The Prescription Against Heretics

Tertullian (c. AD 155–220)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

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Introduction

[Translated by the Rev. Peter Holmes, D.D., F.r.a.s., Etc., Etc.]

Chapter I.-Introductory. Heresies Must Exist, and Even Abound; They are a Probation to Faith.

The character of the times in which we live is such as to call forth from us even this admonition, that we ought not to be astonished at the heresies (which abound) neither ought their existence to surprise us, for it was foretold that they should come to pass; nor the fact that they subvert the faith of some, for their final cause is, by affording a trial to faith, to give it also the opportunity of being ”approved.” Groundless, therefore, and inconsiderate is the offence of the many who are scandalized by the very fact that heresies prevail to such a degree. How great (might their offence have been) if they had not existed. When it has been determined that a thing must by all means be, it receives the (final) cause for which it has its being. This secures the power through which it exists, in such a way that it is impossible for it not to have existence.

Chapter II.-Analogy Between Fevers and Heresies. Heresies Not to Be Wondered At: Their Strength Derived from Weakness of Men's Faith. They Have Not the Truth. Simile of Pugilists and Gladiators in Illustration.

Taking the similar case of fever, which is appointed a place amongst all other deadly and excruciating issues (of life) for destroying man: we are not surprised either that it exists, for there it is, or that it consumes man, for that is the purpose of its existence. In like manner, with respect to heresies, which are produced for the weakening and the extinction of faith, since we feel a dread because they have this power, we should first dread the fact of their existence; for as long as they exist, they have they have their power; and as long as they have their power, they, have their existence. But still fever, as being an evil both in its cause and in its power, as all know, we rather loathe than wonder at, and to the best of our power guard against, not having its extirpation in our power. Some men prefer wondering at heresies, however, which bring with them eternal death and the heat of a stronger fire, for possessing this power, instead of avoiding their power when they have the means of escape: but heresies would have no power, if (men) would cease to wonder that they have such power. For it either happens that, while men wonder, they fall into a snare, or, because they are ensnared, they cherish their surprise, as if heresies were so powerful because of some truth which belonged to them.

It would no doubt be a wonderful thing that evil should have any force of its own, were it not that heresies are strong in those persons who are not strong in faith. In a combat of boxers and gladiators, generally speaking, it is not because a man is strong that he gains

the victory, or loses it because he is not strong, but because he who is vanquished was a man of no strength; and indeed this very conqueror, when afterwards matched against a really powerful man, actually retires crest-fallen from the contest. In precisely the same way, heresies derive such strength as they have from the infirmities of individuals-having no strength whenever they encounter a really powerful faith.

Chapter III.-Weak People Fall an Easy Prey to Heresy, Which Derives Strength from the General Frailty of Mankind. Eminent Men Have Fallen from Faith; Saul, David, Solomon.the Constancy of Christ.

It is usual, indeed, with persons of a weaker character, to be so built up (in confidence) by certain individuals who are caught by heresy, as to topple over into ruin themselves. How comes it to pass, (they ask), that this woman or that man, who were the most faithful, the most prudent, and the most approved in the church, have gone over to the other side? Who that asks such a question does not in fact reply to it himself, to the effect that men whom heresies have been able to pervert ought never to have been esteemed prudent, or faithful, or approved? This again is, I suppose, an extraordinary thing, that one who has been approved should afterwards fall back? Saul, who was good beyond all others, is afterwards subverted by envy. David, a good man "after the Lord's own heart," is guilty afterwards of murder and adultery. Solomon, endowed by the Lord with all grace and wisdom, is led into idolatry, by women. For to the Son of God alone was it reserved to persevere to the last without sin. But what if a bishop, if a deacon, if a widow, if a virgin, if a doctor, if even a martyr, have fallen from the rule (of faith), will heresies on that account appear to possess the truth? Do we prove the faith by the persons, or the persons by the faith? No one is wise, no one is faithful, no one excels in dignity, but the Christian;

and no one is a Christian but he who perseveres even to the end. You, as a man, know any other man from the outside appearance. You think as you see. And you see as far only as you have eyes. But says (the Scripture), "the eyes of the Lord are lofty. "Man looketh at

the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart. "The Lord (beholdeth and) knoweth them that are His; " and "the plant which (my heavenly Father) hath not planted, He rooteth up; " and "the first shall," as He shows, "be last; " and He carries "His fan in His hand to purge His threshing-floor. Let the chaff of a fickle faith fly off as much as it will at every blast of temptation, all the purer will be that heap of corn which shall be laid up in the garner of the Lord. Did not certain of the disciples turn back from the Lord Himself, When they were offended? Yet the rest did not therefore think that they must turn away from following Him, but because they knew that He was the Word of Life, and was come from God, they continued in His company to the very last, after He had gently inquired of them whether they also would go away. It is a comparatively small thing, that certain men, like Phygellus, and Hermogenes, and Philetus, and Hymenµus, deserted His apostle: the betrayer of Christ was himself one of the apostles.

We are surprised at seeing His churches forsaken by some men, although the things which we suffer after the example of Christ Himself, show us to be Christians. "They went out from us," says (St. John,) "but they were not of us. If they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us."

Chapter IV.-Warnings Against Heresy Given Us in the New Testament. Sundry Passages Adduced. These Imply the Possibility of Falling into Heresy.

But let us rather be mindful of the sayings of the Lord, and of the letters of the apostles; for they have both told us beforehand that there shall be heresies, and have given us, in anticipation, warnings to avoid them; and inasmuch as we are not alarmed because they exist, so we ought not to wonder that they are capable of doing that, on account of which they must be shunned. The Lord teaches us that many "ravening wolves shall come in sheep's clothing." Now, what are these sheep's clothing's, but the external surface of the Christian profession? Who are the ravening wolves but those deceitful senses and spirits which are lurking within to waste the flock of Christ? Who are the false prophets but deceptive predictors of the future? Who are the false apostles but the preachers of a spurious gospel? Who also are the Antichrists, both now and evermore, but the men who rebel against Christ? Heresies, at the present time, will no less rend the church by their perversion of doctrine, than will Antichrist persecute her at that day by the cruelty of his attacks, except that persecution make seven martyrs, (but) heresy only apostates. And therefore "heresies must needs be in order that they which are approved might be made manifest, both those who remained stedfast under persecution, and those who did not wander out of their way into heresy. For the apostle does not mean that those persons should be deemed approved who exchange their creed for heresy; although they contrariously interpret his words to their own side, when he says in another passage, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good; " as if, after proving all things amiss, one might not through error make a determined choice of some evil thing.

Chapter V.-Heresy, as Well as Schism and Dissension, Disapproved by St. Paul, Who Speaks of the Necessity of Heresies, Not as a Good, But, by the Will of God, Salutary Trials for Training and Approving the Faith of Christians.

Moreover, when he blames dissensions and schisms, which undoubtedly are evils, he immediately adds heresies likewise. Now, that which he subjoins to evil things, he of course confesses to be itself an evil; and all the greater, indeed, because he tells us that his belief of their schisms and dissensions was grounded on his knowledge that ”there must be heresies also.” For he shows us that it was owing to the prospect of the greater evil that he readily believed the existence of the lighter ones; and so far indeed was he from believing, in respect of evils (of such a kind), that heresies were good, that his object was to forewarn us that we ought not to be surprised at temptations of even a worse stamp, since (he said) they tended ”to make manifest all such as were approved; ” in other words, those whom they were unable to pervert. In short, since the whole passage points to the maintenance of unity and the checking of divisions, inasmuch as heresies sever men from unity no less than schisms and dissensions, no doubt he classes heresies under the same head of censure as he does schisms also and dissensions. And by so doing, he makes those to be ”not approved,” who have fallen into heresies; more especially when with reproofs he exhorts men to turn away from such, teaching them that they should ”all speak and think the selfsame thing,” the very object which heresies do not permit.

Chapter VI.-Heretics are Self-Condemned. Heresy is Self-Will, Whilst Faith is Submission of Our Will to the Divine Authority. The Heresy of Apelles.

On this point, however, we dwell no longer, since it is the same Paul who, in his Epistle to the Galatians, counts ”heresies” among ”the sins of the flesh,” who also intimates to Titus, that ”a man who is a heretic” must be ”rejected after the first admonition,” on the ground that ”he that is such is perverted, and committeth sin, as a self-condemned man.” Indeed, in almost every epistle, when enjoining on us (the duty) of avoiding false doctrines, he sharply condemns heresies. Of these the practical effects are false doctrines, called in Greek heresies, a word used in the sense of that choice which a man makes when he either teaches them (to others) or takes up with them (for himself). For this reason it is that he calls the heretic self-condemned, because he has himself chosen that for which he is condemned. We, however, are not permitted to cherish any object after our own will, nor yet to make choice of that which another has introduced of his private fancy. In the Lord’s apostles we possess our authority; for even they did not of themselves choose to introduce anything, but faithfully delivered to the nations (of mankind) the doctrine which they had received from Christ. If, therefore, even ”an angel from heaven should preach any other gospel” (than theirs), he would be called accursed by us. The Holy Ghost had even then foreseen that there would be in a certain virgin (called) Philumene an angel of deceit, ”transformed into an angel of light,” by whose miracles and illusions Apelles was led (when) he introduced his new heresy.

