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THE COMMONITORY
OF
ST. VINCENT OF LERINS

Early Church Classics

The Commonitory
of
St. Vincent of Lerins

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

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The Commonitory of Saint Vincent of
Lerins on behalf of the Antiquity and
Universality of the Catholic Faith against
the Profane Novelties of all Heretics

“ *Nove non nova* ”

PREFACE

Is it possible to make a translation of an ancient Latin treatise that shall read like an interesting piece of English prose in the language of to-day? Not entirely; for the ideas of the fifth century—or rather, less the ideas than the persons, matters, subjects referred to, and always in the background of thought—have for the most part become obsolete. And to be interesting it is necessary for the reader and the writer to have the same general and familiar background of thought.

I have done my best, without indulging in too much modernity of language, to put St. Vincent's thoughts into everyday twentieth-century form—how imperfectly I am only too conscious and regretful. My own translation has been compared with, and assisted by, the Oxford Translation (Parker, 1837), Dr. Stock's (London, 1879), and Dr. Heurtley's in Parker's *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Oxford, 1894).

It is a pleasure to be able now to refer to a work by Dr. Cooper-Marsdin on *The History of*

the Islands of the Lerins: the Monastery, Saints and Theologians of St. Honorat (Camb. Univ. Press, 1913). It contains a full account of St. Vincent, a detailed bibliography, and some excellent illustrations.

T. H. B.

*Hedenham, Norfolk,
October 1913.*

INTRODUCTION

I

THE term "Commonitory" has been attached so long and so closely to this treatise of St. Vincent that one hesitates to suggest an alternative. But one may at least point out that a "Commonitorium" was a list of written instructions carried by one entrusted with a commission: in other words, "an aid to memory," headings of details, or, as we say familiarly, "memoranda." It is in this sense that St. Vincent uses it. It was to be his "Own Remembrancer," a "Wayfarer's Notebook." For *Peregrinus*, the pen-name which he uses, denotes "one who lives away from the world of cities," almost a "pilgrim," but a cloistered pilgrim, if the phrase be possible, combining the two ideas of a sojourner as regards this earthly life, and a recluse as regards the world. *Peregrinari* in late Latin came to be used for "leading the monastic life."

II

Lying in the deep blue of the Bay of Cannes are two small islands which claim the deepest

interest of the Church historian. Their ancient names,¹ Lero and Lerina, mentioned by Strabo, and by Ptolemy and by Pliny, survive in their modern designation The Lérins.

Lero lies two miles from the shore, and Lerina another mile south. The latter is the smaller of the two islets, and is known as the Île St. Honorat, from the name of the venerated founder of the Lerins community; the larger one is called the Île Ste. Marguerite, in memory of the church built there with that dedication during the first centuries of the Middle Ages.²

The fascination of islands and secluded spots for souls drawn towards asceticism has often been observed. In the history of our own Church Hy, Farne, Ely, Crowland are indissolubly linked with the names of Columba, Aidan and Cuthbert, Etheldreda, Guthlac; and similarly throughout Southern Europe and Egypt islands and deserts exercised their own attraction for devotees. But while Eastern monasticism was for the most part characterized by solitude, contemplation and speculation, its

¹ Strabo, IV, i. 10, *Λήρων*; Ptolemy, II, ix. 21, *Ληρώνη* v. *Λήρος νήσος*, *Ληρώνις*; Pliny, *H.N.* III, 2, Lero et Lerina adversus Antipolim. For other names see Cooper-Marsdin, *Hist. of the Islands of the Lerins*, p. 34.

² Lentheric, *Riviera, Ancient and Modern*, p. 354. For an earlier legend see Cooper-Marsdin, *u.s.*, p. 35.

Western twin preferred life in brotherhoods, in communities of vigorous thought and activity, in schools of learning. Amongst these the community of Lerins was conspicuous in the fifth century and after as the training place of some of the most illustrious saints and scholars of the age. Founded about A.D. 400 by the nobly-born Honoratus, it gave bishop after bishop to the Gallican Church and masterpieces of theological literature to Christendom.¹ Not the least of its achievements was the brotherhood's healthy protest against Augustinian predestinarianism; and not the least famous of its writers was Vincenius, the author of the tract "On behalf of the antiquity and universality of the Catholic Faith against the profane novelties of all heretics," which is usually called the "Commonitorium."

III

Of Vincent we know nothing beyond his own brief reference to his earlier life (Chap. I), and what we are told by Gennadius of Massilia

¹ It is interesting to English churchmen to remember that both Patrick and Benedict Biscop were for a time inmates of this famous Community. For fuller and later details of the history of Lerins, see the works named in Cooper-Marsdin, pp. 322 ff.; to which add Baeda, *Hist. Abb.*, Greith, *Altirische Kirche*, I, 3, and Bright, *The Age of the Fathers*, II, 247.

(c. A.D. 495) in his *De illustribus ecclesiæ scriptoribus* (cap. 64).

“Vincentius” (he writes), “a Gaul by birth, a Presbyter in the monastery on the island of Lerins, a man learned in the Holy Scriptures, and well instructed in the knowledge of Church doctrines, composed in clear and plain language a very powerful dissertation with a view to overthrow the sects of the heretics, which, concealing his own name, he entitled PEREGRINUS AGAINST THE HERETICS. Having lost the greater part of the Second Book of this work (the manuscript of which was stolen), he recapitulated its substance in a few words, attached it to the First, and published them in one book. He died in the reign of Theodosius and Valentinian.”

Theodosius died in July 450, so that Vincent cannot have lived beyond that date. The Commonitory was written in the year 434, for he refers to the Council of Ephesus, which was held in June and July 431, as having been held almost three years before (Chap. XXIX). Vincent finds a place in the Roman Martyrology, being commemorated on May 24.

IV

There is no doubt much in the course of the argument employed by St. Vincent which is bound to seem forced and unreal to a modern

reader. But there is also no doubt that our author did strike out on the right lines for the formulation of a principle of authority when he insisted upon the general consensus of the Church as its basis. For this is a universal principle, extending forward into the future as well as backward into the past. It cannot be confined to the consensus of one generation. In this aspect he is particularly useful in what he says about the function of the œcumenical councils. The development of expression or formulation of belief from the simple baptismal declaration of Apostolic times to the more elaborate formulæ of the Nicene Creed (or Chalcedonian Definition) involved no imposition of new doctrine on the Church (Chap. XXI). He points out that what the Councils did was simply to gather up into obligatory formulæ the Faith which had been traditionally taught, re-expressing in carefully chosen terms such portions of the Apostolic teaching as needed to be defined at the moment in opposition to heretical innovations. We may see here a germ of modernism. For the facts or truths may be distinguished from the mode in which those facts and truths were apprehended either at first or in the later definitions. No human formula of expression is in advance of its age; and therefore "no formula which expresses clearly the thought

of one generation can convey the same meaning to the generation which follows" (Westcott, *Revelation of the Father*, Pref. vii, 1884). I should prefer to say myself that no formula which is employed to express the belief of one generation can be used to express adequately the quickened and developed apprehension of the same belief in succeeding generations. The facts are not altered, but the modes in which they are apprehended are different. Each age is bound, in accordance with the development of its spiritual consciousness and insight, to scrutinize, reform or readapt the work of its predecessors, inasmuch as Revelation is continuous, marching side by side with the advance of knowledge. This does not in the least impugn the deposit of the faith once for all delivered to the saints; it only modifies our views about the modes in which that faith ought to be apprehended. The consensus of Christian belief has, as a matter of fact, often had to shift and remodel its ideas about the modes in which facts have been presented for its acceptance. The truths remain the same in their spiritual reality, and for the most part the remodelling of the ideas has come about unconsciously. It is well that the Church, never anxious to define, though sometimes driven to it—and generally with disaster—has distinctly refused to define in certain cases. What we

need is the repeated efforts of every generation of believers to understand, readapt and restate. This is precisely Vincent's contention in a fine burst of eloquence at the end of Chap. XXII. To teach the old truths in a new way in order that the light may grow clearer and clearer, and dull assent give place to intelligent apprehension, was Vincent's sincerest desire and aspiration.

To assert that revelation or inspiration has ceased, or that it was confined to the earliest days of the Church, or to the age of the Councils, is to give the lie to Christ's own promise of the guidance of His Spirit, and of His own Presence with His Church all the days even to the end of the world.

V

There remains one very interesting point to mention, namely, the relation of Vincent's Com-monitory to the *Quicumque vult*. Certain parallel lines of thought and occasional coincidences of language are too close to be accidental. Older discussions of this subject, as well as quite recent criticisms, are summarized in Dr. Burn's *Introduction to the Creeds*, and later in the *Athanasian Creed* in Rivington's "Oxford Church Text Books." The question of the authorship of the *Quicumque* scarcely comes within the scope of this Introduction; but one

is glad to record that an earlier rather than a later date for its composition seems to be gaining acceptance. Personally, I should be inclined to place it before that of the Commonitory; but whether Vincent was himself the writer of it or not is very difficult to decide. It seems to me that it is much easier to attack theories of authorship propounded by others than it is to construct an unassailable theory of authorship oneself. Certainly the *Quicumque* says nothing of the Nestorian duad of Sons, while Vincent is severely anti-Nestorian on this point; nor does it insert the crucial test-word "Theotokos," upon which Vincent strongly insists. The *Quicumque* is, in fact, anti-Apollinarian rather than anti-Nestorian. Dr. Burn looks to the honoured Founder of the Community of Lerins, Honoratus, afterwards Bishop of Arles (420-429), as the author, while Kattenbusch would place its composition about 410. Dr. Cooper-Marsdin and Mr. C. H. Turner prefer Cæsarius of Arles (502-542). Dom Morin wavers between Cæsarius and Martin of Braba some few years later (*Journ. Theol. St.*, Jan. and April 1911).

Attention is called in the notes to the coincidences between the Commonitory and the *Quicumque* as they occur in the text.

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THE COMMONITORY OF SAINT VINCENT OF LERINS

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

THE DESIGN OF THE TREATISE

I. INASMUCH as the voice of Scripture admonishes us "Ask thy fathers and they shall tell thee, thine elders and they shall declare unto thee":¹ and again, "Lend thine ear to the words of the wise":² likewise "My son, forget not these instructions, but let thy heart keep my words,"³ it seems to me, Peregrinus, the least of all God's servants, that, the Lord helping me, it will be a matter of no small profit to set down in writing what I have received faithfully from the holy fathers, and certainly it will be a much needed aid to my own infirmity, since I shall always have in readiness something which will help my weak memory by daily reading in it.

¹ Deut. xxxii. 7.

² Prov. xxii. 17.

³ Prov. iii. 1.

2. To this I am impelled not only by the profit to be reaped from the labour, but also by the consideration of time and the opportuneness of place. Time because, since all things human are snatched away by it, it behoves us to snatch something out of it which may profit us to eternal life; especially when a certain expectation of an approaching awful divine judgment¹ urgently demands increased zeal in religious matters, while the craftiness of new heretics needs much care and attention. Place, moreover, because, avoiding the throngs and crowds of cities, I have my secluded dwelling in a monastery in a very retired spot, where that aim can be achieved without great distraction which is chanted in the Psalm: "Be still and know that I am God."² Besides, it well suits the plan of what I have set before myself; for whereas I was for long involved in the various and disastrous whirlpools of worldly warfare,³ I have

¹ Vincent is alluding, I think, not to the Final Judgment, but to the ravages of the Vandals and other forces of disruption which were an immediate menace to the Roman Empire.

² Psalm xlvi. 10.

³ It cannot be certainly deduced from these words that Vincent had been a soldier. That life itself was a warfare had long been a Stoic commonplace, and Christians from St. Paul onwards (Eph. vi. 13 ff.; 1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 7) naturally pictured their own life in the

at length, by Christ's wafting, come to anchor in the harbour of the religious life, always the safest for every one. And I trust that, being freed from the windy blasts of vanity and pride, and pleasing God by the sacrifice of Christian humility, I may escape both the shipwrecks of this present life and the flames of the world to come.

. 3. And now I will, in the Lord's name, set about my purpose, which is to write down as a trusty narrator, rather than as presuming to pose as an author, what our forefathers have handed down and entrusted to us; observing this rule, however, in what I write, namely, not by any means to touch upon every point, but only the points that are necessary; and not even to do that in a polished and precise style, but in easy and plain language, so that most of the points may seem to be intimated rather than set forth at length. Let those write elegantly and precisely who are led to such work by confidence in their own genius or by a sense of duty: for myself it will be sufficient if I prepare a Commonitory for my own use to aid my recollection, or rather my forgetfulness. And I will endeavour, the Lord being my helper, to emend it, and make it more complete, day by day as I

world as a *militia*. Cp. Seneca *Epist.* 51, 96, *vivere militare est*.

recollect bit by bit what I have learnt. Anyhow I mention this at the beginning in order that, if by chance my book falls into the hands of the saints, they may not find fault hastily with anything in it when they still see that I have promised to polish it by correction.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL RULE FOR DISTINGUISHING CATHOLIC TRUTH FROM HERETICAL PERVERSENESS: THE TEST OF UNIVERSALITY, ANTIQUITY, CONSENT

4. I HAVE often inquired most earnestly and attentively from very many experts in sanctity and learning, how, and by what definite and, as it were, universal rule I might distinguish the truth of the Catholic Faith from the falsity of heretical perversion; and I have always received an answer of this kind from almost all of them, namely, that whether I, or any one else, wished to detect the frauds of newly rising heretics and to avoid their snares, and to remain sound and whole in the sound faith, one ought, with the Lord's help, to fortify one's faith in a twofold manner: first, by the authority of the Divine Law, and secondly, by the tradition of the Catholic Church.

5. Here perhaps some one will ask, Since the canon of Scripture is complete and is in itself sufficient, and more than sufficient on all points, what need is there to join to it the authority of ecclesiastical interpretation? The answer of course is that, owing to the very depth of Holy Scripture itself, all do not receive it in one and the same sense; but one in one way and another in another interpret the declarations of the same writer, so that it seems possible to elicit from it as many opinions as there are men. For Novatian¹ expounds it one way, Photinus² another, Sabellius³ another, Donatus⁴

¹ Novatian was a Roman presbyter who seceded from the Church in A.D. 251, and procured for himself an irregular consecration as bishop. He refused to reinstate the penitent lapsed to Christian privileges (Socr. I, 10; IV, 28), and following out this principle of discipline his followers styled themselves "the Pure." They copied the rigorous rules of the Montanists, forgetting the lessons of the parables of the Tares and of the Dragnet.

² Photinus, a pupil of Marcellus of Ancyra, deposed from the See of Sirmium in 351, taught that Christ was a mere man. See below, Chap. XI.

³ Sabellius, Bishop of Ptolemais, c. 250, denied the distinction of the Three Persons in the Holy Trinity. The Sabellian heresy took two forms: Patripassianism, an identification of the Persons; and Modalism, a regarding the Persons as merely three aspects of revealed Deity. This was an application of docetic notions to the Trinity.

