

0160-0220 – Tertullianus – De Carne Christi

On the Flesh of Christ

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God, with whom you are now yourself on a par? Such conceits are constantly cropping out⁶⁹³⁷ amongst them, from the redundance of their mother's seed.⁶⁹³⁸ And so it happens that the doctrines which have grown up amongst the Valentinians have already extended their rank growth to the woods of the Gnostics.



V.

On the Flesh of Christ.⁶⁹³⁹

This was written by our author in confutation of certain heretics who denied the reality of Christ's flesh, or at least its identity with human flesh—fearing that, if they admitted the reality of Christ's flesh, they must also admit his resurrection in the flesh; and, consequently, the resurrection of the human body after death.

[Translated by Dr. Holmes.]

Chapter I.—The General Purport of This Work. The Heretics, Marcion, Apelles, and Valentinus, Wishing to Impugn the Doctrine of the Resurrection, Deprive Christ of All Capacity for Such a Change by Denying His Flesh.

THEY who are so anxious to shake that belief in the resurrection which was firmly settled⁶⁹⁴⁰ before the appearance of our modern Sadducees,⁶⁹⁴¹ as even to deny that the expectation thereof has any relation whatever to the flesh, have great cause for besetting the flesh of Christ also with

⁶⁹³⁷ Superfruticant.

⁶⁹³⁸ Archamoth is referred to.

⁶⁹³⁹ In his work *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* (chap. ii.), Tertullian refers to this tract, and calls it “De Carne Domini adversus quatuor hæreses”: the four heresies being those of Marcion, Apelles, Basilides, and Valentinus. Pamelius, indeed, designates the tract by this fuller title instead of the usual one, “De Carne Christi.” [This tract contains references to works written while our author was Montanistic, but it contains no positive Montanism. It should not be dated earlier than A.D. 207.]

⁶⁹⁴⁰ Moratam.

⁶⁹⁴¹ The allusion is to Matt. xxii. 23; comp. *De Præscr. Hæret.* 33 (Fr. Junius).

doubtful questions, as if it either had no existence at all, or possessed a nature altogether different from human flesh. *For they cannot but be apprehensive* that, if it be once determined that *Christ's flesh* was human, a presumption would immediately arise in opposition to them, that that flesh must by all means rise again, which has already risen in Christ. Therefore we shall have to guard our belief in the resurrection⁶⁹⁴² from the same armoury, whence they get their weapons of destruction. Let us examine our Lord's bodily substance, for about His spiritual nature all are agreed.⁶⁹⁴³ It is His flesh that is in question. Its verity and quality are the points in dispute. Did it ever exist? whence was it derived? and of what kind was it? If we succeed in demonstrating it, we shall lay down a law for our own resurrection. Marcion, in order that he might deny the flesh of Christ, denied also His nativity, or else he denied His flesh in order that he might deny His nativity; because, of course, he was afraid that His nativity and His flesh bore mutual testimony to each other's reality, since there is no nativity without flesh, and no flesh without nativity. As if indeed, under the prompting of that licence which is ever the same in all heresy, he too might not very well have either denied the nativity, although admitting the flesh,—like Apelles, who was first a disciple of his, and afterwards an apostate,—or, while admitting both the flesh and the nativity, have interpreted them in a different sense, as did Valentinus, who resembled Apelles both in his discipleship and desertion *of Marcion*. At all events, he who represented the flesh of Christ to be imaginary was equally able to pass off His nativity as a phantom; so that the virgin's conception, and pregnancy, and child-bearing, and then the whole course⁶⁹⁴⁴ of her infant too, would have to be regarded as putative.⁶⁹⁴⁵ *These facts pertaining to the nativity of Christ* would escape the notice of the same eyes and the same senses as failed to grasp the full idea⁶⁹⁴⁶ of His flesh.



Chapter II.—Marcion, Who Would Blot Out the Record of Christ's Nativity, is Rebuked for So Startling a Heresy.

Clearly enough is the nativity announced by Gabriel.⁶⁹⁴⁷ But what has he to do with the Creator's angel?⁶⁹⁴⁸ The conception in the virgin's womb is also set plainly before us. But what concern has

⁶⁹⁴² Tertullian's phrase is "carnis vota"—the future prospects of the flesh.

⁶⁹⁴³ Certum est.

⁶⁹⁴⁴ Ordo.

⁶⁹⁴⁵ Τῶ δοκεῖν haberentur. This term gave name to the *Docetic* errors.

⁶⁹⁴⁶ Opinio.

⁶⁹⁴⁷ Luke i. 26–38.

⁶⁹⁴⁸ This is said in opposition to Marcion, who held the Creator's angel, and everything else pertaining to him, to be evil.

he with the Creator's prophet, Isaiah?⁶⁹⁴⁹ He⁶⁹⁵⁰ will not brook delay, since *suddenly* (without any prophetic announcement) did he bring down Christ from heaven.⁶⁹⁵¹ "Away," says he, "with that eternal plaguey taxing of Cæsar, and the scanty inn, and the squalid swaddling-clothes, and the hard stable.⁶⁹⁵² We do not care a jot for⁶⁹⁵³ that multitude of the heavenly host which praised their Lord at night.⁶⁹⁵⁴ Let the shepherds take better care of their flock,⁶⁹⁵⁵ and let the wise men spare their legs so long a journey;⁶⁹⁵⁶ let them keep their gold to themselves.⁶⁹⁵⁷ Let Herod, too, mend his manners, so that Jeremy may not glory over him.⁶⁹⁵⁸ Spare also the babe from circumcision, that he may escape the pain thereof; nor let him be brought into the temple, lest he burden his parents with the expense of the offering;⁶⁹⁵⁹ nor let him be handed to Simeon, lest the old man be saddened at the point of death.⁶⁹⁶⁰ Let that old woman also hold her tongue, lest she should bewitch the child."⁶⁹⁶¹ After such a fashion as this, I suppose you have had, O Marcion, the hardihood of blotting out the original records (of the history) of Christ, that His flesh may lose the proofs of its reality. But, prithee, on what grounds (do you do this)? Show me your authority. If you are a prophet, foretell us a thing; if you are an apostle, open your message in public; if a follower of apostles,⁶⁹⁶² side with apostles in thought; if you are only a (private) Christian, believe what has been handed down to us: if, however, you are nothing of all this, then (as I have the best reason to say) cease to live.⁶⁹⁶³ For indeed you are already dead, since you are no Christian, because you do not believe that which by being believed makes men Christian,—nay, you are the more dead, the more you are not a Christian; having fallen away, after you had been one, by rejecting⁶⁹⁶⁴ what you formerly believed, even as you yourself acknowledge in a certain letter of yours, and as your followers do

699 A reference to Isa. vii. 14.
 680 Marcion.
 681 See also our *Anti-Marcion*, iv. 7.
 682 Luke ii. 1–7.
 683 Viderit.
 684 Luke ii. 13.
 685 Luke ii. 8.
 686 Matt. ii. 1.
 687 Matt. ii. 11.
 688 Matt. ii. 16–18, and Jer. xxxi. 15.
 689 Luke ii. 22–24.
 690 Luke ii. 25–35.
 691 Luke ii. 36–38.
 692 Apostolicus.
 693 Morere.
 694 Rescindendo.

not deny, whilst our (brethren) can prove it.⁶⁹⁶⁵ Rejecting, therefore, what you *once* believed, you have completed the act of rejection, by now no longer believing: the fact, however, of your having ceased to believe has not made your rejection of the faith right and proper; nay, rather,⁶⁹⁶⁶ by your act of rejection you prove that what you believed previous to the said act was of a different character.⁶⁹⁶⁷ What you believed to be of a different character, had been handed down just as *you believed it*. Now⁶⁹⁶⁸ that which had been handed down was true, inasmuch as it had been transmitted by those whose duty it was to hand it down. Therefore, when rejecting that which had been handed down, you rejected that which was true. You had no authority for what you did. However, we have already in another treatise availed ourselves more fully of these prescriptive rules against all heresies. Our repetition of them hereafter that large (treatise) is superfluous,⁶⁹⁶⁹ when we ask the reason why you have formed the opinion that Christ was not born.

Chapter III.—Christ's Nativity Both Possible and Becoming. The Heretical Opinion of Christ's Apparent Flesh Deceptive and Dishonourable to God, Even on Marcion's Principles.

Since⁶⁹⁷⁰ you think that this lay within the competency of your own arbitrary choice, you must needs have supposed that being born⁶⁹⁷¹ was either impossible for God, or unbecoming to Him. With God, however, nothing is impossible but what He does not will. Let us consider, then, whether He willed to be born (for if He had the will, He also had the power, and was born). I put the argument very briefly. If God had willed not to be born, it matters not why, He would not have presented Himself in the likeness of man. Now who, when he sees a man, would deny that he had been born? What *God* therefore willed not to be, He would in no wise have willed the seeming to be. When a thing is distasteful, the very notion⁶⁹⁷² of it is scouted; because it makes no difference whether a thing exist or do not exist, if, when it does not exist, it is yet assumed to exist. It is of course of the greatest importance that there should be nothing false (*or pretended*) attributed to that which really does not exist.⁶⁹⁷³ But, say you, His own consciousness (of the truth of His nature) was enough for

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⁶⁹⁶⁵ Compare our *Anti-Marcion*, i. 1, iv. 4 and *de Præscr. Hæc.* c. xxx.

⁶⁹⁶⁶ Atquin.

⁶⁹⁶⁷ Aliter fuisse.

⁶⁹⁶⁸ Porro.

⁶⁹⁶⁹ Ex abundantia. [Dr. Holmes, in this sentence actually uses the word *lengthy*, for which I have said *large*.]

⁶⁹⁷⁰ Quatenus.

⁶⁹⁷¹ Nativitatem.

⁶⁹⁷² Opinio.

⁶⁹⁷³ If Christ's flesh was not real, the pretence of it was wholly wrong.

Him. If any supposed that He had been born, because they saw Him as a man, that was their concern.⁶⁹⁷⁴ Yet with how much more dignity and consistency would He have sustained the human character on the supposition that He was truly born; *for* if He were not born, He could not have undertaken the said character without injury to that consciousness of His which you on your side attribute to *His* confidence of being able to sustain, although not born, the character of having been born even against! His own consciousness!⁶⁹⁷⁵ Why, I want to know,⁶⁹⁷⁶ was it of so much importance, that Christ should, when perfectly aware what He really was, exhibit Himself as being that which He was not? You cannot express any apprehension that,⁶⁹⁷⁷ if He had been born and truly clothed Himself with man's nature, He would have ceased to be God, losing what He was, while becoming what He was not. For God is in no danger of losing His own state and condition. But, say you, I deny that God was truly changed to man in such wise as to be born and endued with a body of flesh, on this ground, that a being who is without end is also of necessity incapable of change. For being changed into something else puts an end to the former state. Change, therefore, is not possible to a Being who cannot come to an end. Without doubt, the nature of things which are subject to change is regulated by this law, that they have no permanence in the state which is undergoing change in them, and that they come to an end from thus wanting permanence, whilst they lose that in the process of change which they previously were. But nothing is equal with God; His nature is different⁶⁹⁷⁸ from the condition of all things. If, then, the things which differ from God, *and* from which God differs, lose what existence they had whilst they are undergoing change, wherein will consist the difference of the Divine Being from all other things except in His possessing the contrary faculty of theirs,—in other words, that God can be changed into all conditions, and yet continue just as He is? On any other supposition, He would be on the same level with those things which, when changed, lose the existence they had before; whose equal, of course, He is not in any other respect, as He certainly is not in the changeful issues⁶⁹⁷⁹ *of their nature*. You have sometimes read and believed that the Creator's angels have been changed into human form, and have even borne about so veritable a body, that Abraham even washed their feet,⁶⁹⁸⁰ and Lot was

⁶⁹⁷⁴ Viderint homines.

