

*Selections from the Work Against Heresies
by Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons:
"The Refutation and Overthrow of the
Knowledge Falsely So Called"*

THE TEXT: (BOOK I) THE HERETICS

PREFACE

¹ Certain men, rejecting the truth, are introducing among us false stories and vain genealogies, which serve rather to controversies, as the apostle said,²⁵ than to God's work of building up in the faith. By their craftily constructed rhetoric they lead astray the minds of the inexperienced, and take them captive, corrupting the oracles of the Lord, and being evil expounders of what was well spoken. For they upset many, leading them away by the pretense of knowledge from Him who constituted and ordered the universe, as if they had something higher and greater to show them than the God who made the heaven and the earth and all that is in them. By skillful language they artfully attract the simple-minded into their kind of inquiry, and then crudely destroy them by working up their blasphemous and impious view about the Demiurge. Nor can their simple hearers distinguish the lie from the truth.

² For their error is not displayed as what it is, lest it should be stripped naked and shown up; it is craftily decked out in an attractive dress, and made to seem truer than the truth itself to the inexperienced because of the outer appearance. As one better than I am has said about these matters, a precious stone like emerald, which many value greatly, can be put to shame by a clever imitation in glass, unless there is someone on hand who can test it, and show what was done deceptively by art; and when brass is mixed with silver, what untrained person can easily prove it? So then, lest some should be made prey of through my fault, like sheep by wolves, not recognizing them because of their outwardly wearing sheep's clothing—whom the Lord warned us to guard against²⁶—and because they

²⁵ I Tim. 1:4.

²⁶ Matt. 7:15.

talk like us, though thinking very differently, I thought it necessary, my dear friend, after reading the Commentaries, as they call them, of the disciples of Valentinus, and having met some of them and so become familiar with their point of view, to expound to you those portentous and profound mysteries, which not all accept, since not all have sufficiently purged their brains.²⁷ Then you, being informed about these things, may be able to make them clear to all your people, and to warn them to be on their guard against this abysmal folly and blasphemy against Christ. As well as I can, then, I will briefly and clearly describe the position of the present false teachers, I mean the followers of Ptolemaeus, who is an offshoot of the school of Valentinus. I will further provide, as far as my modest ability extends, the means of overthrowing it, showing how absurd and foreign to the truth are the things they say. I am neither practiced in writing nor trained in rhetoric, but my love for you and yours encourages me to bear my witness about these teachings which have been hidden till the present, but have now by the grace of God come to light. "For there is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed, nor secret, that shall not be made known."²⁸

You will not expect from me, a resident among the Celts,³ and mostly accustomed to a barbarous language, rhetorical skill, which I have never learned, nor power in writing, which I have not acquired, nor beauties of language and style, which I am not acquainted with.²⁹ But what I write to you out of love, plainly and truly and simply, you will surely receive in love, and you can then amplify for yourself, having greater ability than mine, what I have given you, as it were, in basic principles. With your breadth of mind you will be able to make much more fruitful what I have said to you in brief, and will be able to present powerfully to your people what I have feebly expounded to you. As I have endeavored, in response to your long-held desire to know their position, not only to make it plain to you, but also to give you the necessary means of showing its falsity, so do you perform a similar service for the rest, according to the grace which the Lord has given you, so that men may no longer be ensnared by their plausibilities, which are as follows.

²⁷ These phrases are of course meant satirically.

²⁸ Matt. 10:26; Luke 12:2.

²⁹ Irenaeus is not the only author to use the best resources of his rhetoric to protest his lack of it.

THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH

10 Now the Church, although scattered over the whole civilized world to the end of the earth, received from the apostles and their disciples its faith in one God, the Father Almighty, who made the heaven, and the earth, and the seas, and all that is in them, and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was made flesh for our salvation, and in the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets proclaimed the dispensations of God—the comings, the birth of a virgin, the suffering, the resurrection from the dead, and the bodily reception into the heavens of the beloved, Christ Jesus our Lord, and his coming from the heavens in the glory of the Father to restore all things, and to raise up all flesh, that is, the whole human race, so that every knee may bow, of things in heaven and on earth and under the earth, to Christ Jesus our Lord and God and Saviour and King, according to the pleasure of the invisible Father, and every tongue may confess him,³⁰ and that he may execute righteous judgment on all. The spiritual powers of wickedness, and the angels who transgressed and fell into apostasy, and the godless and wicked and lawless and blasphemers among men he will send into the eternal fire. But to the righteous and holy, and those who have kept his commandments and have remained in his love, some from the beginning [of life] and some since their repentance, he will by his grace give life incorrupt, and will clothe them with eternal glory.

2 Having received this preaching and this faith, as I have said, the Church, although scattered in the whole world, carefully preserves it, as if living in one house. She believes these things [everywhere] alike, as if she had but one heart and one soul, and preaches them harmoniously, teaches them, and hands them down, as if she had but one mouth. For the languages of the world are different, but the meaning of the [Christian] tradition is one and the same. Neither do the churches that have been established in Germany believe otherwise, or hand down any other tradition, nor those among the Iberians, nor those among the Celts, nor in Egypt, nor in Libya, nor those established in the middle parts of the world. But as God's creature, the sun, is one and the same in the whole world, so also the preaching of the truth shines everywhere, and illumines all men who wish to come to the knowledge of

³⁰ Phil. 2:10, 11.

the truth. Neither will one of those who preside in the churches who is very powerful in speech say anything different from these things, for no one is above [his] teacher,³¹ nor will one who is weak in speech diminish the tradition. For since the faith is one and the same, he who can say much about it does not add to it, nor does he who can say little diminish it.

This matter of having more or less understanding does not mean that men change the basic idea, and imagine another God above the Demiurge and Maker and Nourisher of this universe, as if he were not enough for us, or another Christ or another Only-begotten. But it consists in working out the things that have been said in parables, and building them into the foundation of the faith: in expounding the activity and dispensation of God for the sake of mankind; in showing clearly how God was long-suffering over the apostasy of the angels who transgressed, and over the disobedience of men; in declaring why one and the same God made some things subject to time, others eternal, some heavenly, and some earthly; in understanding why God, being invisible, appeared to the prophets, not in one form, but differently to different ones; in showing why there were a number of covenants with mankind, and in teaching what is the character of each of the covenants; in searching out why God shut up all in disobedience that he might have mercy on all; in giving thanks that the Word of God was made flesh, and suffered; in declaring why the coming of the Son of God [was] at the last times, that is, the Beginning was made manifest at the end; in unfolding what is found in the prophets about the end and the things to come; in not being silent that God has made the despaired-of Gentiles fellow heirs and of the same body and partners with the saints; and in stating how this mortal and fleshly [body] will put on immortality, and this corruptible incorruption; and in proclaiming how he says, "What was not a people, is a people, and what was not beloved, is beloved," and, "Many more are the children of the desolate than of her who has a husband."³² With reference to these things and others like them the apostle exclaimed, "O depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!"³³ But [this greater skill] does not consist in imagining beyond the Creator and Demiurge the Mother of these

³¹ Matt. 10:24; Luke 6:40.

