

Tertullian: Against the Valentinians

TERTULLIANI ADVERSUS VALENTINIANOS

Translation by [Mark T. Riley](#), 1971

I.

The Valentinians, as everyone knows, are the most commonly encountered sect of heretics--most common because they are mostly apostates from the true religion, quite willing to invent myths, and are not deterred from their inventions by a strict rule of life. These individuals care about nothing more than to conceal what they teach--if indeed anyone who conceals can be said to teach. Their duty of guardianship is a duty brought on by their guilty consciences. They preach confusion while (seemingly) asserting their piety. In just the same way concerning the Eleusinian mysteries, itself a heresy of Athenian paganism; the fact that they keep silent about these mysteries make them an object of shame. Consequently the mystagogues make entry difficult and perform long initiation rites before they accept the devotee; they put him on probation for five years in order to increase his anticipation by suspense and in this manner cause the awesomeness of their rites to match the desire which has been elicited. Their duty of secrecy is a natural consequence; they guard closely what they are finally to reveal. Then--the entire godhead of the sanctuary, the object of devoted sighs, the secret signed on all tongues: the image of a penis. To allay disappointment, they bring forward the honored name of nature (using it allegorically) and cover their sacrilege with the help of an arbitrary metaphor. Thus they acquit themselves of the charge (of sacrilege) by this deceitful use of an image. In just this manner the heretics against whom we are now opening fire fashion useless and disgraceful tales out of the sacred names, titles, and contents of the true faith. They can do this because of the openhanded charity of the divine scriptures; from such a large work, many interpretations can be drawn. These people make the Eleusinian rites into Valentinian lures, sacred only because of their great silence, heavenly only because of their concealment. If you question them in all good faith, they answer with a poker face and raised eyebrows, "that is obscure"; if you feel them out diplomatically, they swear they have the same beliefs as you, only blurred in translation. If you indicate you know what they really think, they deny they know anything. If you attack them openly in argument, they make your victory over them ineffective by their clever innocence. They

do not even reveal their secrets to their own disciples before they make them their own, but instead they have a trick by which they persuade them before they teach them. In our case, however, truth persuades by teaching, she does not teach by persuading.

II.

Therefore we are branded "innocent" by them, and for that reason they do not consider us "wise." They imagine that wisdom has nothing in common with innocence, even though the lord connected both in his saying, "be prudent as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matt. 10:16). Now, however, if we are stupid because we are innocent, are they not "un-innocent" because they are wise? The most vicious individuals are those who are not innocent, just as the most stupid are those who are not wise. As for me, I would prefer to be convicted of the better fault if I have to make a choice; it is better to have a lesser intelligence than an evil one; better to err than to deceive. Furthermore, the face of God is seen by those seeking in innocence--as the Wisdom of Solomon, not of Valentinus, teaches. Infants as well bore witness to Christ by their blood; can I call those who cried "crucify him!" children? They were neither children nor infants, specifically they were not innocent. The apostle moreover orders us to become like children according to God's will, in order that we might be "babes in evil" by our innocence and secondly, "in thinking be mature" (I Cor.14). By this he makes it clear that wisdom should flow from innocence. To sum up, the dove used to reveal Christ; the serpent used to tempt him. The former from the first was the herald of divine love; the latter from the first was the thief of God's image. Therefore, innocence by itself can easily both recognize and exhibit God. Wisdom by itself can rather attack and betray him.

III.

Now, let the serpent hide himself as much as he can; let him twist his entire "wisdom" into the windings of his lairs. Let him live deep in the ground, push into dark holes, unroll his length coil by coil; let him slither out--but not all of him at once, the light--hating beast. Our dove, how ever, has a simple home, always in high and open places to ward the light since this symbol of the Holy Spirit loves the sunrise, the symbol of Christ. Just so, truth blushes at nothing except being hidden away, because no one is

ashamed to listen to her, to learn to recognize as God the one whom nature has already pointed out to him as God, the one whom he sees daily in all his works. He was imperfectly known in that he was not considered to be one, in that he was worshipped in other guises. How should we convert someone from the crowd of these other gods to yet another mob, move from a familiar ruler to an unknown one, turn from what is well-known to what is secret? This is to trip on the threshold of faith. For example, if anyone is initiated into the entire story, will he not recall that he heard such things from his nurse as a wakeful child--such things as "the witch's tower" and "the rays of the sun"? To take another instance: if someone knowledgeable in our faith comes to these tales and immediately finds so many names of Aeons, so many marriages, so many offspring, so many dooms, so many adventures, joys, sorrows of a scattered and fragmentary godhead, will he hesitate then and there to call these the "myths and endless genealogies" which the apostle's inspiration had already condemned even then when these heretical seeds were sprouting? Rightly then these people are not innocent; rightly they are only "wise," these people who produce such myths with difficulty and defend them slackly. It is clever for them to be so slack, since their lessons are disgraceful; otherwise, they would be acting cruelly in not revealing all, if their lessons were honorable. Despite their reticence we "innocent" know all, and we have made this knowledge the first line of our attack. Our knowledge will be the scout and pointer of their entire scheme. We cast the augury for this first victory, since a mere expose destroys what is hidden with so much trouble.

IV.

I affirm that we know quite well their origins and we also know why we call them Valentinians even though they seem not to be; for they have left their founder's path. Still their original teachings have not been at all forgotten, even if they have been changed somewhat: this very change bears witness to their former teachings.