Chapter VII.-Pagan Philosophy the Parent of Heresies. The Connection Between Deflections from Christian Faith and the Old Systems of Pagan Philosophy.

These are ”the doctrines” of men and ”of demons” produced for itching ears of the spirit of this world’s wisdom: this the Lord called ”foolishness,” and ”chose the foolish things of the world” to confound even philosophy itself. For (philosophy) it is which is the material of the world’s wisdom, the rash interpreter of the nature and the dispensation of God. Indeed heresies are themselves instigated by philosophy. From this source came the ¦ons, and I known not what infinite forms, and the trinity of man in the system of Valentinus, who was of Plato’s school. From the same source came Marcion’s better god, with all his tranquillity; he came of the Stoics. Then, again, the opinion that the soul dies is held by the Epicureans; while the denial of the restoration of the body is taken from the aggregate school of all the philosophers; also, when matter is made equal to God, then you have the teaching of Zeno; and when any doctrine is alleged touching a god of fire, then Heraclitus comes in. The same subject-matter is discussed over and over again by the heretics and the philosophers; the same arguments are involved. Whence comes evil? Why is it permitted? What is the origin of man? and in what way does he come? Besides the question which Valentinus has very lately proposed-Whence comes God? Which he settles with the answer: From enthymesis and ectroma. Unhappy Aristotle! who invented for these men dialectics, the art of building up and pulling down;

an art so evasive in its propositions, so far-fetched in its conjectures, so harsh, in its arguments, so productive of contentions-embarrassing even to itself, retracting everything, and really treating of nothing! Whence spring those ”fables and endless genealogies,” and ”unprofitable questions,” and ”words which spread like a cancer? ” From all these, when the apostle would restrain us, he expressly names philosophy as that which he would have us

be on our guard against. Writing to the Colossians, he says, ”See that no one beguile you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, and contrary to the wisdom of the Holy Ghost. He had been at Athens, and had in his interviews (with its philosophers) become acquainted with that human wisdom which pretends to know the truth, whilst it only corrupts it, and is itself divided into its own manifold heresies, by the variety of its mutually repugnant sects. What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? what between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from ”the porch of Solomon,” who had himself taught that ”the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart. Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the gospel! With our faith, we desire no further belief. For this isour palmary faith, that there is nothing which we ought to believe besides.

Chapter VIII.-Christ's Word, Seek, and Ye Shall Find, No Warrant for Heretical Deviations from the Faith. All Christ's Words to the Jews are for Us, Not Indeed as Specific Commands, But as Principles to Be Applied.

I come now to the point which (is urged both by our own brethren and by the heretics). Our brethren adduce it as a pretext for entering on curious inquiries, and the heretics insist on it for importing the scrupulosity (of their unbelief). It is written, they say, "Seek, and ye shall find." Let us remember at what time the Lord said this. I think it was at the very outset of His teaching, when there was still a doubt felt by all whether He were the Christ, and when even Peter had not yet declared Him to be the Son of God, and John (Baptist) had actually ceased to feel assurance about Him. With good reason, therefore, was it then said, "Seek, and ye shall find," when inquiry was still be to made of Him who was not yet become known. Besides, this was said in respect of the Jews. For it is to them that the whole matter of this reproof pertains, seeing that they had (a revelation) where they might seek Christ.

"They have," says He, "Moses and Elias," -in other words, the law and the prophets, which preach Christ; as also in another place He says plainly, "Search the Scriptures, in which ye expect (to find) salvation; for they testify of me; " which will be the meaning of "Seek, and ye shall find. For it is clear that the next words also apply to the Jews: "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. The Jews had formerly been in covenant with God; but being afterwards cast off on account of their sins, they began to be without God. The Gentiles, on the contrary, had never been in covenant with God; they were only as "a drop from a bucket," and "as dust from the threshing floor, and were ever outside the door. Now, how shall he

who was always outside knock at the place where he never was? What door does he know of, when he has passed through none, either by entrance or ejection? Is it not rather he who is aware that he once lived within and was thrust out, that (probably) found the door and knocked thereat? In like manner, "Ask, and ye shall receive," is suitably said to one who was aware from whom he ought to ask,-by whom also some promise had been given; that is to say, "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. Now, the Gentiles knew nothing either of Him, or of any of His promises.

Therefore it was to Israel that he spake when He said, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Not yet had He "cast to the dogs the children's bread; " not yet did He charge them to "go into the way of the Gentiles. It is only at the last that He instructs them to "go and teach all nations, and baptize them," when they were so soon to receive "the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, who should guide them into all the truth. And this, too, makes towards the the same conclusion. If the apostles, who were ordained to be teachers to the Gentiles, were themselves to have the Comforter for their teacher, far more needless was it to say to us, "Seek, and ye shall find," to whom was to come, without research, our instruction by the apostles, and to the apostles themselves by the Holy Ghost. All the Lord's sayings, indeed, are set forth for all men; through the ears of the Jews have they passed on to us. Still most of them were addressed to Jewish persons; they therefore did not constitute instruction properly designed for ourselves, but rather an example.

Chapter IX.-The Research After Definite Truth Enjoined on Us. When We Have Discovered This, We Should Be Content.

I now purposely relinquish this ground of argument. Let it be granted, that the words, ”Seek, and ye shall find,” were addressed to all men (equally). Yet even here one’s aim is carefully to determine the sense of the words consistently with (that reason), which is the guiding principle in all interpretation. (Now) no divine saying is so unconnected and diffuse, that its words only are to be insisted on, and their connection left undetermined. But at the outset I lay down (this position) that there is some one, and therefore definite, thing taught by Christ, which the Gentiles are by all means bound to believe, and for that purpose to ”seek,” in order that they may be able, when they have ”found” it, to believe. However, there can be no indefinite seeking for that which has been taught as one only definite thing. You must ”seek” until you ”find,” and believe when you have found; nor have you anything further to do but to keep what you have believed provided you believe this besides, that nothing else is to be believed, and therefore nothing else is to be sought, after you have found and believed what has been taught by Him who charges you to seek no other thing than that which He has taught. When, indeed, any man doubts about this, proof will be forthcoming, that we have in our possession that which was taught by Christ. Meanwhile, such is my confidence in our proof, that I anticipate it, in the shape of an admonition to certain persons, not ”to seek” anything beyond what they have believed-that this is what they ought to have sought, how to avoid interpreting, ”Seek, and ye shall find,” without regard to the rule of reason.

Chapter X.-One Has Succeeded in Finding Definite Truth, When He Believes. Heretical Wits are Always Offering Many Things for Vain Discussion, But We are Not to Be Always Seeking.

Now the reason of this saying is comprised in three points: in the matter, in the time, in the limit. In the matter, so that you must consider what it is you have to seek; in the time, when you have to seek; in the limit, how long. What you have "to seek," then, is that which Christ has taught, (and you must go on seeking) of course for such time as you fail to find, -until indeed you find it. But you have succeeded in finding when you have believed. For you would not have believed if you had not found; as neither would you have sought except with a view to find. Your object, therefore, in seeking was to find; and your object in finding was to believe, All further delay for seeking and finding you have prevented by believing. The very fruit of your seeking has determined for you this limit. This boundary has He set for you Himself, who is unwilling that you should believe anything else than what He has taught, or, therefore, even seek for it. If, however, because so many other things have been taught by one and another, we are on that account bound to go on seeking, so long as we are able to find anything, we must (at that rate) be ever seeking, and never believe anything at all. For where shall be the end of seeking? where the stop in believing? where the completion in finding? (Shall it be) with Marcion?

But even Valentinus proposes (to us the) maxim, "Seek, and ye shall find. Then shall it be) with Valentinus? Well, but Apelles, too, will assail me with the same quotation; Hebion also, and Simon, and all in turn, have no other argument wherewithal to entice me, and draw me over to their side. Thus I shall be nowhere, and still be encountering (that challenge), "Seek, and ye shall find," precisely as if I had no resting-place; as if (indeed) I had never

found that which Christ has taught-that which ought to be sought, that which must needs be believed.

Chapter XI.-After We Have Believed, Search Should Cease; Otherwise It Must End in a Denial of What We Have Believed. No Other Object Proposed for Our Faith.

There is impunity in erring, if there is no delinquency; although indeed to err it is itself an act of delinquency. With impunity, I repeat, does a man ramble, when he (purposely) deserts nothing. But yet, if I have believed what I was bound to believe, and then afterwards think that there is something new to be sought after, I of course expect that there is something else to be found, although I should by no means entertain such expectation, unless it were because I either had not believed, although I apparently had become a believer, or else have ceased to believe. If I thus desert my faith, I am found to be a denier thereof. Once for all I would say, No man seeks, except him who either never possessed, or else has lost (what he sought). The old woman (in the Gospel) had lost one of her ten pieces of silver, and therefore she sought it; when, however, she found it, she ceased to look for it. The neighbour was without bread, and therefore he knocked; but as soon as the door was opened to him, and he received the bread, he discontinued knocking. The widow kept asking to be heard by the judge, because she was not admitted; but when her suit was heard, thenceforth she was silent. So that there is a limit both to seeking, and to knocking, and to asking.