³² Eph. 2:19; I Cor. 15:54; Rom. 9:25 (Hos. 2:23); Gal. 4:27 (Isa. 54:1).

³³ Rom. 11:33.

things and of him, the Desire of a wandering Aeon, and coming to such a point of blasphemy, nor in falsely conceiving of the Pleroma above her, now with thirty, now with an innumerable crowd of Aeons, as these teachers who are indeed void of divine understanding say. But as I said before, the real Church has one and the same faith everywhere in the world.

VALENTINUS

11 Let us now look at the inconsistent views of these men, since there are two or three of them anyway, how they do not even agree on the same topics, but vary from each other both about things and about names. The first of these, Valentinus, who adapted the principles of the so-called Gnostic heresy to the individual character of his school, thus expounded it, defining that there is an unnamable Dyad, of which one is called Ineffable and the other Silence. Then from this Dyad a second Dyad was produced, of which he calls one part Father and the other Truth. From the Tetrad were produced Logos and Zoë, Anthropos and Ecclesia,³⁴ and this is the first Ogdoad. From Logos and Zoë he says that ten Powers were produced, as I said before, but from Anthropos and Ecclesia twelve, one of which, falling away and suffering a lack, brought about the rest of the business. He postulated two Boundaries, one between the depth and the rest of the Pleroma, dividing the begotten Aeons from the unbegotten Father, and the other separating their Mother from the Pleroma. Christ was not produced from the Aeons within the Pleroma, but was conceived by the Mother who was outside, according to her knowledge of better things, but with a kind of shadow. He, being male, cast off the shadow from himself and returned into the Pleroma. Then the Mother, being left with the shadow, and emptied of spiritual substance, brought forth another Son, and this is the Demiurge, whom he also calls almighty over things subject to him. He taught that there was also produced with him a left-hand Ruler, as do those falsely called Gnostics whom we shall speak of. He sometimes says that Jesus was produced by him who was separated from their Mother and reunited with the others, that is, the Desired; sometimes from him who returned to the Pleroma, that is, from Christ; sometimes from Anthropos and Ecclesia. And he says that the Holy Spirit was produced by the Truth to inspect and fructify the Aeons, entering into

³⁴ Or Word and Life, Man and Church.

them invisibly, through whom the Aeons produced the plants of truth.

SECUNDUS

Secundus³⁵ says that there is a first Ogdoad, a right-hand 2 and a left-hand Tetrad, as he would have them called, one light, the other darkness; and the Power that fell away and suffered lack was not begotten of the thirty Aeons, but of their fruits. There is another distinguished teacher among them, 3 who, striving after something more sublime, and an even greater knowledge, speaks thus of the first Tetrad: There is a certain Proarche before all things, beyond any thought or speech or name, whom I call Monotes; with this Monotes is another Power, whom I call Henotes.³⁶ This Henotes, and this Monotes, being the One, sent forth, but not as causing an emanation, the intelligible Arche over all things, which Arche is known in speech as Monad. With this Monad there also reigns a Power of one substance with him, which I also call the One. These powers, Monotes and Henotes, Monad and the One, sent forth the other productions of the Aeons.

Iu, iu, and pheu, pheu! Truly we may utter these exclamations 4 from tragedy at such bold invention of ridiculous nomenclature, and at the audacity that made up these names without blushing. For when he says, "There is a certain Proarche before all things, above all thought, which I call Monotes," and again, "With this Monotes there reigns a Power, which I call Henotes," it is obvious that he admits that he is talking about his own inventions, and that he has given names to his inventions which no one else had given them before. It is clear also that he himself dared to make up these names, and unless he had been on hand the Truth would have had no name. There is no reason why someone else shouldn't assign names like these on the same basis: There is a royal Proarche above all thought, a Power above all substance, indefinitely extended. Since this is the Power which I call the Gourd, there is with it the Power which I call Superemptiness. This Gourd and Superemptiness, being one, emitted, yet did not emit, the fruit, visible, edible, and delicious, which is known to language as the Cucumber. With this Cucumber there is a Power of like quality with it, which I call the Melon. These Powers, the Gourd, Superemptiness,

³⁵ Or just possibly "the second," if the Latin translation was sufficiently well-known to have corrupted the Greek extracts.

³⁶ That is, Beginning, Uniqueness, and Oneness.

the Cucumber, and the Melon, sent forth the remaining crowd of the delirious Melons of Valentinus.³⁷ For if the language which is used about all kinds of things is to be transferred to the first Tetrad, and anyone can assign names as he pleases, who would prohibit [our using] these names, which are much more credible, and in common use and generally known?

OTHER Gnostics AND THEIR RITES

- 5 Others again have called their first and self-begotten Ogdoad by these names—first Proarche, then Inconceivable, the third Ineffable, and the fourth Invisible; and from the first Proarche proceeded in the first place [of the second Tetrad], and fifth [of the whole] Arche, from Inconceivable in the second and sixth place Incomprehensible, from Ineffable in the third and seventh place Unnamable, and from Invisible in the fourth and eighth place Unbegotten, the Pleroma of the first Ogdoad. They would have these Powers anterior to Depth and Silence, so that they may appear as more perfect than the perfect and more knowing than the Gnostics—to whom one might properly say, “What babbling sophists!” And even about Depth there are many different opinions among them. Some make him out to be unmated, being indeed neither male nor female—in fact, not being anything. Others say that he is both male and female, assigning him the nature of a hermaphrodite. Others again assign him Silence as a consort, that there may be the first conjunction.
- 21 Their [i.e., the Marcosian] tradition about redemption³⁸ is obscure and incomprehensible, as being the mother of things that cannot be grasped or clearly seen. Because it is fluctuating, it cannot be described simply or in one account, as each one of them hands it down as he chooses. Each of these mystagogues has his own ceremony of redemption. That this pattern has been instigated by Satan to lead them to renounce the baptism of rebirth to God, indeed to deny the whole faith, I

³⁷ Satire, indeed sarcasm, although there are hints that the sacredness of cucumbers and melons, as the least material kinds of fruit, was a not unknown idea. Cf. the prohibition against offering them in church (Hippolytus, *Apost. Trad.* 28), and their later use by Manichaeans as food for the elect.