⁴ Donatus, Bishop of Casa Nigra in Numidia, revived

another, Arius,¹ Eunomius² and Macedonius³ another, Apollinarius⁴ and Priscillian⁵ another,

the disciplinary rules of the Novatians, and formed a schism. He was the real founder of the sect, but not the man from whom it got its name. This was Donatus the Great, the successor of Majorinus (the first schismatic Bishop of Carthage) about 315.

¹ Arius, an Alexandrian presbyter, denied the Eternal Sonship of the Word and Personal Godhead of Jesus Christ. The Council of Nicæa in 325 condemned his erroneous teaching and drew up the Nicene Creed to exclude it.

² Eunomius, "the Rationalist of the fourth century," Bishop of Cyzicum, 360-364, held exaggerated Arian views and asserted the absolute unlikeness of the Son to the Father.

³ Macedonius, Bishop of Constantinople, 341-360, denied the Personality and Godhead of the Holy Spirit. His teaching was condemned by the Council of Constantinople in 381.

Arius, Eunomius and Macedonius are named together because they all attacked the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

⁴ Apollinarius, Bishop of Laodicæa, 362, was sound on the doctrine of the Trinity, but denied the existence in Christ of a human soul, whose place, he held, was supplied by the Divine Logos. Thus while Sabellius "confounded the Persons," and Arius "divided the substance," Apollinarius rejected the "Perfect Man" as Arius also rejected the "Perfect God." See on these points the present translator's *Œcumenical Documents of the Faith* (Methuen, 1906). His heresy is further explained in Chap. XII.

⁵ Priscillian, a Spanish bishop who professed eclectic tenets compounded of pantheism, fatalism, Sabellianism

Jovinian,¹ Pelagius² and Celestius³ another, and quite lately Nestorius⁴ another. Whence it is most necessary, on account of the great intricacies of such various errors, that the rule for the interpretation of the Prophets and Apostles should be laid down in accordance with the standard of the ecclesiastical and Catholic understanding of them.

and Gnosticism. Condemned by a Synod at Bordeaux, he appealed to the usurper Maximus, was tried, convicted of sorcery, and put to death—the first instance of the death penalty being inflicted for heresy.

¹ Jovinian, an ex-ascetic at Rome, who decried the merits of self-denial, and was condemned by Siricius of Rome and Ambrose of Milan in 390.

² Pelagius, a Briton whose native name was Morgan, taught, 400, that man had no need of supernatural grace nor inherited original sin. Augustine was his great opponent. His tenets were condemned at Carthage in 412.

³ Celestius was Pelagius' intimate friend and champion.

⁴ Nestorius, Archbishop of Constantinople, 428, a pupil of Theodore of Mopsuestia. His own views were greatly misunderstood by his contemporaries (see Bethune-Baker, *Nestorius and his Teaching*, Cambridge, 1908), but "Nestorianism" stood for the denial of the Personal Union of the two Perfect Natures of Godhead and Manhood in Jesus Christ, and for the refusal of the title "Theotokos" to the Virgin Mary (see below, p. 56, and my *Œcumenical Documents*, pp. 99 ff., and Mason's *Chalcedonian Doctrine of the Incarnation*, S.P.C.K. 1913.)

6. Also in the Catholic Church itself we take great care that we hold that which has been believed everywhere, 'always,' by all.¹ For that is truly and properly "Catholic," as the very force and meaning of the Word shew, which comprehends everything almost universally. And we shall observe this rule if we follow universality, antiquity, consent. We shall follow universality if we confess that one Faith to be true which the whole Church throughout the world confesses; antiquity if we in no wise depart from those interpretations which it is plain that our ancestors and fathers proclaimed; consent if in antiquity itself we eagerly follow the definitions and beliefs of all, or certainly nearly all, priests and doctors alike.

¹ This is the celebrated Vincentian Rule, which it is as easy to deride as to misuse. Like every epigrammatic maxim, it has its limitations, and in Chap. XXIII Vincent himself recognizes that it must not be allowed to exclude growth and development in the apprehension of Christian dogmata. Meticulously pressed, it becomes an impossible and ridiculous standard; but if understood as I think Vincent meant it to be held, it is a valuable guide, and embraces even modernism.

CHAPTER III

THE GENERAL CONSENSUS OF APPROVED MASTERS
TO BE FOLLOWED

7. WHAT, then, will the Catholic Christian do if any part of the Church has cut itself off from the communion of the Universal Faith? What surely but prefer the soundness of the whole body to a pestilent and corrupt member?

What if some novel contagion seek to infect the whole Church, and not merely a small portion of it? Then he will take care to cling to antiquity, which cannot now be led astray by any novel deceit.

8. What if in antiquity itself error be detected on the part of two or three men, or perhaps of a city, or even of a province? Then he will look to it that he prefer the decrees of an ancient General Council, if such there be, to the rashness and ignorance of a few.

But what if some error spring up concerning which nothing of this kind is to be found? Then he must take pains to find out and compare the opinions of the ancients, provided, of course, that such remained in the communion and faith of the One Catholic Church, although they lived in different times and places, conspicuous and

approved teachers; and whatever he shall find to have been held, written and taught, not by one or two only, but by all equally and with one consent, openly, frequently and persistently, that he must understand is to be believed by himself also without the slightest hesitation.

CHAPTER IV

THE EVILS RESULTING FROM THE DONATIST AND ARIAN ERRORS

9. BUT to make what we say plainer, we must illustrate it by some individual examples and enlarge upon it a little more fully, lest in our anxiety to be extremely brief, weighty matters be hurried over in swiftness of speech.

In the time of Donatus, from whom the Donatists get their name, when large numbers in Africa were rushing into the error of their own madness, and, forgetful of their name, religion and profession, preferred the sacrilegious rashness of one man to the Church of Christ, then they alone throughout Africa were safe within the precincts of the Catholic Faith who, detesting the profane schism, continued in communion with all the Churches of the world;

leaving an illustrious example to posterity as to the very proper way in which the soundness of the whole body should be preferred to the insanity of one, or even of a few.

10. So also when the poison of the Arians had infected not merely a small part, but nearly the whole world—so much so that a kind of mental blindness had fallen upon almost all the bishops of the Latin tongue, who were deceived partly by threats and partly by fraud,¹ and thus prevented from seeing what was best to be done in so great a confusion of affairs; then whoever stood forth as a true lover and worshipper of Christ, preferring the ancient belief to the new misbelief, escaped the infection of that poison.

11. And the peril of that time abundantly demonstrated the enormous calamity caused by the introduction of a new doctrine. For not only small matters but the very greatest were ruined. For not only relations, kinships, friendships, homes, but actually cities, peoples, provinces, nations, and at last the whole Roman Empire was shaken to its depths and filled with com-

¹ Vincent refers to the extraordinary proceedings of the bishops at and after the Councils of Ariminum (400 Westerns) and Seleucia (160 Easterns) in 359, who were deceived by the "Fraud of Nicè," and compelled to accept an Arian creed. Jerôme (*ad Lucif.* 10) has a similar description to that in the text: "The world groaned, and wondered to find itself Arian. . . ."

motion. For when this same Arian novelty, like a Bellona or a Fury, had first captured the emperor,¹ and then subjected all the chief officials in the palace to new laws, it never ceased to confuse and harass every kind of business, no matter whether private or public, sacred or secular, making no discrimination in favour of what was good and true, but smote whom and what it pleased as though from a superior plane. Then were wives dishonoured, widows polluted, virgins desecrated, monasteries demolished, clerics ejected, Levites scourged, priests driven into exile, gaols, prisons, mines filled with saints, the greater number of whom, forbidden to enter the cities, thrust forth into exile, homeless, in deserts and caves, amongst wild beasts and rocks, in nakedness, hunger and thirst, were worn out and wasted away.² And all this for no other cause than that instead of the heavenly doctrine men's superstitions were substituted; a well-founded antiquity was overturned by a scandalous novelty; the institutions of the ancients were violated; the decisions of the fathers rescinded; the definitions of the

¹ Constantius, sole emperor, 350-361.

² Heurtley points out that similar atrocious cruelties were being perpetrated in Africa by the Arian Vandals at the time when Vincent was writing. Possidius, *Vit. August.* 28; Victor, *de pers. Vandal.* pass.

elders torn up: because the lust of a profane and novel curiosity did not restrict itself within the purest limits of a consecrated and unimpaired antiquity.

CHAPTER V

THE EXAMPLE OF THE CONFESSORS

12. BUT perchance we are inventing these charges from our hatred of novelty and our love of antiquity. Whoever thinks this must at any rate give credence to the Blessed Ambrose,¹ who in the second book of his work² addressed to the Emperor Gratian,³ says, as he bewails the bitterness of the times: "But enough now, Almighty God, have we atoned with our destruction, with our blood, the slaughter of Confessors, the banishment of priests, and the wickedness of impiety so enormous. Sufficiently has it been made manifest that they who violate the Faith cannot remain in safety." Also in the third

¹ Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, 374-397. The first two books of his *De Fide* were written in 378 at the request of the Emperor Gratian, who was setting out to the relief of Valens against the Goths. Books III-V were added in 380.

² *De Fide*, II, 141.

³ Gratian Augustus, 367-383.

book of the same work : ¹ "Let us follow, therefore, the precepts of our ancestors, and not violate with rude and reckless daring the seals we have inherited. That sealed book of prophecy neither elders, nor powers, nor angels, nor archangels have dared to open. To Christ alone is reserved the prerogative of making it known.² Who amongst us dare unseal the book of the priesthood, sealed by Confessors and long consecrated by testimony of many? Even they who were constrained to unseal it,³ yet afterwards when the fraud was denounced resealed it, whilst those who had not dared to violate it stand forth as Confessors and witnesses. How can we deny the Faith of those whose victory we proclaim?"

13. We do proclaim it, O Venerable Ambrose, we do proclaim it, and we praise and admire.

For who is so demented as not at least to desire to follow, even though he may not be able to overtake, those whom no force could keep back from the defence of their ancestral Faith?—no threats, no blandishments, not life, not death, not the palace, not the life-guards, not the emperor, not the empire, not men, not dæmons—those I say whom, because of their firm adherence to religious antiquity, the Lord accounted

¹ *De fide*, III, 148.

² Rev. v. 1-5.

³ Referring to Ariminum, see note above, p. 29.

worthy of this so great reward, namely, that by their aid He restored fallen Churches, quickened peoples who were spiritually dead, replaced the castaway crowns of priests, deleted those nefarious—not letters, but—blots¹ of novel impiety with a fount of believing tears poured out under heavenly influence from the hearts of the bishops, and lastly, when almost the whole world was completely stricken by a hurricane of unexpected heresy, He recalled it from a novel misbelief to its old belief, from its recent insanity to its ancient sanity, from the blindness of novelty to its original light.

14. Now in this divine valour of the Confessors the point to be noted most particularly is this: that in their appeal to ecclesiastical antiquity the defence which they then undertook was not on behalf of a part, but of the whole. For it was not possible that men so eminent and of such character should uphold with such tremendous exertion the erroneous and even contradictory notions of one or two men, or that they should contend for some rash coalition in some small province; but, following the decrees and definitions of all the priests of the Holy Church, being heirs of Apostolic and Catholic Truth, they preferred to surrender themselves rather than the Faith of antiquity and univers-

¹ Non litteras sed lituras.

ality.¹ And on this account they deserved the great glory not merely of being called Confessors, but of being justly and appropriately regarded as the princes of the Confessors.

CHAPTER VI

TEACHING AND EXAMPLE OF STEPHEN, BISHOP OF ROME, IN RESPECT OF THE ITERATION OF BAPTISM

15. THE example of these same Blessed ones is indeed great and plainly divine, and worthy of recollection and meditation by every true Catholic; for they, like the seven-branched candlestick,² shining with the sevenfold light of the Holy Spirit, most clearly showed to posterity how in future the audacity of profane novelty, with all its several vain babblings of error, might be crushed by the authority of hallowed antiquity. Nor is the example at all a novel one. For that very same feeling has always flourished in the Church, whereby the more devout any one is the more ready is he to oppose

¹ Such, for example, as Athanasius, Hilary of Poitiers, Eusebius of Vercelli, Gregory of Nazianzum, Ambrose of Milan.

² Exod. xxxvii. 17 ff. Cp. Rev. i. 12.

new inventions. Every period is full of such examples. But not to labour the point, we will take one such, and that a very conspicuous one, from the Apostolic See;¹ so that it may be clearer than daylight to every one with how great energy, zeal and argument, the blessed successors of the blessed Apostles have always defended the integrity of the Faith they have once for all received.

16. It happened in the past that Agrippinus, Bishop of Carthage, of venerable memory, was the first of all mortals to think it right to re-baptize,² contrary to the divine canon, contrary to the rule of the Universal Church, contrary to the feeling of all his fellow bishops, contrary to ancestral custom and institutes. And this in-

¹ *i. e.* Rome, which Latin writers regarded as peculiarly such, since it was the only Apostolic See in the West, and honoured by the martyrdom of the two foremost Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul. But the title was common to all Sees which could claim an Apostle for their founder, or to have been the recipients of Apostolic Epistles (Augustine, *de doctr. Christ.* II, 13). See Bingham, *Antiquities*, II, 2-3. Tertullian (*de præscr. hæer.* 32, 36) reckons Smyrna, Corinth, Philippi, and Ephesus, as well as Rome, as Apostolic Sees.

² This, of course, refers only to the re-baptism of heretics and schismatics, whose baptism was believed to be invalid, on their reconciliation to the Church. See on the whole subject Benson's *Cyprian*, pp. 335 ff.; Hooker's *Eccles. Polity*, V. 62.

novation brought about such an amount of evil that it afforded to all heretics an example of sacrilege, and even to some Catholics an occasion of error. When then all protested against the newness of this practice, and the priests everywhere, each as his zeal prompted him, opposed it, Pope Stephen of blessed memory, Prelate of the Apostolic See, acting indeed with his colleagues, but giving them the lead, withstood it, deeming it right, I imagine, so far to surpass all the rest in his devotion to the Faith as he was above them by the authority of his position.

Accordingly in an epistle¹ sent at that time to Africa, he laid down this rule: that nothing new was to be imposed, except what had been handed down by tradition. For that holy and prudent man knew that the policy of piety does not permit any other rule than that the self-same things which have been received as of faith from the fathers should be taught under seal of faith to the children; and that we are bound to follow whither orthodoxy leads us, not to lead

² The letter has not been preserved, but Stephen's words as quoted by Cyprian (with disapproval, naturally, as he held the opposite view) are, "If any then shall come to you from any heresy whatsoever, let there be nothing imposed afresh beyond what has been handed down, namely, that hands be laid on such to repentance" (Epist. 74, *ad Pompeium*).

orthodoxy whither we wish; and that it is the peculiar property of Christian modesty and earnestness not to hand down to posterity our own fancies, but to preserve what has been received by our forefathers.

What, then, was the ultimate issue of the whole question? Only what was usual and customary. Antiquity was retained, novelty was repudiated.