"For to every one that asketh," says He, "it shall be given, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened, and by him that seeketh it shall be found. Away with the man who is ever seeking because he never finds; for he seeks there where nothing can be found. Away with him who is always knocking because it will never be opened to him; for he knocks where there is none (to open). Away with him who is always asking because he will never be heard; for he asks of one who does not hear.

Chapter XII.-A Proper Seeking After Divine Knowledge, Which Will Never Be Out of Place or Excessive, is Always Within the Rule of Faith.

As for us, although we must still seek, and that always, yet where ought our search to be made? Amongst the heretics, where all things are foreign and opposed to our own verity, and to whom we are forbidden to draw near? What slave looks for food from a stranger, not to say an enemy of his master? What soldier expects to get bounty and pay from kings who are unallied, I might almost say hostile-unless forsooth he be a deserter, and a runaway, and a rebel? Even that old woman searched for the piece of silver within her own house. It was also at his neighbour's door that the persevering assailant kept knocking. Nor was it to a hostile judge, although a severe one, that the widow made her appeal. No man gets instruction from that which tends to destruction. No man receives illumination from a quarter where all is darkness. Let our "seeking," therefore be in that which is our own, and from those who are our own: and concerning that which is our own,-that, and only that, which can become an object of inquiry without impairing the rule of faith.

Chapter XIII.-Summary of the Creed, or Rule of Faith. No Questions Ever Raised About It by Believers. Heretics Encourage and Perpetuate Thought Independent of Christ's Teaching.

Now, with regard to this rule of faith-that we may from this point acknowledge what it is which we defend-it is, you must know, that which prescribes the belief that there is one only God, and that He is none other than the Creator of the world, who produced all things out of nothing through His own Word, first of all sent forth; that this Word is called His Son, and, under the name of God, was seen "in diverse manners" by the patriarchs, heard at all times in the prophets, at last brought down by the Spirit and Power of the Father into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in her womb, and, being born of her, went forth as Jesus Christ; thenceforth He preached the new law and the new promise of the kingdom of heaven, worked miracles; having been crucified, He rose again the third day; (then) having ascended into the heavens, He sat at the right hand of the Father; sent instead of Himself the Power of the Holy Ghost to lead such as believe; will come with glory to take the saints to the enjoyment of everlasting life and of the heavenly promises, and to condemn the wicked to everlasting fire, after the resurrection of both these classes shall have happened, together with the restoration of their flesh. This rule, as it will be proved, was taught by Christ, and raises amongst ourselves no other questions than those which heresies introduce, and which make men heretics.

Chapter XIV.-Curiosity Ought Not Range Beyond the Rule of Faith. Restless Curiosity, the Feature of Heresy.

So long, however, as its form exists in its proper order, you may seek and discuss as much as you please, and give full rein to your curiosity, in whatever seems to you to hang in doubt, or to be shrouded in obscurity. You have at hand, no doubt, some learned brother gifted with the grace of knowledge, some one of the experienced class, some one of your close acquaintance who is curious like yourself; although with yourself, a seeker he will, after all, be quite aware that it is better for you to remain in ignorance, lest you should come to know what you ought not, because you have acquired the knowledge of what you ought to know. "Thy faith," He says, "hath saved thee" not observe your skill in the Scriptures. Now, faith has been deposited in the rule; it has a law, and (in the observance thereof) salvation. Skill, however, consists in curious art, having for its glory simply the readiness that comes from knack. Let such curious art give place to faith; let such glory yield to salvation. At any rate, let them either relinquish their noisiness. or else be quiet. To know nothing in opposition to the rule (of faith), is to know all things. (Suppose) that heretics were not enemies to the truth, so that we were not forewarned to avoid them, what sort of conduct would it be to agree with men who do themselves confess that they are still seeking?

For if they are still seeking, they have not as yet found anything amounting to certainty; and therefore, whatever they seem for a while to hold, they betray their own scepticism, whilst they continue seeking. You therefore, who seek after their fashion, looking to those who are themselves ever seeking, a doubter to doubters, a waverer to waverers, must needs be "led, blindly by the blind, down into the ditch. But when, for the sake of deceiving us, they pretend that they are still seeking, in order that they may palm their essays upon us by the suggestion of an anxious sympathy, -when, in short (after gaining an access to us), they proceed at once to insist on the necessity of our inquiring into such points as they were in the habit of advancing, then it is high time for us in moral obligation to repel them, so that

they may know that it is not Christ, but themselves, whom we disavow. For since they are still seekers, they have no fixed tenets yet; and being not fixed in tenet, they have not yet believed; and being not yet believers, they are not Christians. But even though they have their tenets and their belief, they still say that inquiry is necessary in order to discussion. Previous, however, to the discussion, they deny what they confess not yet to have believed, so long as they keep it an object of inquiry.

When men, therefore, are not Christians even on their own admission, how much more (do they fail to appear such) to us! What sort of truth is that which they patronize, when they commend it to us with a lie? Well, but they actually treat of the Scriptures and recommend (their opinions) out of the Scriptures! To be sure they do. From what other source could they derive arguments concerning the things of the faith, except from the records of the faith?

Chapter XV.-Heretics Not to Be Allowed to Argue Out of the Scriptures. The Scriptures, in Fact, Do Not Belong to Them.

We are therefore come to (the gist of) our position; for at this point we were aiming, and for this we were preparing in the preamble of our address (which we have just completed),-so that we may now join issue on the contention to which our adversaries challenge us. They put forward the Scriptures, and by this insolence of theirs they at once influence some. In the encounter itself, however, they weary the strong, they catch the weak, and dismiss waverers with a doubt. Accordingly, we oppose to them this step above, all others, of not admitting them to any discussion of the Scriptures. If in these lie their resources, before they can use them, it ought to be clearly seen to whom belongs the possession of the Scriptures, that none may be admitted to the use thereof who has no title at all to the privilege.

Chapter XVI.-Apostolic Sanction to This Exclusion of Heretics from the Use of the Scriptures, Heretics, According to the Apostle, are Not to Be Disputed With, But to Be Admonished.

I might be thought to have laid down this position to remedy distrust in my case, or from a desire of entering on the contest in some other way, were there not reasons on my side, especially this, that our faith owes deference to the apostle, who forbids us to enter on ”questions,” or to lend our ears to new-fangled statements, or to consort with a heretic ”after the first and second admonition,” not, (be it observed,) after discussion. Discussion he has inhibited in this way, by designating admonition as the purpose of dealing with a heretic, and the first one too, because he is not a Christian; in order that he might not, after the manner of a Christian, seem to require correction again and again, and ”before two or three witnesses,” seeing that he ought to be corrected, for the very reason that he is not to be disputed with; and in the next place, because a controversy over the Scriptures can, clearly, produce no other effect than help to upset either the stomach or the brain.

Chapter XVII.-Heretics, in Fact, Do Not Use, But Only Abuse, Scripture. No Common Ground Between Them and You.

Now this heresy of yours does not receive certain Scriptures; and whichever of them it does receive, it perverts by means of additions and diminutions, for the accomplishment of it own purpose; and such as it does receive, it receives not in their entirety; but even when it does receive any up to a certain point as entire, it nevertheless perverts even these by the contrivance of diverse interpretations. Truth is just as much opposed by an adulteration of its meaning as it is by a corruption of its text. Their vain presumptions must needs refuse to acknowledge the (writings) whereby they are refuted. They rely on those which they have falsely put together, and which they have selected, because of their ambiguity. Though most skilled in the Scriptures, you will make no progress, when everything which you maintain is denied on the other side, and whatever you deny is (by them) maintained. As for yourself, indeed, you will lose nothing but your breath, and gain nothing but vexation from their blasphemy.

Chapter XVIII.-Great Evil Ensues to the Weak in Faith, from Any Discussion Out of the Scriptures. Conviction Never Comes to the Heretic from Such a Process.

But with respect to the man for whose sake you enter on the discussion of the Scriptures, with the view of strengthening him when afflicted with doubts, (let me ask) will it be to the truth, or rather to heretical opinions that he will lean? Influenced by the very fact that he sees you have made no progress, whilst the other side is on an equal footing (with yourself) in denying and in defence, or at any rate on a like standing he will go away confirmed in his uncertainty by the discussion, not knowing which side to adjudge heretical. For, no doubt, they too are able to retort these things on us. It is indeed a necessary consequence that they should go so far as to say that adulterations of the Scriptures, and false expositions thereof, are rather introduced by ourselves, inasmuch as they, no less than we maintain that truth is on their side.

Chapter XIX. Appeal, in Discussion of Heresy, Lies Not to the Scriptures. The Scriptures Belong Only to Those Who Have the Rule of Faith.