⁶⁹⁷⁵ It did not much matter (according to the view which Tertullian attributes to Marcion) if God did practise deception in affecting the assumption of a humanity which He knew to be unreal. Men took it to be real, and that answered every purpose. God knew better: and He was moreover, strong enough to obviate all inconveniences of the deception by His unfaltering fortitude, etc. All this, however, seemed to Tertullian to be simply damaging and perilous to the character of God, even from Marcion's own point of view.

⁶⁹⁷⁶ Edoce.

⁶⁹⁷⁷ Non potes dicere *ne*, etc.

⁶⁹⁷⁸ Distat.

⁶⁹⁷⁹ In exitu conversionis.

⁶⁹⁸⁰ Gen. xviii.

rescued from the Sodomites by their hands;⁶⁹⁸¹ an angel, moreover, wrestled with a man so strenuously with his body, that the latter desired to be let loose, so tightly was he held.⁶⁹⁸² Has it, then, been permitted to angels, which are inferior to God, after they have been changed into human bodily form,⁶⁹⁸³ nevertheless to remain angels? and will you deprive God, their superior, of this faculty, as if Christ could not continue to be God, after His real assumption of the nature of man? Or else, did those angels appear as phantoms of flesh? You will not, however, have the courage to say this; for if it be so held in your belief, that the Creator's angels are in the same condition as Christ, then Christ will belong to the same God as those angels do, who are like Christ in their condition. If you had not purposely rejected in some instances, and corrupted in others, the Scriptures which are opposed to your opinion, you would have been confuted in this matter by the Gospel of John, when it declares that the Spirit descended in the body⁶⁹⁸⁴ of a dove, and sat upon the Lord.⁶⁹⁸⁵ When the said Spirit was in this condition, He was as truly a dove as He was also a spirit; nor did He destroy His own proper substance by the assumption of an extraneous substance. But you ask what becomes of the dove's body, after the return of the Spirit back to heaven, and similarly in the case of the angels. Their withdrawal was effected in the same manner as their appearance had been. If you had seen how their production out of nothing had been effected, you would have known also the process of their return to nothing. If the initial step was out of sight, so was also the final one. Still there was solidity in their bodily substance, whatever may have been the force by which the body became visible. What is written cannot but have been.



Chapter IV.—God's Honour in the Incarnation of His Son Vindicated. Marcion's Disparagement of Human Flesh Inconsistent as Well as Impious. Christ Has Cleansed the Flesh. The Foolishness of God is Most Wise.

Since, therefore, you do not reject the assumption of a body⁶⁹⁸⁶ as impossible or as hazardous to the character of God, it remains for you to repudiate and censure it as unworthy of Him. Come now, beginning from the nativity itself, declaim⁶⁹⁸⁷ against the uncleanness of the generative elements within the womb, the filthy concretion of fluid and blood, of the growth of the flesh for nine months

⁶⁹⁸¹ Gen. xix.

⁶⁹⁸² Gen. xxxii.

⁶⁹⁸³ See below in chap. vi. and in the *Anti-Marcion*, iii. 9.

⁶⁹⁸⁴ Corpore.

⁶⁹⁸⁵ Matt. iii. 16.

⁶⁹⁸⁶ Corporationem.

⁶⁹⁸⁷ Compare similar passages in the *Anti-Marcion*, iii. 1 and iv. 21.

long out of that very mire. Describe the womb as it enlarges⁶⁹⁸⁸ from day to day, heavy, troublesome, restless even in sleep, changeful in its feelings of dislike and desire. Inveigh now likewise against the shame itself of a woman in travail⁶⁹⁸⁹ which, however, ought rather to be honoured in consideration of that peril, or to be held sacred⁶⁹⁹⁰ in respect of (the mystery of) nature. Of course you are horrified also at the infant, which is shed into life with the embarrassments which accompany it from the womb;⁶⁹⁹¹ you likewise, of course, loathe it even after it is washed, when it is dressed out in its swaddling-clothes, graced with repeated anointing,⁶⁹⁹² smiled on with nurse's fawns. This reverend course of nature,⁶⁹⁹³ you, O Marcion, (are pleased to) spit upon; and yet, in what way were you born? You detest a human being at his birth; then after what fashion do you love anybody? Yourself, of course, you had no love of, when you departed from the Church and the faith of Christ. But never mind,⁶⁹⁹⁴ if you are not on good terms with yourself, or even if you were born in a way different from other people. Christ, at any rate, has loved even that man who was condensed in his mother's womb amidst all its uncleannesses, even that man who was brought into life out of the said womb, even that man who was nursed amidst the nurse's simpers.⁶⁹⁹⁵ For his sake He came down (from heaven), for his sake He preached, for his sake "He humbled Himself even unto death—the death of the cross."⁶⁹⁹⁶ He loved, of course, the being whom He redeemed at so great a cost. If Christ is the Creator's *Son*, it was with justice that He loved His own (creature); if He comes from another god, His love was excessive, since He redeemed a being who belonged to another. Well, then, loving man He loved his nativity also, and his flesh as well. Nothing can be loved apart from that through which whatever exists has its existence. Either take away nativity, and then show us *your* man; or else withdraw the flesh, and then present to our view the being whom God has redeemed—since it is these very conditions⁶⁹⁹⁷ which constitute the man whom God has redeemed. And are *you* for turning these conditions into occasions of blushing to the very creature whom He has redeemed, (censuring them), too, as unworthy of Him who certainly would not have redeemed

⁶⁹⁸⁸ Insolescentem.

⁶⁹⁸⁹ Enitentis.

⁶⁹⁹⁰ Religiosum.

⁶⁹⁹¹ Cum suis impedimentis profusum.

⁶⁹⁹² Unctionibus formatur.

⁶⁹⁹³ Hanc venerationem naturæ. Compare Tertullian's phrase, "Illa sanctissima et reverenda opera naturæ," in the *Anti-Marcion*, iii. 11.

⁶⁹⁹⁴ Videris.

⁶⁹⁹⁵ Per ludibria nutritum. Compare the phrase just before, "smiled on with nurse's fawns"—"blanditiis deridetur." Oehler, however, compares the phrase with Tertullian's expression ("puerperii spurcos, anxios, *ludicros exitus*,") in the *Anti-Marcion*, iv. 21.

⁶⁹⁹⁶ Phil. ii. 8.

⁶⁹⁹⁷ Hæc: i.e. man's *nativity* and his *flesh*.

them had He not loved them? Our birth He reforms from death by a second birth from heaven;⁶⁹⁹⁸ our flesh He restores from every harassing malady; when leprous, He cleanses it of the stain; when blind, He rekindles its light; when palsied, He renews its strength; when possessed with devils, He exorcises it; when dead, He reanimates it,—then shall *we* blush to own it? If, to be sure,⁶⁹⁹⁹ He had chosen to be born of a mere animal, and were to preach the kingdom of heaven invested with the body of a beast either wild or tame, your censure (I imagine) would have instantly met Him with this demurrer: “This is disgraceful for God, and this is unworthy of the Son of God, and simply foolish.” For no other reason than because one thus judges. It *is* of course foolish, if we are to judge God by our own conceptions. But, Marcion, consider well this Scripture, if indeed you have not erased it: “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise.”⁷⁰⁰⁰ Now what are those foolish things? Are they the conversion of men to the worship of the true God, the rejection of error, the whole training in righteousness, chastity, mercy, patience, and innocence? These things certainly are not “foolish.” Inquire again, then, of what things he spoke, and when you imagine that you have discovered what they are will you find anything to be so “foolish” as believing in a God that has been born, and that of a virgin, and of a fleshly nature too, who wallowed in all the before-mentioned humiliations of nature? But some one may say, “These are not the foolish things; they must be other things which God has chosen to confound the wisdom of the world.” And yet, according to the world’s wisdom, it is more easy to believe that Jupiter became a bull or a swan, if we listen to Marcion, than that Christ really became a man.

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Chapter V.—Christ Truly Lived and Died in Human Flesh. Incidents of His Human Life on Earth, and Refutation of Marcion’s Docetic Parody of the Same.

There are, to be sure, other things also quite as foolish (as the birth of Christ), which have reference to the humiliations and sufferings of God. Or else, let them call a crucified God “wisdom.” But Marcion will apply the knife⁷⁰⁰¹ to this *doctrine* also, and even with greater reason. For which is more unworthy of God, which is more likely to raise a blush of shame, that *God* should be born, or that He should die? that He should bear the flesh, or the cross? be circumcised, or be crucified? be cradled, or be confined?⁷⁰⁰² be laid in a manger, or in a tomb? *Talk of “wisdom!”* You will show more of *that* if you refuse to believe this also. But, after all, you will not be “wise” unless you

⁶⁹⁸ Literally, “by a heavenly regeneration.”

⁶⁹⁹ Revera. [I cannot let the words which follow, stand in the text; they are sufficiently rendered.]

⁷⁰⁰ 1 Cor. i. 27.

⁷⁰¹ Aufer, Marcion. Literally, “Destroy this also, O Marcion.”

⁷⁰² Educari an sepeliri.

become a “fool” to the world, by believing “the foolish things of God.” Have you, then, cut away⁷⁰⁰³ all sufferings from Christ, on the ground that, as a mere phantom, He was incapable of experiencing them? We have said above that He might possibly have undergone the unreal mockeries⁷⁰⁰⁴ of an imaginary birth and infancy. But answer me at once, you that murder truth: Was not God really crucified? And, having been really crucified, did He not really die? And, having indeed really died, did He not really rise again? Falsely did Paul⁷⁰⁰⁵ “determine to know nothing amongst us but Jesus and Him crucified;”⁷⁰⁰⁶ falsely has he impressed upon us that He was buried; falsely inculcated that He rose again. False, therefore, is our faith also. And all that we hope for from Christ will be a phantom. O thou most infamous of men, who acquittest of all guilt⁷⁰⁰⁷ the murderers of God! For nothing did Christ suffer from them, if He really suffered nothing at all. Spare the whole world’s one only hope, thou who art destroying the indispensable dishonour of our faith.⁷⁰⁰⁸ Whatsoever is unworthy of God, is of gain to me. I am safe, if I am not ashamed of my Lord. “Whosoever,” says He, “shall be ashamed of me, of him will I also be ashamed.”⁷⁰⁰⁹ Other matters for shame find I none which can prove me to be shameless in a good sense, and foolish in a happy one, by my own contempt of shame. The Son of God was crucified; I am not ashamed because men must needs be ashamed *of it*. And the Son of God died; it is by all means to be believed, because it is absurd.⁷⁰¹⁰ And He was buried, and rose again; the fact is certain, because it is impossible. But how will all this be true in Him, if He was not Himself true—if He really had not in Himself that which might be crucified, might die, might be buried, and might rise again? *I mean* this flesh suffused with blood, built up with bones, interwoven with nerves, entwined with veins, *a flesh* which knew how to be born, and how to die, human without doubt, as born of a human being. It will therefore be mortal in Christ, because Christ is man and the Son of man. Else why is Christ man and the Son of man, if he has nothing of man, and nothing from man? Unless it be either that man is anything else than flesh, or man’s flesh comes from any other source than man, or Mary is anything else than a human being, or Marcion’s man is *as* Marcion’s god.⁷⁰¹¹ Otherwise Christ could not be described as being man without flesh, nor the Son of man without any human parent; just as He is not God without the Spirit of God, nor the Son of God without having God for His father. Thus the

7003 Recidisti.

7004 Vacua ludibria.

7005 Paul was of great authority in Marcion’s school.

7006 1 Cor. ii. 2.