17. But perchance patronage was lacking to the introduction of that novelty. Nay, it had on its side such force of genius, such floods of eloquence, such a number of partisans, so close a resemblance to the truth, such textual support in the Bible (only obviously interpreted in a new and wrong sense), that it seems to me the whole of that combination could not have been destroyed in any other way but by the very essence of the great stir itself—that which began it, that which defended it, that which applauded it—its boast of novelty! And what validity in the end had that African Council¹ or its decrees?

¹ Vincent is referring to the Council of Carthage held by Cyprian in 256, which reaffirmed the decision of the Council held by Agrippinus about the year 213, that heretics must be re-baptized. The Council of Arles in 314 decided that if the proper Trinitarian formula had been used, the baptism of heretics was valid. The Council of Nicæa, on the other hand, demanded not only the use of the orthodox formula, but also an ortho-

18. None whatever, thanks to God; but the whole affair, like a story, like a dream, like refuse, was effaced, rejected, trampled under foot. And now note the marvellous reversal of treatment. The authors of that same opinion are adjudged to be Catholics, the followers of it heretics; the teachers are absolved, the disciples condemned: the writers of the books will be children of the Kingdom,¹ the defenders of them will have their place in gehenna. For who is so demented as to doubt that the most blessed Cyprian, that light of all saints and martyrs and bishops, with the rest of his colleagues, will reign with Christ for ever; or who on the other hand is so sacrilegious as to deny that the Donatists and the rest of those pestilent ones, who boast that they re-baptize on the authority of that Council, will burn for ever with the devil?

dox Trinitarian faith on the part of the baptizer (canon 19, concerning the Paulianists, followers of Paul of Samosata, who was a Sabellianist)

¹ Matthew xiii. 38.

CHAPTER VII

THE HERETICS CRAFTILY SEEK SUPPORT FOR THEIR
ERRORS IN THE OBSCURER SAYINGS OF ANCIENT
WRITERS

19. THIS judgement¹ seems to me to have been promulgated under divine guidance especially because of the craftiness of those who contrive to make their heresy harmonize with something taught under another name, and often capture for their own use the somewhat obscurer sayings of some ancient writer which seem to agree with their own teaching just because of its characteristic obscurity. Thus they seem to be neither the first nor the only ones to hold whatever it is they profess. This evil practice of theirs is, to my mind, doubly hateful: first, because they do not shrink from offering to others the cup of heretical poison; and again, because with profane hand, as if stirring up ashes now still, they disturb the memory of some holy man, and by reviving his opinions spread abroad what ought to be buried in silence—following the steps of their progenitor Ham, who not only neglected to cover the nakedness of the venerable Noah,

¹ That is, the rejection by the Church of the practice of re-baptism, and of the Councils which approved of it.

but proclaimed it to others as something to be laughed at. Whence he incurred so great a disgrace for his outrage on filial piety that even his descendants were involved in the curses on his sin. Very different he from his brethren blest, who neither wished to dishonour with their own eyes, nor to expose to others, the nakedness of their venerable father; but went backwards, as it is written,¹ and covered him, that is, they neither approved nor betrayed the fault of the holy man; and therefore they were rewarded with a happy benediction on their posterity.

20. But let us return to the matter in hand.

With great fear, then, ought we to shrink from the guilt of altering the Faith and polluting religion, from which sin not only the rule of Church polity, but also the rebuke of Apostolical authority should hold us back. For it is well known to all how impressively, how severely, how vehemently the blessed Apostle Paul rebukes those who, with wondrous levity, had so quickly transferred their mind from him who had called them to the grace of Christ to another Gospel, which is not another; ² who had heaped together teachers for themselves according to their own desires, turning away their ears from the Truth, and turning aside unto fables; ³ having condemnation because they had made void their first

¹ Gen. ix. 22.

² Gal. i. 6 f.

³ 2 Tim. iv. 3 f.

faith; ¹ deceived by those of whom the Apostle writes thus to the Roman Christians, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark those which cause dissensions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learnt, and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not the Lord Christ but their own belly, and by their winsome words and fair speeches beguile the hearts of the innocent." ² Who enter houses and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led by various desires, always learning and never arriving at the knowledge of the Truth; ³ vain talkers and seducers, who subvert whole houses, teaching what they ought not for the sake of filthy lucre. ⁴ Men of corrupt mind, reprobate concerning the Faith; ⁵ puffed up yet knowing nothing, but doting about questionings and disputes of words, destitute of the Truth, thinking gain to be piety; ⁶ withal learning to be idle, going about from house to house; and not idle only, but tattlers and busybodies, speaking things they ought not; ⁷ who, having thrust from them a good conscience, have made shipwreck concerning the Faith; ⁸ whose profane and vain babblings proceed further unto ungodliness, and their words spread like a gangrene. ⁹ Well also

¹ 1 Tim. v. 12.² Rom. xvi. 17 f.³ 2 Tim. iii. 6 f.⁴ Titus i. 10 f.⁵ 2 Tim. iii. 8.⁶ 1 Tim. vi. 4.⁷ 1 Tim. v. 13.⁸ 1 Tim. i. 19.⁹ 2 Tim. ii. 16.

is it written of them, "But they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was."¹

CHAPTER VIII

EXPLANATION OF GALATIANS I. 8

21. WHEN, therefore, certain of this sort, touring provinces and cities and carrying with them their errors on sale, arrived amongst the Galatians, and the Galatians, being affected with a nausea towards the Truth, vomited forth the manna of Apostolical and Catholic teaching, delighting rather in the garbage of heretical novelty, the authority of Apostolic power asserted itself and decreed with the greatest severity, "Though either we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel than we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."²

22. What does he mean by saying "Though we"? Why not "Though I"? He means even if Peter, or Andrew, or John, or, in fact, the whole company of the Apostles,³ preach any

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 9.

² Gal. i. 8.

³ *Apostolorum chorus*, so in Niceta's Hymn *Te Deum*, based on Cyprian's *apostolorum gloriosus chorus (de mortal. 26)*.

other Gospel to you than we have preached, let him be accursed. A tremendous extension of the anathema. But to ensure the holding fast of the "first faith,"¹ he will spare neither himself nor the rest of his fellow Apostles.

But that is a small matter. He goes on, "Even if an angel from heaven preach to you any other Gospel than we have preached, let him be accursed." To have mentioned human beings as concerned in the preservation of the Faith once for all delivered,² did not suffice without the inclusion also of angelic excellency—"Though we" (he says) "or an angel from heaven." Not that the holy and celestial angels can now sin, but it is as though he said, Even if that happen which cannot happen—whoever he may be that attempts to change the Faith once delivered, let him be accursed.

23. But perchance the Apostle originally spoke these words inconsiderately, and let them fall from a natural impulse rather than from a Divine prompting. By no means. For he follows up what he says and stamps it in with all the strength of repeated assertion: "As we said before, so now again I say, If any one shall preach to you any other Gospel than what ye received, let him be accursed." He does not say, If any one announce to you an additional

¹ 1 Tim. v. 12.

² Jude 3.

message to that which ye received, let him be blessed, praised, welcomed; but he says, Let him be accursed, separated, that is, cut off, shut out, lest the horrid contagion of a single sheep infect, by his poisonous intermixture with it, the innocent flock of Christ.

CHAPTER IX

ST. PAUL'S WARNING TO THE GALATIANS IS OF UNIVERSAL APPLICATION

24. BUT perhaps this warning was meant only for the Galatians. Then it will follow that the other commands which are given later in the same Epistle are for the Galatians only—such as, “If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another,”¹ and so on. And if this is absurd, and all the injunctions were meant equally for all, then it follows that, as the injunctions as to moral conduct, so also the warnings as to the Faith apply equally to all. And just as it is not permissible for any one to provoke or to envy another, so likewise

¹ Gal. v. 25 f. 1

is it not permissible for any one to receive any other Gospel than what the Catholic Church preaches everywhere.

25. Or if it is contended that the anathema pronounced upon any one who preached any other Gospel than had been preached was meant for that time only, and is no longer applicable, then likewise the injunction, "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh,"¹ was meant for those times only and not for the present. But if to think thus is alike contrary to piety and actually pernicious, it necessarily follows that, as these injunctions are to be observed by all ages, so also those commands laid down regarding the unchangeableness of the Faith are for all ages. To preach, therefore, any other doctrine to Catholic Christians than they have received never was lawful, never is lawful, never will be lawful; and to anathematize those who do preach otherwise than has been once for all received always was a duty, always is a duty, always will be a duty.

26. And since this is so, is there any one either so bold as to preach any other doctrine than the Church preaches, or so unsteadfast as to receive anything other than he has received from the Church? That chosen vessel,² that teacher of the Gentiles, that trumpet of the Apostles, that

¹ Gal. v. 16.

² Acts ix. 15.

herald of the world, that intimate of heaven,¹ cries and repeatedly proclaims throughout his Epistles to all, always, in all places, If any one preach any new doctrines, let him be anathema. On the other hand, certain frogs, fleas and short-lived flies, such as are the Pelagians, cry in opposition, and that to Catholics, We are the originators, we are the leaders, we are the expositors: condemn what you used to hold: hold what you used to condemn: throw away the ancient Faith, the paternal institutes, the trusts left by your ancestors, and receive instead—ah, what? I shudder to say it; for it is so arrogant that it seems to me that not only to affirm it, but even to refute it, cannot be done without some sort of guilt.

CHAPTER X

THE ERRORS OF EMINENT MEN ARE PERMITTED AS A TEST OF THE CHURCH'S FIDELITY

27. BUT some one will say, Why, then, are eminent persons in the Church very often permitted by Divine Providence to preach novel doctrines to Catholics? The question is perti-

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 2.

ment, and deserves full and careful discussion; but it is one to which a satisfactory reply must be given not by our own ingenuity, but by the authority of the Divine Law and the teaching of an ecclesiastical master.

Let us hear, then, saintly Moses, and let him teach us why learned men, and such as from their knowledge are even graced with the title of Prophets by the Apostle, are permitted sometimes to put forth new doctrines which the Old Testament was accustomed to call, in allegorical phrase, "other gods"—an appropriate title, inasmuch as the heretics pay as much reverence to their own opinions as the heathen do to their gods.

28. Blessed Moses, then, writes thus in Deuteronomy: ¹ "If there shall arise among you a prophet or one who says that he has seen a vision," that is, one holding office in the Church whom his disciples or hearers believe to be teaching by revelation—what follows?—"and he shall predict a sign or a wonder, and that shall come to pass which he hath spoken"—obviously he indicates some great Master whose learning is so wide that his followers believe him able not only to have cognizance of things human, but to foreknow things superhuman, such Masters as their disciples commonly boast were Valentinus,²

¹ Deut. xiii. 1 ff.

² Valentinus, an Alexandrian Platonist who settled in

Donatus, Apollinaris, and the rest of the same sort—what follows? “And shall say unto them, Let us go after other gods whom thou knowest not, and serve them.” What are these other gods but strange errors which thou knewest not, novel and unheard of? “And let us serve them,” that is, let us believe and follow them. What is the conclusion? “Thou shalt not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer.” And why, I ask you, does not God forbid to be taught that which He forbids to be listened to? “Because the Lord your God trieth you, that it may be plain whether you love Him or not with all your heart and with all your mind.”

The reason is clearer than daylight why sometimes Divine Providence suffers certain leaders of Churches to preach certain new doctrines—“that the Lord your God may try you,” he says. And assuredly it is a great trial when one whom thou lookest up to as a Prophet, as a disciple of

Rome c. 140, the author of the most elaborate of the Gnostic systems. He attempted to harmonize pagan philosophy with Christian teaching (see my notes on Tertullian, *de præscr. hæc.* 30 ff.). His artificial Christology was docetic, and denied that the body of Christ was of the Virgin's substance. This view was revived and widely disseminated at the time of the Reformation by some of the anabaptist sects, and had to be repeatedly condemned: note the explicit language of Article II, and of the Christmas Preface (*Œcum. Docts.* pp. 208, 305).

Prophets, as a teacher and upholder of the Truth, whom thou hast accepted with the greatest veneration and affection, on a sudden privily and furtively introduces noxious errors which thou canst not at once detect, so long as thou art influenced by the prestige of his long-felt authority, and dost not deem it right easily to condemn, so long as thou art hindered by thine affection for an old Teacher.

CHAPTER XI

EXAMPLES FROM CHURCH HISTORY ILLUSTRATING MOSES' WORDS—THE CASES OF NESTORIUS, PHOTINUS, APOLLINARIUS

29. HERE perhaps some one will at once demand that we illustrate the verbal assertions of the holy man Moses by some actual examples in Church history. The demand is just, and shall be answered forthwith.

I will begin with the nearest and plainest case. What kind of a trial do we reckon the latest one, when that unhappy Nestorius, suddenly changed from a sheep into a wolf, began to ravage the flock of Christ, while still the very ones who were being devoured for the most part believed

him to be a sheep, and consequently were the more open to his attacks? For who would readily believe him to be in error who was known to have been elected by the imperial choice, and honoured with such close attention of priests?—a man who was held in great affection by the saints, and in the highest estimation by the people, as he daily expounded the Scriptures in public and confuted the noxious errors of Jews and heathen. How, pray, could he fail to win every one's confidence as an orthodox teacher, preacher, believer?—he who, to open a way for one heresy of his own, was occupied in attacking the blasphemies of all heresies? And yet this was exactly what Moses meant: "The Lord your God doth try you, whether ye love Him or not."

30. To leave Nestorius, in whom there was always more of the wonderful than of the profitable, more of show than of reality, whom natural ability rather than Divine grace made to seem great for a time in the opinion of the multitude, let us rather mention those persons who, being endued with many advantages and great industry, presented no little temptation to Catholics.

Photinus, for example, amongst the Pannonians, within the memory of our elders, is said to have been a trial to the Church of Sirmium.¹ In which place, after he had been

¹ An important city of the empire, capital of Pannonia.

advanced to the priesthood¹ with universal approbation, and for some time had ministered as a Catholic, suddenly, like that evil prophet or dreamer whom Moses refers to, he began to persuade the people of God entrusted to him to follow strange gods, that is, strange errors, which before they knew not.

The case was not a novel one; but the mischief of it was that he made use of extraordinary aids in the perpetration of his nefarious work. For he had immense natural genius and excelled in learning, and was very eloquent, disputing and writing copiously and weightily in both Greek and Latin, as is shown by the evidence of his books, written some in the one and some in the other language. But happily the sheep of Christ committed to him, wary and watchful for the Catholic Faith, instantly remembered the forewarnings of Moses, and although they admired the eloquence of their Prophet and Pastor, they

Three Arian Councils were held here in 351, 357 and 359; and four Arian Creeds promulgated, the last being the celebrated "Dated Creed," May 22, 359, of Mark of Arethusa, which was rejected at Ariminum, but accepted in a worse form at Nicè. Sirmium was the modern Metrovitz on the north bank of the Save in Slavonia in Hungary.

¹ This is not the first time that Vincent uses *sacerdotium* (*sacerdotes*) to denote bishops. "Summus sacerdos qui est Episcopus."

were not unaware of the trial. For they thenceforward avoided as a wolf him whom they had previously followed as the ram of the flock.