Our appeal, therefore, must not be made to the Scriptures; nor must controversy be admitted on points in which victory will either be impossible, or uncertain, or not certain enough. But even if a discussion from the Scriptures should not turn out in such a way as to place both sides on a par, (yet) the natural order of things would require that this point should be first proposed, which is now the only one which we must discuss: ”With whom lies that very faith to which the Scriptures belong. From what and through whom, and when, and to whom, has been handed down that rule, by which men become Christians? ”For wherever it shall be manifest that the true Christian rule and faith shall be, there will likewise be the true Scriptures and expositions thereof, and all the Christian traditions.

Chapter XX.-Christ First Delivered the Faith. The Apostles Spread It; They Founded Churches as the Depositories Thereof. That Faith, Therefore, is Apostolic, Which Descended from the Apostles, Through Apostolic Churches.

Christ Jesus our Lord (may He bear with me a moment in thus expressing myself!), whosoever He is, of what God soever He is the Son, of what substance soever He is man and God, of what faith soever He is the, teacher, of what reward soever He is the Promiser, did, whilst He lived on earth, Himself declare what He was, what He had been, what the Father's will was which He was administering, what the duty of man was which He was prescribing; (and this declaration He made,) either openly to the people, or privately to His disciples, of whom He had chosen the twelve chief ones to be at His side, and whom He destined to be the teachers of the nations. Accordingly, after one of these had been struck off, He commanded the eleven others, on His departure to the Father, to "go and teach all nations, who were to be baptized into the Father, and into the Son, and into the Holy Ghost. Immediately, therefore, so did the apostles, whom this designation indicates as "the sent. Having, on the authority of a prophecy, which occurs in a psalm of David, chosen Matthias by lot as the twelfth, into the place of Judas, they obtained the promised power of the Holy Ghost for the gift of miracles and of utterance;

and after first bearing witness to the faith in Jesus Christ throughout Judμa, and rounding churches (there), they next went forth into the world and preached the same doctrine of the same faith to the nations. They then in like manner rounded churches in every city, from which all the other churches, one after another, derived the tradition of the faith, and

the seeds of doctrine, and are every day deriving them, that they may become churches. Indeed, it is on this account only that they will be able to deem themselves apostolic, as being the offspring of apostolic churches. Every sort of thing must necessarily revert to its original for its classification. Therefore the churches, although they are so many and so great, comprise but the one primitive church, (rounded) by the apostles, from which they all (spring). In this way all are primitive, and all are apostolic, whilst they are all proved to be one, in (unbroken) unity, by their peaceful communion, and title of brotherhood, and bond of hospitality,-privileges which no other rule directs than the one tradition of the selfsame mystery.

Chapter XXI.-All Doctrine True Which Comes Through the Church from the Apostles, Who Were Taught by God Through Christ. All Opinion Which Has No Such Divine Origin and Apostolic Tradition to Show, is Ipso Facto False.

From this, therefore, do we draw up our rule. Since the Lord Jesus Christ sent the apostles to preach, (our rule is) that no others ought to be received as preachers than those whom Christ appointed; for "no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Nor does the Son seem to have revealed Him to any other than the apostles, whom He sent forth to preach-that, of course, which He revealed to them. Now, what that was which they preached-in other words, what it was which Christ revealed to them-can, as I must here likewise prescribe, properly be proved in no other way than by those very churches which the apostles rounded in person, by declaring the gospel to them directly themselves, both vivG voce, as the phrase is, and subsequently by their epistles. If, then, these things are so, it is in the same degree manifest that all doctrine which agrees with the apostolic churches-those moulds and original sources of the faith must be reckoned for truth, as undoubtedly containing that which the (said) churches received from the apostles, the apostles from Christ, Christ from God. Whereas all doctrine must be prejudged as false which savours of contrariety to the truth of the churches and apostles of Christ and God. It remains, then, that we demonstrate whether this doctrine of ours, of which we have now given the rule, has its origin in the tradition of the apostles, and whether all other doctrines do not ipso facto proceed from falsehood. We hold communion with the apostolic

churches because our doctrine is in no respect different from theirs. This is our witness of truth.

Chapter XXII.-Attempt to Invalidate This Rule of Faith Rebutted. The Apostles Safe Transmitters of the Truth. Sufficiently Taught at First, and Faithful in the Transmission.

But inasmuch as the proof is so near at hand, that if it were at once produced there would be nothing left to be dealt with, let us give way for a while to the opposite side, if they think that they can find some means of invalidating this rule, just as if no proof were forthcoming from us. They usually tell us that the apostles did not know all things: (but herein) they are impelled by the same madness, whereby they turn round to the very opposite point, and declare that the apostles certainly knew all things, but did not deliver all things to all persons,-in either case exposing Christ to blame for having sent forth apostles who had either too much ignorance, or too little simplicity. What man, then, of sound mind can possibly suppose that they were ignorant of anything, whom the Lord ordained to be masters (or teachers), keeping them, as He did, inseparable (from Himself) in their attendance, in their discipleship, in their society, to whom, "when they were alone, He used to expound" all things which were obscure, telling them that "to them it was given to know those mysteries," which it was not permitted the people to understand? Was anything withheld from the knowledge of Peter, who is called "the rock on which the church should be built," who also obtained "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," with the power of "loosing and binding in heaven and on earth?

" Was anything, again, concealed from John, the Lord's most beloved disciple, who used to lean on His breast to whom alone the Lord pointed Judas out as the traitor, whom He commended to Mary as a son in His own stead? Of what could He have meant those to be ignorant, to whom He even exhibited His own glory with Moses and Elias, and the Father's

voice moreover, from heaven? Not as if He thus disapproved of all the rest, but because ”by three witnesses must every word be established. After the same fashion, too, (I suppose,) were they ignorant to whom, after His resurrection also, He vouchsafed, as they were journeying together, ”to expound all the Scriptures. No doubt He had once said, ”I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now; ”but even then He added, ”When He, the Spirit of truth, shall come, He will lead you into all truth. He (thus) shows that there was nothing of which they were ignorant, to whom He had promised the future attainment of all truth by help of the Spirit of truth. And assuredly He fulfilled His promise, since it is proved in the Acts of the Apostles that the Holy Ghost did come down.

Now they who reject that Scripture can neither belong to the Holy Spirit, seeing that they cannot acknowledge that the Holy Ghost has been sent as yet to the disciples, nor can they presume to claim to be a church themselves who positively have no means of proving when, and with what swaddling-clothes this body was established. Of so much importance is it to them not to have any proofs for the things which they maintain, lest along with them there be introduced damaging exposures of those things which they mendaciously devise.

Chapter XXIII.-The Apostles Not Ignorant. The Heretical Pretence of St. Peter's Imperfection Because He Was Rebuked by St. Paul. St. Peter Not Rebuked for Error in Teaching.

Now, with the view of branding the apostles with some mark of ignorance, they put forth the case of Peter and them that were with him having been rebuked by Paul. "Something therefore," they say, "was wanting in them. (This they allege,) in order that they may from this construct that other position of theirs, that a fuller knowledge may possibly have afterwards come over (the apostles,) such as fell to the share of Paul when he rebuked those who preceded him. I may here say to those who reject The Acts of the Apostles: "It is first necessary that you shows us who this Paul was,-both what he was before he was an apostle, and how he became an apostle,"-so very great is the use which they make of him in respect of other questions also. It is true that he tells us himself that he was a persecutor before he became an apostle, still this is not enough for any man who examines before he believes, since even the Lord Himself did not bear witness of Himself. But let them believe without the Scriptures, if their object is to believe contrary to the Scriptures. Still they should show, from the circumstance which they allege of Peter's being rebuked by Paul, that Paul added yet another form of the gospel besides that which Peter and the rest had previously set forth.

But the fact is, having been converted from a persecutor to a preacher, he is introduced as one of the brethren to brethren, by brethren-to them, indeed, by men who had put on faith from the apostles' hands. Afterwards, as he himself narrates, he "went up to Jerusalem for the purpose of seeing Peter," because of his office, no doubt, and by right of a common belief and preaching. Now they certainly would not have been surprised at his having become a preacher instead of a persecutor, if his preaching were of something contrary; nor,

moreover, would they have "glorified the Lord," because Paul had presented himself as an adversary to Him They accordingly even gave him "the right hand of fellowship," as a sign of their agreement with him, and arranged amongst themselves a distribution of office, not a diversity of gospel, so that they should severally preach not a different gospel, but (the same), to different persons, Peter to the circumcision, Paul to the Gentiles. Forasmuch, then, as Peter was rebuked because, after he had lived with the Gentiles, he proceeded to separate himself from their company out of respect for persons, the fault surely was one of conversation, not of preaching. For it does not appear from this, that any other God than the Creator, or any other Christ than (the son) of Mary, or any other hope than the resurrection, was (by him) announced.

Chapter XXIV.-St. Peter's Further Vindication. St. Paul Not Superior to St. Peter in Teaching. Nothing Imparted to the Former in the Third Heaven Enabled Him to Add to the Faith. Heretics Boast as If Favoured with Some of the Secrets Imparted to Him.