7007 Excusas.

7008 The humiliation which God endured, so indispensable a part of the Christian faith.

7009 Matt. x. 33, Mark viii. 38, and Luke ix. 26.

7010 Ineptum.

7011 That is, imaginary and unreal.

nature⁷⁰¹² of the two substances displayed Him as man and God,—in one respect born, in the other unborn; in one respect fleshly, in the other spiritual; in one sense weak, in the other exceeding strong; in one sense dying, in the other living. This property of the two states—the divine and the human—is distinctly asserted⁷⁰¹³ with equal truth of both natures alike, with the same belief both in respect of the Spirit⁷⁰¹⁴ and of the flesh. The powers of the Spirit,⁷⁰¹⁵ proved Him to be God, His sufferings attested the flesh of man. If His powers were not without the Spirit⁷⁰¹⁶ in like manner, were not His sufferings without the flesh. If His flesh with its sufferings was fictitious, for the same reason was the Spirit false with all its powers. Wherefore halve⁷⁰¹⁷ Christ with a lie? He was wholly the truth. Believe me, He chose rather to be born, than in any part to pretend—and that indeed to His own detriment—that He was bearing about a flesh hardened without bones, solid without muscles, bloody without blood, clothed without the tunic *of skin*,⁷⁰¹⁸ hungry without appetite, eating without teeth, speaking without a tongue, so that His word was a phantom to the ears through an imaginary voice. A phantom, too, it was of course after the resurrection, when, showing His hands and His feet for the disciples to examine, He said, “Behold and see that it is I myself, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have;”⁷⁰¹⁹ without doubt, hands, and feet, and bones are not what a spirit possesses, but *only* the flesh. How do you interpret this statement, Marcion, you who tell us that Jesus comes only from the most excellent God, who is both simple and good? See how He *rather* cheats, and deceives, and juggles the eyes of all, and the senses of all, as well as their access to and contact with Him! You ought rather to have brought Christ down, not from heaven, but from some troop of mountebanks, not as God besides man, but simply as a man, a magician; not as the High Priest of our salvation, but as the conjurer in a show; not as the raiser of the dead, but as the misleader⁷⁰²⁰ of the living,—except that, if He were a magician, He must have had a nativity!

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⁷⁰¹² Census: “the origin.”

⁷⁰¹³ Dispuncta est.

⁷⁰¹⁴ This term is almost a technical designation of the *divine nature* of Christ in Tertullian. (See our translation of the *Anti-Marcion*, p. 247, note 7, Edin.)

⁷⁰¹⁵ This term is almost a technical designation of the *divine nature* of Christ in Tertullian. (See our translation of the *Anti-Marcion*, p. 247, note 7, Edin.)

⁷⁰¹⁶ This term is almost a technical designation of the *divine nature* of Christ in Tertullian. (See our translation of the *Anti-Marcion*, p. 247, note 7, Edin.)

⁷⁰¹⁷ Dimidias.

⁷⁰¹⁸ See his *Adv. Valentin*, chap. 25.

⁷⁰¹⁹ Luke xxiv. 39.

⁷⁰²⁰ Avocatorem.

Chapter VI.—The Doctrine of Apelles Refuted, that Christ's Body Was of Sidereal Substance, Not Born. Nativity and Mortality are Correlative Circumstances, and in Christ's Case His Death Proves His Birth.

But certain disciples⁷⁰²¹ of the heretic of Pontus, compelled to be wiser than their teacher, concede to Christ real flesh, without effect, however, on⁷⁰²² their denial of His nativity. He might have had, they say, a flesh which was not at all born. So we have found our way “out of a frying-pan,” as the proverb runs, “into the fire,”⁷⁰²³—from Marcion to Apelles. This man having first fallen from the principles of Marcion into (intercourse with) a woman, in the flesh, and afterwards shipwrecked himself, in the spirit, on the virgin Philumene,⁷⁰²⁴ proceeded from that *time*⁷⁰²⁵ to preach that the body of Christ was of solid flesh, but without having been born. To this angel, indeed, of Philumene, the apostle will reply in tones like those in which he even then predicted him, saying, “Although an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”⁷⁰²⁶ To the arguments, however, which have been indicated just above, we have now to show our resistance. They allow that Christ really had a body. Whence was the material of it, if not from the same sort of thing as⁷⁰²⁷ that in which He appeared? Whence came His body, if His body were not flesh? Whence came His flesh, if it were not born? Inasmuch as that which is born must undergo this nativity in order to become flesh. He borrowed, they say, His flesh from the stars, and from the substances of the higher world. And they assert it for a certain principle, that a body without nativity is nothing to be astonished at, because it has been submitted to angels to appear even amongst ourselves in the flesh without the intervention of the womb. We admit, of course, that such facts have been related. But then, how comes it to pass that a faith which holds to a different rule borrows materials for its own arguments from the faith which it impugns? What has it to do with Moses, who has rejected the God of Moses? Since the God is a different one, everything belonging to him must be different also. But let the heretics always use the Scriptures of that God whose world they also enjoy. The fact will certainly recoil on them as a witness to judge them, that they maintain their own blasphemies from examples derived from *Him*.⁷⁰²⁸ But it is an easy task for the truth to prevail without raising any such demurrer against them. When,

7021 He has Apelles mainly in view.

7022 Sine præjudicio tamen. “Without prejudice to their denial, etc.”

7023 The Roman version of the proverb is “out of the lime-kiln into the coal-furnace.”

7024 See Tertullian, *de Præscr. Hæret.* c. xxx.

7025 Ab eo: or, “from that *event* of the carnal contact.” A good reading, found in most of the old books, is *ab ea*, that is, Philumene.

7026 Gal. i. 8.

7027 Ex ea qualitate in qua.

7028 Ipsius: the Creator.

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therefore, they set forth the flesh of Christ after the pattern of the angels, declaring it to be not born, and yet flesh for all that, I should wish them to compare the causes, both in Christ's case and that of the angels, wherefore they came in the flesh. Never did any angel descend for the purpose of being crucified, of tasting death, *and* of rising again from the dead. Now, since there never was such a reason for angels becoming embodied, you have the cause why they assumed flesh without undergoing birth. They had not come to die, therefore they also (came not) to be born. Christ, however, having been sent to die, had necessarily to be also born, that He might be capable of death; for nothing is in the habit of dying but that which is born. Between nativity and mortality there is a mutual contrast. The law⁷⁰²⁹ which makes us die is the cause of our being born. Now, since Christ died owing to the condition which undergoes death, but that undergoes death which is also born, the consequence was—nay, it was an antecedent necessity—that He must have been born also,⁷⁰³⁰ by reason of the condition which undergoes birth; because He had to die in obedience to that very condition which, because it begins with birth, ends in death.⁷⁰³¹ It was not fitting for Him not to be born under the pretence⁷⁰³² that it was fitting for Him to die. But the Lord Himself at that very time appeared to Abraham amongst those angels without being born, and yet in the flesh without doubt, in virtue of the before-mentioned diversity of cause. You, however, cannot admit this, since you do not receive that Christ, who was even then rehearsing⁷⁰³³ how to converse with, and liberate, and judge the human race, in the habit of a flesh which as yet was not born, because it did not yet mean to die until both its nativity and mortality were previously (by prophecy) announced. Let them, then, prove to us that those angels derived their flesh from the stars. If they do not prove it because it is not written, neither will the flesh of Christ get its origin therefrom, for which they borrowed the precedent of the angels. It is plain that the angels bore a flesh which was not naturally their own; their nature being of a spiritual substance, although in some sense peculiar to themselves, corporeal; and yet they could be transfigured into human shape, and for the time be able to appear and have intercourse with men. Since, therefore, it has not been told us whence they obtained their flesh, it remains for us not to doubt in our minds that a property of angelic power is this, to assume to themselves bodily shape out of no material substance. How much more, you say, is it (within their competence to take a body) out of some material substance? That is true enough. But there is no evidence of this, because Scripture says nothing. Then, again,⁷⁰³⁴ how should they who are able to form themselves into that which by nature they are not, be unable to do this out of no material substance? If they become that which they are not, why cannot they *so* become out of

7029 Forma.

7030 Æque.

7031 Quod, quia nascitur, moritur.

7032 Pro.

7033 Ediscebat. Compare a fine passage of Tertullian on this subject in our *Anti-Marcion*, note 10, p. 112, Edin.

7034 Ceterum.

that which is not? But that which has not existence when it comes into existence, is *made* out of nothing. This is why it is unnecessary either to inquire or to demonstrate what has subsequently become of their⁷⁰³⁵ bodies. What came out of nothing, came to nothing. They, who were able to convert *themselves* into flesh have it in their power to convert *nothing itself* into flesh. It is a greater thing to change a nature than to make matter. But even if it were necessary *to suppose* that angels derived their flesh from some material substance, it is surely more credible that it was from some earthly matter than from any kind of celestial substances, since it was composed of so palpably terrene a quality that it fed on earthly ailments. Suppose that even now a celestial *flesh*⁷⁰³⁶ had fed on earthly aliments, although it was not itself earthly, in the same way that earthly flesh actually fed on celestial aliments, although it had nothing of the celestial nature (for we read of manna having been food for the people: “Man,” says *the Psalmist*, “did eat angels’ bread,”⁷⁰³⁷) yet this does not once infringe the separate condition of the Lord’s flesh, because of His different destination. For One who was to be truly a man, even unto death, it was necessary that He should be clothed with that flesh to which death belongs. Now that flesh to which death belongs is preceded by birth.

Chapter VII.—Explanation of the Lord’s Question About His Mother and His Brethren. Answer to the Cavils of Apelles and Marcion, Who Support Their Denial of Christ’s Nativity by It.

But whenever a dispute arises about the nativity, all who reject it as creating a presumption in favour of the reality of Christ’s flesh, wilfully deny that God Himself was born, on the ground that He asked, “Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?”⁷⁰³⁸ Let, therefore, Apelles hear what was our answer to Marcion in that little work, in which we challenged his own (favourite) gospel to the proof, even that the material circumstances of that remark (of the Lord’s) should be considered.⁷⁰³⁹ First of all, nobody would have told Him that His mother and brethren were standing outside, if he were not certain both that He had a mother and brethren, and that they were the very persons whom he was then announcing,—who had either been known to him before, or were then and there discovered by him; although heretics⁷⁰⁴⁰ have removed this passage from the gospel,

⁷⁰³⁵ The angels’.

⁷⁰³⁶ Sidera. Drawn, as they thought, from the stars.

⁷⁰³⁷ Ps. lxxviii. 24.

⁷⁰³⁸ Matt. xii. 48; Luke viii. 20, 21.

⁷⁰³⁹ See our *Anti-Marcion*, iv. 19.

