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Early Church Classics

TERTULLIAN
ON THE TESTIMONY OF THE SOUL
AND ON
THE "PRESCRIPTION" OF HERETICS

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I

LIFE OF TERTULLIAN

QUINTUS SEPTIMIUS FLORENS TERTULLIANUS was born of heathen parentage at Karthage in the middle of the second century, and was educated as a lawyer and rhetorician in that "nursery of advocates."¹ Some portion of his life was spent in Rome, and Eusebius' statement that he was intimately versed in Roman Law is amply justified by his writings, which bristle with legal phraseology, and often display the acuteness of a special pleader making the most of his brief.²

His conversion has been variously dated between 185 and 196. He was ordained presbyter, and was married but childless. His fervid African temperament, not guiltless of impatience (which he bewails, *de patientia*, 1), made him an enthusiastic and eloquent champion of whatever cause he took up. He wrote fluently both in Greek and Latin. The jealousy of the Roman clergy, probably provoked

¹ *nutricula causidicorum Africa*, Juvenal, VII, 148.

² Some modern writers are inclined to identify him with an otherwise unknown Tertullian who is mentioned in the index to the Pandects as the author of two works on Roman jurisprudence.

by Tertullian's dislike and mistrust of their laxity of discipline, led him to embrace the stricter rule of the Montanists (c. 202-203), and finally to assail ordinary Churchmen as unspiritual (207). But he was never excommunicated, although his arrogant attacks upon the Church, coming from so gifted a teacher, became, as St. Vincent of Lerins tells us (*Common.* 18), a severe trial to the faithful, and as Hilary says (*in Matth.* 5), his later error naturally cast some discredit on the authority of his approved writings.

Tertullian lived to a great age (Jerome, *de viris illustribus*, 53), and his death may be placed about 230-240.

Happily the two treatises given in this little volume were written when Tertullian was still a loyal member of the Church: the *De Testimonio Animæ* in 197, and the *De Præscriptione Hæreticorum* in the following year.

II

THE KARTHAGINIAN SCHOOL OF APOLOGISTS

THE Puritan mind and spirit were never more effectively illustrated and expressed than by our North African author. He saw in the development of pagan thought and religion nothing but a pernicious falsification and obscuring of the Divine Light and Truth: in the pagan mysteries nothing but the devil's anticipation or imitation of the Christian Sacraments (Chap. XL.). The narrowness of view which regarded all pre-Christian endeavour as the result of the rival effort of God's opponent to enslave the human intellect,

and deter it from the knowledge of the Truth, is expressed in the statement that Athens and Jerusalem, the Church and the Academy, had nothing in common (Chap. VII).

Far different was the comprehensive and sympathetic attitude of the Alexandrian Apologists, who delighted to trace in the history and philosophy of the past those yearnings after and approximations to the Truth which constituted in the history of mankind a preparation for Christianity. Against Tertullian's sharp antithesis between pagan thought and Christian revelation we may place the wise saying of Clement that "the true scribe brings all kinds of learning into the Gospel net," or Origen's teaching that it was "mete to take the spoils of the Ægyptians for the furniture of the Tabernacle." By the side of these early and almost contemporaneous opinions we may place the noble comment of the ecclesiastical historian Socrates on 1 Thess. v. 21: "What is good, wherever it may be, is the property of the Truth" (*H. E.* iii. 16).

Tertullian does not stand quite alone in his identification of the heathen gods with the dæmons (*de test. an.* 2; *Apol.* 23). The idea was often present in the minds of the Apologists and others, and may be detected in Justin Martyr (*Apol.* i. 5), and later in Athanasius (*de incarn. V. Dei*, 30, 47). It is common in the Clementine writings and is the ground of St. Paul's warnings to the Corinthians.¹ But his extraordinary views about the corporeality of the soul and the material nature of the resurrection body are curiously indicative of a mind steeped in realism, and faint to respond to spiritual ideals.

¹ 1 Cor. x. 20 f.

To him incorporeal means non-existent, and hence the soul, nay, GOD Himself, must have some kind of body (*de carne Christi*, II).

III

THE CREED OF THE NORTH AFRICAN CHURCH

IN Chap. XIII Tertullian sets out the Rule of Faith, which can easily be thrown into the form of the following familiar clauses. The words in italics are supplied from the Creed as given in *de virg. vel. i*, and *adv. Prax. i*.

We believe in One GOD *Almighty*, the Creator of the world,

And in His Son Jesus Christ,

Born of the Virgin Mary,

Suffered under Pontius Pilate,

Was crucified, *dead and buried.*

Rose again the third day *from the dead,*

Ascended into heaven,

Sitteth at the right hand of the Father,

Shall come with glory to judge *the quick and the dead,*

In the Holy Spirit,

The resurrection of the flesh,

Life eternal.

IV

TERTULLIAN'S STYLE AND LATINITY

THESE have been dealt with and illustrated so fully by Woodham, Kaye, Fuller (in D.C.B.),

Bonwetsch, and a host of more recent English, French and German editors, that I will permit myself only a few words as to my own translation. Tertullian's vocabulary is often archaic and more often forced, and his love of epigram and antithesis sometimes involves his style in harshness and obscurity. His sententious aphorisms are inimitably his own, and render him one of the most difficult writers to represent in a translation. Epigram, assonance, condensation, concentration are impossible to reproduce in any other language. Especially is his perilous use of irony conspicuous in these two treatises. St. Vincent of Lerins wrote of him that "almost every word was an aphorism, almost every sentence a victory." To which I am inclined to add, *Non, nisi ex ipso Tertulliano, Tertullianum potes interpretari.* The text I have used for the *De Testimonio Animæ* is that printed by Œhler (Leipsic, 1853), and for the *De Præscriptione Hæreticorum* that of the Oxford University Press (edited by myself, 1893).

I

ON THE TESTIMONY OF THE SOUL

O testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ!

ON THE TESTIMONY OF THE SOUL

THIS short treatise was written very soon after the *Apology*, a work to which it refers for a fuller proof of the antiquity of the Scriptures, and of their priority to any heathen writings (Chap. V). It elaborates in some detail and with great acuteness a theme which Tertullian had used in a briefer form in the *Apology* (Chap. XVII), namely, the confirmation which the natural testimony of the Soul afforded to Christian Truth, and the disclosure and revelation of a Soul naturally Christian through the universal voice of conscience.

The germ of this argument is found in Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 18; whence Tertullian took it; and indeed the nineteenth chapter of the *Octavius* so exactly corresponds to Tertullian's description in his opening words (Chap. I) of Christian authors who had culled from heathen writers testimonies to the Truth, that I cannot but believe he was referring to Minucius' work. Minucius refers for the Unity and spirituality of GOD to the poets Ennius, Homer and Vergil, and to a whole string of philosophers from Thales to Chrysippus.

Here is the excerpt from the *Octavius* which Tertullian worked up—

Do not enquire for the name of God; God is His Name. . . . Herein too I have the consent of all; for I hear the people when they stretch their hands heavenwards say

nothing but "GOD!" "GOD is great!" "GOD is true!" "If GOD wills!" Is this the natural speech of the vulgar, or the utterance of a confessing Christian?

The reader has Tertullian's words before him (below, pp. 19 ff.), and I add here the passage from the *Apology* as another datum for comparison—

We worship One GOD . . . the True and great GOD . . . of Whom they who refuse to recognize Him cannot be ignorant. . . . Will you have this proved from the testimony of the soul itself? For the soul, although limited by the prison-house of the body, although hindered by evil customs, although weakened by lusts and desires, although enslaved to false gods, yet when it recovers its senses, as if from intoxication or sleep or any infirmity, and enjoys its own proper sanity, names GOD by this Name alone, as being the proper Name of the True GOD: "Great GOD!" "Good GOD!" and "Which GOD grant!" are common expressions. It also testifies to Him as Judge: "GOD sees," "I leave it to GOD," and "GOD will repay me." O testimony of the soul naturally Christian! Lastly, when uttering these expressions, it looks not to the Capitol but to Heaven. For it knows the abode of the Living GOD: from Him and from thence it came down.

SYNOPSIS

TESTIMONIES to Christian Truth may be found in the writings of pagan teachers, philosophers and poets; but whereas their statements are generally received with blind deference by their followers, their authority is rejected so soon as their teaching most nearly approaches the Truth and most closely resembles the fundamentals of Christianity.

Now a new witness is summoned, of the highest and universal value—the human Soul, in its natural state, possessing only that knowledge which is innate or learnt directly from its Maker (Chap. I).

From its spontaneous utterances the Soul bears involuntary testimony to the Unity of GOD—

to His Nature,

to His just judgement (Chap. II), and

to the existence of evil spirits (Chap. III).

Christianity teaches the Immortality of the Soul, a Future Judgement, and the Resurrection of the Body—this last being necessary for the full presentment of the personality of each person for Judgement.

The Soul pities the dead, fears death, and often exhibits a desire for posthumous fame—feelings which prove its belief in a hereafter (Chap. IV).

The Soul's testimonies are clear and simple; they are also universal, because derived from Mistress Nature, herself derived from GOD. Earlier than any literature, they have not been derived from books. If they had, they must needs have come from Holy Scripture originally, the oldest writings in the world, which the heathen made use of (Chap. V).

There are only three authorities whence the Soul could have derived its knowledge—Heathen writings, the Divine Scriptures and Nature. God and Nature must be true, therefore the Soul's testimony is valid, and it is found to be one and the same in every race of mankind.

Its neglect of its own witness to Christian Truth will be the Soul's condemnation at the day of Judgement (Chap. VI).

ON THE TESTIMONY OF THE SOUL

CHAPTER I

It were a work demanding considerable ingenuity and a still more retentive memory, were one to extract the testimonies to Christian Truth out of all the most approved writings of philosophers and poets and teachers of secular learning and wisdom, so that its rivals and opponents might be convicted out of their own literature both of error as regards themselves and of injustice towards us. Some, indeed, whose diligence in research and excellence of memory in ancient literature have been unflinching, have composed booklets with this end in view which are in our hands;¹ and in these works they set forth and attest in each particular the reason and origin of our traditions and the proofs of our tenets, from which it can be seen that we have upheld nothing either novel or strange which does not find support and countenance in popular writings in everybody's hands, in so far as we have either rejected error or admitted truth. But human obstinacy arising out of credulity has impaired men's faith even in their own teachers, who on other points are deemed most approved and most authoritative, wherever they come across vindications of

¹ Minucius Felix. See Intro., p. 13.

the Christian position. Then are the poets foolish when they assign to the gods human passions and stories; then are the philosophers stupid when they knock at the doors of Truth. One will only be regarded as wise and learned so long as one utters sentiments nearly Christian; while if one has really aimed at prudence and wisdom by rejecting (heathen) ceremonies or by convicting the world (of sin), one is at once branded as a Christian.

We will now therefore have nothing to do with a literature and a teaching of such fertile perversity that it is believed in for what is false in it rather than for what is true. No matter that some have taught one GOD and one only. Rather let them have written nothing at all which a Christian acknowledges, lest he may upbraid them with it. For all do not know what has been written, and those who do know do not agree with it with any confidence. Far less do men agree with our writings, to which no one comes unless he is a Christian already.

I call a new witness, better known than all literature, more discussed than all doctrine, more public than all publications, greater than any man, yet which is indeed the whole of man.

Stand forth, O Soul, in the midst; whether thou art divine and eternal (as many philosophers assert), and therefore less likely to lie, or whether thou art the opposite of divine because mortal (as Epicurus is alone in thinking), and therefore oughtest the less to lie;¹ whether thou art received from heaven, or conceived on earth; whether thou art produced from

¹ *i. e.* being an outside, independent source of witness to GOD.

numbers or atoms ; whether thou hast thy beginning with the body, or art subsequently introduced into the body ; whencesoever and howsoever thou makest man to be a rational being, the most capable of sense and knowledge—stand forth and utter thy testimony.

But I do not summon thee in the form in which thou givest vent to thy wisdom when thou hast been shaped in the schools, trained in libraries, fed in Attic academies and Porches.¹ I address thee in thy simple, unskilled, unpolished, untaught form, such as they possess thee who have nothing else but thee, thy very self alone, as thou existest in the lane, in the highway, in the loom. I need thy inexperience, since no one credits thy experience, however small. I demand of thee that which thou bringest into man, which thou hast learnt to feel either from thyself or from thine author, whoever he may be. Thou art not, as I know, Christian, for a soul is wont to be made, not born Christian.² Yet now Christians extort from thee an alien, a testimony against thine own friends, so that these may actually blush before thee because they hate and mock us for those very things of which now thy conscience accuses thee.

¹ *i. e.* brought up on Platonist or Stoic teaching.

² So previously in his *Apology* Tertullian wrote: "Christians are made, not born"; cp. Augustine, *de pecc. mer.* III, 9: "Not birth, but rebirth, makes Christians."

CHAPTER II

WE give offence when we preach the ONE GOD under One Name only, from Whom are all things,¹ and under Whom is the universe. Speak forth thy testimony, if thou knowest this to be the truth. For we hear thee everywhere openly and with full liberty (which is denied to us), ejaculating, "May GOD grant it," and "If GOD wills." And by these words thou declarest that some ONE exists, and confessest that all power belongs to Him to Whose will thou lookest. At the same time thou sayest that the rest are not gods, inasmuch as thou callest them by their own names—Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Minerva. For thou affirmest Him alone to be GOD Whom thou callest simply GOD; and hence when thou dost sometimes also call the others gods, thou seemest to do so by a derived and, as it were, a borrowed use of the word.

