On Idolatry

Tertullian (c. AD 155–220)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

Contents

Introduction 1

Chapter I.-Wide Scope of the Word Idolatry. 2

Chapter II.-Idolatry in Its More Limited Sense. Its Copiousness. 4

Chapter III.-Idolatry: Origin and Meaning of the Name. 5

Chapter IV.-Idols Not to Be Made, Much Less Worshipped. Idols and Idol-Makers in the Same Category. 6

Chapter V. -Sundry Objections or Excuses Dealt with. 8

Chapter VI.-Idolatry Condemned by Baptism. To Make an Idol Is, in Fact, to Worship It. 10

Chapter VII.--Grief of the Faithful at the Admission of Idol-Makers into the Church; Nay, Even into the Ministry. 11

Chapter VIII.-Other Arts Made Subservient to Idolatry. Lawful Means of Gaining a Livelihood Abundant. 12

Chapter IX.-Professions of Some Kinds Allied to Idolatry. Of Astrology in Particular. 14

Chapter X.-Of Schoolmasters and Their Difficulties. 16

Chapter XI.-Connection Between Covetousness and Idolatry. Certain Trades, However Gainful, to Be Avoided. 18

Chapter XII.-Further Answers to the Plea, How Am I to Live? 20

Chapter XIII.-Of the Observance of Days Connected with Idolatry. 22

Chapter XIV.-Of Blasphemy. One of St. Paul's Sayings. 23

Chapter XV.-Concerning Festivals in Honour of Emperors, Victories, and the Like. Examples of the Three Children and Daniel. 25

Chapter XVI.-Concerning Private Festivals. 27

Chapter XVII.-The Cases of Servants and Other Officials. What Offices a Christian Man May Hold. 28

Chapter XVIII.-Dress as Connected with Idolatry. 29

Chapter XIX.-Concerning Military Service. 31

Chapter XX.-Concerning Idolatry in Words. 32

Chapter XXI.-Of Silent Acquiescence in Heathen Formularies. 33

Chapter XXII.-Of Accepting Blessing in the Name of Idols. 34

Chapter XXIII.-Written Contracts in the Name of Idols. Tacit Consent. 35

Chapter XXIV.-General Conclusion. 37

Introduction

[Translated by the Rev. S. Thelwall.]

Chapter I.-Wide Scope of the Word Idolatry.

The principal crime of the human race, the highest guilt charged upon the world, the whole procuring cause of judgment, is idolatry. For, although each single fault retains its own proper feature, although it is destined to judgment under its own proper name also, yet it is marked off under the general account of idolatry. Set aside names, examine works, the idolater is likewise a murderer. Do you inquire whom he has slain? If it contributes ought to the aggravation of the indictment, no stranger nor personal enemy, but his own self. By what snares? Those of his error. By what weapon? The offence done to God. By how many blows? As many as are his idolatries. He who affirms that the idolater perishes not, will affirm that the idolater has not committed murder. Further, you may recognize in the same crime adultery and fornication; for he who serves false gods is doubtless an adulterer of truth, because all falsehood is adultery. So, too, he is sunk in fornication. For who that is a fellow-worker with unclean spirits, does not stalk in general pollution and fornication? And thus it is that the Holy Scriptures use the designation of fornication in their upbraiding of idolatry. The essence of fraud, I take it, is, that any should seize what is another's, or refuse to another his due; and, of course, fraud done toward man is a name of greatest crime. Well, but idolatry does fraud to God, by refusing to Him, and conferring on others, His honours;

so that to fraud it also conjoins contumely. But if fraud, just as much as fornication and adultery, entails death, then, in these cases, equally with the former, idolatry stands unacquitted of the impeachment of murder. After such crimes, so pernicious, so devouring of salvation, all other crimes also, after some manner, and separately disposed in order, find their own essence represented in idolatry. In it also are the cancupiscences of the world. For what solemnity of idolatry is without the circumstance of dress and ornament? In it are lasciviousnesses and drunkennesses; since it is, for the most part, for the sake of food, and stomach, and appetite, that these solemnities are frequented. In it is unrighteousness. For what more unrighteous than it, which knows not the Father of righteousness? In it also is vanity, since its whole system is vain. In it is mendacity, for its whole substance is false. Thus it comes to pass, that in idolatry all crimes are detected, and in all crimes idolatry. Even otherwise, since all faults savour of opposition to God, and there is nothing which savours of opposition to God which is not assigned to demons and unclean spirits,

whose property idols are; doubtless, whoever commits a fault is chargeable with idolatry, for he does that which pertains to the proprietors of idols.

Chapter II.-Idolatry in Its More Limited Sense. Its Copiousness.

But let the universal names of crimes withdraw to the specialities of their own works; let idolatry remain in that which it is itself. Sufficient to itself is a name so inimical to God, a substance of crime so copious, which reaches forth so many branches, diffuses so many veins, that from this name, for the greatest part, is drawn the material of all the modes in which the expansiveness of idolatry has to be foreguarded against by us, since in manifold wise it subverts the servants of God; and this not only when unperceived, but also when cloaked over. Most men simply regard idolatry as to be interpreted in these senses alone, viz.: if one burn incense, or immolate a victim, or give a sacrificial banquet, or be bound to some sacred functions or priesthoods; just as if one were to regard adultery as to be accounted in kisses, and in embraces, and in actual fleshly contact; or murder as to be reckoned only in the shedding forth of blood, and in the actual taking away of life. But how far wider an extent the Lord assigns to those crimes we are sure: when He defines adultery to consist even in concupiscence, "if one shall have cast an eye lustfully on," and stirred his soul with immodest commotion;

when He judges murder to consist even in a word of curse or of reproach, and in every impulse of anger, and in the neglect of charity toward a brother just as John teaches, that he who hates his brother is a murderer. Else, both the devil's ingenuity in malice, and God the Lord's in the Discipline by which He fortifies us against the devil's depths, would have but limited scope, if we were judged only in such faults as even the heathen nations have decreed punishable. How will our "righteousness abound above that of the Scribes and Pharisees," as the Lord has prescribed, unless we shall have seen through the abundance of that adversary quality, that is, of unrighteousness? But if the head of unrighteousness is idolatry, the first point is, that we be fore-fortified against the abundance of idolatry, while we recognise it not only in its palpable manifestations.

Chapter III.-Idolatry: Origin and Meaning of the Name.

