

THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS

Edited by Carol Harrison

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TRANSLATION AGAINST HERESIES

On the Detection and Refutation of the
Knowledge Falsely So Called

PREFACE TO BOOKS I AND II

Pr. 1 Some persons reject the truth and introduce false statements and “endless genealogies, which provide questions,” as the Apostle says, “rather than the divine training that is in faith” (1 Tim.1:4).¹ They combine plausibility with fraud and lead the mind of the inexperienced astray and force them into captivity. They falsify the words of the Lord and make themselves bad interpreters of what was well said. Thus they overthrow many and on the pretext of “knowledge” (*Gnosis*) divert them from the one who founded and arranged this universe, as if they could show something higher and greater than the God who made heaven and earth and everything in them. By persuasion and rhetoric they attract the simple to pursue the quest and wickedly destroy them, inculcating blasphemous and impious ideas about the Creator in people unable to distinguish false from true.

Pr. 2 Error is not shown forth such as it is, for fear that when stripped it may be recognized, but is fraudulently adorned with persuasive attire and appears more true than the truth itself, ridiculous to say, thanks to this external appearance to the eyes of the ignorant – as was said by one of our betters: “The precious stone emerald, of great price in the eyes of some, is devalued by glass artfully polished, as long as no one is present who can test it and prove the existence of fraud. And when bronze has been mixed with silver, who can readily verify it if he is no expert?” We do not want people snatched away by our fault like sheep by wolves when deceived by the outer covering of sheepskin (Matt.7:15), wolves from whom the Lord warned us to keep away, those who speak like us but think otherwise. Therefore, after reading the commentaries of those who call themselves disciples of Valentinus, and meeting some of them and having fully understood their teaching, I considered it necessary

to show you, beloved, their portentous and profound mysteries, which "not all understand" (Matt.19:11), because not all have lost their brains! Thus you will know the doctrines and will make them manifest to all who are with you and instruct them to avoid the "abyss" of unreason and blasphemy against God. As well as we can, we will briefly and clearly report the teaching of those who teach this error at the present time – I mean Ptolemaeus and his followers, whose doctrine is the "flower" of the school of Valentinus;² and we will set it forth briefly and plainly, and in accord with our moderate ability will provide opportunities to refute them, showing that their statements are absurd, inconsistent, and discordant with the truth. We are not accustomed to writing nor have we studied the art of rhetoric, but love encourages us to show you and all with you things thus far hidden but now by God's grace brought to light. "For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known" (Matt.10:26).

Pr. 3 You will not expect from us, who live with the Celts and most of the time use the language of barbarians,³ either the art of rhetoric which we did not learn, or the skill of a writer which we have not exercised, or elegance of language or persuasion which we do not know. You may, however, accept with love what we have written for you with love, simplicity, and truth, and without technique, and yourself develop it, being more capable than we are. After receiving "seeds" from us you will make what we have expressed to you in a few words "bear fruit" abundantly, in the breadth of your spirit, and will powerfully express to those with you what we have inadequately told you. And in response to the request you once made when seeking to learn their doctrine, we have zealously labored not only to show it to you but also to provide you with the means of proving it false, and thus you will successfully serve others according to the grace given you by the Lord, so that men may no longer be taken captive by their persuasive talk. The following is their doctrine.

BOOK I

The "Great Notice" of Ptolemaeus: Emanations

1.1 In the invisible and unnameable heights there was a perfect Aeon, prior to all. This Aeon is called Pre-Beginning and Pre-Father and Abyss. Since he was incomprehensible and invisible, eternal and unbegotten, he was in silence and in rest for unlimited ages. With him was Thought, also called Grace and Silence. When this Abyss wanted to emit a Beginning of all, he set it like a seed in the womb of his companion Silence. When she received this seed she became pregnant and generated Mind, similar and equal to the one who emitted him, alone comprehending the greatness of the Father. This Mind they call Only-Begotten and Father and Beginning of all; with him was emitted Truth, to compose the first and primary, indeed Pythagorean Tetrad: Abyss and Silence, then Mind and Truth.

This Only-Begotten, sensing the purpose for which he was emitted, himself emitted Logos and Life, Father of all later than himself, and the Beginning and Formation of the Pleroma. From Logos and Life were emitted, by pairing, Man and Church, and this is the firstborn Ogdoad, the root and substance of all, called by four names by them: Abyss, Mind, Logos, and Man. Each of these is male-female: first the Pre-Father united by pairing with his Thought, which they also call Grace and Silence; then the Only-Begotten, that is, Mind, with Truth; then Logos with Life; and Man with Church.

1.2 Then all these Aeons, emitted for the glory of the Father, desiring in turn to glorify the Father by something of their own, made emissions in pairs. Logos and Life, after emitting Man and Church, emitted ten more aeons, called Mythical and Mingling, Ageless and Union, Self-Grown and Pleasure, Immovable and Compound, Only-Begotten and Bliss. These are the ten Aeons emitted by Logos and Life.

Man with Church emitted twelve Aeons, with the following names: Paraclete and Faith, Paternal and Hope, Maternal and Love, Everlasting and Understanding, Ecclesiastical and Blessedness, Willed and Sophia (Wisdom).

The thirty Aeons of the Pleroma

1.3 These are the thirty Aeons of their error, enveloped in silence and unknown. This is their invisible and spiritual Pleroma, with its triple division into Ogdoad, Decad, and Dodecad. For this reason, they say, the Savior (they refuse to call him Lord) spent thirty years without doing anything in public (Luke 3:23), thus revealing the mystery of these Aeons. Also the parable of the Laborers sent to the Vineyard clearly signifies these thirty Aeons. Certain laborers were hired at the first hour, others at the third, others at the sixth, others at the ninth, others at the eleventh. Added together, these hours, 1+3+6+9+11, give a total of thirty (Matt.20:1-7). And these are the great and wonderful hidden mysteries which they themselves "fructify," not to mention all the other words of the scriptures which they have been able to adapt and assimilate to their fiction.

2.1 Thus, they say, their Pre-Father was known only to Only-Begotten, that is, Mind, while being invisible and incomprehensible to all the other Aeons. According to them, only Mind took pleasure in seeing the Father and rejoiced in contemplating his immeasurable greatness. He considered sharing with the other Aeons the greatness of the Father, revealing his size and nature, and how he was without beginning and uncontainable and not visible; but Silence kept him from this by the will of the Father, for she wanted to bring all the Aeons to the thought and the desire of searching for this Pre-Father. And the rest of the Aeons similarly desired, with a desire more or less quiet, to see the one who emitted their seed and to meet the root without beginning.

The fall of Sophia

2.2 But the last and youngest Aeon of the Dodecad emitted by Man and Church, that is, Sophia, leaped forth and experienced passion outside the embrace of her consort Theletos. This passion had arisen among the Aeons about Mind and Truth, but it was concentrated in the Aeon Sophia, now altered by it. She was moved by love or audacious yearning, because unlike Mind she did not have communion

with the perfect Father. Her passion was a search for the Father, for she wanted to comprehend his greatness. As she could not do so, for it was impossible, she struggled violently because of the greatness of the Abyss and its unsearchable character and her caring love for the Father. As she always pressed on (Phil.3:13), she would finally have been swallowed by his sweetness and dissolved in the universal Substance if the Power which consolidates the Aeons and keeps them outside the inexpressible Greatness had not met her. They call this Power Limit. It stopped her and consolidated her; with difficulty she returned to herself (Luke 15:17), now believed that the Father is incomprehensible, and put off her previous Desire with its accompanying passion, now with wondering admiration.

2.3 Some of the heretics thus imagine the passion and conversion of Sophia. Because she had undertaken something impossible and incomprehensible, she gave birth to a shapeless substance such as a woman normally produces. When she looked at it, first she was sad because of the incomplete character of her offspring; next she feared that it might disappear; then she was beside herself and confused, seeking the cause as well as the way in which she could hide what was born. After experiencing these passions she accepted conversion and tried to run back to the Father. In her weakness she supplicated the Father, and the rest of the Aeons, especially Mind, asked along with her. From all this, they say, the substance of matter took its origin, from ignorance, sadness, fear, and perplexity.

2.4 The Father through Only-Begotten then further emitted Limit in his own image, without a pair but male-female. Sometimes they speak of the Father with his consort Silence, sometimes they make him neither male nor female. To Limit they give the names Cross, Redeemer, Emancipator, Delimiter, and Guide. By this Limit, they say, Sophia was purified, consolidated, and restored to her consort. When her Desire had been separated from her with its passion by Limit, she remained within the Pleroma, but her Desire with its inherent passion was separated, crucified, and expelled from the Pleroma by Limit. Desire had a spiritual substance, since it was the natural movement of an Aeon, but it was a formless and shapeless substance because Sophia understood nothing, and therefore her fruit was weak and female.

2.5 After Desire was banished from the Pleroma and her Mother was reintegrated in her pair, Only-Begotten emitted another pair, in accordance with the providence of the Father, so that none of the Aeons might again experience such an emotion. These were Christ and Holy

Spirit, emitted to fix and consolidate the Pleroma, to teach the incomprehensibility of the Father and the nature of spiritual "rest."

Mysterious exegesis

3.1 [The Valentinian myth] was not clearly expressed in the scriptures, since "not all understand" (Matt.19:11) their Gnosis, but was indicated mysteriously by the Savior when he spoke in parables to those able to understand in this way. The thirty Aeons were indicated by the thirty years (Luke 3:23) when the Savior did nothing in public, and by the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt.20:1-7). Paul too, they say, frequently mentions Aeons, even preserving their hierarchy when he says, "In all the Aeons of Aeons" (Eph.3:21). And we ourselves allude to these Aeons, when in the Eucharist we refer to "the Aeons of Aeons," and wherever Aeon or Aeons are named they want them to refer to those.

The Gnostic method

3.6 This is what they say about their Pleroma and the formation of their Aeons, eager to adapt things well said to things they have badly invented. They try to draw their proof not only from the Gospels and the writings of the Apostle, changing the interpretations and twisting the exegesis, but also from the law and the prophets. Since they encounter many parables and allegories which can be taken in various ways, they adjust what is ambiguous to their fiction through exegesis and lead captive, far from the truth, those who do not preserve a firm faith in one God the Father Almighty and in one Jesus Christ the Son of God.

The salvation of the fallen Sophia

4.1 Shapeless, ugly Desire, also known as Achamoth, was lost below, but Christ extended himself to her through the Cross and gave her shape as she suffered grief, fear, perplexity, and ignorance, though sometimes, oddly enough, she laughed. Christ then returned to the Pleroma but sent the Paraclete, the Savior, to her. The Savior made it possible for her to shape three kinds of entities: material (from her passion), psychic (from her conversion), and spiritual (from her essential nature). From the psychic nature she fashioned the Demiurge, who preserved the image of Only-Begotten and was

the maker of all psychic and material beings. He shaped seven heavens, which are angels, and dwells above them. He thought he made them, but Achamoth projected them first. In his ignorance he thought he was alone.

Irenaeus irony

4.3 What now? It is tragic to see each one pompously explaining the passion and element from which matter derived its origin. I think they are right when they do not want to teach this to everyone in public, but only to those capable of providing substantial payments for such great mysteries. For they do not speak of things like those our Lord mentioned, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8), but hidden, marvelous, and deep mysteries, discovered by the immense labor of these lovers of lies. Who would not spend his whole fortune to learn that from the tears of Desire, the Aeon in passion, originated seas and springs and rivers and everything wet? And from her laughter, light? And from her perplexity and anguish, the corporeal elements of the world?

4.4 I too wish to contribute to their "fruit-bearing." For since I see that some waters are sweet (springs, rivers, rains, etc.) while seawater is salt, I realize that all these cannot come from the tears of Achamoth, since the property of tears is salt. So it is evident that the salty waters are the ones that come from tears. But I suppose that Achamoth, being in agony and great hesitation, also sweated. Therefore according to their argumentation one must suppose that springs and rivers and any other sweet waters originated from her sweat. For it is not likely that since tears are of one property both salt and sweet waters come from them. It is more likely that some are from tears, others from sweat. But since in the world there are waters both warm and acrid, you should understand what she was doing and from what member she emitted these. "Fruits" of this kind are entirely suited to their argument.

