they bring forward a composition of Nepos, on which they rely too much as showing irrefutably that the Kingdom of Christ will be on earth, though I accept and love Nepos for many other things, his faith, his laboriousness, his study of the Scriptures, and the many psalms he has written, by which already many of the brethren are encouraged, and though I hold him in all the greater respect because he has gone to his rest before us, yet the truth is so dear to me and to be preferred that I can indeed applaud and give my full assent to right propositions, but must examine and correct whatever appears to be unsoundly stated. And if he were still with us and propounding his views merely by word of mouth, a discussion without writing would have sufficed to persuade and convince our opponents by way of question and answer. But now that this writing of his is published, which many think most convincing, and certain teachers hold the law and the prophets of no account and have relinquished the following of the Gospels and depreciated the Epistles of the Apostles, while they parade the teaching of this book as if it were some great and hidden mystery and will not allow our simpler brethren to hold any high and noble opinion either about the glorious and truly Divine appearing of our Lord or about our rising from the dead and our gathering together and being made like unto Him, but persuade them to hope for mean and passing enjoyments like the present in the Kingdom of God, it is necessary that we also should discuss the matter with our brother Nepos as if he were still alive.

Further on he adds— (2) So being in the district of Arsenoe, where, as you know, this teaching prevailed long before, so that both schisms and the defection of whole churches have occurred, I called together the presbyters and teachers among the brethren in the villages, such of the brethren as wished being also present, and invited them publicly to make an examination of the matter. And when some brought forward against me this book as an impregnable weapon and bulwark, I sat with them three days in succession from dawn till evening and tried to correct the statements made. During which time I was much struck with the steadiness, the desire for truth, the aptness in following an argument and the intelligence displayed by

the brethren, whilst we put our questions and difficulties and points of agreement in an orderly and reasonable manner, avoiding the mistake of holding jealously at any cost to what we had once thought, even though it should now be shown to be wrong, and yet not suppressing what we had to say on the other side, but, as far as possible, attempting to grapple with and master the propositions in hand without being ashamed to change one’s opinion and yield assent if the argument convinced us; conscientiously and unfeignedly, with hearts spread open before God, accepting what was established by the exposition and teaching of the holy Scriptures.

At last the champion and mouthpiece of this doctrine, the man called Coracion, in the hearing of all the brethren that were present agreed and testified to us that he would no longer adhere to it nor discourse upon it nor yet mention nor teach it, on the ground that he had been convinced by what had been said against it. And of the rest of the brethren some rejoiced at the conference and the reconciliation and harmonious arrangement which was brought about by it between all parties. Further on he says this about the Revelation of John—

(3) Certain people therefore before now discredited and altogether repudiated the book, both examining it chapter by chapter and declaring it unintelligible and inconclusive and that it makes a false statement in its title. For they say it is not John’s, no nor yet a “Revelation,” because of the heavy, thick veil of obscurity which covers it: and not only is the author of this book not one of the Apostles but he is not even one of the saints nor a churchman at all; it is Cerinthus, the founder of the heresy that was called Cerinthian from him, and he desired to attribute his own composition to a name that would carry weight. For the substance of his teaching was this, that Christ’s Kingdom will be on earth, and he dreams that it will be concerned with things after which he himself, being fond of bodily pleasures and very sensual, hankered, such as the satisfying of his belly and lower lusts, that is eating and drinking and marrying and such means as he thought would provide him more decorously with these pleasures, feasts and sacrifices and the slaying of victims. I should not myself venture to reject the book, seeing that many brethren hold it in high esteem, but, reckoning the decision about it to be beyond my powers of mind, I consider the interpreting of its various contents to be recondite and matter for much wonder. For without fully understanding, I yet surmise that some deeper meaning underlies the words, not measuring and judging them by calculations of my own; but giving the preference to faith, I have come to the conclusion that they are too high for me to comprehend, and so I do not reject what I have not taken in, but can only wonder at these visions which I have not even seen (much less understood).

