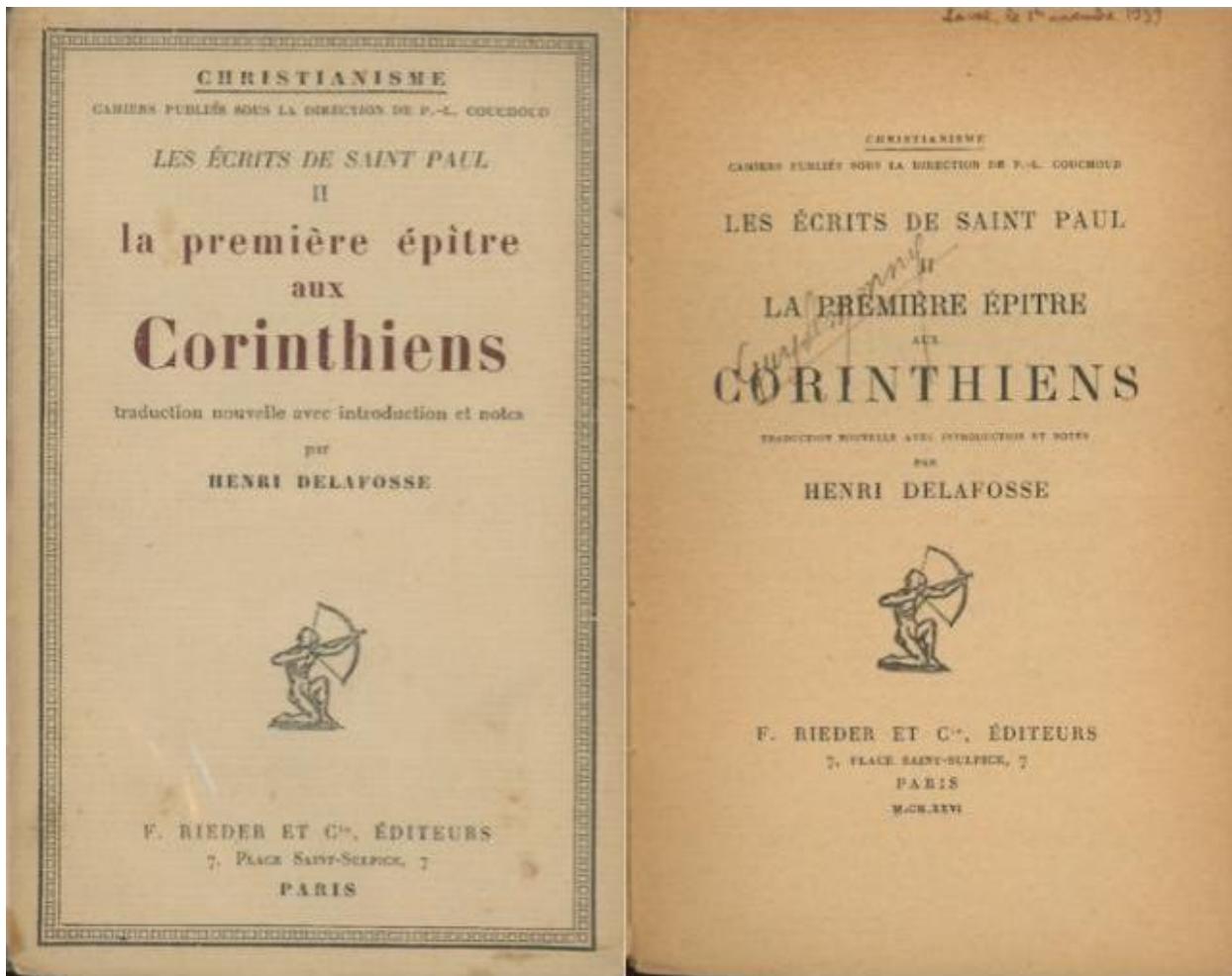


This file was created October 2021 as a translation for my personal use and without any thought of sharing publicly at the time. I only ask that you keep that in mind when using it. I have made a copy of the French text available at

<https://archive.org/details/turmel-les-ecrits-de-saint-paul-ii-la-premiere-epitre-aux-corinthiens>

Neil Godfrey - November 2023



INTRODUCTION

The first epistle to the Corinthians was written in the spring of the year 55. By this time Paul had been in Ephesus for about two years and was about to return to Corinth, where he had already spent eighteen months. The letter, as we have it, points out and condemns various abuses that

had crept into the church at Corinth since the apostle's departure; it answers various questions from the Corinthians; it also teaches various points of doctrine. But we shall see that there is reason to carry out a serious weeding out.

1. I will speak later about the eighteen-month stay in Corinth, but I note once and for all that, according to Acts XVIII, 11 and 18, its duration was not longer than ten months. XVIII, 11 and 18, it was probably longer.

THE KINGDOM

Paul begins his letter by thanking God for the blessing he has bestowed on the Corinthians, for the great wealth he has given them through Christ Jesus. Then he mentions the testimony of Christ, his appearance, his day, the faithfulness of God who called the Corinthians to the company of his son. These mysterious formulas summarize Paul's program. They make sense when we have read the Epistle to the Romans, which makes this program known to us¹. Enlightened by Ro. IV, 13, this is what they mean: Have confidence, you who have been confirmed in the testimony I have given about Christ Jesus, who believe in his coming, in his day. God, who promised Abraham and his descendants the empire of the world, will without fail fulfill his promise through Christ Jesus. You will participate in the empire that Christ will found and whose seat will be in Jerusalem. From now on I thank God for the high fortune to which you are called.

1 = See Letter to the Romans, p. 16,

The lines which follow this comforting exordium relate to a cabal of which Apollos was the occasion. Around the year 53 Apollos, a Jew from Alexandria who had converted to Christianity, arrived in Corinth. Paul had left that city a short time earlier. Apollos took over from the apostle and continued his work. Paul's preaching had made disciples; Apollos' preaching did too. Only the final result was that which occurs in electrolysis, where we see the elements divided into two camps and grouped, some around the anode, others around the cathode. The disciples of the two masters, instead of merging, set themselves against each other. Paul, who was informed of the situation by Chloe's people, shows that this antagonism is unreasonable: "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in Paul's name?" And he congratulates himself for having baptized only Crispus, Gaius and the family of Stephanas.

Further on (IV, 8) Paul says to the Corinthians in a tone of irony:

Already you are satiated! Already you are rich! Without us you rule! And may you indeed reign, so that we too may reign with you!

To understand these words, we must again refer to Ro. IV, 13, where the apostle's program is formulated; we must also read Gal. III, 18, 29, which express the same thought. Paul mocks the

Corinthians for taking a boastful attitude as if the kingdom had already arrived. And he adds: "If only that were true! For I will reign with you.

The Corinthians are obsessed with the thought of the kingdom. This obsession is the result of the propaganda that has been going on among them for three years. Paul told them that Christ would fulfill God's promise to Abraham and establish the new kingdom of Israel in Jerusalem. Apollos kept them in the same dream, whose sharpness he increased. "As Acts XVIII:23 says, he probably based the promise of the kingdom on the oracles of the prophets, while Paul held to the texts of Genesis in which God guarantees Abraham and his descendants possession of the land of Canaan. Perhaps Apollos also promised the Christians the empire of the world, while Paul spoke only of the kingdom of Palestine. It is precisely Paul who, in the epistle to the Galatians written before the troubles in Corinth, presented Christ as the future king of Palestine, presents him, in the epistle to the Romans written after these troubles, as the master to whom the whole world will soon be subject. Perhaps he evolved under the influence of Apollos. In any case, when Acts celebrates the biblical knowledge of Apollos, it is certainly not their intention to present him as the preacher of the Logos, and the opinion¹ that this product of Philonian doctrine was introduced into Christian dogmatics by Apollos has no foundation.

1. Patronized by Renan, Saint Paul, p. 373; Les Evangiles, p. 416; adopted by the Jesuit Lebreton, Les origines du dogme de la Jriniti, p. 386.

PAUL sets himself up AS A SYMBOL

Between I:17 and IV:8 there is a long dissertation with which we must now become acquainted.

It speaks of "the foolishness of preaching", of God using the foolish to confound the wise, of the wisdom of God preached among the perfect, of the animal man and the spiritual man, of certain teachers who are warned to watch their teaching and not to place inflammable matter on the foundation of Christ on pain of seeing it devoured by fire when the "day" comes. She also speaks of judges who have condemned Paul or who will condemn him, and for whom Paul has nothing but disdain. It even speaks of Apollos, who returns once in III, 4 and a second time in III, 22 in the company of Cephas, who, moreover, has already been named in I, 12.

Who are these judges to whom Paul declares without ambiguity in IV, 3 that he has nothing but contempt for their verdict? Who are these teachers to whom the severe admonition of III, 12-15 is addressed? This apology of the cross which we read in I, 17-25, against whom is it directed? And what does Cephas have to do with it? The dissertation which goes from I, 17 to IV, 8 leads us from mystery to mystery.

1. The fact.

Among the enigmatic texts that it presents to us, there is one especially which attracts our attention. Here it is IV, 6:

Brethren, I have symbolized these things in myself and Apollos for your sake, that you may learn in us not to be above what is written, that you may not be puffed up because of one against another.

So Paul "symbolized" (meteschematisa, transfigured in the Vulgate) certain things in himself and Apollos. What does this mean? It means that the rivalry which arose among the Corinthians and of which he and Apollos were the unwitting causes serves him as a symbol for later purposes. And what are the further ends he wants to achieve by means of this symbol or, if you like, this allegory? He wants to teach the Corinthians "not to be above what is written" and also "not to be puffed up because of one against another".

There is an old and a new fact in the church of Corinth. The old fact is the coterie that was formed around the names of Paul and Apollos. The new fact is the conviction of the Corinthians that they are above what is written, the pride that makes them swell up for one person against another. The ancient fact itself is of no interest. What is serious, what is disturbing, what must be fought as a dreadful evil, is the new fact, the tendency of the Corinthians to put themselves above what is written, to take pride against another in favor of someone. To cure them of this prideful mentality, Paul found nothing better than to recall the old fact and to exploit it. This fact, which by itself belongs to the past, becomes current again when it is used as an allegorical veil. It then makes it possible to express useful truths which, without it, either could not be conveniently articulated or, in any case, would not be understood. This is why Paul, wanting to give the Corinthians a lesson in humility, symbolizes it in himself and in Apollos.

13

Will it be said that I put too much into IV, 6? Here is how Estius paraphrases this text:

What I have said of the masters of whom you boast, by a figure of speech I have transposed onto myself and Apollos. That is to say, I have named myself and Apollos as being the masters because of whom you have allowed yourselves to be cabalized (we must also add Cephas, whose name he probably withholds out of respect). But under our names I want to designate other supporters of human wisdom, sub his alias volo intelligi, of whom you have boasted foolishly and in a spirit of faction, and whom I did not want to name so as not to shame you. - Paul does not deny that the Corinthians put their glory in him, in Peter and in Apollos... but he declares to have used transposition,

because under these names he wanted to designate other characters, quia his nominatis olios magis voluit intelligi.

The Bible of Saci gives the following paraphrase:

I have proposed these things under my name and that of Apollos, these things, that is, what I have just said in verses 4, 5, 6 of the preceding chapter against the presumption of the ministers and against the partiality which they excite in the Church, as if I myself and Apollos were stained with this vice and as if we had been leaders of parties like the others. "For your sake", that is, to spare you the confusion you would have received, you who are the pastors of Corinth, if I had called you by your proper names, and to enable you to profit by my warnings, seeing that I use them with such charity, prudence and modesty.

14

Saint Thomas speaks of false apostles "whom the apostle did not want to name so as not to appear to speak against them out of hatred and jealousy; in their place he had put his own name and that of other good preachers".

We see that the most orthodox commentators recognize that in IV, 6, Paul declares that he uses his name and the name of Apollos to designate, under the veil of the symbol, other men about whom, out of charity, he does not want to speak openly, but whose unbearable pride he wants to put down and whose pernicious influence he wants to ruin. This is how they understand the text IV, 6. The text itself, apart from a few jingoistic nuances, has no other interpretation.

But this interpretation contains several impossibilities. First of all, if we are to believe our text, Paul used leniency towards men whose action on the faithful was harmful, therefore towards men who were not worthy of any leniency and whose misdeeds should, on the contrary, be vigorously denounced. On this account the charity he showed them was unreasonable. Now no one agrees to put unreasonable acts on Paul's account. First impossibility.

15

This is not all. According to our text, Paul pushed his charity towards these disreputable characters to the point of making Apollos take responsibility for their faults. Some even go further and believe that Paul agreed to personally endorse the faults committed by some of these men (the Saci Bible says: "As if I and Apollos were stained with this vice"). Now, when charity has reached this degree, it becomes an extravagance for which Paul is not to be held responsible. Second impossibility.

This is not all yet. Does Paul, with all the precautions he takes to cover men unworthy of all gentleness, at least reach his goal? Does he succeed in covering them? These men are leaders, they stand out from the crowd, everyone has their eyes on them, everyone knows

them, it will be impossible to blame them under the veil of allegory without everyone knowing to whom the blame is addressed. This would be impossible even if we were dealing with a huge community with thousands of members. What would it be like in a church consisting of a few families? The symbol used to keep hidden the names of the ringleaders who led the Corinthians astray is nothing but childish; and to imagine that such a poor expedient could have any result, required a lightness of mind which cannot be attributed to Paul. Third impossibility.

16

The text "I have symbolized these things" is not by Paul. It is the work of a forger who, seeing his co-religionists in the grip of powerful enemies, evoked to defend them the quarrels of Paul's supporters in Corinth with the partisans of Apollos. The text IV, 6 is an artificial product.

Immediately he becomes intelligible and the impossibilities that stood before him disappear. It is easy to understand why a forger would have used for his own purposes a conflict from which Paul had suffered, the same one that the epistle to the Corinthians speaks of in I, 10-16. In order to carry out this project, transposition was necessary. Our forger therefore transformed his friends and enemies into contemporaries of the apostle, and he put them all in Corinth. The men of his party became Paul's disciples, those of the opposite party were assigned to Apollos. The latter naturally had to be presented in unfavorable colors; on the other hand, it was impossible to designate them by name under penalty of unmasking the artifice. As for Apollos, the fictitious father of these enemies, his work could only be reproved; but he personally had to be spared, since, in XVI, 12, Paul treats him as a friend. We now have the explanation of IV, 6. Under the pen of a forger, the inconsistencies it contains vanish.

17

Here an important observation must be made. Let us note that the text "I have symbolized" refers to earlier texts. It states that the parties which divided the church in Corinth at the time of Paul and Apollos were subjected to a transposition. But he is only a spokesman, a reporter.

The operation of which he speaks was carried out by some of the preceding texts which have passed under our eyes. One understands now the impossibility where we were to find in these texts a plausible sense. We did not manage to put some cohesion in them. How could we have it, whereas we misunderstood completely on their intimate condition and, in some way, on the nature of their language? Our error was that of an archaeologist who, finding himself in front of a Greek inscription, would persist in taking it for a Latin inscription, who would ask for the explanation of it in Latin, and would be quite astonished to arrive at nothing. To understand something with our texts, one must start from this principle that they make transposition, symbolism, that they carry out the work of which speaks IV, 6 and that they have a common origin with him.