The three elements or classes

6.1 There are three elements. One, material, which they also call "left," will necessarily perish because incapable of receiving any breath of imperishability; another, psychic, which they call "right," is in the middle between spiritual and material and will go where it makes a turn; and the spiritual has been sent forth so that joined with the

psychic it will receive formation, instructed with it during its life. This, they say, is "salt" and "the light of the world" (Matt.5:13-14). The psychic needed teaching for the senses. This is why, they say, the world was made and why the Savior came to save this psychic element, since it possessed free will. For, they say, he assumed the first fruits of what he was going to save: from Achamoth, the spiritual; from the Demiurge he was clothed with the psychic Christ; finally, from the divine plan he was surrounded by a body possessing psychic substance but prepared with ineffable skill to be visible, tangible, and capable of suffering. He received nothing material, for the material is not capable of being saved. The final consummation will take place when everything spiritual has been shaped and made perfect by Gnosis, that is, the men who have perfect Gnosis about God and have been initiated into the mysteries of Achamoth. These men are themselves, they say.

Imperfect psychic Christians versus perfect Gnostics

6.2 On the other hand, the psychics are trained in psychic teaching, those men who are made firm through works and mere faith and do not have perfect Gnosis. These men, they say, are we who belong to the church. That is why good behavior is necessary for us, and otherwise we cannot be saved, but they are definitely saved not by works but because they are spiritual by nature. Just as what is material cannot share in salvation, for it is not receptive of it, they say; so again what is spiritual cannot undergo perishability, whatever acts it experiences. For as gold deposited in mud does not lose its beauty but preserves its own nature because mud cannot harm gold, so they themselves, they say, no matter what material acts they experience, cannot be harmed or lose the spiritual substance.

6.3 Therefore the "perfect" among them fearlessly perform all the forbidden acts, of which the scriptures affirm that "those who perform them will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal.5:21). They eat foods indiscriminately and think they are in no way defiled by them. They are the first to meet on every festival of the gentiles celebrated in honor of the idols, so that some of them do not abstain from the murderous spectacles of fights with wild beasts and gladiatorial combats, hateful to God and men. Some are insatiable slaves of carnal pleasures, and they say they pay the tribute of carnal to the carnal and of the spiritual to the spiritual.

Some secretly corrupt the women who learn this doctrine from them, as many of those persuaded by them have frequently confessed,

along with their other errors, after returning to the church of God. Others, proceeding openly and without shame, have become infatuated with certain women and have stolen them from their husbands, then married them. Still others after a chaste beginning, pretending to live with women as with sisters, in time have been unveiled, when the sister was made pregnant by the brother.

6.4 [They claim that] whoever is "in the world" (John 17:11) and does not love a woman and unite with her does not come "from the truth" (18:37) and will not pass "into the truth" (16:13); but if he who is "of the world" (8:23) unites with a woman, he will not pass into the truth because he has united with this woman with lust.

Three classes of human beings

7.5 There are also three classes of human beings: spiritual, psychic, and material, after the fashion of Cain, Abel, and Seth, from whom come the three natures, no longer in an individual but in the human race. The material element will go to corruption. The psychic element, if it chooses the better, will repose in the place of the Middle; but if it chooses the worse it will go to recover what it will have come to resemble. As for the spiritual elements that Achamoth has sown from then until now in just souls, after they have been instructed and nourished there, for they were sent forth as very small, after being judged worthy of "perfection" they will be given as brides (they say) to the angels of the Savior, while their souls will eternally rest in the Middle with the Demiurge. The souls themselves, they say, are subdivided into two categories, those by nature good and those by nature bad, and the good are those receptive of the seed while the others by nature can never receive it in any way.

Gnostic exegesis

8.1 Such is their doctrine, which the prophets did not proclaim, the Lord did not teach, and the apostles did not transmit. They boast that they have known it more abundantly than anyone else. While citing texts from unwritten sources and venturing to weave the proverbial ropes out of sand, they try to adjust, in agreement with their statements, sometimes parables of the Lord, sometimes prophetic sayings, and sometimes apostolic words, so that their fiction may not seem without witness. They contradict the order and the continuity of the scriptures and, as best they can, dissolve the members of the

truth. They transfer and transform, making one thing out of another, and thus lead many astray by the badly constructed phantom that they make out of the Lord's words they adjust.

King into dog or fox

It is as if someone destroyed the figure of a man in the authentic portrait of a king, carefully created by a skillful artist out of precious stones, and rearranged the stones to make the image of a dog or fox, declaring that this badly composed image is that good image of the king made by the skillful artist. He shows the stones arranged by the first artist for the image of the king but badly transferred by the later one into the image of a dog, and by the appearance of the stones deceives the simple, that is, those ignorant of the king's image, and persuades them that this ugly image of a fox is the good image of a king. In the same way these people compile old wives' tales and then, transferring sayings and words and parables, want to accommodate the words of God to their fables.

Texts for events outside the Pleroma

8.2 Here are the texts that they try to apply to the events outside the Pleroma. The Lord, they say, came to his passion in the last times of the world to show the passion in the last of the Aeons and to make known by its end what the end of the production of Aeons was. The 12-year-old girl, daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, whom the Lord stood beside and raised from the dead (Luke 8:41-42), was a figure of Achamoth, whom their extended Christ shaped and led to understand the Light which had abandoned her. The Savior manifested himself to her as she was outside the Pleroma in a state of abortion, as Paul declared in his first letter to the Corinthians: "Last of all, he appeared to me also as to an abortion" (1 Cor.15:8). This coming to Achamoth by the Savior escorted by contemporaries is similarly revealed by Paul in the same letter: "A woman ought to have a veil on her head because of the angels" (11:10). And Moses made known, by covering his face with a veil (2 Cor.3:13), that when the Savior came to her Achamoth put a veil on her face because of reverence. As for the passions experienced by Achamoth, the Savior, they say, underwent them. Thus when he cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Matt.27:46), he revealed that Sophia had been abandoned by the Light and stopped by Limit in her rush

forward; he revealed her grief when he said, "How sad is my soul" (Matt.26:38); her fear when he said, "Father, if possible let the cup pass from me" (Matt.26:39); and her anguish similarly: "I do not know what to say" (John 12:27).

8.3 The Lord, they teach, set forth the three races of men (Matt.8:19-22 = Luke 9:57-62): the material in his response to the man who said, "I will follow you," when Jesus replied, "The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head"; and the psychic, in what he said to the one who said, "I will follow you, but let me go and say goodbye to those of my house." The Lord replied, "No one who has put his hand to the plow but looks back is fit for the kingdom of heaven" (Luke 9:61-62). This man was from the Middle, and so was the one who confessed having achieved the manifold duties of justice but then refused to follow, overcome by wealth that kept him from becoming perfect (Matt.19:16-22). They say this man was of the psychic race. Finally, he indicated the spiritual when he said, "Let the dead bury their dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God" (Matt.8:22 = Luke 9:60), and saying to Zacchaeus the tax-collector, "Hasten to come down, for I must stay in your house today" (Luke 19:5). And the parable of the leaven that a woman is said to have hidden in three measures of meal (Matt.13:33 = Luke 13:20-21), shows forth the three kinds of men. The woman is Sophia; the three measures of meal are the three kinds of men, spiritual, psychic, earthly; and the meal itself is the Savior. And Paul spoke plainly about earthly, psychics, and spirituals. In one place, "As the earthly, so also the earthly ones" (1 Cor.15:48). Again, "The psychic man does not receive the things of the Spirit," and again, "the spiritual examines all" (2:14-15). According to them, "the psychic does not receive the things of the Spirit" refers to the Demiurge, who being psychic knows neither the Mother, who is spiritual, nor her seed, nor the Aeons in the Pleroma. Paul further affirms that the Savior received the first-fruits of what he was going to save: "If the first-fruit is holy, so is the lump" (Rom.11:16). The first-fruit, they teach, is the spiritual, and we are the lump, that is, the psychic church, whose lump they say the Savior assumed and raised with him, for he was the leaven.

8.4 That Achamoth wandered outside the Pleroma and was shaped by Christ and sought by the Savior, they say he revealed when he said he had come to the lost sheep (Matt.18:12-13; Luke 15:4-7). They say the lost sheep is their Mother, from whom they claim the church here below was sown. The wandering is its straying outside the Pleroma, experiencing all the passions from which they say matter

was made. The woman who cleans her house and finds a lost drachma (Luke 15:8-10) they explain as the Sophia Above, who has lost her Desire (Achamoth) and later, when everything has been purified by the coming of the Savior, will find it again, for, according to them, she must be restored within the Pleroma. They say that "Symeon, who took Christ in his arms and gave thanks to God and said, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace according to your word" (Luke 2:29) is a figure of the Demiurge, who at the Savior's coming learned about his change of abode and gave thanks to Abyss. As for the prophetess Anna, who in the Gospel is said to have lived seven years with her husband and the rest of her life as a widow, until she saw the Savior, recognized him, and spoke of him to all (2:36-38), she obviously signifies Achamoth, who saw the Lord with his companions for a moment and then remained in the Middle for the whole later period, waiting for him to come back and establish her in her pair. The Savior indicated her name when he said, "Sophia was justified by her children" (7:35), as did Paul in these words, "We speak of Sophia among the perfect" (1 Cor.2:6). The say that Paul also spoke of the pairs within the Pleroma when he spoke plainly about one such pair: speaking of the marriage that is in this life, he wrote, "This mystery is great, but I speak of Christ and Church" (Eph.5:32).

Exegesis of the Prologue of John's Gospel

8.5 They also teach that John the Lord's disciple pointed to the first Ogdoad and the generation of all and they speak thus. He set forth the "Beginning," first made by God, also called "Son" and "Only-Begotten God," in whom the Father emitted everything in seminal fashion. By this Beginning, says John, was emitted the Logos and, in him, the whole substance of the Aeons, which the Logos himself later fashioned. Since John is speaking of the first genesis, he rightly starts his teaching with the Beginning or Son and by the Logos. He speaks thus: "In the Beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was toward God, and the Logos was God; this Logos was in the Beginning, toward God." First he differentiates three terms: God, Beginning, Logos; then he unites them, in order to show not only the emission of both Son and Logos but also the unity between them and with the Father. For in the Father and from the Father is the Beginning, and in the Beginning and from the Beginning is the Logos. Therefore John well said: "In the Beginning was the Logos." The Logos was in fact in the Son. "And the Logos was toward God." For that was the

Beginning. "And the Logos was God." Just so, since what is born of God is God. "This Logos was in the Beginning toward God." He reveals the sequence of emissions. "Everything was made by him, and without him nothing was made." In fact, for all the Aeons after him the Logos was the cause of formation and generation. But John continues, "What was made in him is Life." He thus points to a pair, for he says that everything was made through him, but "Life," in him. This, made in him, is closer to him than what was only made through him; it is united to him and bears fruit through him. Since John continues, "And the Life was the Light of Men," by saying "Men" he speaks of "Church" so that through one name he may set forth the communion of the pair; for from Logos and Life proceed Man and Church. John calls Life "the Light of Men" because they have been illuminated by it, that is, formed and made manifest. This is also what Paul says: "Everything made manifest is Light" (Eph.5:13). Therefore since Life manifested and generated Man and Church it is called their Light. By these words John clearly showed, among other things, the Second Tetrad: Logos and Life, Man and Church. He also indicated the First Tetrad. For speaking of the Savior, and saying that everything outside the Pleroma was formed by him, he says at the same time that this Savior is the fruit of the whole Pleroma. He calls him Light that shines in the darknesses and has not been seized by them because though it formed all the products of the passion it was ignored by them. This Savior John further calls Son and Truth and Life and Incarnate Logos. "We have seen his glory," he says, "glory as of the Only-Begotten, given him by his Father, full of Grace and Truth." And he says, "And the Logos became incarnate and dwelt among us and we saw his glory, glory as of the Only-Begotten from the Father, full of Grace and Truth" (1:14). So John carefully sets forth the First Tetrad, naming Father and Grace and Only-Begotten and Truth. Thus he spoke of the First Ogdoad, the Mother of all the Aeons, for he named Father and Grace, Only-Begotten and Truth, Logos and Life, Man and Church. This is what Ptolemaeus said.