Besides this, after examining the book as a whole and showing that it is impossible to understand it in its literal sense, he proceeds— (4) So having completed practically the whole prophecy, the prophet pronounces a blessing on those who keep it

and indeed on himself also: for “blessed,” saith he, “is he that observeth the words of the prophecy of this book and I John who saw and heard these things.” That he was called John, therefore, and that the writing is John’s I will not dispute. For I agree that it is the work of some holy and inspired person but I should not readily assent to his being the Apostle, the son of Zebedee, the brother of James, whose is the Gospel entitled “According to John” and the General Epistle. For I conclude that he is not the same (1) from the character of each, (2) from the style of the language and (3) from what may be called the arrangement of the book. For the Evangelist nowhere inserts his name nor yet proclaims himself either in the Gospel or in the Epistle....

(5) But John nowhere speaks either in the first or in the third person about himself, whereas he that wrote the Revelation straightway at the beginning puts himself forward: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which he gave him to show to his servants speedily, and he sent and signified (it) by his angel to his servant John who bare witness of the word of God and of his testimony, even of all things that he saw.” Then he also writes an Epistle: “John to the seven churches that are in Asia, grace to you and peace.” Whereas the Evangelist did not put his name even at the head of the Catholic Epistle but began with the mystery of the Divine revelation without any superfluous words: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes.”

For it is over this revelation that the Lord also pronounced Peter blessed, saying: “Blessed art thou Simon bar Jona, because flesh and blood did not reveal it to thee, but my heavenly Father. Nay, even in the second and third extant Epistles of John, short though they are, John does not appear by name but he writes himself “the elder” anonymously. Whereas our author did not even consider it sufficient to mention himself by name once and then proceed with his subject, but he repeats the name again, “I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and in the patience of Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. In fact, at the end also he says this: “Blessed is he that observeth the words of the prophecy of this book and I John who saw and heard these things. That he which wrote these things, therefore, is John, we must believe as he says so: but which John is not clear. For he does not say, as in many places in the Gospel, that he is the disciple beloved of the Lord, nor the one that reclined on His breast, nor yet the brother of James, nor yet the one that was the eyewitness and hearer of the Lord. Surely he would have used one of the aforesaid descriptions, when desirous of clearly identifying himself.

And yet he does nothing of the kind, but calls himself our brother and partaker with us, and witness of Jesus and blessed for the seeing and hearing of the revelations. I suppose that many bore the same name as John the Apostle, who by reason of their love towards him and from their admiration and emulation of him and desire

to be loved by the Lord like him, were glad to bear the same name with him, even as many a one among the children of the faithful is called Paul or Peter. There is then another John also in the Acts of the Apostles, the one called Mark whom Barnabas and Paul took with them and of whom it says again: “And they had John as their attendant. But as to whether he is the writer, I should say no. For it is not written that he arrived in Asia with them, but “Paul and his company,” it says, “set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem. And I think there was yet another among those who were in Asia, since they say there were two tombs in Ephesus and each of them are said to be the tomb of John.

Again, from the thoughts and from the actual words and their arrangement this John may be reasonably reckoned different from the other. For the Gospel and the Epistle agree with each other and begin in a similar way. The one says “In the beginning was the Word: and the other “That which was from the beginning. The one says “And the Word became flesh and tabernacled in us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the Only-begotten from the Father: the other uses the same or almost equivalent expressions, “That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld and our hands handled concerning the Word of Life, and the Life was manifested. For he starts in this way because he is dealing, as he shows in what follows, with those who say that the Lord has not come in the flesh. For which reason he is careful to add also: “And we have seen and bear witness and announce unto you the eternal Life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard we announce also unto you. He is consistent with himself and does not diverge from his own propositions, but treats them throughout under the same heads and in the same terms, of which we will briefly recall;

for instance, the attentive reader will find in each book frequent mention of the Life, the Light, the turning from darkness, constant reference to the Truth, Grace, Joy, the Flesh and the Blood of the Lord, the Judgment, the Forgiveness of sins, the Love of God towards us, the command to us to love one another and that we must keep all the commandments: again there is the conviction of the world, of the devil, of the antichrist, God’s adoption of us as Sons, the Faith, which is everywhere required of us, the Father and the Son everywhere: and generally throughout in describing the character of the Gospel and the Epistle one and the same complexion is to be observed in both. But the Revelation is quite different from them, foreign, out of touch and affinity with them, not having, one might almost say, one syllable in common. The Epistle contains no reminiscence nor subject dealt with in the Revelation nor the Revelation in the Epistle (to say nothing of the Gospel), whereas Paul in his Epistles did give some indication even about those revelations which he has not actually described.