³⁸ The tradition, *paradosis*, here is that of a rite, such as the *paradosis* of the Eucharist in I Cor., ch. 11; Irenaeus contrasts the simple Christian *paradosis* of baptism with Gnostic attempts at outdoing that rite and the anointings that followed it.

will show in the proper place when I refute them. They say that it is necessary for those who have received perfect knowledge to be reborn into the power which is above all things—otherwise one cannot enter the Pleroma, since this is what leads them to the Depth. The baptism of Jesus who appeared [on earth] was [they say] for remission of sins, but the redemption of the Christ who came down upon him, for perfection, and they allege that the former is animal, the latter spiritual. Baptism was preached by John for repentance, but redemption was added by Jesus for perfection; and it is with reference to this that he says, “I have another baptism to be baptized with, and I press on eagerly towards it.”³⁹ So they also say that the Lord propounded this redemption to the sons of Zebedee, when their mother asked that they might sit on his right and left in the Kingdom, and he said, “Can you be baptized with the baptism that I am to be baptized with?”⁴⁰ Paul too, they claim, often testifies of the redemption in Christ Jesus, and this is [the rite] which they hand down in diverse and discordant forms.

For some of them prepare a nuptial couch and perform a sacred rite for those who are “perfected,” with certain invocations, saying that they have performed a spiritual marriage, according to the likeness of the conjunctions above. Some bring [the candidates] to the water, and baptize them with these words: “In the Name of the unknowable Father of all things—in Truth the mother of all—in him who came down upon Jesus—into union and redemption and the fellowship of the Powers.” Others invoke certain Hebrew names, in order to impress the initiates even more, thus, “*Basema chamosse baaiabora mistadia ruada kousta babophor calachthei*.”⁴¹ The interpretation of these is as follows: “Above every Power of the Father I invoke the light which is named, and the good Spirit and Life, for you have reigned in the body.” Others use this invocation for redemption: “The name which is hidden from all godhead, and lordship, and truth, which Jesus of Nazareth put on in the regions of the light of Christ, of Christ who lives by the Holy Spirit, for angelic redemption—the name of restoration, *Messia ouphareg namempsaiman chaldaian mosomedaea acphranai psoua*,

³⁹ Luke 12:50 with an interesting (not necessarily Gnostic) variant.

⁴⁰ Mark 10:38.

⁴¹ *Basema* suggests “in the Name” in some Semitic language; the ultimate source of this gibberish, as it now is, might be the Trinitarian formula in Aramaic.

Jesus Nazaria." The interpretation of these is as follows: "I do not divide the Spirit of Christ, the heart, and the supercelestial power, the merciful; may I name your name, O Saviour of Truth." This is what those who initiate invoke, while he who is initiated replies, "I am strengthened and redeemed, and I redeem my soul from this age, and from all things connected with it in the name of Iao, who redeemed his soul to full redemption in the living Christ." Then those present respond, "Peace to all on whom this name rests." Then they anoint the initiate with balsam, for they say that this ointment is a type of the sweetness which is above all things.

4 Some of them say that it is superfluous to lead men to the water, but mixing oil and water together, with utterances like those which I have quoted, they pour it on the head of those being initiated; and this they make out to be the redemption. They also anoint them with balsam. Others omit all these things, and say that the mystery of the ineffable and invisible should not be performed by means of visible and corruptible things, and [that of] the inconceivable and incorporeal, by sensible and bodily; but the perfect redemption is the knowledge of the ineffable Greatness itself. For weakness and suffering were brought about by ignorance, and everything that has come from ignorance is destroyed by knowledge, and knowledge is the redemption of the inner man. This is not bodily, since the body is corruptible; nor is it psychic, since the soul came from deficiency, and is as it were a mere dwelling place of the spirit—therefore redemption must be spiritual. So the inner spiritual man is redeemed by knowledge, and they need nothing more than the knowledge of all things—and this is true redemption.

5 There are others who keep on "redeeming" the dying up to the moment of death, pouring oil and water on their heads, or the ointment mentioned above mixed with water, and with the invocations mentioned above, that they may not be grasped or seen by the principalities and powers, and that their inner man may ascend even above the invisible things, while their body is left among the things of the world and the soul abandoned to the Demiurge.⁴² And they tell them to say this when they come to the Powers after they have died: "I am the son of the Father, the Father who pre-existed, a son in the pre-existent; I came to see both alien things, and my own, yet they

⁴² Among sources for this rite would be the Christian anointing of the sick (James 5:14), and the formulas with which Egyptians equipped the dead for their last journey.

are not wholly alien, but belong to Achamoth, who is female, and made them for herself; for I derive my race from the pre-existent, and I go again to my own, from which I came forth." And they claim that he who says this will avoid and escape the powers; he will come to those who surround the Demiurge, and say to them: "I am a precious vessel, more than the female being who made you. Though your mother does not know her origin, I know myself, and I know whence I am, and I call on the incorrupt Wisdom, who is in the Father, who is the Mother of your mother, and has no Father nor any male consort; for a female, made of a female, made you, not knowing her own Mother, and thinking that she was alone; but I call upon her Mother." When they hear this, those who surround the Demiurge will be greatly troubled, and revile their origin, and the race of their Mother; but he will go to his own, casting off his chain, that is, the [animal] soul. This is what has come to me about the redemption. Since their teachings and traditions are different, and the newer ones among them claim to be constantly finding something new, and working out what no one ever thought of before, it is hard to describe their views.

CERDON AND MARCION

Cerdon, who took his start from the followers of Simon, and ²⁷ settled at Rome under Hyginus, who held the ninth place in the episcopal succession from the apostles,⁴³ taught that the God preached by the Law and the Prophets was not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the former was known and the latter unknown, the former righteous and the latter good.