Nor is the Nature of the GOD Whom we preach hid from thee. "GOD is good," "GOD doeth good," are thine own expressions—obviously implying, "But man is evil"; involving in this contrary proposition by indirect inference the reproach that man is evil because he has departed from the good GOD.

Again, whereas with us every benediction in the Name of the GOD of goodness and loving-kindness is the most sacred bond of our faith and practice, "GOD bless thee" runs off thy tongue as readily as it should come from any Christian's need. And even when thou turnest the invocation of GOD into

¹ 1 Cor. viii. 6.

a curse, by that very phrase thou dost confess equally with us that His power is supreme over us all.

There are some who, although they do not deny GOD, yet do not regard Him as One Who searches and beholds and judges (in which opinion, of course, they markedly differ from us who cling to that doctrine in fear of the proclaimed Judgement), thus attempting to honour GOD by freeing Him from the care of watching and the trouble of censuring, not even permitting Him to be angry. "For if GOD be angry," say they, "He is corruptible and passionate; and moreover what is corruptible and passionate is perishable, but GOD is not perishable." These same persons, however, by their own confession elsewhere that the soul is divine and GOD-given, run up against a testimony of the soul itself which can be retorted against their opinion just given; for if the soul be either divine or bestowed by GOD, doubtless it knows its Giver, and if it knows Him it surely fears Him as its especial Endower. Doth it not fear Him Whom it would rather have propitious towards it than wrathful? Whence comes, then, that natural fear of the soul for GOD if GOD knows not how to be angry? How can He be feared Who cannot be offended? What is to be feared save anger? Whence arises anger save from censure? Whence censure save from judgement? And whence judgement save from power? And who has the supreme power save GOD alone? Hence comes, O soul, thy readiness to say from thine own inmost knowledge, at all times and places, no one scoffing or objecting, "GOD seeth all things"; "I leave it to GOD"; "GOD will repay"; "GOD shall judge

between us." Whence hast thou this knowledge, not being Christian?

Moreover, often in the very temples themselves, wreathed with Ceres' fillet, or scarleted with Saturn's cloak, or white in Isis' linen, thou supplicatest GOD as Judge! Thou standest under Æsculapius, thou deckest out Juno in bronze, thou bindest on Minerva a morion with dusky ornaments, and yet thou dost not adjure any one of these deities that are present with thee! In thine own forum thou appealest to a Judge in another place: in thine own temples thou sufferest another GOD! O Testimony of Truth, which among the very dæmons¹ makes these a witness for the Christians!

CHAPTER III

BUT when we affirm that there are dæmons—as a matter of fact we prove their existence, for we alone expel them—some supporter of Chrysippus² mocks us. Yet thine own execrations confirm the fact of their existence and of their being abominated. Thou callest a man a dæmon either for his filthiness or malice or insolence, or for some stigma or other which we assign to dæmons, in a sudden hastiness of hatred. Thou namest Satan,³ for

¹ Tertullian, and the African school of Apologists generally, held that the pagan gods were identical with the dæmons who were agents of the Evil One. See *Apol.* 23.

² Chrysippus. One of the most distinguished of the Stoic philosophers (300–220 B.C.), a disciple of Zeno and Cleanthes.

³ Tertullian's meaning seems to be that Satan is unwittingly referred to in the maledictory exclamation of the

instance (whom we call the angel of evil, the contriver of error, the corrupter of the whole world), in every expression of vexation and scorn and detestation—the being by whom man in the beginning was beguiled to transgress GOD’S command, and on that account was given over to death, and brought it about that the whole race, thus infected from his seed, became a sharer in and transmitter of his condemnation. Thou art aware, therefore, of thine own destroyer, and albeit that Christians alone (including whatever sect is on GOD’S side)¹ know him, yet even thou too recognizest him since thou hatest him.

CHAPTER IV

To come now to a matter more closely related to thine own perception—how intimately indeed does it touch thy very being!—we affirm that thou existest after the extinction of the bodily life, and awaitest a day of judgement, and art destined, according to thy deservings, either to torture or to refreshment, in either case eternally; for the perception of which thy original essence must necessarily return to thee, together with the substance of the identical human being, and thy memory; because neither canst thou feel anything of good or bad without the faculty of sensitive

vulgar, “Malum!” See Terence, *Eun.* IV, 7, 10; Plautus, *Epidic.* V, 2, 44. Tertullian uses *Malus* for Satan, *de cult. fem.* 5; *de idol.* 16, 21; so also Paulin, *Carm. adv. pag.* V, 158. See my note on *Apol.* 22.

¹ The Jews.

flesh,¹ nor is there any possibility of judgement without the presentation of the actual person who has deserved to suffer judgement. This Christian opinion, though nobler far than Pythagoras', inasmuch as it doth not transmigrate thee into animals; though fuller than Plato's, inasmuch as it restores to thee thy dowry of body; though more dignified than Epicurus', inasmuch as it saves thee from perishing, is yet set down to sheer vanity and stupidity and (as it is called) "presumption,"² merely because it is Christian. But we blush not if our "presumption" is found also with thee. For in the first place, when thou recallest in memory any one who is dead, thou callest him "wretched man"—not surely as one cut off from a happy life, but as one assigned to punishment and judgement. Another time, however, thou callest the dead free from care—thus implying the disadvantage of life and the boon of death. Next thou callest the dead free from care what times thou retirest outside the gate to the tombs with thy viands and delicacies, or when (appeasing thyself rather than them) thou returnest from the tombs overcome with wine.

But I demand thy sober opinion. Thou callest the dead "poor wretches" when thou speakest

¹ This is worked out more fully and with equally crude materialism in the treatise *de resurrectione carnis*.

² This was quite a technical term of reproach against the Christians, like *dementia*, *obstinatio*; see *ad Nat.* I, 19; *Apol.* 19, "our confidence which you call presumption"; *ib.* 49, "tenets that in our case alone are called presumptions, but in the case of philosophers and poets are looked upon as sublime and most ingenious flights of science," So again below, 4; compare *de anima*, 1.

from thine own mind when thou art away from them. For thou canst not denounce their lot in their feast when they are, as it were, present and reclining with thee: thou art bound to flatter those on whose account thou art faring more joyously. Dost thou then call him a poor wretch who feeleth nothing? What when thou cursest, as one who does feel, him whose memory thou recallest with some mordant dislike? Thou prayest that the earth may lie heavy on him, and that his ashes may be tormented among the shades below. Likewise out of good feeling for one to whom thou owest favours, thou implorest refreshment on his bones and ashes, and that he may rest happily among the shades. If thou hast no capability of suffering after death, if there is no persistency of feeling, if in fine thou art absolutely naught when thou hast left the body, why dost thou lie against thyself and imply the possibility of some suffering hereafter? Nay, why dost thou fear death at all? There is nothing after death for thee to fear, since there is nothing to be felt. For even were it to be said that death is to be feared, not because it threatens something beyond, but because it deprives one of the advantage of life, yet since the far more numerous ills of life are cut off at the same time, the fear of death is removed by a gain of greater weight; for the loss of good is no longer to be feared inasmuch as it is balanced by another good, the freedom from ills. That ought not to be feared which frees one from everything fearful. If thou fearest to depart out of life because thou knowest life to be best, thou certainly oughtest not to fear death which thou dost not know to be evil. But on the other hand, inasmuch as thou fearest it, thou

showest that thou knowest it to be evil. But thou wouldst not know it to be evil, and therefore wouldst not fear it, if thou didst not know that there is something after death which makes it an evil and a thing of dread to thee. We will say nothing now of the instinctive fear of death. No one should fear what cannot be avoided. I will meet thee from the opposite side of a more joyful hope after death. For in almost all men there is an innate desire of fame after death. There is no need to recount again the Curtii, and the Reguli, and the Greek heroes of whose contempt of death for the sake of posthumous fame there are innumerable testimonies.¹ Who now, in our own day, does not strive that his memory may be constantly borne in mind after his death, and that his name may be preserved either by works of literature, or by simple glory of his virtues, or by the splendour of his very tomb? Whence is it that to-day the soul aspires to something which it wishes for after death, and makes such elaborate preparations for what it can use only after its departure? Surely it would care nothing about the future if it knew nothing about the future.

But perhaps thou art more certain of thy sentience after death than of thy future resurrection—the doctrine of which we are branded as being the “presumptuous”² teachers. Yet this also is proclaimed by the soul. For if any one inquires about some one already dead as though he were alive, at once the answer comes, “He has just gone, and ought to return.”³

¹ See instances in *Apol.* 50.

² See note above.

³ This was a conventional formula, as though the question

CHAPTER V

THESE testimonies of the soul are as simple as they are true, as constant as they are simple, as common as they are habitual, as natural as they are common, as divine as they are natural. I do not think they could appear to any one to be trifling or indifferent, if one meditates on the majesty of Nature whence the authority of the soul is derived. Howsoever much thou allowest to the mistress, the same must thou assign to the disciple. Nature is the mistress; the soul, the disciple. Whatever either the mistress has taught or the soul has learnt came from GOD, the Master in truth of the mistress herself. What the soul can infer about its first Teacher it is thy power to estimate from what is in thyself. Think of that soul which enables thee to think. Reflect on that which in presages thy seer, in omens thy augur, in issues thy foreseer. Is it strange if, given by GOD, it knows how to divine for man? Is it very strange if it knows Him by Whom it has been given? Even when outwitted by its adversary, it remembers its own Author and His goodness and His decree both of its own end and of that of its adversary himself. Is it so strange if, given by GOD, it utters the truths that GOD has given to His own people to know?

But he who does not think such outbursts of the soul are the teaching of its essential nature and

asked in ignorance of the person's death was of good omen to the deceased.

secret truths entrusted to its inborn consciousness,¹ will rather say that the existing habit, and, as it were, vice, of speaking in this way has been confirmed by the widely spread opinions amongst the common people of published books. Surely the soul existed before letters, and speech before books, and ideas before the record of them, and man himself before the philosopher and poet. Is it then to be believed that before literature and its publication men lived without speaking of such matters? Used no one to speak of GOD and His goodness, of death and of the shades below? Speech went a-begging, I suppose—nay, none was possible for lack at that time of those subjects without which it cannot exist even to-day when it is so much more full and rich and wise—if those things which to-day are so obvious, so pressing, so close at hand, bred as it were on the very lips, were formerly non-existent, before letters had sprung up in the world, before Mercury,² I suppose, was born.

And whence, I pray, did letters come to know and spread abroad for the use of speech matters which no mind had ever conceived or tongue produced, or ear heard?

But in truth, since the Divine Scriptures which are in our hands or in those of the Jews, into whose olive³ tree we have been grafted, precede secular

¹ So again, *de virg. vel.* 5, Tertullian speaks of the divine nature of the soul, through the tacit consciousness of nature, unwittingly bringing into use forms of speech conformable with Scripture.

² Mercury, as identified by the Romans with Hermes, was believed to be the inventor of the alphabet; Cicero, *de nat. deorum*, III, 22.

³ *Oleastro*, properly the wild olive, but if the text is correct

literature by a very long period, or even by a moderate space of time (as we have shown in the proper place in order to demonstrate their trustworthiness),¹ if the soul hath taken these utterances from literature, obviously it must be believed to have taken them from ours, not from yours, because the earlier are more potent for instructing the soul than the later, which were actually themselves waiting to be instructed by the earlier. So that even if we grant that the soul was instructed from your writings, yet tradition belongs to its first origin, and whatever you happen to have taken and handed on from ours is altogether ours. Since this is so, it matters little whether the knowledge which the soul possesses has been implanted in it by GOD or derived from the writings of GOD.

CHAPTER VI

BELIEVE therefore thine own writings, and also believe our records so much the more as being divine; but as touching the witness of the soul itself, believe Nature in like manner. Select which of these thou notest to be the more faithful sister to the Truth. If thou doubtst about thine own writings, neither GOD nor Nature speak falsely. That thou mayest believe both Nature and GOD, believe the soul: thus it will come to pass that thou wilt believe thyself also. Assuredly it is the

here = *olivo*. Rigault and other editors suggest *olea ex oleastro*. The reference is to Rom. xi. 17 f.

¹ *Apol.* 19.

soul that thou valuest as making thee as great as thou art, whose thou art entirely; for the soul is everything to thee, without which thou canst neither live nor die, and for its sake thou neglectest GOD: For since thou art afraid to become a Christian, summon the soul and ask why, when worshipping another, she calleth upon the name of GOD?¹ Why, when she brandeth spirits as accursed, doth she speak of dæmons? Why doth she make her protestations heavenwards and her execrations earthwards? Why doth she worship him in one place, and in another call upon Him as an Avenger? Why doth she pass judgements on the dead? Why hath she Christian phrases on her lips when Christians she desires neither to hear nor see? Why hath she either given us those phrases or received them from us? Why hath she been either our teacher or our scholar? Hadst thou not better suspect that there is something in this agreement of speech amid so great a disagreement of practice? Foolish thou art if thou attributest such to our own language only or to the Greek (both of which are regarded as near akin), and deniest the solidarity of Nature. The soul descended not from heaven exclusively on the Latins and Greeks. Man is one and the same in all nations; the soul is one though speech be various; the spirit is one though its voice differs; each race has its own language, but the themes of language are the same in all. GOD is everywhere,² and His goodness everywhere; the dæmon is everywhere, and his curse everywhere; the

¹ Above, Chap. II.