⁷⁰⁴⁰ Literally, “heresies.”



because those who were admiring His doctrine said that His supposed father, Joseph the carpenter, and His mother Mary, and His brethren, and His sisters, were very well known to them. But it was with the view of tempting Him, that they had mentioned to Him a mother and brethren which He did not possess. The Scripture says nothing of this, although it is not in other instances silent when anything was done against Him by way of temptation. “Behold,” it says, “a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him.”⁷⁰⁴¹ And in another passage: “The Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him.” Who⁷⁰⁴² was to prevent its being in this place also indicated that this was done with the view of tempting Him? I do not admit what you advance of your own apart from Scripture. Then there ought to be suggested⁷⁰⁴³ some occasion⁷⁰⁴⁴ for the temptation. What could they have thought to be in Him which required temptation? The question, to be sure, whether He had been born or not? For if this point were denied in His answer, it might come out on the announcement of a temptation. And yet no temptation, when aiming at the discovery of the point which prompts the temptation by its doubtfulness, falls upon one so abruptly, as not to be preceded by the question which compels the temptation whilst raising the doubt. Now, since the nativity of Christ had never come into question, how can you contend that they meant by their temptation to inquire about a point on which they had never raised a doubt? Besides,⁷⁰⁴⁵ if He had to be tempted about His birth, this of course was not the proper way of doing it,—by announcing those persons who, even on the supposition of His birth, might possibly not have been in existence. We have all been born, and yet all of us have not either brothers or mother. He might with more probability have had even a father than a mother, and uncles more likely than brothers. Thus is the temptation about His birth unsuitable, for it might have been contrived without any mention of either His mother or His brethren. It is clearly more credible that, being certain that He had both a mother and brothers, they tested His divinity rather than His nativity, whether, when within, He knew what was without; being tried by the untrue announcement of the presence of persons who were not present. But the artifice of a temptation might have been thwarted thus: it might have happened that He knew that those whom they were announcing to be “standing without,” were in fact absent by the stress either of sickness, or of business, or a journey which He was at the time aware of. No one tempts (another) in a way in which he knows that he may have himself to bear the shame of the temptation. There being, then, no suitable occasion for a temptation, the announcement that His mother and His brethren had actually turned up⁷⁰⁴⁶ recovers its naturalness. But there is some ground for thinking that *Christ’s* answer denies His mother and brethren for the present, as even Apelles might learn. “The Lord’s

⁷⁰⁴¹ Luke x. 25.

⁷⁰⁴² Literally, “nobody prevented its being, etc.”

⁷⁰⁴³ Subesse.

⁷⁰⁴⁴ Materia.

⁷⁰⁴⁵ Eo adicimus etiam.

⁷⁰⁴⁶ Supervenissent.

brethren had not yet believed in Him.”⁷⁰⁴⁷ So is it contained in the Gospel which was published before Marcion’s time; whilst there is at the same time a want of evidence of His mother’s adherence to Him, although the Marthas and the other Marys were in constant attendance on Him. In this very passage indeed, their unbelief is evident. Jesus was teaching the way of life, preaching the kingdom of God *and* actively engaged in healing infirmities of body and soul; but all the while, whilst strangers were intent on Him, His very nearest relatives were absent. By and by they turn up, and keep outside; but they do not go in, because, forsooth, they set small store⁷⁰⁴⁸ on that which was doing within; nor do they even wait,⁷⁰⁴⁹ as if they had something which they could contribute more necessary than that which He was so earnestly doing; but they prefer to interrupt Him, and wish to call Him away from His great work. Now, I ask you, Apelles, or will you Marcion, please (to tell me), if you happened to be at a stage play, or had laid a wager⁷⁰⁵⁰ on a foot race or a chariot race, and were called away by such a message, would you not have exclaimed, “What are mother and brothers to me?”⁷⁰⁵¹ And did not Christ, whilst preaching and manifesting God, fulfilling the law and the prophets, *and* scattering the darkness of the long preceding age, justly employ this same form of words, in order to strike the unbelief of those who stood outside, or to shake off the importunity of those who would call Him away from His work? If, however, He had meant to deny His own nativity, He would have found place, time, and means for expressing Himself very differently,⁷⁰⁵² and not in words which might be uttered by one who had both a mother and brothers. When denying one’s parents in indignation, one does not deny *their existence*, but censures *their faults*. Besides, He gave others the preference; and since He shows their title to this favour—even because they listened to the word (of God)—He points out in what sense He denied His mother and His brethren. For in whatever sense He adopted as His own those who adhered to Him, in that did He deny as His⁷⁰⁵³ those who kept aloof from Him. Christ also is wont to do to the utmost that which He enjoins on others. How strange, then, would it certainly⁷⁰⁵⁴ have been, if, while he was teaching others not to esteem mother, or father, or brothers, as highly as the word of God, He were Himself to leave the word of God as soon as His mother and brethren were announced to Him! He denied His parents, then, in the sense in which He has taught us to deny ours—for God’s work. But there is also another view of the case: in the abjured mother there is a figure of the synagogue, as well as of the Jews in the unbelieving brethren. In their person Israel remained outside, whilst

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7047 John vii. 5.
 7048 Non computantes scilicet.
 7049 Nec sustinent saltem.
 7050 Contendens: “videlicet sponsionibus” (Oehler)
 7051 Literally, “Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?”—Christ’s own words.
 7052 The *alius* is a genitive, and must be taken with *sermonis*.
 7053 Abnegavit: “repudiated.”
 7054 Force of the indicative *quale erat*.

the new disciples who kept close to Christ within, hearing and believing, represented the Church, which He called mother in a preferable sense and a worthier brotherhood, with the repudiation of the carnal relationship. It was in just the same sense, indeed, that He also replied to that exclamation (of a certain woman), not denying His mother's "womb and paps," but designating those as more "blessed who hear the word of God."⁷⁰⁵⁵

Chapter VIII.—Apelles and His Followers, Displeased with Our Earthly Bodies, Attributed to Christ a Body of a Purer Sort. How Christ Was Heavenly Even in His Earthly Flesh.

These passages alone, in which Apelles and Marcion seem to place their chief reliance when interpreted according to the truth of the entire uncorrupted gospel, ought to have been sufficient for proving the human flesh of Christ by a defence of His birth. But since Apelles' precious set⁷⁰⁵⁶ lay a very great stress on the shameful condition⁷⁰⁵⁷ of the flesh, which they will have to have been furnished with souls tampered with by the fiery author of evil,⁷⁰⁵⁸ and so unworthy of Christ; and because they on that account suppose that a sidereal substance is suitable for Him, I am bound to refute them on their own ground. They mention a certain angel of great renown as having created this world of ours, and as having, after the creation, repented of his work. This indeed we have treated of in a passage by itself; for we have written a little work in opposition to them, *on the question* whether one who had the spirit, and will, and power of Christ for such operations, could have done anything which required repentance, since they describe the *said* angel by the figure of "the lost sheep." The world, then, must be a wrong thing,⁷⁰⁵⁹ according to the evidence of its Creator's repentance; for all repentance is the admission of fault, nor has it indeed any existence except through fault. Now, if the world⁷⁰⁶⁰ is a fault, as is the body, such must be its parts—faulty too; so in like manner must be the heaven and its celestial (contents), and everything which is conceived and produced out of it. And "a corrupt tree must needs bring forth evil fruit."⁷⁰⁶¹ The flesh of Christ, therefore, if composed of celestial elements, consists of faulty materials, sinful by reason of its sinful origin;⁷⁰⁶² so that it must be a part of that substance which they disdain to clothe Christ with,

⁷⁰⁵⁵ Luke xi. 27, 28. See also our *Anti-Marcion*, p. 292, Edin.

⁷⁰⁵⁶ Isti Apelleiaci.

⁷⁰⁵⁷ Ignominiam.

⁷⁰⁵⁸ Ab igneo illo præside mali: see Tertullian's *de Anima*. xxiii.; *de Resur. Carn.* v.; *Adv. Omnes Hæres.* vi.

⁷⁰⁵⁹ Peccatum.

⁷⁰⁶⁰ *Mundus* is here the universe or entire creation.

⁷⁰⁶¹ Matt. vii. 17.

⁷⁰⁶² Censu.

because of its sinfulness,—in other words, our own. Then, as there is no difference in the point of ignominy, let them either devise for Christ some substance of a purer stamp, since they are displeased with our own, or else let them recognise this too, than which even a heavenly substance could not have been better. We read in so many words:⁷⁰⁶³ “The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven.”⁷⁰⁶⁴ This passage, however, has nothing to do with any difference of substance; it only contrasts with the once⁷⁰⁶⁵ “earthy” substance of the flesh of the first man, Adam, the “heavenly” substance of the spirit of the second man, Christ. And so entirely does the passage refer the celestial man to the spirit and not to the flesh, that those whom it compares to Him evidently become celestial—by the Spirit, of course—even in this “earthy flesh.” Now, since Christ is heavenly even in regard to the flesh, they could not be compared to Him, who are not heavenly in reference to their flesh.⁷⁰⁶⁶ If, then, they who become heavenly, as Christ also was, carry about an “earthy” substance of flesh, the conclusion which is affirmed by this fact is, that Christ Himself also was heavenly, but in an “earthy” flesh, even as they are who are put on a level with Him.⁷⁰⁶⁷



Chapter IX.—Christ’s Flesh Perfectly Natural, Like Our Own. None of the Supernatural Features Which the Heretics Ascribed to It Discoverable, on a Careful View.

We have thus far gone on the principle, that nothing which is derived from some other thing, however different it may be from that from which it is derived, is so different as not to suggest the source from which it comes. No material substance is without the witness of its own original, however great a change into new properties it may have undergone. There is this very body of ours, the formation of which out of the dust of the ground is a truth which has found its way into Gentile fables; it certainly testifies its own origin from the two elements of earth and water,—from the former by its flesh, from the latter by its blood. Now, although there is a difference in the appearance of qualities (in other words, that which proceeds from something else is in development⁷⁰⁶⁸ different), yet, after all, what is blood but red fluid? what is flesh but earth in an especial⁷⁰⁶⁹ form? Consider the respective qualities,—of the muscles as clods; of the bones as stones; the mammillary glands as a kind of pebbles. Look upon the close junctions of the nerves as propagations of roots, and the branching courses of the veins as winding rivulets, and the down (which covers us) as moss, and

⁷⁰⁶³ Plane.
⁷⁰⁶⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 47.
⁷⁰⁶⁵ Retro.
⁷⁰⁶⁶ Secundum carnem.
⁷⁰⁶⁷ Ei adæquantur.
⁷⁰⁶⁸ Fit.
⁷⁰⁶⁹ Sua.

the hair as grass, and the very treasures of marrow within our bones as ores⁷⁰⁷⁰ of flesh. All these marks of the earthy origin were in Christ; and it is they which obscured Him as the Son of God, for He was looked on as man, for no other reason whatever than because He existed in the corporeal substance of a man. Or else, show us some celestial substance in Him purloined from the Bear, and the Pleiades, and the Hyades. Well, then, *the characteristics* which we have enumerated are so many proofs that His was an earthy flesh, as ours is; but anything new or anything strange I do not discover. Indeed it was from His words and actions only, from His teaching and miracles solely, that men, though amazed, owned Christ to be man.⁷⁰⁷¹ But if there had been in Him any new kind of flesh miraculously obtained (from the stars), it would have been certainly well known.⁷⁰⁷² As the case stood, however, it was actually the ordinary⁷⁰⁷³ condition of His terrene flesh which made all things else about Him wonderful, as when they said, “Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works?”⁷⁰⁷⁴ Thus spake even they who despised His outward form. His body did not reach even to human beauty, to say nothing of heavenly glory.⁷⁰⁷⁵ Had the prophets given us no information whatever concerning His ignoble appearance, His very sufferings and the very contumely He endured bespeak it all. The sufferings attested His human flesh, the contumely proved its abject condition. Would any man have dared to touch even with his little finger, the body *of Christ*, if it had been of an unusual nature;⁷⁰⁷⁶ or to smear His face with spitting, if it had not invited it⁷⁰⁷⁷ (by its abjectness)? Why talk of a heavenly flesh, when you have no grounds to offer us for your celestial theory?⁷⁰⁷⁸ Why deny it to be earthy, when you have the best of reasons for knowing it to be earthy? He hungered under the devil’s *temptation*; He thirsted with the woman of Samaria; He wept over Lazarus; He trembles at death (for “the flesh,” as He says, “is weak”⁷⁰⁷⁹); at last, He pours out His blood. These, I suppose, are celestial marks? But how, I ask, could He have incurred contempt and suffering in the way I have described, if there had beamed forth in that flesh of His aught of celestial excellence? From this, therefore, we have a convincing proof that in it there was nothing of heaven, because it must be capable of contempt and suffering.