I have not the good fortune, or, as I must rather say, I have not the unenviable task, of setting apostles by the ears. But, inasmuch as our very perverse cavillers obtrude the rebuke in question for the set purpose of bringing the earlier doctrine into suspicion, I will put in a defence, as it were, for Peter, to the effect that even Paul said that he was "made all things to all men-to the Jews a Jew," to those who were not Jews as one who was not a Jew-"that he might gain all." Therefore it was according to times and persons and causes that they used to censure certain practices, which they would not hesitate themselves to pursue, in like conformity to times and persons and causes. Just (e.g.) as if Peter too had censured Paul, because, whilst for-bidding circumcision, he actually circumcised Timothy himself. Never mind those who pass sentence on apostles! It is a happy fact that Peter is on the same level with Paul in the very glory of martyrdom. Now, although Paul was carried away even to the third heaven, and was caught up to paradise, and heard certain revelations there, yet these cannot possibly seem to have qualified him for (teaching) another doctrine, seeing that their very nature was such as to render them communicable to no human being. If, however, that unspeakable mystery did leak out, and become known to any man, and if any heresy affirms that it does itself follow the same, (then) either Paul must be charged with having betrayed the secret, or some other man must actually be shown to have been afterwards "caught up into paradise," who had permission to speak out plainly what Paul was not allowed (even) to mutter.

Chapter XXV.-The Apostles Did Not Keep Back Any of the Deposit of Doctrine Which Christ Had Entrusted to Them. St. Paul Openly Committed His Whole Doctrine to Timothy.

But here is, as we have said, the same madness, in their allowing indeed that the apostles were ignorant of nothing, and preached not any (doctrines) which contradicted one another, but at the same time insisting that they did not reveal all to all men, for that they proclaimed some openly and to all the world, whilst they disclosed others (only) in secret and to a few, because Paul addressed even this expression to Timothy: ”O Timothy, guard that which is entrusted to thee; ” and again: ”That good thing which was committed unto thee keep. What is this deposit? Is it so secret as to be supposed to characterize a new doctrine? or is it a part of that charge of which he says, ”This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy? ” and also of that precept of which he says, ”I charge thee in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ who witnessed a good confession under Pontius Pilate, that thou keep this commandment? ” Now, what is (this) commandment and what is (this) charge? From the preceding and the succeeding contexts, it will be manifest that there is no mysterious hint darkly suggested in this expression about (some) far-fetched doctrine, but that a warning is rather given against receiving any other (doctrine) than that which Timothy had heard from himself, as I take it publicly: ”Before many witnesses” is his phrase.

Now, if they refuse to allow that the church is meant by these ”many witnesses,” it matters nothing, since nothing could have been secret which was produced ”before many witnesses. Nor, again, must the circumstance of his having wished him to ”commit these things to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also,” be construed into a proof of there being some occult gospel. For, when he says ”these things,” he refers to the things of which

he is writing at the moment. In reference, however, to occult subjects, he would have called them, as being absent, those things, not these things, to one who had a joint knowledge of them with himself.

Chapter XXVI.-The Apostles Did in All Cases Teach the Whole Truth to the Whole Church. No Reservation, Nor Partial Communication to Favourite Friends.

Besides which, it must have followed, that, for the man to whom he committed the ministration of the gospel, he would add the injunction that it be not ministered in all places, and without respect to persons, in accordance with the Lord's saying, "Not to cast one's pearls before swine, nor that which is holy unto dogs. Openly did the Lord speak, without any intimation of a hidden mystery. He had Himself commanded that, "whatsoever they had heard in darkness" and in secret, they should "declare in the light and on the house-tops. He had Himself fore-shown, by means of a parable, that they should not keep back in secret, fruitless of interest, a single pound, that is, one word of His. He used Himself to tell them that a candle was not usually "pushed away under a bushel, but placed on a candlestick," in order to "give light to all who are in the house. These things the apostles either neglected, or failed to understand, if they fulfilled them not, by concealing any portion of the light, that is, of the word of God and the mystery of Christ. Of no man, I am quite sure, were they afraid,-neither of Jews nor of Gentiles in their violence; with all the greater freedom, then, would they certainly preach in the church, who held not their tongue in synagogues and public places. Indeed they would have found it impossible either to convert Jews or to bring in Gentiles, unless they "set forth in order" that which they would have them believe.

Much less, when churches were advanced in the faith, would they have withdrawn from them anything for the purpose of committing it separately to some few others. Although, even supposing that among intimate friends, so to speak, they did hold certain discussions, yet it is incredible that these could have been such as to bring in some other rule of faith, differing from and contrary to that which they were proclaiming through the Catholic churches, -as if they spoke of one God in the Church, (and) another at home, and described one sub-

stance of Christ, publicly, (and) another secretly, and announced one hope of the resurrection before all men, (and) another before the few; although they themselves, in their epistles, besought men that they would all speak one and the same thing, and that there should be no divisions and dissensions in the church, seeing that they, whether Paul or others, preached the same things. Moreover, they remembered the words): "Let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil; " so that they were not to handle the gospel in a diversity of treatment.

Chapter XXVII.-Granted that the Apostles Transmitted the Whole Doctrine of Truth, May Not the Churches Have Been Unfaithful in Handing It On? Inconceivable that This Can Have Been the Case.

Since, therefore, it is incredible that the apostles were either ignorant of the whole scope of the message which they had to declare, or failed to make known to all men the entire rule of faith, let us see whether, while the apostles proclaimed it, perhaps, simply and fully, the churches, through their own fault, set it forth otherwise than the apostles had done. All these suggestions of distrust you may find put forward by the heretics. They bear in mind how the churches were rebuked by the apostle: ”O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you? ” and, ”Ye did run so well; who hath hindered you? ” and how the epistle actually begins: ”I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him, who hath called you as His own in grace, to another gospel.” That they likewise (remember), what was written to the Corinthians, that they ”were yet carnal,” who ”required to be fed with milk,” being as yet ”unable to bear strong meat; ” who also ”thought that they knew somewhat, whereas they knew not yet anything, as they ought to know.” When they raise the objection that the churches were rebuked, let them suppose that they were also corrected; let them also remember those (churches), concerning whose faith and knowledge and conversation the apostle ”rejoices and gives thanks to God,” which nevertheless even at this day, unite with those which were rebuked in the privileges of one and the same institution.

Chapter XXVIII.-The One Tradition of the Faith, Which is Substantially Alike in the Churches Everywhere, a Good Proof that the Transmission Has Been True and Honest in the Main.

Grant, then, that all have erred; that the apostle was mistaken in giving his testimony; that the Holy Ghost had no such respect to any one (church) as to lead it into truth, although sent with this view by Christ, and for this asked of the Father that He might be the teacher of truth; grant, also, that He, the Steward of God, the Vicar of Christ, neglected His office, permitting the churches for a time to understand differently, (and) to believe differently, what He Himself was preaching by the apostles,-is it likely that so many churches, and they so great, should have gone astray into one and the same faith? No casualty distributed among many men issues in one and the same result. Error of doctrine in the churches must necessarily have produced various issues. When, however, that which is deposited among many is found to be one and the same, it is not the result of error, but of tradition. Can any one, then, be reckless enough to say that they were in error who handed on the tradition?

Chapter XXIX.-The Truth Not Indebted to the Care of the Heretics; It Had Free Course Before They Appeared. Priority of the Church's Doctrine a Mark of Its Truth.

In whatever manner error came, it reigned of course only as long as there was an absence of heresies? Truth had to wait for certain Marcionites and Valentinians to set it free. During the interval the gospel was wrongly preached; men wrongly believed; so many thousands were wrongly baptized; so many works of faith were wrongly wrought; so many miraculous gifts, so many spiritual endowments, were wrongly set in operation; so many priestly functions, so many ministries, were wrongly executed; and, to sum up the whole, so many martyrs wrongly received their crowns! Else, if not wrongly done, and to no purpose, how comes it to pass that the things of God were on their course before it was known to what God they belonged? that there were Christians before Christ was found? that there were heresies before true doctrine? Not so; for in all cases truth precedes its copy, the likeness succeeds the reality. Absurd enough, however, is it, that heresy should be deemed to have preceded its own prior doctrine, even on this account, because it is that (doctrine) itself which foretold that there should be heresies against which men would have to guard! To a church which possessed this doctrine, it was written-yea, the doctrine itself writes to its own church-"Though an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that which we have preached, let him be accursed."

Chapter XXX.-Comparative Lateness of Heresies. Marcion's Heresy. Some Personal Facts About Him. The Heresy of Apelles. Character of This Man; Philumene; Valentinus; Nigidius, and Hermogenes.