² *i. e.* in universal speech.

invocation of divine judgement is everywhere, and the consciousness of it everywhere; and the witness of the soul likewise is everywhere. Every soul in its own right shouts aloud what we are not permitted even to whisper. Deservedly therefore is every soul a culprit and a witness; for in so far as it witnesses to the Truth, just so far is it guilty of wrongdoing, and so it will stand before the courts of GOD in the day of judgement speechless, Thou usest to proclaim GOD, O Soul, and didst not seek Him; thou didst abominate dæmons, and didst worship them; thou didst appeal to the judgement of GOD, and didst not believe in its existence; thou didst look for infernal punishments, and tookest no precautions to avoid them; thou wert Christianly minded, and yet didst persecute the Christian name.

II

ON THE "PRESCRIPTION" OF HERETICS

Depositum custodi

ON THE "PRESCRIPTION" OF HERETICS

IN legal language the word "Præscriptio" denoted something written in front of, and limiting an already existing formula. Something of its original legal connotation may be detected in our familiar use of it in medicine; for a prescription is something written out beforehand for subsequent use. Tertullian employs it to limit discussion with the heretics to the single point of their right to appeal to the Scriptures. He argues that their use of the Christian documents is not allowable, because they have forfeited their right to the name of Christians, and with that their right of possession of the Christian literature. The following synopsis will sufficiently show the course of Tertullian's argument.

SYNOPSIS

- I. Introduction; Chaps. I-XIV.
 1. Heresies a necessary evil; Chaps. I-VII.
 2. Refutation of the heretical misapplication of Christ's command, "Seek and ye shall find"; Chaps. VIII-XII.
 3. The Rule of Faith; Chaps. XIII, XIV.
- II. Main "Prescription"; Chaps. XV-XLIV.
 - i. 1. Heretics forbidden to appeal to the Scriptures in argument (Chaps. XV-XIX); because the Catholic Church is the sole possessor of the True Faith and its records. The Apostles whom Christ sent can alone be received as Teachers, and the substance of their teaching can be learnt from Apostolic Churches only (Chaps. XX, XXI).

2. Consideration of heretical objections drawn from—
 - (a) The alleged ignorance of the Apostles :
 - (1) Rebuke of Peter by Paul.
 - (2) Special revelations to Paul; Chaps. XXII-XXIV.
 - (b) The alleged non-publication of the whole Gospel by the Apostles; Chaps. XXV-XXVII.
 - (c) The alleged error in the Church's reception of it; Chaps. XXVII, XXVIII.
 - ii.
 1. Heresies essentially of later date than the Church; their teachers lacking mission, and without episcopal succession; Chaps. XXIX-XXXIV.
 2. The true doctrine and the true Scriptures preserved by the Apostolic Churches; Chaps. XXXV-XL.
 3. Description of the heretical lack of organization and discipline; Chaps. XLI-XLIV.
- III. Conclusion; Chap. XLV.

ON THE "PRESCRIPTION" OF HERETICS

CHAPTER I

THE character of the present times calls upon us to bear in mind that the heresies around us ought not to occasion wonder either at their existence—for they were foretold as bound to exist,¹ or that they subvert the faith of some—for they exist for the very purpose of giving an opportunity to faith, through suffering trial, of being approved.

It is therefore due to a want of heed and reflection that many are offended by the mere fact that heresies have so much power. How much would they have if they did not exist?² When anything is destined in any case to be, its being has behind it an irresistible cause, and then this cause of its existence makes it evident that it is impossible for it not to exist.

¹ Matt. vii. 15; xxiv. 4, 11, 24; Acts xx. 24 f.; 1 Tim. iv. 1 f.; 2 Pet. ii. 1. In 1 Cor. xi. 19 St. Paul was probably quoting definite words of Christ; see Knowling, *Witness of the Epistles*, p. 119.

² A Tertullianesque paradox. The non-existence of heresies would falsify the predictions of Scripture.

CHAPTER II

IN the case of fever, for example, to which its own place is assigned amongst other deadly and excruciating calamities for the destruction of man, we do not wonder at its existence, for it does exist; or that it destroys man, for it exists for that purpose. Similarly in the case of heresies, which are engendered for the weakening and destruction of faith, if we are struck with amazement that they have this power, we may just as well feel amazement that they exist; since as long as they exist they have power, and as long as they have power they have being.

Again, in the case of fever, rather than wonder at it we loathe it as an evil, recognized as such both from the reason of its existence and from its power; and so far as we can we take precautions against it, since we have not the power to annihilate it. Yet in the case of heresies, which inflict eternal death and the burning of a keener fire, some persons prefer to wonder that heresies have such power rather than to avoid their power when they have the power to avoid it. Heresies would not prevail a whit if men would cease to wonder at their prevailing so greatly. For either whilst men are wondering, they lay themselves open to an occasion of stumbling, or because they are being tempted to stumble, they wonder on that account, fancying that the great power of heresies arose from some truth that they possess. As though it were wonderful, forsooth, that evil should have any strength of its own. Yet it is to be observed

that heresies prevail chiefly with those who are not valiant in the Faith.

In a contest of boxers or gladiators, in very many cases a competitor wins the victory not because he is strong or insuperable, but because the defeated one was a man of no power; and hence that same victor, when subsequently matched against a really strong man, is himself overcome and retires. Just in the same way heresies owe all their power to men's weaknesses, and are powerless when they assail a really strong faith.

CHAPTER III

It is, indeed, not unusual for this weaker class of men to be edified¹ to their own ruin through reliance on certain persons who have been ensnared by heresy. Why is it, they argue, that this woman or that man, most faithful, prudent and experienced persons in the Church, have gone over to the other side? Does not such a questioner himself supply the answer? Those whom heresy has been able to pervert ought not to have been accounted prudent, or faithful, or experienced. Besides, is it anything so extraordinary for one who has been approved afterwards to fall away again? Saul, good-hearted beyond the rest, was afterwards overthrown by envy.² David, a man good after the Lord's heart,³ was afterwards guilty of murder and

¹ Tertullian copies St. Paul's ironical oxymoron in 1 Cor. viii. 10.

² 1 Sam. xviii. 7 ff.

³ 1 Sam. xiii. 14. But it should be noted that in the Hebrew the phrase "after His own heart" qualifies the verb,

adultery. Solomon, gifted with every grace and wisdom by the Lord,¹ was won over to idolatry by women.² For the Son of GOD alone was it reserved to continue without fault.³ What then if a bishop, or a deacon, or a widow,⁴ or a virgin, or a doctor,⁵ or even a confessor shall have lapsed from the Rule of Faith; are heresies on that account to be regarded as maintaining the Truth? Do we test the Creed by persons or persons by the Creed? No one save a Christian is wise, faithful and high in honour; but no one is a Christian save he who shall have endured to the end.⁶ Thou, being a man, knowest each one from without. Thou judgest from what thou seest, yet thou seest only as far as thine eyes permit thee. But "the eyes of the Lord are high," saith the Scripture.⁷ "Man looketh upon the outward appearance, GOD looketh upon the heart."⁸ And for that reason the Lord

not the object. "Yhvh after his own mind [=uninfluenced by human motives] hath sought a man." Acts xiii. 22 gives a midrashic paraphrase.

¹ 1 Kings iii. 12; iv. 29.

² 1 Kings xi. 4 ff.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 22.

⁴ For the early institution of the Order of Widows, see 1 Tim. v. 9; *Apost. Const.* II, 36; III, 7.

⁵ In the North African Church the special duty of the "doctores," who might be Readers, Deacons or Presbyters, was the instruction of the Catechumens.

⁶ Matt. x. 22.

⁷ Tertullian often quotes Scripture very loosely, sometimes giving the sense, sometimes weaving together several texts, as in the immediately following sentences. Other instances will be found in Chaps. VII, VIII, XI; *Apol.* 33. The present quotation has been thought to refer to 4 Esdras viii. 20; cp. Jer. xvi. 17; xxxii. 19.

⁸ 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

seeth and knoweth who are His.¹ The slip that He hath not set He rooteth up.² He shows that "there shall be last from those that are first,"³ and He carries "a fan in His hand to purge His threshing-floor."⁴ Let the chaff of a fickle faith fly forth as it wills with every blast of temptation:⁵ so will the bulk of the grain be purer which is to be stored in the garner of the Lord. Did not some of the disciples, being offended, turn away from the Lord Himself?⁶ Nevertheless the rest did not think that for that reason they too ought to depart from His footsteps. Those who knew Him to be the Word of Life and to have come forth from GOD⁷ continued in His company even to the end, after He had calmly confronted them with the question whether they also were willing to go away.⁸ It is of less moment that men like Phygelus and Hermogenes⁹ and Philetus and Hymenæus¹⁰ deserted the Apostles: the very betrayer of Christ was of the Apostles.

We make it a matter of wonder if Christ's Churches are sometimes deserted; whereas the very things which we suffer after the example of Christ show that we are Christians. "They went out from us," says the Apostle,¹¹ "but they were not of us. If they had been of us, they would certainly have continued with us."

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

³ Luke xiii. 30.

⁵ Eph. iv. 14.

⁷ John xvi. 30.

⁹ 2 Tim. i. 15.

¹¹ 1 John ii. 19.

² Matt. xv. 13.

⁴ Matt. iii. 12.

⁶ John vi. 60 ff.

⁸ John vi. 67.

¹⁰ 2 Tim. ii. 17.

CHAPTER IV

LET us rather be mindful both of the statements of the Lord¹ and of the Apostolic Letters² which foretold to us that heresies should be, and enjoined that they should be avoided; and as we are not dumbfounded at their existence, so let us not wonder that they possess that power which makes it necessary for them to be avoided.

The Lord taught that many ravening wolves would come in sheep's clothing. And what is sheep's clothing but the outward profession of the Christian name?³ What are the ravening wolves but crafty intentions and dispositions lurking within to molest the flock of Christ? Who are false prophets but false preachers? Who are false Apostles but spurious evangelizers? Who are the Antichrists now and ever but the rebels against Christ? There are, through wilfulness of teachings, heresies assailing the Church; at the present time no less than in the future will Antichrist attack her by cruelty of persecutions, only there is this difference: persecution makes martyrs, heresy only apostates. And therefore it was necessary that there should be heresies, in order that those who are approved might be made manifest—meaning both those who shall have stood fast in times of persecution and those who shall not have strayed away to heresies. For the Apostle does

¹ Matt. vii. 15; xxiv. 4, 11, 24.

² 1 Cor. xi. 19; 1 Tim. iv. 1 f.; 2 Pet. ii. 1.

³ This passage evidently suggested Vincent of Lerins' *Common.* 25, 66.

not wish those to be accounted approved who change the Faith into heresy; as they perversely interpret his words in their own favour, because he said in another place,¹ "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." As if it were not possible after proving all things amiss to fasten through error upon the choice of some evil.

CHAPTER V

BESIDES, when he rebukes dissensions and schisms which are undoubted evils, he immediately adds "heresies"² also. That which he adjoins to evil things he assuredly confesses to be an evil, and indeed a greater evil, since he says he believed concerning their dissensions and schisms, because he knew that heresies moreover must be. He showed that in view of the greater evil he easily believed about the lighter evils: certainly not meaning that he thus believed concerning the evils, because heresies were good, but to forewarn them not to marvel about temptations of a worse character, which, he asserted, tended to make manifest those who were approved, that is, those whom heresies could not pervert. Similarly, since the whole section savours of the preservation of unity and the restraint of divisions, whilst heresies divorce from unity no less than schisms and dissensions, undoubtedly he includes heresies in that same category of blame in which he also places schisms and dissensions; and hence he does make

¹ 1 Thess. v, 21.

² 1 Cor. xi, 18, 19.

those to be approved who have turned aside to heresies, since he pointedly exhorts men to turn away from such, and teaches all to speak one thing and to be minded the selfsame way¹—an ideal which heresy does not allow.

CHAPTER VI

WE need not dwell longer on this point, since it is the same Paul who also in another place, when writing to the Galatians,² classes heresies among carnal sins, and who warns Titus³ that a man that is an heretic must be avoided after the first admonition,⁴ because he that is such has become perverted and sins, being self-condemned. Moreover, also in nearly every Epistle, when enjoining the necessity of fleeing false doctrines, he indicates heresies. For false doctrines are the production of heresies: heresies being so-called from a Greek word which signifies the "choice" which any one makes when introducing or adopting them.⁵ And it is for this reason that he calls a heretic self-condemned, because he chose for himself that wherein he is condemned. For us, however, it is not lawful to

¹ I Cor. i. 10.

² Gal. v. 20.

³ Titus iii. 10.

⁴ The Latin version of the New Testament used by Tertullian omitted "et alteram."

⁵ *ἄπεισις*. This is the true definition of heresy. Etymologically it is self-willed choice, in contrast to the receptive docility of the Catholic temper: practically it is the invention or espousal of new and erroneous teaching contrary to the tradition handed down by the Apostles and Apostolic Churches from Christ. Cp. Chaps. XIV, XXXVII; *Apol.* 47.

introduce anything on our own authority, nor to choose that which any one else has similarly introduced. We have the Apostles of the Lord as our authorities, who not even themselves chose to introduce anything on their own authority, but faithfully handed on to the nations the rule received from Christ. Consequently, if even an angel from heaven preached otherwise, he would be called anathema by us.¹ Already at that time had the Holy Spirit perceived that there would be an angel of deceit in a certain virgin Philumena,² transforming himself into an angel of light;³ by whose signs and deceptions Apelles,⁴ being led away, introduced a new heresy.

CHAPTER VII

THESE are the doctrines of men and of dæmons,⁵ generated for itching ears⁶ by the ingenuity of that worldly wisdom which the Lord called foolishness, and chose the foolish things⁷ of the world to confound even philosophy itself. For philo-

¹ Gal. i. 8.