So let us put ourselves in the school of the author who "symbolizes" himself in Paul, and let us listen to what he tells us, beginning with his dissertation on the wisdom of God and the folly of the cross.

18

2. Explanation of the fact.

He declares (I, 21) that the world has not known God. This assertion contradicts the place in Romans 1:19-21 where we read that God is seen in his works and that men have known him. But it agrees with the Marcionite redaction of the fourth gospel which says (I, 18) that no one has seen God and that the Son alone has made him known, which adds (VII, 28) that the Jews themselves do not know God.

Our author establishes between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world an opposition pushed to the point of hostility, since, according to him, the wisdom of the world is foolishness before God and the wisdom of God is foolishness in the eyes of the world (I, 17-11, 16). In the presence of this irreducible antagonism one wonders with amazement how God was led to make a creature that went so wrong and that, instead of giving him glory, rebelled against him.

The solution of the enigma is found in the Marcionite redaction of the fourth gospel, which teaches us (VIII, 23, 40, 44) that men (it is the Jews considered as men) are not the creatures of the good God, but of the devil, and (I Jo. V, 19) that the world is in the power of the Evil One, that is to say, of this same creator devil¹.

1. See The Fourth Gospel, pp. 19-26.

19

He speaks of the "Lord of glory", that is, the glorious Lord whom the rulers of this age have crucified. This vocabulary is reminiscent of that of the fourth gospel which mentions (I, 14) "the glory" of the Son of God.

He says (II, 7) that the wisdom of God was destined for us by God "before the ages". This formula is a counterpart to the one we find in Romans XVI, 25, where it speaks of a "mystery which has been kept secret for infinite times" and which was revealed by the order of the eternal God. Now this piece is of Marcionite origin 1.

1. See the Letter to the Remaints, p. 89.

The dissertation on the wisdom of God and the folly of the cross, considered up to II, 10, is strongly related to texts whose Marcionite origin is not doubtful.

From II, 10 the Spirit appears on the scene. Before examining this new character, let us study the text IV, 3, where Paul shows, on the one hand, the deepest contempt for the judgment which has been pronounced or which a human court could pronounce against him, and, on the other hand, defers to the judgment of God. The truth is that the text IV, 3 does not make sense in Paul's writing. It will only become intelligible when we find a man who has had a dispute with an ecclesiastical tribunal.

20

Now Marcion was condemned by the Roman church in the year 144 (Tertullian, *Adv. Mark.* I, 19), and, before coming to Rome, he had probably already been condemned by one or other of the churches of Asia Minor in which he had stayed, notably by the church of Smyrna where Polycarp was. It is known that he did not let himself be stopped by the condemnation of Rome, nor, even more so, by the condemnation of Smyrna or elsewhere. The text "I do not attach the slightest importance to being judged by you" thus reproduces exactly the welcome he gave to the sentence or rather to the sentences which struck him. This is how he answered his judges. He said to them: "I am the Lord's, not yours; I have the deepest contempt for your judgment."

But what does the following have to do with "or by a human court"? This is the necessary consequence of the operation by which Marcion was "transfigured" into the apostle. The fictitious Paul who speaks here to the Corinthians lifts a corner of the veil of the future and announces the condemnation which will befall him around 140. In order not to unmask himself, he is naturally obliged to remain imprecise. Hence the rather mysterious turn of phrase in which he declares that he is ignoring the sentence that a "human court" - other than that of the Corinthians - might pronounce against him.

Marcion was condemned, that is, excluded from one or more of the communities of Asia Minor, at any rate from the Roman community. His enemies certainly did not go to this extreme immediately. They must have tried beforehand to enlighten the innovator, to convince him, to refute him. They resigned themselves to pronouncing a sentence of exclusion against him only after they had seen the futility of gentler measures. In a word, Marcion, before being condemned, met with opposition of varying length and ardor.

21

This opposition must have seemed very strange to him. Marcion, if he was not a visionary - which for lack of documents we have no right to affirm - was surely an exalted one, for the doctrine he taught is incompatible with sound judgment. The exalted possess absolute certainty. Marcion therefore held his doctrine to be self-evident. The opposition he encountered must have seemed to him like a very mysterious enigma, and yet he could not help seeking an explanation.

The only possible explanation was that of a difference in essence. He must have thought that he and his followers were of a higher status than his opponents, that the latter had one less sense, and that, lacking this sense, certain realities eluded them of which he, Marcion, and his followers had a clear perception. Now the dissertation on the Spirit explains to us that, to understand the things of God, it is necessary to be a spiritual man, i.e. to have received the Spirit, and that for the animal man, for the carnal man, spiritual things are a folly (II, 10, 12, 14) or, in any case, are incomprehensible (III, 1, 3). It translates exactly the thoughts which must have agitated Marcion when he saw opponents rising up against him. It adds (II, 15) that "the spiritual man judges all things and is judged by no one". And this again corresponds to the state of mind of Marcion, who could not believe for a moment in the competence of his opponents and recognized no other authority than that of God.

22

The name of the apostle Peter played a considerable role in the Marcionite controversy. The initiative probably came from Marcion himself who, having attacked Peter as the representative of the Twelve and of vulgar Christianity, forced the Catholics to defend him. What is certain, in any case, is that Marcion's opponents put into the mouth of Christ oracles that presented Peter as the head of the Church. It was then that the famous texts "You are Peter" and "Feed my sheep" made their entrance, one in Matthew, the other in the fourth gospel.

This brings us back to the "party of Cephas". The presence of this party in Corinth is inexplicable. We now have the key to the mystery. There was no party of Cephas in Corinth in the years 52-55. But around 140 there were Christians who, in order to defend their attacked faith, put it under the patronage of the apostle Peter, who venerated Peter as the plenipotentiary minister of Christ, who professed to obey only Peter. The party of Cephas, which did not exist in Corinth during Paul's lifetime, existed a century later in the churches of Asia Minor and in Rome. It is he who is denounced here and who is denounced by an enemy. The author of this fantasy only half deceives us, since he warns us elsewhere that he has deliberately made the transposition.

23

He forbids Christians (III, 21-22) to put their glory in men; whether these men are Paul, Apollos or Cephas. He displays great modesty. He does not want to be a leader: "Everything is yours, be it Paul...". But let us not be fooled by the artifice. Since he, Paul, has received the Spirit of God (II, 12) and is a "spiritual" man, all Christians who have received the Spirit of God, who are "spiritual", will necessarily judge as he does; and those who do not judge as he does will, by this very fact, be convinced that they are men devoid of the Spirit. From the axiom so pompously formulated in III, 21-22, only one thing remains, namely, that Christians should not put their glory in Cephas. Marcion was quite of this opinion.

24

Let us now look at III, 10-15, which in severe terms asks that inflammable materials not be placed on the foundation of Christ. If we consider only the context, it is Apollos who is targeted here. But let us not forget that we are in the middle of a transposition. The Apollos who is targeted is the Catholic clergy of around 140. The historical Apollos intervenes only to "symbolize" this collective character. And the censor who mortifies him is Marcion "symbolized" by Paul. Marcion believes that the good God, who does not punish anyone, will only preserve his own, that is, those who believe in him, from the blows of the Creator and will abandon the others to him. He believes that the "day" of the Creator will soon come with its procession of flames, and he threatens with these flames the one whose construction will include combustible materials, i.e. the one whose teaching will contain Judaic elements. He will be punished by the Creator who will satisfy his anger on him. He will be a victim of fire.

This fate is in the logic of things. So we are surprised to read later that he will be saved, but by fire, as if fire could be an agent of salvation. Here we are in the presence of a reworking. The original text said: "He whose work burns will be punished by the game". The Catholic editor added: "But he himself will be saved". And, to adapt this salvation to fire, he has used the particle "but as" (*outōs dé ôs*) intended to act as a connector 1.

1. The expression "by fire" (*dia puros*), which is not preceded by a verb marking a movement, attributes to fire the role of cause. Now fire can be a cause of punishment, but not a cause of salvation, so the result sought is not obtained. But the intention was there,

25

It remains for me to say two words about the essay which begins at IV, 9 and extends to the end of the chapter. It first describes, in moving terms, the lamentable fate to which the apostles are condemned on this earth, and the resignation with which they endure all their sufferings. Then Paul informs the Corinthians that he has sent Timothy to them and that this beloved son is to remind them of the way in which he, Paul, teaches in all the churches.

In reality, Paul does not know for sure whether Timothy will pass through Corinth (XVI, 10); he has therefore not sent him to that city. In any case, the Corinthians, where Paul stayed for eighteen months, know firsthand what the apostle teaches and how he teaches. Moreover, if by any chance there was anything new to learn, they would learn it from Paul himself, who was to spend the next winter among them (XVI, 6-7). And there should be no danger of this happening, since for several years the apostle did not consider it useful to communicate this additional information to the Corinthians. The mission entrusted to Timothy is fictitious.

26

The dissertation IV, 9-21, is part of the great thesis I, 17-IV, 7 from which it is separated by IV, 8. Paul continues his role as a symbol. To the followers of the spiritual Christ he speaks with the

tenderness of a father. But, in front of the rebels, his voice becomes severe, and, standing up with majesty, he threatens them with the rod.

26

the incestuous one

Chapter V deals first with a stain that defiles the church in Corinth. Among the Christians of that city there is an incestuous person. The fact is based on incontrovertible testimony: "It is commonly said that there is fornication among you..." The Corinthians should have felt a sense of consternation. They should have been ashamed and quickly expelled from their bosom the member that dishonored them. Instead, they are proud of their church and the incestuous one has never ceased to be admitted to their assemblies.

Paul gives them the rebuke they deserve: "And you are full of pride! And did you not rather grieve so that the one who did this would be removed from you? He then shows that, if the guilty party is not cast out of the community, his example will be contagious, and he illustrates this fact by the comparison of leaven, a particle of which is sufficient to make the dough rise. He concludes (7):

27

"Get rid of the old leaven so that you may be a new dough," which means, "Cast out the guilty from your bosom."

1. He is delivered to Satan.

So Paul instructs the Corinthians to cast out of their society the member who dishonors them. But before taking this step in 7, we see him in 3-5 deliver the guilty one to Satan himself for the destruction of the flesh and the salvation of the spirit. Why this mixture of extreme severity and leniency that results in the destruction of the flesh and the salvation of the spirit? And then how will the destruction of the flesh serve the salvation of the spirit? Finally, what is the point of entrusting to the Corinthians the fate of a wretch whom Satan is already charged with killing! All this is very complicated and confused.

The real solution to the difficulty consists in distinguishing several redactions. What belongs to Paul is verse 7 in which the Corinthians are ordered to expel the incestuous one from their meetings. The delivery of the culprit to Satan is a measure taken after Paul. This delivery itself, in the form it has today, was done in two stages. The incestuous one was first delivered to Satan, that is to say to the evil God "for his perdition": this is the work of the Marcionite editor.

Then the Catholic editor intervened. This one, for whom Satan was a celestial spirit revolted against God, did not want to leave the last word to this character and he found a favorable outcome to the delivery. According to him the incestuous one is delivered to Satan, for the perdition of "the flesh so that the spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus."

28

2. The previous letter.

In 9-13 Paul refers to and interprets a "letter" according to which all contact with fornicators is to be avoided. The interpretation he gives is both restrictive and extensive. Restrictive, it explains that the only culprits to be avoided are those who call themselves "brothers", that is, those who are part of the Christian community, because they alone are subject to the jurisdiction of Christians and can be judged by them. As for the guilty "outside", God alone has the right to judge them. It is extensive, explaining that impure people are not the only members of the Christian community whose contact must be avoided, but that this measure extends to thieves, drunkards, blasphemers and idolaters.

Commentators have been very puzzled by this "letter" to which Paul refers here. It is generally thought to be a reference to an earlier letter, now lost, in which the apostle had, in summary terms, commanded the faithful to break off all relations with fornicators. Some, however, believe that Paul does not refer to an earlier letter, but simply explains the first verses of chapter V of our epistle, in which he enjoins the Corinthians to keep the incestuous away from their community. This last opinion, I hasten to say, has little credence among commentators and deserves none, for it is simply a paradox."

29

But the common opinion is not without serious difficulties. And first of all, if the apostle had, by a previous writing, regulated the situation of the impure, this regulation should have left some trace in the history of the incestuous which is reported to us at the beginning of chapter V. As soon as the infamous conduct of one of their number came to their attention, the Christians of Corinth would have hastened to carry out the apostolic instructions and to expel the guilty party from their community.

Let us suppose, however, that through some deplorable negligence they had forgotten the regulation sent by Paul; in any case, Paul would have remembered it and reminded them of it in order to clear his responsibility. He would have written to them something like this: "By continuing to admit the incestuous man to your meetings and to treat him as one of your own, you have violated my most formal orders since, in a previous letter, I decided that you should expel from your bosom all impure persons." So what does he do? He reproaches the Corinthians for remaining indifferent in the presence of a fault which the pagans themselves would not want to commit; he reminds them of the laws of modesty and also of solidarity - he

warns them that the evil has a contagious action; he enjoins them to expel immediately the incestuous. But he does not say a word about the regulations he had previously issued, which the Corinthians had not carried out, or about the disregard of his orders of which they had been guilty. And this silence is inconceivable.

Let us now consider in itself the regulation of the previous letter. Certainly it is wise, it is just. It is easy to understand that Paul, concerned about the good name of the Christian communities, prescribed the expulsion of fornicators. But fornication is not the only vice which is likely to dishonour a corporation. Other vices, notably drunkenness and theft, also honor it. And societies that value public esteem eliminate those of their members who have not maintained a reputation for sobriety and honesty. Why did Paul, when he legislated against the fornicators, not associate them with the drunkards and thieves? In the letter that we have, he says in substance this to the Corinthians: "I enjoined you before to expel the impure; I add today that you must also expel the drunkards, the thieves, the *idolâ-très*". He makes up for his forgetfulness. But he had made this oversight, and this is what we cannot understand as long as we attribute V, 9-13 to Paul. Let us look for another solution.

31

Verses V, 9-13 come from an unknown second-century person who fictitiously took the name of Paul. And this is how 9-13 relates to 1-7.

Paul, whose whole program was the restoration of the kingdom of Israel to Jesus, left moral questions out of his horizon. But he did not want the small Christian group to become an object of ridicule for Jews and Gentiles. When, three years after his departure, the affair of the incestuous man came to his attention, he immediately saw the advantage that the pagans were going to draw from a scandal which, as he himself said, was unknown among them. He enjoined the Corinthians to expel the guilty party from their society, but he did not blame them for not having taken the initiative themselves. In decreeing this measure, he did not regulate the general situation of the impure in front of the Christian communities, he did not act as a legislator; he ruled on a particular case, he did what a doctor does when he removes a gangrenous member.