31. Nor is it only in the case of Photinus that we see the danger of trial within the Church, and are warned at the same time of the more diligent guardianship of the Faith which we ought to keep. Apollinarius¹ is another example who aroused surging commotions and acute perplexities in his followers, the Church's authority drawing them one way and their teacher's influence another; so that, wavering and fluctuating between the two, they did not rightly extricate themselves from their dilemma.

But perhaps he was a man of worthless character? Nothing of the kind. His word was only too readily believed on any subject, so eminent and so esteemed was he. He was unequalled in acuteness, adroitness, learning; he quashed many heresies in voluminous writings; he con-

¹ The two Apollinarii, father and son, lived at Laodicæa, of which city the younger was bishop. By their joint labours, the elder dramatizing the Old Testament and the younger turning the New Testament into Platonic dialogue, the edict of Julian in 362, which prohibited Christians from teaching, was evaded. The younger, as Vincent says, was a man of extraordinary ability and learning, so much so that his lapse into heresy was with difficulty credited (Socrates III, 6; Epiphanius, *Hær.* LXXVII, 2).

futed countless errors hostile to the Faith, a proof of which is that splendid masterpiece in not less than thirty books in which he refuted with a great mass of arguments the insane calumnies of Porphyry.¹ It were a long tale to mention all his works by which he might be regarded as an equal of the chiefest of the Church's edifiers, had not some profane lust of heretical curiosity led him to invent something new, which both contaminated all his labours as if by some leprous contagion, and brought it about that his learning came to be termed the Church's trial instead of its edification.

CHAPTER XII

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE HERESIES OF PHOTINUS, APOLLINARIUS AND NESTORIUS

32. AT this point perhaps I may be asked to give some account of the heresies of the men

¹ Porphyry the Neoplatonist (233-305) wrote fifteen books criticizing the Scriptures as they were currently interpreted. Apollinarius' reply, which Jerome praised (*de vir. illustr.* 104), has not been preserved, nor have any of Apollinarius' works, save fragments quoted by other writers.

I have just mentioned, Nestorius, Apollinarius and Photinus. This is not really pertinent to the matter in hand, which is not to follow up the errors of individuals, but to present a few examples which obviously and clearly illustrate Moses' words that if at any time some Church Teacher, himself a Prophet in interpreting the Prophets' mysteries, attempts to introduce some novel teaching into the Church of God, Divine Providence permits that to happen for our trial. Only as a digression, then, may it be useful to set forth briefly what these afore-mentioned heretics held.

33. This, then, is the heresy of Photinus. He says that God is sole and solitary, and to be acknowledged after the manner of the Jews. He denies the fulness of the Trinity and the Personality both of the Word of God and of the Holy Spirit. He asserts that Christ was a mere man who had his beginning from Mary; and he lays down expressly the doctrine that we ought to reverence the Person of God the Father only, and Christ only as a man. That is the teaching of Photinus.

34. Apollinarius boasts that he agrees with the belief in the Unity of the Trinity, and that, with full¹ reverence for the Faith; but with regard to

¹ Baluzius and some later editors insert *non*, to the destruction of the sense.

the Incarnation of our Lord he blasphemes with open profession. For he says that either there was no human soul in the flesh itself of our Saviour, or at least that it did not embrace the human mind and reason. In addition, he taught that the flesh of our Lord was not derived from the flesh of the holy Virgin Mary, but descended from heaven into the Virgin; and, with constant vacillation and doubt, he sometimes asserted that it was coeternal with God the Word, and sometimes that it was created out of the Divine Nature of the Word. For he denied that there existed in Christ two Natures, one Divine and one Human—the one from the Father and the other from His Mother; but thought that the very Nature of the Word was divided, as though one part of it remained permanently in God and the other was converted into flesh;¹ so that whereas the Truth says that the One Christ was from two Natures,² he, contrary to the Truth, asserts that from the One Divine Nature of Christ two substances were made. Such was the teaching of Apollinarius.

35. But Nestorius, whose error was the oppo-

¹ In this and the following chapters there will be noticed constant coincidences of thought and language with the *Quicumque Vult*.

² This was, and is, a perfectly orthodox phrase, although later Eutychians and Monophysites perverted it to their own uses (*Æcum. Docts.* p. 240).

site to that of Apollinarius, whilst pretending to distinguish Two Natures in Christ, suddenly brings in Two Persons, and by an unheard-of wickedness postulates Two Sons of God, Two Christs, One God and the other Man: One begotten from the Father, the other from His Mother. And therefore he affirms that the holy Mary ought not to be called Theotokos,¹ but Christotokos, because she gave birth not to that Christ Who is God, but to that Christ who was man.

But if any one thinks that in his writings Nestorius speaks of Christ as One and teaches One Person of Christ, let him not hastily trust him.² For either this was devised skilfully to deceive, that through good things he might the more easily win others to evil things—as saith the Apostle, “He worked death to me through that which is good”³—either, as I say, for the

¹ This title of the Virgin was of very ancient use in the language of the Church; its equivalent is found in St. Luke i. 43, “the Mother of my Lord.” The doctrine which it emphasizes is that of the One Divine Personality of Christ. He was God before He became Man, and His Personality remained unchanged by His conception and birth from the Virgin—only to His Divine Nature was thereby added Human Nature. For references see *Œcum. Docts.* pp. 112 ff.

² But see Nestorius' own views very clearly described in Mason, *Chalcedonian Doctrine of the Incarnation*, p. 92.

³ Romans vii. 13.

sake of deceit he boasts in certain of his writings that he believes One Christ and One Person of Christ, or else he holds that after the birth from the Virgin had taken place the two Persons were united in One Christ—thus postulating two Christs at the time of the Virgin's conception or parturition and for a little time after. It follows that Christ was born at first an ordinary man, not yet associated in Unity of Person with God the Word, and that afterwards the Person of the Word assuming descended upon Him, and although He now, having been assumed, remains in the glory of God, yet at one time there seems to have been no difference between Him and the rest of mankind.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CATHOLIC DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY AND OF THE INCARNATION

36. SUCH are the barkings against the Catholic Faith of the rabid dogs Nestorius, Apollinarius and Photinus: Photinus rejecting the Trinity; Apollinarius teaching a convertible nature of the Word, and denying the Two Natures in Christ, and also denying that Christ possessed a soul

at all, or at any rate a human mind and reason in His soul, its place being taken by the Word of God; Nestorius affirming that either always or at some time there were two Christs.

But the Church Catholic, with the right knowledge about God and about our Saviour, is not guilty of blasphemy either on the mystery of the Trinity or on the Incarnation of Christ. For she worships One Deity in the fulness of the Trinity and the equality of the Trinity in one and the same Majesty, and confesses One Jesus Christ, not two, the Same equally God and Man: she believes One Person in Him, but Two Natures: Two Natures but One Person—Two Natures because the Word of God is not changeable so as to be converted into flesh: One Person, lest by professing Two Sons she should seem to be worshipping not a Trinity but a Quarternity.

37. It is quite worth while to get to the heart of these Truths again and again, in as distinct and detailed a manner as possible.

In God there is One Substance but Three Persons: in Christ Two Substances but One Person.¹ In the Trinity exists a distinction of Persons, not of Substances: in our Saviour a distinction of Substances, not of Persons. Why are there these distinctions of Persons and not

¹ See Mason, *u.s.*, p. 30.

of Substances in the Trinity? Because there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost;¹ but yet there is only one and the same Nature of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. And why are there these distinctions of Substance and not of Person in the Saviour? Because there is one Substance of Divinity and another of Humanity; but yet the Deity and the Humanity are not two Persons, but one and the same Christ, one and the same Son of God, one and the same Person of the One and the Same Christ and Son of God; just as in man the flesh is one thing and the soul another, but the man is one and the same, soul and flesh.² In Peter and Paul there is flesh and soul, but yet there are not two Peters, soul and flesh; nor one Paul soul and another Paul flesh; but one and the same Peter, one and the same Paul, of twofold and

¹ These words read very naturally, as though they were a quotation from a known formulary.

² This analogy, familiar to us in the *Quicumque*, is not a perfect one; but it is a sufficient illustration of a natural union in which two unconfused "substances" constitute one person. It was frequently employed by theological writers, even after the Eutychian perversion of it: see Vigilius of Thapsus, c. 450, *contr. Eutych.* V, 6. The Monophysites used it, pleading for *one* Nature in Christ, inasmuch as soul and body make *one* nature in man. See the *Journal of Theol. Studies*, Jan 1911, p. 166, and refs. there; Ottley, *Incar.* II, 279.

diverse nature of soul and body subsisting. So in like manner are there in one and the same Christ two Substances, one Divine and the other Human: One from God the Father, the other from His Virgin Mother: One coeternal and coequal with the Father, the other belonging to time and less than the Father:¹ the One consubstantial with the Father, the other consubstantial with His Mother; and yet One and the Same Christ in both Substances.

There is not, therefore, One Christ God, and another Christ Man: not One uncreated and another created: not One impassible, and another passible: not One equal to the Father, and another less than the Father: not One from the Father and another from His Mother; but One and the Same, God and Man—the Same uncreated and created, the Same unchangeable and impassible and One Who has changed and suffered, the Same both equal to the Father and

¹ This section is a brilliant anticipation of Leo's Tome of 449, and represents generally the views of the Western (Latin) Fathers, though not without exceptions like Tertullian and Hilary. The earlier, and for the most part Eastern, view was that the Son was equal in essence but inferior in personality to the Father, Who Alone was of none. This "subordination" of Persons in the Trinity sprang from Their Eternal and Absolute relations to Each Other; whence we speak of Them in the "order" of Father, Son, and Spirit. See Westcott's Note on John xiv. 28.

less than the Father,¹ the Same begotten of the Father before all time and born in time from His Mother, Perfect GOD and Perfect MAN: as to God the highest of Deity, as to Man the completest Humanity—completest, I say, since He possessed soul and flesh—true flesh, mark you, our flesh, derived from His Mother—and a soul endowed with intellect and potent with mind and reason.

There is, therefore, in Christ soul and flesh, but this whole is One Christ, One Son of God, our One Saviour and Redeemer. One, not by some corruptible confusion of Divinity and Humanity, but by a whole and single Unity of Person. Nor did that conjunction convert and change one into the other (that is an error peculiar to the Arians), but rather it so compacted both into One that, while there always remains in Christ an absolute singleness and oneness of the same Person, there exists also for all eternity the property of each Nature, whereby neither can God ever begin to be body nor can what is once body ever cease to be such. This also can be illustrated from human nature. For not only

¹ John x. 30; xiv. 28. Cp. Augustine, *Tr. in Joan.* LXXVIII, 1, "The form of the servant is added, but the form of God is not subtracted. The one causes Him to say, 'The Father is greater than I'; the latter, 'I and the Father are One.'"

doth each individual now, but also in the future each individual will consist of body and soul; and yet never will his body be converted into soul nor his soul into body; but in each man destined to live for ever the distinction of both natures will necessarily remain for ever. So likewise in Christ will each Nature's own characteristic property be retained for ever, and yet the Unity of Person be preserved.

CHAPTER XIV

JESUS CHRIST, TRUE AND PERFECT MAN

38. BUT when we so frequently use the word "Person,"¹ as that God became Man "Personally," it must be very carefully understood that we do not mean to say that God the Word assumed our nature merely in an imitation of our action, and that His works as Man were

¹ The Latin *persona* is a more ambiguous term than the English "person." Originally denoting the actor's mask, it came to be used of any assumed rôle, and finally to designate that which distinguishes a man from his fellows, his character and personality. It is therefore impossible always to render *persona* (which may mean impersonation as well as real personality, by the same English word. The true sense of St. Vincent is, I believe, conveyed in the translation of this chapter.

merely in appearance and not truly human. His deeds were not like those of an actor in a theatre, where often one man by a quick change takes many parts, none of which is the real man. For as often as any imitation of another's action is undertaken, the functions and deeds of others are so performed as that the actors represent others not themselves. For (to use as examples the Secular Games and the Manichæans)¹ when a tragedian represents a priest or a king, he is not really priest or king, because when the acting ceases at the same time the assumed impersonation ceases also. We shudder at such monstrous and wicked blasphemy. Let that madness of theirs remain with the Manichæans, proclaimers of a phantasy, who say that the Son of God,

¹ In the middle of the third century a Persian ascetic, Manes, taught throughout Eastern Babylonia, India and China a religion of sheer Dualism—two Deities, one good and the other evil—a belief which lay at the root of all the Gnostic heresies. By the middle of the fourth century Manichæism had spread widely throughout the empire and found adherents amongst the monks and clergy of Egypt and North Africa, to whom its extreme asceticism appealed. All matter was regarded as evil, and hence the teaching of the Old Testament was set aside and the Incarnation rejected. Augustine before his conversion was long ensnared in its toils. Valentinian III and Justinian attempted to stamp it out by severe enactments. See Bethune-Baker, *Intr. to Christian Doctrine*, p. 93.

Very God, appeared only in the character of a man, not as a real man, but pretending a feigned human action and behaviour.

39. But the Catholic Faith asserts that the Word of God was made Man in such wise that He took our nature not in pretence or semblance, but really and truly, and that His human actions were not as it were feigned, but rather His very own, and that He absolutely was what He acted and did. Just as we ourselves when we speak, think, live, subsist, do not imitate men, but are men. Peter and John, to take eminent examples, were not men by imitating men, but by being men. Paul likewise did not feign to be the Apostle or pretend to be Paul, but was the Apostle and was Paul. Just so God the Word, by assuming and taking flesh, by speaking, working, suffering in flesh, yet without any corruption of His own Nature, deigned to manifest Himself wholly thus, not imitating and counterfeiting Perfect Man, that He might not merely in seeming and in thought, but in reality and actuality, be true Man. Therefore as soul joined to flesh (though not converted into flesh) is man, and not an imitation of man—man in substance and not in counterfeit; so also God the Word, without any conversion of Himself, by uniting Himself to man, became Man not by confusion or imitation, but by subsisting as Man. The

whole idea, then, of His Person must be rejected for ever which sees in it only the assumption of a fictitious character, where there is always a distinction between what is and what is pretended, and where he who acts is never the actual person whom he represents. Away with the notion that in this deceptive fashion did God the Word undertake the personation of a man: rather let us believe that, while His own Substance remained unchangeable, He Himself, taking to Himself the nature of perfect manhood, existed as Flesh, as Man, as actuality of Man; not counterfeit but real, not in imitation but in substance, not ceasing with the acting, but absolutely permanent in substantial existence.