Where was Marcion then, that shipmaster of Pontus, the zealous student of Stoicism? Where was Valentinus then, the disciple of Platonism? For it is evident that those men lived not so long ago,-in the reign of Antoninus for the most part, -and that they at first were believers in the doctrine of the Catholic Church, in the church of Rome under the episcopate of the blessed Eleutherus, until on account of their ever restless curiosity, with which they even infected the brethren, they were more than once expelled. Marcion, indeed, [went] with the two hundred sesterces which which he had brought into the church, and, when banished at last to a permanent excommunication, they scattered abroad the poisons of their doctrines. Afterwards, it is true, Marcion professed repentance, and agreed to the conditions granted to him-that he should receive reconciliation if he restored to the church all the others whom he had been training for perdition: he was prevented, however, by death. It was indeed necessary that there should be heresies; and yet it does not follow from that necessity, that heresies are a good thing. As if it has not been necessary also that there should be evil! It was even necessary that the Lord should be betrayed; but woe to the traitor! So that no man may from this defend heresies. If we must likewise touch the descent of Apelles, he is far from being" one of the old school," like his instructor and moulder, Marcion;

he rather forsook the continence of Marcion, by resorting to the company of a woman, and withdrew to Alexandria, out of sight of his most abstemious master. Returning therefrom, after some years, unimproved, except that he was no longer a Marcionite, he clave to another woman, the maiden Philumene (whom we have already mentioned), who herself afterwards became an enormous prostitute. Having been imposed on by her vigorous spirit, he committed to writing the revelations which he had learned of her. Persons are still living who remember them,-their own actual disciples and successors,-who cannot therefore deny the lateness of their date. But, in fact, by their own works they are convicted, even as the Lord said. For since Marcion separated the New Testament from the Old, he is (necessarily) subsequent to that which he separated, inasmuch as it was only in his power to separate what was (previously) united. Having then been united previous to its separation, the fact of its subsequent separation proves the subsequence also of the man who effected the separation. In like manner Valentinus, by his different expositions and acknowledged emendations, makes these changes on the express ground of previous faultiness, and therefore demonstrates the difference of the documents. These corrupters of the truth we mention as being more notorious and more public than others. There is, however, a certain man named Nigidius, and Hermogenes, and several others, who still pursue the course of perverting the ways of the Lord. Let them show me by what authority they come!

If it be some other God they preach, how comes it that they employ the things and he writings and the names of that God against whom they preach? If it be the same God, why treat Him in some other way? Let them prove themselves to be new apostles! Let them maintain that Christ has come down a second time, taught in person a second time, has been twice crucified, twice dead, twice raised! For thus has the apostle described (the order of events in the life of Christ); for thus, too, is He accustomed to make His apostles-to give them, (that is), power besides of working the same miracles which He worked Himself. I would therefore have their mighty deeds also brought forward; except that I allow their mightiest deed to be that by which they perversely vie with the apostles. For whilst they used to raise men to life from the dead, these consign men to death from their living state.

Chapter XXXI.-Truth First, Falsehood Afterwards, as Its Perversion. Christ's Parable Puts the Sowing of the Good Seed Before the Useless Tares.

Let me return, however, from this digression to discuss the priority of truth, and the comparative lateness of falsehood, deriving support for my argument even from that parable which puts in the first place the sowing by the Lord of the good seed of the wheat, but introduces at a later stage the adulteration of the crop by its enemy the devil with the useless weed of the wild oats. For herein is figuratively described the difference of doctrines, since in other passages also the word of God is likened unto seed. From the actual order, therefore, it becomes clear, that that which was first delivered is of the Lord and is true, whilst that is strange and false which was afterwards introduced. This sentence will keep its ground in opposition to all later heresies, which have no consistent quality of kindred knowledge inherent in them-to claim the truth as on their side.

Chapter XXXII.-None of the Heretics Claim Succession from the Apostles. New Churches Still Apostolic, Because Their Faith is that Which the Apostles Taught and Handed Down. The Heretics Challenged to Show Any Apostolic Credentials.

But if there be any (heresies) which are bold enough to plant themselves in the midst Of the apostolic age, that they may thereby seem to have been handed down by the apostles, because they existed in the time of the apostles, we can say: Let them produce the original records of their churches; let them unfold the roll of their bishops, running down in due succession from the beginning in such a manner that [that first bishop of theirs] bishop shall be able to show for his ordainer and predecessor some one of the apostles or of apostolic men,-a man, moreover, who continued stedfast with the apostles. For this is the manner in which the apostolic churches transmit their registers: as the church of Smyrna, which records that Polycarp was placed therein by John; as also the church of Rome, which makes Clement to have been ordained in like manner by Peter. In exactly the same way the other churches likewise exhibit (their several worthies), whom, as having been appointed to their episcopal places by apostles, they regard as transmitters of the apostolic seed. Let the heretics contrive something of the same kind. For after their blasphemy, what is there that is unlawful for them (to attempt)? But should they even effect the contrivance, they will not advance a step. For their very doctrine, after comparison with that of the apostles, will

declare, by its own diversity and contrariety, that it had for its author neither an apostle nor an apostolic man;

because, as the apostles would never have taught things which were self-contradictory, so the apostolic men would not have inculcated teaching different from the apostles, unless they who received their instruction from the apostles went and preached in a contrary manner. To this test, therefore will they be submitted for proof by those churches, who, although they derive not their founder from apostles or apostolic men (as being of much later date, for they are in fact being founded daily), yet, since they agree in the same faith, they are accounted as not less apostolic because they are akin in doctrine. Then let all the heresies, when challenged to these two tests by our apostolic church, offer their proof of how they deem themselves to be apostolic. But in truth they neither are so, nor are they able to prove themselves to be what they are not. Nor are they admitted to peaceful relations and communion by such churches as are in any way connected with apostles, inasmuch as they are in no sense themselves apostolic because of their diversity as to the mysteries of the faith.

Chapter XXXIII.-Present Heresies (Seedlings of the Tares Noted by the Sacred Writers) Already Condemned in Scripture. This Descent of Later Heresy from the Earlier Traced in Several Instances.

Besides all this, I add a review of the doctrines themselves, which, existing as they did in the days of the apostles, were both exposed and denounced by the said apostles. For by this method they will be more easily reprobated, when they are detected to have been even then in existence, or at any rate to have been seedlings of the (tares) which then were. Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, sets his mark on certain who denied and doubted the resurrection. This opinion was the especial property of the Sadducees. A part of it, however, is maintained by Marcion and Apelles and Valentinus, and all other impugners of the resurrection. Writing also to the Galatians, he inveighs against such men as observed and defend circumcision and the (Mosaic) law. Thus runs Hebion's heresy. Such also as "forbid to marry" he reproaches in his instructions to Timothy. Now, this is the teaching of Marcion and his follower Apelles. (The apostle) directs a similar blow against those who said that "the resurrection was past already. Such an opinion did the Valentinians assert of themselves. When again he mentions "endless genealogies," one also recognises Valentinus, in whose system a certain ¦on, whosoever he be, of a new name, and that not one only, generates of his own grace Sense and Truth; and these in like manner produce of themselves Word and Life, while these again afterwards beget Man and the Church.

From these primary eight ten other ¦ons after them spring, and then the twelve others arise with their wonderful names, to complete the mere story of the thirty ¦ons. The same

apostle, when disapproving of those who are ”in bondage to elements,” points us to some dogma of Hermogenes, who introduces matter as having no beginning, and then compares it with God, who has no beginning. By thus making the mother of the elements a goddess, he has it in his power ”to be in bondage” to a being which he puts on a par with God. John, however, in the Apocalypse is charged to chastise those ”who eat things sacrificed to idols,” and ”who commit fornication. There are even now another sort of Nicolaitans.Theirs is called the Gaian heresy. But in his epistle he especially designates those as ”Antichrists” who ”denied that Christ was come in the flesh,” and who refused to think that Jesus was the Son of God. The one dogma Marcion maintained; the other, Hebion. The doctrine, however, of Simon’s sorcery, which inculcated the worship of angels, was itself actually reckoned amongst idolatries and condemned by the Apostle Peter in Simon’s own person.

Chapter XXXIV.-No Early Controversy Respecting the Divine Creator; No Second God Introduced at First. Heresies Condemned Alike by the Sentence and the Silence of Holy Scripture.

These are, as I suppose, the different kinds of spurious doctrines, which (as we are informed by the apostles themselves) existed in their own day. And yet we find amongst so many various perversions of truth, not one school which raised any controversy concerning God as the Creator of all things. No man was bold enough to surmise a second god. More readily was doubt felt about the Son than about the Father, until Marcion introduced, in addition to the Creator, another god of goodness only. Apelles made the Creator of some nondescript glorious angel, who belonged to the superior God, the god (according to him,) of the law and of Israel, affirming that he was fire. Valentinus disseminated his ¦ons, and traced the sin of one ¦on to the production of God the Creator. To none, forsooth, except these, nor prior to these, was revealed the truth of the Divine Nature; and they obtained this especial honour and fuller favour from the devil, we cannot doubt, because he wished even in this respect to rival God, that he might succeed, by the poison of his doctrines, in doing himself what the Lord said could not be done-making "the disciples above their Master. Let the entire mass of heresies choose, therefore, for themselves the times when they should appear, provided that the when be an unimportant point;

allowing, too, that they be not of the truth, and (as a matter of course) that such as had no existence in the time of the apostles could not possibly have had any connection with the apostles. If indeed they had then existed, their names would be extant, with a view to their own repression likewise. Those (heresies) indeed which did exist in the days of the apostles, are condemned in their very mention. If it be true, then, that those heresies, which

in the apostolic times were in a rude form, are now found to be the same, only in a much more polished shape, they derive their condemnation from this very circumstance Or if they were not the same, but arose afterwards in a different form, and merely assumed from them certain tenets, then, by sharing with them an agreement in their teaching, they must needs partake in their condemnation, by reason of the above-mentioned definition, of lateness of date, which meets us on the very threshold. Even if they were free from any participation in condemned doctrine, they would stand already judged on the mere ground of time, being all the more spurious because they were not even named by the apostles. Whence we have the firmer assurance, that these were (the heresies) which even then, were announced as about to arise.