² A virgin to whom Apelles attached himself, believing her to be inspired by an angel and endowed with miraculous powers. Her utterances were the source of several of his tenets, and he wrote a book of "Revelations" at her dictation. See Chap. XXX, *de carne Chr.* 6. She seems to have been a clairvoyante.

³ 2 Cor. xi. 14.

⁴ Apelles was the most famous of Marcion's disciples, born early in the second century. See note below on Chap. XXX,

⁵ 1 Tim. iv. 1.

⁶ 2 Tim. iv. 3.

⁷ 1 Cor. i. 27; iii. 19.

sophy is the theme of worldly wisdom, that rash interpreter of the Divine Nature and Order. And in fact, heresies are themselves equipped by philosophy. Thence come Valentinus' "æons" and I know not what infinite "ideas" and "trinity of man."¹ He was a Platonist. Thence, too, the "better GOD" of Marcion,² so-called because of his tranquillity. He came from the Stoics. And when the soul is affirmed to perish,³ that is a tenet taken from the Epicureans. And when the restoration of the flesh is denied, that is assumed from the uniform teaching of all the philosophers. And when matter is identified with GOD, that is the doctrine of Zeno.⁴ And when any statement is made about a fiery god,⁵ Heracleitus comes in. The same themes are pondered by heretics and philosophers: the same subjects of consideration are involved—Whence came evil, and why? and Whence came man, and how? and—a question lately propounded by Valentinus—Whence came GOD? From Desire,⁶ forsooth, and an Abortion.

¹ See below, Chap. XXXIII.

² The Supreme GOD of pure benevolence, in Marcion's system; not the Creator, the "just" or "severe" God of the Old Testament. Cp. Justin Mart., *Apol.* I, 26. See below on Chap. XXX.

³ The tenet of Marcion's disciple Lucanus: *de res. carn.* 2.

⁴ The eternity of matter was a tenet of Hermogenes: *adv. Herm.* 4. Zeno taught that the universe was the essential being of God: *Diog. Lært.* VII, 148.

⁵ Apelles' Creator and Old Testament Deity was a fiery god or angel, a notion derived from Exod. iii. 2.

⁶ *Ἐπιθυμία* was the "Animatio" or "Desire" of the "Higher Sophia" in the Valentinian system, and being a formless abortion, *ἔκτρομα*, was driven forth from the Pleroma. From her was derived the Demiurge, or God of mankind.

Wretched Aristotle! who established for them the dialectic art, so ingenious in the construction and refutation of propositions, so crafty in statements, so forced in hypotheses, so inflexible in arguments, so laborious in disputes, so damaging even to itself, always reconsidering everything, so that it never treats thoroughly of anything at all.

Hence come those fables and endless genealogies,¹ and profitless questions, and words which spread like a cancer; in restraining us from which the Apostle expressly mentions philosophy as that which we ought to beware of, writing to the Colossians,² "Take heed lest any one beguile you through philosophy or vain deceit, according to the tradition of men," beyond the providence of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle had been at Athens, and in his argumentative encounters there had become acquainted with that human wisdom which affects and corrupts the Truth, itself also being many times divided into its own heresies by the variety of its mutually antagonistic sects.

What then hath Athens in common with Jerusalem? What hath the Academy in common with the Church?³ What have heretics in common with Christians? Our principles are from the "Porch" of Solomon,⁴ who himself handed down that the Lord must be sought in simplicity of

¹ 1 Tim. i. 4; Titus iii. 9; 2 Tim. ii. 17, 23.

² Col. ii. 8.

³ Tertullian models his queries on those of St. Paul, 2 Cor. vi. 14 ff. On this attitude of the Karthaginian School, see the Introduction, p. viii.

⁴ Solomon's Porch, *i. e.* the teaching of Christ and His Apostles: John x. 23; Acts iii. 2; v. 12. The implied contrast is to the Porch of Zeno.

heart.¹ Away with those who bring forward a Stoic or Platonic or dialectic Christianity. We have no need of speculative inquiry after we have known Christ Jesus; nor of search for the Truth after we have received the Gospel. When we become believers, we have no desire to believe anything besides; for the first article of our belief is that there is nothing besides which we ought to believe.

CHAPTER VIII

AND so I come to that sentence which our own members bring forward to justify speculative inquiry, and which heretics also urge as a reason for introducing restless hesitancy. It is written,² they say, "Seek and ye shall find."³

Now let us call to mind when it was that the Lord uttered these words. It was surely at the very beginning of His teaching, when as yet all were in doubt whether He were the Christ; when as yet Peter had not pronounced Him to be the Son of GOD,⁴ when even John had ceased to be certain about Him.⁵ Rightly therefore at that time was the injunction given, "Seek and ye shall find," when

¹ Wisdom, i. 1.

² On the abuse of this formula by heretics, see Vincent of Lerins' *Common.* XXVI, 69.

³ Matt. vii. 7; Luke xi. 9.

⁴ Matt. xvi. 14 ff.

⁵ Matt. xi. 2; Luke xii. 18; the various patristic interpretations of John the Baptist's question are collected in the *Oxf. Litr. Fathers* ad hoc.

as yet He had to be sought Who was not yet recognized.¹

Besides, this saying was only for the Jews. For the whole purport of that admonition was directed to those who had in their possession the sources whence to seek the Christ. "They have Moses and Elias,"² it says, that is, the Law and the Prophets which proclaim the Christ. Similarly in another place also expressly, "Search the Scriptures in which ye hope for salvation, for they speak of Me."³ And this will be the meaning of "Seek and ye shall find."

For it is plain that what follows is also pertinent to the Jews: "Knock and it shall be opened to you." The Jews had in times past been within the household of GOD; but afterwards, when rejected on account of their transgressions, they began to be apart from GOD. Whereas the nations were never within GOD'S household: they were nothing more than "a drop from a bucket and dust from a threshing-floor,"⁴ and were always outside the door. How then shall one who has ever been outside knock where he has never been? What door is he acquainted with whereat he has never been either received or rejected? Is it not rather one who knows that he has once been within and has been turned out, who knocks and recognizes the door?

¹ In this interpretation of the words Tertullian deserts Clement of Alexandria, whom he elsewhere often follows (see an article by Nöldechen in the *Jahrb. f. protest. Theologie*, XII, 279). Clement applies the injunction to urge the Christian's advance in knowledge: *Strom.* I, 51.

² Luke xvi. 29; an instance of careless quotation.

³ John v. 39.

⁴ Isa. xl. 15

Likewise, "Ask and ye shall receive"¹ is relevant to the case of one who is aware to Whom request must be made and by Whom something has been promised, namely, by the GOD of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, of Whose Person the nations had no more knowledge than they had of any promises of His. And therefore He said with reference to Israel, "I have not been sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."² Not yet had He cast the children's bread to the dogs; not yet was He bidding them to go into the way of the nations.³ It was only at the last that He commanded them to go and teach and baptize the nations⁴ when they were on the point of receiving the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, Who would guide them into all Truth.⁵ This therefore also supports our interpretation. Moreover, if the Apostles, the destined teachers of the nations, were themselves about to receive the Paraclete as their teacher, the injunction, "Seek and ye shall find" was still less applicable to our case; for the doctrine was about to come to us without research through the Apostles as to the Apostles through the Holy Spirit. All the Lord's sayings, indeed, which have come to us through the ears of the Jews have been set down for all; but many of them, addressed to particular classes of persons, only possess for us the character of example, not of injunction.

¹ John xvi. 24. Tertullian frequently confuses this verse with Matt. vii. 7, which he evidently meant to quote here.

² Matt. xv. 24.

³ Matt. x. 5.

⁴ Matt. xxviii. 19.

⁵ John xvi. 13.

CHAPTER IX

Now I am going to grant you your point voluntarily. I will admit, for the sake of argument, that the words "Seek and ye shall find" were addressed to all. Yet even this view is bound to clash with any reasonable rule of interpretation. For no Divine word is so unqualified or so unlimited in its application that the words alone can be used in argument and their real purport be disregarded.

But among first principles I lay this down: that there was a one and definite Truth taught by Christ, which the nations are bound by every means to believe, and therefore to seek, so that when they have found it they may believe it. Yet surely an indefinite search for a single and definite teaching is impossible. Thou must seek until thou findest, and thou must believe when thou hast found. And then nothing more remains for thee to do, save to keep what thou hast believed—provided that thou believest also that there is nothing else to be believed, and therefore nothing remains to be sought for, since thou hast found and believed what was taught by Him Who bids thee seek for nothing beyond that which He taught.

And if any one is in uncertainty what this is, it will be established that Christ's teaching is to be found with us. And for the moment, out of confidence in my proof, I anticipate it, and admonish certain persons that nothing must be sought beyond what they believe to be the proper objects of their search, lest they interpret "Seek and ye shall find" without strict regard to its real purport.

CHAPTER X

Now the true purport of this saying is to be found in three points—in the matter, in the time, and in the limitation. In the matter, for thou must consider what is to be sought; in the time, when thou must seek it; and in the limitation, how long. It follows that that is to be sought which Christ taught, just so long as thou findest not, and until thou findest. But thou didst find when thou didst believe. For thou hadst not believed unless thou hadst found, just as thou wouldst not have sought except that thou mightest find. The very object of thy seeking was to find, and the result of thy finding was to believe. Any further extension of seeking and finding was put an end to by thy believing. The very issue of thy search brought about this restriction for thee. This limit has been fixed for thee by Him Himself Who wills thee neither to believe nor to seek anything beyond what He taught.

If, however, we ought to seek in proportion as we are able to find, because so many varying doctrines have been taught by different persons, we shall be for ever seeking and never believing at all. For where will be the end of seeking? Where the resting-place of belief? Where the fulfilment of finding? With Marcion?¹ But Valentinus also enunciates "Seek and ye shall find." With Valentinus, then? But Apelles too will attack me with this same injunction; and Ebion² and

¹ See below, Chap. XXXIII.

² Tertullian evolved a person and a surname from the

Simon¹ and all one after another who have no other means of ingratiating themselves with me and winning me over to their party. And so I shall be nowhere! whilst I am met on all sides with "Seek and ye shall find"; just as if I were nowhere—as though I were one who had never apprehended what Christ taught, what ought to be sought, what ought to be believed.

CHAPTER XI

ONE may safely wander, if one does not go wrong; although, indeed, to wander is to go wrong; but I mean that he who deserts nothing may safely go astray. Yet surely if I believed what I ought to believe, and still think there is something else to be sought anew, hoping of course that there is something to be found, this hope is due to nothing else than either my never having believed really when I seemed to believe, or to my having ceased to believe. And so in deserting my faith I am found to be the denier of it.

Let me say once for all: No one seeks save he who either has not possessed or has lost his possession. The old woman² had lost one of her ten drachmæ, and therefore she was seeking it; yet as soon as she found it she stopped her search. The neighbour³ had no bread, and therefore he was

self-assumed title, 'Ebionites' ("The Poor"), of a sect who claimed to be the true representatives of those who had received the Lord's benediction: Luke vi. 20; cp. Matt. x. 3. See further in Chap. XXXIII.

¹ Simon Magus, Acts viii. 9 ff.; see below, Chap. XXXIII.

² Luke xv. 8.

³ *Ib.* xi. 5.

knocking; yet as soon as the door was opened to him and he received the bread, he ceased to knock. The widow ¹ was asking to be heard by the judge, because she was not granted an audience; yet as soon as she was heard, she no longer persisted. There is therefore a limit to seeking and knocking and asking. "For to him that asketh 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 does not find! for he is seeking in a place where he will not find. Away with the man who is ever knocking because it will never be opened to him! for he is knocking where no one is. Away with the man who is ever asking because he will never be heard! for he is asking from one who does not hear.

CHAPTER XII

BUT even supposing that we ought to be seeking now and ever, where ought the search to be made? Amongst the heretics, where everything is strange and antagonistic to our truth, and whom we are forbidden to approach? What slave looks for his food from a stranger, let alone his master's enemy? What soldier seeks to obtain largess and pay from unallied, let alone hostile, kings—unless, indeed, he be a deserter or a runaway or a rebel? Even the old woman spoken of was looking for the drachma within her own house; even the man who knocked was thumping his neighbour's door; even

¹ Luke xviii. 2 ff.

the widow was making her appeal, not to a hostile albeit a harsh judge. It is impossible for any one to receive instruction from the same quarter whence destruction comes; it is impossible for any one to be enlightened by that which darkens. Let us make our search, therefore, in our own and from our own and concerning our own; provided only that nothing comes into question which attacks the Rule of Faith.

CHAPTER XIII

Now the Rule of Faith¹—that we may here at this point make our profession of what we maintain—is unquestionably that wherein our belief is affirmed that there is but ONE GOD, the Selfsame with the Creator of the world, Who produced all things out of nothing through His Word sent down in the beginning of all things; that this Word is called His Son, Who in the Name of GOD was seen under divers forms by the patriarchs, was ever heard in the prophets, and lastly was brought down by the Spirit and Power of GOD the Father into the Virgin Mary, became Flesh in her womb, and being born of her lived as Jesus Christ; that thereafter He proclaimed a new law and a new promise of the Kingdom of Heaven, wrought miracles, was crucified, and on the third day rose again, was caught up into the heavens, and sat down at the right hand of the Father; that He sent the Vicarious Power of the Holy Spirit to lead believers; that He will come with glory to

¹ See the Introduction, p. x.

take the saints into the enjoyment of life eternal and of the heavenly promises, and to adjudge the wicked to fire perpetual, after the resurrection of both good and bad has taken place together with the restoration of their flesh.¹

This Rule, taught (as it will be proved) by Christ, admits no questionings amongst us, save those which heresies introduce and which make heretics.