Valentinus expected to become bishop because he had great abilities of mind and tongue, but another was preferred for the position because he suffered as a martyr. Angry at this, Valentinus broke with the legitimate church. Just as minds who have been excited with the hope of advancement usually burn anticipating revenge, he turned to overthrowing truth. Having

discovered the trail of some old teaching, he paved the way for Colorbasus. Afterwards Ptolomaeus traveled the same path; he segregated those attributes--such as feeling, influence, and motion--which Valentinus had included in the totality of the godhead into names and positions, i.e., Aeons considered as animate individuals having their existence apart from God. Heracleon cut a few footpaths from there, as did Secundus and Marcus the seer. Theotimus evolved many things about the "forms" of the law. As you see, Valentinus has disappeared, yet these are Valentinians who derive from Valentinus. At Antioch alone to this day Axionicus consoles the memory of Valentinus by a full obedience of his rules. The other heretics allow themselves to change their teachings with the same frequency a prostitute changes her makeup--and why not?--since each of them discovers that well known spiritual seed in himself: if they invent anything new, they immediately call it a revelation; they call their audacity a spiritual gift. They do not claim their sect is united, but admit it is diverse; consequently whenever they abandon their usual equivocation, we see that most of them are at odds about the meaning of certain dogmas, some saying in good faith, "this is not so"; others, "I take this in a different sense"; others, "I don't admit that." As we see their list of rules has been painted over by their innovations and looks as if it had been scribbled on by an ignoramus.

V.

My exposition will be limited to the original teachings of their chief teachers; it will not include the high-flying leaders of the mass of followers. I hope no one will say (because of this limitation) that I have invented this material for the occasion. No indeed, many men who were renowned for their holiness and their leadership, who were not only our predecessors but also contemporaries of those very heresiarchs, have exposed and refuted them in learned volumes. I refer to Justin, philosopher and martyr, Miltiades, that churchly sage, Irenaeus, an eager discoverer of all doctrines, and our own Proculus, the living exemplar of a chaste old age and of Christian eloquence. In their footsteps I might hope to follow in all works of faith, just as I do in this work.

Now if in reality there are no heresies at all (as you must believe if you assume those who refuted them invented them), the apostle who predicted them lied. But if in fact they do exist, they were none other than those which

were examined by these men; no one can be considered to have enough leisure to invent material for his pen when he already has it at hand.

VI.

Therefore, here is this book in which I have set out a mere expose of their arcana. Now, so that no one may be stupefied by the strange, forced, arcane, and ambiguous names herein, I will first show how I plan to use them: for some of the names, a translation from the Greek does not bring out the appropriate force of the name; for others, the gender of the word in the two languages does not match; finally, we are more used to the citation of others untranslated. As a result I shall usually write the names in Greek with the meaning in the margin. Moreover, I will not omit the Greek form when I use the Latin name. I will note it over the line so that it will be a sign that this is an abstraction used as a personal name; otherwise there would be ambiguity since some of the "names" are used in other senses. Since I have put off for the future the full weight of my attack, attempting for the moment merely a recitation of their doctrines, this will not be an assault with a death-blow, since their disgraceful teachings deserve to be beaten black and blue. Consider this then, reader, as a feint before the battle. I will show where I plan to hit them, but I will not carry through. Also, if you must laugh in places, do so; it will suit the subject. Much of this should be refuted with laughter so that it will not be awarded serious consideration. Silly ideas often meet with ridicule. It is suitable even for truth to laugh because it is happy, to mock its enemies because it is safe. Be careful, however, not to laugh where it is inappropriate to do so. Otherwise where it is appropriate, you should laugh. Finally, after this introduction I will begin.

VII.

Ennius, the Roman poet, was the first to mention (with a straightforward meaning) "the great halls of heaven," because of its lofty position or because he had read in Homer of Jupiter's feasting there. Now as for the heretics--it is a marvel how many pinnacles on pinnacles and towers on towers they hang, add, develop on the house of each god of theirs. Well, perhaps even for our creator these Ennian halls have been distributed like apartments. Perhaps they have various shops built on in front and assigned to each god by floors--as many floors as there are heresies. In this way the world becomes an

apartment house; indeed, you might think the celestial flats are the Happy Isles Apartments, located somewhere. There even the Valentinian god lives--in the penthouse. They call him in essence $\alpha\omega\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$ (the Perfect Aeon); as an individual they call him $\pi\rho\omicron\tau\alpha$ (Original Father) and $\pi\rho\omicron\alpha\rho\chi\eta$ (Original Beginning), also Bythos (Abyss), which name does not suit at all someone living in heaven. They postulate that he is unborn, immeasurable, infinite, invisible, and eternal. They assume of course that they have proved him to be such if they postulate qualities everyone knows he should have. In the same way they say he existed before anything else. I declare that this is indeed true, but I criticize them in nothing more than in this, the fact that the one they say existed before anything else they discover to be subsequent to everything else, indeed subsequent to things not of his own making. Anyway, let's grant that this so-called Bythos existed infinite ages ago in deep and profound calm, in the great peace of a peaceful and (so to speak) insensate godhead, as Epicurus declares. Despite this, they assign a companion to this individual, who is supposed to be alone, a second entity named Thought, whom they also call Charis (Grace) and Sige (Silence). Perhaps they served--in that praiseworthy calm--to encourage him to produce the beginnings of the universe from himself. Like semen he places this beginning in his Sige just as in a womb. Sige accepts it right away, becomes pregnant, and bears (in silence, of course)--whom? Nus (Mind), resembling the Father and equal in all respects. Specifically he alone can grasp the Father's vastness and his inconceivable magnitude. Consequently, he himself is called "Father" and "Beginning of the universe" and (as his proper name) "Monogenes" (i.e., only begotten), though not properly since he is not the only legitimate child. Another was born at the same time, a female whose name is Truth and for that reason, Monogenes might have been named Protogenes much more aptly as being the first

Now we see that Bythos and Sige, Nus and Truth are championed as the first team of the Valentinian league. They are also the root and source of all the rest, for Nus immediately took on the task for which he had been emitted: he produces from himself Word and Life, which since they had not existed previously, were certainly not in Bythos--and what an absurdity if Life was not in God. Anyway this offspring whose duty is to found the corporate and united Pleroma, makes a profit: it gives birth to Man and Church. You now have an ogdoad, a double tetrad, resulting from the liaisons of male and

female. These are the silo--so to speak--of the primordial Aeons, the incestual relations of the Valentinian gods, the source of all holiness and heretical majesty. They are a mob of either devils or saints (I don't know which), but certainly the parents of the remaining brood.

VIII.