A parallel in Homeric study

9.4 After collecting scattered texts and names they transfer them, as we said before, out of their natural meaning to a meaning contrary to nature, acting like those who propose random hypotheses for themselves and try to treat them from the Homeric verses, so that the untutored may suppose that Homer composed verses on this

completely novel subject and that many readers may be led astray, through the well-ordered sequence of the verses, to ask if Homer wrote them. Here is how, with verses from Homer, one could describe Heracles as sent by Eurystheus to the dog in Hades. Nothing keeps us from using such an example, since it involves the same argument in both cases.

Having thus spoken, he left groaning deeply (*Od.*10.76)
The noble Heracles, witness of great deeds (*Od.*21.26);
Eurystheus, born of Sthenelos the Perseid (*Il.*19.123),
To lead from Erebus the dog of cruel Hades (*Il.*8.368).
He left, like a fierce lion fed in mountains (*Od.*6.130),
Through mid-city; his friends at once parted (*Il.*24.327).
Old men and boys and unmarried girls (*Od.*11.38),
Uttering laments as if he walked toward death (*Il.*24.328).
Hermes went with him, and grey-eyed Pallas (*Od.*11.626),
For he knew what grief agitated his brother (*Il.*2.409).

What singleton would be taken in by these verses to suppose that Homer composed them in this way? One who knows his Homer will recognize the verses but not the subject matter. He knows that one of the verses deals with Odysseus, another with Heracles, another with Priam, another with Menelaos and Agamemnon. If anyone takes these verses and restores them to their original setting, he will make the system disappear. And thus whoever keeps the rule of truth, which he received through baptism, unchanged within himself, knows these names, phrases, and parables from the scriptures but does not recognize their blasphemous system. If he recognizes the stones [of the mosaic] he will not take the fox for the royal image. Setting each word in its context and adjusting it to the body of truth, he will strip it of their fiction and show their inconsistency.

The uniform faith of the church

10.1 The church, dispersed throughout the world to the ends of the earth, received from the apostles and their disciples the faith in one God the Father Almighty, "who made heaven and earth and sea and all that is in them" (Exod.20:11), and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, incarnate for our salvation, and in the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets predicted the dispensations of God: the coming, the birth from the Virgin, the passion, the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension of the beloved Jesus Christ our Lord in the flesh

into the heavens, and his coming from the heavens in the glory of the Father to "recapitulate all things" (Eph.1:10) and raise up all flesh of the human race, so that to Christ Jesus our Lord and God and Savior and King, according to the good pleasure of the invisible Father, "every knee should bow, of beings in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess him" (Phil.2:10-11), and that he should render a just judgement on all and send to eternal fire the spiritual powers of iniquity, the lying and apostate angels, and men who are impious, unjust, iniquitous, and blasphemous, while on the contrary he should give life imperishable as a reward to the just and equitable who keep his commandments and persevere in his love (some from the beginning, others since their conversion), and surround it with eternal glory.

10.2 The church, having received this preaching and this faith, as we have just said, though dispersed in the whole world, diligently guards them as living in one house, believes them as having one soul and one heart (Acts 4:32), and consistently preaches, teaches, and hands them down as having one mouth. For if the languages in the world are dissimilar, the power of the tradition is one and the same. The churches founded in Germany believe and hand down no differently, nor do those among the Iberians, among the Celts, in the Orient, in Egypt, or in Libya, or those established in the middle of the world. As the sun, God's creature, is one and the same in the whole world, so the light, the preaching of truth, shines everywhere and illuminates all men who wish to come to the knowledge of truth. And none of the rulers of the churches, however gifted he may be in eloquence, will say anything different – for no one is above the Master (Matt.10:24) – nor will one weak in speech damage the tradition. Since the faith is one and the same, he who can say much about it does not add to it nor does he who says little diminish it.

What theological method can and cannot do

10.3 The fact that some people know more or less by insight does not result in changing the subject (*hypothesis*) and falsely imagining a God other than the Creator, Maker, and Sustainer of this universe, as if he were not sufficient for us, or another Christ or another Only Son. But knowledge lies in (a) the more complete investigation of everything said in parables and its adaptation to the argument of truth; (b) telling in detail the action and plan of God for humanity; (c) setting forth God's long-suffering toward the apostasy of the rebellious

angels as well as the disobedience of men; (d) stating why one and the same God made some things temporal, others eternal, some celestial, others earthly; (e) understanding why God, being invisible, appeared to the prophets, not in one form but variously; (f) indicating why many covenants were handed down to the human race, and teaching the character of each one; (g) investigating why "God consigned all things to unbelief that he might have mercy on all" (Rom.11:32); (h) giving thanks for why "the Word" of God "became incarnate" (John 1:14) and suffered; (i) proclaiming why the advent of the Son of God took place in the last times, that is, why the Beginning appeared at the end; (j) investigating whatever is contained in the scriptures about the end and things to come; (k) not being silent about why, when the gentiles were without hope, God made them joint heirs incorporate, sharers with the saints (Eph.3:6); (l) announcing how "this mortal flesh will put on immortality and this perishable, imperishability" (1 Cor.15:54); (m) proclaiming how "the not-people became a people and the non-beloved beloved" (Hos.2:25) and how "the children of the one abandoned have become more than the children of her who had a husband" (Gal.4:27).

On these matters and others like them the Apostle shouted, "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgements and his ways cannot be investigated" (Rom.11:33). He did not imagine or blaspheme that above the Creator and Demiurge there is a 'Mother' of him and of them, the Desire of an Aeon that went astray, nor did he falsely state that above her is a Pleroma which would contain sometimes thirty Aeons, sometimes innumerable multitudes of Aeons. Thus these masters, truly destitute of divine understanding, express themselves, while the whole church has one and the same faith in all the world, as we have said.

Varieties of systems after Valentinus

11.1 Let us now look at their unstable teaching and how, when there are two or three of them, they not only do not make the same statements about the same things but give contradictory answers in content and expression alike. The first among them, Valentinus, transferred the older doctrines from what is called the "Gnostic" sect and adapted them for his own school. He stated that there is an ineffable Duality consisting of the Inexpressible and Silence. Later this Duality emitted a second Duality, Father and Truth. This Tetrad bore

as fruit Logos and Life, Man and Church, thus constituting the first Ogdoad. From Logos and Life ten powers were emitted, as we have said; from Man and Church were emitted twelve, one of which, leaving (the Pleroma) and falling into distress, made the rest of the creation. He has two Limits: one, between the Abyss and the Pleroma, separates the generated Aeons from the uncreated Father, while the other separates their Mother from the Pleroma. The Christ was not emitted by the Aeons of the Pleroma, but was borne by the Mother, when she was outside it, according to the memory she had of the powers above, though with a certain shadow. As this Christ was masculine, he cut off the shadow from himself and returned to the Pleroma. Then the Mother, abandoned with the shadow and emptied of spiritual substance, emitted another son: this is the Demiurge, omnipotent master of those beneath him. Along with him was emitted an Archon of the left, as in the system of the falsely called "Gnostics."

Jesus was sometimes said to be emitted by Theletos, the Aeon separated from their Mother and united with the others, sometimes by Christ, who ran upward again into the Pleroma, and sometimes by Man and Church. And the Holy Spirit was emitted by Truth for testing and fructifying the Aeons; it enters them invisibly, and by it the Aeons fructify the plants of Truth. Such is the doctrine of Valentinus.

11.2 Secundus teaches that the first Ogdoad includes a Tetrad of the right and a Tetrad of the left, and light and darkness; the Aeon that left the Pleroma and fell into distress did not come from the thirty but from their fruits.

Fantastic language

11.3 Another, a famous teacher of theirs, "stretches out" toward a Gnosis higher and more Gnostic and describes the first Tetrad thus: There exists before everything a pre-unintelligible Pre-principle which I call Unicity. With this Unicity there coexists a Power which I call Unity. This Unity and this Unicity, being one, emitted without emitting a Beginning of all things, intelligible unengendered and invisible, the Beginning which language calls Monad. With this Monad coexists a Power of the same substance (*homooousios*), which I call One. These Powers, Unicity, Unity, Monad, and One, emitted the rest of the Aeons.

11.4 Iou iou! Pheu pheu! This exclamation of tragedy ought to be

expressed over such a fabrication of names and such great audacity as he shamelessly gives names to his lying inventions. For when he says, "There exists before everything a pre-unintelligible Pre-principle which I call Unicity" and "With this Unicity there coexists a Power which I call Unity," he admits clearly that whatever he has said is fiction and that he imposes on the fiction names that no one else ever set. Without his boldness, today the "truth" would not have a name, according to them.

It deserves parody

But then, nothing keeps another who writes on the same subject from defining the terms thus: There exists a certain royal Pre-principle, pre-unintelligible, pre-insubstantial and pre-prerogative, which I call Gourd. With this Gourd there coexists a Power which I call Supervacuity. This Gourd and this Supervacuity, being one, emitted without emitting a Fruit visible in all its parts, edible and sweet, which language calls Cucumber. With this Cucumber there is a Power of the same substance, which I call Melon. These Powers, Gourd and Supervacuity and Cucumber and Melon, emitted the whole multitude of Valentinus' delirious Melons. For if one must accommodate ordinary language to the first Tetrad and if each one chooses the terms he wants, who would keep him from using these last terms, much more worthy of credence, in ordinary usage, and known by all?

Further ridiculous examples

11.5 Others among them again have given the first and primal Ogdoad the following names: first the Pre-beginning, then the Unintelligible; third the Inexpressible, fourth the Invisible. From the Pre-beginning was emitted, in the first and fifth place, the Beginning; from the Unintelligible was emitted, in the second and sixth place, the Incomprehensible; from the Inexpressible was emitted, in the third and seventh place, the Unnameable; from the Invisible was emitted, in the fourth and eighth place, the Unengendered, with which the first Ogdoad is completed. These Powers pretended that they existed before Abyss and Silence, in order to appear more perfect than the "perfect," more Gnostic than the Gnostics. One could rightly say to them, "Poor melons, who are vile sophists and not men" (cf. *Iliad* 2.235).

God is not like any of this

12.2 Do not these people seem to you, O beloved, to have envisioned the Homeric Zeus, sleepless because of cares, worried about how to honor Achilles and destroy a multitude of Greeks (*Iliad* 2.1-4), rather than the Lord of all? He is the one who considered doing something and at the same time accomplished what he considered; at the same time he willed and considered what he willed, and thinks when he wills and wills when he thinks, since he is all Thought, all Will, all Mind, all Light, all Eye, all Hearing, the source of all good things.

Mark the Valentinian magician

13.1 Another among them, named Mark, boasts that he is the corrector of the master. This man, highly skilled in magic tricks, through which he leads many men and not a few women astray to be converted to himself as to the most Gnostic and most perfect, and possessing the greatest power from the invisible and ineffable regions, is a true forerunner of the Antichrist. He combines the games of Anaxilaos with the wickedness of so-called magicians and is therefore considered a miracle-worker among those who have no sense or are demented.

Marcosian Eucharist, prophecy, and bridal chamber

13.2 Pretending to celebrate the Eucharist with a chalice of wine mixed with water, and prolonging the prayer of invocation, he makes the cup appear purple and red so that the Grace from the regions above all may be supposed to distill its blood in his chalice through his invocation, while those present experience a strong desire to taste from that cup so that in them too may flow what the magician calls Grace. Again, giving women mixed chalices he orders them to give thanks in his presence. That done, he brings forward another chalice, much greater than the one in which that woman led astray makes eucharist and, pouring from the smaller one made eucharist by the woman into the much larger one brought by him, straightway says this:

May that incomprehensible and ineffable Grace which is before all things fill your inner man (Eph.3:16) and multiply its Gnosis in you, sowing the grain of mustard seed in good earth (Matt.13:31,8).

Saying such things and driving that unhappy woman mad, he shows forth marvels when the larger chalice is filled from the smaller one and overflows. And by other similar marvels he has led many astray and dragged them behind him.