7070 Metalla.

7071 Christum hominem obstupescebant.

7072 Notaretur.

7073 Non mira.

7074 Matt. xiii. 54.

7075 Compare Isa. liii. 2. See also our *Anti-Marcion*, p. 153, Edin.

7076 Novum: made of the stars.

7077 Merentem.

7078 Literally, “why do you suppose it to be celestial.”

7079 Matt. xxvi. 41.

Chapter X.—Another Class of Heretics Refuted. They Alleged that Christ’s Flesh Was of a Finer Texture, Animalis, Composed of Soul.

I now turn to another class, who are equally wise in their own conceit. They affirm that the flesh of Christ is composed of soul,⁷⁰⁸⁰ that His soul became flesh, so that His flesh is soul; and as His flesh is of soul, so is His soul of flesh. But here, again, I must have some reasons. If, in order to save the soul, Christ took a soul within Himself, because it could not be saved except by Him having it within Himself, I see no reason why, in clothing Himself with flesh, He should have made that flesh one of soul,⁷⁰⁸¹ as if He could not have saved the soul in any other way than by making flesh of it. For while He saves *our* souls, which are not only not of flesh,⁷⁰⁸² but are even distinct from flesh, how much more able was He to secure salvation to that soul which He took Himself, when it was also not of flesh? Again, since they assume it as a main tenet,⁷⁰⁸³ that Christ came forth not to deliver the flesh, but only our soul, how absurd it is, in the first place, that, meaning to save only the soul, He yet made it into just that sort of bodily substance which He had no intention of saving! And, secondly, if He had undertaken to deliver our souls by means of that which He carried, He ought, in that soul which He carried to have carried our *soul*, one (that is) of the same condition as ours; and whatever is the condition of our soul in its secret nature, it is certainly not one of flesh. However, it was not our soul which He saved, if His own was of flesh; for ours is not of flesh. Now, if He did not save our soul on the ground, that it was a soul of flesh which He saved, He is nothing to us, because He has not saved our soul. Nor indeed did it need salvation, for it was not our soul really, since it was, on the supposition,⁷⁰⁸⁴ a soul of flesh. But yet it is evident that it has been saved. Of flesh, therefore, it was not composed, and it was ours; for it was our *soul* that was saved, since that was in peril of *damnation*. We therefore now conclude that as in Christ the soul was not of flesh, so neither could His flesh have possibly been composed of soul.

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Chapter XI.—The Opposite Extravagance Exposed. That is Christ with a Soul Composed of Flesh—Corporeal, Though Invisible. Christ’s Soul, Like Ours, Distinct from Flesh, Though Clothed in It.

But we meet another argument of theirs, when we raise the question why Christ, in assuming a flesh composed of soul, should seem to have had a soul that was made of flesh? For God, they

7080 Animalem: “etherialized; of a finer form, differing from gross, earthy matter” (Neander).

7081 Animalem.

7082 Non carneas.

7083 Præsumant.

7084 Scilicet.

say, desired to make the soul visible to men, by enduing it with a bodily nature, although it was before invisible; of its own nature, indeed, it was incapable of seeing anything, even its own self, by reason of the obstacle of this flesh, so that it was even a matter of doubt whether it was born or not. The soul, therefore (they further say), was made corporeal in Christ, in order that we might see it when undergoing birth, and death, and (what is more) resurrection. But yet, how was this possible, that by means of the flesh the soul should demonstrate itself⁷⁰⁸⁵ to itself or to us, when it could not possibly be ascertained that it would offer this mode of exhibiting itself by the flesh, until the thing came into existence to which it was unknown,⁷⁰⁸⁶ that is to say, the flesh? It received darkness, forsooth, in order to be able to shine! Now,⁷⁰⁸⁷ let us first turn our attention to this point, whether it was requisite that the soul should exhibit itself in the manner contended for,⁷⁰⁸⁸ and next *consider* whether their previous position be⁷⁰⁸⁹ that the soul is wholly invisible (inquiring further) whether this invisibility is the result of its incorporeality, or whether it actually possesses some sort of body peculiar to itself. And yet, although they say that it is invisible, they determine it to be corporeal, but having somewhat that is invisible. For if it has nothing invisible how can it be said to be invisible? But even its existence is an impossibility, unless it has that which is instrumental to its existence.⁷⁰⁹⁰ Since, however, it exists, it must needs have a something through which it exists. If it has this something, it must be its body. Everything which exists is a bodily existence *sui generis*. Nothing lacks bodily existence but that which is non-existent. If, then, the soul has an invisible body, He who had proposed to make it⁷⁰⁹¹ visible would certainly have done His work better⁷⁰⁹² if He had made that part of it which was accounted invisible, visible; because then there would have been no untruth or weakness in the case, and neither of these flaws is suitable to God. (But as the case stands in the hypothesis) there is *untruth*, since He has set forth the soul as being a different thing from what it really is; and there is *weakness*, since He was unable to make it appear⁷⁰⁹³ to be that which it is. No one who wishes to exhibit a man covers him with a veil⁷⁰⁹⁴ or a mask. This, however, is precisely what has been done to the soul, if it has been clothed with a covering belonging to something else, by being converted into flesh. But even if the soul is, on

⁷⁰⁸⁵ Demonstraretur: or, "should become apparent."

⁷⁰⁸⁶ Cui latebat.

⁷⁰⁸⁷ Denique.

⁷⁰⁸⁸ Isto modo.

⁷⁰⁸⁹ An retro allegent.

⁷⁰⁹⁰ Per quod sit.

⁷⁰⁹¹ Eam: the soul.

⁷⁰⁹² Dignius: i.e., "in a manner more worthy of Himself."

⁷⁰⁹³ Demonstrare.

⁷⁰⁹⁴ Cassidem.

their hypothesis, supposed⁷⁰⁹⁵ to be incorporeal, so that the soul, whatever it is, should by some *mysterious* force of the reason⁷⁰⁹⁶ be quite unknown, only not be a body, then in that case it were not beyond the power of God—indeed it would be more consistent with His plan—if He displayed⁷⁰⁹⁷ the soul in some new sort of body, different from that which we all have in common, one of which we should have quite a different notion,⁷⁰⁹⁸ (being spared the idea that)⁷⁰⁹⁹ He had set His mind on⁷¹⁰⁰ making, without an adequate cause, a visible soul instead of⁷¹⁰¹ an invisible one—a fit incentive, no doubt, for such questions as they start,⁷¹⁰² by their maintenance of a human flesh for it.⁷¹⁰³ Christ, however, could not have appeared among men except as a man. Restore, therefore, to Christ, His faith; *believe* that He who willed to walk the earth as a man exhibited even a soul of a thoroughly human condition, not making it of flesh, but clothing it with flesh.

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Chapter XII.—The True Functions of the Soul. Christ Assumed It in His Perfect Human Nature, Not to Reveal and Explain It, But to Save It. Its Resurrection with the Body Assured by Christ.

Well, now, let it be granted that the soul is made apparent by the flesh,⁷¹⁰⁴ on the assumption that it was evidently necessary⁷¹⁰⁵ that it should be made apparent in some way or other, that is, as being incognizable to itself and to us: there is still an absurd distinction in this *hypothesis*, which implies that we are ourselves separate from our soul, when all that we are is soul. Indeed,⁷¹⁰⁶ without the soul we are nothing; there is not even the name of a human being, only that of a carcase. If, then, we are ignorant of the soul, it is in fact the soul that is ignorant of itself. Thus the only remaining question left for us to look into is, whether the soul was in this matter so ignorant of itself that it

⁷⁰⁹⁵ Deputetur.

⁷⁰⁹⁶ Aliqua vi rationis: or, “by some power of its own condition.”

⁷⁰⁹⁷ Demonstrare.

⁷⁰⁹⁸ Notitiæ.

⁷⁰⁹⁹ Ne.

⁷¹⁰⁰ Gestisset.

⁷¹⁰¹ Ex.

⁷¹⁰² Istis.

⁷¹⁰³ In illam: perhaps “*in it*,” as if an ablative case, not an unusual construction in Tertullian.

⁷¹⁰⁴ Ostensa sit.

⁷¹⁰⁵ Si constiterit.

⁷¹⁰⁶ Denique.

became known in any way it could.⁷¹⁰⁷ The soul, in my opinion,⁷¹⁰⁸ is sensual.⁷¹⁰⁹ Nothing, therefore, pertaining to the soul is unconnected with sense,⁷¹¹⁰ nothing pertaining to sense is unconnected with the soul.⁷¹¹¹ And if I may use the expression for the sake of emphasis, I would say, “*Animæ anima sensus est*” — “Sense is the soul’s very soul.” Now, since it is the soul that imparts the faculty of perception⁷¹¹² to all (that have sense), and since it is itself that perceives the very senses, not to say properties, of them all, how is it likely that it did not itself receive sense as its own natural constitution? Whence is it to know what is necessary for itself under given circumstances, from the very necessity of natural causes, if it knows not its own property, and what is necessary for it? To recognise this indeed is within the competence of every soul; it has, I mean, a practical knowledge of itself, without which knowledge of itself no soul could possibly have exercised its own functions.⁷¹¹³ I suppose, too, that it is especially suitable that man, the only rational animal, should have been furnished with such a soul as would make him the rational animal, itself being pre-eminently rational. Now, how can that soul which makes man a rational animal be itself rational if it be itself ignorant of its rationality, being ignorant of its own very self? So far, however, is it from being ignorant, that it knows its own Author, its own Master, and its own condition. Before it learns anything about God, it names the name of God. Before it acquires any knowledge of His judgment, it professes to commend itself to God. There is nothing one oftener hears of than that there is no hope after death; and yet what imprecations or deprecations does not the soul use according as the man dies after a well or ill spent life! These reflections are more fully pursued in a short treatise which we have written, “*On the Testimony of the Soul.*”⁷¹¹⁴ Besides, if the soul was ignorant of itself from the beginning, there is nothing it could⁷¹¹⁵ have learnt of Christ except its own quality.⁷¹¹⁶ It was not its own form that it learnt of Christ, but its salvation. For this cause did the Son of God descend and take on Him a soul, not that the soul might discover itself in Christ, but Christ in itself. For its salvation is endangered, not by its being ignorant of itself, but of the word of God. “The life,” says He, “was manifested,”⁷¹¹⁷ not the soul. And again, “I am come to

⁷¹⁰⁷ Quoquo modo.

⁷¹⁰⁸ Opinor.

⁷¹⁰⁹ Sensualis: endowed with sense.

⁷¹¹⁰ Nihil animale sine sensu.

⁷¹¹¹ Nihil sensuale sine anima.

⁷¹¹² We should have been glad of a shorter phrase for *sentire* (“to use sense”), had the whole course of the passage permitted it.

⁷¹¹³ Se ministrare.

⁷¹¹⁴ See especially chap. iv. *supra*.

⁷¹¹⁵ Debuerat.

⁷¹¹⁶ Nisi qualis esset.

⁷¹¹⁷ 1 John i. 2.

save the soul.” He did not say, “to explain”⁷¹¹⁸ it. We could not know, of course,⁷¹¹⁹ that the soul, although an invisible essence, is born and dies, unless it were exhibited corporeally. We certainly were ignorant that it was to rise again with the flesh. This is the truth which it will be found was manifested by Christ. But even this He did not manifest in Himself in a different way than in some Lazarus, whose flesh was no more composed of soul⁷¹²⁰ than his soul was of flesh.⁷¹²¹ What further knowledge, therefore, have we received of the structure⁷¹²² of the soul which we were ignorant of before? What invisible part was there belonging to it which wanted to be made visible by the flesh?