Idol in ancient times there was none. Before the artificers of this monstrosity had bubbled into being, temples stood solitary and shrines empty, just as to the present day in some places traces of the ancient practice remain permanently. Yet idolatry used to be practised, not under that name, but in that function; for even at this day it can be practised outside a temple, and without an idol. But when the devil introduced into the world artificers of statues and of images, and of every kind of likenesses, that former rude business of human disaster attained from idols both a name and a development. Thenceforward every art which in any way produces an idol instantly became a fount of idolatry. For it makes no difference whether a moulder cast, or a carver grave, or an embroiderer weave the idol; because neither is it a question of material, whether an idol be formed of gypsum, or of colors, or of stone, or of bronze, or of silver, or of thread. For since even without an idol idolatry is committed, when the idol is there it makes no difference of what kind it be, of what material, or what shape; lest any should think that only to be held an idol which is consecrated in human shape. To establish this point, the interpretation of the word is requisite. Eidoßs, in Greek, signifies form; eido¦loßn, derived diminutively from that, by an equivalent process in our language, makes formling. Every form or forming, therefore, claims to be called an idol. Hence idolatry is ”all attendance and service about every idol.” Hence also, every artificer of an idol is guilty of one and the same crime, unless, the People which consecrated for itself the likeness of a calf, and not of a man, fell short of incurring the guilt of idolatry.

Chapter IV.-Idols Not to Be Made, Much Less Worshipped. Idols and Idol-Makers in the Same Category.

God prohibits an idol as much to be made as to be worshipped. In so far as the making what may be worshipped is the prior act, so far is the prohibition to make (if the worship is unlawful) the prior prohibition. For this cause-the eradicating, namely, of the material of idolatry-the divine law proclaims, "Thou shall make no idol; " and by conjoining, "Nor a similitude of the things which are in the heaven, and which are in the earth, and which are in the sea," has interdicted the servants of God from acts of that kind all the universe over. Enoch had preceded, predicting that "the demons, and the spirits of the angelic apostates, would turn into idolatry all the elements, all the garniture of the universe, all things contained in the heaven, in the sea, in the earth, that they might be consecrated as God, in opposition to God. All things, therefore, does human error worship, except the Founder of all Himself. The images of those things are idols; the consecration of the images is idolatry. Whatever guilt idolatry incurs, must necessarily be imputed to every artificer of every idol. In short, the same Enoch fore-condemns in general menace both idol-worshippers and idol-makers together. And again: "I swear to you, sinners, that against the day of perdition of blood repentance is being prepared.

Ye who serve stones, and ye who make images of gold, and silver, and wood, and stones and clay, and serve phantoms, and demons, and spirits in fanes, and all errors not according to knowledge, shall find no help from them. But Isaiah says, "Ye are witnesses whether there is a God except Me. "And they who mould and carve out at that time were not: all vain! who do that which liketh them, which shall not profit them! And that whole ensuing discourse sets a ban as well on the artificers as the worshippers: the close of which is, "Learn that their heart is ashes and earth, and that none can free his own soul. In which sentence David equally includes the makers too. "Such," says he, "let them become who make them. And why should I, a man of limited memory, suggest anything further? Why recall anything more from the Scriptures? As if either the voice of the Holy Spirit were not sufficient; or else

any further deliberation were needful, whether the Lord cursed and condemned by priority the artificers of those things, of which He curses and condemns the worshippers!

Chapter V. -Sundry Objections or Excuses Dealt with.

We will certainly take more pains in answering the excuses of artificers of this kind, who ought never to be admitted into the house of God, if any have a knowledge of that Discipline. To begin with, that speech, wont to be cast in our teeth, "I have nothing else whereby to live," may be more severely retorted, "You have, then, whereby to live? If by your own laws, what have you to do with God? " Then, as to the argument they have the hardihood to bring even from the Scriptures, "that the apostle has said, 'As each has been found, so let him persevere.'" We may all, therefore, persevere in sins, as the result of that interpretation! for there is not any one of us who has not been found asa sinner, since no other cause was the source of Christ's descent than that of setting sinners free. Again, they say the same apostle has left a precept, according to his own example, "That each one work with his own hands for a living. If this precept is maintained in respect to all hands, I believe even the bath-thieves live by their hands, and robbers themselves gain the means to live by their hands; forgers, again, execute their evil handwritings, not of course with their feet, but hands; actors, however, achieve a livelihood not with hands alone, but with their entire limbs. Let the Church, therefore, stand open to all who are supported by their hands and by their own work;

if there is no exception of arts which the Discipline of God receives not. But some one says, in opposition to our proposition of "similitude being interdicted," "Why, then, did Moses in the desert make a likeness of a serpent out of bronze? "The figures, which used to be laid as a groundwork for some secret future dispensation, not with a view to the repeal of the law, but as a type of their own final cause, stand in a class by themselves. Otherwise, if we should interpret these things as the adversaries of the law do, do we, too, as the Marcionites do, ascribe inconsistency to the Almighty, whom they in this manner destroy as being mutable, while in one place He forbids, in another commands? But if any feigns ignorance of the fact that that effigy of the serpent of bronze, after the manner of one uphung, denoted the shape of the Lord's cross, which was to free us from serpents-that is, from the devil's angels-while, through itself, it hanged up the devil slain; or whatever other exposition of that figure has been revealed to worthless men no matter, provided we remember the apostle affirms that all things happened at that time to the People figuratively. It is enough that the same God,

as by law He forbade the making of similitude, did, by the extraordinary precept in the case of the serpent, interdict similitude. If you reverence the same God, you have His law, "Thou shall make no similitude.

If you look back, too, to the precept enjoining the subsequently made similitude, do you, too, imitate Moses: make not any likeness in opposition to the law, unless to you, too, God have bidden it.

Chapter VI.-Idolatry Condemned by Baptism. To Make an Idol Is, in Fact, to Worship It.

If no law of God had prohibited idols to be made by us; if no voice of the Holy Spirit uttered general menace no less against the makers than the worshippers of idols; from our sacrament itself we would draw our interpretation that arts of that kind are opposed to the faith. For how have we renounced the devil and his angels, if we make them? What divorce have we declared from them, I say not with whom, but dependent on whom, we live? What discord have we entered into with those to whom we are under obligation for the sake of our maintenance? Can you have denied with the tongue what with the hand you confess? unmake by word what by deed you make? preach one God, you who make so many? preach the true God, you who make false ones? "I make," says one, "but I worship not; "as if there were some cause for which he dare not worship, besides that for which he ought not also to make,-the offence done to God, namely, in either case. Nay, you who make, that they may be able to be worshipped, do worship; and you worship, not with the spirit of some worthless perfume, but with your own; nor at the expense of a beast's soul, but of your own. To them you immolate your ingenuity; to them you make your sweat a libation; to them you kindle the torch of your forethought. More are you to them than a priest, since it is by your means they have a priest; your diligence is their divinity. Do you affirm that you worship not what you make? Ah! but they affirm not so, to whom you slay this fatter, more precious and greater victim, your salvation.

Chapter VII.--Grief of the Faithful at the Admission of Idol-Makers into the Church; Nay, Even into the Ministry.