Now the second tetrad, Word and Life, Man and Church, after they had sprouted for the glory of the Father, wish to offer something similar of their own to him; so they shoot off an equal number of sprouts, pairs of course, since they were combinations of both natures. On one side Word and Life gush out all at once ten aeons. On the other side Man and Church produce two more than did Word and Life; in doing so they make themselves equal in numbers to their parents, since the pair Man and Church combined with the ten mentioned above make a number equal to what their parents, Word and Life, produced. I will enter the names of the ten I mentioned: Bythios (Profound) and Mixis (Mixture), Ageratos (Unaging) and Henosis (Union), Autophyes (Essential Nature) and Hedone (Pleasure), Acinetos (Unmoved) and Synchysis (Commixture), Monogenes (Only-Begotten) and Macaria (Happiness). These others are the twelve: Paracletus (Comforter) and Pistis (Faith), Patricos (Fatherly) and Elpis (Hope), Metricos (Motherly) and Agape (Love), Aeinus (Eternal Mind) and Synesis (Intelligence), Ecclesiasticus (Churchly) and Macariotes (Blessedness), Theletus (Perfect) and Sophia (Wisdom). Here I really must bring in a relevant story since these names deserve it. There was once in the schools at Carthage a certain dull Latin orator named Phosphorus. When he was declaiming the role of a military man he said, "I have returned to you noble citizens from battle accompanied by my Lady Victory, by your Lady Joy, along with Nobility, Glory, Luck, Heroism, and Triumph." Immediately the students shouted Hooray! to Phosphorus' family. You have heard about Fortunatus, Hedone, Acinetus, Theletus. Yell Hooray! to Ptolomaeus' family. This family is that secret pleroma, the full ness of its thirty-fold divinity. Let us see what are the special attributes of these groupings of four and of eight and of twelve. But meanwhile the entire generative power has ceased; the urge and potency and productive passion of the aeons is castrated. It is as if there was no more yeast in the numbers' dough, and no more names from the school records. Otherwise why are not 50 to 100 produced--why not Toilet-paper or Mignon?

IX.

There is also a discrimination between individuals here, because of all of them, Nus alone delights in knowing the vast Father and he alone rejoices and boasts while the others of course weep. Obviously Nus wanted and tried, as much as he could, to communicate to the rest of the aeons what he knew about the greatness and incomprehensibility of the Father, but his mother, Sige, intervened; the same Sige of course who orders her own heretics to be silent, although they say she interceded by order of the Father who wanted everyone to be inflamed with a desire for him. So, while they burn with silent longing to know the Father, a crime of sorts is committed--specifically, the youngest aeon (ignore the solecism; her name is Sophia) of the twelve aeons which Man and Church produced, unrestrainedly rushes off without her mate, Theletus, to seek the Father. In doing so she contracts a sort of disease which was epidemic among Nus' associates and which had spread to this aeon, i.e., Sophia, just as diseases contracted somewhere in the body usually do damage in another part. In this case, under the pretext of love for the Father, a feeling of rivalry toward Nus, who alone rejoiced in his knowledge of the Father, overcame her. Since, however, she was attempting the impossible, Sophia accomplished nothing and was crushed by the difficulty of the task and was racked by her emotions. Indeed, she barely missed being swallowed up in the great sweetness of the Father and the labor of her search and she almost was dissolved in the primal substance. Only her destruction would have stopped her search if she had not by a stroke of luck run into Horos. (He acts as support and as the boundary-guard of this whole world.) They also call him Cross, Lytotes (Redeemer) or Carpistes (Emancipator). He causes Sophia to become calm by removing her from danger and by persuading her to stop her useless search for the Father. She then cut off and abandoned her Inclination (in Greek-Enthymesis) along with the suffering which had then accompanied it.

X.

Some of the Valentinians have dreamed up another fall and redemption for Sophia: after her fruitless attempts and the disappointment of her hopes, she was all bent out of shape (because of her paleness, thinness and neglect, I suppose. In this quite suitable way she grieved that she was denied access to

the Father, a denial that was no less painful than his loss.) Next in her grief she has conceived--with no help from her mate--and gives birth to a female offspring. Is this surprising? It should not be, even a hen can produce offspring by herself; even more striking, they say buzzards are only female. Anyway, she is a mother without a man and she fears her end is near; she is at a loss as to the treatment of her case; she is worried about hiding her condition. No help anywhere! Otherwise, where would we have gotten tragedies and comedies from which we borrow the procedure of exposing what is born out of wedlock? While her situation is in such a bad way, she thinks of the Father, turns to him. She has tried in vain, however, and with her strength deserting her, she turns to prayer. All her neighbors pray for her, especially Nus. (Nus? Pray for someone so evil?) None of Sophia's misfortunes are without effect: all her sorrows cause a reaction, in that her recent struggles bring about the creation of matter; her ignorance, fear, and sorrow become substances. Finally, the Father moved at last by her prayers sends the above-mentioned Horos to her. (This Horos, who was sent through the agency of Monogenes-Nus, is in the Father's image, i.e., both masculine and feminine; thus the Valentinians are at odds even about the Father's sex.) Some of these heretics also add that Horos is called Metagogeus (Guide) and Horothetes (Limiter). They say that with his help Sophia was turned aside from her crooked ways, cleansed of evil, and finally strengthened and restored to her mate. They add that Sophia remained in the pleroma, but that her Enthymesis and its accompanying suffering was banished by Horos, crucified and thrown out; as they say, "evil begone." The Valentinians define this Enthymesis as a spirit-like substance, since it is a natural outgrowth of an aeon, but one which is without form or shape, since it had grasped nothing. Consequently, they call it "sterile fruit" and "female."

XI.