13.3 He probably has an attendant demon through which he gives the impression of prophesying and makes those women he deems worthy prophesy too. For he busies himself especially with women, the most elegant and richest, who wear robes with purple borders.⁴ As he tries to seduce them he often says in flattery:

I want you to share in my Grace, since the Father of all always sees your angel before his face (Matt.18:10). The place of Greatness is in us; we must establish ourselves in the One. Take Grace first from me and through me. Beautify yourself as a bride receiving her bridegroom (Rev.21:2), so that you may be what I am and I what you are. Establish in your bridechamber the seed of light. Take from me the bridegroom and receive him and be received in him. Behold, Grace has come upon you. Open your mouth and prophesy.

The woman replies thus: "I have never prophesied and I do not know how to prophesy." He makes invocations again to stupefy the one being seduced and says to her, "Open your mouth and say anything, and you will prophesy." Bewitched and bewildered by these words, her soul is set on fire by the idea that she will prophesy, and her heart pounds much harder than it should. She grows daring and speaks delirious words and whatever comes to mind, foolishly and boldly, in the heat of the empty spirit. (A better teacher than we are has said of such people, "A soul warmed by empty air is audacious and shameless.") From that moment she considers herself a prophetess. She gives thanks to Mark for sharing his Grace with her. She tries to repay him not only by the gift of her property – thus he has collected a great amount of wealth – but also by sharing her person in her desire to be united with him in everything so as to descend with him into the One.

13.4 He also tried to lead astray some of the most faithful women who possess the fear of God and cannot be seduced, by ordering them to prophesy, but they hissed at him and anathematized him and separated from such a detestable group. They knew that prophecy is not given to mankind by Mark the magician, but those on whom God has sent his grace from on high have prophecy given by God and speak where and when God wishes, not when Mark orders. The one who gives orders is greater and more powerful than the one ordered;

one is chief, the other is a subordinate. If then Mark or someone else gives orders, as all these people do in their banquets, playing at oracles, ordering one another to prophesy, and predicting according to their lusts, the one who gives orders will be greater and more powerful than the prophetic Spirit, though he is only a man; and this is impossible. But the spirits who are ordered by such people and speak when they desire it are feeble and powerless but bold and impudent, sent by Satan to seduce and destroy those who do not firmly keep the faith they have received from the beginning through the church.

13.5 The same Mark uses philtres and charms, if not with all women at least with some, so as to be able to dishonor their bodies. Once back in the church they have confessed that they were defiled by him in their bodies and that they felt a violent passion for him. A deacon of ours in Asia let Mark into his home, but fell into a disaster of this kind: his wife was beautiful and, corrupted in spirit and body by that magician, followed him for a long time. When the brethren were finally able to bring her back with great effort, she spent all her time in penitence, weeping and bewailing her seduction by the magician.⁵

13.6 And his disciples, wandering about in the same circumstances and seducing and corrupting many women, call themselves "perfect," as if no one can equal the greatness of their knowledge, not even if you should mention Paul or Peter or some other apostles, but they know more than all of them and alone have drunk the greatness of the knowledge of the inexpressible Power. They are on the height, above every Power; therefore they can do everything freely without any fear. Because of "redemption" they have become incomprehensible and invisible to the Judge. If anyone should arrest them, they stand before him, protected by "redemption," and say these words:

O Assistant of God and of the mystical Silence prior to the Aeons, you are the one through whom the Magnitudes who forever see the face of the Father (cf. Matt.18:10), using you as their leader and guide, draw their forms on high. That truly audacious Female fantasized because of the goodness of the Propator [the Abyss] and emitted these forms, none other than ourselves, as images of the Magnitudes, for she had the realities above present to her spirit as in a dream. Now the Judge is at hand and the herald orders me to make my defence. Do you, who know the nature of both of us, present to the judge the justification of our two cases as one.

When she hears these words the Mother covers them at once with the Homeric cap of Hades so that, becoming invisible (*Iliad* 5.845) they may escape from the Judge, and she immediately takes them into the bridal chamber and gives them to their spouses.

13.7 By saying and doing such things, even in our regions of the Rhône they have seduced a great number of women, who have their consciences cauterized (1 Tim.4:2) and some even confess publicly, while others importunately withdraw in silence, giving up hope for the life of God; while some have apostatized completely and others remain in suspense between the two, as the proverb puts it "being neither inside nor outside" and having the fruit of the seed of the sons of "knowledge."

Mark's revelation of origins

14.1 This Mark, who says that as the Only Son he was the womb and receptacle of the Silence of Colorbasus, sent into the world the seed deposited in him. The Tetrad from the highest invisible ineffable places came down to him in feminine form, since, he said, the world could not endure the masculine element she possesses, and she showed him who she was and told him alone the genesis of everything, which she had not revealed to any gods or men. She said this:

When the Father who has no Father, inconceivable and insubstantial, neither male nor female, first wanted his ineffable element to be expressed and what was invisible in him to receive form, he opened his mouth and brought forth a Word like himself. This Word, staying with him, showed him what he was, appearing as the Form of the invisible. The enunciation of the Name took place thus: The Father spoke the first word of his Name, which was the Beginning, and it was one syllable with four elements; he added a second syllable, which likewise contained four elements; then he spoke the third, of ten elements; finally he pronounced the last, of twelve elements. Thus the enunciation of the Name was of thirty elements and four syllables. Each element has its own letters, its own character, its own resonance, and figures and images. None among them sees the form of which it is an element. They are not only ignorant of that, but each element does not know even the resonance of its neighbor but imagines that all its own resonance expresses the Whole. For each of them, being only a part of the

Whole, calls its own sound as if it were all, and does not stop resounding until they come in sequence to the last letter of the last element. Then (says the Tetrad) the restitution of all things will take place, when all things are converted into one letter and the same resonance, of which there is an image when we all say "Amen." These are the sounds which form the insubstantial and ungenerated Aeon, the forms which the Lord called "angels who forever see the face of the Father" (Matt.18:10).

14.3 After this exposition the Tetrad said:

I wish to show you the Truth herself, for I have made her come down from the higher abodes so that you may look upon her bare and contemplate her beauty, and also hear her speaking and marvel at her wisdom. See at the top her head, which is Alpha and Omega, her neck Beta and Psi, her shoulders and hands Gamma and Chi, her chest Delta and Phi, her diaphragm Epsilon and Upsilon, her back Zeta and Tau, her belly Eta and Sigma, her thighs Theta and Rho, her knees Iota and Pi, her legs Kappa and Omicron, her ankles Lambda and Xi, her feet Mu and Nu.

This, according to the magician, is "the body of Truth, the scheme of the Element, the character of the Letter." He calls the Element Man, and says he is the source of every word and the beginning of every voice, the expression of the Inexpressible, the mouth of silent Silence. "And this is his body. But as for you, follow the Tetrad, raise the thoughts of your spirit higher and hear the Logos, generator of itself and giver of the Father."

14.7 The first heaven sounds Alpha, the next Epsilon, the third Eta, the fourth (in the middle of the seven) has the power of Iota, the fifth Omicron, the sixth, Upsilon, and the seventh (the fourth from the middle), Omega. All the Powers, mutually embracing, sound forth and glorify the one by whom they were emitted, and the glory of the sound is sent forth to the Forefather. The sound of this glorification, carried to the earth, became the fashioner and generator of what is on earth.

14.8 He provides proof of this by citing newborn infants, whose soul, recently arrived from the womb, makes heard the sound of each of the vowels. As, then, the seven Powers glorify the Logos, so the soul of infants by lamenting and moaning glorifies Mark himself. This is why David said, "Out of the mouth of infants and those at the

breast you have perfected praise" (Ps.8:1-2), and again, "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps.19:1). And therefore when the soul finds itself in sufferings and calamities for its purification, it says "O" as a sign of praise so that the soul above, recognizing its cognate, may send down help to it.

15.1 Mark uses the following names, expressing them seriously and with faith: Ineffable and Silence, Father and Truth. Of this Tetrad the whole number of letters is twenty-four, for Ineffable (*Arretos*) contains seven letters, Silence (*Seige*) five and Father (*Pater*) five and Truth (*Aletheia*) seven; all these letters added together, five twice and seven twice, reach the total of twenty-four. So also the second Tetrad, that is Logos and Life (*Zoe*), Man (*Anthropos*) and Church (*Ekklesia*), presents the same number of letters. The expressible name of the Savior, that is, Jesus (*Iesous*) is of six letters, but his inexpressible name is of twenty-four letters. "Son Christ" (*Uios Xreistos*) is of twelve letters, but what is inexpressible in Christ is of thirty letters. This is why Mark says he is Alpha and Omega, to show forth the dove (*peristera*), since the bird has this number.

15.3 From the Tetrad came forth the Aeons; in this Tetrad were Man and Church, Logos and Life. From these four Aeons, says Mark, emanated the "powers" which generated the Jesus who appeared on earth. The angel Gabriel took the place of the Logos, the Holy Spirit that of Life, the "power of the Most High" that of Man, and finally the Virgin took the place of Church. Thus according to Mark the man of the divine plan was generated by Mary; at his passage through the womb the Father of all chose him through the Logos for the knowledge of himself. When he came to the water there came down on him as a dove the one who ran back upward and completed the number twelve, and in him was found the seed of those sown with him and they came down and went up with him. This "power" that came down thus, according to Mark, was the seed of the Father, the seed which contained the Father, the Son, the ineffable "power" of Silence, known only by these, and all the Aeons. That is the Spirit which spoke by the mouth of Jesus, declaring himself the Son of Man and manifesting the Father, after having come down upon Jesus and being united with him. The Savior from the divine plan destroyed death, he says, and made known his Father, Christ. Jesus is the name of the man from the divine plan: he was in the likeness and image of the Man who was to come down in him. When he received him, he had in himself the very Man and the very Logos and the Father and the Ineffable, as well as Silence, Truth, Church, and Life.

Mark's mysticism and the history of the alphabet

15.4 That goes beyond the "Iou Iou and Pheu Pheu," and every other exclamation of grief in tragedy. Who, indeed, would not hate the evil inventor of such lies when seeing the idol of the Truth made by Mark and branded with the letters of the alphabet?

It is only recently (as they say, "yesterday or the day before") that the Greeks received an alphabet of sixteen letters from Cadmus; with the passage of time they discovered the aspirated consonants [Theta, Phi, Chi] and the double consonants [Zeta, Xi, Psi]. Finally Palamedes added the long vowels [Eta and Omega]. Therefore before all that took place among the Greeks Truth did not exist, for its body, according to you, Mark, is later than Cadmus and his predecessors, later than those who added the other letters, and later than yourself, for you alone have brought down the one whom you call Truth to the level of an idol.

The absurdity of the Marcosian system

15.5 Who will endure your talkative Silence, which speaks the Ineffable Aeon, describes the indescribable, claims that he who, you say, has no body or shape opened his mouth and emitted a Word, as if he were a living being composed of parts, and that this Word, like him who emitted it and forms the Invisible, is composed of thirty letters and four syllables? So because of his resemblance to the Logos, the Father of all, as you say, has thirty letters and four syllables. Furthermore, who will endure your enclosing in arrangements and numbers - thirty, twenty-four, or only six - the one who is the Creator and Demiurge and Maker of all, the Word of God, whom you cut up into four syllables and thirty letters; and reduce the Lord of all, who made firm the heavens, into the number 888 (as you did for the alphabet); and subdivide the Father himself, who encloses everything and is enclosed by no one, into Tetrad, Ogdoad, Decad, and Dodecad, by such multiplications describing what you say is the ineffable and inconceivable nature of the Father? The one you call incorporeal and insubstantial, you fabricate his substance out of many letters engendered the ones out of the others, lying Daedalus that you are and an evil maker of the supreme Power. You subdivide this substance that you call indivisible into mute consonants and vowels and semi-vowels, falsely attributing the mutes to the Father and his Thought; you thus have driven into the deepest blasphemy and greatest impiety all who believe you.

The old herald of truth denounced Mark

15.6 Therefore it was just and appropriate for your audacity that the divinely inspired old man, the herald of truth, cried out against you:

Idol-maker and observer of monsters,
 Skilled in astrological and magical art,
 Through which you confirm your false teachings,
 Showing signs to those deceived by you,
 The workings of the apostate power,
 Which your father Satan always supplies to you,
 To achieve through the power of the angel Azazel,
 When he has you as forerunner of impiety toward God.

