Letter 3 : Against those who maintain that letters fell from heaven onto the altar of the church of St. Peter

Licinian of Cartagena (d. c. AD 602)

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The third letter of Licinianus, bishop of Cartagena, to Vincent, bishop of the island of Ibiza. — Against those who maintain that letters fell from heaven on the shrine of Saint Peter of Rome (now for the first time published from the manuscript of the church of Toledo).

By the charity of Christ, we have not been prevented by the difficulties of various tribulations, be they what they may, from sending some words to your Holiness, who has urged us to accept your letter, and to rejoice in your health. But we are not a little saddened by the fact that, as your writing indicates, you have accepted a certain letter, which you forwarded to us, and that you had it read aloud from the tribunal of the people. I, for one, when I had only just received what you sent me, read the beginning of that letter in the presence of the messenger himself. I wasn't patient and didn't stand on my dignity; I didn't read the repellent message throughout. I immediately tore it apart and threw it on the floor, surprised that you could have believed this. After the prophecies of the prophets, and the gospels of Christ, and the apostles and their letters, I don't know who of all people, could believe a letter written under the name of Christ was really from him, wherein no noble word, no sensible doctrine could be found.

In the first place we read in that letter that the day of the Lord is to be maintained. Who is a Christian, then, who would not hold it most revered, not because of the day itself, but because of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, who on that day was resurrected from the dead? But, as I see it, this new 'prophecy' says this in order to compel us to live like the Jews, and that nobody may on that day prepare the necessary food for himself, or walk on the road. But let your Holiness decide on what is worst. If only the Christian people, if they do not visit the church on that day, would do other works, instead of go dancing. It were better for men to tend their garden, to go on the road, for women to hold the spinning staff,

and not, as I said, to dance, to jump, and to badly twist ones God-given limbs and to call for stories and songs to raise the passions.

Therefor it is not fitting of your Holiness to believe that letters are now sent to us by Christ. What is said in the (books of the) prophets, by himself and by his Apostles is sufficient. Because even to them he did not send a letter from heaven, but the Holy Spirit filled their hearts. Except for the ten commandments, that were given miraculously in the stone tablets, no letters were ever sent from heaven to prophets or apostles. Do not believe things that were never made to be read: for even if they were made, after the proclamation of the gospels they are no longer necessary. And if by chance this novelty pleases you, because this letter, as the forger writes, came from heaven on to the altar of Christ dedicated to the holy apostle Peter, know that it is a work of the Devil, and every divine scripture, letter, or letters are heavenly, and are transmitted to us from Heaven.

Repair then what your Holiness rashly believed, and destroy this letter, if you still possess it, in the presence of the people. And this requires penitence from you, that you had it read from the tribunals. For according to the learning of the blessed apostle, as what he wrote among other things to the Galatians: If someone preaches to you something other than that what you have accepted, let him be anathema. But as well as the gospel, the entire law and the prophets up to John prophesy this. If in the future some new or unusual things are spread, your Holiness will know they are to be completely cast aside and detested. Pray for us, holy lord and dear brother in Christ.

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