Now after Sophia's Enthymesis is exiled and she herself restored to her mate, that famous Monogenes, or Nus, at leisure now and dismissed from his attentions and attendance on the Father, decides to consolidate matters and to fortify and stabilize the Pleroma so that no such upheaval can shake it again. To do so he knocks out another pair, Christ and the Holy Spirit. (I should think this pairing of two males immoral; but perhaps the Holy Spirit is female and the male is crucified by the female.) These two have one duty--to

stabilize the aeons. From the association of these two in this duty, two schools arise, two pulpits and the beginning (of sorts) of a division in the Valentinian teachings. Christ's duty was to teach the aeons the nature of their marriages--you see what sort of affair this was of course to teach them how to form some idea of the unbegotten, and to make them capable of generating in themselves knowledge of the Father, knowledge, namely, that they can not get an idea of him or understand him--nor can they see or hear him -- except by the help of Monogenes. Now I can acknowledge that the aeons learn about the Father in this way--certainly we do the same thing. What I do criticize is the perversity of what they learn: namely, that what is unknowable in the Father is the cause of their eternal existence; what is knowable in him is the cause of their birth and material form or shape. To my mind the following is implicit in this teaching: it is best that God is not known if indeed his unknowableness is the cause of eternal existence. His knowable aspect is the cause, not of eternal existence, but of birth and material form or shape, conditions which lack eternal existence. In fact, the Valentinians postulate the son as the knowable aspect of the Father. Thus Christ, after being emitted, taught the aeons how the Father should be grasped.

The special duty of the Holy Spirit was this: after all the aeons were equally eager to learn, she should teach them how to give full thanks and should bring true tranquility to them.

XII.

Now all the aeons are equal physically and mentally. All of them have become what each one individually is; no one is different, because all are the same. Everyone is turned into Nuses or into Men or into Theletuses; all female aeons have become Siges, Zoes, Churches, or Fortunatas. Ovid would have erased his *Metamorphoses* if he knew of this greater one today. As soon as they have been reformed and stabilized and made tranquil by the truth, they sing a chorus to the Father with great exuberance of joy. He himself was filled with joy, certainly happy about his children and grandchildren who could sing so well. Why should he not be filled with complete happiness, since the Pleroma was freed from danger? In such circumstances, what ship's captain does not rejoice even immorally? Every day we see sailors' orgies. Consequently, just as sailors revel at their banquets, so do the aeons, who are now alike in appearance, and in feeling, too, needless to say. In conjunction

with their new brothers and teachers, Christ and the Holy Spirit, each one puts in the pot the best and most beautiful thing with which he is decorated. (They wasted their effort, if you ask me; if they were all alike as a result of the above mentioned equalization, there was no incentive to win the pot, whose attractiveness lies only in the variety of things in it.) Anyway, they all brought the "Good" which they all were: the incentive was habit perhaps, or a regulation of the previous equalization. From the anted cash--as the expression goes-- the aeons fashion in honor and glory, of the Father the most beautiful star in the Pleroma and the perfect fruit, Jesus. They name him Saviour, Christ, and Word; these are family names. They also call him the All, since he was formed from a bouquet of all flowers, like Aesop's Jaybird, Hesiod's Pandora, Accius' Bow, Nestor's Fruitcake, or Ptolomanus' Miscellany--all the same. It would have been more appropriate if these idle name-givers had called him Mr. Snatchitall, a name perhaps from some Oscan skit. Moreover, to make a show for their puppet, they formed for him an angel body guard, equal in nature. If they are equal to each other, okay; if equal in nature to Saviour (since I find the word ambiguously placed), what eminence would he have among attendants of equal status?

XIII.

These scenes exhibit the first register of the aeons who are being born, marrying, and giving birth; they contain Sophia's dangerous accident, caused by her longing for the Father, Horos' opportune help, the scapegoating of Enthymesis and its accompanying suffering. They also tell of the education by Christ and the Holy Spirit, the "reform through education" of the aeons, the peacock-like decoration of Saviour, and the consubstantial retinue of angels! "What else," you say? For you to exit clapping? Instead, I say you should stay to hear and jeer. What has gone before (i.e., the first scene of the tragedy) is alleged to have happened within the Pleroma. The rest of the play happens on the other side of the curtain--namely, outside the Pleroma. We have seen this development happen in the bosom of the Father, within the circuit of the guardian Horos. What kind of development will there be outside, where God does not exist?

XIV.

Enthymesis, then, or rather Achamoth (since from now on this incomprehensible name will be used) has been expelled-with Sophia's diseased suffering as a companion-into a place lacking light, which is a component of the Pleroma only. In that well known empty void of Epicurus she is wretched because of her location. Certainly she had no shape or surface at all, deformed and aborted creature as she was. While she is in such a state, Christ is persuaded by the aeons and led by Horos to shape and form Achamoth by his own power; he forms her in essence only, not in intelligible form as well. Nevertheless, she is left with a small estate, namely "the breath of incorruptibility," and having this she can experience the desire for something better than she has. After he has done this deed of mercy, Christ returns to the Pleroma, not leaving behind the Holy Spirit. Usually an abundance of entities creates an abundance of names: she is called Enthymesis (Inclination) from what happened, Achamoth from God knows where, Sophia after her mother, Holy Spirit from the angel called by the same name. In any event, she conceives a desire for Christ, by whom she has been deserted, as she immediately realizes. Thereupon she leaps up and goes to seek his light. (I might ask, if she did not know him at all, since he operated unseen, how could she look for his light which was as unknown to her as he was?) Nevertheless, she tried and might have grasped it if that same Horos who had run into her mother so fortunately had not unfortunately happened upon the daughter. He shouted at her, "Iao" just like "Make way!" or "Hail to the Chief!" Because of this we find "Iao" in the Bible. Thus she was driven away and prevented from going further; nor was she able to fly over Cross, otherwise known as Horos, because she had not played the part of Laureolus in Catullus' mime. Since she has been deserted, the suffering, to which she is bound with many twisted ties, begins to afflict her in all ways; with sadness because she did not accomplish her objective; with fear that she would lose her life just as she had lost her light; with alarm, and finally with ignorance. She did not suffer as her mother had, for she was an aeon; instead, Achamoth suffered worse because of her status: another tide of emotion washed over her, a desire for conversion--to Christ of course--by whom she had been quickened and fashioned with a view toward this very conversion.