CHAPTER XV

THE WORD BECAME MAN IN THE WOMB OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD

40. THIS unity of Person, then, was complete and perfect not after His birth from the Virgin, but in her very womb. For it behoves us most earnestly to take heed that we confess Christ not merely ONE but always ONE. For it is intolerable blasphemy if, although thou grantest that

He is now ONE, thou shouldest contend that once He was not ONE but two—ONE after His baptism but two at His birth. Yet we cannot clearly avoid this monstrous sacrilege otherwise than by confessing the Manhood united to the Godhead in Personal Union, not by the Ascension or Resurrection or Baptism,¹ but already within His Mother's womb at the moment of the Virgin's conception. On account of which Unity of Person we ascribe indifferently and interchangeably the attributes of God to Man and the attributes of flesh to God.² Hence it is divinely written both that the Son of Man came down from heaven,³ and that the Lord of Glory was crucified⁴ on earth. Hence also, since the

¹ Many of the Gnostic heresies taught that the Divine Logos or "Higher Christ" did not descend upon Jesus or the "Lower Christ" until His Baptism.

² This method of speech is known technically as "antidosis" or "communicatio idiomatum," interchange of properties, whereby all that can be predicated of the Divine or Human Nature may with equal propriety be predicated of the One Divine Person of Christ. It is the Person Who acts or suffers: it is His Nature, Divine or Human, which makes Him capable of either. See Hooker, V, 52. Tertullian was the first to give form to this doctrine, *de carne Chr.* 5, *adv. Prax.* 29. Leo drew it out at length in his Tome. But it was the obvious liability of this paradoxical language to misuse that made Nestorius object to it.

³ John iii. 13; vi. 62.

⁴ Acts ii. 8.

flesh of the Lord was made and created, it is said that the Word of God was made and the very Wisdom of God full of knowledge created; just as in prophetic speech His own hands and feet are said to have been pierced.¹

It is through this Unity of Person that it follows, by reason of a like mystery, that, since the flesh of the Word was born of a spotless Virgin, God the Word Himself is most catholicly believed to have been born of the Virgin, and most impious it is to deny it. And since this is so, away with the thought² that any one should attempt to defraud the holy Mary of the privileges of the Divine favour and special glory. For by a certain unique gift of our Lord and God, but her Son, she is most truly and blessedly to be confessed as Mother of God, Theotokos; but Mother of God not in the same in which a certain heresy imagines it, namely, that she may be called Mother of God solely because she gave birth to that man who afterwards became God; as we recognize a mother of a presbyter or a mother of a bishop not by her bearing one already a presbyter or a bishop, but by her bringing forth one who afterwards was made a presbyter or a bishop. Not in this way

¹ Psalm xxii. 16.

² Pearson quotes these words in a fine passage: *Creed*, Art. III, f. 179.

is the holy Mary Theotokos, but rather, as I said before, because already in her holy womb was brought about that all-holy mystery whereby, on account of the singular and unique Unity of Person, as the Word in Flesh is Flesh, so the Man in God is God.

CHAPTER XVI

RECAPITULATION OF THE LAST FIVE CHAPTERS

41. NOW to refresh our memory let us repeat more briefly and succinctly what we have already said in a few words about the heresies mentioned and about the Catholic Faith, in order that by repetition it may be more fully understood, and by insistence it may be more firmly held.

Anathema then to Photinus, rejecting the fullness of the Trinity and teaching that Christ is a mere man.

Anathema to Apollinarius, asserting in Christ a certain conversion of Deity and taking away from Him the completeness of Manhood.

Anathema to Nestorius, denying that God was born of the Virgin, asserting two Christs, and by abolishing the Trinitarian Faith introducing a Quarterinity.

But Blessed be the Catholic Church which worships One God in the fulness of the Trinity and the equality of the Trinity in the Deity, so that neither the Oneness of the Substance confounds the property of the Persons nor the distinction of the Trinity divides the Unity of the Deity.

Blessed be the Church, I say, which believes that in Christ are two true and perfect Substances, yet ONE Christ, so that neither the distinction of the Natures divides the Unity of Person, nor the Unity of Person confounds the difference of the Substances.

Blessed Church, I say, which confesses Christ to be and to have always been ONE, Man united to God not after His birth, but already in the womb itself of His Mother.

Blessed Church, I say, which understands God to have been made Man not by conversion of Nature, but by reason of a true Manhood, not counterfeited and transient, but actual and permanent.

Blessed Church, I say, which proclaims this Personal Union to have such force that, by a wondrous and ineffable mystery, Divine things are ascribable to Man and Human things to God. Hence she does not deny that Man as God came down from heaven, and believes that God as Man on earth was made, suffered, and was cruci-

fied; and she therefore confesses also Man the Son of God and God the Son of the Virgin.

Blessed then and venerable, blest and all-holy, and entirely worthy to be compared to that supernal praise-song of the Angels,¹ be the Confession which glorifies the One Lord God in Thrice-Holy Name.² For the same reason she proclaims the Unity of Christ so as not to transgress the mystery of the Trinity.

This has been said by way of digression: at another time, if God will, these points shall be more expansively treated and explained.³ Now we return to our immediate purpose.

¹ Isaiah vi. 3; Rev. iv. 8.

² Dr. Burn (*Intr. to Creeds*, p. 28) surmises that in these words Vincent may be referring to the *Te Deum*, but he seems to me to mean the confession of the Trinitarian Faith in general rather than any concrete expression of it in a document or hymn. But Dr. Burn's suggestion is worth noting.

³ The *Quicumque*, even if Vincent were the author of it, would not correspond to this promise of a treatise more elaborate than the last six chapters of the *Commonitory*.

CHAPTER XVII

ORIGEN'S ERRORS A TRIAL TO THE CHURCH

42. WE were saying in an earlier part of this treatise¹ that in the Church of God the teacher's error was the people's trial, and that the trial was all the greater when the erring one was the more learned. This we maintained first on the authority of Scripture, and then by instances from Church history of those who, once having been regarded as sound in the Faith, had in the end fallen away either to alien sect or themselves became founders of a heresy of their own. An important fact truly, useful to be learnt and necessary to be remembered, and one that we ought again and again by numbers of examples to illustrate and emphasize, so that all true Catholics may know that they must with the Church receive teachers, not with teachers forsake the Church's Faith.

43. My own opinion is that whilst we might bring forward many instances of this kind of trial, hardly any could be compared with Origen,² in whom there were so many qualities

¹ Chap. VIII. On the present chapter see Hooker, V, 62, 9 ff.

² Vincent's account of Origen is based upon Eusebius (*H.E.* VI, 16 ff.) and Jerome (*de viris illustr.* 54).

so excellent, so unique, and so admirable, that at first sight any one would readily judge that credit ought to be given to every one of his assertions. For if manner of life carries weight, great was his industry, great his chastity,¹ his patience, his endurance; if his descent or his experience be taken into account, what nobler than first his birth in a house rendered illustrious by martyrdom, and then, when deprived for Christ's sake not only of his father but of all his

Origen was born in Alexandria in 185. His father, Leonidas, was martyred in 202, and the family property confiscated. At the age of eighteen Origen was made Head of the Catechetical School at Alexandria in succession to Clement. He travelled in Italy, Syria and Arabia, but his chief literary works were produced at Cæsarea, where he had been ordained at the age of forty-three. He survived the tortures and confinement of the Decian persecution in 250-252, and lived to his seventieth year. He was an eminent exponent of scientific and systematic theology, and the Father of Biblical Criticism, both Higher and Textual. His errors lay rather in speculative than in positive teaching; and his allegorical and mystical methods of interpretation were not heretical so much as fantastic. His writings are preserved partly in the original Greek and partly in the Latin translation of Rufinus. See Westcott's monograph in *D.C.B.*, and Bigg's *Bampton Lectures*.

¹ His passionate zeal led him to act on a literal interpretation of Matthew xix. 12. It is surprising that the most mystical and allegorical of exegetes should have taken so literal a view of such a text.

property, he advanced so greatly amidst the straits of holy poverty as to suffer frequently, it is said, as a confessor. Nor were these the only things in him which taken altogether afterwards became an occasion of trial; but in addition his genius was so forceful, so profound, so acute, so refined, that he by far and a long way surpassed almost every one else. The splendour of his learning and of his erudition generally was such that there were few things in Divine philosophy, and perhaps hardly any in human, which he did not completely master. And as to his knowledge, when Greek retreated before him, he toiled at Hebrew. What shall I say of his eloquence, the style of which was so pleasing, so smooth, so sweet, that honey rather than words seemed to flow from his lips? What difficulties did he not elucidate by the strength of his persuasive reasoning! What arduous undertakings did he not invest with the greatest apparent facility!

But perhaps he supported his own asseverations only by specious interweaving of arguments? No, indeed; for no Teacher ever used more illustrations from the Divine Law.

Then, I suppose, he wrote but few works? No mortal ever composed more; indeed it is in my opinion impossible, I do not say to read through all his books, but even to find them. And that

nothing might be wanting to assist his acquisition of knowledge, a long life was granted to him.

But perhaps he was unfortunate in his disciples? Was any one ever happier? For from under his care came forth doctors, priests, confessors and martyrs without number. Who can now describe the admiration that all felt for him, his great renown, his wide influence? Every one who was a little more than usual devoted to religion flew to him from the ends of the earth. Every Christian venerated him almost as a prophet, and every philosopher as a master. Historians declare the extraordinary reverence paid him not only by private persons, but also by the Court; for he was summoned by the mother of the Emperor Alexander,¹ desirous of heavenly wisdom, with the love of which both she and he were inflamed. His letters also bear witness to the same which he wrote with the authority of a Christian Teacher to the Emperor

¹ Julia Mammæa, the aunt of Elagabalus and mother of Alexander Severus. The interview between herself and Origen took place at Antioch about the year 218 (though some would place it fourteen or fifteen years later). There is no evidence that she was a Christian, but she no doubt shared her son's eclectic religious syncretism (see Lampridius, *Sev.* 29). Christians were practically tolerated though not formally recognized under Alexander (*ibid.* 22).

Philip,¹ the first of Roman princes to be a Christian.

As to his incredible learning, if any one cares not for the Christian testimony that I can produce, let him at least accept the attestation of heathen philosophers. For the impious Porphyry² says that when little more than a boy, drawn by his fame, he went to Alexandria and there saw him, then an old man, but evidently of such splendid attainments as to have completed the circle of universal knowledge.

44. Time would soon fail me were I to recount even in small measure the excellencies of the man, which, however much they tended to the glory of religion, yet added to the greatness of the trial. For who, pray, would lightly set aside a man of so great genius, learning and influence, and not rather make use of that saying: "I prefer

¹ Eusebius is the first to record, but only as a report, that Philip the Arabian was a Christian. He probably shewed himself favourably disposed to the Christians from some superstitious motive (Euseb., *H.E.* VI, 34-36). The letters written by Origen to this emperor and to his wife Severa are no longer extant.

² A fragment of Porphyry's description of Origen's mastery of philosophy and general versatility is cited by Eusebius (*H.E.* VI, 19), but Vincent seems to have rather exaggerated Porphyry's estimate of Origen's erudition.

to err with Origen than to think rightly with others" ?¹

What more shall I say? The result was that very many were led astray from the integrity of the Faith, not by any common temptation, but (as the event showed) by the too perilous trial of so great a personality, so learned a Teacher, so great a Prophet.

Hence this same Origen, great and marvellous as he was, wantonly abusing the grace of God, relying too much on his own genius, trusting too much to himself, valuing too little the ancient simplicity of the Christian religion, presumptuously imagining that he knew more than all the rest, despising the Church's traditions and the judgments of the ancients, interpreting certain passages of the Scriptures in a novel way, merited the doom that concerning himself also should be spoken to God's Church, "If a Prophet shall arise amongst you . . . thou shalt not hearken to the words of that Prophet . . . because the Lord your God doth try you whether ye love Him or not."²

Truly thus unexpectedly to lead astray from the old religion to a new profanity, gradually

¹ Vincent's adaptation of the well-known Ciceronian "Errare mehercule malo cum Platone quam cum istis vera sentire" (*Tuscul. quæst.* 1).

² Deut. xiii. 1.

and little by little, the Church which was devoted to him, and hung upon him in admiration of his genius, knowledge, eloquence, manner of life and influence, not at all suspicious or fearing for herself, is to be no ordinary trial but a severe one.

45. Some one may suggest that Origen's writings have been tampered with. I do not oppose such a suggestion: I would rather believe it to be true; and indeed that such is the case has been handed down both orally and in writing by Catholics and by heretics. But the point that we are concerned to note is that, even if it were not he himself, yet the books published under his name constitute a great trial; for abounding as they do in many hurtful blasphemies, they are read and loved not as the works of some one else, but as Origen's own; so that even if originally Origen's meaning was not erroneous, yet Origen's authority is powerful enough to persuade people into error.¹

¹ On the points of the Origenistic controversy, see Bright, *Age of the Fathers*, II, 49 ff.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ERRORS OF TERTULLIAN A TRIAL TO THE
CHURCH

46. THE case of Tertullian¹ is the same. For as Origen among the Greeks, so Tertullian among the Latins ought to be adjudged easily the first of all of us. Who, indeed, more learned than he? who better equipped in subjects human and divine? He embraced with a marvellous capacity of mind all philosophy, and knew every school, the founders and followers, their different rules and their various pursuits. His was a genius so exceptionally weighty and vigorous that there was hardly anything which he proposed to himself to attack that he did not penetrate by his acuteness or crush by his weight. Who can adequately sing the praises of his eloquence? It was compacted with such keen logical sequence that he compelled the consent

¹ Tertullian was a distinguished rhetorician of Carthage, converted to Christianity about 190 and ordained priest; a man of enormous literary and polemical activity, the author of over thirty treatises; but in a few years he was attracted to Montanism, and thereafter became the African champion of the "New Prophecy." There is an excellent account of the man and his writings by J. M. Fuller in the *D.C.B.*

of those whom he could not persuade. Almost every word of his was an epigram and every sentence a victory. This know the Marcions,¹ the Apelles,² the Praxeæ,³ the Hermogenes,⁴ the Jews,⁵ the Heathen,⁶ the Gnostics,⁷ and the rest of those whose blasphemies he overthrew with

¹ Marcion flourished about 150; he was the author of *Antitheses*, or instances of opposition between the Law and the Gospel. His heresy was free from pagan elements, being a sheer perversion of Judaism and Christianity, between which he held there was an irreconcilable antagonism. 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. His theology was dualistic, his Christology docetic, and his philosophy quasi-Manichæan. His tenets were crushingly combated by Tertullian in five books.

² Apelles was the most famous of Marcion's disciples. Tertullian's treatise against him is no longer extant, but Harnack attempted to reconstruct it, from fragments and quotations, in his *de Apellis gnosis monarchia*.

³ Praxeas was a strong opponent of Montanus, but also the first to obliterate the distinction of Persons between the Father and the Son. Hence he was the founder of Patripassian Monarchianism (see above on Sabellius, p. 23). All we know of him is derived from Tertullian's treatise *adv. Praxean*.

⁴ The treatise against Hermogenes is extant. He believed in the eternity of matter.

⁵ The treatise *adversus Judæos* is referred to.

⁶ In his *ad nationes* in two books, and in the *Apologeticum*, *de idololatria*, and *de test. animæ*.