These are the words of the old man dear to God. But we shall try to set forth the rest of their mysteries briefly, since they are lengthy, and bring forth what has been long hidden into the light. For thus it will be easy for them to be refuted by all.

Biblical summary on Mark's theology

16.3 When you read all this, beloved, I know well that you will laugh hard at their pretentious foolishness. They are worthy of pity when they substitute the alphabet and the cold and artificial numbers for so great a religion, the greatness of the truly ineffable Power, and the great dispensations of God. All who separate from the church and adhere to these "old wives' tales" (1 Tim.4:7) are truly self-condemned (Tit.3:11). Paul orders us to "avoid them after a first and a second warning" (Tit.3:10). John the Lord's disciple condemned them still more severely, desiring us not even to greet them: "He who greets them participates in their evil works" (2 John 11). And rightly, for "there is no greeting for the impious, says the Lord" (Is.48:22). Impious beyond all impiety are these who say that the Creator of heaven and earth, the only almighty God above whom there is no other God, was emitted from a deficiency that proceeded from another deficiency, so that according to them he would be the product of a third deficiency. Rightly rejecting and anathematizing this notion, we must flee far from them and, the more they affirm and delight in their discoveries, the more we shall know that they are agitated by the most evil spirits of the Ogdoad. When sick people fall into delirium, the more they laugh and believe themselves healthy

and do everything as if they were well or more than well, the sicker they really are. So it is with these people: the more they believe they have lofty thoughts and break down with bow-string stretched too tautly, the more unhealthy they are. The unclean spirit of ignorance comes forth and frees them not for God but for worldly questions, and it proceeds to take with it seven other spirits more evil than itself (Matt.12:43-45), and infatuates their thought to believe that they can discover what is above God, and after preparing them for their ruin deposits the Ogdoad [= 7 + 1] of the madness of evil spirits in them.

The heavens declare the glory of Gnosis

17.1 I wish to show you further how, according to them, the creation itself would have been made through the Mother after the image of invisible things by the Demiurge without his knowledge. First, they say, the four elements, fire, earth, water and air, were produced as an image of the superior Tetrad. Adding their operations, hot, cold, wet, dry, exactly portrays the Ogdoad. Then there are ten powers: first the seven spherical bodies called heavens, then the circle containing them, called the eighth heaven, and finally the sun and the moon. Since these are ten in number they are images of the invisible Decad emitted by Logos and Life. The Dodecad is indicated by the circle called zodiac, for the twelve signs of the zodiac most plainly indicate, as if in a picture, the Dodecad, daughter of Man and Church. And since the highest heaven is opposed to the rapid movement of all the stars, weighing them down with its mass and counterbalancing their speed by its slowness, so as to complete the whole cycle from sign to sign in thirty years, they say that the heaven is an image of Limit, which envelops their Mother who bears the thirtieth name. In turn, the moon, circling its heaven in thirty days, signifies the number of aeons through the thirty days. The sun, finishing its circular revolution in twelve months, signifies the Dodecad by these twelve months. The days too, measured by twelve hours, are the image of the invisible Dodecad. The hour itself, the twelfth part of the day, is divided into thirty degrees to be an image of the Thirty. The circle of the zodiac thus contains 360 degrees, each sign having thirty parts, and thus by the circle is preserved the image of the conjunction of the number twelve with the number thirty. Further, the earth is divided into twelve zones, and in each zone it receives straight down from the heavens a particular "power" and generates

children like that power which has sent down its emanation. Thus, they say, the earth is a most obvious figure of the Dodecad and its children.

Humanity an image of the Pleroma

18.1 Modeled after the Power from above, man has within him a "power" coming from a single source. This "power" has its seat in the brain. From it flow four "powers" after the image of the Tetrads above: sight, hearing, smelling, taste. The Ogdoad is signified in man because he has two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, and dual tasting for bitter and sweet. Thus, they teach, the whole man is the complete image of the Thirty: in his hands, by his ten fingers, he bears the Decad, in his whole body, divided into twelve members, the Dodecad (they divide the body as they divide the body of Truth, mentioned above); as for the Ogdoad, inexpressible and invisible, they consider it hidden in the entrails ...

A false legend about the boy Jesus

20.1 Beyond that, they introduce an infinite multitude of apocryphal and bastard scriptures that they themselves have composed to stupefy the simple and those who do not know the authentic writings. For the same purpose they add this forgery: When the Lord was a boy learning the alphabet, his teacher said to him, as is customary, "Say Alpha," and he replied, "Alpha." But when the teacher ordered him to say Beta, the Lord replied, "First you tell me what Alpha is and then I will tell you what Beta is." They explain this reply as meaning that he alone knew the Unknowable, whom he showed forth in the figure of the Alpha.

Valentinian Gospel exegesis

20.2 They twist some of the content of the Gospels in this sense, for example what he said at the age of 12 to his mother: "Do you not know that I must be in what belongs to my Father?" (Luke 2:49): By that he was telling them, they say, about the Father whom they did not know; and for this reason he sent the disciples to the twelve tribes (Matt. 10:5-6), announcing the God unknown to them. And to the man who said "Good Master" to him, he acknowledged the truly good God when he said, "Why do you call me good? A single one is good, the Father among the Heavens" (19:16-17 var.) They say that

here the Aeons are called Heavens. And for this reason he did not answer those who asked him, "By what power do you do this?" but embarrassed them with his counter-questioning (21:23-27); they explain that by not replying he showed forth the ineffable character of the Father. And when he said, "Often they desired to hear one of these words, and they had no one to speak them,"⁶ the word "one" refers to the one true God whom they did not know. Further, when he was approaching Jerusalem and wept over it and said, "If you had known today what belongs to your peace, but it is hidden from you" (Luke 19:42), with the word "hidden" he referred to the hidden mystery of the Abyss. And again, when he said, "Come to me all you who labor and are burdened and learn from me" (Matt. 11:28-29), he proclaimed the Father of Truth, for, they say, he promised he would teach them what they did not know.

20.3 Finally, as a proof of the foregoing and the final statement of their system, they bring forward this text: "I praise you, Father, Lord of the Heavens [Aeons] and the Earth [Achamoth], for you have hidden these things from the wise and revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for such was your good pleasure. Everything has been delivered to me by my Father, and no one but the Son has known the Father, nor the Son but the Father and he to whom the Son has revealed it" (Matt. 11:25-27). By these words, they say, he most plainly showed that before his coming no one clearly knew the Father of Truth. They claim that the Maker and Creator has always been known by all, but the Lord spoke these words of the Father unknown to all, whom they themselves proclaim.

Gnostic spiritual rites

21.3 Some of them use a bridal chamber and perform a whole mystery with profane invocations over the initiates; they call what is performed a "spiritual marriage," after the likeness of the pairs above. Others lead them to water and baptize them while saying,

Into the name of the unknown Father of all,
into Truth the Mother of all,
into the one who came down into Jesus;
for union, redemption, and the communion of the Powers.

Others also use Hebrew words in order to impress the initiates:⁷ *Basema cacabasa eanaa irraumista diarbada caeota bafobor came-lanthi*.⁸ [Graffin's translation] "In the name of Sophia, Father, and

Light, called Spirit of Holiness, for the redemption of the angelic nature." Still others proclaim the "redemption" thus: "The Name hidden from every Deity and Lordship and Truth, which Jesus the Nazarene put on in the zones of the light of Christ, who lives through the Holy Spirit for the angelic redemption, the Name of the restoration:"

[Graffin's restoration] *Messia ufar magno in seenchaldia mosomeda eaacha faronepseha Iesu Nazarene*: "I am anointed and redeemed from my soul and from all judgment by the name of Iao; redeem me, Jesus of Nazareth."

So the initiators speak, and the initiate then responds:

I am confirmed and redeemed, and I redeem my soul from this age and everything from it, in the name of Iao, who redeemed his soul by redemption in the living Christ.¹⁰

Finally those present declare, "Peace be to all on whom this Name rests." Then they anoint the initiate with balsam, for they say this perfume signifies the good odor over all things.

21.4 Some of them say it is pointless to lead to water. They mix oil and water together, with formulas like those we mentioned, and pour it on the head of those being initiated, and this they claim as "redemption." They also anoint with balsam. Others, rejecting all these rites, say that the mystery of the ineffable and invisible Power should not be performed through created things, visible and perishable, nor that of unthinkable and bodiless realities through sensible and corporeal things. Perfect redemption is simply the Gnosis of the inexpressible Greatness, for the deficiency and passion took place out of ignorance. By Gnosis the whole state of ignorance will be dissolved, so that Gnosis is the redemption of the inner man. This redemption is neither corporeal, since the body is perishable, nor psychic, since the soul too comes from the deficiency and is like a dwelling for the spirit. Redemption must therefore be spiritual. By Gnosis the inner, spiritual man is redeemed, and for such persons the knowledge of everything is sufficient: such is the true redemption.

21.5 There are others who redeem the dead at their last moment, pouring oil and water on their heads, or the aforesaid ointment with water and the aforesaid invocations, so that they may become incomprehensible and invisible to the Archons and Powers and their inner man may ascend above the invisible regions, abandoning the body to the created universe and leaving the soul with the Demiurge. And they teach them to say when they come to the Powers after death:

I am a son from the Father, the pre-existent Father, and a son in the Pre-existent. I have come to see everything, all that is mine and that is not mine, not completely foreign but belonging to Achamoth, who is female and made them by herself but originated from the Pre-existent; and I am returning again to my own place from which I came.

By saying this he will escape from the Powers. He will come to those about the Demiurge and say to them

I am a precious vessel, more precious than the female who made you. If your Mother is ignorant of her origin, I know myself,¹¹ and know whence I come, and I invoke the imperishable Sophia which is in the Father, the Mother of your Mother [Achamoth] who has no Father or male companion. She, female from female, made you in ignorance of her Mother while supposing herself to be alone; but I invoke her Mother.

When they hear these words, the angels about the Demiurge will be greatly troubled and will blame their source and the race of their Mother, but the initiate will go toward his own places, rejecting his bond, that is his soul.¹²

Valentinian redemption versus the rule of truth

This is what we have found out about that "redemption" of theirs. Since they differ from one another in teaching and tradition, and those known to be more recent try to discover and fructify what no one ever thought of, it is hard to describe the doctrines of all of them.

22.1 But we hold fast the rule of truth, that there is one almighty God who founded everything through his Word and arranged it and made everything out of the non-existent (Hermas *Mandate* 1), as scripture says: "By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made firm and by the Spirit of his mouth all their power" (Ps.32:2), and further, "All things were made through him and without him nothing was made" (John 1:3). Nothing is excepted from this "all things."

Through him the Father made everything, visible and invisible, sense-perceptible and intelligible, temporal for God's plan or eternal. He did not make them through angels or powers separate from his will, for God has no need of anything at all; but by his Word and his Spirit he makes everything, disposes everything, governs everything, gives existence to everything. He made the world, for the world is

part of "all things." He fashioned man. He is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. There is no other God above him, nor a Beginning or a Power or a Pleroma. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we shall show. Holding fast to this rule, we can easily show that however varied and lengthy are the sayings (of the heretics) they have deviated from the truth. In fact, nearly all heretics, however many they are, say there is one God, but they change him by their perverse doctrine, being as ungrateful to him who made them as the pagans are through idolatry. They despise the work fashioned by God, rejecting their own salvation, these most bitter accusers and false witnesses. They will rise in the flesh, willing or not, to know the power of the one who raises them from the dead, but they will not be counted with the just because of their lack of faith.

The Valentinians' "source and root"

22.2 Since the refutation and overthrow of all the heretics is necessarily varied and lengthy, and since we intend to refute all in accordance with the character of each, we have considered it necessary first of all to make known their source and root, so that when you know their most sublime "Abyss" you may know the tree from which such fruits have flowed forth.