Chapter XIII.—Christ’s Human Nature. The Flesh and the Soul Both Fully and Unconfusedly Contained in It.

The soul became flesh that the soul might become visible.⁷¹²³ Well, then, did the flesh likewise become soul that the flesh might be manifested?⁷¹²⁴ If the soul is flesh, it is no longer soul, but flesh. If the flesh is soul, it is no longer flesh, but soul. Where, then, there is flesh, and where there is soul, it has become both one and the other.⁷¹²⁵ Now, if they are neither in particular, although they become both one and the other, it is, to say the least, very absurd, that we should understand the soul when we name the flesh, and when we indicate the soul, explain ourselves as meaning the flesh. All things will be in danger of being taken in a sense different from their own proper sense, and, whilst taken in that different sense, of losing their proper one, if they are called by a name which differs from their natural designation. Fidelity in names secures the safe appreciation of properties. When these properties undergo a change, they are considered to possess such qualities as their names indicate. Baked clay, for instance, receives the name of brick.⁷¹²⁶ It retains not the name which designated its former state,⁷¹²⁷ because it has no longer a share in that state. Therefore, also, the soul of Christ having become flesh,⁷¹²⁸ cannot be anything else than that which it has

7118 Ostendere; see Luke ix. 56.
 7119 Nimirum.
 7120 Animalis.
 7121 Carnalis.
 7122 Dispositione.
 7123 Ostenderetur: or, “that it might prove itself soul.”
 7124 Or, “that it might show itself flesh.”
 7125 Alterutrum: “no matter which.”
 7126 Testæ: a pitcher, perhaps.
 7127 Generis.
 7128 Tertullian quotes his opponent’s opinion here.

become nor can it be any longer that which it once was, having become indeed⁷¹²⁹ something else. And since we have just had recourse to an illustration, we will put it to further use. Our pitcher, then, which was formed of the clay, is one body, and has one name indicative, of course, of that one body; nor can the pitcher be also called clay, because what it once was, it is no longer. Now that which is no longer (what it was) is also not an inseparable property.⁷¹³⁰ And the soul is not an inseparable property. Since, therefore, it has become flesh, the soul is a uniform solid body; it is also a wholly incomplex being,⁷¹³¹ and an indivisible substance. But in Christ we find the soul and the flesh expressed in simple unfigurative⁷¹³² terms; that is to say, the soul is called soul, and the flesh, flesh; nowhere is the soul termed flesh, or the flesh, soul; and yet they ought to have been thus (confusedly) named if such had been their condition. *The fact, however, is* that even by *Christ Himself* each substance has been separately mentioned by itself, conformably of course, to the distinction which exists between the properties of both, the soul by itself, and the flesh by itself. “*My soul,*” says He, “is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;”⁷¹³³ and “the bread that I will give is *my flesh,* (which I will give) for the life⁷¹³⁴ of the world.”⁷¹³⁵ Now, if the soul had been flesh, there would have only been in Christ the soul composed of flesh, or else the flesh composed of soul.⁷¹³⁶ Since, however, He keeps the species distinct, the flesh and the soul, He shows them to be two. If two, then they are no longer one; if not one, then the soul is not composed of flesh, nor the flesh of soul. For the soul-flesh, or the flesh-soul, is but one; unless indeed He even had some other soul apart from that which was flesh, and bare about another flesh besides that which was soul. But since He had but one flesh and one soul,—that “soul which was sorrowful, even unto death,” and that *flesh which was the* “bread given for the life of the world,”—the number is unimpaired⁷¹³⁷ of two substances distinct in kind, thus excluding the unique species of the flesh-comprised soul.

Chapter XIV.—Christ Took Not on Him an Angelic Nature, But the Human. It Was Men, Not Angels, Whom He Came to Save.

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- 7129 Silicet: in reference to the *alleged* doctrine.
- 7130 Non adhæret.
- 7131 Singularitas tota.
- 7132 Nudis.
- 7133 Matt. xxvi. 38. Tertullian’s quotation is put interrogatively.
- 7134 “The salvation” (salute) is Tertullian’s word.
- 7135 John vi. 51.
- 7136 Above, beginning of chap. x.
- 7137 Salvus.

But Christ, they say, bare⁷¹³⁸ (the nature of) an angel. For what reason? The same which induced Him to become man? Christ, then, was actuated by the motive which led Him to take human nature. Man's salvation was the motive, the restoration of that which had perished. Man had perished; his recovery had become necessary. No such cause, however, existed for Christ's taking on Him the nature of angels. For although there is assigned to angels also perdition in "the fire prepared for the devil and his angels,"⁷¹³⁹ yet a restoration is never promised to them. No charge about the salvation of angels did Christ ever receive from the Father; and that which the Father neither promised nor commanded, Christ could not have undertaken. For what object, therefore, did He bear the angelic nature, if it were not (that He might have it) as a powerful helper⁷¹⁴⁰ wherewithal to execute the salvation of man? The Son of God, in sooth, was not competent alone to deliver man, whom a solitary and single serpent had overthrown! There is, then, no longer but one God, but one Saviour, if there be two to contrive salvation, and one of them in need of the other. But was it His object indeed to deliver man by an angel? Why, then, come down to do that which He was about to expedite with an angel's help? If by an angel's aid, why *come* Himself also? If He meant to do all by Himself, why have an angel too? He has been, it is true, called "the Angel of great counsel," that is, a messenger, by a term expressive of official function, not of nature. For He had to announce to the world the mighty purpose of the Father, even that which ordained the restoration of man. But He is not on this account to be regarded as an angel, as a Gabriel or a Michael. For the Lord of the Vineyard sends even His Son to the labourers to require fruit, as well as His servants. Yet the Son will not therefore be counted as one of the servants because He undertook the office of a servant. I may, then, more easily say, if such an expression is to be hazarded,⁷¹⁴¹ that the Son is actually an angel, that is, a messenger, from the Father, than that there is an angel in the Son. Forasmuch, however, as it has been declared concerning the Son Himself, "Thou hast made Him a little lower than the angels"⁷¹⁴² how will it appear that He put on the nature of angels if He was made lower than the angels, having become man, with flesh and soul as the Son of man? As "the Spirit⁷¹⁴³ of God," however, and "the Power of the Highest,"⁷¹⁴⁴ can He be regarded as lower than the angels,—He who is verily God, and the Son of God? Well, but as bearing human nature, He is so far made inferior to the angels; but as bearing angelic nature, He to the same degree loses that inferiority. This opinion will be very suitable for Ebion,⁷¹⁴⁵ who holds Jesus to be

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7138 Gestavit.

7139 Matt. xxv. 41.

7140 Satellitem.

7141 Si forte.

7142 Ps. viii. 5.

7143 For this designation of the *divine* nature in Christ, see our *Anti-Marcion*, p. 247, note 7, Edin.

7144 Luke i. 35.

7145 Hebioni.

a mere man, and nothing more than a descendant of David, and not also the Son of God; although He is, to be sure,⁷¹⁴⁶ in one respect more glorious than the prophets, inasmuch as he declares that there was an angel in Him, just as there was in Zechariah. Only it was never said by Christ, “And the angel, which spake within me, said unto me.”⁷¹⁴⁷ Neither, indeed, was ever used by Christ that familiar phrase of all the prophets, “Thus saith the Lord.” For He was Himself the Lord, who openly spake by His own authority, prefacing His words with the formula, “Verily, verily, *I* say unto you.” What need is there of further argument? Hear what Isaiah says in emphatic words, “It was no angel, nor deputy, but the Lord Himself who saved them.”⁷¹⁴⁸

Chapter XV.—The Valentinian Figment of Christ’s Flesh Being of a Spiritual Nature, Examined and Refuted Out of Scripture.

Valentinus, indeed, on the strength of his heretical system, might consistently devise a spiritual flesh for Christ. Any one who refused to believe that that flesh was human might pretend it to be anything he liked, forasmuch as (and this remark is applicable to all *heretics*), if it was not human, and was not born of man, I do not see of what substance Christ Himself spoke when He called Himself man and the Son of man, *saying*: “But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth;”⁷¹⁴⁹ and “The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath-day.”⁷¹⁵⁰ For it is of Him that Isaiah writes: “A man of suffering, and acquainted with the bearing of weakness;”⁷¹⁵¹ and Jeremiah: “He is a man, and who hath known Him?”⁷¹⁵² and Daniel: “Upon the clouds (He came) as the Son of man.”⁷¹⁵³ The Apostle Paul likewise says: “The man Christ Jesus is the one Mediator between God and man.”⁷¹⁵⁴ Also Peter, in the Acts of the Apostles, speaks of Him as verily human (when he says), “Jesus Christ was a man approved of God among you.”⁷¹⁵⁵ These passages alone ought to suffice as a prescriptive⁷¹⁵⁶ testimony in proof that Christ had human flesh derived from man, and

7146 Plane.
 7147 Zech. i. 14.
 7148 Isa. lxiii. 9.
 7149 John viii. 40.
 7150 Matt. xii. 8.
 7151 Isa. liiii. 3, Sept.
 7152 Jer. xvii. 9, Sept.
 7153 Dan. vii. 13.
 7154 1 Tim. ii. 5.
 7155 Acts ii. 22.
 7156 Vice præscriptionis.

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not spiritual, and that His flesh was not composed of soul,⁷¹⁵⁷ nor of stellar substance, and that it was not an imaginary flesh; (and no doubt they would be sufficient) if heretics could only divest themselves of all their contentious warmth and artifice. For, as I have read in some writer of Valentinus' wretched faction,⁷¹⁵⁸ they refuse at the outset to believe that a human and earthly substance was created⁷¹⁵⁹ for Christ, lest the Lord should be regarded as inferior to the angels, who are not formed of earthly flesh; whence, too, it would be necessary that, if His flesh were like ours, it should be similarly born, not of the Spirit, nor of God, but of the will of man. Why, moreover, should it be born, not of corruptible [seed], but of incorruptible? Why, again, since His flesh has both risen and returned to heaven, is not ours, being like His, also taken up at once? Or else, why does not His flesh, since it is like ours, return in like manner to the ground, and suffer dissolution? Such objections even the heathen used constantly to bandy about.⁷¹⁶⁰ Was the Son of God reduced to such a depth of degradation? Again, if He rose again as a precedent for our hope, how is it that nothing like it has been thought desirable (to happen) to ourselves?⁷¹⁶¹ Such views are not improper for heathens and they are fit and natural for the heretics too. For, indeed, what difference is there between them, except it be that the heathen, in not believing, do believe; while the heretics, in believing, do not believe? Then, again, they read: "Thou madest Him a little less than angels;"⁷¹⁶² and they deny the lower nature of that Christ who declares Himself to be, "not a man, but a worm;"⁷¹⁶³ who also had "no form nor comeliness, but His form was ignoble, despised more than all men, a man in suffering, and acquainted with the bearing of weakness."⁷¹⁶⁴ Here they discover a human being mingled with a divine one and so they deny the manhood. They believe that He died, and maintain that a being which has died was born of an incorruptible substance;⁷¹⁶⁵ as if, forsooth, corruptibility⁷¹⁶⁶ were something else than death! But our flesh, too, ought immediately to have risen again. Wait a while. Christ has not yet subdued His enemies, so as to be able to triumph over them in company with His friends.