A whole day the zeal of faith will direct its pleadings to this quarter: bewailing that a Christian should come from idols into the Church; should come from an adversary workshop into the house of God; should raise to God the Father hands which are the mothers of idols; should pray to God with the hands which, out of doors, are prayed to in opposition to God; should apply to the Lord's body those hands which confer bodies on demons. Nor is this sufficient. Grant that it be a small matter, if from other hands they receive what they contaminate; but even those very hands deliver to others what they have contaminated. Idol-artificers are chosen even into the ecclesiastical order. Oh wickedness! Once did the Jews lay brands on Christ; these mangle His body daily. Oh hands to be cut off! Now let the saying, "If thy hand make thee do evil, amputate it," see to it whether it were uttered by way of similitude merely. What hands more to be amputated than those in which scandal is done to the Lord's body?

Chapter VIII.-Other Arts Made Subservient to Idolatry. Lawful Means of Gaining a Livelihood Abundant.

There are also other species of very many arts which, although they extend not to the making of idols, yet, with the same criminality, furnish the adjuncts without which idols have no power. For it matters not whether you erect or equip: if you have embellished his temple, altar, or niche; if you have pressed out gold-leaf, or have wrought his insignia, or even his house: work of that kind, which confers not shape, but authority, is more important. If the necessity of maintenance is urged so much, the arts have other species withal to afford means of livelihood, without outstepping the path of discipline, that is, without the confiction of an idol. The plasterer knows both how to mend roofs, and lay on stuccoes, and polish a cistern, and trace ogives, and draw in relief on party-walls many other ornaments beside likenesses. The painter, too, the marble mason, the bronze-worker, and every graver whatever, knows expansions of his own art, of course much easier of execution. For how much more easily does he who delineates a statue overlay a sideboard! How much sooner does he who carves a Mars out of a lime-tree, fasten together a chest! No art but is either mother or kinswoman of some neighbour art: nothing is independent of its neighbour. The veins of the arts are many as are the concupiscences of men. ”But there is difference in wages and the rewards of handicraft; ”therefore there is difference, too, in the labour required. Smaller wages are compensated by more frequent earning.

How many are the party-walls which require statues? How many the temples and shrines which are built for idols? But houses, and official residences, and baths, and tenements, how many are they? Shoe- and slipper-gilding is daily work not so the gilding of Mercury and Serapis. Let that suffice for the gain of handicrafts. Luxury and ostentation have more votaries than all superstition. Ostentation will require dishes and cups more easily than superstition. Luxury deals in wreaths, also, more than ceremony. When, therefore, we urge men generally to such kinds of handicrafts as do not come in contact with an idol indeed

and with the things which are appropriate to an idol; since, moreover, the things which are common to idols are often common to men too; of this also we ought to beware that nothing be, with our knowledge, demanded by any person from our idols' service. For if we shall have made that concession, and shall not have had recourse to the remedies so often used, I think we are not free of the contagion of idolatry, we whose (not unwitting) hands are found busied in the tendence, or in the honour and service, of demons.

Chapter IX.-Professions of Some Kinds Allied to Idolatry. Of Astrology in Particular.

We observe among the arts also some professions liable to the charge of idolatry. Of astrologers there should be no speaking even; but since one in these days has challenged us, defending on his own behalf perseverance in that profession, I will use a few words. I allege not that he honours idols, whose names he has inscribed on the heaven, to whom he has attributed all God's power; because men, presuming that we are disposed of by the immutable arbitrament of the stars, think on that account that God is not to be sought after. One proposition I lay down: that those angels, the deserters from God, the lovers of women, were likewise the discoverers of this curious art, on that account also condemned by God. Oh divine sentence, reaching even unto the earth in its vigour, whereto the unwitting render testimony! The astrologers are expelled just like their angels. The city and Italy are interdicted to the astrologers, just as heaven to their angels. There is the same penalty of exclusion for disciples and masters. "But Magi and astrologers came from the east. We know the mutual alliance of magic and astrology. The interpreters of the stars, then, were the first to announce Christ's birth the first to present Him "gifts. By this bond, [must] I imagine, they put Christ under obligation to themselves? What then? Shall therefore the religion of those Magi act as patron now also to astrologers? Astrology now-a-days, forsooth, treats of Christ-is the science of the stars of Christ;

not of Saturn, or Mars, and whomsoever else out of the same class of the dead it pays observance to and preaches? But, however, that science has been allowed until the Gospel, in order that after Christ's birth no one should thence forward interpret any one's nativity by the heaven. For they therefore offered to the then infant Lord that frankincense and myrrh and gold, to be, as it were, the close of worldly sacrifice and glory, which Christ was about to do away. What, then? The dream-sent, doubtless, of the will of God-suggested to the same Magi, namely, that they should go home, but by another way, not that by which they came. It means this: that they should not walk in their ancient path. Not that Herod should not pursue them, who in fact did not pursue them; unwitting even that they had departed by

another way, since be was withal unwitting by what way they came. Just so we ought to understand by it the right Way and Discipline. And so the precept was rather, that thence forward they should walk otherwise. So, too, that other species of magic which operates by miracles, emulous even in opposition to Moses, tried God's patience until the Gospel. For thenceforward Simon Magus, just turned believer, (since he was still thinking somewhat of his juggling sect; to wit, that among the miracles of his profession he might buy even the gift of the Holy Spirit through imposition of hands) was cursed by the apostles, and ejected from the faith.

Both he and that other magician, who was with Sergius Paulus, (since he began opposing himself to the same apostles) was mulcted with loss of eyes. The same fate, I believe, would astrologers, too, have met, if any had fallen in the way of the apostles. But yet, when magic is punished, of which astrology is a species, of course the species is condemned in the genus. After the Gospel, you will nowhere find either sophists, Chaldeans, enchanters, diviners, or magicians, except as clearly punished. "Where is the wise, where the grammarian, where the disputer of this age? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this age? " You know nothing, astrologer, if you know not that you should be a Christian. If you did know it, you ought to have known this also, that you should have nothing more to do with that profession of yours which, of itself, fore-chants the climacterics of others, and might instruct you of its own danger. There is no part nor lot for you in that system of yours. He cannot hope for the kingdom of the heavens, whose finger or wand abuses the heaven.

Chapter X.-Of Schoolmasters and Their Difficulties.