After him came Marcion of Pontus, who developed his ² teaching, shamelessly blaspheming the God whom the Law and the Prophets proclaimed, describing him as the author of evils, desirous of wars, changing his opinions, and [at different times] contrary to himself. But Jesus [was] from the Father who is above the God that formed the world, and came into Judea in the time of Pontius Pilate, who was procurator of Tiberius Caesar; manifest in human form to those who were in Judea, he abolished the Prophets and the Law, and all the works of that God who made the world, whom he calls the World Ruler.⁴⁴ In addition to this he mutilated the Gospel According to Luke, removing everything about the birth of the Lord,

⁴³ Here the apostles are included in the series, while in III. 3: 3 they are not.

⁴⁴ The Cosmocrat. Cf. Eph. 6:12.

and much of the teaching of the words of the Lord, in which the Lord is recorded as clearly confessing the creator of this universe as his Father. He persuaded his disciples that he was more veracious than the apostles who handed down the gospel, giving them not a gospel but a mere fragment of a gospel. He also similarly cut up the Epistles of Paul, removing whatever the apostle said clearly about the God who made the world, that he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and whatever the apostle teaches by referring to the prophetic writings that predict the coming of the Lord.

3 Only the souls [he says] of those who have learned his teaching will come to salvation; the body, since it is taken from the earth, cannot be saved. To his blasphemy against God he adds this, speaking diabolically indeed and in direct opposition to the truth: that Cain and those like him—the men of Sodom and the Egyptians, and other such, and in general all the nations that walked in all kinds of wickedness—were saved by the Lord when he descended into the lower regions, and came running to him and received him into their realm; but Abel and Enoch and Noah and the other righteous, and the patriarchs such as Abraham, with all the prophets and those who were pleasing to God, did not share in the salvation which the serpent who was in Marcion preached. For, he says, since they knew that their God was always testing them, they thought he was testing them then, and so did not come to Jesus or believe his proclamation, and therefore their souls remained in Hades.

4 But since this man alone has dared publicly to mutilate the Scriptures, and more than any others to malign God shamelessly, I will refute him separately, convicting him from his own writings, and from the words of the Lord and the apostles which he preserves and uses I will overthrow him, with the help of the Lord.⁴⁵ But here it is necessary only to mention him, that you may know that all those who corrupt the truth and injure the teaching of the Church are the disciples and successors of Simon Magus the Samaritan. Although, in order to deceive others, they do not confess the name of their teacher, yet they teach his views. Setting up the name of Christ Jesus as a kind of decoy, but in one way or another introducing the impiety of Simon, they bring many to destruction, spreading their evil teachings under a good name, and by the sweetness and beauty of the name [of Christ] offering them the bitter and evil poison of the serpent, the prince of the apostasy.

⁴⁵ A topic taken up, though not quite in this manner, in Book IV.

THE TEXT: (BOOK III) THE FAITH IN SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

PREFACE

It was your command, my dear friend, that I should bring out into the open the teachings of the Valentinians, which they consider to be hidden, showing their diversity, and developing an argument against them. So I undertook to exhibit the succession of their teachings, maintaining that they derive from Simon the father of all heretics, and to reply to them all. Since it is in many respects part of one work to explain and to refute them, I have sent you these books, of which the first contains the opinions of all of them, and shows their habits and the nature of their behavior. In the second their evil teachings are destroyed and overthrown, and shown up nakedly for what they are. Now in this third book I introduce the arguments from the Scriptures, thus leaving out nothing that you asked for. Indeed, I will have given you, beyond what you had expected, the means of reasoning with and refuting those who offer any kind of evil teaching. For the love which is in God, being rich and ungrudging, gives more than one asks from it. Keep in mind therefore what I have said in the two previous books; and by adding this to them you will have from me a full reply against all heretics, and will be able to resist them faithfully and boldly on behalf of the one true and life-giving faith, which the Church has received from the apostles and imparts to her children. For the Lord of all gave to his apostles the power of the gospel, and by them we also have learned the truth, that is, the teaching of the Son of God—as the Lord said to them, “He who hears you hears me, and he who despises you despises me, and him who sent me.”⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Luke 10:16.

THE TRADITIONS OF THE GOSPELS

1 For we learned the plan of our salvation from no others than from those through whom the gospel came to us. They first preached it abroad, and then later by the will of God handed it down to us in Writings,⁴⁷ to be the foundation and pillar of our faith. For it is not right to say that they preached before they had come to perfect knowledge, as some dare to say, boasting that they are the correctors of the apostles. For after our Lord had risen from the dead, and they were clothed with the power from on high when the Holy Spirit came upon them, they were filled with all things and had perfect knowledge. They went out to the ends of the earth, preaching the good things that come to us from God, and proclaiming peace from heaven to men, all and each of them equally being in possession of the gospel of God. So Matthew among the Hebrews issued a Writing of the gospel in their own tongue, while Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel at Rome and founding the Church. After their decease Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also handed down to us in writing what Peter had preached. Then Luke, the follower of Paul, recorded in a book the gospel as it was preached by him. Finally John, the disciple of the Lord, who had also lain on his breast, himself published
2 the Gospel, while he was residing at Ephesus in Asia. All of these handed down to us that there is one God, maker of heaven and earth, proclaimed by the Law and the Prophets, and one Christ the Son of God. If anyone does not agree with them he despises the companions of the Lord, he despises Christ the Lord himself, he even despises the Father, and he is self-condemned, resisting and refusing his own salvation, as all the heretics do.

THE APOSTOLIC TRADITION

2 But when they are refuted from the Writings they turn around and attack the Writings themselves, saying that they are not correct, or authoritative, and that the truth cannot be found from them by those who are not acquainted with the tradition. For this [they say] was not handed down in writing, but orally, which is why Paul said, "We speak wisdom among

⁴⁷ *In scripturis*, doubtless representing "*En graphais*," not yet quite as technical as "Scripture."

the perfect, but not the wisdom of this world."⁴⁸ Each of them utters a wisdom which he has made up, or rather a fiction, so that according to them the truth was once to be found in Valentinus, then at another time in Marcion, at another time in Cerinthus, then later in Basilides, or was also in that opponent, who has no saving message to utter.⁴⁹ Each one of them is wholly perverse, and is not ashamed to preach himself, corrupting the rule of faith.