And yet once more one can estimate the difference between the Gospel and Epistle and the Revelation from the literary style. For the first two books are not only written in irreproachable Greek, but are also most elegant in their phrases, reasonings and arrangements of expression. No trace can be found in them of barbarous words, faulty construction or peculiarities in general. For St. John seems to have possessed both words, the Lord having graciously vouchsafed them to him; viz. both the word and knowledge of the word of speech. That this John had seen a Revelation and received knowledge and the gift of prophecy, I do not deny, but I observe his dialect and inaccurate Greek style, which employs barbaric idioms and sometimes even faulty constructions, which it is not now necessary to expose. For I have not mentioned this in order to scoff, let no one think so, but simply to point out the dissimilarity of the writings.

“On Nature” (Eus., Præp. Evang. xiv. 23-7)

(1) How shall we bear with them when they say that the wise and, for that reason, the good productions of Creation are the results of chance coincidences? Each of which as it came into being by itself appeared to Him that ordered it to be good and all of them together equally so.

For God “saw,” it says, “all things that he had made, and behold they were very good.” And yet they take no warning from the small, ordinary instances at their feet, from which they may learn that no necessary and profitable work is produced without design or haphazard, but is adapted to its proper purpose by handiwork, whereas when it falls into a useless and unprofitable state, it then breaks up and comes to pieces indefinite, and, as it chances, because the wisdom which was concerned in its construction no longer superintends and directs it. For a garment is not woven by the woof standing up without a weaver, nor yet by the warp weaving itself of its own accord: but when it is becoming worn out, the torn rags fall asunder. And a house or a city is built not by receiving certain stones which volunteer for the foundations and others which jump into the courses of the walls, but because the builder brings the stones that fit in the proper order: but when the building is thrown down, each stone falls to the ground just as it may. So, too, when a ship is being built, the keel does not set itself below, while the mast raises itself in the middle and each of the other timbers takes the place which it chances to of itself. Nor, again, do the planks of a wagon—said to be 100 in number—become fixed in the position which each found empty; but the builder in each case puts the timber together suitably. But if the ship, when it went upon the sea, or the wagon, when it was driven along on land, comes to pieces, the timbers are scattered wherever it may happen—in the one case by the waves, in the other by the violent rush.

In the same way it would befit them to say that the atoms also which are inoperative when they are at rest and not worked by hands, are also useless when they move at random. For let these opponents of ours look to these viewless atoms of theirs and apply their minds to these mindless ones, not like the Psalmist who confesses that

this was revealed to him by God alone: “Mine eyes beheld thy unfinished work.” So, too, when they say that those fine webs which they speak of as being produced from atoms, are self-wrought by them without skill or sensation, who can bear to hear of these weaver atoms whom even the spider excels in skill when he spins his web out of himself.

(2) Who, then, is it that discriminates between the atoms, gathering or scattering them, and arranging some in this way to make the sun and others in that way for the moon, and putting each of them together according to the light-giving power of each star? For the particular number and kind that made the sun by being united in a particular way would never have condescended to produce the moon, nor would the intertwinings of the moon atoms have ever become the sun. Moreover, even Arcturus, bright as he is, would never plume himself on having the atoms of Lucifer, nor the Pleiads those of Orion. For Paul has well distinguished when he says: “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for star differeth from star in glory.” And if the combination of the atoms, as being soulless, was unintelligent, they needed an intelligent artist to put them together: and if their junction was without purpose and the result of necessity, they being void of reason, some wise herdsman drove them together and presided over them: and if they have been linked together voluntarily to do willing service, some wonderful master-craftsman assigned them their parts and took the lead; or, like an expert general, he did not leave his army disordered and all in a muddle, but disposed the cavalry in one part and the heavy armed troops apart, and the javelin men by themselves and the slingers where they ought to be, in order that those who carried the same weapon might help one another. And if they think this illustration ridiculous because in it I make a comparison of great bodies with small, we will come down to the very smallest.