Moreover, we must inquire likewise touching schoolmasters; nor only of them, but also all other professors of literature. Nay, on the contrary, we must not doubt that they are in affinity with manifold idolatry: first, in that it is necessary for them to preach the gods of the nations, to express their names, genealogies, honourable distinctions, all and singular; and further, to observe the solemnities and festivals of the same, as of them by whose means they compute their revenues. What schoolmaster, without a table of the seven idols, will yet frequent the Quinquatria? The very first payment of every pupil he consecrates both to the honour and to the name of Minerva; so that, even though he be not said "to eat of that which is sacrificed to idols" nominally (not being dedicated to any particular idol), he is shunned as an idolater. What less of defilement does he recur on that ground, than a business brings which, both nominally and virtually, is consecrated publicly to an idol? The Minervalia are as much Minerva's, as the Saturnalia Saturn's; Saturn's, which must necessarily be celebrated even by little slaves at the time of the Saturnalia. New-year's gifts likewise must be caught at, and the Septimontium kept; and all the presents of Midwinter and the feast of Dear Kinsmanship must be exacted; the schools must be wreathed with flowers; the flamens' wives and the μdiles sacrifice; the school is honoured on the appointed holy-days. The same thing takes place on an idol's birthday; every pomp of the devil is frequented.

Who will think that these things are befitting to a Christian master, unless it be he who shall think them suitable likewise to one who is not a master? We know it may be said, "If teaching literature is not lawful to God's servants, neither will learning be likewise; "and, "How could one be trained unto ordinary human intelligence, or unto any sense or action whatever, since literature is the means of training for all life? How do we repudiate secular studies, without which divine studies cannot be pursued? "Let us see, then, the necessity of literary erudition; let us reflect that partly it cannot be admitted, partly cannot be avoided. Learning literature is allowable for believers, rather than teaching; for the principle of learning and of teaching is different. If a believer teach literature, while he is teaching doubtless he commends, while he delivers he affirms, while he recalls he bears testimony to, the praises of idols interspersed therein. He seals the gods themselves with

this name; whereas the Law, as we have said, prohibits "the names of gods to be pronounced," and this name to be conferred on vanity. Hence the devil gets men's early faith built up from the beginnings of their erudition. Inquire whether he who catechizes about idols commit idolatry. But when a believer learns these things, if he is already capable of understanding what idolatry is, he neither receives nor allows them; much more if he is not yet capable.

Or, when he begins to understand, it behoves him first to understand what he has previously learned, that is, touching God and the faith. Therefore he will reject those things, and will not receive them; and will be as safe as one who from one who knows it not, knowingly accepts poison, but does not drink it. To him necessity is attributed as an excuse, because he has no other way to learn. Moreover, the not teaching literature is as much easier than the not learning, as it is easier, too, for the pupil not to attend, than for the master not to frequent, the rest of the defilements incident to the schools from public and scholastic solemnities.

Chapter XI.-Connection Between Covetousness and Idolatry. Certain Trades, However Gainful, to Be Avoided.

If we think over the rest of faults, tracing them from their generations, let us begin with covetousness, ”a root of all evils,” wherewith, indeed, some having been ensnared, ”have suffered shipwreck about faith. Albeit covetousness is by the same apostle called idolatry. In the next place proceeding to mendacity, the minister of covetousness (of false swearing I am silent, since even swearing is not lawful)-is trade adapted for a servant of God? But, covetousness apart, what is the motive for acquiring? When the motive for acquiring ceases, there will be no necessity for trading. Grant now that there be some righteousness in business, secure from the duty of watchfulness against covetousness and mendacity; I take it that that trade which pertains to the very soul and spirit of idols, which pampers every demon, falls under the charge of idolatry. Rather, is not that the principal idolatry? If the selfsame merchandises-frankincense, I mean, and all other foreign productions-used as sacrifice to idols, are of use likewise to men for medicinal ointments, to us Christians also, over and above, for solaces of sepulture, let them see to it. At all events, while the pomps, while the priesthoods, while the sacrifices of idols, are furnished by dangers, by losses, by inconveniences, by cogitations, by runnings to and fro, or trades, what else are you demonstrated to be but an idols’ agent? Let none contend that, in this way, exception may be taken to all trades.

All graver faults extend the sphere for diligence in watchfulness proportionably to the magnitude of the danger; in order that we may withdraw not only from the faults, but from the means through which they have being. For although the fault be done by others, it makes no difference if it be by my means. In no case ought I to be necessary to another, while he is doing what to me is unlawful. Hence I ought to understand that care must be taken by me, lest what I am forbidden to do be done by my means. In short, in another cause of no lighter guilt I observe that fore-judgment. In that I am interdicted from fornication, I

furnish nothing of help or connivance to others for that purpose; in that I have separated my own flesh itself from stews, I acknowledge that I cannot exercise the trade of pandering, or keep that kind of places for my neighbour's behoof. So, too, the interdiction of murder shows me that a trainer of gladiators also is excluded from the Church; nor will any one fail to be the means of doing what he subministers to another to do. Behold, here is a more kindred fore-judgment: if a purveyor of the public victims come over to the faith, will you permit him to remain permanently in that trade? or if one who is already a believer shall have undertaken that business, will you think that he is to be retained in the Church? No, I take it;

unless any one will dissemble in the case of a frankincense-seller too. In sooth, the agency of blood pertains to some, that of odours to others. If, before idols were in the world, idolatry, hitherto shapeless, used to be transacted by these wares; if, even now, the work of idolatry is perpetrated, for the most part, without the idol, by burnings of odours; the frankincense-seller is a something even more serviceable even toward demons, for idolatry is more easily carried on without the idol, than without the ware of the frankincense-seller. Let us interrogate thoroughly the conscience of the faith itself. With what mouth will a Christian frankincense-seller, if he shall pass through temples, with what mouth will he spit down upon and blow out the smoking altars, for which himself has made provision? With what consistency will he exorcise his own foster-children, to whom he affords his own house as store-room? Indeed, if he shall have ejected a demon, let him not congratulate himself on his faith, for he has not ejected an enemy; he ought to have had his prayer easily granted by one whom he is daily feeding. No art, then, no profession, no trade, which administers either to equipping or forming idols, can be free from the title of idolatry; unless we interpret idolatry to be altogether something else than the service of idol-tendence.

Chapter XII.-Further Answers to the Plea, How Am I to Live?

In vain do we flatter ourselves as to the necessities of human maintenance, if-after faith sealed -we say, ”I have no means to live? ” For here I will now answer more fully that abrupt proposition. It is advanced too late. For after the similitude of that most prudent builder, who first computes the costs of the work, together with his own means, lest, when he has begun, he afterwards blush to find himself spent, deliberation should have been made before. But even now you have the Lord’s sayings, as examples taking away from you all excuse. For what is it you say? ”I shall be in need. But the Lord calls the needy ”happy. ”I shall have no food. But ”think not,” says He, ”about food; ” and as an example of clothing we have the lilies. ”My work was my subsistence. Nay, but ”all things are to be sold, and divided to the needy. ”But provision must be made for children and posterity. ”None, putting his hand on the plough, and looking back, is fit” for work. ”But I was under contract. ”None can serve two lords. If you wish to be the Lord’s disciple, it is necessary you ”take your cross, and follow the Lord: ” your cross; that is, your own straits and tortures, or your body only, which is after the manner of a cross. Parents, wives, children, will have to be left behind, for God’s sake. Do you hesitate about arts, and trades, and about professions likewise, for the sake of children and parents?