7157 Animalis.

7158 Factiuncula.

7159 Informatam.

7160 Volutabant: see Lactantius, iv. 22.

7161 De nobis probatum est: or, perhaps, "has been proved to have happened in our own case."

7162 Ps. viii. 6, Sept.

7163 Ps. xxii. 6.

7164 Isa. liii. 3, Sept.

7165 Ex incorruptela.

7166 Corruptela.

Chapter XVI.—Christ’s Flesh in Nature, the Same as Ours, Only Sinless. The Difference Between Carnem Peccati and Peccatum Carnis: It is the Latter Which Christ Abolished. The Flesh of the First Adam, No Less Than that of the Second Adam, Not Received from Human Seed, Although as Entirely Human as Our Own, Which is Derived from It.

The famous Alexander,⁷¹⁶⁷ too, instigated by his love of disputation in the true fashion of heretical temper, has made himself conspicuous against us; he will have us say that Christ put on flesh of an earthly origin,⁷¹⁶⁸ in order that He might in His own person abolish sinful flesh.⁷¹⁶⁹ Now, even if we did assert this as our opinion, we should be able to defend it in such a way as completely to avoid the extravagant folly which he ascribes to us in making us suppose that the very flesh of Christ was in Himself abolished as being sinful; because we mention our belief (in public),⁷¹⁷⁰ that it is sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven; and we further declare that it will come again from thence in all the pomp⁷¹⁷¹ of the Father’s glory: it is therefore just as impossible for us to say that it is abolished, as it is for us to maintain that it is sinful, and so made void, since in it there has been no fault. We maintain, moreover, that what has been abolished in Christ is not *carnem peccati*, “sinful flesh,” but *peccatum carnis*, “sin in the flesh,”—not the material thing, but its condition;⁷¹⁷² not the substance, but its flaw;⁷¹⁷³ and (this we aver) on the authority of the apostle, who says, “He abolished sin in the flesh.”⁷¹⁷⁴ Now in another sentence he says that Christ was “in the likeness of sinful flesh,”⁷¹⁷⁵ not, however, as if He had taken on Him “the likeness of the flesh,” in the sense of a semblance of body instead of its reality; but he means us to understand likeness to the flesh

⁷¹⁶⁷ Although Tertullian dignifies him with an *ille*, we have no particulars of this man. [It may be that this is an *epithet*, rather than a name, given to some enemy of truth like Alexander the “Coppersmith” (2 Tim. iv. 14) or like that (1 Tim. i. 20), blasphemer, whose character suits the case.]

⁷¹⁶⁸ Census.

⁷¹⁶⁹ So Bp. Kaye renders “*carnem peccati*.” [See his valuable note, p. 253.]

⁷¹⁷⁰ We take the *meminerimus* to refer “to the Creed.”

⁷¹⁷¹ Suggestu.

⁷¹⁷² Naturam.

⁷¹⁷³ Culpam.

⁷¹⁷⁴ “Tertullian, referring to St. Paul, says of Christ: ‘Evacuavit peccatum in carne;’ alluding, as I suppose, to Romans viii. 3. But the corresponding Greek in the printed editions is κατέκρινε τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ σαρκί (‘He condemned sin in the flesh’). Had Tertullian a different reading in his Greek mss., or did he confound Romans viii. 3 with Romans vi. 6, ἵνα καταργηθῇ τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας (‘that the body of sin might be destroyed’)? Jerome translates the Greek καταργέω by ‘evacuo,’ c. xvi. See *Adv. Marcionem*, ver. 14. Dr. Neander has pointed out two passages in which Tertullian has ‘damnavit or *damnaverit* delinquentiam in carne.’ See *de Res. Carnis*. 46; *de Pudicitia*. 17.”—Bp. Kaye.

⁷¹⁷⁵ Also in Rom. viii. 3.

which sinned,⁷¹⁷⁶ because the flesh of Christ, which committed no sin itself, resembled that which had sinned,—resembled it in its nature, but not in the corruption it received from Adam; whence we also affirm that there was in Christ the same flesh as that whose nature in man is sinful. In the flesh, therefore, *we say* that sin has been abolished, because in Christ that same flesh is maintained without sin, which in man was not maintained without sin. Now, it would not contribute to the purpose of Christ's abolishing sin in the flesh, if He did not abolish it in that flesh in which was the nature of sin, nor (would it conduce) to His glory. For surely it would have been no strange thing if He had removed the stain of sin in some better flesh, and one which should possess a different, even a sinless, nature! Then, you say, if He took our flesh, Christ's was a sinful one. Do not, however, fetter with mystery a sense which is quite intelligible. For in putting on our flesh, He made it His own; in making it His own, He made it sinless. A word of caution, however, must be addressed to all who refuse to believe that our flesh was in Christ on the ground that it came not of the seed of a human father,⁷¹⁷⁷ let them remember that Adam himself received this flesh of ours without the seed of a human father. As earth was converted into this flesh of ours without the seed of a human father, so also was it quite possible for the Son of God to take to Himself⁷¹⁷⁸ the substance of the selfsame flesh, without a human father's agency.⁷¹⁷⁹

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Chapter XVII.—The Similarity of Circumstances Between the First and the Second Adam, as to the Derivation of Their Flesh. An Analogy Also Pleasantly Traced Between Eve and the Virgin Mary.

But, leaving Alexander with his syllogisms, which he so perversely applies in his discussions, as well as with the hymns of Valentinus, which, with consummate assurance, he interpolates as the production of some respectable⁷¹⁸⁰ author, let us confine our inquiry to a single point—Whether Christ received flesh from the virgin?—that we may thus arrive at a certain proof that His flesh was human, if He derived its substance from His mother's womb, although we are at once furnished with clear evidences of the human character of His flesh, from its name and description as that of a man, and from the nature of its constitution, and from the system of its sensations, and from its suffering of death. Now, it will first be necessary to show what previous reason there was for the Son of God's being born of a virgin. He who was going to consecrate a new order of birth, must Himself be born after a novel fashion, concerning which Isaiah foretold how that the Lord Himself

7176 Peccatricis carnis.

7177 Viri.

7178 Transire in: "to pass into."

7179 Sine coagulo.

7180 Idonei.

would give the sign. What, then, is the sign? “Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son.”⁷¹⁸¹ Accordingly, a virgin did conceive and bear “Emmanuel, God with us.”⁷¹⁸² This is the new nativity; a man is born in God. And in this man God was born, taking the flesh of an ancient race, without the help, however, of the ancient seed, in order that He might reform it with a new seed, that is, in a spiritual manner, and cleanse it by the re-moval of all its ancient stains. But the whole of this new birth was prefigured, as was the case in all other instances, in ancient type, the Lord being born as man by a dispensation in which a virgin was the medium. The earth was still in a virgin state, reduced as yet by no human labour, with no seed as yet cast into its furrows, when, as we are told, God made man out of it into a living soul.⁷¹⁸³ As, then, the first Adam is thus introduced to us, it is a just inference that the second Adam likewise, as the apostle has told us, was formed by God into a quickening spirit out of the ground,—in other words, out of a flesh which was unstained as yet by any human generation. But that I may lose no opportunity of supporting my argument from the name of Adam, why is Christ called Adam by the apostle, unless it be that, as man, He was of that earthly origin? And even reason here maintains the same conclusion, because it was by just the contrary⁷¹⁸⁴ operation that God recovered His own image and likeness, of which He had been robbed by the devil. For it was while Eve was yet a virgin, that the ensnaring word had crept into her ear which was to build the edifice of death. Into a virgin’s soul, in like manner, must be introduced that Word of God which was to raise the fabric of life; so that what had been reduced to ruin by this sex, might by the selfsame sex be recovered to salvation. As Eve had believed the serpent, so Mary believed the angel.⁷¹⁸⁵ The delinquency which the one occasioned by believing, the other by believing effaced. But (it will be said) Eve did not at the devil’s word conceive in her womb. Well, she at all events conceived; for the devil’s word afterwards became as seed to her that she should conceive as an outcast, and bring forth in sorrow. Indeed she gave birth to a fratricidal devil; whilst Mary, on the contrary, bare one who was one day to secure salvation to Israel, His own brother after the flesh, and the murderer of Himself. God therefore sent down into the virgin’s womb His Word, as the good Brother, who should blot out the memory of the evil brother. Hence it was necessary that Christ should come forth for the salvation of man, in that condition *of flesh* into which man had entered ever since his condemnation.

7181 Isa. vii. 14.

7182 Matt. i. 23.

7183 Gen. ii. 7.

7184 Æmula.

7185 Literally, “Gabriel.”



Chapter XVIII.—The Mystery of the Assumption of Our Perfect Human Nature by the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. He is Here Called, as Often Elsewhere, the Spirit.

Now, that we may give a simpler answer, it was not fit that the Son of God should be born of a human father's seed, lest, if He were wholly the Son of a man, He should fail to be also the Son of God, and have nothing more than "a Solomon" or "a Jonas,"⁷¹⁸⁶—as Ebion⁷¹⁸⁷ thought we ought to believe concerning Him. In order, therefore, that He who was already the Son of God—of God the Father's seed, that is to say, the Spirit—might also be the Son of man, He only wanted to assume flesh, of the flesh of man⁷¹⁸⁸ without the seed of a man;⁷¹⁸⁹ for the seed of a man was unnecessary⁷¹⁹⁰ for One who had the seed of God. As, then, before His birth of the virgin, He was able to have God for His Father without a human mother, so likewise, after He was born of the virgin, He was able to have a woman for His mother without a human father. He is thus man with God, in short, since He is man's flesh with God's Spirit⁷¹⁹¹—*flesh* (I say) without seed from man, *Spirit* with seed from God. For as much, then, as the dispensation of *God's* purpose⁷¹⁹² concerning His Son required that He should be born⁷¹⁹³ of a virgin, why should He not have received of the virgin the body which He bore from the virgin? Because, (forsooth) it is something else which He took from God, for "the Word" say they, "was made flesh."⁷¹⁹⁴ Now this very statement plainly shows what it was that was made flesh; nor can it possibly be that⁷¹⁹⁵ anything else than the Word was made flesh. Now, whether it was of the flesh that the Word was made flesh, or whether it was so made of the (divine) seed itself, the Scripture must tell us. As, however, the Scripture is silent about everything except what it was that was made (flesh), and says nothing of that from which it was so made, it must be held to suggest that from something else, and not from itself, was the Word made flesh. And if not from itself, but from something else, from what can we more suitably suppose that the Word became flesh than from that flesh in which it submitted to the dispensation?⁷¹⁹⁶ And (we have a proof of the same conclusion in the fact) that the Lord Himself sententiously and distinctly pronounced, "that

⁷¹⁸⁶ Matt. xii. 41, 42.

⁷¹⁸⁷ De Hebionis opinione.

⁷¹⁸⁸ Hominis.

⁷¹⁸⁹ Viri.

⁷¹⁹⁰ Vacabat.

⁷¹⁹¹ As we have often observed, the term *Spiritus* is used by Tertullian to express the *Divine Nature* in Christ. *Anti-Marcion*, p. 375, note 13.

⁷¹⁹² Dispositio rationis.

⁷¹⁹³ Proferendum.

⁷¹⁹⁴ John i. 14.

⁷¹⁹⁵ Nec periclitatus quasi.