[Eusebius’s extract breaks off here.] (3) If the atoms have no ruler over them, to speak to them or to choose or to arrange them, but they move, settling themselves of their own accord out of the big rushing tumult and producing a big uproar as they clash together, like coming to like without the Divine intervention of which the poet speaks, and if they run and herd together, recognizing their kinsfolk, truly the republic of the atoms is a marvellous one, friends greeting and embracing one another and hasting to take up their abode in one habitation: some have rounded themselves off spontaneously into the sun, that mighty orb, that they may produce the day, and some perchance have flared up into the many pyramids of stars that they may encircle the whole expanse of sky, while others are ranged around it, in order that they may—albeit undesignedly—form the firmament and arch the atmosphere over for the graduated ascent of the stars, and that the confederation of these helter-skelter atoms may choose their abodes and apportion the sky as homes and stations for themselves.

(4) So far are these deniers of Divine Providence from comprehending the invisible parts of the universe that they do not even see what is visible. For they appear not even to consider the ordered risings and settings of the sun, conspicuous though they be, let alone those of the other heavenly bodies; nor yet to appreciate the assistance thus given to mankind through them, the day being lighted up for work and the night being darkened for rest. For man shall go forth, it says, to his work and his labour until the evening. But they do not even take note of its other revolution, by which it brings about the fixed times and fair seasons and the regular winter and summer solstices, under guidance of its component atoms. Yet however much these poor creatures dislike it, it is as the righteous believe: Great is the Lord that made him: and at His word he hasteneth his course. Do atoms, ye blind, bring you winter and rains, in order that the earth may produce food for you and all the animals upon it? do they introduce summer that ye may receive for your enjoyment the fruits of the trees also? then why do you not bow down and sacrifice to the atoms that are the guardians of earth’s fruits? ungrateful truly ye are, never offering them the smallest firstfruits of the many gifts ye have from them.

(5) The many-tribed and much-mixed populace of the stars which the much-roving and ever-scattered atoms composed have (they say) apportioned among themselves their places according to agreement, setting up, as it were, a colony or a community, without any founder or controller taking the lead over them: and they observe the duties of neighbourliness to one another by compact and peacably, not transgressing the original bounds which they accepted, as if they were under the jurisdiction of such atoms as had regal power. But the atoms do not rule; how could they, being of no account? Nay, listen to the Divine announcement (λόγια): “In the judgment of the Lord are his works from the beginning; and from the making of them he disposed the parts thereof. He garnished his works for ever and the beginnings of them unto their generation.”

(6) What well-ordered phalanx ever traversed an earthly plain, no one stepping in front of others, nor falling out of the ranks, nor obstructing his comrades, nor falling behind them, in the way that the stars advance ever in regular order, shield locked in shield—that continuous, unwavering, unencumbered and unembarrassed host? Yet certain obscure deviations (we are told) arise among them through clashings and sideward motions: and that they who devote themselves to their study can always tell the seasons and foresee the positions at which they will rise. Let, then, these cutters of the uncuttable and dividers of the indivisible and combiners of the uncombined and discerners of the infinite tell us by what means occurs the encompassing journey round the heavens in company? it cannot be because a single combination of atoms has been without purpose hurled as from a sling in this way, seeing that the whole encircling band goes on its regular rhythmic way and whirls around together; by what means those multitudinous fellow-voyagers proceed in company albeit they are without arrangement or purpose and unknown to one an-

other? Well did the prophet include amongst things impossible and undemonstrable that two strangers should run in company: Shall two walk at all together, he says, unless they are acquainted?

(7) (That to work is not toilsome to God.)

To work and to administer and to benefit and to provide and the like are perchance vexatious to the idle and thoughtless and feeble and iniquitous, amongst whom Epicurus enrolled himself, when he conceived such ideas about the gods. But to the earnest and capable and intelligent and sober-minded, such as those who love wisdom (or philosophers) ought to be (and how much more the gods?), they are not only not unpleasing and irksome but rather most delightful and of all things most agreeable; for negligence and delay in doing something useful is a reproach to them, as the poet warns them, when he counsels: “Put not off till the morrow,” and further threatens them: “He that procrastinates hath ever to struggle against disasters,” while the prophet instructs us still more solemnly when he says that virtuous deeds are truly godlike, but he that despises them is detestable: “for,” saith he, “cursed be he that doeth the works of the Lord negligently. Consequently, while those who are untaught in any craft and are imperfect from want of practice and familiarity with the processes do find toil involved in their endeavours, those who make progress in it, and still more those who have reached perfection, are cheered by their easy success in what they aim at, and would rather accomplish and bring to completion the tasks they are accustomed to than have all the good things of mankind.