CHAPTER XIV

Now, provided that the form of this Rule be preserved in its own place, thou mayest seek and discuss as much as thou pleasest, and pour forth thy whole desire for curious inquiry if any point seem to thee to be undetermined through ambiguity or obscure from want of clearness. There is surely some brother, a doctor gifted with the grace of knowledge, some one amongst those well-skilled ones who are intimate with thee, and like thyself curious, who although like thyself a seeker will know that it is better for thee in the end to be ignorant, thus avoiding thy knowing what thou oughtest not, since thou already knowest what thou oughtest to know. "Thy faith," Christ said,² "hath saved thee," not thy argumentative skill in the Scriptures. Faith is posited in a Rule: it hath a Law, and Salvation that cometh from the observance of the Law. But argumentative skill depends upon curious inquiry, and possesses a fame derived

¹ Tertullian's materialistic views of the soul naturally led him to equally materialistic views of the resurrection body.

² Luke xviii. 42.

solely from zeal in practice. Let curiosity yield to faith, let fame give place to salvation. At all events let them cease to be a hindrance, or let them be quiet. To know nothing contrary to the Rule is to know everything. Suppose that heretics were not the enemies of the Truth; suppose that we were not forewarned to avoid them, yet what kind of an action would it be to unite with men who even themselves profess that they are still seeking? If they are still truly seeking, they have as yet found nothing certain, and therefore as long as they go on seeking they display their own hesitation about any tenets which they seem for the moment to hold. And so if thou who art similarly a seeker lookest to them who themselves are also seekers—a man in doubt looking to others in doubt, a man in uncertainty to others in like plight—blind thyself, thou art bound to be led by the blind into the ditch.¹

But when for purposes of deceit they pretend to be still seeking, in order craftily to recommend their own views to us through an insinuation of disquietude, and having approached us immediately defend those points which they previously said needed investigation, we are at once bound to refute them so as to make them understand that we are not deniers of Christ but of themselves. For while they are still seeking they are not yet holding, and since they are not holding they have not yet believed, and since they have not yet believed they are not yet Christians.

But, it may be objected, when they do really hold and believe, they affirm the necessity of seek-

¹ Matt. xv. 14.

ing in order that they may be able to defend their belief.

Then they actually deny it before they defend it, since whilst they are seeking they confess that they have not yet believed. How much more are they not Christians to us who are not even so to themselves. What kind of a faith do they argue for who arrive at it by deceit? To what truth do they lend their countenance who introduce it with a lie?

But they themselves treat of the Scriptures and argue out of the Scriptures. Of course; for whence could they speak concerning the things of the Faith save out of the literature of the Faith?

CHAPTER XV

WE come, then, to our main point; for to this indeed we were steering, and for this we were laying the preparatory foundation in our preceding discourse. So that from this point onward we may contest the ground on which our opponents make their appeal. They make the Scriptures the ground of their plea, and by this audacious stroke of theirs immediately influence a certain number of persons. Moreover, in the encounter itself, they weary even the strong, they capture the weak, and the undecided they send away anxious. We therefore make our strongest stand in maintaining that they are not to be admitted to any discussion of the Scriptures at all. If the Scriptures are to be their source of strength, then the question

as to who are the rightful possessors of the Scriptures must be gone into first, so as to prevent their use by one who has no manner of right to them.

CHAPTER XVI

I MIGHT be bringing forward this objection from a want of confidence, or from a wish to enter upon the case in dispute in a different manner from the heretics, were not a reason to be found at the outset in that our Faith owes obedience to the Apostle who forbids us to enter into questionings, or to lend our ears to novel sayings, or to associate with a heretic after one admonition¹—he does not say after discussion. Indeed, he forbade discussion by fixing on admonition as the reason for meeting a heretic. And he mentions this one admonition, because a heretic is not a Christian, and to prevent his appearing worthy of being, like a Christian,² censured once and again in the presence of two or three witnesses; since he is to be censured for the same reason that he is not to be disputed with—because argumentative contests about the Scriptures profit nothing, save of course to upset the stomach or the brain.

CHAPTER XVII

THIS or that heresy rejects certain of the Scriptures, and those which it receives it perverts both

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 4; Titus iii. 10.

² Matt. xviii. 15.

by additions and excisions to agree with its own teaching. For even when it receives them it does not receive them entire, and if it does in some cases receive them entire, it none the less perverts them by fabricating heterodox interpretations.¹ A spurious interpretation injures the Truth quite as much as a tampered text. Baseless presumptions naturally refuse to acknowledge the means of their own refutation. They rely on passages which they have fraudulently rearranged or received because of their obscurity.² What wilt thou effect, though thou art most skilled in the Scriptures, if what thou maintainest is rejected by the other side and what thou rejectest is maintained? Thou wilt indeed lose nothing—save thy voice in the dispute; and gain nothing—save indignation at the blasphemy.

¹ Tertullian is here following Clement Alex. (*Strom.* VII, 16), and this, I think, determines his meaning. He is not referring to spurious scriptures, such as the Psalms of Valentinus or the Phaneroseis of Apelles, but to the genuine Scriptures, which some of the heretics mutilated or perverted. Clement's words are: "Though it be true that the heretics also have the audacity to use the prophetic Scriptures, yet in the first place they do not use them all, and in the second place they do not use them in their entirety, nor as the general frame and tissue of the prophecy suggest; but picking out ambiguous phrases, they turn them to their own opinions, plucking a few scattered utterances, without considering what is intended by them, but perverting the bare letter as it stands. For in almost all the passages they employ you will find how they attend to the words alone, while they change the meaning, neither understanding them as they are spoken, nor even using in their natural sense such extracts as they adduce." On the dishonest neglect of the context of Scripture, see Vincent of Lerins' *Comm.* xxv. 64 f.; Cyprian, *de unit. eccl.* 11.

² The Marcionites mutilated, the rest explained them away: Iren. III, 12. 12.

CHAPTER XVIII

BUT the man for whose sake thou mayest have entered into an argument from the Scriptures in order to strengthen him when wavering, will he incline more to the Truth or to heresies? Influenced by the very fact that he sees thou hast effected nothing, since each side possesses equal vantage-ground in denial and assertion, and is without doubt in a like position, he will go away rendered still more uncertain by the discussion, and not knowing which he is to adjudge the heresy. For they themselves are naturally bound to retort these charges upon us. They must necessarily assert that the falsification of the Scriptures and lying interpretations have been introduced by us, because they equally maintain that the Truth is with them.

CHAPTER XIX

APPEAL, therefore, must not be made to the Scriptures, nor must the contest be carried on concerning points where victory is impossible or uncertain or too little uncertain. For even though the discussion from the Scriptures should not so result as to place each side in an equal position, the order of things would demand that this point should first be decided—the point which alone now calls for discussion, namely: Who holds the Faith to which the Scriptures belong? From whom and through whom, and when, and to whom was the

doctrinal teaching delivered whereby men are made Christians? For wheresoever it shall appear that the true Christian religion and faith exist, there will be found the true Scriptures and interpretations and all Christian traditions.

CHAPTER XX

CHRIST JESUS our Lord (may He allow me so to speak for the moment), Whoever He is, of whatever GOD the Son, of whatever substance Man and GOD, of whatever Faith the Teacher, of whatever reward the Promiser, did, while he was living on earth, Himself declare what He was, what He had been, what was His Father's will which He carried out, what was the duty of man that He laid down, either openly to the people or privately to His disciples, out of the number of whom He had attached to Himself twelve special ones who were destined to be the teachers of the nations. Consequently, when one of them was struck off, He bade the eleven remaining ones to go and teach all nations, who were to be baptized into the Father and into the Son and into the Holy Spirit.¹ Immediately, therefore, the Apostles (whose title denotes their being sent), having added to their number by lot a twelfth,² Matthias, in the place of Judas, on the authority of a prophecy in a Psalm of David,³ and having obtained the promised power of the Holy Spirit for miracles and for utterance,

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19 f.

² Acts i. 20.

³ Ps. cix. 8.

first throughout Judæa bore witness to the faith in Christ Jesus; and, having founded Churches, then went forth into the world and spread abroad the same doctrine of the same Faith to the nations. In like manner, too, they founded Churches in every city, from which the rest of the Churches hereafter have derived the transmission of their faith and the seeds of their doctrine, and are daily deriving them in order to become Churches. Thus these Churches themselves are also reckoned as Apostolic because they are the offspring of Apostolic Churches. Every kind of thing must necessarily be classed according to its origin. Consequently these Churches, numerous and important as they are, form but the one Primitive Church founded by the Apostles, from which source they all derive. So that all are primitive and all are Apostolic; whilst that all are in one Unity is proved by the fellowship of peace and title of brotherhood and common pledge of amity¹—privileges which nothing governs but the one tradition of the selfsame Bond of Faith.

CHAPTER XXI

ON this ground, therefore, we rule our limitation that if the Lord Jesus Christ sent the Apostles

¹ *Contesseratio hospitalitatis*. The *contesseratio* was their unity of doctrine; see below, Chap. XXXVI, for the *contesseratio* between Rome and the African Churches. One practical outcome of this was the hospitable entertainment of ordinary laymen (who were provided by their bishop with Letters of Communion) by their Christian brethren in every part of the world: Sozom. V, 16.

to preach, no others ought to be received as preachers save those whom Christ appointed; since no other knoweth the Father save the Son, and He to whom the Son hath revealed Him.¹ Nor does the Son appear to have revealed Him to any but the Apostles whom He sent to preach—surely only what He revealed to them.

Now what they preached—that is, what Christ revealed to them—I rule ought to be proved by no other means than through the same Churches which the Apostles themselves founded by preaching to them *viva voce*, as men say, and afterwards by Epistles. If this is so, it follows accordingly that all doctrine which agrees with those Apostolic Churches and original founts of Faith must be reckoned for Truth, as preserving unquestionably that which the Churches received from the Apostles, and the Apostles from Christ, and Christ from God; and, on the other hand, that all doctrine which savours contrary to the Truth of the Churches and of the Apostles of Christ and of GOD, must be condemned at once as having its origin in falsehood. It remains therefore for us to show whether this our doctrine—the Rule of which we have set forth above—is derived from the tradition of the Apostles; and, as a deduction from this, whether the other doctrines come of falsehood.

We are in communion with the Apostolic Churches, a privilege which no diverse doctrine enjoys. This is evidence of Truth.

¹ Matt. xi. 27.

CHAPTER XXII

BUT inasmuch as the proof is so easy that were it immediately produced nothing would remain for consideration, let us for the moment, supposing we had no proof to produce, give place to our opponents to see if they think they can set aside this limitation.

They are wont to say that the Apostles did not know all things; driven to this by the same madness which leads them to face about again and say that the Apostles did indeed know all things but did not deliver all things to all persons—in either case exposing Christ to blame for sending out Apostles with either too little preparation or too little simplicity.

But who in his senses can believe that those men were ignorant of anything, whom the Lord gave to be teachers, keeping them close to Himself in companionship,¹ in discipleship, in society; to whom He was accustomed to explain privately whatever was obscure,² saying that it was granted to them to know hidden truths which the people were not permitted to understand?³ Was anything hidden from Peter who was called the Rock⁴ of

¹ Mark iii. 14.

² *Ib.* iv. 34.

³ Matt. xiii. 11.

⁴ *Ib.* xvi. 18. Tertullian is not quite consistent in his interpretation of this passage. Here and *de monog.* 8 and *de pud.* 21 he makes St. Peter the rock, but *adv. Marc.* IV, 13 the rock is Christ. The patristic exegesis of this text often varied, even in the writings of the same father, as the point of view varied. In a somewhat similar way Christ is regarded by St. Paul sometimes as Himself the

the Church which was to be built, who obtained the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the power of loosing and binding in Heaven and on earth? Was anything hidden from John, the most beloved of the Lord, who lay on His breast,¹ to whom alone the Lord beforehand pointed out Judas the traitor, and whom He commended to Mary as a son in His own place?² Who can maintain that they were ignorant to whom He even manifested His own glory, and Moses and Elijah, and the voice of His Father from heaven?³ not as though He were rejecting the other Apostles, but because "by three witnesses shall every word be established."⁴ Then too, they must be ignorant to whom after His Resurrection He deigned to expound all the Scriptures in the way.⁵

True enough He did once say, "I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now";⁶ adding, however, "When He, the Spirit of Truth, shall have come, He will lead you into all Truth." He shewed that they who, according to His promise, should attain all Truth through the Spirit of Truth, would be ignorant of nothing.

And surely He fulfilled His promise, for the

"foundation" of the Church (1 Cor. iii. 11), and sometimes as the "corner stone," with the Apostles and Prophets as the foundation (Eph. ii. 20). See Lightfoot, *Clem. Rom.* II, 482 ff.

¹ Hence the title of the Apostle *ὁ ἐπιστήθιος*: See Westcott on John xiii. 25.

² *Ib.* xix. 26.

³ Matt. xvii. 1 ff.; Mark ix. 1 ff.; Luke ix. 28 ff.

⁴ Deut. xix. 15; Matt. xviii. 16; 2 Cor. xiii. 1.

⁵ Luke xxiv. 32.

⁶ John xvi. 13 f.

Acts of the Apostles prove the descent of the Holy Spirit.¹ And those who do not receive this Scripture² are unable either to recognize that the Holy Spirit has yet been sent to the disciples, or to maintain that they themselves are the Church, since they cannot prove when or with what origin this body was founded. It is of vast importance to them not to produce the proofs of their position, lest simultaneously the exposure of their falsehoods should be obvious.