Simon the Samaritan magician

23.1 In his desire to contend with the apostles,¹³ so that he might seem a celebrity, he looked more deeply into all magic, in order to drive the many into a stupor. He lived under Claudius Caesar, by whom he is said to have been honored with a statue because of his magic. He was therefore glorified by many as God, and taught that he himself was the one who appeared among the Jews as Son, came down in Samaria as Father, and arrived among the other nations as Holy Spirit. He was the Supreme Power, the Father above all, though he was willing to be called by all the names people call him.

23.2 Simon the Samaritan, from whom all the heresies originated, had subject matter of this kind for his sect. When he had bought a certain prostitute named Helen in Tyre, the city of Phoenicia, he took her about with him, saying that she was the first Thought of his mind, the Mother of all, through whom he originally conceived of making the angels and archangels by whom this world was made. This Thought, leaping forth from him and knowing what her Father

wished, came down to the lower regions and gave birth to the angels and powers by whom this world was made. After she gave birth to them she was made captive by them because of envy, since they did not want to be considered the offspring of anyone. Simon was totally unknown by them, while his Thought was held captive by the powers and angels emitted by her and suffered complete degradation, so that she was enclosed in a human body and through the ages passed into other female bodies as from one vessel into another. She was in that Helen for whom the Trojan war was undertaken.

Therefore when Stesichorus cursed her in his poems he went blind, but later, when he repented and praised her in his "palinodes," he saw again. As she passed from body into body and always suffered degradation, she finally stood in a brothel. She is the "lost sheep" (Luke 15:4-6). Therefore he himself came, first to take her up and free her from her bonds and then to provide men with salvation by the Gnosis of himself. As the angels were misgoverning the world, since each desired the primacy, he came down to correct the state of affairs, transformed and disguised as various principalities and powers and angels, so that among men he appeared as a man, though not a man, and he was thought to suffer in Judaea, though he did not suffer. He said the prophets spoke their prophecies when inspired by the angels who made the world; therefore those who have set their hope on him and Helen should no longer be concerned with them, but as free people do whatever they will. People are saved by his grace, not by just works (Eph.2:8-9), for works are just not by nature but by convention, in accord with the decrees of the world-creating angels who lead mankind into slavery through such precepts. Therefore he promised to destroy the world and free those who are his from the control of those who made it.

23.4 The priests of their mysteries live in debauchery and practice magic, as much as each one of them can. They employ exorcisms, incantations, love-philters, charms, familiar spirits, dream-inducers, and every other magical practice. They venerate images of Simon as Zeus and Helen as Athena. They bear the name "Simonians" derived from the founder of the most impious doctrine, and from them originated the "knowledge falsely so called" (1 Tim.6:20), as can be learned from their assertions.

Menander, another Samaritan magician

23.5 Simon's successor, another Samaritan, was Menander, who also reached the pinnacle of magic and said that the First Power was

unknown to all, while he himself was the Savior sent by the invisible powers for the salvation of humanity. The world was made by angels who (like Simon) he says were emitted by Thought. By the magic taught by him he provided a "gnosis" to overcome the angels who made the world. For his disciples receive resurrection through baptism into him and can no longer die but continue on, ageless and immortal.

Saturninus of Antioch

24.1 From these [Simon and Menander] Saturninus, from Antioch by Daphne, and Basilides took their points of departure but set forth different doctrines, the one in Syria, the other at Alexandria. Saturninus like Menander set forth one Father unknown to all, who made angels, archangels, principalities, and powers. By seven of these angels was made "the world and everything in it" (cf. Acts 17:24). Man too is the work of the angels, who could not retain a shining image that appeared downward from the Supreme Power because it immediately ran back upward. They exhorted one another, saying, "Let us make man after the image and the likeness" (cf. Gen. 1:26). When what they made could not stand erect, because of the weakness of the angels, but wriggled like a worm, the Power from above took pity on it, for it was made in its likeness, and emitted a spark of life that raised the man, set him on his feet, and made him live. After death this spark of life runs back above to what possesses the same nature as its own, but the rest returns to the original elements.

24.2 The Savior was ungenerated, incorporeal, and shapeless. He was seen as a man only in appearance. The God of the Jews is one of the angels. When the Father wanted to destroy all the archons, the Christ came for the destruction of the God of the Jews and the salvation of those who believed him and have the spark of his life. The angels had fashioned two kinds of men, one bad, the other good, and since demons helped the worse, the Savior came for the destruction of evil men and demons but the salvation of the good.

They say marriage and generation are from Satan. Many of his followers abstain from meat and lead many astray through simulated continence of this kind. Some prophecies were spoken by the angels who made the world, some by Satan. This angel is the adversary of the world-makers, especially the God of the Jews.

Basilides of Alexandria

24.3 In order to seem to have discovered something rather deep and persuasive, Basilides extended the development of his doctrine to infinity. He postulated that Mind was first born from the ungenerated Father, from Mind Logos, from Logos Forethought, from Forethought Wisdom and Power, and from Power and Wisdom the powers, archons, and angels whom he calls first, who made the first heaven. Similarly other angels emanated from these and made another heaven like the first, and so on with copies of those above them to a total of 365; the year therefore has 365 days.

24.4 The angels who occupy the lower heaven seen by us made everything that the world contains and shared among themselves the earth and the nations on it. The chief of the angels is the one regarded as the God of the Jews. When he wanted to subject the other nations to his own people, the Jews, the other archons rose up against him and fought him, and therefore the other peoples rose against his people.¹⁴

But the ungenerated and unnameable Father saw their perversity and sent his First-Begotten Mind, called Christ, to liberate those who believe him from the power of those who made the world. He appeared on earth as a man to the peoples of the archons and worked miracles. Consequently he did not suffer, but a certain Simon of Cyrene was impressed into service and carried his cross for him, and he was crucified¹⁵ by ignorance and error,¹⁶ transfigured by him so that he was supposed to be Jesus. As for Jesus himself, he assumed the appearance of Simon and stood by to deride the archons.¹⁷ Since he was an incorporeal power and the Mind of the ungenerated Father, he transfigured himself as he wished, and it was thus that he ascended to him who sent him,¹⁸ deriding them because he could not be held and was invisible to all. Those who know this have been freed from the world-making archons. One must not confess the one who was crucified but the one who came in human form, appeared to be crucified, was called Jesus, and was sent by the Father to destroy the works of the world-makers by this plan. If anyone confesses the Crucified, he says, he is still a slave and under the domination of those who made bodies; but he who denies is freed from them and knows the plan of the unbegotten Father.

24.5 Salvation is only for the soul; the body is perishable by nature. The prophecies come from the archons who made the world, but the law comes specifically from their chief, that is, the one who led the

people out of the land of Egypt. One must despise the foods offered to idols, regard them as nothing and use them without the slightest fear, treating other actions with indifference, including every kind of debauchery. These people also practice magic, incantations, invocations, and all the rest. They make up names for the angels, claiming that these are in the first heaven, those in the second, and go on to give the names of the archons, angels, and powers of the 365 supposed heavens. They also say that the name under which the Savior descended and ascended is Caulacau (Is.28:10).

24.6 The person who has learned these things and knows all the angels and their origins will become invisible and intangible to the angels and their powers just as Caulacau was. As the Son is unknown to all, so they will not be known by anyone but when they know all [the angels] and pass through all [their realms] they are invisible and unknown to all. "You must know everyone," they say, "but no one should know you." Therefore such people are ready to deny and indeed cannot suffer for the Name, since they resemble all. Not many can know these things, but one out of a thousand and two out of ten thousand. They say Jews no longer exist, Christians not yet. Their mysteries must not be divulged but held secret in silence.

24.7 They determine the positions of the 365 heavens as the astrologers do, and borrow the astrologers' "theorems" in order to adapt them to the nature of their own doctrine. Their chief is Abrasax, and therefore he bears the number 365.¹⁹

Carpocrates

25.1 Carpocrates and his disciples say that the world and what is in it was made by angels much inferior to the ungenerated Father. Jesus was the son of Joseph and was like all other men, though superior to the others because his soul, strong and pure, remembered what it had seen in the sphere of the ungenerated God. Therefore a power was sent him by the Father so that he could escape from the world-makers and pass through all of them and, freed in all, ascend to him. So it goes for those with dispositions like his. The soul of Jesus was brought up in the customs of the Jews but despised them; therefore it received powers through which it destroyed the passions found in men as punishments.

25.2 The soul which like that of Jesus can despise the world-making archons can similarly receive powers to perform the same actions. Therefore they reach such a pitch of pride that some of them declare

themselves equal to Jesus, while others say they are stronger and still others claim to be superior to his disciples such as Peter and Paul and the other apostles – who are in no way inferior to Jesus. For their souls, coming from the same sphere and therefore similarly despising the world-makers, have been held worthy of the same power and return to the same place. If anyone despises what is here more than Jesus did he can be better than him. → c t 6 p 3 n ?

25.3 They too work magic arts and use philters and charms and familiar spirits and dream-senders and the other infamies, saying that they have power to dominate the archons and makers of this world, and not only them but also all their works in it.

These people have been sent by Satan to the pagans in order to slander the divine name of the church, so that when men hear them spoken of in various ways and imagine we are all like them, they may turn their ears away from the preaching of the truth or, viewing their conduct they may blaspheme all of us, even though we communicate with them in nothing, neither doctrine nor morals nor daily life. But these people, who live in debauchery and profess impious doctrines, abuse the Name as a veil to cover their wickedness. "Their judgment is just" (Rom.3:8) and they will receive retribution worthy of their works from God.

25.4 They have become so insane that they say they can freely commit every sacrilege and impiety. Good and evil, they say, are merely matters of opinion. Souls in their transmigration must try out every possible way of living and acting. If anyone is not careful to perform all these actions in one lifetime – acts which it is not right for us to mention (Eph.5:12) or hear or even think of, and we would not believe that men living in the same cities as us would perform anything of the sort – according to their own writings their souls must try out every possible way of living so that when they depart they have nothing left to do; they must act so that nothing may be lacking in their freedom and they may not be compelled to enter bodies again. This is why, they say, Jesus spoke this parable: "While you are on the way with your adversary, act to be freed from him, for fear that he may deliver you to the judge and the judge to the officer, and he put you in prison. Verily, I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last quadrant."²⁰ The "adversary" is one of the angels who are in the world, the one named the Devil; he was made in order to conduct the souls of the dead of this world to the archon. This archon is the first of the world-makers. He delivers the souls to another angel, his officer, to enclose them in other bodies, for the

prison is the body. "You will not leave there until you have paid the last quadrant" means that no one escapes the power of the world-making angels, but constantly transmigrates as long as he has not performed all the acts in the world. When not one is left, then his soul is freed for that god who is above the world-making angels. And thus all souls will be saved, whether they hasten to take part in all actions during a single coming or, transmigrating or inserted from one body into another, accomplish all kinds of actions, pay their debt, and are freed so that they no longer are in bodies.

25.5 Do they actually perform these irreligious, unjust, and forbidden acts? I would not believe it. In their writings, however, it is written thus and they themselves state it, saying that Jesus spoke privately in a mystery to his disciples and apostles and told them to transmit his secrets to those who were worthy and in agreement.²¹ Salvation is achieved through faith and love,²² and all the rest is a matter of indifference. It is called good or bad according to human opinion, but nothing is evil by nature.

25.6 Some of them brand their disciples on the back part of the right ear lobe. One of them named Marcellina came to Rome under Anicetus and caused the destruction of many. They call themselves Gnostics. They have images, some painted, others made of various materials, for, they say, a portrait of Christ was made by Pilate in the time when Jesus was with men. They put crowns on these and show them forth with images of the worldly philosophers, that is, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and others, and pay them the same honors as among pagans.

Cerinthus in Asia

26.1 A certain Cerinthus in Asia taught that the world was not made by the First God but by a certain Power far separated and distant from the Principality which is over all and ignoring the God over all. Jesus was not born of a virgin, for that is impossible, but was the son of Joseph and Mary by a generation like that of all other men, and he was better than them in justice, prudence, and intelligence. After his baptism the Christ came down into him in the form of a dove from the Principality which is over all and then he proclaimed the unknown Father and worked miracles. At the end the Christ flew away from Jesus, Jesus suffered and was raised, but the Christ remained impassible, being spiritual.