Later, in the second century, in a large Christian community, probably that of Rome, where vices including idolatry flourished freely, a reader concerned with the moral problem took on the mission of remedying the degeneracy he had witnessed and raising the level of morals. To ensure the success of his undertaking, he put it under the name of Paul and, to give credence to this lie, he presented his work as a continuation of the measure enacted by the apostle. Full of these thoughts, he distorted, without suspecting it, the meaning and scope of V, 2, 7 where Paul, after having blamed the Corinthians for not having rid themselves of the incestuous one, enjoins them to no longer allow this sad character to take part in their meetings. He thought he saw in these texts a legislation regulating in a general way the fate of all the impure and, in the light of this fanciful interpretation which was also the utilitarian interpretation, he carried out his project.

Having settled the fate of the impure, Paul was naturally led to continue his work of purification and to remove from the Christian assemblies all other unworthy members. This is what he does in section 9-13, the meaning of which is as follows: "I have commanded you to exclude from your meetings those who are unchaste. I now add that you must also expel drunkards, thieves, idolaters and, in general, all those whose external conduct is a scandal. In short, the previous letter to which 9 refers is indeed V, 1-7; but the author of this reference is not Paul, as some commentators have believed, but a reformer of the second century who has attached to Paul's text (7) a course in morality.

33

This lecture continues in VI, with the deduction of overloads which will be pointed out in the notes. After having said: "Put away the evil one from among you", the author adds VI, 9b: "Neither the impure nor the idolaters... will possess the kingdom of God". In this list we find the terms we have already encountered in V, 11. The fornication on which attention is then concentrated gives rise to the following observations VI, 13: "God will destroy the food as well as the belly". Christians whose bodies are the members of Christ must not unite with prostitutes; they must not become one body with prostitutes, they who are one spirit with the Lord. They are to flee from fornication and glorify God in their bodies, remembering that they have been redeemed at a great price.

The "redemption" is a product of the Marcionite theology that the good God came to earth and sacrificed his life to wrestle men from the Creator's control. It was also in Marcionite theology that Christ was a "spirit" and that the Christian became one spirit with Christ. The instruction V, 9-VI, 20 is of Marcionite origin.

This observation gives us the true meaning of V:13 where it speaks of an "Evil One" whom the Corinthians must expel from their community. This "Evil One" is the Creator God, of whom the fourth gospel says in XII, 31 that he will be "expelled from the world". Let us add that this Marcionite instruction, cut by several enclaves which we will find indicated in the notes, has come down to us in a Catholic edition.

34

3. Christ the paschal lamb.

Let us now turn to the examination of a very short oracle contained entirely in V, 7b-8. Paul has just told the Corinthians to get rid of the old leaven that would make the whole dough ferment, in other words to expel from their meetings the incestuous one whose contact could be pernicious to all. He adds:

You are unleavened. For our paschal lamb is Christ who was slain. So let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and perversity, but with the unleavened bread of purity and truth.

What does the expulsion of the incestuous have to do with the Passover? And in what way does the celebration of Easter ("let us celebrate", eortazōmen) come into play here? In the preceding lines Paul has appealed to the laws of natural decency to get the Corinthians to expel an unworthy member from their meetings. If, in addition to this first consideration, he wanted to add another, did he have nothing better to present than the Passover, whose feast was once a year? But above all, what is the Paschal lamb doing here? Why does Paul use this memory? And why does he insist on explaining that what is important for "celebrating the feast" are "the unleavened bread of purity and truth?"

35

The oracle 7b-8 has no bearing on the case of the incestuous man. In order to find a plausible meaning for it, it must be put before Christians who are attached to the Judaic rites of the Paschal lamb and unleavened bread, Christians who are convinced that the Christian Passover consists, like the Jewish Passover, in eating the lamb and unleavened bread. But with these Judaizing Christians everything becomes clearer.

Our text gives us a glimpse of the arguments that these backward disciples of Moses were using, and it answers them. They referred to the text of Exodus XII:31, which prescribes the sacrifice of the paschal lamb (text of the LXX thusate to pasqa). They referred to the Mosaic ordinances which prescribe eating unleavened bread and putting away old leaven. He answers first of all that the paschal lamb of the Christians, "ours" to pasqa èmôn, is Christ, and that this lamb has been sacrificed, etuthé Christos. He then answers that the old leaven that must be put away is the leaven of iniquity, and that the unleavened bread that must be eaten is the unleavened bread of purity and truth.

36

It remains to be seen whether Christians attached to the Jewish Passover have existed. They did exist. We know this from the letter of Polycrates to Victor (Eusebius, 5, 24, 2 and 6) in which we read:

Always my parents celebrated the day when the people put away the leaven.

Polycrates, when the Passover arrived, put aside the leaven and ate unleavened food. He observed the Mosaic ordinances and therefore ate the paschal lamb. Polycrates wrote his letter around 190. At that time, Christians attached to the Jewish Passover were found, with very few exceptions, only in Asia Minor. But fifty years earlier they had been found elsewhere. It is to them that the oracle V, 7b-8 is directed. He wants to "dejaize" the Christian Passover. It is of Marcian origin; it was written around 140 1.

1. See Ephesians to the Romans, p. 82.

These texts, one sees, do not contain trace of casuistry; they do not decide that such principle of morals has or does not have its application in such given case; they formulate, let us say that they promulgate in didactic terms the principles of the licitness of marriage, of its indissolubility, of the licitness of the second marriage. From this it follows that the questions asked were also confined to the area of principles. And so we arrive at the result I had announced: Paul spent eighteen months among the Christians of Corinth without speaking to them about the lawfulness of marriage, its indissolubility, the lawfulness of second marriages. During the first three years after his departure, the Corinthians divorced without scruples 1.

41

1. The answer suggests that the indissolubility of marriage was frequently violated, and this is one of the clues which prove, as I said above, that the letter is addressed to a very large church; but how can this practice of divorce be reconciled with scruples about the licitness of marriage and second marriages? I limit myself to pointing out here the problem of which I will try later to give the key.

After three years, however, they suspected that their moral education was not without gaps, and they invited the apostle to complete it.

Two other problems were written on the questionnaire. One had to do with the suspension of marital relations, the other with mixed marriages. Let us deal with the latter first.

Some Christians had pagan spouses; belatedly, they asked if these unions could be maintained. Paul answers (12-16). From the distinctions he makes, and especially from the concern he has to justify his decisions with sound arguments, it is clearer here than elsewhere that he is faced with a new problem and that the question of mixed marriages had never before been raised before him. Why is this so? There is only one possible explanation for this, and that is that during his stay among the Corinthians, he had not come across a single example of a pagan spouse married to a Christian, and that mixed marriages had waited for his departure from Corinth before making their appearance in that city.

42

Were they contracted after the apostle's departure? It is impossible to stop at this solution, since the spouses in question have holy children, that is to say, children brought up as Christians and, consequently, already out of infancy.¹ These marriages are therefore old; what is new in them is the conversion of one of the spouses. The question comes from men and women who had been married for a long time, who for a long time had remained pagans, who, since Paul's departure,

have adhered to Christianity without being followed by their spouses, and who do not know if they should remain with their spouses or abandon them.

1. Estius admits: "Paul speaks of adult sons being brought up in a holy and chaste manner by parents living with them." Now the children of marriages contracted after Paul's departure were at most two years old.

43

This is what the question must be to fit Paul's story. But does the text allow this interpretation? It describes a situation that occurs frequently and of which there are already many examples. This is especially true of 14: "Otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. The people to whom these words are addressed, i.e. Christians with Gentile spouses, necessarily constitute a significant portion of the Corinthian church. The conversion of one spouse to the exclusion of the other has always been a very rare occurrence, and mixed marriages achieved in this way have always been exceptional. Normally and according to the ordinary course of things, what produced the said marriages was the union of a man who was previously a Christian, of a woman who was previously a Christian, with a pagan spouse. The text therefore knows only of mixed marriages contracted after Paul's departure. The question it asks does not fit the history of the apostle. It is artificial.

Besides those who do not know what to think of mixed marriages, the questionnaire shows us others who are worried about marital relationships and who ask whether they should not be suppressed. I said earlier that Paul - if only his propaganda had a religious character - could not have failed to preach the legitimacy of marriage, that is, to give a teaching which made such scruples impossible. But let us suppose that he kept silent on one of the fundamental points of Christian morality. In any case, during his eighteen months in Corinth, he never said anything against conjugal relations. The faithful freely exercised their rights as spouses. How could they not see that the apostle's silence was tantamount to approval? And how, three years after Paul's departure, did they have any concerns about a kind of life against which Paul had never protested? The least we can say is that these late scruples are very suspicious scruples.

2. The answers.

So far I have only dealt with the questions. It is time to get to know the answers. Let us first address 28b. Paul has just spoken about those who marry. He adds, "These will have affliction in the flesh; I will spare you that. How does he spare them? By advising against marriage; for we recognize today that this is the meaning of his text 1. It remains to be seen whether this will continue.

1. Estius admits: "he advises continence".

It continues. Here, in fact, is what we read:

"The time is short; let those who have wives be as if they had none. What does this mean? According to theologians, it means that spouses should use marriage sparingly and only for the procreation of children. But if we take the advice of common sense, we can clearly see that this text calls for the complete suppression of conjugal relations. Earlier people were advised not to marry; here people who have entered into marriage are strongly advised to leave it.

This continues. In 32-35, in the opinion of theologians themselves, the author notes that marriage harms the service of God, hinders it, diminishes it and contains impurities. Consequently, he turns the faithful away from marriage, he turns them away from it in their own interest. He urges them to celibacy. He puts a model before their eyes. And this model that he would like them to reproduce is himself (7).

Here is the solution that Paul gives to the problem of conjugal relationships. Let us rather say: this is one solution. For there is another solution, formulated in a peremptory tone in 2-6. Here every man must have his wife, every woman must have her husband; the spouses must maintain conjugal relations; if they are authorized to suppress these relations, this suppression must be only momentary; the momentary suppression itself is granted only by way of tolerance, for it is to this that verse 6 applies: "I say this by way of permission, not by way of commandment"; and this regime is presented as the only dam capable of stopping an overflow of fornications and adulteries.

Let us try to reconcile 2-6 with 28b-35. Here is the result we get: "Where there is no marriage there is debauchery, and the only way to escape debauchery is to practice married life.

Therefore, I do not command you to marry, but out of condescension I tolerate that you enter into marriage (verse 6 is usually presented as the commentary to 2). However, consider the disadvantages of married life; when you have thought it over, I hope that those of you who are married will renounce marital relations, and that those who are not married will remain single. Isn't this formidable cock-a-doodle-do the proof by the absurd that one is on the wrong track when he insists on reconciling the two essays and uses 6 for this conciliation attempt?

The proof is there. There are in chapter VII two doctrines concerning marriage, two doctrines which contradict each other, since the one advises against marriage while the other prescribes it, and which cannot therefore emanate from the same author. We are in the presence of two writers who came at different times. The younger one has corrected his elder; he has corrected him for the right reason, that is, to interpret him, to complete him. It is only a question of knowing where the original writing is, where the interpolation is. This is a problem that we have already encountered and that we know how to solve.

The first redaction, the one that had to be interpreted by correcting it, is the one that advises against marriage, the one that is marked by Marcionite mysticism. It dates from around 140. Fifteen or twenty years later a Catholic theologian, full of admiration for this sublime moral which circulated under the name of Paul, but all the same worried about the excesses to which it could lead, felt obliged in conscience to add an explanatory commentary to it, a commentary which he put in the foreground to serve as an introduction. We begin by learning that marriage is obligatory, that the separation of the spouses is authorized by tolerance and only for a very short time. With these guiding principles we can climb the peaks of Marcionite morality with a sure footing.

So at the base of chapter VII is a Marcionite redaction which was later corrected and completed. Here is how we can reconstruct the original text:

1 b. It is good for a man not to touch a woman. 7 I would that all men were like me; but each one has his gift from God, one in one way and another in another. 8 I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them to remain like me. 9 But if they cannot contain themselves, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn. 28b But they will have tribulations in the flesh, and I would like to spare you from them. 29 This I say to you, brethren, that the time is short, so that in the future those who have wives may be as if they had none; 30 that those who weep may be as if they did not weep, those who rejoice as if they did not rejoice, those who buy as if they did not possess, and those who use this world as if they did not enjoy it, for the appearance of this world is passing away. 32 I would have you be carefree. He who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, about pleasing the Lord; 33 but he who is married is concerned about the things of the world, about pleasing his wife, 34 and he is divided. So it is with the married woman and the virgin. The unmarried woman is concerned about the things of the Lord, to be holy in body and spirit. But she who is married is concerned about the things of the world, about pleasing her husband. 35 I say this for your benefit; not to set a trap for you, but to lead you to what is right and proper to cleave to the Lord without distraction.

This is the framework in which the Catholic writer has inserted his corrections and additions. In order to prepare the reader for this, he has imagined a questionnaire sent by the Corinthians to the apostle who is supposed to answer it and who lets us know: "Concerning the things of which you have written to me." The first essay that deals with the legitimacy of marital relations, 2-7, hangs on the first sentence of the early writing lb. I have studied its content above.

A word here only about "Satan" in verse 5. This character, who in Marcionite theology designates the Creator, has obtained, as we know, the right to be cited in Catholic theology after having been previously transformed into a spirit in revolt against God. Verse VII, 5 is one of the first witnesses to this metamorphosis.

A second essay, 10-16, establishes the principle of the indissolubility of marriage, but derogates from it in favor of the Christian whose unfaithful spouse separates.

In 17-24 we find a third essay that prescribes Christians to remain in the situation they were in when they came to the Christian faith. Verses 25-28a are fittings intended to bring the rest of the early essay along smoothly. In 2-7 the Catholic corrector has explained to us that every man must have his wife, every woman must have her man, and that both, except for temporary interruptions, must lend themselves to the conjugal act. However, from 28b onwards, he is obliged to transcribe the primitive wording which advocates continence. How to reconcile these antinomies? He finds a way out by means of an ingenious idea formulated in verse 26: "because of the difficult times that are approaching, it is good for a man to be so". What this means is this:

"I have asked that all should marry and perform the conjugal act; however, because of the persecution that is coming, I allow you the following (this is the meaning of the expression "to be so"): those who are married should remain married, those who are not should not marry. This is my way of thinking (25) which is not based on a command from the Lord." The connection is not very satisfactory; but we must take into account the situation in which the author has placed himself by inserting verses 2-7 into the original writing.

The piece 36-38 is very obscure. Usually one hears it from the father whose daughter is past the age of puberty, and who thinks of marrying her off to cut short the malicious interpretations that public malignity might give rise to. But in the text it is simply a question of a man and his virgin and not of a father and his daughter. We are around 165. At that time there were "under-introduced" in the Christian communities, that is, Christian virgins living together with Christians (Hermas, Sim. X, 10, 12). The author assumes that a Christian is passionately in love with his companion and allows him to marry her.

The last two verses allow second marriages. The author who gives permission adds: "And I also believe that I have the Spirit of God. He is targeting teachers who claimed to be inspired by the Spirit of God to condemn second marriages. These teachers were the Montanists. Our two verses belong to the anti-Montanist polemic.

MEAT DEDICATED TO IDOLS

Chapters VIII-X deal with what to do about meat from pagan sacrifices, and they offer two different theses on this problem. The first comprises the whole of chapter VIII, continues in IX, 19-27 and ends in X, 23-31. The second begins at X, 1 and ends at 22.