Even there was it demonstrated to us, that both ”dear pledges,” and handicrafts, and trades, are to be quite left behind for the Lord’s sake; while James and John, called by the Lord, do leave quite behind both father and ship; while Matthew is roused up from the toll-booth; while even burying a father was too tardy a business for faith. None of them whom the Lord chose to Him said, ”I have no means to live. Faith fears not famine. It knows, likewise, that hunger is no less to be contemned by it for God’s sake, than every kind of death. It has learnt not to respect life; how much more food? [You ask] ”How many have fulfilled these conditions? ”But what with men is difficult, with God is easy. Let us, however, comfort ourselves about the gentleness and clemency of God in such wise, as not to indulge our ”necessities” up to the point of affinities with idolatry, but to avoid even from afar every breath of it, as of a pestilence. [And this] not merely in the cases forementioned, but in the universal series of human superstition; whether appropriated to its gods, or to the defunct,

or to kings, as pertaining to the selfsame unclean spirits, sometimes through sacrifices and priesthoods, sometimes through spectacles and the like, sometimes through holy-days.

Chapter XIII.-Of the Observance of Days Connected with Idolatry.

But why speak of sacrifices and priesthoods? Of spectacles, moreover, and pleasures of that kind, we have already filled a volume of their own. In this place must be handled the subject of holidays and other extraordinary solemnities, which we accord sometimes to our wantonness, sometimes to our timidity, in opposition to the common faith and Discipline. The first point, indeed, on which I shall join issue is this: whether a servant of God ought to share with the very nations themselves in matters of his kind either in dress, or in food, or in any other kind of their gladness. "To rejoice with the rejoicing, and grieve with the grieving," is said.about brethren by the apostle when exhorting to unanimity. But, for these purposes, "There is nought of communion between light and darkness," between life and death or else we rescind what is written, "The world shall rejoice, but ye shall grieve. If we rejoice with the world, there is reason to fear that with the world we shall grieve too. But when the world rejoices, let us grieve; and when the world afterward grieves, we shall rejoice. Thus, too, Eleazar in Hades, (attaining refreshment in Abraham's bosom) and the rich man, (on the other hand, set in the torment of fire) compensate, by an answerable retribution, their alternate vicissitudes of evil and good. There are certain gift-days, which with some adjust the claim of honour, with others the debt of wages. "Now, then," you say, "I shall receive back what is mine, or pay back what is another's.

If men have consecrated for themselves this custom from superstition, why do you, estranged as you are from all their vanity, participate in solemnities consecrated to idols; as if for you also there were some prescript about a day, short of the observance of a particular day, to prevent your paying or receiving what you owe a man, or what is owed you by a man? Give me the form after which you wish to be dealt with. For why should you skulk withal, when you contaminate your own conscience by your neighbour's ignorance? If you are not unknown to be a Christian, you are tempted, and you act as if you were not a Christian against your neighbour's conscience; if, however, you shall be disguised withal, you are the slave of the temptation. At all events, whether in the latter or the former way, you are guilty of being "ashamed of God. But "whosoever shall be ashamed of Me in the presence of men, of him will I too be ashamed," says He, "in the presence of my Father who is in the heavens."

Chapter XIV.-Of Blasphemy. One of St. Paul's Sayings.

But, however, the majority (of Christians) have by this time induced the belief in their mind that it is pardonable if at any time they do what the heathen do, for fear "the Name be blasphemed. Now the blasphemy which must quite be shunned by us in every way is, I take it, this: If any of us lead a heathen into blasphemy with good cause, either by fraud, or by injury, or by contumely, or any other matter of worthy complaint, in which "the Name" is deservedly impugned, so that the Lord, too, be deservedly angry. Else, if of all blasphemy it has been said, "By your means My Name is blasphemed," we all perish at once; since the whole circus, with no desert of ours, assails "the Name" with wicked suffrages. Let us cease (to be Christians) and it will not be blasphemed! On the contrary, while we are, let it be blasphemed: in the observance, not the overstepping, of discipline; while we are being approved, not while we are being reprobated. Oh blasphemy, bordering on martyrdom, which now attests me to be a Christian, while for that very account it detests me! The cursing of well-maintained Discipline is a blessing of the Name. "If," says he, "I wished to please men, I should not be Christ's servant. But the same apostle elsewhere bids us take care to please all: "As I," he says, "please all by all means. No doubt he used to please them by celebrating the Saturnalia and New-year's day!

[Was it so] or was it by moderation and patience? by gravity, by kindness, by integrity? In like manner, when he is saying, "I have become all things to all, that I may gain all," does he mean "to idolaters an idolater? ""to heathens a heathen? ""to the worldly worldly? "But albeit he does not prohibit us from having our conversation with idolaters and adulterers, and the other criminals, saying, "Otherwise ye would go out from the world," of course he does not so slacken those reins of conversation that, since it is necessary for us both to live and to mingle with sinners, we may be able to sin with them too. Where there is the intercourse of life, which the apostle concedes, there is sinning, which no one permits. To live with heathens is lawful, to die with them is not. Let us live with all; let us be glad with them, out of community of nature, not of superstition. We are peers in soul, not in discipline; fellow-possessors of the world, not of error. But if we have no right of communion in matters of this kind with strangers, how far more wicked to celebrate them among brethren! Who

can maintain or defend this? The Holy Spirit upbraids the Jews with their holy-days. "Your Sabbaths, and new moons, and ceremonies," says He, "My soul hateth.

By us, to whom Sabbaths are strange, and the new moons and festivals formerly beloved by God, the Saturnalia and New-year's and Midwinter's festivals and Matronalia are frequented-presents come and go-New-year's gifts-games join their noise-banquets join their din! Oh better fidelity of the nations to their own sect, which claims no solemnity of the Christians for itself! Not the Lord's day, not Pentecost, even it they had known them, would they have shared with us; for they would fear lest they should seem to be Christians. We are not apprehensive lest we seem to be heathens! If any indulgence is to be granted to the flesh, you have it. I will not say your own days, but more too; for to the heathens each festive day occurs but once annually: you have a festive day every eighth day. Call out the individual solemnities of the nations, and set them out into a row, they will not be able to make up a Pentecost.

Chapter XV.-Concerning Festivals in Honour of Emperors, Victories, and the Like. Examples of the Three Children and Daniel.