But when we appeal again to that tradition which has come
2 down from the apostles and is guarded by the successions of elders⁵⁰ in the churches, they oppose the tradition, saying that they are wiser not only than the elders, but even than the apostles, and have found the genuine truth. For the apostles [they say] mixed matters of the Law with the words of the Saviour, and not only the apostles, but even the Lord himself, spoke sometimes from the Demiurge, sometimes from the middle power, sometimes from the highest, while they know the hidden mystery without doubt or corruption, and in its purity. This is in nothing less than shameless blasphemy against their Maker. What it comes to is that they will not agree with either
3 Scripture or tradition. It is such people, my dear friend, that we have to fight with, who like slippery snakes are always trying to escape us. Therefore we must resist them on all sides, hoping that by cutting off their escape we may be able to bring them to turn to the truth. For although it is not easy for a soul which has been seized by error to turn back, still it is not absolutely impossible to put error to flight by putting the truth beside it.⁵¹

The tradition of the apostles, made clear in all the world,
3 can be clearly seen in every church by those who wish to behold the truth. We can enumerate those who were established by the apostles as bishops in the churches, and their successors down to our time, none of whom taught or thought of anything like their mad ideas. Even if the apostles had known of hidden mysteries, which they taught to the perfect secretly and apart

⁴⁸ I Cor. 2:6.

⁴⁹ Probably the unnamed heretic of I. 11:3, whom Irenæus or his source may have left nameless as a recent and therefore familiar (or painful) defection; attempts to identify him by conjectural restoration of misunderstood Greek do not seem convincing.

⁵⁰ *Presbuteroi* in Irenæus are sometimes holders of an office in the Church, but often, as probably here, the grand old men who were links in the chain of tradition.

⁵¹ Apparently a citation of Justin, *Apol. I*, ch. 12, *fin.*

from others, they would have handed them down especially to those to whom they were entrusting the churches themselves. For they certainly wished those whom they were leaving as their successors, handing over to them their own teaching position, to be perfect and irreproachable, since their sound conduct would be a great benefit [to the Church], and failure on their part the greatest calamity. But since it would be very long in such a volume as this to enumerate the successions of all the churches, I can by pointing out the tradition which that very great, oldest, and well-known Church, founded and established at Rome by those two most glorious apostles Peter and Paul, received from the apostles, and its faith known among men, which comes down to us through the successions of bishops, put to shame all of those who in any way, either through wicked self-conceit, or through vainglory, or through blind and evil opinion, gather as they should not.⁵² For every church must be in harmony with this Church because of its outstanding pre-eminence, that is, the faithful from everywhere, since the apostolic tradition is preserved in it by those from everywhere.⁵³

3 When the blessed apostles had founded and built up the Church, they handed over the ministry of the episcopate to Linus. Paul mentions this Linus in his Epistles to Timothy. Anencletus succeeded him. After him Clement received the lot of the episcopate in the third place from the apostles. He

⁵² I.e., assemble apart from the gatherings in communion with the Church (cf. Ignatius, Eph., ch. 5); or perhaps more generally, do not gather the harvest with the Lord, and so scatter (Luke 11:23; Matt. 12:30; cf. Lebreton, *The History of the Primitive Church*, p. 676).

⁵³ *Ad hanc enim ecclesiam propter potentioris principalem necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam, hoc est, eos qui sunt undique fideles, in qua semper ab his qui sunt undique conservata est ea quae est ab apostolis traditio.* This sentence, preserved only in Latin, deserves to be quoted more because of the many discussions of it than for its own importance. Eusebius tantalizingly begins a quotation immediately afterward with what he considered of real interest in this passage. Irenaeus' solid reasons for selecting the Roman Church as his chief sample of the preservation of tradition in all churches have just been given; he seems here to mix them rather confusingly with the thought that as the city of Rome was a microcosm of the Empire, so was the Roman Church a microcosm of the Christian world, and the confluence of Christians there preserved the faith by representing all local traditions; *convenire* might mean simply "meet," but is probably best translated as above; for recent discussion see W. L. Knox, "Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* III. 3:2," *Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 47, 1946, pp. 180-184, and P. Galtier, ". . . *Ab his qui sunt undique.* . ." *Irenée, Adv. Haer.* III. 3:2," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, Vol. 44, 1949, pp. 411-428.

had seen the apostles and associated with them, and still had their preaching sounding in his ears and their tradition before his eyes—and not he alone, for there were many still left in his time who had been taught by the apostles. In this Clement's time no small discord arose among the brethren in Corinth, and the Church in Rome sent a very powerful letter to the Corinthians, leading them to peace, renewing their faith, and declaring the tradition which they had recently received from the apostles, which declared one almighty God, maker of heaven and earth and fashioner of man, who brought about the Deluge, and called Abraham; who brought out the people from the land of Egypt; who spoke with Moses; who ordained the Law and sent the Prophets; and who has prepared fire for the devil and his angels. Those who care to can learn from this Writing that he was proclaimed by the churches as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so understand the apostolic tradition of the Church, since this Epistle is older than those present false teachers who make up lies about another God above the Demiurge and maker of all these things that are.⁵⁴ Evarestus succeeded to this Clement, and Alexander to Evarestus; then Xystus was installed as the sixth from the apostles, and after him Telesphorus, who met a glorious martyrdom; ⁵⁵ then Hyginus, then Pius, and after him Anicetus. Soter followed Anicetus, and Eleutherus now in the twelfth place from the apostles holds the lot of the episcopate. In this very order and succession the apostolic tradition in the Church and the preaching of the truth has come down even to us. This is a full demonstration that it is one and the same life-giving faith which has been preserved in the Church from the apostles to the present, and is handed on in truth.

Similarly Polycarp, who not only was taught by apostles, ⁴ and associated with many who had seen Christ, but was installed by apostles for Asia, as bishop in the church in Smyrna—I saw him myself in my early youth—survived for a long time, and departed this life in a ripe old age by a glorious and magnificent martyrdom. He always taught what he learned from the apostles, which the Church continues to hand on, and

⁵⁴ Irenaeus properly recognizes the Old Testament emphasis of I Clement; evidently, like us, he derived his knowledge about it entirely from the document itself, except for the tradition of some connection with Clement.