⁷ In his *de præscriptione hæreticorum*, *adv. Valentinianos*, *Scorpiace*, *de carne Christi*, *de res. carnis*.

the numerous and mighty piles of his volumes as if with so many thunderbolts. Yet this man also, in spite of all this learning—Tertullian, I say, too little tenacious of Catholic doctrine, that is, the Universal and Ancient Faith, being much more skilful than faithful, changed his opinions in the end; and, as the blessed confessor Hilary¹ writes of him, "By his subsequent error he detracted from the authority of his approved writings."

So that man also was a great trial to the Church. I do not wish to say more about this: this only will I mention, that when there arose in the Church the most novel phrenzies of Montanus,² and insane women's dreams of a new doctrine, Tertullian, by asserting them to be true prophecies, contrary to the precept of Moses, deserved that concerning himself also and his

¹ Hilary of Poitiers, the "Athanasius of the West," *Comm. in St. Matt.* vi. 9.

² Montanus was a Mysian who, about 130, claimed to complete the Gospel revelation by a new gift of Prophecy derived from the Paraclete. His two female associates, Maximilla and Priscilla, were also recipients of revelations. Fierce fanaticism, gloomy austerity and stern asceticism characterized his teaching. Church discipline was set at naught in his desire to restore the stricter discipline of earlier days. The Catholics were despised as "psychics," while the Montanists claimed to be "pneumatics," the spiritual ones. Montanus was sound on the doctrine of the Trinity.

writings it should be said, "If there shall arise a Prophet among you . . . thou shalt not hearken to the words of that Prophet." Why? "Because the Lord your God doth try you whether ye love Him or not."

CHAPTER XIX

THE VALUE OF THESE EXAMPLES

47. To these examples from Church history, and to others of the same kind, so numerous and so important, it behoves to take heed, and to understand very clearly that according to the Laws of Deuteronomy if at any time any Ecclesiastical Teacher should err from the Truth, Divine Providence permits it to be so for our trial to see whether we love God or not with all our heart and with all our mind.

CHAPTER XX

CONTRAST BETWEEN A TRUE CATHOLIC AND A WAYWARD HERETIC

48. THIS being so, he is the true and genuine Catholic who loves God's Truth, loves the

Church, loves Christ's Body, and who sets Divine Religion and the Catholic Faith before everything else—before the authority, regard, genius, eloquence or philosophy of any man whatsoever; who despises all this and remains fixed and steadfast in the Faith, determined that he will believe and hold only that which the Catholic Church has held universally and from old; and that, on the other hand, whatever new and unheard-of teaching he shall see to have been introduced by any one in addition to, or contrary to, the belief of all the saints, he will understand that this belongs, not to Religion, but is by way of "trial"; being on this point especially instructed by the blessed Apostle Paul, who writes thus in his First Epistle to the Corinthians: ¹ "There must needs be heresies, that those who are approved may be made manifest." ² It is as if he had said, It is for this reason that the authors of heresies are not instantly rooted out from among you by Divine Providence, namely, in order that they who are approved may be made manifest, that is, that it may be apparent

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 19.

² These words are believed to be an agraphon of Our Lord. Justin Martyr quotes as His, "There shall be divisions and heresies" (*Dial.* 35); and the words may well have formed a parallel to Matt. xviii. 7, "For it needs be that offences come."

how firm and loyal and steadfast each individual is in his love for the Catholic Faith.

49. In point of fact, when any novelty springs up, the weight of the grain and the lightness of the chaff is instantly perceived. Then whatever has not sufficient weight to keep it within the threshing-floor is driven forth without any great exertion. For some absolutely fly away at once; others, only half shaken out, are afraid of perishing, and ashamed to return, wounded, half dead and half alive, since they have drunk so much of poison as is insufficient to kill, yet more than can be digested, and which neither compels them to die nor suffers them to live. Alas! for their wretched condition. In what surgings and whirlpools of anxieties are they tossed about! sometimes when the error is rampant they are hurried away whithersoever the wind drives them; another time they are thrown back upon themselves, like contrary waves striking back upon each other; now they with rash presumption give their approval to what seems certain, now with unreasoning fear they shrink even from what is certain; they hesitate where to go, whither to return; what to seek, what to avoid; what to hold, what to cast away.

50. This affliction of a doubtful and wretchedly vacillating mind is, if they only knew it, the medicine of Divine compassion towards them.

For it is because they are outside the most secure harbour of the Catholic Faith that they are tossed, beaten and almost killed by diverse storms of thoughts, but all in order that they may take in the sails, spread out aloft, of their puffed-up minds, which they had wickedly unfurled to the blasts of novelties, and return to and remain within the trustworthy anchorage of their calm and benign Mother, and after having vomited up those turbulent waves of error, may thenceforward be able to drink of the streams of living and springing water. Let them unlearn well what they have learnt not well; and let them receive as much as they can understand of the whole body of Church doctrine, and what they cannot understand let them believe.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FOLLY OF FOLLOWING NOVEL FALSEHOODS

51. SUCH being the case, as I revolve in my mind and think over these things again and again, I cannot sufficiently marvel at the insanity of certain men, at the impiety of their blinded understanding, at their lust of error so great that they are not content with the Rule of Faith

delivered once for all and accepted from antiquity, but must daily be seeking one new thing after another, and constantly longing to add, or to change, or to take away something in Religion. As if the Doctrine were not of heavenly origin, which it is sufficient to have been once for all revealed, but some human institution which cannot be perfected otherwise than by constant eager emendation, nay, rather by constant censure; whereas the Divine Oracles cry: "Remove not the boundaries which thy fathers fixed";¹ and "Thou shalt not judge over him that sits as judge";² and "Whoso breaketh through a hedge a serpent shall bite him";³ and that saying of the Apostle, wherewith as with a spiritual sword all the wicked novelties of all the heretics have often been, and will always have to be slain: "O Timothy, keep the deposit, avoiding profane novelties of speech and oppositions of falsely named knowledge, which some professing have erred concerning the Faith."⁴

52. In the face of these injunctions, can any be found of such hardened shamelessness of front, of such forge-hammered impudence, of such granitic obstinacy, as not to yield to such multitude of heavenly counsels, not to be crushed

¹ Prov. xxii. 28.

² Eccles. viii. 14.

³ Eccles. x. 8.

⁴ 1 Tim. vi. 20.

under such ponderous weights, not to be shaken to pieces under such hammers, not to be ground to powder by such thunderbolts?

“Avoid” (he says) “profane novelties of speech”: he does not say Avoid old and ancient forms of speech; nay, he plainly shows what ought to follow by the rule of contrary. For if novelty is to be avoided, antiquity is to be held fast: if novelty is profane, antiquity is sacred. “And oppositions of falsely named knowledge.” Falsely named indeed, as far as the heretical doctrines are concerned; as if ignorance should trick itself out under the name of knowledge, fog as sunshine, darkness as light. “Which indeed some professing, have erred concerning the Faith.” What did they profess, save some new and unheard-of doctrine?

Nay, you may actually hear some of these professors say: “Come, ye simple and unhappy ones, who are commonly called Catholics, come and learn the true faith which no one understands save ourselves, which for many ages has lain hid, but lately has been revealed and shown. But learn it furtively and secretly, for it will delight you.” And again, “But when you have learnt it, teach it stealthily, so that the world hear it not, nor the Church get to know it; for it is granted to few to receive the secret of so great a mystery.” Are not these the words of

that wanton¹ who, in the Proverbs of Solomon, calls to herself the passers-by, who go right on their way, "Whoso" (says she) "is simplest among you, let him come aside to me"? And as for those that are void of understanding, she exhorts them, saying, "Take hidden loaves with pleasure and drink sweet water in stealth." What next? "But he knoweth not that the earth-born perish in her house." Who are the earth-born? Let the Apostle explain: "Those who have erred concerning the Faith."

CHAPTER XXII

APPLICATION OF I TIMOTHY VI. 20

53. BUT it is worth while to discuss the whole of that passage in more detail: "O Timothy, keep the deposit, avoiding profane novelties of speech."

That exclamation "O" is one of anxious foreknowledge as well as of love. For he foresaw and grieved over errors about to come. Who to-day is Timothy but either the Universal Church in general, or the whole body of the Prelacy in particular, whose duty it is themselves

¹ Prov. ix. 15 ff.

to hold fast the knowledge of Religion complete, and to communicate it to others.

What does he mean by "Keep the deposit"? Keep it, he says, because of thieves and enemies; lest while men sleep they sow tares over that good seed of corn which the Son of Man had sown in His field.¹ "Keep the deposit." What is the deposit? That which has been entrusted to thee, not something that thou hast invented: which thou receivedst, not what thou hast thought out for thyself: a matter of instruction, not of genius, not of private possession, but of public tradition: something brought to thee, not put forth by thee: something whereof it behoves thee to be a keeper, not an author; a learner, not a teacher; a follower, not a leader.

"Keep the deposit": preserve the "talent"² of the Catholic Faith untampered with, unimpaired. Let what has been entrusted to thee always remain with thee and be handed on by thee. Gold thou hast received, gold give in thy turn. I would not that thou shouldest substitute for me one thing for another. I would not that thou shouldest counterfeit the gold shamelessly by lead, or deceitfully by copper. I want not the appearance of gold, but the reality. O Timothy,

¹ Matt. xiii. 25, 37.

² Matt. xxv. 15. In view of the teaching of the parable this seems an unfortunate expression.

O priest, O expositor, O doctor, if the Divine gift hath made thee fit by genius, training or learning, be thou a Bezalel¹ of the spiritual Tabernacle; engrave the precious gems of Divine doctrine; faithfully fit them together, adorn them wisely, add splendour, grace, loveliness. Let that which was formerly believed darkly be understood clearly by thy exposition. Let posterity by thy aid rejoice in truths understood which antiquity venerated without understanding them. Yet teach still the same things which thou didst learn, so that although thou speakest in a new fashion, thou speakest not new things.

CHAPTER XXIII

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE MUST PROCEED ON NORMAL, AND NOT ABNORMAL LINES

54. BUT some one will say perhaps, Is there, then, to be no religious progress in Christ's Church? Progress certainly, and that the greatest. For who is he so jealous of men and so odious to God who would attempt to forbid it? But progress, mind you, of such sort that it is a true advance, and not a change, in the Faith.

¹ Exod. xxxi. 1 ff.

For progress implies a growth within the thing itself, while change turns one thing into another. Consequently the understanding, knowledge and wisdom of each and all—of each churchman and of the whole Church—ought to grow and progress greatly and eagerly through the course of ages and centuries, provided that the advance be within its own lines, in the same sphere of doctrine, the same feeling, the same sentiment.

55. The growth of religion in the soul should resemble the growth of the body, which, though it develops and unfolds in the course of years, yet remains the same. Quite different is the flower of youth from the ripeness of age, but yet old men are the same persons that they were in youth: the stature and form of each have changed, but they are one and the same in nature and personality. The limbs of infants are small, those of young men large, but they are the same limbs. The joints of boys are as numerous as those of men; and if maturer age does produce anything fresh, it was already present in the embryo, so that nothing new comes out in the old which was not already latent in their childhood. Doubtless, then, this is the right and legitimate rule of progress, this is the established and most beautiful order of growth, that mature age always develops in the older ones the parts and forms which the wisdom of the Creator had

already framed beforehand in them when infants. Whereas if the human shape were changed into some form of an alien race, or if the number of its limbs were increased or diminished, then the whole body would either perish or become a monstrosity, or at least be enfeebled.

56. In like manner it is proper that the doctrines of the Christian Religion should follow these laws of progress, so as to be consolidated by the course of years, amplified by time, refined by age, and yet remain uncorrupted and unimpaired, full and perfect in all the measurements of its parts and in all its proper members and senses (so to speak), admitting no further change or loss of distinctive characteristics, allowing no variation of boundary.

57. For example, our fathers of old sowed the seeds of wheaten faith in the Church's cornfield: it would be most unjust and unseemly if we, their descendants, reaped a substituted error of tares instead of the genuine truth of corn. The correct result, of course, would be that, the first and last not differing among themselves, from the growth of the wheaten sowing we should reap the fruit of the wheaten doctrine; in such wise as that when anything in process of time is evolved from these beginnings of seeds, and is made to flourish under cultivation, yet nothing is changed in the real character of the plant. You

may add comeliness, beauty, distinction, but the nature of each kind must remain. Perish the thought that the rose-beds of Catholic belief should be turned into thistles and thorns—that in the spiritual Paradise from twigs of cinnamon and balsam darnel and wolf's bane should suddenly shoot forth.

Therefore whatever has been sown in the Church, which is God's husbandry,¹ by the fidelity of the fathers, the same ought to be cultivated and tended by the industry of their children, the same ought to flourish and ripen, to advance and be perfected. For it is right that the ancient doctrines of heavenly philosophy should, as time goes on, be carefully tended, smoothed, polished: it is not right for them to be changed, maimed, mutilated. They may gain in evidence, light, distinctness, but they must not lose their completeness, integrity, characteristic property.

58. If once a licence of impious fraud be permitted, I shudder to say how great will be the risk of Religion being destroyed and wiped out. For if any part of the Catholic Doctrine be laid aside, then another part, and also another, and likewise another, and yet another, will go as a matter of course and right. But when the parts one by one have been rejected, what else will

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 9.

follow in the end but that the whole be equally rejected?

Again, moreover, if what is new begin to be mingled with the old, foreign with domestic, profane with sacred, this custom will creep in everywhere, until the Church at last will have nothing untampered with, nothing unimpaired, nothing complete, nothing pure, but there will only be a brothel of impious shameless errors where formerly was a sanctuary of chaste and undefiled Truth. May the Divine Pity turn aside this wickedness from the minds of His own: be it rather the phrenzy of the ungodly.

59. Truly the Church of Christ, the diligent and cautious Guardian of the doctrines entrusted to her, never changes anything in them, diminishes anything, adds anything; she cuts not off what is necessary, adds not what is superfluous; doth not lose her own, nor take possession of another's; but, while dealing faithfully and wisely with ancient doctrines, takes pains with and polishes anything in antiquity that lacks shape and finish, consolidates and strengthens anything that is plain and clear, safeguards anything that is established and defined.

For instance: what else had the Councils in view in their decrees except that what before was believed in simplicity might thenceforward be believed more intelligently; and that what before

was preached coldly might thenceforward be preached more fervently; and that what before was practised carelessly might thenceforward be performed with solicitude? This, I say, and nothing but this, has the Catholic Church ever accomplished by the decrees of her Councils when roused by the novelties of heretics—to consign in writing to posterity the truths she had previously received only by tradition, comprising a vast amount of matter in a few words, and often for the better understanding, never for a new interpretation of the Faith, using a new characteristic word.¹

CHAPTER XXIV

FURTHER EXPLANATION OF I TIMOTHY VI. 20

60. BUT let us return to the Apostle.

“O Timothy, keep the deposit, avoiding profane novelties of speech.” Avoid, says he, as you would a viper, or a scorpion, or a basilisk; lest they strike you, not only with their touch, but even with their eyes and breath. What is it to avoid? “With such an one not even to eat.”²

¹ Vincent had in mind, no doubt, the *δημοσίον* of the Council of Nicæa.

² I Cor. v. 11.