The Ebionites

26.2 Those who are called Ebionites agree that the world was made by the real God but as to the Lord they profess the same opinions as Cerinthus and Carpocrates. They use only the Gospel according to Matthew and reject the apostle Paul, whom they call an apostate from the law. They strive with excessive pedantry to expound the prophecies. They practice circumcision and persevere in legal customs and the Jewish way of life, so that they pray toward Jerusalem as if it were the house of God.²³

The Nicolaitans

26.3 The Nicolaitans have as their master Nicolaus, one of the seven who first were ordained to the diaconate by the apostles (Acts 6:5-6). They live in promiscuity. The Apocalypse of John fully reveals who they are: they teach that fornication and the eating of meats offered to idols are matters of indifference (Rev.2:14-15). Therefore the scripture too says of them, "But you have this in your favor, that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (2:6).

Cerdo and Marcion

27.1 A certain Cerdo likewise began with the doctrine of the Simonians. He came to Rome under Hyginus, ninth to occupy the place of the episcopate by succession from the apostles, and he taught that the God announced by the law and the prophets was not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The former was known; the second, unknown; one is just and the other is good.

27.2 For a successor he had Marcion, a man from Pontus who developed his teaching by impudently blaspheming the God announced by the law and the prophets, calling him the creator of evils, desirous of wars, inconstant in his thoughts and contradicting himself. As for Jesus, sent by the Father above the god who created the world, he came into Judaea in the times of the governor Pontius Pilate, procurator for Tiberius Caesar, manifest in human form to those who were in Judaea, abolishing the prophets, the law, and all the works of the god who made the world, whom Marcion called the Cosmocrator. Beyond that, he circumcised the Gospel according to Luke, taking out everything written about the birth of the Lord and removing many passages from his teaching, those in which he plainly

acknowledged the Creator of this world as his Father. Thus Marcion persuaded his disciples that he was more truthful than the apostles who transmitted the gospel, and handed over to them not the gospel but a modest portion of the gospel. He also cut away the letters of the apostle Paul, suppressing all the texts in which the apostle plainly spoke of the God who made the world as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as all those in which the apostle mentions the prophecies predicting the coming of the Lord.

27.3 He said there would be salvation only for souls that had learned his doctrine, while the body, as taken from the earth, cannot share in salvation. To his blasphemy against God he adds, as a true mouth of the devil, completely opposed to the truth, that Cain and those like him, the men of Sodom, the Egyptians and the like, the pagans who walked in every combination of evil, were saved by the Lord when he descended into Hades, for they ran to him and he took them into his kingdom; Abel, however, and Enoch and Noah and the rest of the righteous, Abraham and the patriarchs after him, with all the prophets and all who pleased God, did not share in salvation – as the serpent who was in Marcion proclaimed. These men, he says, knew that their god was always testing them, and in the belief that he was testing them then they did not run to Jesus and did not believe his proclamation, and therefore their souls remained in Hades.

Marcion is unique, but all come from Simon

✓27.4 But since this Marcion is the only one who openly dared to circumscribe the scriptures and attack God more shamelessly than all others, we shall write against him separately, refuting him, with God's help, from his writings and from those words of the Lord and the Apostle which he respected and uses. For now we have to mention him so that you may know that all who in any way adulterate the truth and harm the church's preaching are disciples and successors of Simon the Samaritan magician. Although in their aim of deceiving others they do not confess the name of their teacher, his is the doctrine they teach. They set forth the name of Christ Jesus as an incitement, but in various ways introducing the impiety of Simon they cause the death of many, through the good name spreading their evil doctrine, and through the gentleness and modesty of this name presenting the bitter and malignant poison of the serpent who introduced apostasy.

28.1 Beginning with those we have just mentioned, there arose the many ramifications of the heresies because many, or rather all, among

them want to be teachers and to leave the heresy in which they began and create one doctrine from another and then another from the previous one, declaring that they themselves invented whatever system they fabricated.

The Encratites and Tatian

Thus, for example, people called Encratites ("continent"), inspired by Saturninus and Marcion, have proclaimed abstinence from marriage, rejecting the ancient work of God and implicitly accusing him who made male and female for procreation (Gen.1:27–28), and they have introduced abstinence from what they call "animated," being ungrateful to the God who made everything. They also deny the salvation of the first-formed man. This last point was invented among them in our own time when a certain Tatian first introduced this blasphemy. While he heard the teaching of Justin and stayed with him, he set forth no such doctrine, but after Justin's martyrdom he separated from the church. Lifted up and inflated by his claim to be a teacher, as if he were better than the rest, he created his own style of doctrine. Like the Valentinians he set forth a myth about invisible Aeons; like Marcion and Saturninus he called marriage corruption and debauchery, and finally he rejected the salvation of Adam.

Barbelo-Gnostics

29.1 Beyond these people, a multitude of Gnostics has arisen out of the Simonians already mentioned, just as mushrooms come up from the earth. We are going to report their principal doctrines.²⁴ Some say that there is a never-ageing Aeon in a Virginal Spirit called Barbelo, and in this Spirit an unnameable Father, who wanted to reveal himself to Barbelo. This Thought came forth and stood in his sight and asked for Foreknowledge. When Foreknowledge also came forth, they both requested Imperishability, and she came forth; then Eternal Life. Barbelo rejoiced in them and, looking toward the Greatness and delighting in the Conception, she bore a Light like it. This was the Beginning of the illumination and generation of all things.

When the Father saw this Light he anointed it with his own goodness so that it would be perfect. This is Christ ["anointed"], who then asked that a helper, Mind, be given him, and Mind came forth. Then the Father emitted Logos. Next there were unions of Thought and

Logos, Imperishability and Christ; Eternal Life was joined with Will and Mind with Foreknowledge. These emanations magnified the great Light and Barbelo.

29.2 Afterwards from Thought and Logos was emitted Self-Born as a representation of the great Light; it was greatly honored and all things were subjected to it (cf. Ps.8:6-7). With it was emitted Truth, and thus there was another pair, Self-Born and Truth. From the Light which is Christ and from Imperishability four luminaries were emitted to stand about Self-Born; again, from Will and Eternal Life four emissions took place to serve the four luminaries. These emissions were called Grace, Willing, Intelligence, and Thinking. Grace was united with the first great Light, Savior, also called Armozel; Willing with the second, called Raguel; Intelligence with the third, called David; Thinking with the fourth, called Eleleth.²⁵

29.3 When all these had been established Self-Born also emitted the Perfect and True Man, also called Adamas because he is adamant, as are his origins. He was separated from the first Light by Armozel. Perfect Gnosis was emitted by Self-Born along with the Man, and was joined to him; from her he knows the one who is above all. Unconquered Power was given him by the Virginal Spirit in which all things rest to praise the great Aeon. Thus were revealed the Mother, the Father, and the Son: from the Man and Knowledge was born the Tree, itself also called Knowledge (Gen.2:9).

29.4 Then from the first angel with Monogenes (Self-Born) was emitted Holy Spirit, also called Sophia and Prunicus. When this Spirit saw that all the others had partners but she did not, she sought someone with whom to be united. When she found none, she stretched and looked down to the lower regions in the belief that she would find one there. Not finding one, she leapt back, wearied because she had made this effort without the approval of the Father. Afterwards, driven by simplicity and kindness, she generated a work in which were Ignorance and Presumption. This work is called Proarchon, the fashioner of this universe. He stole a great power from his mother and departed from her to the lower regions and made the firmament of heaven, in which he dwells. And since he is Ignorance he made the powers beneath him: angels, firmaments, and everything earthly. Then he was united with Presumption and generated Wickedness, Jealousy, Envy, Strife, and Desire. When they were generated, the Mother Sophia fled in grief and withdrew above, becoming the Eighth for those who count from below. When she withdrew, he thought he was alone, and therefore he said, "I am a

jealous God and there is none but me" (Exod.20:5).²⁶ Such are the lies of these heretics.

Ophite Gnostics

30.1 Still others provide the following portentous account. There was a first Light in the power of the Abyss, blessed and imperishable and unlimited; this is the Father of All, called First Man. From him proceeded a Thought, the son of him who emitted it; this is the Son of Man, the Second Man.²⁷ Below them was the Holy Spirit, and under this Spirit were the separate elements, water, darkness, abyss, chaos; above these elements was borne the Spirit, called First Woman (Gen.1:2). Then the First Man exulted with his Son over the beauty of the Spirit, that is, the Woman, and he illuminated her; thus he generated from her an imperishable Light, the Third Male, called Christ, the son of the First and Second Man and of the Holy Spirit, the First Woman.

30.2 The Father and the Son then united with the Woman, whom they called also Mother of the Living (Gen.3:20). But she could not hold up or contain the greatness of the Light, which overflowed above the left-hand parts. And thus only Christ was their Son, as being on the right hand, and raised up above with his Mother into the imperishable Aeon. This is the true and holy Church, the convocation, association, and union of the Father of All, the First Man, and of the Son, the Second Man, and of Christ, their Son, and of the Woman we have mentioned.

30.3 Then the Power which flowed out of the Woman, with the moisture of light, left the domain of the Fathers and fell downward by her own will, having with her the moisture of light. This Power is called Left and Prunicus and Sophia and Male-Female. She came down all at once into the immobile waters and put them in motion, plunging boldly into them to the bottom, and took a body from them. Everything ran toward her moisture of light and adhered to it and imprisoned it on all sides; without this moisture of light she might have been completely absorbed and submerged by matter. While she was thus enchained and weighed down by the body of matter, she once came to herself and tried to escape from the waters and ascend to her Mother, but she could not, because of the heaviness of the body placed around her. She felt that her condition was very bad, and she planned to hide the light from above, for fear that it too, like her, would be harmed by the inferior elements. When she

received power from the moisture of the light within her, she leapt forth and was raised into the height, and when she reached the height she extended herself and made this visible heaven, and she remained under the heaven she made, still having the form of a watery body. When she had felt desire for the light from above and had received a new power, she put off her body entirely and was freed from it. They call this body her son and they call her Woman from Woman.

30.4 Her son had an inspiration of imperishability that his Mother left him, because of which he was able to work.

Become strong, he himself emitted a son from the waters, without his Mother; for he did not know his Mother. His son, like his father, emitted another son; this third generated a fourth, the fourth a fifth, the fifth a sixth, and the sixth a seventh. Thus was finished the Hebdomad (cf. Gen.2:2), with the Mother occupying the eighth place, and as they have a hierarchy in origin so also they have a hierarchy of dignity and power.

30.5 Here are the names that they gave to what they invented. The first from the Mother is called Ialdabaoth; the one from him is Iao, from him Sabaoth, the fourth Adoneus [Adonai], the fifth Eloeus [Elohim], the sixth Horeus [Or, light], the seventh and last, Astaphaeus. These Heavens, Virtues, Powers, Angels, and Creators sit in order in the heaven, ranked by origins, while remaining invisible. They rule over celestial and terrestrial affairs. The first of them, Ialdabaoth, despised the Mother when without her permission he made sons and grandsons, that is, Angels, Archangels, Virtues, Powers, and Dominions. His sons had just come into existence when they turned against him to dispute the first place. Sad and despondent, Ialdabaoth looked down at the low-lying dregs of matter and consolidated his lust for it. From that, they say, a son was born, and this is Mind, with the twisted shape of a serpent (cf. Gen.3:1). From him came spirit and soul and everything worldly, and from him were born Oblivion and Malice and Jealousy and Envy and Death. The Father drove out this serpentine and twisted Mind of theirs for its prevarication when it had been with the Father in heaven and in paradise (cf. Gen. 3:14).

30.6 This is why Ialdabaoth exulted and boasted over everything below him and said, "I am Father and God and there is none above me" (Is.45:5-6; 46:9). But the Mother heard these words and cried out against him, "Do not lie, Ialdabaoth; above you are the Father of all, the First Man, and the Man, the Son of Man." All were disturbed by the new voice and the unexpected appellation and, while they

asked whence the cry had come,²⁸ Ialdabaoth said to them, to turn them away and bring them to himself, "Come, let us make a man after the image."²⁹ When six Powers heard this, the Mother gave them the idea of a man in order to empty them of their original power through him. They came together and formed a man immense in breadth and length. When he could only writhe they brought him to their Father. Sophia effected this so that she might empty Ialdabaoth of the dew of light and so that the man, deprived of his power, could not stand erect against those who are above him. They say that when Ialdabaoth breathed into the man a breath of life (Gen.2:7) he inadvertently emptied himself of his power. Henceforward the man possessed mind and thought, and (they say) these are what are saved, and immediately he gave thanks to the First Man, abandoning those who made him.