At all events, Democritus himself, so they say, used to maintain that he would rather discover a single reason for a fact than gain the Persian kingdom; and that though he seeks his reasons so vainly and unreasonably, starting as it were from a void beginning and a roving hypothesis and not observing that fundamental Necessity which is common to the nature of things existent, but considering his conception of senseless and mindless contingencies to be the highest wisdom of setting up Chance as the mistress and queen of things universal and even of things divine, and maintaining that all things occur through her, and yet warning her off from matters of human life and conduct and accusing those who give her precedence there to be devoid of judgment. At all events, at the beginning of the “Precepts,” he says: “Men have fashioned the figure of Chance, as a cloke for their own folly: for by nature chance fights against judgement. Thus they (the Epicureans) have said that this very Chance, the great enemy of intelligence, yet has the mastery over it; or, rather, by utterly uprooting and abolishing the one, they set up the other in its place: for they sing not of intelligence as happy, but of chance as the equivalent of intelligence.

So, then, those who superintend works of beneficence pride themselves in measures which advance the interests of their kind, some as rearers of families, some

as directors of institutions, some as healers of men’s bodies, some as ministers of state, yes, and those who love wisdom (philosophers) and try hard to instruct their fellows, likewise give themselves great airs—unless Epicurus or Democritus will venture to maintain that philosophizing is mere vexation of spirit: but surely there is no pleasure they would prefer to it. For even though they reckon pleasure to be the absolute good, yet they will be ashamed to say that to philosophize (seek wisdom) is not one of the higher forms of pleasure. And as to the gods, about whom the poets among them sing as “givers of good gifts” and these philosophers combine respect with banter,—the gods neither give nor partake of any good things. And in what manner do they find evidence that gods exist? for they do not see them before their eyes doing anything (even as those who admired the sun and the moon and the stars said they were called gods (θεοί) because they run (θέειν) their course); nor do they attribute to them any creative or constructive powers, in order that they make them gods from the word θεῖναι (set, i. e. make): and on that ground the Maker and Creator of all things is truly the only God;

nor do they put forward their management or jurisdiction or favours towards men, in order that we may be induced to worship them from motives of fear or reverence.

“Refutation and Defence” (Eus., Præp. Evang. vii. 19)

(1) They are not pious, who hand over matter to God as a thing without beginning for His orderly disposition, maintaining that, being subject to treatment and change, it yields to the modifications imposed by God. For they should explain how both the like and the unlike belong both to God and to matter. For some one must be imagined superior to either, and that may not be entertained about God. For whence came it that there is in them both the being without beginning, which is what is said to be “like” in both and which is also conceived of as different from both? For if God is of Himself without beginning and the being without beginning is, as some would say, His very essence, matter will not be without beginning, too: for matter and God are not identical. But, if each is what it is independently, and to both belongs in addition the property of being without beginning, it is clear that the being without beginning is different from either and older and higher than both. And thus the difference between their opposing states is entirely subversive of their co-existence, or rather of the one, viz. matter existing of itself. Otherwise let them state the reason why, both being without beginning, God is not subject to treatment, unchangeable, immovable, productive, and matter is the opposite, subject to treatment, changeable, mobile, varying.

Again, how is it that God and matter came in contact and combined? Was it that God adapted Himself to match the nature of matter and exercised His craft upon it? Nay, that is absurd that God, like men, should work in gold and stone and busy Himself in the other handicrafts which the various materials can give shape and form to. But if God endowed matter with the qualities which He in His own wisdom determined, impressing on it as with a seal the multiform and diverse shape and fashion of His own workmanship, this account of it is both proper and true, and yet further proves that God, who is the fundamental principle on which the universe exists, is without beginning. For to its being (according to them) without beginning God add its bearing certain qualities. So, then, there is still much to be said in answer to these views, but we do not propose to say it now. Nevertheless they are expressed with more propriety than those who are absolutely atheistical polytheists.