1. First thesis.

The first thesis first examines whether the Christian can take part in the feasts which take place in the pagan temples. While giving a negative solution to the question, it brings in considerations marked by great liberalism.

The creation of the world was carried out under the orders of God the Father by Jesus. The Father who commanded the creation of the world is the only God; Jesus who made the creation in accordance with the Father's will is the only Lord, that is, the only master of the world. The idols are nothing; the consecration of meat to them in sacrifices is nothing; eating meat consecrated to idols, eating it in a pagan temple is an indifferent act: this is what science says.

52

"But not all have science." There are "weak" people who imagine that idols are something. These weaklings, when they see the enlightened Christian sitting at table in a temple of idols, will lose faith. This evil must be avoided. For the sake of the weak, the enlightened Christian must refrain from going to the temples to partake of the feasts where meat consecrated to idols is eaten. To follow this line of conduct, he need only follow the example of Paul (IX, 19-27) who became a Jew with the Jews, weak with the weak, who in view of the incorruptible crown submitted himself to the hard discipline imposed by athletes to obtain a corruptible crown.

From X, 23 two other cases of conscience are discussed: one of them has to do with meat offered for sale on the market, the other with the invitations to dinner which a Christian can receive from pagan friends. The meat one meets in the market may have come from a victim sacrificed in the pagan temple. What should we do? Similarly, the meat that the Christian finds on the table of the pagan who invited him to dinner may have come from the pagan temple. What is to be done? The author, always very liberal, allows the Christian to eat whatever is presented to him, with the restriction that the weak must not be scandalized,

53

2. Second thesis.

The second thesis begins by mentioning the punishments inflicted in the past on the guilty Israelites and by recommending to Christians to behave well or else they will be punished in their turn, and then it deals with the meats consecrated to idols. We hear a different sound.

Without doubt, here again the idol is nothing and the consecration of meats to it is nothing. But behind the idol which is nothing, there is the demon which is something. To sit at the feasts where one eats the meats consecrated to idols is to sit at the table of the demons, it is to drink from the cup of the demons, it is to put oneself in communion with the demons. Such an act would provoke the Lord's jealousy. Previously, the feasts intended for the consumption of meat from pagan sacrifices were innocent, and respect for the weak was the only obstacle that could

prevent the enlightened Christian from attending them. Here these same feasts offend the Lord, because they place those who participate in them in communion with demons.

The two instructions on meat consecrated to idols presented to us in chapters VIII-X contradict each other: they come from two different authors. Let us try to establish the date of their writing.

Among the Christians to whom they are addressed, there are some weaklings who imagine that idols are something. There are others, on the contrary, who, assuming that idols are nothing, go to pagan temples to partake of feasts. Now the Corinthians whom Paul brought to Christianity were either Jews by birth or, at any rate, proselytes, that is to say, men and women who, even before they entered Christianity, believed in the existence of the one God and were fully convinced of the vanity of idols. Moreover, these Christians, at the time when they attended the synagogue, had a deep aversion to the pagan temples, they would never have wanted to enter them. And it is hard to understand how their entry into Christianity would have lessened their intransigence.

54

Will it be said that the Corinthian Christians of the year 52 were not all former Jews by birth or education and that there were former pagans among them? So be it. But who will believe that Paul, after having converted the pagans - in any case, not many - neglected to educate them, that he did not, on the one hand, show them the vanity of idols, that he did not, on the other hand, instruct them never to enter the pagan temples? What did he use his eighteen months of apostolate among the Corinthians for if he did not teach them these elementary notions? The instructions on idolatrous meats are not Paul's. They were written for a church that was not a church. They were written for a church whose members of pagan origin were, not generally but quite commonly, in profound ignorance since they still believed in the reality of idols. This situation could only have occurred in a very large community where the leaders were unable to teach their flock. Other members of the community were feasting at idol temples and making friends with pagans. This laxity, too, can only be well explained in a large community where there was not the jealous supervision that small groups show. And to find large communities, we must go back to the second century. The instructions on meat consecrated to idols belong to the second century.

55

Moreover, they are both of Catholic origin, since one attributes creation to Jesus acting under the orders of the Father, and the other identifies the God of the Israelites with the God of Christians. They may have followed each other some twenty years apart, and the first of them may have been composed in Rome around 150 A.D. Hermas (Mand. X, 1, 4; Simil. VIII, 9, 3) speaks of Christians in Rome enjoying themselves in the society of pagans.

3. Participation in the body of the Lord.

A word about the second instruction which, as I have said, seeks to demonstrate that participation in the feasts given in pagan temples after the sacrifices puts the one who is guilty of this in communion with the demons. The demonstration is made with the help of several arguments, one of which (16) starts from the fact that the blessed cup in the Christian assembly is "a communion with the blood of Christ", and that the broken bread in the same assembly is "a communion with the body of Christ". The conclusion that is implied is this: since the cup and bread of the Christian assembly put Christians in communion with the body and blood of the Lord, the meats consecrated to idols also put those who eat them in communion with demons (16, 19).

But why does participation in the cup and bread put the faithful in communion with the body and blood of Christ? We are not told. The fact is affirmed, it is not proven here. For proof we must go to XI, 23-25 where the institution of the Lord's Supper by Jesus is recounted. The author of our instruction, which can hardly be earlier than about 170, uses the account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, not to interpret it, not to say how it should be understood, but only to prove his thesis, that is, to demonstrate that meat consecrated to idols puts those who eat it in communion with demons. Let us do as he does. Let us not try to find out what "This is my body" means. Let us reserve this question for chapter XI, where we shall find it again.

57

THE LIVELIHOOD OF PREACHERS

In chapter IX there is an essay (1-18) about the sustenance of preachers of the Gospel. It consists of two parts.

In the first part, which runs from 1 to 14 with the exception of 12b, Paul establishes by various considerations that Christian communities have a strict obligation to provide for the maintenance of their ministers. In the other, which runs from 15 to 18 with the addition of 12b, the apostle declares himself ready to die rather than claim anything for himself and receive any salary; on the contrary, he makes a point of preaching the gospel free of charge.

Since Paul does not want to be a burden to anyone, he does not plead for the right of preachers to receive a living. So it is with amazement that we read in 11 and 12a:

If we have sown spiritual goods among you, is it such a big deal that we reap your material goods? If others enjoy this right over you, is it not rather for us to enjoy it?

58

In these texts Paul is not content with establishing the right, he also claims the enjoyment or, what amounts to the same thing, the exercise of this right. And he claims this exercise for himself as well as for his companions. Moreover, any doubts that might still remain are dispelled by verse 6, which reads: "Are we alone, I and Barnabas, who do not have the right not to work? This text is absolutely inexplicable except as a riposte to the reproaches made by the Corinthians against the conduct of Paul and Barnabas. And the scene, illuminated by verse 5, is this: "You complain about Barnabas and me, you murmur against us because we are your dependents. See what the apostles do, including James, the Lord's brother, including Cephas. They live at the expense of the communities they evangelize. Each one of them is even accompanied by a sister who serves as his wife and this woman is also fed by the communities. Why do you want to condemn Barnabas and me to provide for ourselves, while the apostles do not have to do this?

Let us conclude. The first part of the essay on the subsistence of preachers is in flagrant opposition to the second. It also violently contradicts the second epistle to the Corinthians (XI, 7-8; XII, 7) where Paul declares that he preached the gospel free of charge and was not a burden to anyone. This plea in favor of the preachers is not the work of Paul, and the interests defended there are not the interests of Paul, but the interests of a corporation fulfilling functions similar to those which Paul performed. The essay IX, 1-14 was written to defend the interests of the Christian clergy, to prove that the clergy have a right to be fed by the faithful. It uses the name of Paul to give the prestige of the great apostle to the arguments it puts forward. It borrows from the Acts of the Apostles the small historical or legendary elements which it takes to its service; it only forgets that Paul and Barnabas did not live together in Corinth. The essay IX, 1-14 is a fiction invented at the time and in the environment where the question of the subsistence of the clergy first arose.

59

Now here is what a controversialist of the second century, Apollonius, says about Montan (Eusebius, 5, 18, 2):

He established collectors of money. Under the name of offerings he organized the collection of donations. He provided salaries for the preachers of the doctrine in order to provide the teaching of religion with the support of good food... Is it not clear that the Scripture forbids prophets to receive gifts and money? When I see the prophetess accepting gold, silver and expensive clothes, how can I not reject her?

60

Our essay was written in Montan's environment. And the allusion to the female sisters who accompanied the apostles is intended to legitimize the presence of the prophetesses alongside the apostles of the Holy Spirit.

The dissertation on the subsistence of preachers composed around 170 was inserted in the middle of the first instruction on meat consecrated to idols which, cut today into two sections VIII, 1-13; IX, 19-25, was originally in one piece (see p. 51). A few years later, towards 180, an unknown person shocked by the mercantilism which spread out in IX, 2-14, wrote under the name of Paul, a declaration inspired by an unreserved disinterestedness. This is what we read in 12b and 15-18.

The Eucharist

Chapter XI - when we have pruned verse 1, which ends the preceding piece and should close chapter X - begins with a praise: "I praise you", which is then tempered by a rebuke: "But I do not praise this". Probably in the present state of the text, the rebuke does not come until long after the praise (verse 17), from which it is separated by a dissertation on the veil of women. But originally it followed it immediately. I will speak later about the veil of women. For the moment I leave aside this intruder and take the text as it originally stood.

61

1. The banquet.

Paul's rebuke of the Corinthians' meetings is: "I do not praise this, that you meet not for the better but for the worse. So the Corinthians have meetings that leave something to be desired. What are these meetings? And what is the evil in them? Let's get some details. For that purpose, neglecting for the moment the more or less obscure, more or less mysterious texts which we will soon find again, let us address ourselves first to those whose clarity excludes all contestation, all equivocation. Here are some which seem to fulfill these conditions:

21 Each one takes his own meal first, when you eat, and one is hungry while the other is drunk.
22b You shame those who have nothing. What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I do not praise you. 33 Therefore, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.

So the Corinthian Christians have meetings "to eat", that is to say, meetings whose only purpose, the only one mentioned, is to feast together. These meetings "for eating" are, in themselves, nothing but very legitimate and no criticism could be directed against them if only the guests were expecting each other. But they don't. This is where the disorder is; disorder that will disappear when they expect each other. This is the meaning of verse 33, which does not say: "Stop meeting to eat", but: "When you meet to eat, wait for one another".

64

Let us not conclude that all religious elements are absent. The Jews, as we know, included in their meals thanksgiving to God for having placed at their disposal nourishing bread and wine. And on feast days, these thanksgivings took on a more solemn character¹. Now the first Christians were, before their conversion, either Jews by origin or former pagans who had joined Judaism as proselytes. At the time when they professed the Jewish religion, they sanctified their meals by adding a prayer. When they became Christians, they did not give up the traditional practice. Why would they abandon it? The corporate banquet of the Corinthian Christians was therefore accompanied by a prayer, and this prayer had to be surrounded by a pompous apparatus on certain days. But it was nonetheless profane in its purpose as well as in its origin. And it was vitiated by a selfishness against which Paul protests.

1. von der Goltz, Tischgebete uni abendmahlsgebete, p. 5-13.

2. The Lord's Supper.

But I have so far left verses 22a and 34 in the shade. Now we must give them the floor. The first one says: "Do you not have houses to eat and to drink?" And the second: "If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home". The first articulates a reproach at the same time as it notes an abuse; the second enacts a reform. The abuse consists in installing in the meetings meals that should be held only in the private houses. The reform prescribes that no more feasts should be held in the meetings. It tells the faithful to eat at home as they please, but not to turn the meetings into banquets. These two oracles protest against the meals in the meetings and demand their immediate disappearance. They say to the faithful: "Feast at home, but not in the meetings." Unless one voluntarily closes one's eyes, one cannot fail to see the contrast of this legislation with the previous one. Earlier a criticism was made of the corporate meals of the Corinthian Christians, and a reform was called for. But the blame was only directed at the selfishness of some of the guests; once the selfishness had disappeared, the meal was nothing but blameless. Here it is the meal itself which is at issue, it is the meal which vitiates the meetings and which must not leave the home of each faithful. There is an irreducible opposition.

Let us examine this essay which works to banish banquets from Christian meetings. And first let us try to identify the principle in the name of which it is campaigning. That principle is stated in terse terms in verse 20: "This is not eating the Lord's supper. Let us develop this turn of phrase. Here is what he means: "Your duty in your common meetings is to eat the Lord's Supper. But to feast as you do is not to eat the Lord's Supper. Therefore, banish from your meetings those meals that desecrate them odiously.

1 In rejecting the term "meal", I am conforming to the intention of the author who uses, it is true, the word *delpnon*, but does not want this *deipnon* to be a meal.

But what is "the Lord's Supper"? What does it consist of? The following text answers these questions:

For I have received from the Lord what I have handed down to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night that he was betrayed, took bread and, when he had given thanks, broke it and said... Do this in memory of me. And likewise the cup after supper saying... Do this all the laws that you drink in remembrance of me. For all the laws that you eat this bread and drink from the cup, you profess the death of the Lord... Therefore he who eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty... Let each one discipline himself and eat the bread and drink from the cup.

According to this text the Lord's Supper is a rite that the Lord himself instituted. To eat the Lord's Supper is to do exactly what the Lord has instituted. Now the Lord, on the night when he was betrayed, took the bread and made the thanksgiving over it. He also took the cup and gave thanks for it. Then he distributed the bread and passed the cup around, commanding to do the same * in remembrance of his death. Therefore, in order to eat the Lord's Supper, one must eat the bread and drink from the cup "in this way" (28). (28). Thus, that is to say, no other food than the bread, no other drink than that of the common cup, should be introduced into the rite. Thus, that is to say, to eat the bread after it has received thanksgiving, to drink from the cup after it has also received thanksgiving, and to do these two acts "in remembrance" of Christ, in remembrance of his death, which we will profess.

This is why feasting "is not eating the Lord's Supper". There is an incompatibility between this and that because a feast, with the meat and drink with which it is charged, is a profane act usually accompanied by drunkenness; whereas the Lord's supper, with the bread and the cup which compose it exclusively, with the double thanksgiving which intervenes in it, especially with the commemoration of the Lord's death which is made in it, is essentially a religious act.

In two words, the Christian must eat the bread and drink the cup "thus", that is, in the manner prescribed by the Lord. But, to do this, he must first "discipline himself", not give in to his gluttonous instincts and not turn a religious act into a vulgar banquet.

3. Origin of the Lord's Supper.

Paul teaches here in what circumstances and for what purpose Christ instituted the Lord's Supper. He also declares that he had already taught the Corinthians this while he was among them: "What I have taught you".

What he taught, he could not fail to practice. So he celebrated the Lord's Supper. He celebrated it at least every week, and it goes without saying that he did so in full conformity with the

intentions of Christ. As long as he lived in Corinth, as long as he presided over the meetings of the faithful, no abuse was introduced. He left and, three years after his departure, nothing remained of the teachings he had given, of the customs he had established, of the regulations he had promulgated concerning the Lord's Supper. Everything is forgotten. The religious act par excellence has been transformed into an improper meal where "one is hungry when the other is drunk". No one has stopped the sacrilege, not the family of Stephanus, whose devotion Paul will soon praise (XVI, 15), not Fortunatus and Achaicus, whose praise he will make (XVI, 18), not all those prophets, not all those inspired people who (according to chapters XII and XIV, whose authenticity is universally accepted) are the organs of the Spirit. All of them have allowed themselves to be drawn into evil; the profanation has been general! How can one not see that such a situation is repugnant, that things could not have happened this way?