But "let your works shine," saith He; but now all our shops and gates shine! You will now-a-days find more doors of heathens without lamps and laurel-wreaths than of Christians. What does the case seem to be with regard to that species (of ceremony) also? If it is an idol's honour, without doubt an idol's honour is idolatry. If it is for a man's sake, let us again consider that all idolatry is for man's sake; let us again consider that all idolatry is a worship done to men, since it is generally agreed even among their worshippers that aforetime the gods themselves of the nations were men; and so it makes no difference whether that superstitious homage be rendered to men of a former age or of this. Idolatry is condemned, not on account of the persons which are set up for worship, but on account of those its observances, which pertain to demons. "The things which are Caesar's are to be rendered to Caesar. It is enough that He set in apposition thereto, "and to God the things which are God's. What things, then, are Caesar's? Those, to wit, about which the consultation was then held, whether the poll-tax should be furnished to Caesar or no. Therefore, too, the Lord demanded that the money should be shown Him, and inquired about the image, whose it was; and when He had heard it was Caesar's, said, "Render to Caesar what are Caesar's, and what are God's to God;

"that is, the image of Caesar, which is on the coin, to Caesar, and the image of God, which is on man, to God; so as to render to Caesar indeed money, to God yourself. Otherwise, what will be God's, if all things are Caesar's? "Then," do you say, "the lamps before my doors, and the laurels on my posts are an honour to God? "They are there of course, not because they are an honour to God, but to him who is honour in God's stead by ceremonial observances of that kind, so far as is manifest, saving the religious performance, which is in secret appertaining to demons. For we ought to be sure if there are any whose notice it escapes through ignorance of this world's literature, that there are among the Romans

even gods of entrances; Cardea (Hinge-goddess), called after hinges, and Forculus (Door-god) after doors, and Limentinus (Threshold-god) after the threshold, and Janus himself (Gate-god) after the gate: and of course we know that, though names be empty and reigned, yet, when they are drawn down into superstition, demons and every unclean spirit seize them for themselves, through the bond of consecration. Otherwise demons have no name individually, but they there find a name where they find also a token. Among the Greeks likewise we read of Apollo Thyrµus, i.e. of the door, and the Antelii, or Anthelii, demons, as presiders over entrances.

These things, therefore, the Holy Spirit foreseeing from the beginning, fore-chanted, through the most ancient prophet Enoch, that even entrances would come into superstitious use. For we see too that other entrances are adored in the baths. But if there are beings which are adored in entrances, it is to them that both the lamps and the laurels will pertain. To an idol you will have done whatever you shall have done to an entrance. In this place I call a witness on the authority also of God; because it is not safe to suppress whatever may have been shown to one, of course for the sake of all. I know that a brother was severely chastised, the same night, through a vision, because on the sudden announcement of public rejoicings his servants had wreathed his gates. And yet himself had not wreathed, or commanded them to be wreathed; for he had gone forth from home before, and on his return had reprehended the deed. So strictly are we appraised with God in matters of this kind, even with regard to the discipline of our family. Therefore, as to what relates to the honours due to kings or emperors, we have a prescript sufficient, that it behoves us to be in all obedience, according to the apostle's precept, "subject to magistrates, and princes, and powers; " but within the limits of discipline, so long as we keep ourselves separate from idolatry.

For it is for this reason, too, that that example of the three brethren has forerun us, who, in other respects obedient toward king Nebuchodonosor rejected with all constancy the honour to his image, proving that whatever is extolled beyond the measure of human honour, unto the resemblance of divine sublimity, is idolatry. So too, Daniel, in all other points submissive to Darius, remained in his duty so long as it was free from danger to his religion; for, to avoid undergoing that danger, he feared the royal lions no more than they the royal fires. Let, therefore, them who have no light, light their lamps daily; let them over whom the fires of hell are imminent, affix to their posts, laurels doomed presently to burn: to them the testimonies of darkness and the omens of their penalties are suitable. You are a light of the world, and a tree ever green. If you have renounced temples, make not your own gate a temple. I have said too little. If you have renounced stews, clothe not your own house with the appearance of a new brothel.

Chapter XVI.-Concerning Private Festivals.

Touching the ceremonies, however, of private and social solemnities-as those of the white toga, of espousals, of nuptials, of name-givings-I should think no danger need be guarded against from the breath of the idolatry which is mixed up with them. For the causes are to be considered to which the ceremony is due. Those above-named I take to be clean in themselves, because neither manly garb, nor the marital ring or union, descends from honours done to any idol. In short, I find no dress cursed by God, except a woman's dress on a man: for "cursed," saith He, "is every man who clothes himself in woman's attire." The toga, however, is a dress of manly name as well as of manly use. God no more prohibits nuptials to be celebrated than a name to be given. "But there are sacrifices appropriated to these occasions." Let me be invited, and let not the title of the ceremony be "assistance at a sacrifice," and the discharge of my good offices is at the service of my friends. Would that it were "at their service" indeed, and that we could escape seeing what is unlawful for us to do. But since the evil one has so surrounded the world with idolatry, it will be lawful for us to be present at some ceremonies which see us doing service to a man, not to an idol. Clearly, if invited unto priestly function and sacrifice, I will not go, for that is service peculiar to an idol; but neither will I furnish advice, or expense, or any other good office in a matter of that kind. If it is on account of the sacrifice that I be invited, and stand by, I shall be partaker of idolatry; if any other cause conjoins me to the sacrificer, I shall be merely a spectator of the sacrifice.

Chapter XVII.-The Cases of Servants and Other Officials. What Offices a Christian Man May Hold.

But what shall believing servants or children do? officials likewise, when attending on their lords, or patrons, or superiors, when sacrificing? Well, if any one shall have handed the wine to a sacrificer, nay, if by any single word necessary or belonging to a sacrifice he shall have aided him, he will be held to be a minister of idolatry. Mindful of this rule, we can render service even "to magistrates and powers," after the example of the patriarchs and the other forefathers, who obeyed idolatrous kings up to the confine of idolatry. Hence arose, very lately, a dispute whether a servant of God should take the administration of any dignity or power, if he be able, whether by some special grace, or by adroitness, to keep himself intact from every species of idolatry; after the example that both Joseph and Daniel, clean from idolatry, administered both dignity and power in the livery and purple of the prefecture of entire Egypt or Babylonia. And so let us grant that it is possible for any one to succeed in moving, in whatsoever office, under the mere name of the office, neither sacrificing nor lending his authority to sacrifices; not farming out victims; not assigning to others the care of temples; not looking after their tributes; not giving spectacles at his own or the public charge, or presiding over the giving them; making proclamation or edict for no solemnity; not even taking oaths: moreover (what comes under the head of power), neither sitting in judgment on any one's life or character, for you might bear with his judging about money; neither condemning nor fore-condemning; binding no one, imprisoning or torturing no one- if it is credible that all this is possible.