CHAPTER XXIII

FOR the purpose of scoffing at some ignorance in the Apostles, the heretics bring forward the point that Peter and his companions were blamed by Paul. "Something therefore," say they, "was lacking in them." They say this in order to build up that other contention of theirs, that a fuller knowledge might afterwards have come to them, such as came to Paul who blamed his predecessors.

Now here I may say to those who reject the Acts of the Apostles: "The first thing for you to do is to shew who this Paul was—both what he was before he was an Apostle, and how he became an Apostle"; since at other times they make very great use of him in disputed matters. For though he himself declares that from a persecutor he became an Apostle, that statement is not sufficient for one who yields credence only after proof. For not even the Lord Himself bore witness concern-

¹ Acts ii. 1 ff.

² The Marcionites. For their other rejections and mutilations of the New Testament, see below, Chap. XXXVIII.

ing Himself. But let them believe without the Scriptures that they may believe against the Scriptures. Yet they must shew from the instance adduced of Peter being blamed by Paul that another form of Gospel was introduced by Paul beside that which Peter and the rest had previously put forth. Whereas the fact is, when changed from a persecutor into a preacher, he is led in to the brethren by brethren as one of themselves, and presented to them by those who had clothed themselves with faith at the Apostles' hands. Afterwards, as he himself relates,¹ he "went up to Jerusalem to see Peter," because of his office, and by right of course of an identical faith and preaching. For they would not have wondered at his having become a preacher from a persecutor if he had preached anything contrary to their teaching; nor would they have "glorified the Lord" if Paul had presented himself as His adversary. Accordingly they "gave him the right hand,"² the sign of concord and agreement, and arranged among themselves a distribution of office, not a division of the Gospel, namely, that each should preach not a different message, but the same message to different persons, Peter to the Circumcision, Paul to the Gentiles.

But if Peter was blamed because, after he had lived with Gentiles he separated himself from their companionship out of respect of persons, that surely was a fault of behaviour, not of preaching. For no question was therein involved of any other GOD than the Creator,³ nor of any other Christ

¹ Gal. i. 18 ff.

² *Ib.* ii. 9.

³ Against Marcion.

than He Who came from Mary,¹ nor of any other hope than the resurrection.²

CHAPTER XXIV

I AM not good man enough, or rather I am not bad man enough, to pit Apostle against Apostle. But since these most perverse persons thrust forward that rebuke for the purpose of throwing suspicion upon the earlier teaching,³ I will reply, as it were, for Peter, that Paul himself said⁴ that he was made all things to all men—to the Jews a Jew, and to non-Jews a non-Jew—in order to gain all. And so in certain times, persons and cases they would blame actions which they themselves yet might equally perform in other times, persons and cases. Thus, for instance, Peter might likewise have blamed Paul because, while forbidding circumcision, he himself had circumcised Timothy.⁵ Away with those who judge Apostles. Well is it that Peter is made equal to Paul in his martyrdom.

But although Paul was caught up as far as the third heaven, and when brought into paradise heard certain things there, yet these revelations cannot be thought to be such as would render him more qualified to teach another doctrine, since their very nature was such that they could not be communicated to any human being.⁶ But if that unknown revelation did leak out and become

¹ Against Valentinus. See below, note on Chap. XXX.

² Against all Gnostics.

³ That is, the teaching of St. Peter.

⁴ 1 Cor. ix. 20 ff.

⁵ Acts xvi. 3.

⁶ 2 Cor. xii. 2 ff.

known to some one, and if any heresy affirms that it is a follower of that revelation, then either Paul is guilty of having betrayed his secret, or some one else must be shewn to have been subsequently caught up into paradise to whom permission was given to speak out what Paul was not allowed to whisper.

CHAPTER XXV

BUT, as we have said, the same madness is seen when they allow indeed that the Apostles were not ignorant of anything nor preached different doctrines, yet will have it that they did not reveal all things to all persons, but committed some things openly to all, and others secretly to a few; basing this assertion on the fact that Paul used this expression to Timothy, "O Timothy, guard the deposit";¹ and again, "Keep the good deposit."² What was this "deposit" of so secret a nature as to be reckoned to belong to another doctrine? Was it a part of that charge of which he says, "This charge I commit to thee, son Timothy"?³ And likewise of that commandment of which he says, "I charge thee before GOD Who quickeneth all things, and Jesus Christ Who witnessed before Pontius Pilate a good confession, that thou observe the commandment"?⁴ What commandment, now, and what charge? From the context it may be gathered not that something is obscurely hinted at in this phrase concerning a more hidden doctrine, but rather that he was com-

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 20.

³ 1 Tim. i. 18.

² 2 Tim. i. 14.

⁴ *Ib.* vi. 13 f.

manded not to admit anything beyond that which he had heard from Paul himself, openly too, I take it—"before many witnesses" are his words.¹ If by these many witnesses the heretics refuse to understand the Church, it matters not, since nothing could be kept secret which was being set forth before many witnesses.

Nor, again, can his wish that Timothy should "commit these things to faithful men who would be fit to teach others also"² be explained as a proof of any hidden doctrine. For when he says "these things," he refers to things of which he was writing at the moment. In reference to hidden things, present only to their secret knowledge, he would, as of absent things, use the word "those," not "these."

CHAPTER XXVI

BUT nevertheless, it may be said, it was natural for the Apostle, when he committed to any one the administration of the Gospel, which was to be ministered neither indiscriminately nor rashly, to add the injunction in accordance with the Lord's saying that "a pearl should not be cast before swine nor that which is holy to the dogs."³

The Lord spake openly without any indication of some hidden mystery. Himself had commanded that what they had heard in darkness and in secret they were to preach in light and on the housetops.⁴ Himself had prefigured in a parable⁵ that they

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 2.

² *Ib.*

³ Matt. vii. 6.

⁴ *Ib.* x. 27.

⁵ Luke xix. 12 ff.

were not to keep even one pound, that is, one word of His, fruitless in a hidden place. Himself used to teach that a lamp is not wont to be thrust away under a measure, but placed on a lampstand that it may give light to all that are in the house.¹ These instructions the Apostles either neglected or by no means understood if they failed to fulfil them, and concealed any portion of the light, that is, of the Word of GOD and mystery of Christ. I am fully assured they had no fear of any one, neither of the violence of the Jews nor of the Gentiles: how much more, then, would these men preach freely in the Church who were not silent in synagogues and public places! Nay, they could have converted neither Jews nor Gentiles unless they had set forth in order what they wished them to believe! Much less would they have kept back anything from Churches already believing to commit it to a few other persons privately! And even if they used to discuss some things in their private circles (so to speak), yet it is incredible that these things would be of such a nature as to introduce another Rule of Faith, different from and contrary to that which they were setting forth openly to all; so that they should be speaking of one GOD in the Church and of another in their private houses; and describing one substance of Christ in public and another in private; and proclaiming one hope of the resurrection before all and another before the few; at the time when they themselves were beseeching in their own Epistles that all would speak one and the same thing,² and that there should be no divisions and

¹ Matt. v. 15.

² 1 Cor. i. 10.

dissensions in the Church, because they themselves, whether it were Paul or others, were preaching the same thing. Moreover they remembered, "Let your speech be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for what is more than this is of evil"¹; words spoken to prevent them from treating the Gospel in different ways.

CHAPTER XXVII

IF, then, it is incredible either that the Apostles were ignorant of the full scope of their message, or that they did not publish to all the whole plan of the Rule of Faith, let us see whether, perchance; whilst the Apostles indeed preached simply and fully, the Churches through their own fault received it otherwise than as the Apostles used to set it forth. All these incitements to hesitancy you will find thrust forward by heretics.

They hold up instances of Churches reprovèd by the Apostle. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?"² and "Ye were running so well: who hath hindered you?"³ and at the very beginning of his letter, "I wonder that ye have been thus so soon removed from Him Who called you in grace to another Gospel."⁴ Likewise the words written to the Corinthians because they were still "carnal," and had to be fed on milk, not yet being able to take meat; who thought they knew something when not yet did they know anything as they ought to know it.⁵

¹ Matt. v. 27.

² Gal. iii. 1.

³ *Ib.* v. 7.

⁴ *Ib.* i. 6.

⁵ 1 Cor. iii. 1 f.; viii. 2; xvi. 19.

Now when they instance these reprov'd Churches let them be sure that they were corrected. Moreover, let them recognize those Churches for whose "faith and knowledge and manner of life" the Apostle "rejoices and gives thanks to GOD¹ : Churches which to-day unite with those reprov'd ones in the privileges of the selfsame instruction.

CHAPTER XXVIII

BUT come now, suppose that all have erred : grant that the Apostle was deceived in bearing his testimony, and that the Holy Spirit regarded no Church so as to lead it into the Truth, although sent for this purpose by Christ, asked from the Father that He might be the Teacher of truth ;² grant that the Steward of GOD and Vicar of Christ neglected His office and permitted Churches for a time to understand differently what He Himself was preaching through the Apostles ; yet is it at all likely that so many and such important Churches should all have "erred" into one and the same faith ? No uniform issue results from many chances. Error of doctrine on the part of the Churches was bound to have assumed various forms. But when one and the same tenet is found amongst many, that is not error, but tradition. Will any one then dare to affirm that the authors of the tradition were in error ?

¹ Rom. i. 8 ; xv. 14 ; xvi. 19 ; Eph. i. 15 ; Phil. i. 3 ff. ; Col. i. 4 ff. ; 1 Thess. i. 3 ff. ; 2 Thess. i. 3 f.

² John xiv. 26,

CHAPTER XXIX

HOWEVER the "error" came, it reigned for just so long, of course, as there were no heresies. Truth waited for the Marcionites and the Valentinians to set her free. In the meantime the Gospel was wrongly preached, men wrongly believed, so many countless thousands were wrongly baptized, so many works of faith were wrongly wrought, so many spiritual powers and gifts were wrongly put into operation, so many priesthoods, so many ministries were wrongly performed, so many martyrdoms were wrongly crowned! Or if not wrongly and uselessly, how can you characterize the fact that the things of GOD were running their course before it was known to which GOD they belonged? that there were Christians before Christ was found? heresy before true doctrine? Unquestionably in every case Truth precedes its copy: the counterfeit comes afterwards. But it is absurd enough that heresy should be mistaken for the earlier teaching; especially since it is that very earlier teaching which foretold that heresies would come and would have to be guarded against.¹ To a Church possessing this teaching it was written—nay, the teaching itself writes to the Church: "Though an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel than that we have preached, let him be anathema."²

¹ See references above, Chap. I.

² Gal. i. 8.

CHAPTER XXX

WHERE at that time was Marcion, the Pontic shipmaster,¹ the student of the Stoic philosophy? Where, then, was Valentinus,² the disciple of Platonism? For it is agreed that they lived not so very long ago in the reign of Antoninus³ for the most part, and that at first they were believers in the doctrine of the Catholic Church in Rome during the episcopate of the blessed Eleutherus,⁴ until, on account of their ever restless speculation whereby they corrupted the brethren also, they were expelled more than once—Marcion, indeed, with the two hundred sesterces that he had brought into the Church—and when at last banished into

¹ Marcion's home was Sinope, of which city his father was bishop. His heresy was free from pagan elements, though he postulated two Gods—one the Creator or severe God of the Old Testament, and the other a Supreme God of pure benevolence Who was unknown to man till revealed by Christ. He rejected the whole of the Old Testament, and accepted only ten Epistles of St. Paul and the Gospel of St. Luke, which he mutilated (see below, Chap. XXXIII). He was the author of *Antitheses*, or instances of antagonism between the Law and the Gospel. Tertullian combated his tenets in his Five Books against Marcion.

² Valentinus was an Alexandrian Platonist who settled in Rome about the year 140. He attempted to reconcile Christian teaching with pagan philosophy, and elaborated an intricate system of æons or emanations from infinity in order to bridge over the gulf between the infinite and the finite. He denied that the body of Christ was derived from the Virgin's substance.

³ Antoninus, A.D. 138–161.

⁴ Eleutherus, Bishop of Rome about 174–189; but the excommunication of Marcion and Valentinian took place earlier than this (in 145).

perpetual separation from the faithful, they spread abroad the poisonous seeds of their peculiar doctrines. Afterwards, when Marcion had professed penitence and agreed to the condition imposed upon him, namely, that if he could bring back to the Church the residue whom he had instructed to their perdition, he should be received into communion, he was prevented by death.

For indeed heresies must needs be.¹ Yet it does not follow that heresies are good because they are needful. As if evil also were not needful! For it was even needful for the Lord to be betrayed; yet "Woe to the traitor"² to prevent any one from upholding heresies on this same ground of necessity.

If we must examine also the pedigree of Apelles,³ he is not of such long standing as Marcion himself, who was his instructor and moulder, but by a carnal lapse he deserted the Marcionite chastity and withdrew from the presence of his most holy master to Alexandria. Returning thence after some years, in no way improved save that he was no longer a Marcionite, he fastened on another woman, that very virgin Philumena already mentioned,⁴ who afterwards herself also became a

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 19.

² Matt. xxvi. 24; Mark xiv. 21.

³ Apelles was the most famous of Marcion's disciples; but he modified the extreme dualism of his teacher and wholly subordinated the world-Creator to the Supreme God. The charges of immorality brought against him, and likewise against Philumena, were no doubt baseless slanders. No other writers refer to them, and they may easily have originated in the misunderstanding of some figurative phrase. See note, Chap. XLIV. Tertullian's treatise against Apelles is lost.