Now at last the Pythagoreans can learn, the Stoics can recognize, as can Plato himself, where the matter which they call eternal or uncreated had its origin and basis as part of the structure of this world. Even Mercurius Trismegistus, that master of all sciences, never discovered this. You have heard of Achamoth's conversion, another kind of suffering; from this every soul inhabiting this world is said to have arisen, even the soul of the Demiurge himself, who is our God. You have heard of her sadness and fear; from these everything else began. For example, from her tears the whole world of waters flowed. From this you can calculate what a disaster she encountered, so many were the kinds of tears she let flow.

She had salty, she had bitter and sweet, she had hot and cold drops, tarry and rusty, and mineral, even poisonous, like the water dripping from Nonacris which killed Alexander, or the flood of Lyncestian waters which make men drunk, or the Salmacis fountain which make men effeminate. Achamoth even wept heavenly showers and we go so far as to preserve another's sorrows and tears in our cisterns.

Next, material elements were derived from her alarm and terror. Moreover, she smiled occasionally even in a situation of such isolation, in a vista of such loneliness. She smiled remembering Christ's appearance. From this same smile of joy, light gleamed. What a favor of fate who forced her to smile now and then to keep us from being always in darkness! Don't be surprised; why shouldn't such a glorious element be radiated around the world by her joy? By her sorrow she would have deprived the world of this necessary provision. O illuminating smile! O irrigating tear! Her smile could also have been a help amid the desolation of her situation; namely it could have driven away the darkness as often as she wanted to smile, especially so that she would not have been forced to plead with those who had deserted her.

XVI.

She did plead, however; she turned to prayer just as her mother had. Christ, however, now disliked going outside the Pleroma and so sends a deputy, Paracletus Saviour. (This is supposed to be Jesus, to whom the Father gave supreme power over all the aeons, making everyone subject to him; consequently, we read in the apostle, "in him all things were created" (Col. 1:16).) Anyway Christ sends him with a retinue of co-eternal angels. You can

imagine they accompanied him with twelve fasces. As soon as Achamoth saw them, astounded by their stately procession, she veiled herself at her first impulse of reverence and modesty. Afterwards, she gazed upon him and his prolific train. With the strength she had gained from this gazing she ran to him exclaiming, "Hail, Lord!" Thereupon, as I understand, he receives her, strengthens her and forms her in knowledge and finally cleans her from all damages caused by her suffering. He separated out her sufferings with more discrimination than he had shown in her mother's case, for he lumped together all defects or faults, active and violent, and set them as such apart in a solid mass. He changed them from an incorporeal emotional state into an incorporeal antecedent of matter, which was endowed with a sort of nature or aptitude by which it could be come two opposing and comparable entities. In doing so he founded two substances, different in nature: one evil because of the defects and faults, one capable of feeling because of the influence of Achamoth's conversion. This is the matter which lined us up against Hermogenes and the others who assume God made everything out of matter, not out of nothing.

XVII.

Achamoth, since she has been released finally from all evils, now, to and behold! grows and bears fruit for greater ends in this manner. Warmed by her joy at escaping from her unhappiness, and by her gazing at the angelic luminaries, she starts to stew inside (so to speak; I blush at the phrase but there is no other way to say it). In some such way she comes into heat for these luminaries and immediately swells up with a spirit-like conception formed according to the very image which she had swallowed and impressed on herself by the violence of her joyful emotions which came from her anticipation of sexual delight. Finally she gives birth and a triad or natures was born from a triad of sources: one material, arising from her suffering; one soul-like, arising from her conversion; a third spirit-like, arising from her mental image of Christ.

XVIII.

Now that she has become more practiced in managing affairs because of this new status--i.e., being a mother of three children--she decides to shape each kind of her offspring. She could not, however, touch the spirit-like one,

since she was herself spirit-like; similarity of nature usually disqualifies consubstantial beings from having power over one another. Consequently, she turned to the soul-like one with the same purpose, following Saviour's training. First she does a deed which cannot be said or read or heard without horror at its blasphemy: she forms our God, the God of everyone except heretics, the Father and Demiurge and King of all that came after him, and hence came from him--if indeed you can say that they do come from him and not rather from Achamoth herself, who influenced his actions secretly, without his knowledge, like a puppeteer operating from above. In fact, because of this uncertainty as to the author of his works, they mix up the name Metropater (the mother is Father) for him, even though his other names are distinctly assigned according to the kind and place of his works: for example, they call him Father of the soul-like elements, which they put on the right hand; they name him Demiurge of matter, which they put on the left; he is King because he has power over everything together.

XIX.

I object; the particular essence of these names does not fit the essence of the creations from which the names come, since all these creations ought to have been named after that person who created them--unless, of course, even Achamoth did not create them! To be specific, they say that Achamoth sketched these pictures in honor of the aeons. Yet they transfer this work to Soter as its originator who operated through Achamoth so as to present her as the very image of the invisible and unknown Father, she being invisible, of course, and unknown to the Demiurge, and in the same way he created this same Demiurge to correspond to Nus, the son. The Aschangel, creations of the Demiurge, are models of the rest of the aeons. When I hear about such pictures of these three, I ask you, don't you agree that I should laugh at these pictures painted by such a lunatic painter? Achamoth, a female and yet the image of the Father; the Demiurge, ignorant of his mother--not to mention of his Father--yet representing Nus who is not ignorant of his Father; the angels, the reproductions of their masters. This is the same as counterfeiting a fake or distinguishing Ptolomaeus from Valentinus.

XX.