Chapter XVIII.-Dress as Connected with Idolatry.

But we must now treat of the garb only and apparatus of office. There is a dress proper to every one, as well for daily use as for office and dignity. That famous purple, therefore, and the gold as an ornament of the neck, were, among the Egyptians and Babylonians, ensigns of dignity, in the same way as bordered, or striped, or palm-embroidered togas, and the golden wreaths of provincial priests, are now; but not on the same terms. For they used only to be conferred, under the name of honour, on such as deserved the familiar friendship of kings (whence, too, such used to be styled the ”purpled-men” of kings, just as among us, some, from their white toga, are called ”candidates”); but not on the understanding that that garb should be tied to priesthoods also, or to any idol-ceremonies. For if that were the case, of course men of such holiness and constancy would instantly have refused the defiled dresses; and it would instantly have appeared that Daniel had been no zealous slave to idols, nor worshipped Bel, nor the dragon, which long after did appear. That purple, therefore, was simple, and used not at that time to be a mark of dignity among the barbarians, but of nobility. For as both Joseph, who had been a slave, and Daniel, who through captivity had changed his state, attained the freedom of the states of Babylon and Egypt through the dress of barbaric nobility;

so among us believers also, if need so be, the bordered toga will be proper to be conceded to boys, and the stole to girls, as ensigns of birth, not of power; of race, not of office; of rank, not of superstition. But the purple, or the other ensigns of dignities and powers, dedicated from the beginning to idolatry engrafted on the dignity and the powers, carry the spot of their own profanation; since, moreover, bordered and striped togas, and broad-barred ones, are put even on idols themselves; and fasces also, and rods, are borne before them; and deservedly, for demons are the magistrates of this world: they bear the fasces and the purples, the ensigns of one college. What end, then, will you advance if you use the garb indeed, but administer not the functions of it? In things unclean, none can appear clean. If you put on a tunic defiled in itself, it perhaps may not be defiled through you; but you, through it, will be unable to be clean. Now by this time, you who argue about ”Joseph” and ”Daniel,” know that things old and new, rude and polished, begun and developed, slavish and free, are not always comparable. For they, even by their circumstances, were slaves; but you, the slave

of none, in so far as you are the slave of Christ alone, who has freed you likewise from the captivity of the world, will incur the duty of acting after your Lord's pattern. That Lord walked in humility and obscurity, with no definite home:

for "the Son of man," said He, "hath not where to lay His head; " unadorned in dress, for else He had not said, "Behold, they who are clad in soft raiment are in kings' houses: " in short, inglorious in countenance and aspect, just as Isaiah withal had fore-announced. If, also, He exercised no right of power even over His own followers, to whom He discharged menial ministry; if, in short, though conscious of His own kingdom, He shrank back from being made a king, He in the fullest manner gave His own an example for turning coldly from all the pride and garb, as well of dignity as of power. For if they were to be used, who would rather have used them than the Son of God? What kind and what number of fasces would escort Him? what kind of purple would bloom from His shoulders? what kind of gold would beam from His head, had He not judged the glory of the world to be alien both to Himself and to His? Therefore what He was unwilling to accept, He has rejected; what He rejected, He has condemned; what He condemned, He has counted as part of the devil's pomp. For He would not have condemned things, except such as were not His; but things which are not God's, can be no other's but the devil's. If you have forsworn "the devil's pomp," know that whatever there you touch is idolatry.

Let even this fact help to remind you that all the powers and dignities of this world are not only alien to, but enemies of, God; that through them punishments have been determined against God's servants; through them, too, penalties prepared for the impious are ignored. But "both your birth and your substance are troublesome to you in resisting idolatry. For avoiding it, remedies cannot be lacking; since, even if they be lacking, there remains that one by which you will be made a happier magistrate, not in the earth, but in the heavens.

Chapter XIX.-Concerning Military Service.

In that last section, decision may seem to have been given likewise concerning military service, which is between dignity and power. But now inquiry is made about this point, whether a believer may turn himself unto military service, and whether the military may be admitted unto the faith, even the rank and file, or each inferior grade, to whom there is no necessity for taking part in sacrifices or capital punishments. There is no agreement between the divine and the human sacrament, the standard of Christ and the standard of the devil, the camp of light and the camp of darkness. One soul cannot be due to two masters-God and Caesar. And yet Moses carried a rod, and Aaron wore a buckle, and John (Baptist) is girt with leather and Joshua the son of Nun leads a line of march; and the People warred: if it pleases you to sport with the subject. But how will a Christian man war, nay, how will he serve even in peace, without a sword, which the Lord has taken away? For albeit soldiers had come unto John, and had received the formula of their rule; albeit, likewise, a centurion had believed; still the Lord afterward, in disarming Peter, unbe

d every soldier. No dress is lawful among us, if assigned to any unlawful action.

Chapter XX.-Concerning Idolatry in Words.

But, however, since the conduct according to the divine rule is imperilled, not merely by deeds, but likewise by words, (for, just as it is written, ”Behold the man and his deeds; ” so, ”Out of thy own mouth shalt thou be justified”), we ought to remember that, even in words, also the inroad of idolatry must be foreguarded against, either from the defect of custom or of timidity. The law prohibits the gods of the nations from being named, not of course that we are not to pronounce their names, the speaking of which common intercourse extorts from us: for this must very frequently be said, ”You find him in the temple of ¦sculapius; ”and, ”I live in Isis Street; ”and, ”He has been made priest of Jupiter; ”and much else after this manner, since even on men names of this kind are bestowed. I do not honour Saturnus if I call a man so, by his own name. I honour him no more than I do Marcus, if I call a man Marcus. But it says, ”Make not mention of the name of other gods, neither be it heard from thy mouth. The precept it gives is this, that we do not call them gods. For in the first part of the law, too, ”Thou shalt not,” saith He, ”use the name of the Lord thy God in a vain thing,” that is, in an idol. Whoever, therefore, honours an idol with the name of God, has fallen into idolatry.

But if i speak of them as gods, something must be added to make it appear that I do not call them gods. For even the Scripture names ”gods,” but adds ”their,” viz. ”of the nations: ”just as David does when he had named ”gods,” where he says, ”But the gods of the nations are demons. But this has been laid by me rather as a foundation for ensuing observations. However, it is a defect of custom to say, ”By Hercules, So help me the god of faith; ” while to the custom is added the ignorance of some, who are ignorant that it is an oath by Hercules. Further, what will an oath be, in the name of gods whom you have forsworn, but a collusion of faith with idolatry? For who does not honour them in whose name he swears?

Chapter XXI.-Of Silent Acquiescence in Heathen Formularies.