What is it to avoid? "If any one come to you and bring not this doctrine," says St. John.¹ What doctrine? What but the Catholic and Universal doctrine which has continued one and the same through each successive age in the unaltered tradition of the Truth, and so will continue for ever? What then? "Receive him not into thine house, nor give him greeting, for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil deeds."

61. He calls them "profane novelties of speech." What is profane? That which has nothing sacred about it, nothing religious, absolutely alien to the sanctuary of the Church, which is the Temple of God. "Of speech," that is, novelties in doctrines, in subjects, in interpretations, such as are contrary to ancient custom and to antiquity: and if such be received, it follows necessarily that the Faith of the blessed Fathers will be violated either in whole or at least in great part—that all the faithful of all the ages, all the saints, all the pure, the continent, virgins, all the clergy, Levites, priests, many thousands of confessors, the great army of martyrs, numbers and multitudes of cities and peoples, many islands, provinces, kings, races, kingdoms, nations, in a word, almost the whole world, incorporated in Christ the Head, through the

¹ 2 John 10.

Catholic Faith, must be pronounced to have been ignorant for so long a space of time, to have erred, to have blasphemed, and not to have known what to believe.

62. "Avoid profane novelties of speech," to receive and follow which was never the part of Catholics, ever that of heretics. As a matter of fact, what heresy ever burst forth but under a definite name, in a definite place, at a definite time? Who ever founded heresy without first separating himself from the consent of the Universality and Antiquity of the Catholic Church? Examples will make this clearer than daylight. Who ever before that profane Pelagius presumed on such strength in free will as to think that God's grace was not necessary to assist it throughout each single act in good deeds? Who before that monstrous disciple of his, Celestius, denied that the whole human race was involved in the guilt of Adam's sin? Who ever before the sacrilegious Arius dared to divide the Unity of the Trinity, or before the impious Sabellius to confound the Trinity in the Unity? Who before cruellest Novatian said that God was cruel, on the ground that He preferred the death of a dying man to his conversion and life? Who before Simon Magus¹ (who was smitten by the Apostle's rebuke, and from whom that ancient

¹ Acts viii. 9 ff.

flood of turpitude in a constant and hidden stream has flowed right down to the very latest heretic, Priscillian) dared to say that God the Creator is the author of evil, that is, of our wickednesses, impieties, crimes; inasmuch as he asserts that God created with His own hands such a human nature as of its own motion, and by the impulse of its necessity-driven will, cannot do anything or wish anything but sin, seeing that, excited and inflamed by the furies of all the vices, it is hurried along by insatiable desire into the wide maw of infamy?

63. There are innumerable instances of this kind which, for brevity's sake, we pass over; by all of which, however, it is made sufficiently and obviously clear that, in the case of almost all heresies, they ever rejoice in profane novelties, they reject with scorn the decisions of antiquity, and through the oppositions of falsely named knowledge make shipwreck of the Faith.

On the other hand, it is the characteristic of Catholics to keep the deposits committed to them by the holy Fathers, to condemn profane novelties, and, as the Apostle said more than once, to anathematize any one who preaches anything but what has been received.¹

¹ Gal. i. 9.

CHAPTER XXV

THE HERETICS APPEAL TO SCRIPTURE THE MORE
EASILY TO DECEIVE

64. AT this point some one will perhaps ask, Do not the heretics also make use of the testimonies of Holy Scripture? Indeed they do, and that insisiently. They swoop upon each and every book of the Bible—Moses, the Kings, the Psalms, the Apostles, the Evangelists, the Prophets. For whether among friends or among strangers, whether in private or in public, whether in sermons or in books, whether in convivial meetings or in the streets, they scarcely ever put forth anything of their own without trying to shelter it under the language of Scripture. Read the works of Paul of Samosata,¹ of Pris-

¹ Bishop of Antioch, 250-269. He denied any distinction of Persons in the Trinity, holding that the Son and the Spirit were in the Godhead as reason and spirit are in man, and that the Generation of the Son was simply a going forth to act. Thus he anticipated Arian tenets and combined them with his own Sabellian views. He held that the Logos who descended upon the man Jesus was not a Personal Being, but an impersonal Divine activity. In a Council at Antioch in 264 he ingeniously cleared himself from the charge of heresy, but he was convicted and deposed by a further Council in 269. Supported by his patroness Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, he

cillian, of Eunomius, of Jovinian, and the rest of these pests; you will see an endless series of examples—scarcely a page that is not steeped and dyed with quotations from the Old or New Testament.

65. But they are to be avoided and feared all the more, the more they hide under the shades of Scripture. For they know that their own foul doctrines would not quickly attract any one if they were exhibited frankly and plainly, and so they tinge them with a spice of heavenly language, knowing that those who would readily reject a human error would not so facily despise Divine words. They act, in point of fact, like those who, when mixing a bitter draught for children, first smear round the lip of the cup with honey, that the unsuspecting child, when it has first tasted the sweet, shall not shrink

had to be removed by the civil power at the command of the Emperor Aurelian in 272. It was afterwards alleged by the Arians that in this second Council the term *ὁμοούσιος* had been rejected by the bishops. Paul, according to Athanasius (*de syn.* 45), followed by Basil (*contr. Eunom.* I, 19), persuaded them that the term implied some common antecedent *οὐσία* from which both Father and Son were derived; but Hilary (*de syn.* 36) says that the term was set aside because Paul himself was willing to accept it. For a full discussion of the Paulianist views see Bethune-Baker's *Introd. to Hist. of Chr. Doctrine*, pp. 100-111.

back from the bitter. Or like those who carefully disguise poisonous herbs and noxious juices by the names of medicines, so that man hardly suspects a poison when he reads the label of a remedy.

66. The Saviour, too, used to warn : "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but within they are ravening wolves!"¹ What is sheep's clothing but utterances of Prophets and Apostles which they with sheep-like simplicity wove as it were into fleeces for that spotless² Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world?³ What are the ravening wolves? Surely naught else but the fierce and tearing glosses of the heretics who always infest the sheep-fold of the Church and tear in pieces, whenever they can, the flock of Christ? But that they may the more cunningly steal upon the unsuspecting sheep, they discard the appearance of the wolf while retaining its ferocity, and wrap themselves round with Scriptural phrases as it were in sheep's fleeces in order that any one who feels the softness of the wool will never fear the sharpness of the teeth.

But what saith the Saviour? "By their fruits ye shall know them." And that means, when

¹ Matt vii. 15.

² 1 Pet. i. 19; Heb. ix. 14.

³ John i. 29.

they have begun not merely to quote the Scriptures but to explain them—not only to boast of their supports but to interpret them, then will that bitterness, acerbity and rabidness be understood—then will that poison of innovation be exhaled, then will those “profane novelties”¹ appear, then will you see the hedge broken through, the boundaries fixed by the Fathers altered, the Catholic Faith destroyed, the doctrine of the Church torn in pieces.

67. Such were they whom, in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul smites, saying, “For of this sort are false apostles, workers of deceit, transforming themselves into Apostles of Christ.”² What does he mean by these words? The Apostles used to quote Scripture, these do the same; the Apostles used to cite passages from the Prophets, and these cite them no less. It is not until they begin to interpret dissimilarly the passages which they had both similarly used, that the difference can be seen between the natural and the dyed, between the straight and the crooked, between the true and the false Apostles.

“And no wonder,” he says, “for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light, and it is no great thing if his ministers also fashion

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 20.

² 2 Cor. xi. 13 f.

themselves as ministers of righteousness." Therefore, according to the judgement of the Apostle Paul, as often as false apostles or false prophets or false teachers quote passages of the Scriptures whereby they endeavour to uphold their own errors by false interpretations, there is no doubt but that they are following the cunning machinations of their father the devil—a device which surely he would never have employed, had he not known well enough that there is no easier way to deceive than subtly and fraudulently to introduce wicked error by adducing falsely the authority of Holy Scripture.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE HERETICS, IN QUOTING SCRIPTURE, FOLLOW
THE EXAMPLE OF THE DEVIL

68. BUT some one will say, What proof is there that the devil is wont to use examples from the sacred Law? Let him read the Gospels in which it is written: "Then the devil took Him' (the Lord, the Saviour) "and set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and said to Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down, for it is written He gave His angels charge concerning

Thee, to keep Thee in all Thy ways: they shall bear Thee up in their hands, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.”¹ What treatment can wretched mortals expect from one who assailed the Lord of Glory with quotations from Scripture? “If Thou art the Son of God,” says he, “cast Thyself down.” Why? “Because it is written.”

We ought to pay special attention to and remember the lesson of this passage which we have on such high evangelical authority; the lesson, namely, that whenever we find people quoting Apostolic or Prophetic words against the Catholic Faith, we may be sure that it is the devil speaking through them. For as then head spoke to Head,² so now the members speak to members—the members, I mean, of the devil to the members of Christ—the faithless to the faithful, the sacrilegious to the religious, the heretics to Catholics.

69. But what is the meaning of the words to us now?—“If Thou art the Son of God, cast

¹ Matt. iv. 5 f.; Luke iv. 9 f.; but St. Matthew omits the clause, “to keep Thee in all Thy ways,” and St. Luke omits the last four words of it. The citation is from Ps. xci. 11 f. Hence Antonio’s warning in *Merchant of Venice*, I, iii. 86: “The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.”

² Satan, the head of the powers of evil, to Christ, the Head of the Church.

Thyself down." It is as if it were said to one of us, Thou art willing to be a son of God, and to receive the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom; then cast thyself down—in other words, cast thyself down from the teaching and tradition of that lofty Church which is imagined to be God's Temple.

And if you ask any one of the heretics who thus counsel us, "How do you prove, on what grounds do you teach, that I ought to cast myself down from the universal and ancient Faith of the Church Catholic?" immediately he will reply, "For it is written": and forthwith he has ready a thousand testimonies, a thousand examples, a thousand authorities from the Law, from the Psalms, from the Apostles, from the Prophets, by which, since they are interpreted in a new and erroneous fashion, the unhappy soul may be precipitated from the Catholic citadel into the abyss of heresy.

Long now have the heretics been accustomed to deceive unwary men in a marvellous way by the following kind of promises. For they dare to promise and to teach that in their own Church, that is, in the little coterie of their communion, there abides a certain great and special and, forsooth, personal grace of God; so much so, that without any labour, without any pains, without any industry—even though they neither ask

nor seek nor knock—whosoever belongs to their party are so cared for by God that, upborne on angels' hands, preserved by angelic protection, they can never dash their foot against a stone, that is, be caused to stumble.¹

CHAPTER XXVII

RULE FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

70. BUT some one will say, If the Divine words, sentences, and promises of Scripture are used by the devil and his disciples, of whom some are false apostles, some are false prophets, some false teachers, and all are wholly heretical, what are the Catholic sons of Mother Church to do? How are they to distinguish Truth from falsehood in Holy Scripture? The answer is that they must take very great pains to do what we wrote in the beginning of this Commonitory

¹ It has been thought that Vincent is here pointedly attacking the bald predestinarianism of Augustine. That there are elements in common between what Vincent denounces and Augustine taught cannot be denied (see Prosper, *apud. Epist. August.* 225, and Augustine, *de dono persev.* XXIII, § 64). However this may be, Vincent was perfectly right in protesting against a heretical and Antinomian abuse of the doctrine of grace.

had been commended to us by the saints and doctors, namely, to interpret the Sacred Canon according to the traditions of the Universal Church, and according to the Rule of Catholic Doctrine. And in the Catholic and Apostolic Church they must follow Universality, Antiquity, Consent. And if sometimes a part rebel against Universality, or novelty oppose Antiquity, or the dissent of one or of a few who are in error sets itself against the consent of all or the majority of Catholics, then they must prefer the soundness of the whole to the corruption of a part; and in this same whole they must set the Faith of antiquity before the profanity of novelty; and likewise in this very antiquity they must prefer to the rashness of one or of a very few, first of all, the decrees of a General Council (if such there be): secondly, they must follow what is next best, the consentient opinions of many and great Teachers. If these rules are, with God's help, loyally, seriously and accurately observed, we can detect without great difficulty the noxious errors of heretics as they arise.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE DETECTION OF HERESY BY THIS RULE

71. HERE I see I ought, as a matter of course, to show by examples how the profane novelties of heretics may be detected and condemned by the collection and comparison of the unanimous opinions of the Teachers of old. This consent, however, of the ancient Fathers is not to be painfully investigated and followed in every little detail of the Divine Law, but only and especially as regards the Rule of Faith. Neither again is this method of attacking heresies to be employed always and in every case, but only against those which are new and recent, on their first arising, before they have had time to falsify the rules of the ancient Faith, and before they endeavour, as their poison spreads more widely, to corrupt the writings of the Fathers.

Heresies widely spread and of old standing cannot be attacked in this way, seeing that through long lapse of time they have had ample opportunity of personating the Truth. Consequently as regards those older forms of profane heresies or schisms, we can only convict them on the sole authority of the Scriptures, or

else avoid them as already convicted and condemned of old by the General Councils of the Catholic Priesthood.

72. Wherefore as soon as the foulness of each wicked error begins to show itself, and to defend itself by a false use of the words of Scripture, and to expound them deceitfully and fraudulently, at once the opinions of the Fathers in interpretation of the Canon ought to be collected, whereby whatever it may be of novelty, and consequently of profanity, has arisen, may without any doubt be exposed, and without any reconsideration be condemned. But, as a proviso, only the opinions of those Fathers are to be collected who holily, wisely and constantly lived, taught and remained in the Catholic Faith and Communion, or who were happily counted worthy to die in Christ or to be slain for His sake. And yet even these are to be trusted only on this condition, that whatever all or the majority, in one and the same sense, openly, frequently and persistently, as if forming a consentient council of Teachers, have confirmed by receiving, holding and handing on—that only is to be received as indubitable, fixed and settled. Whatever any holy man has held—be he Bishop, Confessor, or Martyr—other than or contrary to all, that must be regarded as in the class of his private opinions, peculiar and

personal to himself, altogether lacking the authority of the common, general and public opinion. Otherwise we should, to the greatest risk of our eternal safety and after the sacrilegious manner of the heretics and custom of the schismatics, be following the erroneous novelties of one man, and setting aside the ancient Truth of universally received Teaching.

73. Now lest any one should think that the holy and Catholic consent of these blessed Fathers may be casually and thoughtlessly despised, the Apostle says in his First Epistle to the Corinthians: ¹ "And God hath placed some in the Church, first Apostles" (of whom he was one), "secondly Prophets" (like Agabus, of whom we read in the Acts),² "thirdly Doctors" (who are now called Expositors, and whom the same Apostle sometimes calls Prophets,³ because by them the prophetic mysteries were made plain to the people). Whosoever therefore despiseth those who have been placed by God in His Church in their several times and places, when they agree in Christ in the interpretation of some one point of Catholic Doctrine, despiseth not man but God. And lest any one should depart from their Unity in the Truth, the same Apostle

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 27 f.

² Acts xi. 28.