Now, as we can see, while the Demiurge stands outside the Pleroma's boundaries in the solitary confinement of eternal exile, he finds a new realm, this world of ours. He clears away the tangles and separates the twofold variety of the substance exiled with him, which was soul-like and material. From this incorporeal mass he made heavy and light things, rising and falling bodies, celestial and earthly elements. Then he completed that seven-layered stage, heaven, with his own throne above it. Consequently, he is called Sabbatus from the sevenness of his home; likewise, his mother, Achamoth, is called Ogdoas from the analogy between her and the original group of eight. The Valentinians consider these heavens savants and also make them angels just as they do the Demiurge; for example, they call the fourth Archangel Paradise (fourth, since they place him over the third heaven), from whose power Adam drew while he resided there among the cloudlets and treelets. Ptolomaeus certainly remembered his childhood babblings, apples growing in the ocean and fish on trees. In the same way he assumes nut-trees grow in the sky. Of course the Demiurge acts in ignorance and perhaps he does not know that trees are supposed to grow only in the ground. Obviously his mother knew; why did she not inform him since she was implementing her own plans? I will ask later why she was unwilling that he be aware of her actions which would testify that he is father and god and king even before the Valentinians brought their ingenuity into play.

XXI.

Meanwhile, just accept the fact that Sophia is named Earth and Mother and what is more laughable, Holy Spirit, as if Earth were masculine. In this way they have bestowed all his honors on a female--including his beard, I presume, not to mention other things. As for Demiurge, he was so incapable of understanding his situation, being unable as he was of approaching spirit-like essences because of his soul-like origin, that he thought himself alone and announced, "I am the Lord and there is no other" (Isa. 45:6). He certainly knew that he had not existed before and consequently knew that he had been made and that there was some creator of the creation. How then can he have thought he was alone, since he at least would suspect, even if he did not know, that there was a creator?

XXII.

Their slanders against the devil are more endurable, especially because his scummy origin justifies them. They consider him to have arisen from the evil part of her grief; they as sign the origin of angels, demons, and all evil spirits to the same source. Nevertheless, they affirm that he is the creation of the Demiurge. They call him World-holder, and they maintain that he is more aware of the higher world, since he is spirit-like in nature, than is the Demiurge, who is soul-like. He whom all heresies serve deserves preference from them!

XXIII.

To resume, they station the citadels of the various powers within the following boundaries: in the height of heights the thirty-fold Pleroma rules with Horos defining the outer limit. Lower down, Achamoth resides in the middle space, stepping on her son, since the Demiurge is below in his seventh heaven. It is certainly fitting that the devil is with us in this world which has been conglomerated together from the same elements, i.e., from Sophia's profitable troubles, as I related above. "Profitable," I say, because he would have had no air, that receptacle of our exhaled breath, that soft covering of all bodies, that determiner of all colors, that engine moving the seasons, if Sophia's sadness had not cultivated it, just as her fear cultivated soullike bodies and her conversion cultivated the Demiurge himself. In all these elements and bodies fire was kindled--now since the Valentinians have not yet revealed the feeling in Sophia which was the origin of this fire, I will conjecture for the present that it was struck up during her feverish delirium. You can be quite sure she was feverish amid such troubles.

XXIV.

If they dream up such things about God--or rather about gods --what sort of things will they dream up about man? They say that after the Demiurge has set the world in motion, he turns his hand to man. He gathers material for making man not (as they say) from the "dry" land, which is the only one we know --they say this as if this land were not yet dry, although it became so later, since at that time the waters had not yet been separated from the remaining mud. Instead, he gathers the material from the invisible mass of that well-known metaphysical matter, from its flowing and viscous part. I take the liberty of conjecturing as to its origin, since no one has revealed it

yet: since fluidity and viscosity are characteristics of liquids and since all liquids flowed from Sophia's tears, it follows that we must believe mud to be the rheum and sand which are indeed the dregs of tears, just as mud is the sediment of water. In this way the Demiurge shapes man and gives him life from his own breath. Thus man is supposed to be material and soul-like since he is made after the Demiurge's image and likeness as a four-fold creation: (1) as his image we will grant that he be considered earthy, i.e., material, even though the Demiurge is not material; (2) as his likeness he must be soul-like, because the Demiurge is also; (3) afterwards they say that a fleshy coating was put on over the earthy and that this coating is the shirt of skin which has sense organs.

XXV.

(4) Achamoth had a small inheritance of spirit-like seed derived from the substance of her mother, Sophia, and identical to her mother. Achamoth hid this away in her son the Demiurge all unknown to him. (Imagine the perseverance of her secret foresight!) She deposited it and hid it for this purpose, namely that when the Demiurge later blew the soul into Adam with his breath, that spirit-like seed might be diverted into the earthy matter through the windpipe. Then, after it had been nourished in the material body as in a uterus and after it had grown to maturity there, it might be found capable of receiving one day the complete Logos. Consequently, when the Demiurge was grafting this scion of his soul onto Adam, the "spirit-like man" lay hidden there too, since it had been planted in the Demiurge's breath and introduced along with the breath in Adam's body. I say "hidden" because the Demiurge knew no more about this seed from his mother than he did about her herself. This seed they call Church. They say it is a mirror of the higher Church and Man; accordingly they consider this seed as an inheritance from Achamoth, just as they consider the soul-like part as coming from the Demiurge, the earthy from the primordial substance, the fleshy from matter. Now you have a new Geryon, only four-fold instead of three.

XXVI.

Just as they assign different origins to each part, so they assign to each a different end: to the material (fleshy) nature, which they also call "left-hand," they assign certain destruction; to the soul-like, which they call "righthand,"

they assign a contingent fate depending on whether it inclines more toward the spirit-like or more toward the material realms, between which it wavers. Because of this (they say), the spirit-like nature was sent out to prepare the soul like nature, so that the soul-like nature could be educated with it and trained by long association. Otherwise, the soul like nature would have lacked even the training furnished by the senses. For this purpose, the structure of the world was devised, for this Saviour was presented to the world, namely for the salvation of the soul-like nature.

In still another version, they will have you believe that this prodigy (Saviour) put on the chief parts of those substances, the entirety of which he intended to save. He did this by taking on the spirit-like nature from Achamoth and the soul-like nature, represented in Christ, which he derived from the Demiurge. As for the rest, he had a bodily nature, (which was made from soul-like substance with wonderful and indescribable skill), only for the sake of helping himself in his work; in it he might be capable of being met, seen, touched, and even capable of dying for an ungrateful world. In reality, however, there was nothing material in him since matter is wholly alien to salvation. They say this as if other natures needed Saviour more than those who lack salvation! All this so that they might revoke our flesh's hope of salvation by estranging it from Christ!