But it is a mark of timidity, when some other man binds you in the name of his gods, by the making of an oath, or by some other form of attestation, and you, for fear of discovery, remain quiet. For you equally, by remaining quiet, affirm their majesty, by reason of which majesty you will seem to be bound. What matters it, whether you affirm the gods of the nations by calling them gods, or by hearing them so called? Whether you swear by idols, or, when adjured by another, acquiesce? Why should we not recognize the subtleties of Satan, who makes it his aim that, what he cannot effect by our mouth, he may effect by the mouth of his servants, introducing idolatry into us through our ears? At all events, whoever the adjurer is, he binds you to himself either in friendly or unfriendly conjunction. If in unfriendly, you are now challenged unto battle, and know that you must fight. If in friendly, with how far greater security will you transfer your engagement unto the Lord, that you may dissolve the obligation of him through whose means the Evil One was seeking to annex you to the honour of idols, that is, to idolatry! All sufferance of that kind is idolatry. You honour those to whom, when imposed as authorities, you have rendered respect. I know that one (whom the Lord pardon!), when it had been said to him in public during a law-suit, "Jupiter be wroth with you," answered, "On the contrary, with you.

What else would a heathen have done who believed Jupiter to be a god? For even had he not retorted the malediction by Jupiter (or other such like), yet, by merely returning a curse, he would have confirmed the divinity of Jove, showing himself irritated by a malediction in Jove's name. For what is there to be indignant at, (if cursed) in the name of one whom you know to be nothing? For if you rave, you immediately affirm his existence, and the profession of your fear will be an act of idolatry. How much more, while you are returning the malediction in the name of Jupiter himself, are you doing honour to Jupiter in the same way as he who provoked you! But a believer ought to laugh in such cases, not to rave; nay, according to the precept, not to return a curse in the name of God even, but dearly to bless in the name of God, that you may both demolish idols and preach God, and fulfil discipline.

Chapter XXII.-Of Accepting Blessing in the Name of Idols.

Equally, one who has been initiated into Christ will not endure to be blessed in the name of the gods of the nations, so as not always to reject the unclean benediction, and to cleanse it out for himself by converting it Godward. To be blessed in the name of the gods of the nations is to be cursed in the name of God. If I have given an alms, or shown any other kindness, and the recipient pray that his gods, or the Genius of the colony, may be propitious to me, my oblation or act will immediately be an honour to idols, in whose name he returns me the favour of blessing. But why should he not know that I have done it for God's sake; that God may rather be glorified, and demons may not be honoured in that which I have done for the sake of God? If God sees that I have done it for His sake, He equally sees that I have been unwilling to show that I did it for His sake, and have in a manner made His precept a sacrifice to idols. Many say, "No one ought to divulge himself; "but I think neither ought he to deny himself. For whoever dissembles in any cause whatever, by being held as a heathen, does deny; and, of course, all denial is idolatry, just as all idolatry is denial, whether in deeds or in words.

Chapter XXIII.-Written Contracts in the Name of Idols. Tacit Consent.

But there is a certain species of that class, doubly sharpened in deed and word, and mischievous on either side, although it flatter you, as if it were free of danger in each; while it does not seem to be a deed, because it is not laid hold of as a word. In borrowing money from heathens under pledged securities, Christians give a guarantee under oath, and deny themselves to have done so. Of course, the time of the prosecution, and the place of the judgment seat, and the person of the presiding judge, decide that they knew themselves to have so done. Christ prescribes that there is to be no swearing. "I wrote," says the debtor, "but I said nothing. It is the tongue, not the written letter, which kills. Here I call Nature and Conscience as my witnesses: Nature, because even if the tongue in dictating remains motionless and quiet, the hand can write nothing which the soul has not dictated; albeit even to the tongue itself the soul may have dictated either something conceived by itself, or else something delivered by another. Now, lest it be said, "Another dictated," I here appeal to Conscience whether, what another dictated, the soul entertains, and transmits unto the hand, whether with the concomitance or the inaction of the tongue. Enough, that the Lord has said faults are committed in the mind and the conscience. If concupiscence or malice have ascended into a man's heart, He saith it is held as a deed. You therefore have given a guarantee;

which clearly has "ascended into your heart," which you can neither contend you were ignorant of nor unwilling; for when you gave the guarantee, you knew that you did it; when you knew, of course you were willing: you did it as well in act as in thought; nor can you by the lighter charge exclude the heavier, so as to say that it is clearly rendered false, by giving a guarantee I for what you do not actually perform. "Yet I have not denied, because I have not sworn. But you have sworn, since, even if you had done no such thing, you would still be said to swear, if you have even consented to so doing. Silence of voice is an unavailing plea in a case of writing; and muteness of sound in a case of letters. For Zacharias, when punished with a temporary privation of voice, holds colloquy with his mind, and, passing

by his bootless tongue, with the help of his hands dictates from his heart, and without his mouth pronounces the name of his son. Thus, in his pen there speaks a hand clearer than every sound, in his waxen tablet there is heard a letter more vocal that every mouth. Inquire whether a man have spoken who is understood to have spoken. Pray we the Lord that no necessity for that kind of contract may ever encompass us;

and if it should so fall out, may He give our brethren the means of helping us, or give us constancy to break off all such necessity, lest those denying letters, the substitutes for our mouth, be brought forward against us in the day of judgment, sealed with the seals, not now of witnesses, but of angels!

Chapter XXIV.-General Conclusion.

Amid these reefs and inlets, amid these shallows and straits of idolatry, Faith, her sails filled by the Spirit of God, navigates; safe if cautious, secure if intently watchful. But to such as are washed overboard is a deep whence is no out-swimming; to such as are run aground is inextricable shipwreck; to such as are engulphed is a whirlpool, where there is no breathing-even in idolatry. All waves thereof whatsoever suffocate; every eddy thereof sucks down unto Hades. Let no one say, "Who will so safely foreguard himself? We shall have to go out of the world!" As if it were not as well worth while to go out, as to stand in the world as an idolater! Nothing can be easier than caution against idolatry, if the fear of it be our leading fear; any "necessity" whatever is too trifling compared to such a peril. The reason why the Holy Spirit did, when the apostles at that time were consulting, relax the bond and yoke for us, was that we might be free to devote ourselves to the shunning of idolatry. This shall be our Law, the more fully to be administered the more ready it is to hand; (a Law) peculiar to Christians, by means whereof we are recognised and examined by heathens. This Law must be set before such as approach unto the Faith, and inculcated on such as are entering it; that, in approaching, they may deliberate; observing it, may persevere; not observing it, may renounce their name. We will see to it, if, after the type of the Ark, there shall be in the Church raven, kite, dog, and serpent. At all events, an idolater is not found in the type of the Ark: no animal has been fashioned to represent an idolater. Let not that be in the Church which was not in the Ark.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.