The text "what I have passed on to you", with all that it drags behind it, does not fit into the life of Paul. We had already noted that the essay on "the Lord's supper" contradicts texts 21 and 33, which speak of a corporate banquet. Those who were still hesitating, those who, before accepting this conclusion, were asking for more light, obtain satisfaction. The supplement they asked for is, I believe, given to them.

Do we want a third proof? We shall have it. Let us reread the formula with which the account of the institution of the Lord's Supper opens: "I have indeed received from the Lord what I have given you. For a long time critics did not pay attention to "I have received from the Lord". In 1887, Havet was the first to note that these strange words should be taken literally. According to him, Paul received directly and exclusively "from the Lord" the information he gives us about the institution of the Eucharist. "From the Lord", which means that he owes nothing to the immediate disciples of Jesus. "From the Lord" also means that Paul is playing the role of a visionary here and that he has drawn the elements of his account of the Lord's Supper from his exalted imagination. Today Havet's thesis is generally accepted and it is commonly said that the formula "I received from the Lord" refers to a vision.

70

This opinion seems to me to confuse two very different questions, namely what Paul may have preached during his stay in Corinth and what he may have written in his letter.

That he contemplated in his supposedly mystical imagination the picture of the first supper and then, with unreserved confidence, preached to the Corinthians the institution of the Eucharist by Christ, is not impossible. But between his departure from Corinth and his letter, something new happened. During his absence, a coterie took shape. Apollos was preferred to him; Cephas was even preferred to him, according to I, 12, III, 22, the authenticity of which is admitted by all critics. His authority has been beaten to a pulp. In the present state of mind, what authority does his vision have? For many Corinthians the patronage of Apollos (or Peter) would do much better. It is under this patronage that he should place himself; just as in XV, 11, whose authenticity is universally accepted, he declares himself to be the echo of the apostles.

If he cannot - and for good reason, since the Lord's Supper is his personal work - should he not be afraid of coming up against irreducible skepticism? For now that the suspicion has been aroused, he cannot conceal the fact that he will be objected to as follows: "Historical facts are not proven by visions but by testimony. If Christ had instituted the Eucharist at the time of his passion, the disciples who were there would know it. But those whom we have been able to question through intermediaries, know nothing of this august ceremony; they have seen nothing, heard nothing. Your vision can do nothing against their denials. This is the objection that the Corinthians will make, which Paul cannot fail to expect and before which he cannot remain indifferent. Now the statement "I have received from the Lord" shows him precisely in this attitude of indifference which he could not have had. For the third time the account of the institution of the Lord's Supper does not fit into the framework of Paul's life. The question can be considered definitively settled: he is not Paul.

71

Let us look for his origin. The text "I have received from the Lord" provides us with a valuable indication. It presents us with a vision; a vision which, it goes without saying, can only be fictional, since the whole piece is fictional. This detail is of capital importance. If the vision were genuine we would have no right to look for any ulterior motive; we should see in it the product of an exalted imagination and nothing more. But it is fictitious. He who constructed it has rigorously adapted it to the purpose for which it was intended; and to discover that purpose we have only to take the vision as it is presented to us.

72

It was granted to Paul, to him alone. Paul alone received the heavenly confidences as to the conduct of the faithful in their meetings, as to the "Lord's Supper" which should be celebrated there, as to the feasting which should be banished. The Twelve were left out of this favor. It is therefore Paul alone to whom the Christians must listen; it is according to his instructions that they must organize their meetings. The vision crystallized in the text "I have received from the Lord" is a maneuver intended to elevate Paul at the expense of the Twelve. Its author can only be an enemy of the Twelve. To find this enemy we must go to the school of Marcion. Paul's vision, the reforming legislation that it introduces, is of Marcionite origin.

From the beginning of the second century, the Christian banquet, probably for economic reasons, was, at least usually, frugal. This results from the text of Pliny:

ad capiendum cibum promiscuum tamen et innoxium1.

1. In the mind of the jurist Pliny, the word "innoxius" designates a meal which, by its frugality, does not contravene the sumptuary laws, in particular the Fannia law. Renan (*Les Evangiles*, p. 478) translates: "to take a meal together but an ordinary and perfectly innocent meal." It should be translated: "to take a meal together but one that is not illegal." (See Baumgartner, in *Zeitschrift für die katholische Theologie*, 33 (1909), 54).

But this frugality had not changed the profane character of the meal. Moreover, it sometimes underwent eclipses and Christian meetings were sometimes real feasts. Such was the situation when Marcion arrived. What did this great reformer do?

The banquet was so deeply rooted in the customs that its radical suppression seemed to him impossible. Obliged to maintain it, he introduced two transformations. First he reduced it to its simplest expression by admitting only bread with the common cup and by rigorously setting aside all that had the appearance of a feast. Then to this skeleton meal he gave a divine origin and a religious destination. He made the primitive banquet the "Lord's supper", that is to say a rite instituted by the Lord himself and celebrated in memory of the Lord's passion. Finally, he launched his institution under the name of Paul, who was supposed to hold it from the Lord.

Now that the capital thought of the Marcionite redaction is clear, let us point out the accessory ideas which accompany it. To it belongs verse 27a, according to which one is guilty when one eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, that is to say, by feasting and omitting to remember the Lord.

To her also must be attributed the verses 30-32 which point out many cases of sickness and death among Christians and present them as paternal punishments intended in the mind of God (the good God) to preserve his children from the fate reserved for the world. In the words of Paul, writing three years after his departure from Corinth, this multitude of sick and dead would require a Christian community of at least ten thousand souls. From the pen of a second century doctor with fifteen or twenty years of experience, these expressions would not necessarily require such a large church. The good God in question here chastises guilty Christians in order to bring them back to himself through repentance and not to be forced to abandon them with the world to the evil God¹.

1. This explanation applies only to the sick and leaves out the dead. It is therefore incomplete; but the author does what he can.

The reformation, initiated under the name of Paul, was inserted into the Marcionite edition of our epistle. Then its author made a summary of it which he inscribed in the Gospel of Luke. This happened around 140, at a time when the Marcionite groups had not yet been expelled from the Catholic communities. The latter accepted the edifying edition of the epistle and the gospel that was presented to them. However, after a few years they felt the need to make some additions. These are mentioned in the notes. But one of them, of capital importance, must be studied here.

4. This is my body.

In our present text Christ, after giving thanks for the bread and before formulating the injunction: "Do this in remembrance of me", says: "This is my body for you. Similarly, after giving thanks for the cup and before repeating the injunction: "Do this in remembrance of me", he says: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood". What are we to think of these two oracles?

That they have no connection with the precept which each of them follows.

It would be understandable if Christ had said: "This is my body for you; believe this. It would also be understandable if Christ had said: "This is my body for you: believe this: "This is my body for you: say that again when you have the Lord's Supper. But there is no connection between the two following propositions : " This is my body for you : do this in remembrance of me ". (same observation with regard to the cup).

When these two oracles have been set aside, we are faced with two gestures, one in which Christ gives thanks for the bread and then gives it to his disciples to eat, and the other in which Christ gives thanks for the cup and then gives it to drink. It is clearly to this double gesture that the double injunction refers: "Do this in memory of me. In remembrance of me, give thanks for the bread, then give it to eat. In remembrance of me, give thanks for the cup, then give it to drink.

76

The word "This is my body" violently separates the two parts of a sentence that want to be united and were originally united. It has been artificially introduced into a frame that was not made to receive it and which it breaks. It therefore does not have the same origin as the context that surrounds it. This observation applies to the cup.

These two oracles are, moreover, of Catholic origin; for in saying that the bread is the body of Christ, that the cup is the new covenant in his blood, they teach equivalently that Christ has a body, a body in which is blood, a carnal body similar to ours. Christ who is supposed to say that the bread is his body, that the cup is the covenant in his blood certainly wants to teach us that he is not a spiritual Christ, that he has a carnal body like ours. But how does he achieve the goal? This comes down to the precise meaning of "this is my body."

Let us ask Justin. In the Dialogue written around 165 this doctor mentions the Eucharist several times and, from the way he speaks of it, it is clear that he knows the text of the institution as we have it today. For the moment I will limit myself to quoting LXX, 4. In this passage, an oracle of Isaiah is spoken of -- which it is unnecessary to relate here -- and we learn that this oracle is to be understood as referring to the bread which our Christ commanded us to make in remembrance of the fact that he took on a body (*eīs anamnēsin tou sesōmatopoïesthaī auton*) for those who believe in him, for whom he also made himself a sacrifice, and to the cup which he commanded us to make in remembrance of his blood, giving thanks.

Justin seems to want to comment here only on the precept "Do this in remembrance of me". His reasoning is, in fact, this: "We must celebrate the bread of thanksgiving in accordance with the intentions of Christ. Now Christ has told us to give thanks on the bread and on the cup in remembrance of him. So we must give thanks in remembrance of the fact that he took a body and had blood in his body. But it is easy to see that one can make the Eucharist in remembrance of Christ without making it in remembrance of the body which Christ took. Justin has introduced into the precept of Christ a precision which is not there. This precision is provided by the text: "This is my body", since it is this text which associates the body of Christ with the bread of the Eucharist. And, under the guise of interpreting the command "Do this", he actually interprets "This is my body".

So, in the LXX Dialogue, Justin commented "This is my body". And the commentary he gives us on this famous text is that the Eucharist is a profession of faith in the incarnation of Christ. Christians are to eat the bread and drink the cup of thanksgiving in remembrance of the body that Jesus took, in remembrance of the blood that was in that body. This is the result of "This is my body." In saying this Christ taught that he was not pure spirit, but that he had a body made alive by blood, a fleshly body like ours. He wanted to say: "I have a body like yours". And by receiving the Eucharist, Christians proclaim their adherence to the teachings of their master, their submission to his commands.

What is this comment worth? Let us note that Justin, who lived in Rome, must have had discussions either with the author of the text himself, or with men who knew the author, who were close to him. His interpretation of the oracle "This is my body" is probably authentic, that is to say, it came from the author of the text. And, if it seems artificial, the cause is in the text itself, which is strange.

It is very strange, indeed, this statement by which Christ declares that the bread is his body. To those who would object that it is not very suitable for housing the incarnation, I would reply: What is it suitable for? The truth is that it is an enigma for all. But since this enigma stands before us, we must try to solve it. Let us try.

First of all, let us put ourselves in the situation of the author. He found himself in the presence of a commandment whose meaning is this: "Give thanks for the bread and the cup, and eat the bread and drink the cup in remembrance of me. This commandment emanated from Christ himself and was communicated by revelation to Paul who was, at the same time, entrusted with its promulgation. On these two points he, a Catholic theologian of about 150, had no doubt. He was also sure that Christ had wanted to oblige us by this order to eat the bread and drink the cup, in memory of his incarnation and his bloody death on Calvary. But he noted with sorrow that Marcion attributed the command "Do this in remembrance of me" to the spiritual Christ, the

Christ who did not have a fleshly body like ours. The only way to refute the Marcionites was to put into the mouth of Christ the details that were in his mind and to complete the oracle. Our author has made it his duty to complete it by introducing the mention of the incarnation of Christ.

79

The operation was difficult. The author did not dare to make Christ say in his own words: "I have a body like yours; eat the bread in memory of this truth. He used a detour. He put into the mouth of Christ a statement which, by way of deduction, would lead the reader to the same result. The statement he chose was "This is my body". By this formula the faithful were warned that a relationship existed between the Eucharistic bread and the body of Christ. The nature of this relationship was not explained to them. It was up to them to guess. They were placed at the entrance to a path at the end of which was the incarnation. And here are the steps that would lead them from the starting point to the end: "This bread that I give you will become your body; from now on it can be said that it is your body, for your body is made of bread. Well, it is the same for me. My body, too, is made of bread. This bread is the material that constitutes my body: it is my body. So my body is not a phantom; it is exactly the same nature as yours; it is carnal like yours. You will eat this bread in memory of me; by eating it you will profess that my body and yours are of the same nature because both feed on bread; you will profess my incarnation; you will condemn the blasphemy of Mar- cion."

80

It is clear that this way of stating the incarnation of Christ is the most obscure, the most artificial one imaginable. And the observations we have just read do not tend to justify it. They only propose to explain how this artifice could have been invented. They want to show that the Catholic author of "This is my body" was led to this formula by his desire to put the dogma of the incarnation in a framework which was not made to receive it, by his obstinacy in pursuing a goal with means which were not appropriate to it.

81

So far I have taken as my guide the text of the Dialogue LXX, 4 which tells us that Christ prescribed to "make bread" in memory of his incarnation. But there is also a famous text in the great Apology LXVI, 2 where it is a question of the food on which the thanksgiving was made. Here it is:

This food by which our blood and flesh are nourished by transformation, we have learned, is the flesh and blood of Jesus made flesh.

So the bread and wine are the flesh and blood of Jesus incarnate. But that same bread and wine "transform" into our flesh and blood. So the Eucharist is both the body and blood of Jesus incarnate and our body and blood. It has two distinct properties. Distinct, not in themselves, but

in the way we know them. That the bread and wine constitute our body, we see by the experience that makes us witness the transformation of food into our own substance. That this same bread and wine constituted the flesh and blood of Jesus during his life on earth, we know "by the teaching we have received". The teaching referred to here is the formula "This is my body" which is reported later. Apart from the way we know them, these two properties are one. The bread and wine of the Eucharist are the body and blood of Jesus in the same way and in the same sense that they are our body and blood. They are the material from which Jesus' body and blood came during his earthly life, just as they are the material from which our body and blood come. Hence it follows that the bread and wine of the Eucharist prove the incarnation of Jesus and condemn the heresy of Marcion.

82

This is what Justin means in that part of the first Apology where the Roman theologians thought they recognized the dogma of transubstantiation. He refers to "This is my body", he interprets it, he explains that Christ meant this: "My body is of the same nature as yours".

5. The women's veil.

This essay, which runs from 3 to 16, has no connection either with the praise which precedes it or with the blame which follows it. It looks like an erratic block: it is a patchwork. There was an essay in which 17 came after 2 and whose content was :

I praise you for remembering me in everything and for keeping the traditions as I have handed them down. But I do not praise this, that you meet not for the better but for the worse.

Then an interpolator came along who inserted, where we read it today, the dissertation on the veil of women and who, at the same time, was obliged to introduce into 17, by way of a connection, the formula "prescribing this". This little note, which presents itself as a link, is in reality an artifice intended to hide the interpolation.

83

Let us examine the content of this essay. Women began to pray and prophesy in public meetings. Public meetings are not mentioned in the text, but they are implied, for no one could think of imposing the wearing of the veil on women in their private homes - besides, prophecy could only be practiced in public meetings. The author sees no problem with women exercising the ministry of prayer and prophecy in meetings. But, in the name of decency, he wants them to wear a veil. And he outlines the many reasons why women are required to wear a veil. One of them, taken from the book of Enoch, refers to the sin that some angels once committed with women, and he suggests that the same misfortune could befall women who dare to pray and prophesy without a veil in public meetings. This is the thesis.