³ Eph. iv. 11.

weightily protests, saying: "I beseech you, brethren, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgements."¹

But if any one has dissented from their unanimous decision, let him listen to the same Apostle: "God is not the Author of dissensions, but of peace,"² that is, He is not the God of him who is a defaulter from the Unity of Consent, but of those who remain in the peace of Consent. "As I teach" (he continues) "in all the Churches of the saints," that is, of Catholics; and their Churches are Churches of the saints, because they continue in the Communion of the Faith.

74. And lest any one, with utter disregard for the rest, should claim that he ought to be heard and believed, he adds a little later: "Was it from you that the Word of God went forth, or came it unto you alone?"³ And then, in case this should be received lightly, he proceeds: "If any one seems to be a prophet or spiritual, let him take knowledge of what I write unto you that they are the commandments of the Lord."⁴ As to which commands, unless one be a prophet

¹ 1 Cor. i. 10.

³ *Ibid.* 36.

² *Ibid.* xiv. 33.

⁴ *Ibid.* 37.

or spiritual, that is, a Master in spiritual things, let him be the most careful observer of impartiality and unity, so as neither to prefer his own opinions before those of all the rest, nor to go back from the opinions of the whole body. "Which commands" (he says), "if any man ignores, he shall be ignored,"¹ that is, he who does not learn what he is ignorant of, or despises what he knows, shall be ignored—be deemed unworthy to be ranked by God amongst those who are by faith united and by humility made equal to one another—than which doom one can imagine nothing bitterer. Yet this, according to the Apostle's warning, befell the Pelagian Julian,² who neglected to associate himself with the belief of his fellows, but presumed to cut himself off from that body.

75. But it is time for us to produce our promised statement as to where and how the opinions of the holy Fathers have been collected together, so that in accordance with them by the decree and authority of a Council the Rule of the Church's Faith may be settled. And that this may be done the more conveniently, the

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 38.

² Julian, Bishop of Œculanum, was one of eighteen bishops who refused to accept Zosimus' *Tractoria* condemning Pelagianism. See Bright, *Age of the Fathers*, II, 220.

present Commonitory shall end here, and we will start fresh on the matters which follow.

BOOK II

[The Second Part of the Commonitory is lost; only the last sections remain, and they are merely a recapitulation of its contents, and of the contents of the First Part.]

CHAPTER XXIX

RECAPITULATION OF BOTH PARTS OF THE COMMONITORY

76. SINCE this is so, it is time for us to recapitulate what has been said in these two Commonitories, at the end of this second one. We have said in preceding passages that this has always been, and is to-day, the custom of Catholics, namely, to prove the True Faith in these two ways: first, by the authority of the Divine Canon, and secondly, by the Tradition of the Church Catholic. Not that the Canon alone is insufficient by itself for everything, but, because those who interpret the Divine Words for the most part according to their own caprice improvise conflicting beliefs and errors, it becomes necessary that the interpretation of Holy Scripture be directed according to the one

rule of the Church's belief, especially on those questions whereon the foundations of the whole Catholic Doctrine rest.

77. We said, too, that in the Church itself due regard must be paid to the consent equally of Universality and Antiquity, lest we be torn away from the integrity of Universality into the domain of schism, or be precipitated from the religion of Antiquity into heretical novelties.

We said, too, that in this same ecclesiastical Antiquity two points must be insistently and studiously observed and closely adhered to by those who do not wish to be heretics. First, that they should ascertain whether anything has been anciently decreed by all the priests of the Catholic Church with the authority of a General Council: secondly, if any new question has arisen respecting which no such decrees can be found, recourse must be had to the opinions of the holy Fathers, of those, that is, who in their own times and places remaining in the unity of the Communion and Faith, stood forth as approved Teachers; and then whatever they shall be found to have held with one mind and consent, that should be judged without any hesitation to be the True and Catholic Doctrine of the Church.

78. And lest we should seem to state this more by our own presumption than on the authority

of the Church, we adduced the instance of the Holy Council, which about three years ago was held in Ephesus in Asia, the illustrious Bassus and Antiochus being consuls.¹ At this Council when there arose a discussion about sanctioning Rules of Faith, lest there again perchance any profane novelty, after the manner of the Ariminian treachery, should creep in, the whole body of the priests there assembled in number nearly two hundred,² agreed to this as the most Catholic, the most loyal and the best thing to do, namely, to bring forth openly the opinions of the holy Fathers, some of whom it was well known had been martyrs, some confessors, and all Catholic priests (and had remained so), in order that duly and solemnly by their consent and decree the religious tie of Ancient Doctrine might be strengthened, and the blasphemy of profane novelty be condemned. Which having been done, the impious Nestorius was rightly and deservedly adjudged to be at variance with Catholic Antiquity, and blessed Cyril on the other hand to be in agreement with it.

Moreover, that nothing might be wanting to ensure the trustworthiness of the matter, we produced the names and the number of those Fathers (although we had forgotten the order) accord-

¹ A.D. 431.

² The actual number was 198.

ing to whose unanimous and concordant opinions there and then the words of the Sacred Law were expounded and the Rule of Divine Doctrine established. To mention whom here again, by way of strengthening our memory, is by no means out of place.

CHAPTER XXX

THE COUNCIL OF EPHESUS

79. THESE, then, are the men whose writings whether as judges or as witnesses were quoted in that Council: St. Peter,¹ Bishop of Alexandria, a very renowned doctor and most blessed martyr: St. Athanasius,² prelate of the same city, a most faithful teacher and most eminent confessor; St. Theophilus,³ also bishop of the

¹ Peter of Alexandria, head of the Catechetical School, and successor to Theonas as bishop in 300, martyred in 311. The fragments of his writings cited by Cyril came from his work *περὶ θεότητος*. See "Peter the Martyr" in Radford's *Three Teachers of Alexandria* (Cambridge, 1908).

² Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, 328-371, five times exiled and five times restored, the conspicuous champion of the Faith against Arianism.

³ Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria, 385-412, a high-handed prelate, first the admirer and then the opponent of Origenism, and a bitter foe of Chrysostom.

same city, a man distinguished for his faith, his life and his knowledge; whose successor was the venerable Cyril,¹ who now adorns the Alexandrian Church. And lest perchance this teaching should be thought to be that of only one city or province, there were added those lights of Cappadocia, St. Gregory of Nazianzum,² bishop and confessor, St. Basil of Cæsarea,³ bishop and confessor, and also the other St. Gregory,⁴ Bishop of Nyssa, most worthy from his faith, manner of life, integrity and wisdom, to be the brother of Basil. And then in order that it might be proved that not only Greece and the East, but also the Western and Latin world

¹ Cyril was Theophilus' nephew, bishop, 412-444, a great controversial leader and writer, but without the wise balance of mind of Athanasius. His celebrated Letters to Nestorius and to John of Antioch were read at Chalcedon in 451.

² Gregory, born 329, successively Bishop of Sasima in 372, coadjutor to his father at Nazianzum, Catholic Bishop in Constantinople, 378, Patriarch in 381, and for a short time President of the Council, retired to Arianzum and died in 389. His great "Sermons on the Holy Trinity" won for him the title of "Theologus."

³ Basil the Great, Bishop of Cæsarea, 370-379, a great dogmatic writer, especially against Arianism.

⁴ Gregory, a younger brother of Basil, Bishop of Nyssa in 371, deposed and banished by the Arians in 375, returned in 378; a philosophical and speculative theologian, but rigidly orthodox.

always so thought, certain letters were read there of St. Felix¹ the martyr and of St. Julius,² both Bishops of Rome. And that not only the capital of the world, but its flanks also might yield their testimony to the Council's judgement, there were added from the south the blessed Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage and martyr, and from the north St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan.

80. All these, then, to the number of the sacred Decalogue,³ Teachers, Advisers, Witnesses, Judges, were adduced at Ephesus. And that blessed Council, holding their doctrine and following their advice, believing their witness and obeying their judgement, gave pronouncement concerning the Rule of Faith without shirking or presumption or favour.

A much larger number of Fathers might have been adduced, but it was unnecessary, because the time for business would have been wasted by a multitude of witnesses, and no one doubted but that those ten fairly represented the belief of all the rest of their colleagues.

¹ Felix, Bishop of Rome, 269-274, author of an Epistle against Sabellius and Paul of Samosata.

² Julius, Bishop of Rome, 337-352, a strong supporter of Athanasius.

³ In the full accounts of the Council it appears that twelve Fathers were quoted, Atticus of Constantinople and Amphilochius of Iconium being the other two.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE COUNCIL OF EPHESUS ZEALOUSLY REJECTED
NOVELTY AND UPHELD ANTIQUITY

81. AFTER all this we added also the sentence of the blessed Cyril, which is contained in the Acts of the Council. For when the Epistle of St. Capreolus,¹ Bishop of Carthage, had been read, who desired and besought only that novelty should be driven away and antiquity maintained, Cyril thus spoke and determined—and it may not be irrelevant to insert it here—saying at the end of the proceedings: “Let this epistle which has been read of the venerable and most religious Bishop of Carthage, Capreolus, be entered in the Acts. The meaning of it is plain; for he wishes the ancient doctrines of the Faith to be confirmed, and novelties and superfluous innovations impiously promulgated to be rejected and condemned.” All the bishops cried out, “These are the words of us all: so we all say: so we all desire.” What were the unanimous words and

¹ Owing to the ravages of the Vandals it was impossible for the African Church to send representatives to Ephesus. Capreolus therefore wrote an elaborate letter in the defence of the Faith against Nestorius, which was entered in the Acts and is extant in Greek and Latin (Labbe, *Concilia* III, 529 ff.).

wishes of all save that what had been anciently handed down might be maintained, and what had lately been invented might be driven away?

82. After we had expressed our admiration for the humility and sanctity of that Council, qualities so marked that, although the number of priests was so large, metropolitans from almost every part, so erudite, so learned that nearly every one of them was equal to taking part in doctrinal discussions, when the very reason for their having assembled might have emboldened them to issue some additional Rule on their own authority, they yet presented nothing new, took nothing upon themselves, arrogated no position for themselves, but only took care in every possible way not to hand on anything to posterity which they had not themselves received from the Fathers. Thus they not only disposed satisfactorily of the matter before them, but they also left an example to those who should come after them, that they too should revere the doctrines of sacred antiquity and condemn the inventions of a profane novelty.

83. We inveighed also against the wicked presumption of Nestorius, who boasted that he was the first and only one to understand the Holy Scriptures, and said that all the rest were ignorant who before him had expounded the Divine Words—men endowed with the gift of

teaching, the whole body of priests, forsooth, and all the confessors and martyrs, some of whom had commented on God's Law, while others had agreed with and trusted the commentators—in a word, he declared that the whole Church was now in error, and always had been in error, because it had followed and was still following (as it seemed to him) ignorant and mistaken Teachers.

CHAPTER XXXII

CELESTINE AND SIXTUS, BISHOPS OF ROME, WERE
EQUALLY ZEALOUS IN THE SAME CAUSE

84. ALL this would be sufficient in its cumulative abundance to crush and extinguish every profane heresy; but yet lest anything should be wanting to the completeness of our contention, we will add at the end two authorities from the Apostolic See—one of St. Sixtus,¹ the venerable Pope who now adorns the Roman Church, the other of his predecessor, Pope Celestine² of blessed memory—which we have thought it right to insert here. Holy Pope Sixtus says in an

¹ Sixtus III, Bishop of Rome, 432-441.

² Celestine, Bishop of Rome, 422-432, very strongly supported Cyril against Nestorius.

epistle which he sent to the Bishop of Antioch¹ about Nestorius' case: "Therefore because, as the Apostle says There is One Faith,² which has evidently been held hitherto; let us believe what ought to be confessed and held." What are the things which ought to be believed and confessed? He goes on, "Let no licence be allowed to novelty, because it is not fitting that anything be added to antiquity. Let not the clear faith and belief of our Fathers be clouded by any admixture of filth."³ It is quite in the Apostle's manner to distinguish the Faith of the Fathers with the light of clearness, and to describe profane novelties as an admixture of filth.

85. Moreover, holy Pope Celestine also was equally of the same opinion. For he says in his epistle⁴ which he sent to the priests in Gaul, convicting them of connivance in error because, by their keeping silent, they were abandoning the old Faith and suffering profane novelties

¹ John, Bishop of Antioch, 429-448. His relations with Cyril were extremely discordant until a reconciliation was effected through the agency of Paul of Emesa, which Cyril welcomed in his celebrated Letter to John ("Lætentur cæli") in 433.

² Eph. iv. 5.

³ The letter of Sixtus is given in Labbe, *Concilia* III, 1262.

⁴ The letter of Celestine is printed in X. ii. 2403 of the Benedictine edition of Augustine's works.

to spring up: "Deservedly are we to blame, if by our silence we encourage error. Therefore let those who are guilty of this be rebuked. Do not let them have unrestricted liberty of preaching."

Here perhaps some one will question whether those whose liberty of preaching he would prohibit are preachers of antiquity or inventors of novelty. Let him speak and himself dispel the doubt of his readers. He goes on: "If the case be so"—he means, If what some people¹ are complaining to me about your cities and provinces be true, namely, that by your hurtful dissimulation you are making them consent to certain novelties—"If this be true, then let novelty cease to assail antiquity."

That was the blessed opinion of blessed Celestine—not that antiquity should cease to subvert novelty, but that novelty should cease to attack antiquity.

¹ The complainants were Prosper and Hilary, who brought against certain Bishops of Southern Gaul the charge of conniving at the unsoundness of the teaching of some of their clergy, and at their disrespectful treatment of the memory of the lately deceased Augustine. Vincent probably sympathized with the Gallic bishops, regarding them as the true maintainers of antiquity; but his point is to claim Celestine's authority in the words quoted for the principle which he is advocating.

maintaining novelty, had been condemned, so also Nestorius himself, an author of novelty and an assailant of antiquity, should be condemned.

And if this sacred unanimity, inspired by Divine grace, be displeasing to any, then he must needs hold that the profanity of Nestorius was unjustly condemned. Ultimately such an one despises the whole Church of Christ and her Teachers, and Apostles, and Prophets, and especially the blessed Apostle Paul, as so much dirt. He despises the Church, in that she has never failed in her bounden duty to revere and thoroughly reverence the Faith once for all delivered to her. He despises St. Paul, who wrote, "O Timothy, keep the deposit, avoiding profane novelties of speech":¹ and "If any one preach to you anything beyond what ye have received, let him be accursed."²

But if neither Apostolic decrees nor Church definitions are to be respected, by which always all heretics—including the latest, Pelagius, Celestius, and Nestorius—according to the sacred consent of Universality and Antiquity, have been justly and deservedly condemned, then assuredly it is the duty of all Catholics who desire to show themselves genuine sons of their Mother Church to cling to the Faith of the holy Fathers, to clasp it close, to die for it; and on the other

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 20.

² Gal. i. 9.

hand to hate, abhor, censure and punish the profane novelties of the profane.

87. These are mostly the points which, having been explained more fully in the two Commonitories, I have now abbreviated somewhat by way of recapitulation in order that my memory, for the strengthening of which I set out to compose the works, may be fortified by constant reminding, and avoid collapse through a distaste for diffuseness.

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