Chapter XXXV.-Let Heretics Maintain Their Claims by a Definite and Intelligible Evidence. This the Only Method of Solving Their Questions. Catholics Appeal Always to Evidence Traceable to Apostolic Sources.

Challenged and refuted by us, according to these definitions, let all the heresies boldly on their part also advance similar rules to these against our doctrine, whether they be later than the apostles or contemporary with the apostles, provided they be different from them; provided also they were, by either a general or a specific censure, precondemned by them. For since they deny the truth of (our doctrine), they ought to prove that it also is heresy, refutable by the same rule as that by which they are themselves refuted; and at the same time to show us where we must seek the truth, which it is by this time evident has no existence amongst them. Our system is not behind any in date; on the contrary, it is earlier than all; and this fact will be the evidence of that truth which everywhere occupies the first place. The apostles, again, nowhere condemn it; they rather defend it,-a fact which will show that it comes from themselves. For that doctrine which they refrain from condemning, when they have condemned every strange opinion, they show to be their own, and on that ground too they defend it.

Chapter XXXVI.-The Apostolic Churches the Voice of the Apostles. Let the Heretics Examine Their Apostolic Claims, in Each Case, Indisputable. The Church of Rome Doubly Apostolic; Its Early Eminence and Excellence. Heresy, as Perverting the Truth, is Connected Therewith.

Come now, you who would indulge a better curiosity, if you would apply it to the business of your salvation, run over the apostolic churches, in which the very thrones of the apostles are still pre-eminent in their places, in which their own authentic writings are read, uttering the voice and representing the face of each of them severally. Achaia is very near you, (in which) you find Corinth. Since you are not far from Macedonia, you have Philippi; (and there too) you have the Thessalonians. Since you are able to cross to Asia, you get Ephesus. Since, moreover, you are close upon Italy, you have Rome, from which there comes even into our own hands the very authority (of apostles themselves). How happy is its church, on which apostles poured forth all their doctrine along with their blood! where Peter endures a passion like his Lord's! where Paul wins his crown in a death like John's where the Apostle John was first plunged, unhurt, into boiling oil, and thence remitted to his island-exile! See what she has learned, what taught, what fellowship has had with even (our) churches in Africa! One Lord God does she acknowledge, the Creator of the universe, and Christ Jesus (born) of the Virgin Mary, the Son of God the Creator; and the Resurrection of the flesh; the

law and the prophets she unites in one volume with the writings of evangelists and apostles, from which she drinks in her faith.

This she seals with the water (of baptism), arrays with the Holy Ghost, feeds with the Eucharist, cheers with martyrdom, and against such a discipline thus (maintained) she admits no gainsayer. This is the discipline which I no longer say foretold that heresies should come, but from which they proceeded. However, they were not of her, because they were opposed to her. Even the rough wild-olive arises from the germ of the fruitful, rich, and genuine olive; also from the seed of the mellowest and sweetest fig there springs the empty and useless wild-fig. In the same way heresies, too, come from our plant, although not of our kind; (they come) from the grain of truth, but, owing to their falsehood, they have only wild leaves to show.

Chapter XXXVII.-Heretics Not Being Christians, But Rather Perverters of Christ's Teaching, May Not Claim the Christian Scriptures. These are a Deposit, Committed to and Carefully Kept by the Church.

Since this is the case, in order that the truth may be adjudged to belong to us, "as many as walk according to the rule," which the church has handed down from the apostles, the apostles from Christ, and Christ from God, the reason of our position is clear, when it determines that heretics ought not to be allowed to challenge an appeal to the Scriptures, since we, without the Scriptures, prove that they have nothing to do with the Scriptures. For as they are heretics, they cannot be true Christians, because it is not from Christ that they get that which they pursue of their own mere choice, and from the pursuit incur and admit the name of heretics. Thus, not being Christians, they have acquired no right to the Christian Scriptures; and it may be very fairly said to them, "Who are you? When and whence did you come? As you are none of mine, what have you to do with that which is mine? Indeed, Marcion, by what right do you hew my wood? By whose permission, Valentinus, are you diverting the streams of my fountain? By what power, Apelles, are you removing my landmarks? This is my property. Why are you, the rest, sowing and feeding here at your own pleasure? This (I say) is my property. I have long possessed it; I possessed it before you. I hold sure title-deeds from the original owners themselves, to whom the estate belonged. I am the heir of the apostles.

Just as they carefully prepared their will and testament, and committed it to a trust, and adjured (the trustees to be faithful to their charge), even so do I hold it. As for you, they

have, it is certain, always held you as disinherited, and rejected you as strangers-as enemies. But on what ground are heretics strangers and enemies to the apostles, if it be not from the difference of their teaching, which each individual of his own mere will has either advanced or received in opposition to the apostles? ”

Chapter XXXVIII.-Harmony of the Church and the Scriptures. Heretics Have Tampered with the Scriptures, and Mutilated, and Altered Them. Catholics Never Change the Scriptures, Which Always Testify for Them.

Where diversity of doctrine is found, there, then, must the corruption both of the Scriptures and the expositions thereof be regarded as existing. On those whose purpose it was to teach differently, lay the necessity of differently arranging the instruments of doctrine. They could not possibly have effected their diversity of teaching in any other way than by having a difference in the means whereby they taught. As in their case, corruption in doctrine could not possibly have succeeded without a corruption also of its instruments, so to ourselves also integrity of doctrine could not have accrued, without integrity in those means by which doctrine is managed. Now, what is there in our Scriptures which is contrary to us? What of our own have we introduced, that we should have to take it away again, or else add to it, or alter it, in order to restore to its natural soundness anything which is contrary to it, and contained in the Scriptures? What we are ourselves, that also the Scriptures are (and have been) from the beginning. Of them we have our being, before there was any other way, before they were interpolated by you.

Now, inasmuch as all interpolation must be believed to be a later process, for the express reason that it proceeds from rivalry which is never in any case previous to nor home-born with that which it emulates, it is as incredible to every man of sense that we should seem to have introduced any corrupt text into the Scriptures, existing, as we have been, from the very first, and being the first, as it is that they have not in fact introduced it who are

both later in date and opposed (to the Scriptures). One man perverts the Scriptures with his hand, another their meaning by his exposition. For although Valentinus seems to use the entire volume, he has none the less laid violent hands on the truth only with a more cunning mind and skill than Marcion. Marcion expressly and openly used the knife, not the pen, since he made such an excision of the Scriptures as suited his own subject-matter. Valentinus, however, abstained from such excision, because he did not invent Scriptures to square with his own subject-matter, but adapted his matter to the Scriptures; and yet he took away more, and added more, by removing the proper meaning of every particular word, and adding fantastic arrangements of things which have no real existence.

Chapter XXXIX.-What St. Paul Calls Spiritual Wickednesses Displayed by Pagan Authors, and by Heretics, in No Dissimilar Manner. Holy Scripture Especially Liable to Heretical Manipulation. Affords Material for Heresies, Just as Virgil Has Been the Groundwork of Literary Plagiarisms, Different in Purport from the Original. These were the ingenious arts of "spiritual wickednesses," wherewith we also, my brethren, may fairly expect to have "to wrestle," as necessary for faith, that the elect may be made manifest, (and) that the reprobate may be discovered. And therefore they possess influence, and a facility in thinking out and fabricating errors, which ought not to be wondered at as if it were a difficult and inexplicable process, seeing that in profane writings also an example comes ready to hand of a similar facility. You see in our own day, composed out of Virgil, a story of a wholly different character, the subject-matter being arranged according to the verse, and the verse according to the subject-matter. In short, Hosidius Geta has most completely pilfered his tragedy of Medea from Virgil. A near relative of my own, among some leisure productions of his pen, has composed out of the same poet The Table of Cebes. On the same principle, those poetasters are commonly called Homerocentones, "collectors of Homeric odds and ends," who stitch into one piece, patchwork fashion, works of their own from the lines of Homer, out of many scraps put together from this passage and from that (in miscellaneous confusion). Now, unquestionably, the Divine Scriptures are more fruitful in resources of all kinds for this sort of facility. Nor do I risk contradiction in saying that the very Scriptures were even arranged by the will of God in such a manner as to furnish materials for heretics, inasmuch as I read that "there must be heresies, which there cannot be without the Scriptures.