And here is the observation it calls for. It was among the Montanists that prophecy became a ministry exercised by women (see below, p. 101). The author of the essay is a Catholic who, without being hostile to Montanist practices, tries to submit them to the rules of common sense. At that time the school of Marcion was alone in identifying Christ with God; everywhere else Christology was still subordinationist. This explains the profession of faith of 3 that God is the head of Christ, just as man is the head of woman and Christ is the head of man.

84

Our essay is not homogeneous. Verses 11 and 12, whose purpose is clearly to put woman on the same level as man, provide a corrective to 9 which clearly puts woman below man. They are the response of an exalted Montanist to the criticism of a moderate Montanist.

NOTE

MARCION AND THE TEXT "THIS IS MY BODY"

Marcion, who recognized no other gospel than that of Luke, gave an edition of this book in which neither the infancy narratives nor certain passages of our present Luke particularly opposed to the Marcionite doctrine were found. Other texts more or less embarrassing for this doctrine were consigned in his edition but provided with glosses which reconciled them or, in any case, tried to reconcile them with Marcionism. These glosses were collected in a special study which accompanied the Marcionite text of the Gospel of Luke and which was entitled *Antitheses*, that is to say oppositions between the doctrine of Christ and the doctrine of the Creator promulgated in the Old Testament.

On these two points we are informed by Tertullian, who, in the fourth book of his treatise *Adversus Marcionem*, sometimes reproaches Marcion for having suppressed an authentic text of Luke and sometimes quotes, before refuting it, one of his commentaries. Let us take the Transfiguration scene as an example. The Marcionite text of Luke reported the presence of Moses and Elijah at the side of the glorious Christ, but it did not say that Christ had spoken with them. And in the *Antitheses*, Marcion explained that Christ had brought in these two figures to deny them; to prove this, he quoted the heavenly oracle, which he glossed as follows: "It is the Son you must listen to, not Moses or Elijah. Tertullian, I, 22, points out the gap in the Marcionite gospel text. He says: "Marcion does not want Moses to have spoken with the Lord. As for the commentary, he reports it and then refutes it with his customary vigor. Naturally, at the time he wrote, he had two copies of Luke on his table, one copy of the Catholic text and one copy of the Marcionite text to which the *Antitheses* were appended. These preliminary observations were necessary for the understanding of the problem which I have now to discuss.

Let us suppose that the oracle: " This is my body ", " This is my blood ", emanates either from Christ or from Paul. Marcion, who, in this hypothesis, necessarily knew it and had to take a stand on it, found himself faced with two parties: the party of interpretation and the party of suppression. He could, by means of an artificial exegesis, adapt or, if one wishes, try to adapt the said oracle to his doctrine of the spiritual Christ. He could also have realized that such an attempt was impracticable and, in desperation, decided on suppression. He had the choice between these two expedients. But he had to choose one or the other, which means that he could not introduce into his edition of Luke the words "This is my body", "This is my blood", without devoting to them in the Antitheses a useful commentary.

Now the only solution to which he could not stop is precisely that which he would have adopted according to Tertullian, whose dissertation on this place in Luke, IV, 40, says in substance: "Christ declares that the bread is the figure of his body. If his body had not been real, he could not have represented it by a figure. The reality of the body of the Lord is confirmed by the mention of the cup, which speaks of a covenant sealed with blood. For if one objects that there are non-carnal bodies, in any case a body that has blood is necessarily a carnal body." One would have expected to find one of two notes: "Marcion suppressed those words of Christ which bothered him", or: "Marcion, who did not dare to suppress the words of Christ, diverted them from their true meaning by means of such an expedient as I shall refute." In fact, Tertullian does not reproach Marcion for having suppressed "This is my body"; nor does he accuse him of having distorted its meaning. He mentions an objection that could be made, but does not say that it has been made. Moreover, this objection, which consists in interpreting "This is my body" spiritually, does not reach "This is my blood", and Tertullian's answer makes precisely this point. From these observations it follows firstly that Tertullian read the oracle "This is my body" in his Marcionite copy of Luke, secondly that he did not read in the Antitheses any commentary intended to distort the meaning of this embarrassing oracle. And one is authorized to conclude that Tertullian attributes to Marcion the only attitude that this heretic could not hold.

Tertullian must be in Terror. Either he read the Antitheses superficially and did not see all that was in it. Or his copy of the Marcionite edition of Luke was inaccurate. The first hypothesis is quite implausible. Let us examine the second.

For that let us note some of the reproaches which Tertullian articulates against his adversary. In II, 17 he accuses Marcion of having cut out of the gospel the text which shows us God making rain fall on the good and on the bad. And the accusation is repeated in IV, 17. It is in the gospel of Luke that Marcion is supposed to have made this deletion because Tertullian, who wants to place himself on the ground of his adversary, declares that he only wants to oppose him to this gospel. The same reproach is made about the text where Christ declares that he did not come to abolish the law. "Marcion erased these words as if they had been added afterwards", we read in IV, 7, then in substance in IV, 9, then in IV, 12. Now these two oracles which we read in Matthew V, 45, 17, are not found in Luke. Obviously Tertullian read them in his Catholic copy of

Luke. This proves that this copy gave hospitality to texts that had no right to it, that it was not pure of alloys.

87

And then a comparison is necessary. If the catholic copy of Luke which Tertullian had at his disposal contained certain alterations, why would his copy of the Marcionite text necessarily have been better preserved? Since Marcion, by Tertullian's own admission, did not try to distort the text "This is my body" in his Antitheses, it was not introduced into his gospel. This conclusion formulated above keeps all its value. It is imposed on those who would insist on putting the above-mentioned oracle in the mouth of Paul or even of Christ. As for me, it is not unpleasant to recall that I arrived at this conclusion by a quite different route, since I postpone the appearance of "This is my body" until about 150. To those who would oppose the Marcionite copy of Luke that Tertullian had at his disposal, one has the right to reply: This copy was interpolated 1.

1. Harnack, Marcion: das Evangelium vom fremden Gott, pp. 2-36, acknowledges that Marcion's Bible was early interpolated by his own followers, and he brings several testimonies to support this assertion.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Chapters XII-XIV deal mainly with spiritual gifts.

1. Glossolalia.

Chapter XIV, from 1^b to 33, is devoted to a strange phenomenon known as "speaking in tongues" (or "in tongues"), the characteristic of which is this: he who speaks in tongues is not understood by the hearers, and he cannot be, since he does not pronounce distinct words (especially 2, 9, 16); he speaks "by the Spirit", but not by the intelligence (14-15); however, the "speaking in tongues" is sometimes interpreted afterwards, either by a hearer or even by the one who held it, and then it becomes useful to the assembly (13, 27, 28). The phenomenon described here, which today is called "glossolalia", is due to the effect of religious exaltation on the nervous system. It is well known in history. Many religious sects, even in our own day, have shown it. It can be said in a general way that glossolalia occurs wherever religious feeling exceeds the average intensity. Then, as with all nervous accidents, it spreads from person to person by contagion.

88

This disease raged, around 165, in the province of Phrygia. Montanus and the two women who accompanied him were exalted: they had frequent fits of glossolalia. This we know from the Anonymous Eusebius. Here is what he says about Montanus (*Hist. eccl.*, 5, 16, 7, 9).

Suddenly entering into a state of excitement and false ecstasy, he spoke enthusiastically, uttered strange words (*xenophônéïn*)[^] and prophesied against the custom introduced into the Church by tradition... He raised up two other women and filled them with the unclean spirit, so that they spoke out of turn, out of time, in an extravagant way like the above-mentioned.

89

In the excerpt we have just read, the adversary of the Montanists reproaches them for having inaugurated a kind of prophecy unknown to tradition, prophecy accompanied by transports, enthusiastic gestures, strange words, extravagant manners. A little further on (5, 17, 3) he insists on this observation, and he proves that Montanist prophecy has nothing in common with traditional prophecy:

They will not be able to show anything like it in the prophets, either of the Old or of the New Testament, who have been filled with the Holy Spirit. Whether they take Agabus, Judas, Silas, the daughters of Philip, Ammia of Philadelphia, Quadratus or any other, they cannot boast of having them with them.

This plea proves to the Montanists that their prophecies, with the extravagances with which they were surrounded, were new phenomena, unknown until now. But it implies that the Montanists maintained the opposite thesis and claimed to have ties with tradition. The dialogue was this: "We have ancestors. - You do not, because the prophets to whom you claim to be attached had nothing in common with you. It can be said, moreover, that it was imposed by force of circumstance. On both sides, tradition had to be drawn to itself.

But in this dialogue there is a surprising gap. How is it that the essay in 1 Corinthians on "speaking in tongues" or "by the Spirit" is used neither in the attack nor in the defense? Some passages of this piece could be used for Montanist propaganda, for example 39: "Do not prevent speaking in tongues". Others were rather hostile to it, e.g. 9: "If you do not speak intelligibly with your tongue, how will anyone know what is being said?" Why is it that neither the Montanists nor their opponents took advantage of the texts that could serve them? Will it be said that they took advantage of them, but that Eusebius did not consider it appropriate to insert in his extracts the borrowings made from the Pauline dissertation on "speaking in tongues"? This would be tantamount to saying that Eusebius eliminated the most important parts of the dossier he wanted to bring to our attention. Who does not see the implausibility of such an explanation?

90

And then we know that one of the opponents of Montanism, Miltiades, wrote - before Anonymous, that is, around 185 - a book entitled: *How a prophet must not speak in ecstasy*. To tell the truth, we only know the title of this book (Eusebius, 5, 17, 1). But this title proves that, around 185, a Catholic doctor did not want to hear about ecstasy. How can we believe that he could have taken this aggressive attitude if he had known I Cor. XIV, 39: "Do not prevent speaking in tongues"? Let us conclude, then, that the whole discussion of "speaking in tongues" or by the "Spirit" was provoked by the Montanist controversy. It did not exist until the day when Montanus and his companions began to prophesy "in ecstasy", that is to say by "the Spirit". It did not even exist when the first polemics broke out to condemn and defend the new prophets. It was written in order to calm down by the method of authority the debates that the controversialists had envenomed (around 170).

Moreover, let us examine this piece closely. One is rightly surprised that Paul waited until he was far from the Corinthians to give them instructions on "speaking in tongues. Why did he not address this subject during his long stay among them?

Could it be that the need was not felt then? A vain excuse. Paul, who boasts (18) of knowing glossolalia better than anyone else, obviously possessed this science at the time he lived in Corinth, and no one would claim that he learned it after he left that city. At that time he knew how to speak in tongues. He could not, therefore, have been unaware that glossolalia had to be practiced with discretion, or else it would lead to disorder. Why did he not make recommendations to the Corinthians in this sense? Why did he not tell them in person what he wrote to them in his letter (18): "In the assembly I would rather speak five words with my mind to instruct others than ten thousand words in tongues"?

92

And then let us note this remark which is made in verse 23: "If the whole assembly is gathered together and they all speak in tongues and some ignorant or unfaithful people come along, will they not say that you are crazy? Here we are shown pagans approaching an assembly of believers to enjoy the spectacle. Such a supposition could not even have occurred to Paul. In his day, Christians met in the house of one of their number. The assemblies were private, and the pagans did not think of disturbing them by their presence any more than an honest man would think of interfering in a family celebration where he was not invited. Verse 23 takes us to a time and place where large numbers of Christian assemblies were public or even held in the open air, as seems to have happened in Phrygia during the Montanist crisis.

One more observation. The essay on glossolalia seems to lack consistency. In one place (21, 22), it says that "speaking in tongues" is a sign for unbelievers, a sign that God announced through the prophet Isaiah. Then it declares that unbelievers will consider a meeting where all Christians speak in tongues to be an assembly of fools. It judges severely the glossolalia, which it presents (9) as the emission of inarticulate sounds, and yet her conclusion is that speaking in tongues should not be prevented. Are there therefore two amalgamated redactions?

Without being impossible, this hypothesis is not probable. Let us note that the same writer who has such harsh words for the glossolalia makes a point of giving them all points. He laughs at their inarticulate stammerings, but at the same time he recognizes that these ejaculations are addressed to God (2). And the pass that verse 39 gives to glossolalia should be all the less surprising because, even where the glossolalia are scoffed at, we read (5), "I desire you all to speak in tongues."

The dissertation of XIV is written in one draft. Its author is a Catholic in the style of Irenaeus, that is to say a man who has the Montanist faith, but who also has a sense of the ridiculous and who was shocked by the extravagances of which the Montanists had so often given the spectacle. It is because he holds the good reputation of the new prophecy that he sets himself up as a censor of the glossolalia. He believes that glossolalia is a sign for the unbelievers, a miracle capable of bringing men to faith, but on condition that no incongruity is introduced into it. Thus 21-23 are reconciled, which can be summarized as follows:

"The miracle that God instituted to bring the unbelievers to faith degenerates in you into an explosion of madness". His motto is this (33): "God is not for disorder but for peace". The anonymous Eusebius tells us (5, 16, 9) that from Montanist circles there sometimes arose censors who reminded their co-religionists of the laws of dignity and decency.

94

2. Panegyric of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter XII opens with this statement: "Brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant of spiritual gifts." After which the code of spiritual gifts is presented to us.

The first article of this code is that those who speak by the Spirit of God cannot curse Jesus. The second is that one must have the Holy Spirit in him to say: "Lord Jesus". The third teaches that the Holy Spirit has multiple gifts and that he distributes these gifts to Christians as he sees fit (11). The fourth explains why all Christians have the Holy Spirit: it is because all have been baptized in the Holy Spirit and all in baptism have been filled with the Holy Spirit (13). Therefore, all Christians possess the same Spirit; but this divine host does not grant the same gifts to all. What should Christians do? They should aspire to the most important gifts (31a).

It is Paul who is supposed to promulgate these oracles. He begins by stating that he does not want to leave the Corinthians in the dark about spiritual gifts. This is a very wise statement. Since the Corinthians, at the time of their baptism, were given the Holy Spirit, they must know the gifts that this august personage has conferred on them. But we must not forget that Paul, at the time he writes these lines, has been away from Corinth for three years, and that before

leaving he stayed there for eighteen months. The Corinthians had been baptized for several years. And it is at the end of this time that the apostle decides to instruct them and to instruct them by letter! Why did he not do so in the instructions he gave them to prepare them for baptism? Or, if, because of circumstances, he thought it necessary to shorten the time and to administer this sacrament after a very summary instruction, why did he not instruct them during the meetings that followed? A few minutes would have been enough for him to say what he wrote in his letter. Really the declaration XII, 1 comes very late.

Let us now look at the communications that this preamble announces. The first one is: "I bring to your attention that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says: 'Cursed be Jesus'. It is written in the form of a notice. The Corinthians did not yet know anything of what is going to be explained to them in this chapter, since Paul declares that he wants to put an end to their ignorance. But here their ignorance is emphasized in a special way, probably to get their attention. A truth of which they have never heard before is about to be brought to their attention; it is up to them to take it in. This truth, of capital importance since it is placed in the foreground, is that one does not curse Jesus when one speaks by the Spirit of God.