XXVII.

Now I continue with what they say about Christ on whom they graft Jesus--with the same liberty as when they stuff the spirit-like seed in him along with the soul-like breath. They make him a mash of inventions of both Men and gods: the Demiurge also has his own Christ, his natural son (consequently soul-like), produced from himself, preached by the prophets. His nature must be decided by prepositions: specifically, he was produced through a virgin, not from a virgin, because he came into existence carried in a virgin in a transportational, not a generational, sense. He came through her, not from her; he experienced her not as a mother but as a conveyance. Upon this Christ, then, in the sacrament of baptism, Jesus descended in the form of a dove. Apart from this, there was even in this Christ spice from the spirit-like seed of Achamoth to keep the rest of the stuffing from spoiling, I presume. Following the analogy of the first Tetrads, they crowd him with four substances: the spirit-like from Achamoth, the soul-like from the Demiurge,

the bodily which is indescribable, and the substance from Saviour, namely dove-like. Saviour at any rate remained in Christ untouched, unhurt, unknown. Finally, when captured, he left him during Pilate's questioning. Likewise, the seed from his mother did not receive injury, being equally, immune and unknown even to the Demiurge. The soul-like and bodily Christ suffered to illustrate the experience of the higher Christ who was stretched on Cross, otherwise known as Horos, when he shaped Achamoth in essence, though not in intelligible form. In such a way everything becomes an illustration or image; even, obviously, these Christians themselves are imaginary.

XXVIII.

Meanwhile, the Demiurge is still ignorant of all this. Even though he is supposed to proclaim these matters through the prophets, he is not aware of the true meaning of this task of his, because the Valentinians allot the prophets' patronage to three entities: Achamoth, her seed, the Demiurge. Anyway, when he has heard of Saviour's approach, he runs to meet him crying "Hail!" He came with his entire force (the symbol for this is the centurion in the gospel), and when he was enlightened by Saviour concerning everything, he discovered his own prospects, namely that he would succeed to his mother's office. Hereafter he administers the world confidently, especially for the sake of protecting the church as long as necessary.

XXIX.

I shall now gather from various sources material to demonstrate what they have decreed about the classification of the human race. They say that from the beginning man had a three fold nature which was nevertheless united in Adam. After Adam they divide up man's nature according to its individual characteristics. They have found an opportunity to explicate this sort of division in the posterity of Adam himself, a posterity, divided into three different moral characters. Cain, Abel, Seth, who can be called the well-springs of the human race, distribute to this race their qualities of character and the results of how they were judged. Specifically, the Valentinians assign the earthy nature, regressed from salvation, to Cain; the soul-like nature, balanced between good and evil prospects, they place in Abel; the spirit-like, prejudged fit for salvation, they find in Seth. Consequently they separate

souls into two groups, good or evil, according to their nature, earthy from Cain, soul-like from Abel. They distinguish only two groups because they put the spirit-like nature from Seth on a different level arbitrarily and call it grace, not a nature, a grace which Achamoth rains from above into good souls, i.e., souls of the soul-like category. (Only into these, for the earthy kind, i.e., evil, can never attain salvation. They define this earthy nature as unchangeable and incorrigible by nature.) Therefore, this grain of a spirit-like seed is insignificant and small when it is sown, but because of its training, the worthiness of these souls grows and advances-as we said above-until they become so outstanding that the Demiurge, ignorant at that time (i.e., before Christ's appearance)of the cause, values them highly. From their number he habitually chose kings and priests. Even now if they attain a full and complete knowledge of these idiocies, they will gain certain salvation, a salvation which is indeed due them since they are born into the spirit-like state.

XXX.

Because of these beliefs, they do not consider good works necessary for themselves, and they do not observe any calls of duty. They also avoid the necessity of being martyrs by any convenient quibble, for they say this rule of works has been prescribed for the soul-like seed in order that we might work out by our actions that salvation which we do not possess by virtue of our nature. We who have incomplete knowledge and who do not know Theletus, have the mark, indeed, which belongs to abortive creatures (like their mother Achamoth). As for us--woe, if we step outside the yoke of discipline in any respect; woe, if we are sluggish in doing works of holiness or justification; woe, if we hope to confess our faith some where other than among the powers of this world, i.e., at the tribunal of the judges. For their part, they prove their noble birth by the looseness of their life and by their delight in sin. Achamoth in this way coddles her own, since she sinned and benefited by it. They have the rule (adopted for the purpose of honoring the higher pairs) of contemplating and engaging frequently in the sacrament of uniting with a "companion," namely, a woman. They consider a man perverse and a false son of truth if he does not, during his life on earth, love a woman and join himself to her. If so, what do the eunuchs do whom we see among them?

XXXI.

Their opinions about the end of the world and the distribution of reward and punishment are left to discuss: when Achamoth has pressed out the mass of her seed and when she has begun to store it in her cellar, or (to change the metaphor) when she has carried it to the mill and then has hidden the flour in the leaven of salvation until she has gathered it all, then the end is very near. At first Achamoth herself will be moved from her position in the middle, i.e., from the second storey, to the penthouse, and she will be restored to the Pleroma. Immediately that glued-together Saviour receives her, as her bridegroom, of course; both together make a new pair. This is supposed to be the bridegroom mentioned in the Bible, with the Pleroma as bridal-chamber! You might think that the Julian laws are intervening, since there are these trips from place to place. Just like his mother, the Demiurge will then move from his seventh heaven into a higher place, into the now vacant apartments of his mother. Now he can know about her, even though he does not see her. But, if all these things had happened, he might have preferred to be in the dark about her forever.

XXXII.