⁵⁵ "Gloriously bore his witness"; the verb is doubtless used technically, as is the noun in the next section.

which are the only truths. The churches in Asia all bear witness to this, as do those who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time; he is certainly a much more trustworthy and dependable witness than Valentinus and Marcion and the other false thinkers. When he visited Rome under Anicetus, he converted many of the above-mentioned heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received from the apostles the one and only truth, the same which is handed on by the Church. There are those who have heard him tell how when John the disciple of the Lord went to bathe at Ephesus, and saw Cerinthus inside, he rushed out of the bath without washing, but crying out, "Let us escape, lest the bath should fall while Cerinthus the enemy of the truth is in it." Polycarp himself, when Marcion once met him and said, "Do you know us?" answered, "I know you, the first-born of Satan." The apostles and their disciples took such great care not even to engage in conversations with the corrupters of the truth, as Paul also said, "A heretical man after a first and second warning avoid, knowing that such a man has fallen away and is a sinner, being self-condemned."⁵⁶ There is also a very powerful letter of Polycarp addressed to the Philippians, from which those who care to, and are concerned for their own salvation, can learn the character of his faith and [his] preaching of the truth. The church in Ephesus also, which was founded by Paul, and where John survived until the time of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles.

4 Since there are so many clear testimonies, we should not seek from others for the truth which can easily be received from the Church. There the apostles, like a rich man making a deposit, fully bestowed upon her all that belongs to the truth, so that whoever wishes may receive from her the water of life. She is the entrance to life; all the others are thieves and robbers.⁵⁷ Therefore we ought to avoid them, but to love with the greatest zeal the things of the Church, and so to lay hold of the tradition of the truth. What if there should be a dispute about some matter of moderate importance? Should we not turn to the oldest churches, where the apostles themselves were known, and find out from them the clear and certain answer to the problem now being raised? Even if the apostles had not left their Writings to us, ought we not to follow the rule of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they

2 committed the churches? Many barbarian peoples who believe

⁵⁶ Titus 3:10, 11.

⁵⁷ Cf. Rev. 22:17; John 10:7, 8.

in Christ follow this rule, having [the message of their] salvation written in their hearts by the Spirit without paper and ink. Diligently following the old tradition, they believe in one God, maker of heaven and earth and of all that is in them, through Christ Jesus the Son of God, who on account of his abundant love for his creation submitted to be born of a virgin, himself by himself uniting man to God, and having suffered under Pontius Pilate, and risen, and having been received up into splendor, is to come in glory as the Saviour of those who are saved, and the judge of those who are judged, and will send into eternal fire those who alter the truth, and despise his Father and his coming. Those who believe in this faith without written documents are barbarians in our speech, but in their convictions, habits, and behavior they are, because of their faith, most wise, and are pleasing to God, living in all righteousness and purity and wisdom. If anyone should preach to them the inventions of the heretics, speaking in their own language, they would at once stop their ears and run far, far away, not enduring even to listen to such blasphemous speech. So by that old tradition of the apostles they do not even take into their minds whatever their impressive words may mean.

Nor do they have any proper congregation or established teaching. For there were no Valentinians before Valentinus, or 3 Marcionites before Marcion; nor were there any of these perverse thinkers whom I have listed above before the founders and inventors of their perversity. For Valentinus came to Rome under Hyginus; he flourished under Pius and remained until [the time of] Anicetus. Cerdon, who was Marcion's predecessor, used to come into the Church under Hyginus and make his confession,⁵⁸ reaching the point where he would now give his secret teaching, now make his confession in public, and then was convicted of his evil teachings and was separated from the assembly of the brethren. Marcion, who followed him, flourished under Anicetus, who held the tenth place in the series of bishops. As we have shown, the others who are called Gnostics began with Menander, the disciple of Simon, and each has as his father and chief the one whose opinions he followed. All of these rebelled in their apostasy much later [than the founding of the Church], in the midst of the Church's history.

⁵⁸ *Exomologoumenos* probably confession of sins, as in I.13:7 (and the regular term for public penance, *exomologēsis*), though possibly confession of the faith.

5 So the apostolic tradition is preserved in the Church and has come down to us. Let us turn, then, to the demonstration from the Writings of those apostles who recorded the gospel, in which they recorded their conviction about God, showing that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Truth, and in him is no lie—as also David said when he prophesied his birth of a virgin and the resurrection of the dead, “Truth has come forth from the earth.”⁵⁹ The apostles, being disciples of the truth, are apart from every lie. For a lie has no fellowship with the truth, any more than light with darkness, but the presence of one excludes the other.⁶⁰ So our Lord, being the Truth, did not lie, and he would never have confessed one whom he knew to be the result of a defect as God and God of all, supreme King and his Father, the perfect [acknowledging] the imperfect, a spiritual being one who was natural, one who was in the Pleroma one outside it. Nor did his disciples name any other being as God, or call any other Lord, except him who is the true God and Lord of all—though it be said by these vainest of sophists that the apostles hypocritically adjusted their teaching to the capacity of their hearers, giving answers according to the presumptions of inquirers, telling blind fables to the blind according to their blindness, to the sick according to their sickness, and to those who were going astray according to their error, and to those who thought that the Demiurge was the only God declaring that this was the case, but to those who can understand the ineffable Father expounding the unspeakable mystery by parables and riddles. So [they allege] the Lord and the apostles did not exercise their teaching office in strict accordance with the truth, but hypocritically in accordance with what different individuals could grasp. This is not the behavior of those who heal and give life, but rather of those who aggravate disease and increase ignorance. The Law shows itself much truer than such people, when it says that whoever leads a blind man astray in the way is accursed.⁶¹ The apostles were sent to find those who were lost, and to bring sight to those who did not see, and healing to the sick, and so they did not speak to them in accordance with their previous opinions but by

⁵⁹ Ps. 85 (84):11; “truth” is used practically as a name of Christ, as later not uncommonly by Latin Fathers (especially Augustine and Gregory the Great).

⁶⁰ II Cor. 6:14; I John 1:6; Irenaeus’ combinations of passages from either Testament or both in such allusive references are an interesting aspect of his use of the Bible.

⁶¹ Deut. 27:18.

manifestation of the truth. For no men of any kind would be acting rightly if they told blind men who were already beginning to fall over the precipice to continue in their very dangerous way, as if it were a sound one and as if they would come through all right. What doctor, when wishing to cure a sick man, would act in accordance with the desires of the patient, and not in accordance with the requirements of medicine? The Lord himself testified that he came as the physician of the sick, saying, “The well have no need of a physician but the sick; I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”⁶² How, then, are the sick to be made strong? and how are sinners to repent? Is it by persevering as they are? or on the contrary, by undergoing a great change and reversal of their previous behavior, by which they brought upon themselves serious illness, and many sins? Ignorance, the mother of these things, is driven out by knowing the truth. Therefore the Lord imparted knowledge of the truth to his disciples, by which he cured those who were suffering, and restrained sinners from sin. So he did not speak to them in accordance with their previous ideas, nor answer in accordance with the presumptions of inquirers, but in accordance with the sound teaching, without any pretense or respect for persons.