96

If such an oracle were written in the catechism today and proposed to the meditation of the faithful, they would wonder with amazement what all this jargon meant. They have never pretended to speak by the Spirit of God. On the other hand, they would hate to curse Jesus, and they would reject with indignation the infamous one who would curse the Savior before them. Then, anxious above all to maintain the attitude of deference and respect, they would not dare to admit to themselves the impression of bewilderment they would have. They would promptly take refuge in the mystery, they would put the said oracle in the rank of truths which God has had his reasons for revealing, but which human reason must not seek to understand. This is exactly what the exegetes do, both the independent and the orthodox. They remain confused, but they are careful not to say so. The truth is that this sentence, if we assume it was written by Paul, is pure gibberish. The same verdict applies to the next sentence, which, if put into Paul's mouth, is also meaningless. We will soon try to solve these riddles. For the moment, let's move on.

97

After the exposition of the principles comes the list of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and of those who are recipients of them. This list is copious, and one has to admire the generosity of the Spirit who distributes decorations and favors without counting the cost. But we know that in Paul's day the church at Corinth was housed in one room. This legion of officers reminds us of the ancient armies of the Republic of Haiti where all the soldiers were generals or at least colonels. This whole lesson about the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit is foreign to Paul.

Let us read Justin. In his great Apology he mentions "the prophetic Spirit" more than twenty times. In the Dialogue, 39:2, he lists the "gifts" that God gives to Christians and he borrows the list from Isaiah, XI:2 (adding "the spirit of healing"). In the same book, 82:1, he states that prophetic gifts still exist among Christians. A little further on, 87:4-6 and 88:1, he dwells complacently on the "powers of the Spirit"; he even speaks of "women" and "men" who have "received the gifts of the Spirit of God", and he seems to have in mind either Montanus and his prophetesses, or certain precursors of Montanism such as Ammia and Quadratus, of whom Eusebius' Anonymous speaks, 5:17, 3. But of the Pauline dissertation on the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit he does not breathe a word, he never makes the slightest allusion to it, he does not know it.

98

Where does this piece come from, which did not yet exist around 165? Let us see first where it goes.

It is cut into two sections by the hymn to charity in chapter XIII. Chapter XII is one of these sections; the other consists of the dissertation on glossolalia which fills almost entirely chapter XIV and which I have studied above. Verse 1 of this chapter is the artificial and somewhat awkward connection which links the hymn to charity to the later section. In the original draft the essay ran from XII, 31a to XIV, 1b. The text was more or less as follows:

Aspire to the most important gifts, but especially to prophecy.

And there you have the question of provenance. The dissertation on the gifts of the Holy Spirit is one with the instruction on glossolalia, whose inspiration is Montanist. It therefore emanates from Montanist circles. The author believes in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which flooded the cantons of Phrygia. His faith, it is true, is tempered by a sense of moderation that keeps him away from incongruities and extravagances. He does not want that the glossolales make figure of madmen. He would even prefer that prophecy was not accompanied by glossolalia. But he believes in glossolalia; he is convinced that those who speak in tongues speak by the Spirit.

99

3. Those who do not curse Jesus.

This observation gives us the key to the famous text where we read that those who speak by the Spirit do not curse Jesus. Those who speak in the Spirit are the glossolalia. The author defends them against the many enemies who try to discredit glossolalia. Soon he will chapter the glossolalia, he will tell them to behave themselves. But he begins by rehabilitating them. To understand the allusion he is making here, let us reread the indictment that their bitter opponent, Eusebius' Anonymous, had drawn up against them (5, 16, 20):

When, confused by the reasons put before them, they no longer know what to say, they fall back on the martyrs. They say that they have many martyrs and that this clearly proves the power of what is called the prophetic Spirit in them.

Enlightened by the commentary of an enemy, our text means this: "You who mock us and our glossolalia, show us your martyrs. These glossolalia who speak in the Spirit do not give up when they are led to the torture, they do not sacrifice to idols, they do not curse Jesus 1 to escape death. It is not among us that we meet renegades". Text XII, 3, which makes no sense in Paul's writing, becomes intelligible when, behind the historical Paul, we see a fictitious Paul who was writing around 170. He formulates, for the first time, what is called in theology the argument from the constancy of the martyrs. And we note that the formula was found by a Montanist for the benefit of Montanism.

1. Martyrdom of Polycarp, 9, 3: "The proconsul insisted "Curse Christ"; Letter of Pliny to Trajan, 10, 96: "All these (they are apostates) have venerated your image and the statues of the gods and have cursed Christ.

100

4. Hymn to charity.

The hymn to charity in chapter XIII, which cuts the dissertation on the gifts of the Holy Spirit into two sections, tends to inspire disdain for these gifts. The activity of the Spirit who distributes his favors to Christians in such a way as to promote the general good, who gives to one "tongues", to another "knowledge", to another "prophecy", to another "faith", has been celebrated before us. Now we are told that all this is nothing. The hymn to charity is a corrective intended to discreetly contradict the panegyric of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

And the contradiction is recorded in the preamble itself, whose intimate meaning is this: "You have just been told to aspire to the most important gifts. The truth is that all these gifts, even the most important ones, are nothing. I am going to show you the true path to follow. Let us notice, in fact, that the one who exhorts the faithful to seek the most important gifts has in view only the gifts he has just listed. The hymn to charity was included in the dissertation on the gifts of the Holy Spirit around 180, at least before Irenaeus who borrowed from it (II, 28, 7; IV, 12, 1).

5. Women are forbidden to speak in the church.

We find another enclave in the ordinance XIV, 33-35 which forbids women to speak in church. Two things are surprising about this prohibition.

First, it is in opposition to XI, 5, where we read that a woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her leader. This last text authorizes the woman to prophesy, provided that she has her head veiled. Now, to prophesy it was necessary to speak and to speak aloud. It goes without saying that the text XI, 5 supposes the woman in the assembly of the faithful and not in her private home. And we come to the conclusion that XI, 5 and XIV, 33-35 bring us face to face with two disparate legislations which cannot be from the same author nor from the same milieu.

But another surprise awaits us. At the origin of the Montanist movement we meet, as we know, the two women Priscilla and Maximilla who, together with Montanus, evangelized the Phrygian populations and initiated them into the doctrine of the Paraclete. The role of these women was shocking. To the objections made to them on this subject, the Montanists replied that Priscilla and Maximilla were reviving a tradition inaugurated by the prophetesses of the Old Testament (Deborah, Mary sister of Moses, Holdah) and continued by the prophetesses of the New Testament: Anne mentioned by Luke, the daughters of Philip mentioned in Acts, a certain Ammia of Philadelphia 1.

1. See Anonymous, quoted by Eusebius, V, 17, 2-4.

Let us now go back to about 230. At this date Origen, confronted with this Montanist argument, replies in substance as follows 1 2 :

2. Catenae in epistol. ad Cor. XIV, 35, in Bonwelsch, Texte zur geschichte des Montanismus, p. 24.

St. Paul says, in the epistle to the Corinthians, that it is shameful for a woman to speak in the assembly. The same apostle says to Timothy: I do not allow a woman to teach. This law of St. Paul was never broken by the prophetesses of either the Old or the New Testament. The daughters of Philip did not prophesy in the church; Anna did not prophesy in the church; the same observation applies to Deborah, to Mary, to Holdah.

Origen, we see, opposes the texts of I Cor. XIV, 35; I TL II, 11 to the Montanists, and he is quite right, for these texts were very appropriate for the Montanist prophetesses.

But the more this observation of Origen appears topical, the more strange also appears the following note written by Irenaeus in response to those who rejected the gospel of Saint John under the pretext that this book seemed to patronize the Paraclete of the Montanists (3, 1, 9) =

These people, to be logical, should not admit the apostle Paul either. For, in the epistle to the Corinthians, he has applied himself to speak of prophetic gifts, and he knows that men and women prophesy in the church, viros et mulieres in ecclesia prophetarites.

Irenaeus probably has in mind here the female preaching in use among the Montanists for whom he had sympathies (these sympathies are precisely in the surroundings of the text I have just quoted). But how could he evoke with pride a practice solemnly condemned by the apostle Paul? He seems to have been unaware of this condemnation, and not to have encountered in his edition of the Pauline letters the texts which forbid women to speak in church.

To Irenaeus we must associate the Anonymous Eusebius whom we have already met several times on our way. A bitter opponent of the Montanists, he bitterly reproaches them for being outside the tradition with their prophecy in ecstasy accompanied by disordered gestures and meaningless words. This is all very well. But, since the author accuses the Montanists of being in conflict with tradition, why does he not oppose them with the rule of I Cor. XIV, 33-35? Why does he not use that simple and peremptory argument to which Origen would later have recourse? Or, if he did use it, how can we explain that Eusebius, who was anxious to put before our eyes the most salient passage of his dissertation, omitted to quote the essential place?

104

The same observation applies to another opponent of Montanism, Apollonius (Eusebius, 5, 18), who also deprives himself of the argument offered to him by I Corinthians, XIV, 33-35. The consequence that emerges from these facts is that the ordinance of I Cor. XIV, 33-35 was enacted to condemn the Montanist prophetesses at a date when the first writings of the Montanist controversy had already appeared and, consequently, at the earliest towards the year 200. Let us note moreover that the Montanists, who were Catholics, would never have allowed prophetesses to teach publicly in their assemblies, if the ordinance in question had been circulated under the name of Paul at the beginning of the Montanist movement.

6. The same God works all things in all people.

A third enclave is verses XII:5-6, which, in a context that speaks exclusively of the "gifts" of the Holy Spirit, speak neither of gifts nor of the Holy Spirit, but of "functions" and "operations" emanating from "the Lord" and "God".

The original wording went directly from 4 to 7: "There are different gifts, but they are the same Spirit. And to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. Then came the enumeration of the gifts, in which the author noted three times that everything derives from one and the same Spirit. Then the list ended with this remark:

"One and the same Spirit produces all these things distributing to each as he wills."

Let us leave the Montanist milieu and go to the Catholics. Here the Phrygian revolutionaries were criticized above all for their ecstasies and their extravagant glossolalia. But their language must also have given cause for concern about their theological conceptions. By dint of exalting

the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the prophetic Spirit, by dint of celebrating his gifts, they ended up speaking only of him, thinking only of him, seeing only him. In this debauchery of panegyrics devoted to the Holy Spirit, what became of God, the one of whom the Spirit is only an attribute? He was practically forgotten. Forgotten also was Christ who had sacrificed himself for mankind and who, by his death, had accomplished the work of redemption. The Spirit surrounded by his procession of gifts supplanted God, supplanted Christ.

106

It was with these sentiments that a reader - no doubt the author of the hymn to charity - read the panegyric of the Spirit. He noted with horror that this text, if left without explanation, would play into the hands of the Montanists. A sober, discreet commentary seemed to him indispensable. He introduced it by modelling his writing on that of the text. Hence verses 5 and 6 which, considering only the turn of phrase, seem to follow 4. Let us examine the ideas expressed here and compare them with the thesis of the panegyric. The Montanist said (11):

One and the same Spirit works all these things.

The commentary retorts in advance (6):

It is God who works all things in you.

God takes the place of the Spirit; he is the source of the universal activity which will soon be attributed to the Spirit:

The Montanist said (4):

There are different gifts, but it is the same Spirit.

The commentary retorts (5):

There is diversity of functions, but it is the same Lord.

The Lord, i.e. Christ, takes the place of the Spirit and the gifts of the latter are eliminated by the functions performed by the body of Christ.

The author of the commentary knows God and the Lord Jesus: God who is the source of all operations, who does everything in all; the Lord whose body, that is to say the Church, could not exist without functions. As for the Holy Spirit, he does not dare to touch him openly; he leaves him in the state in which he found him; he even preserves his prerogatives in appearance; but in reality he takes everything away from him and divides his spoils between God and the Lord. He is one of those who worked to found the Trinity - the archaic Trinity of pre-Augustinian times - since he put the Holy Spirit next to God and the Lord. But he founded it without wanting to,

because under his pen God and the Lord make contact with the Holy Spirit only to dispossess him.

107

7. The body and members of Christ.

A fourth enclave is constituted by the instruction on the body and the members of Christ whose verbose development extends from XII, 12 to XII, 30 under deduction of 13 which is part of the panegyric of the Holy Spirit.

The body of Christ is composed of all the faithful. In this vast organism each Christian occupies a place and exercises a function assigned to him by God; he is in relation to the body of Christ what the member is in the human body. If each member of the body of Christ, modelled on the members of the human body, is occupied with the function assigned to him and is concerned only with it; if, collaborating peacefully with the other members, he associates himself with their joys and sorrows, all is well. But if one member claims to take the place of the neighboring member and usurp his function, there will be disorder, chaos, and the author exclaims (29). "Are all of them apostles? Are they all prophets? Are they all teachers?

108

Under this interrogative turn of phrase one feels the accent of protest vibrate. All these members of the body of Christ have not known how to keep their place. Many of them have usurped the functions of neighboring members. They have disregarded the great law of collaboration and the demands it makes. A breath of individualism has passed over them. Here we recognize the misdeeds of the Montanist ecstasy which did not respect any of the traditional frameworks of Christian life. The author of our instruction is probably a community leader who, without openly fighting the outpouring of the Spirit and the speaking in tongues (see 28 and 30), protected his flock against the wind of revolution that Montanism was blowing around him.

THE RESURRECTION

Chapter XV contains a dissertation on the resurrection of the body. First he establishes the reality of it; then he explains its modalities.

109

The reality of the resurrection of bodies is demonstrated especially by the resurrection of Christ, so that this part of the essay can be summarized in the following syllogism: If our bodies have no resurrection to look forward to, Christ himself has not risen; yet the resurrection of Christ is an undeniable fact; therefore we must hold it certain also that our bodies will rise. The substance of this syllogism is found in verses 12-13:

But if it is preached that Christ rose from the dead, how do some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ has not risen.

I. The resurrection of Christ.

So there are Christians in Corinth who reject the resurrection of the bodies, but who nevertheless professed to believe in the resurrection of Christ. This last point is of course true, for Paul, who himself preached the resurrection of Christ in Corinth, is a witness that the Christians of that city "received" his preaching, "held fast to it" (1), in a word "believed" (11) what had been preached to them. Since they had adhered to the resurrection of Christ, they must, on pain of being inconsistent, also adhere to the resurrection of bodies. The argument starts from an accepted dogma to prove the contested dogma. It is in accordance with the laws of logic.

110

It is in order. However, some details are surprising. First of all, why is the patent of orthodoxy given to the Corinthians in the past tense: "this is what you believed"? Why this turn of phrase - which, if intended, means that the Corinthians originally had an orthodox belief in the resurrection of Christ, but no longer do? It will probably be said that it is not intended, that it is due simply to a carelessness of style. Perhaps it is. But the negligence of style is usually due to the search for the least effort. Was it so difficult to say: "This is how you believe"? Wasn't this formula even appropriate and did it not naturally appear in a sentence whose first assertion was: "This is how we preach"? And then the formula "this is how you believed" is not the only one of its kind. It follows this other one: "in which you have stood". And this one is so strange that the Vulgate has suppressed it to substitute the present "in which you stand". It is a strange oversight that seems to make Paul say once: "All the time I was with you, you believed in the resurrection of Christ, which you then abandoned", and a second time: "That is how you believed at the beginning, but you no longer believe that way, while we still preach that way".