⁴ See Chap. VI, where see note.

monstrous prostitute; and misled by her influence he wrote the "Revelations" which he learnt from her.¹ There are those living at this day who remember them, their own actual disciples and followers, so that they cannot deny their later date.

Moreover, too, these men are condemned by their own works, as the Lord said.² For if Marcion separated the New Testament from the Old, he is of later date than that which he separated, since he could only separate what was united. Having been united then before it was separated, the fact that it was afterwards separated shows that the separator was later.

Similarly Valentinus, by his various expositions and unhesitating emendations, shows absolutely that what he emended as being previously faulty belonged to an earlier age.

We name these men as being the more remarkable and assiduous corruptors of the Truth. But a certain Nigidius³ and Hermogenes⁴ and many others are still moving about perverting the ways of the Lord. Let them show me by what authority they have come forward. If they preach some other GOD, on what ground do they use the history and the writings and the names of that GOD against Whom they preach? If the same GOD, why do

¹ It appears from Ps.-Tert., *adv. hæc.* 6, that Apelles ordered public lections to be read from this book of "Revelations" dictated by Philumena.

² Matt. vii. 16.

³ Of Nigidius nothing is known.

⁴ One of Tertullian's two treatises against Hermogenes is extant. Hermogenes was a Karthaginian artist, who held that God formed the world out of pre-existing (eternal) matter,

they preach Him in a different way? Let them prove themselves to be new Apostles; let them say that Christ came down a second time, a second time taught, was a second time crucified, a second time dead, a second time raised. For so the Apostle has described Him as being wont to make Apostles, and to give them besides the power of showing the same signs that He Himself showed. I desire, therefore, that the miracles of these men be produced; save that I admit their greatest miracle is their inverted rivalry of the Apostles. For the latter used to make the dead alive, but these men make the living dead.

CHAPTER XXXI

LET me, however, return from this digression to discuss the priority of Truth and the lateness of falsehood, with the support of that parable¹ which places first the good seed of the wheat sown by the Lord, and afterwards brings in the corruption of the barren weed of the wild oats by His enemy the Devil. For properly this parable represents the difference of doctrines; since the Word of GOD is also in other places likened to seed. Thus from the very order itself it is made manifest that what was first delivered is from the Lord, and true; and on the other hand, that what was afterwards introduced is strange and false. This sentence will stand against all later heresies which possess no conscientious ground of confidence whereby to claim the truth for their own side.

¹ Matt. xiii. 37 ff.

CHAPTER XXXII

BUT if any heresies dare to plant themselves in Apostolic times, so as to be thought thereby to have been handed down by the Apostles because they existed under the Apostles, we can say: "Let them set forth the earliest beginnings of their Churches; let them unfold the roll of their bishops coming down by succession from the beginning in such a manner that their first bishop had for his ordainer and predecessor one of the Apostles or of those Apostolic men who never deserted the Apostles."

For in this way Apostolic Churches declare their origin: as, for instance, the Church of the Smyrnæans records that Polycarp¹ was placed there by John; and the Roman Church that Clement was ordained thereto by Peter. And exactly in the same way the rest of the Churches can produce persons who, ordained to the episcopate by Apostles, became transmitters of the Apostolic seed.

Let the heretics invent something of the same sort; for what is unlawful for them after blasphemy? Yet even if they should invent such a thing, they will gain nothing by it. For their very doctrine, when compared with the Apostolic doctrine, will itself declare by its diverseness and contrariety that it had neither Apostle nor Apostolic man for its author: because as the Apostles would not have taught differently from each other,

¹ An account of St. Polycarp, and a translation of his Epistle, is published in this series of Early Church Classics.

so neither would Apostolic men have uttered things contrary to the Apostles, unless those who learnt from the Apostles taught a different doctrine.

According to this standard, consequently, they will be tested by those Churches which can produce perhaps no Apostle or Apostolic man for their founder, since they are of much later foundation—those, for instance, that are being daily founded. Yet since they agree in the same faith they are none the less accounted Apostolical by virtue of close kinship in doctrine.

In this way let all heresies, when challenged by our Churches, according to each of these standards, prove how they imagine themselves to be Apostolical. But indeed they are not so; nor can they prove themselves to be what they are not; nor are they received into communion and fellowship by Churches which are in any way Apostolical, seeing that they are in no way Apostolical because of their divergence in doctrine.

CHAPTER XXXIII

I ADDUCE in addition to these arguments an examination of the doctrines themselves which were in existence in the time of the Apostles, and were by the same Apostles both pointed out and rejected. For thus, too, they will be more easily exposed when they are proved either to have existed already at that time, or to have derived their origin from those which did then exist.

Paul, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, censures the deniers and doubters of the resurrection.¹ This opinion is properly that of the Sadducees.² Marcion adopts a part of it, and Apelles, and Valentinus, and all others who impugn the resurrection of the flesh.³ In writing to the Galatians⁴ he rebukes the observers and defenders of circumcision and the Law. This is the heresy of Ebion.⁵ When giving instructions to Timothy⁶ he also brands with reproach those who forbid marriage. Marcion and his follower Apelles lay down this prohibition. In similar terms he refers to those who say that "the resurrection is past already."⁷ This the Valentinians assert concerning themselves.⁸ Again, when he mentions "endless genealogies,"⁹ Valentinus is recognized, according to whom some Æon or other of a strange and shifting name produces Sense and Truth out of its own Grace; and these in like manner generate from themselves Word and Life; while these again produce Man and Church; from which first ogdoad of Æons come ten others, while twelve Æons besides with won-

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 12.

² Matt. xxii. 23; Acts xxiii. 8.

³ The resurrection of the flesh, or of the body, as taught in a crude and materialistic form by Tertullian and others, was rightly rejected by all Gnostics, but on wrong grounds, namely, their belief in the inherent malignity of matter.

⁴ Gal. v. 2.

⁵ The Ebionites were judaizers and psilanthropists; see above on ch. x. (p. 50).

⁶ 1 Tim. iv. 3.

⁷ 2 Tim. ii. 18.

⁸ The Valentinians and many of the Gnostics and Docetæ admitted a spiritual resurrection in baptism.

⁹ 1 Tim. i. 4.

drous names make up the entire fiction of the Thirty.¹

The same Apostle, when he upbraids those "in bondage to the elements,"² points at some teaching of Hermogenes, who introduces Matter as unoriginated, and thereby makes it equal to GOD Who is unoriginate; and while thus making the mother of the elements a goddess, he may well be "in bondage" to her whom he compares to GOD.

Moreover, John in the Apocalypse³ is bidden to chastise those who "eat idol-sacrifices and commit fornication." Other Nicolaitans⁴ exist at the present day: it is called the Gaian heresy.⁵ Again, in his Epistle,⁶ he especially calls those Antichrists who denied that "Christ has come in Flesh," and who did not regard Jesus as the Son of GOD. The former point Marcion maintained, the latter Ebion. The system also of Simonian sorcery, serving angels, was expressly reckoned among idolatries, and by the Apostle Peter condemned in the person of Simon himself.⁷

¹ For an excellent account of the Valentinian system see the monograph of Dr. Lipsius in Smith's *D. C. B.* IV, 1076.

² Gal. iv. 9.

³ Rev. ii. 14.

⁴ These heretics, named from Nicolas, one of the Seven, whose teaching they probably perverted, are denounced by early writers for their impurity, but nothing is certainly known about them beyond what is said in the Apocalypse.

⁵ The name takes various forms in different writers (see *D. C. B.* I, 380), but the sect is generally known as the "Cainite," a branch of the Ophites. They worshipped the Serpent, regarded the Creator as an evil being, and reversed all the moral judgements of the Old Testament.

⁶ 1 John iv. 13.

⁷ Acts viii. 9 ff.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THESE comprehend in my belief the classes of corrupt doctrines which we learn from the Apostles themselves existed in their days. And yet we do not find amid so many varieties of perverse teaching any school that occasioned a controversy concerning GOD as the Creator of all things. No one dared to conjecture a second GOD. Doubt was felt more readily about the Son than about the Father, until Marcion introduced, besides the Creator, another GOD, of goodness only; and until Apelles fashioned some kind of glorious Angel¹ of the Higher GOD as the Creator and GOD of the Law and of Israel, affirming Him to be of fire; and until Valentinus scattered his Æons and elaborated the fault of one Æon into the generation of GOD the Creator.² To these persons alone, and to these persons first, has the Truth respecting the Divine Nature been revealed. They obtained, we cannot doubt, greater privileges and fuller grace from the Devil, who in this way also wished emulously to rival GOD, and by poisonous doctrines to make (in opposition to the saying of the Lord) "the disciples above their Master."³

Let, therefore, any and every heresy select for itself the time (allowing that the time is important!) when it came into existence, so long as it is not of the Truth, and allowing, of course, that those which were not in existence in the Apostles' days cannot have existed then! For if they had existed then

¹ See above, Chap. VII.

² The fall of Sophia from the Pleroma; see note, Chap. VII.

³ Matt. x. 24; Luke vi. 40.

they would have been named that they might also have been repressed.

If, then, the modern heresies are the same, only somewhat more elaborated, as those which existed in a simpler form in the Apostles' time, they derive their condemnation from this fact. Or, if some indeed then existed, but others which arose afterwards adopted certain opinions from them, these, by sharing in their teaching, must of necessity also share in their condemnation. The above-mentioned definition of later date also points the same way, whereby even though there should be no participation in condemned doctrines, they would be prejudged on the score of their age alone, being so much the more corrupt because unnamed even by the Apostles.

CHAPTER XXXV

ALL heresies have now been challenged by us according to these rules, and convicted; now let the heresies themselves—whether they be later than or contemporaneous with the Apostles, provided only they differ from Apostolic teaching: whether they be censured by them in general or specific terms, provided only they be forecondemned—dare to allege in reply any rules of this kind against our system of doctrine. For if they deny its truth they are bound to prove it to be heresy, convicted by the same standard whereby they themselves are convicted; and they are bound, at the same time, to show where the Truth is to be sought, since it has been proved already not to be with them.

Our system is not later, nay, it is earlier than

all; and this is an evidence of its truth, for truth everywhere holds the first place. It is nowhere condemned by Apostles, nay, it is maintained by them; and this is proof that it is their very own. For they make it quite clear that that doctrine which they refuse to condemn, whilst condemning each one foreign to it, is their own, and therefore they also uphold it.

CHAPTER XXXVI

COME now, thou who willest to exercise thy curiosity to better purpose in the business of thy salvation: go through the Apostolic Churches where the very thrones of the Apostles at this very day preside over their own districts, where their own genuine letters are read which speak their words and bring the presence of each before our minds. If Achaia is nearest to thee, thou hast Corinth. If thou art not far from Macedonia, thou hast Philippi. If thou canst travel into Asia, thou hast Ephesus. Or if thou art near to Italy, thou hast Rome, where we too have an authority close at hand.¹ What a happy Church is that whereon the Apostles poured out their whole doctrine² together with their blood; where Peter suffers a passion like his Lord's,³ where Paul is crowned with the death of John,⁴ whence John the

¹ The African Church was not founded by an Apostle, but from Italy: Rome was therefore its natural authority.

² *i. e.* without any reservations, such as the heretics asserted: Chap. XXV.

³ Tertullian is the first to relate that St. Peter was crucified; Origen (*apud* Euseb. III, 1) adds, "head downwards."

⁴ *i. e.* John the Baptist.

Apostle, after being immersed in boiling oil and taking no hurt,¹ is banished to an island. Let us see what she hath learnt, what she hath taught, what bond of friendship she hath had with the African Churches. She acknowledges one GOD the Creator of the universe, and Christ Jesus the Son of GOD the Creator, born of the Virgin Mary, and she teaches the resurrection of the flesh.² She unites the Law and the Prophets with the Evangelic and Apostolic writings: out of these she causeth her faith to drink; and that faith she sealet with water, clotheth with the Holy Spirit, feedeth with the Eucharist, stimulateth with martyrdom, and receiveth no one who opposeth this teaching.

This is that teaching from which heresies have gone forth—to say nothing now of its prediction of the coming of heresies. But they were not "of it"³ from the moment when they became opposed to it. Even from the kernel of the mellow, rich, and indispensable olive springs the rough oleaster; even from the seed of sweetest and most delicious fig arises the useless and deceptive wild fig. So also do heresies come of our stock, but are not of our kind. They spring from the seed of Truth, but, owing to their falsehood, are wild.

¹ Jerome tells the same story, *Comm. in Matt.* xx. 23. It comes from the Leucian Acts. See *Texts and Studies*, V, 144 ff. (Cambridge, 1897).

² The articles of the Creed specially singled out for mention here are those which were rejected by the Gnostics (Marcionites and Valentinians)—the Unity of God, the real Incarnation by a virgin-birth, the resurrection of the flesh, and the unity of Holy Scripture. For a fuller statement of the North African Creed see above, Chap. XIII, *de virg. vel.* 8; *adv. Prax.* 2; *Apol.* 17, 21; and the Introduction, p. viii.

³ Cp. I John i. 19.

CHAPTER XXXVII

IF, then, it be the case that the Truth must be adjudged to be with us "as many as walk according to this rule,"¹ which the Church has handed down from the Apostles, the Apostles from Christ, and Christ from GOD, then the principle that we laid down is established which determined that heretics be not allowed to enter an appeal drawn from the Scriptures, whom we prove, apart from the Scriptures, to have no part nor lot in them.