This can be shown by the words of the Lord. He displayed 3 the Son of God to those of the circumcision, the Christ who was predicted by the prophets—that is, he showed himself, who restored freedom to men and gave them the heritage of incorruption. Then the apostles taught the Gentiles that they should leave the vain sticks and stones which they thought of as gods, and worship the true God, who had established and made the whole human race, and by his ordinance nourished, increased, and preserved them, and gave them their being; and that they should look for his Son Jesus Christ—who redeemed us from the apostasy by his blood, that we also might be made a holy people—who is to come down from heaven in the power of the Father, and who is to execute judgment upon all, and give the good things that come from God to those who have kept his commandments. He appeared in these last times and gathered and united into one those who were far off and those who were near, enlarging Japheth and establishing him in the dwelling of Shem.⁶³

⁶² Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31, 32; Matt. 9:12, 13.

⁶³ Gen. 9:27; Eph. 2:13, 17.

JOHN'S REFUTATION OF GNOSTICISM

11 John, the disciple of the Lord, proclaimed this faith and wished by the proclamation of the gospel to destroy the error which had been planted among men by Cerinthus, and much earlier by those who are called Nicolaitans, who are an offshoot of the knowledge which is falsely so called, [writing] to confound them and show that there is one God who made all things by his Word. It is not true, as they say, that the Fashioner is one and the Father of the Lord another, and the Son of the Fashioner one being, the Christ from on high another, who remained free from suffering, descending on Jesus the Son of the Fashioner and returning again to his Pleroma; [they allege] that the Beginning was the Only-begotten, and Logos the true Son of the Only-begotten,⁶⁴ and that this world order in which we live was not made by the supreme God but by some power far inferior to him and cut off from contact with those things which are invisible and ineffable.

The disciple of the Lord wished to cut off all such ideas and to establish the rule of truth in the Church, that there is one God Almighty who made all things by his Word, both visible and invisible, and also to indicate that through the same Word through whom God made this world order he also bestowed salvation on the men who belong to this order. So he starts off with the teaching according to the Gospel, thus: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God; this was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made. What was made was life in him, and the life was the light of men, and the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not seized hold of it."⁶⁵ All things, he says, were made through him; this word "all" therefore includes this world order of ours. It must not be conceded to them that "all" means what is within that Pleroma of theirs. For if this Pleroma of theirs contains everything, then this order is not outside it, as I have shown in the Book before this. But if these things are outside the Pleroma, which really does not seem possible, then this Pleroma of theirs does not comprise "all things," and so [in any case] this vast created order is not merely "outside."

⁶⁴ A Gnostic interpretation of the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel, which takes Beginning (Arche) and Only-begotten (Monogenes) as entities in a Gnostic system.

⁶⁵ John 1:1-5.

John himself indeed takes away all our disputes on this matter 2 when he says: "He was in this world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came to his own [things] and his own [people] did not receive him."⁶⁶ Now according to Marcion and those who are like him, neither was the world made by him, nor did he come to his own things, but rather to alien. According to some of the Gnostics, this world was made by angels and not through the Word of God. According to the followers of Valentinus again, it was not made through him, but through the Demiurge. For he, as they say, made certain images in imitation of the things above, but the Demiurge carried out the forming of the creation. For they say that the Lord and Demiurge of this created order of things, by whom they say this world was made, was sent forth by the Mother—when the Gospel clearly states that all things were made through the Word, who was in the beginning with God, which Word, he says, was made flesh and dwelt among us.

Now according to them neither was the Word made flesh, 3 nor Christ, nor the Saviour who was made out of all [the Aeons]. For they allege that the Word and Christ never came into this world, and that the Saviour was neither incarnate nor suffered, but that he descended as a dove upon that Jesus who was made by [higher] dispensation, and when he had proclaimed the unknown Father, ascended again into the Pleroma. Some of them indeed say that this Jesus who was by dispensation was incarnate and suffered, and that he had passed through Mary like water through a tube; others say that it was the son of the Demiurge, on whom the Jesus who was by dispensation descended; others again say that Jesus indeed was born of Joseph and Mary, and that Christ who came from above descended on him, being without flesh and free from suffering. But according to none of the views of the heretics was the Word of God made flesh. If one should read over all their credal statements, he would find that they always bring in the Word of God and the Christ who is from above as without flesh and free from suffering. Some think that he was manifested as a transfigured man, but say that he was neither born nor incarnate. Others say that he did not even take the form of a man, but descended like a dove on that Jesus who was born of Mary. So the disciple of the Lord shows them all to be false witnesses when he says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." And so that we should not query what 4

⁶⁶ John 1:11.

God it was whose Word was made flesh, he further taught, saying, "There was a man sent from God, his name was John; he came for witness, to bear witness of the light. He was not himself the light, but [came] that he might bear witness of the light."⁶⁷ What God was it who sent John the Forerunner, who bore witness of the light? He whose angel Gabriel is, who brought the good news of his birth, he who also promised through the prophets that he would send his angel before the face of his Son, and that he would prepare his way, that is, would bear witness of the light, in the spirit and power of Elijah.⁶⁸ And whose servant and prophet was Elijah? His who made the heaven and the earth, as he also confessed. So how could John, who was sent by the Creator and Fashioner of this world, testify of that light which descended from things that are unnamable and invisible? For all the heretics have taught that the Demiurge was ignorant of the power above him, as witness and pointer-out of whom John appeared.⁶⁹ Because of this, the Lord said that he ranked as more than a prophet. For all the other prophets proclaimed the coming of the Father's light, and longed to be worthy to see him whom they foretold; John, however, both predicted him like the others, and also saw and pointed him out when he came, and persuaded many to believe in him, so that he ranks as both prophet and apostle.⁷⁰ This is something more than a prophet—first apostles, then prophets⁷¹—but all came from one and the same God.

5 It was a good thing which was made by God's creation in the vineyard, and was first drunk as wine.⁷² None of those who drank of it spoke badly of it, and the Lord also took some of it. But better wine was that which was made by the Word directly and simply out of water for the use of those who were invited to the wedding. Although the Lord could have provided wine for the feasters and satisfied the hungry with food without using any object of the created order, he did not do so; but taking loaves which came from the earth, and giving thanks, and again making water into wine, he satisfied those who lay

⁶⁷ John 1:6-8.