111

But that is not all. After declaring to the Corinthians that the gospel provides salvation, the apostle adds the following clause: (2) "If you keep it in the sense in which I preached it to you; otherwise you will have believed in vain." Reading it one cannot help but observe that it goes without saying. Indeed, it goes without saying. Why then does it go without saying? Why does Paul find it necessary to explain to the Corinthians that there are ways and ways of keeping the gospel, and that the only useful way of keeping it is to keep it in its traditional sense?

Precautions of this kind are seldom of a preventive character. Almost always they are taken when the evil is done. Paul must know that his preaching on the resurrection of Christ has been subjected to an exegesis which has sublimated it. The evil is done and he knows it. Only, for reasons that we do not know now, but that we will soon unravel, he takes the attitude of the prophet who sees the danger beforehand and warns the faithful against it.

What surprises us most of all are the words with which the essay begins: "I notify you, brothers, of the gospel that I proclaimed to you" (the gospel of the resurrection of Christ). To give notice of something is to make it known to someone who does not yet know it. Paul, who is about to notify the Corinthians of the gospel of Christ's resurrection, assumes that his readers are unaware of this gospel and need to have it explained to them. But since the Corinthians had received this gospel three years earlier from the apostle himself, how could they have forgotten it to the point that a new notification became necessary? Moreover, how can one reconcile a complete oblivion of the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ with a dissertation whose framework presupposes belief in this doctrine? How can we fit it into an argument where the resurrection of Christ serves as a means of demonstration? We are incoherent.

112

But perhaps we have exaggerated the scope of "I notify you". Perhaps the apostle does not intend to make a real notification of the gospel of the resurrection of Christ? The rest of the text will tell us. We read this:

For I have imparted to you what I myself received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures...

There is a lot of detail here that is not necessary. What is the point of explaining that Christ died, that he died for our sins, that he was buried, that his resurrection took place on the third day? All this does not indicate a very keen impatience to arrive at the fact which is this: "Since you believe in the resurrection of Christ, believe also in the resurrection of the dead, for if the dead are not raised, neither is Christ raised.

113

However, these hors d'oeuvres, if they were the only ones, could be blamed on a prolixity that has not been able to discipline itself. But there are two others before which this convenient explanation is powerless. First, there is the formula "what I myself have received"; then this other formula "according to the Scriptures", which is repeated. Both of these do not advance the problem of the resurrection of the dead, they do not shed any light on it, and in this respect they are pure hors d'oeuvres. But no one will attribute their presence here to prolixity. They are part of a program, they tend to a goal. It is not by chance that the "Scriptures" (this is obviously the Old Testament) are mentioned here as having announced the death of Christ as well as his

resurrection. And this observation applies especially to "what I received". Paul deliberately claims to have been a faithful echo of the preaching of the apostles, for it is they who are referred to here, as verse 11 makes clear: "either I or they, so we preach.

An attempt was made to contrast his teaching on the resurrection of Christ with the teaching of the Twelve. The purpose was to enhance the prestige of one side and discredit the other. Against whom was this maneuver directed? Was it against Paul? Was it against the Twelve? It does not matter for the moment. They wanted to oppose Paul to the Twelve on the question of the resurrection of Christ. Paul declares that there is no such opposition and that he speaks of the resurrection of Christ as the Twelve taught him to speak of it. This is what "what I have received" means, completed by 11 "either I or they, that is how we preach". It is a plea either for him or for the Twelve.

114

At the same time we see that the resurrection of Christ gives rise to a controversy and that this controversy must, in the judgment of the apostle, be put to rest without delay. We had imagined that the resurrection of Christ intervened here in a purely accessory capacity and only to demonstrate the resurrection of the dead. And this impression, motivated by verse 12, is that of the commentators who all tell us that chapter XV of the first epistle to the Corinthians deals with the resurrection of the dead, the reality of which it demonstrates with the help of the resurrection of Christ. This is not true. In the said chapter the resurrection of Christ does indeed serve to prove the resurrection of the dead; but before being used for this purpose, it is freed from a controversy to which it was subjected.

However, we are not yet entitled to say that Paul wants to notify the Corinthians, in the strict sense of the term, of the resurrection of Christ. Let us continue our reading (5):

115

Then he appeared at once to more than five hundred brothers, most of whom are still alive, but some are dead. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. To the last of all, as to a runt, he appeared to me. For I am the least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

What we see first of all in this text, what we see clearly, is the concern to list all the apparitions of the risen Christ, not to miss a single one, and also to list them in the chronological order in which they took place. Between these two extremes, each of the others is mentioned in his own right, but it is the Twelve who come immediately after Peter. Here we are at last before a real notification and "I notify you" is to be taken literally. The apostle says everything he knows about the resurrection of Christ. He speaks to the Corinthians about it as if he had never spoken to them before. And since he says he has already spoken about it, it follows that the Corinthians have forgotten everything in the meantime.

They have forgotten everything. They accepted Paul's gospel, held on to it for a while and then abandoned it, or if they kept the letter, they lost the meaning.

They have so completely forgotten that they believe that there is a conflict between the gospel of Paul and the gospel of the Twelve. And Paul is obliged to proclaim his doctrinal agreement with these people. He claims to have never preached anything but the gospel of the Twelve. He accompanies this statement with great protestations of humility. He puts himself not only below the Twelve, but even below the apostles.¹ He does not forget, nor does he want anyone to forget, that he began by persecuting the church of God. And since he cannot deny that he worked a lot for the cause of the church, he gives the credit for his work to God.

1. These apostles, whom he distinguishes from the Twelve, as the list of apparitions proves, must be the seventy disciples of whom Luke speaks.

The fiction that we suspected is now out in the open. But what purpose does it serve? We will know when we have clarified the doctrinal conflict that was imagined between Paul and the Twelve. What did those who invented this conflict against which Paul here protests that it never existed want? Or rather, since their purpose was obviously to discredit a doctrine, what doctrine were they attacking? Paul's willingness to beat his chops and bow down at the feet of the Twelve suggests that he is the one being targeted. Let us examine this hypothesis.

117

It makes Paul an accused. It presents him as a man whose orthodoxy is under attack and who is accused by his opponents, unjustly in fact, of deviating from the teaching of the Twelve concerning the resurrection of Christ. Is this the situation to which Paul's attitude responds? Does he appear here as an accused person pleading his case to escape the reprobation to which he is subjected?

No doubt he declares that he has always spoken of the resurrection of Christ as the Twelve speak of it. And in this sense he defends himself. No doubt he shows the Twelve and their assistants the expression of the deepest deference. And so he gives proof of his humility. But he is not afraid to pose as an accuser. He discreetly reproaches the Corinthians for abandoning his gospel, the gospel of the Twelve, since he and the Twelve preach the same thing; he reproaches them for abandoning the gospel not in its letter but in its spirit, and he informs them that, as a result, their faith has become vain. So the Corinthians, on the chapter of the resurrection of Christ, depart from the gospel of the Twelve. The hypothesis discussed here assumes, on the contrary, that the Corinthians remained faithful to the teaching of the Twelve and that they reproach Paul for having departed from it. It does not answer the text. Let us give up and look for another explanation. Since the doctrinal conflict imagined between Paul and the Twelve is not intended to discredit Paul, let us see if it is not a war machine set up against the Twelve.

118

In this hypothesis, Paul's answer must be: "Your purpose in putting me in opposition to the Twelve is to overwhelm them and to raise my prestige. You want to make it appear that the immediate disciples of Christ have understood nothing of the doctrine of their divine master and that I alone have received the Christian revelation. I have not deserved this excess of honor; they have not deserved this indignity. I am nothing compared to the Twelve, I am not even worthy to be ranked among the apostles, I who once persecuted the Church of God. No doubt I have worked harder than the apostles and the Twelve, but it is the grace of God that has made me what I am; in reality it is not I who has worked, it is the grace of God that has worked with me. I have seen Christ; yes, I have seen the risen Christ. But I was not the only one to receive this favor. All the apostles received it before me. Before the apostles, a great number of Christians, not to mention James, had received it. The Twelve had received it before all the others, and before the Twelve, Peter had received it. You reject what the Twelve say about the resurrection of Christ, under the pretext of receiving only my teaching. How could I have spoken to you about this miracle in any other way than the Twelve, since I confined myself to passing on to you what I had received from them?

They and I teach the same thing. When you depart from them, you depart from me. The gospel that you attribute to me is not mine, it is you who have imagined it. In any case, if you still have the letter of the gospel, you no longer have the spirit of it.

It would be very difficult to believe that a key that opens the lock with such ease was not made for it. We are authorized to conclude that the Christians portrayed in the essay on the resurrection of Christ claim to follow Paul to the exclusion of the Twelve, and that Paul denies these false disciples who want to oppose him to his teachers. Since this could not have happened in Corinth, the whole scene is fictitious, and behind Paul is an apologist for the teaching of the Twelve.

Who is this defender of the immediate followers of Christ who speaks here in Paul's name? We would be unable to say or even to conjecture, if we did not have for information the disciples who acclaimed him as their master and whom he denied. We know who they are. We know the men who confiscated Paul, who claimed to take him as their only teacher, who boasted of being Paul's disciples, of professing Paul's gospel. These are the Marcionites. And this Paul who denies them, who declares that he has not deviated in any way from the teaching of the Twelve, his teachers, is a Catholic doctor of the second half of the second century.

We now have an explanation of certain details which seemed strange to us. The Marcians said that Christ's death was only apparent; to refute them, Paul, not content with affirming Christ's death, also mentions his burial. And if he repeatedly brings in the testimony of the Scriptures, it is to shut the mouth of the Marcionites who taught that Christ, the manifestation of the good God, had nothing in common with the Old Testament, the work of the evil God.

2. The resurrection of the dead

The opponents of the resurrection of the dead, against whom the author fights, are baptized for the dead (29), that is to say, for persons who wished to receive baptism, who were preparing for this great act, and who were surprised by death before they could carry it out. Chrysostom, in I Cor. hom. 41, 1, attests that this practice was still in force in Marcion's church in his time. He even describes the rite by which the Marcionites conferred baptism for the dead. The dead man was laid on the funeral bed, and the baptismal ceremony was performed with questions, answers, a profession of the law, and so on. A Christian hidden under the bed answered all the questions, declared that he wanted to be baptized and received it for the dead.

121

But what attracts our attention here is not the rite, but the cases of death which, according to verse 29, gave rise to its celebration. Catechumens have died; their number is considerable enough to provide material for an argument. Who will believe that this could have happened in the church at Corinth in the year 55? Even in the large churches, cases of death of catechumens were, by necessity, exceptional. Only after a period of fifteen or twenty years could they form a significant number. In a church that had been in existence for barely five years, and which for more than a year held its entirety in the house of one of its members, it is hard to see how baptism for the dead could have become a custom. Verse 29 confirms the above resultf . The opponents of the resurrection who are denounced there belong to the second century, and Chrysostom's text would help us to find them if we did not already know who they are.

3. Modalities of the resurrection.

After having established the fact of the resurrection of the bodies, the author exposes the modalities of it. But, in this dissertation which goes from 35 to 58 we notice certain strange assertions.

122

First of all, this one (50): "What I say, my brothers, is that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, nor can corruption inherit incorruption". Irenaeus, followed by all the theologians, explains (5, 14, 1) that this sentence of exclusion is not addressed to the substance itself of flesh and blood, but only to carnal works. The unfortunate thing is that the formula does not mention carnal works but only flesh and blood.

And then there is this other text (56): "The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law". We did not expect to see the Mosaic law appear here - for it is indeed the law that is in question

- and we get the very clear impression that it intervenes only to receive the blow of the club that is struck against it. It is thus an implacable enemy who went to seek her to give himself the pleasure of knocking her down. Who is this enemy? It is obviously the one who in Ro. V, 20, wrote that the law had intervened to multiply sin and who, in Gal. III, 19, formulated the same thought¹. The qualification of "power of sin" attached to the law comes from a disciple of Marcion who shows us the Creator God ingeniously causing men to sin and then condemning them to death and setting a trap for the descendants of Adam by means of the Mosaic law, just as he had originally set a trap for Adam himself. And it was also a disciple of Marcion who wrote that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

1. The Epistle to the Romans, p. 26.

123

Now that our attention is awakened, let us continue our investigation. To the Marcionite redaction belongs the piece 45-49 which distinguishes two men, one a living soul, the other a quickening spirit; one animal, the other spiritual; the latter of heavenly origin while the former is of earthly origin. The Marcionite origin of this piece - recognizable in our present text - becomes even clearer if we adopt for 45* and 47* the lesson of Marcion which has come down to us through Tertullien and through the Dialogue of Adamantius¹.

1. See the note, p. 173.

To the same Marcionite redaction belongs verse 22 which teaches that all will be vivified by Christ as all die by Adam. To it also belong the last nine verses of XV under deduction of verse 52 or at least of the part of this verse which mentions the trumpet and the resurrection of the dead.

Until about 140 the whole of chapter XV was in a state of nothingness. At that time a disciple of Marcion incorporated into the first epistle to the Corinthians a spiritualist account of the future life in which he aimed an arrow at the creator God. This statement has been preserved (22 and 45-58 except 52), but it is now subsumed into a dissertation on the resurrection of bodies and the resurrection of Christ. It owes this fate to the Catholic editor of around 165.

124

But this enslavement had curious consequences. By taking to his service the spiritualist thesis of the Marcionites the catholic writer was obliged not to clash too openly with it and, not being able to remove the conflict of the ideas, to attenuate the conflict of the formulas. Hence his efforts to sublimate the body of the resurrected. This body is no longer animal, it is spiritual, it is incorruptible, it is glorious (42-44). The vanquished has imposed his conditions on the victor.

CONCLUSION

In chapter XVI Paul gives his instructions about the quest which he will speak about again in the second epistle to the Corinthians as well as in the epistle to the Romans 1, and which already preoccupies him. After various recommendations, he sends to the Corinthians the greeting of the churches of Asia, the greeting of Aquila and Priscilla and also the greeting of the church which is in their house. Then the letter ends.

1. See the Epistle to the Romans, p. 8.

A modest letter, since it is summed up in these few words: "The kingdom you are waiting for will come: there is no doubt about it, for God cannot fail to keep his promise. But the boasts you make about it are ridiculous. No less ridiculous are the coteries of which Apollos and I are the object. You should have banished the incestuous one from your banquets. Banish selfishness from these same banquets. Set aside some money each week for the poor of Jerusalem.

125

Today the First Epistle to the Corinthians advocates virginity, it celebrates the Holy Spirit, it teaches the pre-Augustinian Trinity, 1 Eucharist, the Mass, the resurrection of glorious bodies. As she herself says (IV, 6), she was "transfigured". The pages we have just read have described the stages through which this "transfiguration" took place.

The first epistle to the Corinthians had the same fate as the epistle to the Romans 1. Both were given a Marcionite edition and then received many Catholic alterations.

1. Ibid, p. 93.