Chapter XL.-No Difference in the Spirit of Idolatry and of Heresy. In the Rites of Idolatry, Satan Imitated and Distorted the Divine Institutions of the Older Scriptures. The Christian Scriptures Corrupted by Him in the Perversions of the Various Heretics.

The question will arise, By whom is to be interpreted the sense of the passages which make for heresies? By the devil, of course, to whom pertain those wiles which pervert the truth, and who, by the mystic rites of his idols, vies even with the essential portions of the sacraments of God. He, too, baptizes some-that is, his own believers and faithful followers; he promises the putting away of sins by a layer (of his own); and if my memory still serves me, Mithra there, (in the kingdom of Satan,) sets his marks on the foreheads of his soldiers; celebrates also the oblation of bread, and introduces an image of a resurrection, and before a sword wreathes a crown. What also must we say to (Satan's) limiting his chief priest to a single marriage? He, too, has his virgins; he, too, has his proficients in continence. Suppose now we revolve in our minds the superstitions of Numa Pompilius, and consider his priestly offices and badges and privileges, his sacrificial services, too, and the instruments and vessels of the sacrifices themselves, and the curious rites of his expiations and vows: is it not clear to us that the devil imitated the well-known moroseness of the Jewish law?

CHAPTER XL.-NO DIFFERENCE IN THE SPIRIT OF IDOLATRY AND OF HERESY. IN THE RITE

Since, therefore he has Shown such emulation in his great aim of expressing, in the concerns of his idolatry, those very things of which consists the administration of Christ's sacraments, it follows, of course, that the same being, possessing still the same genius, both set his heart upon, and succeeded in, adapting to his profane and rival creed the very documents of divine things and of the Christian saints -his interpretation from their interpretations, his words from their words, his parables from their parables. For this reason, then, no one ought to doubt, either that "spiritual wickednesses," from which also heresies come, have been introduced by the devil, or that there is any real difference between heresies and idolatry, seeing that they appertain both to the same author and the same work that idolatry does. They either pretend that there is another god in opposition to the Creator, or, even if they acknowledge that the Creator is the one only God, they treat of Him as a different being from what He is in truth. The consequence is, that every lie which they speak of God is in a certain sense a sort of idolatry

Chapter XLI.-The Conduct of Heretics: Its Frivolity, Worldliness, and Irregularity. The Notorious Wantonness of Their Women.

I must not omit an account of the conduct also of the heretics-how frivolous it is, how worldly, how merely human, without seriousness, without authority, without discipline, as suits their creed. To begin with, it is doubtful who is a catechumen, and who a believer; they have all access alike, they hear alike, they pray alike-even heathens, if any such happen to come among them. "That which is holy they will cast to the dogs, and their pearls," although (to be sure) they are not real ones, "they will fling to the swine." Simplicity they will have to consist in the overthrow of discipline, attention to which on our part they call brotherly. Peace also they huddle up anyhow with all comers; for it matters not to them, however different be their treatment of subjects, provided only they can conspire together to storm the citadel of the one only Truth. All are puffed up, all offer you knowledge. Their catechumens are perfect before they are full-taught. The very women of these heretics, how wanton they are! For they are bold enough to teach, to dispute, to enact exorcisms, to undertake cures-it may be even to baptize. Their ordinations, are carelessly. administered, capricious, changeable. At one time they put novices in office; at another time, men who are bound to some secular employment; at another, persons who have apostatized from us, to bind them by vainglory, since they cannot by the truth. Nowhere is promotion easier than in the camp of rebels, where the mere fact of being there is a foremost service. And so it comes to pass that to-day one man is their bishop, to-morrow another; to-day he is a deacon who to-morrow is a reader; to-day he is a presbyter who tomorrow is a layman. For even on laymen do they impose the functions of priesthood.

Chapter XLII.-Heretics Work to Pull Down and to Destroy, Not to Edify and Elevate. Heretics Do Not Adhere Even to Their Own Traditions, But Harbour Dissent Even from Their Own Founders.

But what shall I say concerning the ministry of the word, since they make it their business not to convert the heathen, but to subvert our people? This is rather the glory which they catch at, to compass the fall of those who stand, not the raising of those who are down. Accordingly, since the very work which they purpose to themselves comes not from the building up of their own society, but from the demolition of the truth, they undermine our edifices, that they may erect their own. Only deprive them of the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the divinity of the Creator, and they have not another objection to talk about. The consequence is, that they more easily accomplish the ruin of standing houses than the erection of fallen ruins. It is only when they have such objects in view that they show themselves humble and bland and respectful. Otherwise they know no respect even for their own leaders. Hence it is [supposed] that schisms seldom happen among heretics, because, even when they exist, they are not obvious. Their very unity, however, is schism. I am greatly in error if they do not amongst themselves swerve even from their own regulations, forasmuch as every man, just as it suits his own temper, modifies the traditions he has received after the same fashion as the man who handed them down did, when he moulded them according to his own will.

The progress of the matter is an acknowledgment at once of its character and of the manner of its birth. That was allowable to the Valentinians which had been allowed to Valentinus; that was also fair for the Marcionites which had been done by Marcion-even to innovate on the faith, as was agreeable to their own pleasure. In short, all heresies, when thor-

oughly looked into, are detected harbouring dissent in many particulars even from their own founders. The majority of them have not even churches. Motherless, houseless, creedless, outcasts, they wander about in their own essential worthlessness.

Chapter XLIII.-Loose Company Preferred by Heretics. Ungodliness the Effect of Their Teaching the Very Opposite of Catholic Truth, Which Promotes the Fear of God, Both in Religious Ordinances and Practical Life.

It has also been a subject of remark, how extremely frequent is the intercourse which heretics hold with magicians, with mountebanks, with astrologers, with philosophers; and the reason is, that they are men who devote themselves to curious questions. ”Seek, and ye shall find,” is everywhere in their minds. Thus, from the very nature of their conduct, may be estimated the quality of their faith. In their discipline we have an index of their doctrine. They say that God is not to be feared; therefore all things are in their view free and unchecked. Where, however is God not feared, except where He is not? Where God is not, there truth also is not. Where there is no truth, then, naturally enough, there is also such a discipline as theirs. But where God is, there exists ”the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom.” Where the fear of God is, there is seriousness, an honourable and yet thoughtful diligence, as well as an anxious carefulness and a well-considered admission (to the sacred ministry) and a safely-guarded communion, and promotion after good service, and a scrupulous submission (to authority), and a devout attendance, and a modest gait, and a united church, and God in all things.

Chapter XLIV.-Heresy Lowers Respect for Christ, and Destroys All Fear of His Great Judgment. The Tendency of Heretical Teaching on This Solemn Article of the Faith. The Present Treatise an Introduction to Certain Other Anti-Heretical Works of Our Author.

These evidences, then, of a stricter discipline existing among us, are an additional proof of truth, from which no man can safely turn aside, who bears in mind that future judgment, when ”we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to render an account of our faith itself before all things. What, then, will they say who shall have defiled it, even the virgin which Christ committed to them with the adultery of heretics? I suppose they will allege that no injunction was ever addressed to them by Him or by His apostles concerning depraved and perverse doctrines assailing them, or about their avoiding and abhorring the same. (He and His apostles, perhaps,) will acknowledge that the blame rather lies with themselves and their disciples, in not having given us previous warning and instruction! They will, besides, add a good deal respecting the high authority of each doctor of heresy,- how that these mightily strengthened belief in their own doctrine; how that they raised the dead, restored the sick, foretold the future, that so they might deservedly be regarded as apostles. As if this caution were not also in the written record: that many should come who

were to work even the greatest miracles, in defence of the deceit of their corrupt preaching. So, forsooth, they will deserve to be forgiven!

If, however, any, being mindful of the writings and the denunciations of the Lord and the apostles, shall have stood firm in the integrity of the faith, I suppose they will run great risk of missing pardon, when the Lord answers: I plainly forewarned you that there should be teachers of false doctrine in my name, as well as that of the prophets and apostles also; and to my own disciples did I give a charge, that they should preach the same things to you. But as for you, it was not, of course, to be supposed that you would believe me! I once gave the gospel and the doctrine of the said rule (of life and faith) to my apostles; but afterwards it was my pleasure to make considerable changes in it! I had promised a resurrection, even of the flesh; but, on second thoughts, it struck me that I might not be able to keep my promise! I had shown myself to have been born of a virgin; but this seemed to me afterwards to be a discreditable thing. I had said that He was my Father, who is the Maker of the sun and the showers; but another and better father has adopted me! I had forbidden you to lend an ear to heretics; but in this I erred! Such (blasphemies), it is possible, do enter the minds of those who go out of the right path, and who do not defend the true faith from the danger which besets it.

On the present occasion, indeed, our treatise has rather taken up a general position against heresies, (showing that they must) all be refuted on definite, equitable, and necessary rules, without any comparison with the Scriptures. For the rest, if God in His grace permit, we shall prepare answers to certain of these heresies in separate treatises. To those who may devote their leisure in reading through these (pages), in the belief of the truth, be peace, and the grace of our God Jesus Christ for ever.

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