(2) (Athan., de sent. Dion., 18). However, when I spoke of certain things that had an origin (γενητά) and certain things that were made (ποιητά), I did indeed casually mention examples of such things, recognizing that they were not altogether useful for my purpose: for instance, I said that neither was the plant the same as the husbandman, nor the boat as the shipwright. But afterwards I dwelt at length on those which were more to the point and cognate to the subject, and went more into detail about these truer examples, seeking out various additional evidences which I set out for you also in another letter: and in them I refuted as false the accusation also which they bring against me, as not stating that Christ is of one substance (ὁμοούσιος) with the Father. For even if I say that this word is not found nor read anywhere in Holy Writ, yet these later attempts of mine to explain which they have ignored are not inconsistent with this conception. For I compared human generation, which is clearly a transmission of the parents' own nature (ὁμογενής), saying that the parents were different from their children in this single point, that they were not themselves the children: or else it must needs be that neither parents nor children should exist. The letter itself I cannot, as I have said before, owing to circumstances, lay my hand on: otherwise I would have sent you my exact words, or rather a copy of the whole letter:

and I will do so, if I have the opportunity. But I know from memory that I added several illustrations from things kindred to one another: for instance, I said that a plant coming up from a seed or a root was different from that whence it sprang and yet was absolutely of one nature (ὁμοφυές) with it: and a river flowing from a source partakes of a different shape and name; for neither is the source called river nor the river source, and both these things exist, and the source is, in a sense, the father and the river is the water from the source. But these and similar remarks they pretend never to have seen written, but act as if they were blind. They only try to pelt me from afar with those poor ill-fitting phrases of mine as with stones, failing to recognize that where a subject is obscure and requires to be brought within our understanding, not only do diverse but even quite contradictory illustrations convey the meaning sought for.

(3) (Ibid., 17.) It has been already said that God is the Fountain of all good things: and the Son is described as the stream flowing forth from Him. For the Word is "the effluence" of mind, and, to use human phraseology, is conveyed from the heart through the mouth, i. e. the mind that finds expression by means of the tongue, being differentiated from the word in the heart. For the one having sent it forth remains and is still what it was; but the other being sent forth issues and is carried in all directions: and thus each is in each, being different one from the other: and they are one, being two. And it was in this way that the Father and the Son also were said to be one and in one another. Each of the titles employed by me is indivisible and inseparable from its neighbour. I spoke of the Father, and before introducing the Son I implied Him, too, in the Father. I introduced the Son:

even if I had not already mentioned the Father He would, of course, have been presupposed in the Son. I added the Holy Spirit: but at the same time I intimated both from Whom and through Whom He came. But they are not aware that the Father is not separated from the Son qua Father—for the title (Father) is suggestive of such connexion (as Son with Father)—nor is the Son cut off from the Father; for the appellation “Father” denotes their common bond. And the Spirit is the object of their dealings, being incapable of desertion by either Him that sends, or Him that conveys. How then can I, who use these titles, hold that They are wholly divided and separated?

(4) (Ibid., 23). For, as our mind overflows with speech of itself, as says the prophet: “My heart overfloweth with good speech,” and each is diverse from the other, each occupying its proper place distinct from the other, the one dwelling and moving in the heart and the other on the tongue and in the mouth, and yet they are not entirely unconnected nor deprived of one another; the mind is not speechless, nor the speech mindless, but the mind produces the speech, revealing itself thereby; and the speech shows the mind, having been gendered therein; the mind is, as it were, the inlying speech and the speech is the issuing mind; the mind is transferred into the speech and the speech displays the mind to the hearers; and thus the mind through the speech gains a lodgment in the souls of those that hear, entering together with the speech, and the mind is, as it were, the father of the speech, having an independent existence withal; and the speech is, as it were, the son of the mind, being an impossibility prior to the mind, yet brought into association with it from any outside source, but springing from the mind; even so the Father, who is the Almighty and Universal Mind, has the Son, the Word as the Interpreter and Messenger of Himself.

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