For if they are heretics they cannot be Christians, because they receive the very name of heretics from that which they adopt of their own choice² and do not receive from Christ. Thus, not being Christians, they have no right to the Christian literature, and it may well and justly be said to them: "Who are you? When and whence do you come? What have you to do with us, not being of our party? By what right do you, Marcion, cut my wood? By what licence, Valentinus, do you divert my streams? By what power, Apelles, do you move my landmarks? This is my possession. What business have all the rest of you here, sowing and pasturing at your pleasure? It is my possession. I hold it of old. I am in possession first. I hold sure title-deeds from the first owners themselves of the estate. I am the heir of the Apostles. Just as they bequeathed it in their own will, just as they committed it to trust, just as they swore to it, so do I hold it. You they have ever expressly disinherited and disowned as outsiders, as enemies."

¹ Gal. vi. 16.

² See above note, Chap. VI.

Now on what grounds are heretics outsiders and enemies to the Apostles save from divergence in doctrine, which each one of his own mere will hath either brought forward or received in opposition to the Apostles?

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE corruption of the Scriptures and of their interpretation must therefore be referred to that quarter where divergence in doctrine is to be found. Those who proposed to put forth a different teaching were obliged thereby to alter the doctrinal documents. For they would not have been able to teach differently unless they had altered the sources of teaching. Just as with them corruption of doctrine could not have succeeded without a corresponding corruption of its documents, so also with us integrity of doctrine would not be met with save with the integrity of those documents whence the doctrine is drawn.

For, indeed, what is there opposed to us in our Scriptures? What have we introduced of our own so that we must remedy by omission or addition or alteration anything contrary to it which we have found in the Scripture? What we are, that the Scriptures are from the very beginning. Of them are we, before there was any divergent teaching—before they were interpolated by you. But since every interpolation must be regarded as later in time (since it arises essentially from hostility, which is in every case neither prior in time to, nor of the same household with that which it opposes), it is as incredible to any one of sense that we should be thought to have introduced a

corrupt text into the Scriptures—we who have existed from the beginning and are the first in order of time—as that those persons should not be thought to have introduced it who are both later in date than, and opposed to the Scriptures.

One man falsifies the Scriptures with his hand: another by his interpretation of their meaning. For although Valentinus appears to use the whole volume, he nevertheless laid violent hands on the Truth with a no less cunning bent of mind than did Marcion.¹ Marcion openly and nakedly used the knife, not the pen, since he cut the Scriptures to suit his argument; whereas Valentinus spared them, since he did not invent Scriptures to suit his argument, but argument to suit the Scriptures;² and yet all the same he took away more and added more in taking away the proper meaning of each particular word, and in adding arrangements of systems which have no existence.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THESE were the inventions of “spiritual wickednesses”³ with which we must rightly look “to wrestle,” brethren, as being necessary to faith, that the “elect may be made manifest”⁴ and the reprobate detected. Therefore they possess a power and a skill in inventing and constructing errors which is not to be greatly wondered at as if it were difficult and inexplicable, seeing that a like example is ready to hand in the case of secular

¹ Marcion's alterations are detailed in Lardner, *Hist. of Heretics*, X, 35 ff.; Valentinus' in Irenæus, I, i, 15 ff.

² Occasionally Valentinus did “invent” Scripture to suit his theme; see my note *in hoc loc.*

³ Eph. vi. 12.

⁴ 1 Cor. xi. 19.

writings also. Thou seest in our day a totally different story composed out of Vergil, the matter being adapted to the verses and the verses to the matter. Hosidius Geta,¹ for instance, has very fully extracted from Vergil the tragedy of Medea. A near relative of my own from the same poet has amongst other literary trifles arranged the "Table" of Cebes.² Moreover, "Homerocentones" is the common name for those who from the poems of Homer patch together into one piece, quilt-like, works of their own, out of many scraps put together from this passage and that. Unquestionably the Divine writings are more fruitful in affording resources for any kind of subject. Nor do I hesitate to say that the Scriptures themselves were arranged by the will of GOD in such a manner as to afford material for heretics, inasmuch as I read that there must be heresies,³ which cannot exist without the Scriptures.

CHAPTER XL

THE question will follow, Who interprets the meaning of those passages which make for heresies? The Devil, we cannot doubt; for it is his character to overturn the Truth who emulously rivals the very realities of the Divine sacraments in the idol-mysteries. For he too baptizes certain persons—his own believers and faithful ones; he promises a putting away of sins by means of the

¹ Nothing is known of this writer beyond this isolated notice of him.

² See Dr. Rendel Harris in *The Expositor*, May 1901.

³ 1 Cor. xi. 19.

laver; and if my memory still serves me, Mithras¹ seals there on their foreheads his own soldiers. He celebrates, too, an oblation of bread, and introduces a representation of the resurrection, and purchases a crown under the sword. Why, he even allows but a single marriage to the chief priest.² So, too, he has his virgins and his continent ones.³ Moreover, if we consider the religious enactments of Numa Pompilius,⁴ if we think of his priestly duties and badges and privileges, the sacrificial services and the instruments and vessels of the sacrifices themselves, and the fantastic niceties of his expiations and vows, is it not obvious that the Devil has imitated the scrupulous observances of the Jewish Law? He, then, who has in such a spirit of hostile rivalry aimed at setting forth in the functions of idolatry the very means wherewith the sacraments of Christ are administered, is unquestionably the same being who exulted in the same kind of ingenuity, and has been able to adapt to a profane and hostile faith the actual documents concerning Divine matters written by Christian saints, adapting interpretations from interpretations, words from words, parables from parables.

No one therefore ought to doubt either that "spiritual wickednesses"⁵ from whence come heresies have been sent forth by the Devil, or that

¹ For an account of the Mithraic rites see King, *Gnostics and their Remains*, pp. 122 ff., and McCormack's English translation of Cumont, *Textes et Monuments Figurés relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra* (Kegan Paul).

² Cp. 1 Tim. iii. 2; Titus i. 6.

³ The two terms are distinct. Continence is used of self-control in and after marriage (*ad uxor.* I, 6), and is contrasted with virginity (*de virg. vel.* 10; *adv. Marc.* V, 15).

⁴ See Livy, I, 18 ff.

⁵ Eph. vi. 12.

heresies are not far removed from idolatry, since they belong to the same author and handiwork as idolatry. They either fashion another GOD hostile to the Creator, or if they confess One only Creator they treat of Him otherwise than as He truly is. Consequently every falsehood which they utter about God is in a certain sense a kind of idolatry.

CHAPTER XLI

I MUST not omit a description, too, of the heretics' actual manner of life, how foolish it is, how earthly, how materialistic, without seriousness, without authority, without discipline—as beseems their peculiar faith.

In the first place, it is uncertain who is a catechumen and who a baptized believer; they all alike reproach, they all alike hear, and all alike pray¹—even heathens, if any should have chanced to enter. They will “throw that which is holy to dogs,² and pearls” (albeit false ones) “to swine.” They will have it that their subversion of discipline is simplicity, and call our care for discipline affectation. They unite in communion also with every one from every quarter. For it is of no import-

¹ Marcion, on the strength of Gal. vi. 6, admitted the catechumens and the baptized to the same prayers in public worship (Jerome, *Comm. in loc.*). Tertullian's words seem to imply that there were different classes of catechumens in the North African Church.

² Matt. vii. 6. For a very early application of this text to the Holy Eucharist, see *Didaché*, 9: “Let none eat or drink of your Eucharist save they that are baptized into the Name of the Lord; for as touching this the Lord hath said, Give not that which is holy to the dogs.” See also Clem. Alex., *Strom.* II, 2, 7; and note the early use of “Sancta Sanctis” in the Liturgies.

ance to them, although they are teaching different doctrines, so long as they agree in an attack upon the One Truth. They are all puffed up; they all promise knowledge. Their catechumens are perfected before they are instructed. The very women amongst the heretics, how precocious they are! They presume to teach, to dispute, to practise exorcism, to promise cures, perchance also to baptize! Their ordinations are heedless, capricious, fickle. Now they appoint novices,¹ now men hampered by worldly ties, now apostates from us, so as to bind them by ambition since they cannot by truth. Nowhere is preferment readier than in the camp of rebels, where the simple fact of being there is itself a merit. Consequently one man is bishop to-day, another to-morrow. To-day he is a deacon who to-morrow will be a reader;² to-day he is a presbyter who will to-morrow be a laic. For even on laics do they impose sacerdotal functions!

CHAPTER XLII

BUT what shall I say about their ministry of the word, seeing that they make it their business not to convert the heathen, but to subvert our people? This is the glory that they covet most—to effect the fall of those who stand, not the upraising of those who are thrown down. And since their very work consists not in any building of their own,

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 6.

² This is the first mention of the Order of Readers, the oldest of the minor orders, and early adopted by heretics: see Bright's note on Chalcedonian Council, Canon XIV; and for Ægyptian Readers see *Journal of Theological Studies*, II, 255.

but in the destruction of the Truth, they undermine our defences that they may build up their own. Deprive them of the Law of Moses and the Prophets and God the Creator, and they have not a complaint to utter. Thus they more readily effect the ruin of standing edifices than the reconstruction of fallen ruins. To this end alone their behaviour is humble and bland and respectful. Otherwise not even for their own leaders have they any reverence. This explains the fact that schisms do not commonly exist among heretics, since when they do exist they are not visible. For schism is their very unity.

I am mistaken if they do not even among themselves depart from their own rules; whilst each one adapts what he receives according to his own fancy, just in the same way as he who handed it down fabricated it according to his fancy. The nature of heresy and the manner of its origin are revealed by its subsequent career. The same course was obviously allowable to the Valentinians as to Valentinus, to the Marcionites as to Marcion, of changing the faith according to their own fancy. Indeed, when thoroughly looked into, all heresies are found to depart in many particulars from their own founders. Nor have the majority of them any churches: motherless, homeless, creedless, outcasts, they wander in their own worthlessness.¹

CHAPTER XLIII

INFAMOUS, moreover, is the heretics' intercourse with numberless magicians, with jugglers, with

¹ The text is uncertain: it may mean "they wander far, themselves their all."

astrologers, with philosophers—men unquestionably given over to restless speculation. "Seek and ye shall find"¹ is their never-forgotten maxim. The quality of their faith may thus be estimated precisely from the nature of their conduct. Their system of life is the index of their doctrine. They deny that GOD is to be feared. Consequently all things are to them open and without restraint. But where is GOD not feared save where His Presence is wanting? And where GOD is not, neither is there any Truth. And where there is no Truth there naturally follows such a system of life as theirs. Whereas where GOD is, there also is fear towards GOD, which is "the beginning of wisdom."² And where there is fear towards GOD, there is a becoming gravity, and awestruck diligence, and anxious solicitude, and well-assured election, and well-considered communion, and well-deserved preferment, and religious submissiveness, and loyal attendance, and modest procedure, and a united Church, and all things godly.

CHAPTER XLIV

SIMILARLY these proofs of a stricter discipline amongst us are an additional evidence of truth; and to disregard this is not becoming in any one who is mindful of the future Judgement, when "we must all stand before the Judgement seat of Christ,"³ giving an account in the first place of our faith itself. What, then, will they say who have defiled with the adultery of heresy that

¹ See above, Chap. VIII.

² Ps. cxi. 10; Prov. ix. 10.

³ 2 Cor. v. 10.

virgin¹ committed to them by Christ? They will allege, I suppose, that nothing was ever foretold them by Him or by His Apostles about strange and perverse doctrines destined to come, and that no command was given them about avoiding and abhorring them. Christ and His Apostles will own that the fault was rather their own and their followers', who did not prepare us beforehand. They will add, besides, much about the authority of each heretical leader, how they specially confirmed the belief in their own teaching—how they raised the dead, restored the sick, foretold the future so that they might deservedly be believed to be Apostles! Just as though it were never written² that many should come working the greatest miracles in defence of the deceitfulness of their corrupt teaching.

Consequently they will deserve forgiveness. But suppose some have stood firm in the integrity of the Faith, mindful of the writings and denunciations of the Lord and His Apostles, these, I suppose, will be in danger of losing their forgiveness when the Lord replies³: "I had certainly forewarned you that there would be teachers of error in My Name and in that of the Prophets and Apostles too; and I had commanded My disciples to teach the same to you—with the idea, of course, that you would not believe it. I had given the Gospel once for all, and the teaching of the same

¹ Cp. 2 Cor. xi. 2. It was probably the misunderstanding of some figurative phrase like this (taken from Hegesippus, *apud* Euseb. III, 32; IV, 22) that led to the false scandals respecting the moral character of several of the Gnostic teachers.

² The audacious irony of this passage can hardly be matched even in the writings of Tertullian himself.

³ Matt. xxiv. 24.

Rule to My Apostles, but it pleased Me afterwards to alter some points therein. I had promised a resurrection, even of the flesh; but I reconsidered it, lest I might not be able to fulfil it. I had declared Myself to have been born of a Virgin; but afterwards this seemed disgraceful to Me. I had said that My Father was He Who makes the sunshine and the rain; but another and a better Father¹ has adopted Me. I had forbidden you to lend your ears to heretics; but I made a mistake."

Such are the blasphemies capable of being entertained by those who wander from the right path, and do not guard against those dangers whereby the true Faith is imperilled.

CHAPTER XLV

HAVING in view the present circumstances, we have argued on general grounds against all heresies that they ought by fixed, just and necessary limitations to be disallowed any discussion of the Scriptures. At some future time, if the grace of GOD permit, we will also furnish special replies to some particular heresies.²

To those who read these words at leisure, in belief of the Truth, be peace and the grace of our GOD Jesus Christ for ever.

¹ The higher GOD of Marcion who sent Christ to reveal Him, or the *summus Deus* of Basilides.

² Tertullian wrote subsequently against Marcion, Praxeas, Valentinus, Hermogenes and Apelles.