⁶⁸ Luke 1:17 (Mal. 4:5).

⁶⁹ John must therefore have come from the highest power, not from an inferior ignorant of him; yet John belonged to the God of the Old Testament.

⁷⁰ Matt. 11:9; Luke 7:26; cf. John 1:19-37.

⁷¹ I Cor. 12:28.

⁷² An abrupt but not ineffective transition; we seem to come here on notes of a sermon in which the two kinds of wine drunk at Cana are treated as symbols of the two covenants.

down to eat, and he gave drink to those who were invited to the wedding.⁷³ Thus he showed that God who made the earth, and commanded it to bring forth fruit, and established the waters, and brought forth the springs, also in these last times through his Son gives to the human race the blessing of food and the favor of drink, the incomprehensible [acting] through the comprehensible and the invisible through the visible, since there is none beyond him, but he is in the bosom of the Father. For, he says, no man ever saw God, unless the only-begotten⁶ Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, himself declared him. For the Father who is invisible is declared to all by his Son who is in his bosom. Because of this he is known by those to whom the Son has revealed him, and again the Father through the Son gives knowledge of his Son to those who love him.⁷⁴ So Nathaniel learned from him and knew him, to whom the Lord bore witness, "This is a true Israelite, in whom is no guile." The Israelite knew his King, in that he said to him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel."⁷⁵ Peter was taught by him and knew the Christ, the Son of the Living God, who said: "Behold my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; I will put my Spirit upon him and he will proclaim judgment to the nations. He will not strive, nor shout, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; he will not break the shaking reed, and will not extinguish the smoking flax, until he send forth judgment into strife, and the nations will hope in his name."⁷⁶

THE UNITY AND NUMBER OF THE GOSPELS

These, then, are the principles of the gospel. They declare⁷ one God, the maker of this universe, who was proclaimed by the Prophets, and who through Moses established the dispensation of the Law, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and besides him they know no other God, nor any other Father. So firmly established is this position in the Gospels that the heretics themselves bear witness to them, and starting from them each one of them tries to establish his teaching. So the Ebionites, who use only the Gospel According to Matthew, are shown by that very document not to have right views about the Lord.

⁷³ John 6:11 (and parallels) and 2:9.

⁷⁴ John 1:18; Matt. 10:27; Luke 10:22.

⁷⁵ John 1:47, 49.

⁷⁶ Matt. 12:18-20 (Isa. 42:1-3); apparently from a Greek text that read *neikos*, "strife," for *nikos*, "victory."

Marcion cut up that According to Luke, yet is clearly, by the passages which he still keeps, shown to be a blasphemer of the one existing God. Those who separate Jesus from Christ and say that Christ remained impassible while Jesus suffered, and try to bring forward the Gospel According to Mark, can be corrected out of that, if they will read it with a love of the truth. The followers of Valentinus, who make a great use of that According to John to demonstrate their conjunctions, can be demonstrated from that to be wholly mistaken, as I have demonstrated in the first Book. Since [even] our opponents bear witness to us and make use of these [works], our demonstration based on them is firm and true.

- 8 The Gospels could not possibly be either more or less in number than they are. Since there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four principal winds, while the Church is spread over all the earth, and the pillar and foundation of the Church is the gospel, and the Spirit of life, it fittingly has four pillars, everywhere breathing out incorruption and revivifying men. From this it is clear that the Word, the artificer of all things, he who sits upon the cherubim and sustains all things, being manifested to men gave us the gospel, fourfold in form but held together by one Spirit. As David said, when asking for his coming, "O sinner upon the cherubim, show yourself."⁷⁷ For the cherubim have four faces, and their faces are images of the activity of the Son of God. For the first living creature, it says, was like a lion, signifying his active and princely and royal character; the second was like an ox, showing his sacrificial and priestly order; the third had the face of man, indicating very clearly his coming in human guise; and the fourth was like a flying eagle, making plain the giving of the Spirit who broods over the Church. Now the Gospels, in which Christ is enthroned, are like these.⁷⁸ For that According to John expounds his princely and mighty and glorious birth from the Father, saying, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," and, "All things were made by him, and without him was nothing made." Therefore this Gospel is deserving of all confidence, for such indeed is his person. That According to Luke, as having a priestly character, began with the priest Zacharias offering incense to God. For

⁷⁷ Ps. 80(79):1.

⁷⁸ The first appearance of the creatures of Ezek., ch. 1, and Rev. 4:7, 8, as symbols of the Evangelists; later the lion is assigned to Saint Mark and the eagle to Saint John.

the fatted calf was already being prepared which was to be sacrificed for the finding of the younger son.⁷⁹ Matthew proclaims his human birth, saying, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham," and, "The birth of Jesus Christ was in this manner," for this Gospel is manlike, and so through the whole Gospel [Christ] appears as a man of a humble mind, and gentle. But Mark takes his beginning from the prophetic Spirit who comes on men from on high, saying, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet," showing a winged image of the gospel. Therefore he made his message compendious and summary, for such is the prophetic character. Again, the Word of God himself used to speak to the patriarchs before Moses, in a divine and glorious manner, but for those under the Law he established a priestly and liturgical order; after this, becoming man, he sent out the gift of the Holy Spirit into the whole earth, guarding us by his own wings. As is the activity of the Son of God, such is the form of the living creatures; and as is the form of the living creatures, such is also the character of the Gospel. For the living creatures were quadriform, and the gospel and the activity of the Lord is fourfold. Therefore four general covenants were given to mankind: one was that of Noah's deluge, by the bow; the second was Abraham's, by the sign of circumcision; the third was the giving of the Law by Moses; and the fourth is that of the Gospel, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Since this is the case, they are foolish and uninstructed, even ⁹ audacious, who destroy the pattern of the gospel, and present either more or less than four forms of the gospel—the former, because they claim to have found more than the truth, the latter because they annul the dispensations of God. So Marcion, rejecting the whole gospel, rather indeed cutting himself off from the gospel, still boasts of having a share in the gospel. Others frustrate the gift of the Spirit, which in these last times has been poured out on the human race according to the Father's decree, refusing to admit that aspect [of the gospel] which is according to John's Gospel, in which the Lord promised that he would send the Paraclete; but they reject together both the gospel and the prophetic Spirit. Unhappy men, who want to be some kind of false prophets, but deny the gift of prophecy to the Church, suffering what those do who, because of those who come in insincerity, separate themselves from the

⁷⁹ An allegorical interpretation of Luke 15:23.