The human race has this fate: complete destruction for every soul stamped "earthy" or "material," because "all flesh is grass" (Isa. 40:6). We see that they think even the soul is mortal unless it finds salvation by faith. The souls of righteous men, namely ours, will be carried to the Demiurge in the shelter of his middle region--we are thankful; we will be happy to be counted with our god from whom we received our soul-like origin. Nothing is admitted into the palace of the Pleroma except the spirit-like swarm of Valentinus. These men then, men destined to enter the Pleroma, are unclothed first; to be unclothed means to put aside the souls with which they are only apparently endowed. They return to the Demiurge these souls which they received from him. They become spirits entirely metaphysical, immune to restraint or detection; in this fashion they are received invisibly into the Pleroma secretly, if this is the way it is! What then? They are handed out to the angels who accompany Saviour. As sons, do you suppose? No. As valets perhaps? Not even this. As ghosts? I wish even this were the case! What, then, if you are not ashamed to say? As wives! For marriages they will play "Rape the Sabines" among themselves. This is the reward for being "spirit-like"; this is

the prize for believing. These are proper little stories; for example, you, Marcus, or you, Gaius, at present bearded in this body and in this soul a stern husband, father, grandfather, or great-grandfather certainly masculine enough--then, in this harem of a Pleroma, by some angel you might be. . . ; by my silence I have already said it. Anyway perhaps you might give birth to some new aeon. In place of the usual torch and veil I imagine that famous mysterious fire will blaze out to solemnize the ceremony, and will devastate the entire universe, then be reduced to nothing, after it has incinerated everything. That will be the end of their myth. But I am certainly the rash one for betraying, even in jest, such a great mystery. I should be afraid that Achamoth, who wanted to be unrecognized even by her own son, may rage; that Theletus may become angry; that Fortunata may be irritated. But why worry? I am the Demiurge's man. It will be my fate to return after death to a place where there is no giving in marriage, where we are to be further clothed rather than unclothed (II Cor. 5); where even if I were unclothed of my sex, I would be classified as an angel, neither male nor female. No one will do anything to me since he will not find me as male then.

XXXIII.

I will at last produce by way of a finale to so long a tale those things which I preferred to put off until now to avoid interrupting the order of narration and disturbing the reader's attention. The following topics are gathered from here and there in commentaries by Ptolomaeus' improvers. Yes, improvers, for there have arisen in his school students superior to their master. These have devised a double marriage for their Bythos; his wives are Thought and Will. He had two because Thought alone was not enough; nothing can be produced by Thought alone. From the two, however, Monogenes and Truth were quite easily procreated in marriage; Truth in the image of the female Thought, Monogenes in the image of the male Will. The effect of Will is to make Thought productive and hence Will is classed as male.

XXXIV.

Other students, more strait-laced, have kept in mind the honor due to divinity and have removed the same of even one wife from Bythos; they prefer to attribute no sex to him; perhaps they use the neuter gender and call him "this divine thing" rather than "this god." Others on the contrary say he is

both masculine and feminine. I hope Fenestella, the noted historian, does not think hermaphrodites occur only among the people of Luna.

XXXV.

There are some who assert that Bythos is the last, not the first. They put their ogdoad first, deriving from it a tetrad to be sure, but under other names: first they put Proarche (Pre-beginning), next Anennoetos (Inconceivable), third Arrhetos (Ineffable), fourth Aoratos (Invisible). From Proarche they say Arche (Beginning) came forth in the first and fifth places. From Anennoetos came Acataleptos (Incomprehensible) in the second and sixth places. From Arrhetos came Anonomastos (Unnameable) in the third and seventh places. From Invisible came Agennetos (Unbegotten) in the fourth and eighth places. What rational system arranges it that individual aeons are born in two separate places? I prefer not knowing to finding out. What good can a system have which is promulgated with such perversities?

XXXVI.

How much more sensible are those students who eliminate all this boring trash! They derive no aeon one from another in truly Pentagonian steps. Instead, they say, in one fell swoop that octad burst from Propater and his Ennoea and that they get their names from each step in the process: when he decided to produce an offspring then it was called Father; when he truly carried out his intention and did produce it, then it was called Truth; when he wished that he be praised, this was called Man; the entities which he pre-imagined when he produces them were called Church. Man spoke the Word, and this is his first-born son. Life was added to Word and thus the first ogdoad is completed. All this is entirely tiresome and weak.

XXXVII.

Now note these other huckster ingenuities of one of their more renowned teachers. He has decreed--with his pontifical authority--the following: "There existed before the universe Proarche (Pre-beginning) who cannot be imagined, described, or named, which I will name Monotes. Another power was associated with him. I call this other Henotes. These names mean "Aloneness" and "One-ness." Monotes and Henotes, still united, brought forth, but did not beget, the beginnings of the universe, metaphysical, unborn,

invisible, which his Word called Monad (Singleness). Monad as well had a power of like substance attached to him called Unity. These powers then, Aloneness, Oneness, Singleness, Unity, propagated all the other emanations of aeons. O what a great difference! You can change Unity, Oneness, Singleness, Alone ness however you like; it will still be one.

XXXVIII.

Secundus is more succinct: he divides the ogdoad into two tetrads, a right and a left, a light and a dark. He is also more respectful of his aeons: he does not wish to derive the apostatizing and imperfect power from any of the aeons, but instead from the products of their natures.

XXXIX.

How differently they think even about our Lord Jesus. Some construct him out of the blooms of all the aeons. Others assert that he was made out of the Ten alone whom Word and Life produced, and for this reason the titles "Word" and "Life" apply to him. Still others derive him from the twelve, i.e., the offspring of Man and Church, and call him as a result Son of Man after his grandfather. Others say that he was formed by Christ and the Holy Spirit, who were planning ahead for the establishment of the world; hence he is heir to his father's surname. There are those who imagine the title Son of Man came from nothing else but this: the Father called himself Man because of the great mystery in this name. So they presume. Consequently, what can you hope for if you believe in that God to whom you are made equal?

Among the Valentinians such ingenuities are always cropping up because of over-seeding. As a result the Valentinian doctrines, which budded in the manner described above, have attained their full growth as a forest of Gnostic doctrines.