30.7 Ialdabaoth jealously wanted to empty the man by means of the woman, and from his thought he drew out woman, but Prunucus seized her and invisibly emptied her of power. The others came up and, admiring her beauty, called her Eve, and desired her to generate sons from her, who they say are Angels. Their Mother then planned to seduce Eve and Adam through the serpent, so that they would transgress the commandment of Ialdabaoth. Eve readily believed him as if she heard from the Son of God, and she persuaded Adam to eat from the tree from which God said not to eat. When they had eaten, they say, they knew that Power which is above all and withdrew from those who made them. Prunucus, seeing that these had been overcome through their own creation, rejoiced greatly and again cried out that since the imperishable Father already existed, Ialdabaoth lied when he called himself Father, and since Man and First Woman already existed, he sinned when he made an imperfect copy.

30.8 Because of the Oblivion about him, Ialdabaoth paid no attention to these words and drove Adam and Eve out of paradise because they had transgressed his commandment. He had to generate sons for Adam out of Eve but did not achieve this, since her Mother acted against him in everything and secretly emptied Adam and Eve of their dew of light, so that the spirit from the Supreme Power might not receive curse or blame. They teach that thus emptied of the divine substance, they were cursed by Ialdabaoth and cast down from heaven into this world. The serpent who had acted against the Father was also cast down by him into this world, though he put under his control the angels who are here and generated six sons, himself being the seventh, in imitation of the Hebdomad about the Father. These,

they say, are the seven cosmic demons, always hostile and resisting the human race since because of them their father was driven down below. 30.9 Adam and Eve formerly had light, luminous, and so to speak spiritual bodies, as they had been fashioned. But when they came here, the bodies became dark, fat, and idle. Even their souls became soft and languid because they had only the worldly breathing from the Maker – until Prunicus took pity on them and gave them back the sweet odor of the dew of light. Because of this they recognized themselves and knew they were naked and that their body was material. They knew that they bore death in themselves and were patient, knowing that they had been clothed with a body only for a time. Guided by Sophia, they found food and when filled they united carnally and generated Cain. But the fallen serpent and its sons immediately seized him, corrupted him, filled him with worldly oblivion, and sent him into stupidity and audacity, so that when he killed his brother Abel he was the first to reveal jealousy and death. After them, in accordance with the providence of Prunicus (they say) were generated Seth, then Norea; from whom the rest of mankind (they say) were generated, and sent by the lower Hebdomad into all malice and apostasy from the higher Hebdomad and into idolatry and universal contempt, while the Mother never stopped opposing the work of these powers and saving what was her own, the dew of light. They want the sacred Hebdomad to consist of the seven stars called planets, and they say that the serpent cast forth has two names, Michael and Sammael.

30.10 Ialdabaoth, angered by human beings because they did not worship him or honor him as Father and God, sent the deluge against them so that all would perish at once. Once more Sophia opposed him and those with Noah in the ark were saved because of the dew of light from her, and through her the world was again filled with human beings. Among them, Ialdabaoth chose a certain Abraham and made a covenant with him that if his seed would continue to serve him he would give them the earth as an inheritance. Later through Moses he brought forth from Egypt the descendants of Abraham, gave them the law, and made them Jews. From them the seven gods, also called the sacred Hebdomad, chose their own heralds to glorify each and proclaim him as God, so that the rest of mankind, hearing the glorification, might also serve those who were proclaimed by the prophets as Gods.

30.11 Thus they distribute the prophets: of Ialdabaoth, Moses and Joshua son of Nun and Amos and Habakkuk; of Iao, Samuel and

Nathan and Jonah and Micah; of Sabaoth, Elijah and Joel and Zechariah; of Adonai, Isaiah and Ezekiel and Jeremiah and Daniel; of Elohim, Tobias and Haggai; of Oraeus, Micah and Nahum; of Astaphaeus, Esdras and Zephaniah. Each of these prophets glorified his own Father and God, while Sophia spoke much through them (they say) about the First Man and the imperishable Aeon and that Christ who is above, recalling and reminding men of the imperishable light and the First Man and proclaiming the descent of Christ. The Archons were terrified by these and marveled at the novelty in what was proclaimed by the prophets. Prunicus worked through Ialdabaoth without his knowledge and effected the emissions of two men, one from the sterile Elizabeth (Luke 1:7), the other from the Virgin Mary (1:34–35).

30.12 Prunicus herself found rest neither in heaven nor on earth, but in affliction called the Mother to aid her. Her Mother, the First Woman, took pity on the repentance of her daughter and asked the First Man to send Christ to her as a helper, and he came down, sent to his sister and to the dew of light. Learning that her brother was coming down to her, the Sophia below [Achamoth] announced his coming through John and prepared a baptism of repentance (Luke 3:2–3,16) and formed Jesus in advance so that at his descent the Christ might find a pure vessel and that through her son Ialdabaoth the Woman might be proclaimed by Christ. The Christ then descended through the seven heavens, assimilated to their sons (they say), and gradually emptied them of power; the whole dew of light (they say) ran toward him. And when Christ came down into this world he first put on his sister Sophia and both exulted, taking their rest in each other; and they define them as the Bridegroom and the Bride (John 3:29). Jesus, because born of the Virgin by the work of God, was more wise, pure, and just than all other men (cf. Luke 2:40,52). Christ descended into him in the embrace of Sophia (3:22), and thus Jesus Christ came to be.

30.13 Many disciples of Jesus, they say, did not recognize the descent of Christ into him, but when Christ came down into Jesus he began to perform miracles and cures and proclaim the unknown Father and acknowledge openly that he was the Son of the First Man. In their anger the Archons and the Father of Jesus worked to kill him, and when he was being led to death, they say the Christ with Sophia withdrew into the imperishable Aeon, while Jesus was crucified. The Christ did not forget what was his own but sent from above a power into him which raised him in a body. They call this body psychic and

spiritual, for he left his worldly elements in the world. The disciples saw that he had risen but did not recognize him (Luke 24:16), and did not even know by whose grace Jesus arose from the dead. And they say this was the greatest error among his disciples, that they thought he had risen with a worldly body, not knowing that "flesh and blood do not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor.15:50).

30.14 They want to confirm the descent of Christ and his ascension from the fact that the disciples say that neither before the baptism nor after the resurrection from the dead did Jesus perform anything significant. These disciples did not know that Jesus was united to Christ, the imperishable Aeon to the Hebdomad, and they call the worldly body "psychic." After his resurrection Jesus remained on earth for eighteen months, and when intelligence descended in him he taught what was obviously true, and he taught these [secret] matters to a few of his disciples, who he knew were capable of understanding such great mysteries (cf. Mark 4:11 and parallels), and thus he was taken up into heaven. There Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father Ialdabaoth to receive to himself, after they have put off the worldly flesh, the souls of those who knew him. He enriches himself, while his Father is in ignorance and does not even see him, for when Jesus enriches himself with holy souls the Father suffers a loss and diminishes, emptied of his power through the souls. For he will not possess the holy souls so as to send them back into the world, but only those which are from his substance, that is, from the "breathing." The final end will take place when the whole dew of the spirit of light is gathered together and taken into the Aeon of imperishability.

Miscellaneous sects

Such are the doctrines of these people, from which, like the Lernaean hydra, a beast with multiple heads, is generated the school of Valentinus. Some, however, say that Sophia herself was the serpent, and for this reason it rose against the Maker of Adam and insinuated Gnosis into men, and therefore the serpent was called "wiser than all others" (Gen.3:1). The position and shape of our intestines, through which food is brought in, shows hidden within us the generative substance with the form of the serpent.

31.1 Still others say that Cain came from the Absolute Sovereignty above, and Esau, Korah, and the men of Sodom, along with every person of this sort, have the same origin. They were hated by the Creator because though attacked they suffered no harm, for Sophia

took to herself what was her own in them. The traitor Judas was the only one of the apostles who possessed this knowledge (cf. John 13:27). For this reason he brought about the mystery of the betrayal; through him all things on earth and in heaven were destroyed. They provide a work to this effect called the "Gospel of Judas."

31.2 I have collected writings of theirs in which they urge the destruction of the works of the Womb, calling the Creator of heaven and earth Womb. They cannot be saved unless they experience everything, as Carpocrates also taught. At each sinful and disgusting action an angel is present; the agent must act boldly and make the impurity fall upon the angel present in the act, saying to him, "O angel, I use your work; O power, I perform your operation." This is "perfect knowledge," to perform without fear such actions as may not even be named.

Conclusion of Book I

31.3 From such mothers and fathers and grandparents have come Valentinus and his disciples, as their own doctrines and systems show them to be. It was necessary to provide clear proof and bring their teachings to light. Perhaps some of them will repent and by returning to the only God, the Creator and Maker of the universe, can be saved.

BOOK II

SUMMARY OF BOOK I

Pr.1 In the first book, the one before this, we attacked the "Knowledge falsely so called" and showed you, beloved, the whole falsehood that was invented by the disciples of Valentinus in its many contradictory forms. We also set forth the opinions of those who lived earlier, showing that they disagreed with themselves as well as with the truth. We diligently described the views of Mark the magician, since he belongs among them, as well as his works; we reported the passages from the scriptures that they try to adapt to his fiction, and we carefully described the way they try to assert the truth through numbers and the twenty-four letters of the alphabet. We have related how they say that the created world was made after the image of their invisible Pleroma, and all that they think and teach about the Demiurge. We have revealed the doctrine of their ancestor, Simon the Samaritan magician, and all his successors, and we have also set forth the multitude of Gnostics descended from him. We have noted their differences, doctrines, and successions, have described all the heresies founded by them, and shown that all the heretics began from Simon and introduced their impious and irreligious doctrines into this world. We have revealed their "redemption," the way they initiate their adepts, their ritual formulas, and their mysteries. And we recalled that there is one God the Creator, not a "fruit of deficiency,"¹ and that there is nothing above him or beyond him.

SUMMARY OF BOOK II

Pr. 2 In this book we shall treat only what is useful for us and what time permits, and we shall refute their whole system through the

BOOK II

major points. This is why, since it is a question of detecting and refuting their doctrine, we have given this very title to our work; for their hidden pairs have to be destroyed by stating and refuting them when brought to light, as well as the "Abyss," proving that it never existed and does not exist now.

1.1 We must begin with the primary and most important point, with God the Demiurge who made heaven and earth and everything in them, whom these blasphemers call "fruit of deficiency," and we shall show that there is nothing either above him or beyond him, and that he freely made everything, not moved by another but on his own initiative, since he is the only God and the only Lord and the only Creator and the only Father, the only one who contains all and provides being to all.

Divine transcendence

1.2 How could there be above this God another Pleroma or Beginning or Power or another God, when it is necessary for the God of all these to contain everything in his immensity and be contained by none? If there is something outside him, he is no longer the Pleroma of everything, nor does he contain everything; for to this Pleroma or the God above everything there will be lacking what they say is found outside him. That which lacks something or from which something has been withdrawn by someone is not the Pleroma of everything.

Furthermore, this being will have a beginning, a middle, and an end in relation to those outside him. If the end is in what lies below, the beginning is in those above. Similarly in the other directions it is necessary that he will know the same situation: he will be contained, determined, and enclosed by what is outside him. For the end which is below necessarily surrounds and encloses the being which is ended in it. Thus, then, their so-called Father of All, whom they also call Pre-existent or Pre-beginning, and their Pleroma with him, and Marcion's good God, will be contained, enclosed, and surrounded by another Principle, which is necessarily larger than it, since what contains is greater than what is contained; what is larger is also stronger and more the Lord; and what is larger and stronger and more the Lord will be God.

1.3 Since they say that something exists outside the Pleroma, into which they think that Power wandering from above came down,