⁷¹⁹⁶ Literally, "in which it became *flesh*."

which is born of the flesh is flesh,"⁷¹⁹⁷ even because it is born of the flesh. But if He here spoke of a human being simply, and not of Himself, (as you maintain) then you must deny absolutely that Christ is man, and must maintain that *human nature* was not suitable to Him. And then He adds, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit,"⁷¹⁹⁸ because God is a Spirit, and He was born of God. Now this description is certainly even more applicable to Him than it is to those who believe in Him. But if this passage indeed apply to Him, then why does not the preceding one also? For you cannot divide their relation, and adapt this to Him, and the previous clause to all other men, especially as you do not deny that Christ possesses the two substances, both of the flesh and of the Spirit. Besides, as He was in possession both of flesh and of Spirit, He cannot possibly, when speaking of the condition of the two substances which He Himself bears, be supposed to have determined that the Spirit indeed was His own, but that the flesh was not His own. Forasmuch, therefore, as He is of the Spirit He is God the Spirit, and is born of God; just as He is also born of the flesh of man, being generated in the flesh as man.⁷¹⁹⁹

Chapter XIX.—Christ, as to His Divine Nature, as the Word of God, Became Flesh, Not by Carnal Conception, Nor by the Will of the Flesh and of Man, But by the Will of God. Christ's Divine Nature, of Its Own Accord, Descended into the Virgin's Womb.

What, then, is the meaning of this passage, "Born⁷²⁰⁰ not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God?"⁷²⁰¹ I shall make more use of this passage after I have confuted those who have tampered with it. They maintain that it was written thus (in the plural)⁷²⁰² "*Who were born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," as if designating those who were before mentioned as "believing in His name," in order to point out the existence of that mysterious seed of the elect and spiritual which they appropriate to themselves.⁷²⁰³ But how can this be, when all who believe in the name of the Lord are, by reason of the common principle of the human race, born of blood, and of the will of the flesh, and of man, as indeed is Valentinus himself? The expression is in the singular number, as referring to the Lord, "He was born of God." And very properly, because Christ is the Word of God, and with the Word the Spirit



⁷¹⁹⁷ John iii. 6.

⁷¹⁹⁸ John iii. 6.

⁷¹⁹⁹ [A very perspicuous statement of the Incarnation is set forth in this chapter.]

⁷²⁰⁰ Tertullian reads this in the singular number, "natus est."

⁷²⁰¹ John i. 13.

⁷²⁰² We need not say that the mass of critical authority is against Tertullian, and with his opponents, in their reading of this passage.

⁷²⁰³ He refers to the Valentinians. See our translation of this tract against them, chap. xxv., etc., p. 515, *supra*.

of God, and by the Spirit the Power of God, and whatsoever else appertains to God. As flesh, however, He is not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of man, because it was by the will of God that the Word was made flesh. To the flesh, indeed, and not to the Word, accrues the denial of the nativity which is natural to us all as men,⁷²⁰⁴ because it was as flesh that He had thus to be born, and not as the Word. Now, whilst the passage actually denies that He was born of the will of the flesh, how is it that it did not also deny (that He was born) of the substance of the flesh? For it did not disavow the substance of the flesh when it denied His being “born of blood” but only the matter of the seed, which, as all know, is the warm blood as convected by ebullition⁷²⁰⁵ into the *coagulum* of the woman’s blood. In the cheese, it is from the coagulation that the milky substance acquires that consistency,⁷²⁰⁶ which is condensed by infusing the rennet.⁷²⁰⁷ We thus understand that what is denied is the Lord’s birth after sexual intercourse (as is suggested by the phrase, “the will of man and of the flesh”), not *His nativity* from a woman’s womb. Why, too, is it insisted on with such an accumulation of emphasis that He was not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor (of the will) of man, if it were not that His flesh was such that no man could have any doubt on the point of its being born from sexual intercourse? Again, although denying His birth from such cohabitation, the passage did not deny that He was born of *real* flesh; it rather affirmed this, by the very fact that it did not deny His birth in the flesh in the same way that it denied His birth from sexual intercourse. Pray, tell me, why the Spirit of God⁷²⁰⁸ descended into a woman’s womb at all, if He did not do so for the purpose of partaking of flesh from the womb. For He could have become *spiritual* flesh⁷²⁰⁹ without such a process,—much more simply, indeed, without the womb than in it. He had no reason for enclosing Himself within one, if He was to bear forth nothing from it. Not without reason, however, did He descend into a womb. Therefore He received (flesh) therefrom; else, if He received nothing therefrom, His descent into it would have been without a reason, especially if He meant to become flesh of that sort which was not derived from a womb, that is to say, a spiritual one.⁷²¹⁰

Chapter XX.—Christ Born of a Virgin, of Her Substance. The Physiological Facts of His Real and Exact Birth of a Human Mother, as Suggested by Certain Passages of Scripture.

⁷²⁰⁴ Formalis nostræ nativitatis.

⁷²⁰⁵ Despumatione.

⁷²⁰⁶ Vis.

⁷²⁰⁷ Medicando. [This is based on Job x. 10, a favourite passage with the Fathers in expounding the generative process.]

⁷²⁰⁸ i.e., The Son of God.

⁷²⁰⁹ Which is all that the heretics assign to Him.

⁷²¹⁰ Such as Valentinus ascribed to Him. See above, c. xv. p. 511.

But to what shifts you resort, in your attempt to rob the syllable *ex* (*of*)⁷²¹¹ of its proper force as a preposition, and to substitute another for it in a sense not found throughout the Holy Scriptures! You say that He was born *through*⁷²¹² a virgin, not *of*⁷²¹³ a virgin, and *in* a womb, not *of* a womb, because the angel in the dream said to Joseph, “That which is born in her” (not of her) “is of the Holy Ghost.”⁷²¹⁴ But the fact is, if he had meant “of her,” he must have said “in her;” for that which was of her, was also in her. The angel’s expression, therefore, “in her,” has precisely the same meaning as the phrase “of her.” It is, however, a fortunate circumstance that Matthew also, when tracing down the Lord’s descent from Abraham to Mary, says, “Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, *of whom* was born Christ.”⁷²¹⁵ But Paul, too, silences these critics⁷²¹⁶ when he says, “God sent forth His Son, made of a woman.”⁷²¹⁷ Does he mean *through* a woman, or *in* a woman? Nay more, for the sake of greater emphasis, he uses the word “*made*” rather than *born*, although the use of the latter expression would have been simpler. But by saying “*made*,” he not only confirmed the statement, “The Word was made flesh,”⁷²¹⁸ but he also asserted the reality of the flesh which was made of a virgin. We shall have also the support of the Psalms on this point, not the “Psalms” indeed of Valentinus the apostate, and heretic, and Platonist, but the Psalms of David, the most illustrious saint and well-known prophet. He sings to us of Christ, and through his voice Christ indeed also sang concerning Himself. Hear, then, Christ the Lord speaking to God the Father: “Thou art He that didst draw⁷²¹⁹ me out of my mother’s womb.”⁷²²⁰ Here is the first point. “Thou art my hope from my mother’s breasts; upon Thee have I been cast from the womb.”⁷²²¹ Here is another point. “Thou art my God from my mother’s belly.”⁷²²² Here is a third point. Now let us carefully attend to the sense of these passages. “Thou didst draw me,” He says, “out of the womb.” Now what is it which is *drawn*, if it be not that which adheres, that which is firmly fastened to anything from which it is drawn in order to be sundered? If He clove not to the womb, how could He have been drawn from it? If He who clove thereto was drawn from it, how could He have adhered to it,

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7211 Indicating the *material* or *ingredient*, “out of.”
 7212 Per.
 7213 Ex.
 7214 Matt. i. 20.
 7215 Matt. i. 16.
 7216 Grammaticis.
 7217 Gal. iv. 4.
 7218 John i. 14.
 7219 Avulsisti.
 7220 Ps. xxii. 9.
 7221 Vers. 9, 10.
 7222 Ver. 10.

if it were not that, all the while He was in the womb, He was tied to it, as to His origin,⁷²²³ by the umbilical cord, which communicated growth to Him from the matrix? Even when one strange matter amalgamates with another, it becomes so entirely incorporated⁷²²⁴ with that with which it amalgamates, that when it is drawn off from it, it carries with it some part of the body from which it is torn, as if in consequence of the severance of the union and growth which the constituent pieces had communicated to each other. But what were His “mother’s breasts” which He mentions? No doubt they were those which He sucked. Midwives, and doctors, and naturalists, can tell us, from the nature of women’s breasts, whether they usually flow at any other time than when the womb is affected with pregnancy, when the veins convey therefrom the blood of the lower parts⁷²²⁵ to the *mamilla*, and in the act of transference convert the secretion into the nutritious⁷²²⁶ substance of milk. Whence it comes to pass that during the period of lactation the monthly issues are suspended. But if the Word was made flesh of Himself without any communication with a womb, no mother’s womb operating upon Him with its usual function and support, how could the lacteal fountain have been conveyed (from the womb) to the breasts, since (the womb) can only effect the change by actual possession of *the proper substance*? But it could not possibly have had blood for transformation into milk, unless it possessed the causes of blood also, that is to say, the severance (by birth)⁷²²⁷ of its own flesh *from the mother’s womb*. Now it is easy to see what was the novelty of Christ’s being born of a virgin. It was simply this, that (He was born) of a virgin in the real manner which we have indicated, in order that our regeneration might have virginal purity,—spiritually cleansed from all pollutions through Christ, who was Himself a virgin, even in the flesh, in that He was *born* of a virgin’s flesh.

Chapter XXI.—The Word of God Did Not Become Flesh Except in the Virgin’s Womb and of Her Substance. Through His Mother He is Descended from Her Great Ancestor David. He is Described Both in the Old and in the New Testament as “The Fruit of David’s Loins.”

Whereas, then, they contend that the novelty (of Christ’s birth) consisted in this, that as the Word of God became flesh without the seed of a human father, so there should be no flesh of the virgin mother (assisting in the transaction), why should not the novelty rather be confined to this, that His flesh, although not born of seed, should yet have proceeded from flesh? I should like to

⁷²²³ i.e. of His flesh.

⁷²²⁴ Concaratus et convisceratus: “united in flesh and internal structure.”

⁷²²⁵ Sentinam illam inferni sanguinis.

⁷²²⁶ Lactioem.

⁷²²⁷ Avulsionem.

go more closely into this discussion. “Behold,” says he, “a virgin shall conceive in the womb.”⁷²²⁸ *Conceive* what? I ask. The Word of God, of course, and not the seed of man, and in order, certainly, to bring forth a son. “For,” says he, “she shall bring forth a son.”⁷²²⁹ Therefore, as the act of conception was her own,⁷²³⁰ so also what she brought forth was her own, also, although the cause of conception⁷²³¹ was not. If, on the other hand, the Word became flesh of Himself, then He both conceived and brought forth Himself, and the prophecy is stultified. For in that case a virgin did *not* conceive, and did *not* bring forth; since whatever she brought forth from the conception of the Word, is not her own flesh. But is this the only statement of prophecy which will be frustrated?⁷²³² Will not the angel’s announcement also be subverted, that the virgin should “conceive in her womb and bring forth a son?”⁷²³³ And will not in fact every scripture which declares that Christ had a mother? For how could she have been His mother, unless He had been in her womb? But then He received nothing from her womb which could make her a mother in whose womb He had been.⁷²³⁴ Such a name as this⁷²³⁵ a strange flesh ought not *to assume*. No flesh can speak of a mother’s womb but that which is itself the offspring of that womb; nor can any be the offspring of the said womb if it owe its birth solely to itself. Therefore even Elisabeth must be silent although she is carrying in her womb the prophetic babe, which was already conscious of his Lord, and is, moreover, filled with the Holy Ghost.⁷²³⁶ For without reason does she say, “and whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”⁷²³⁷ If it was not as her son, but only as a stranger that Mary carried Jesus in her womb, how is it she says, “Blessed is the fruit of thy womb?”⁷²³⁸ What is this fruit of the womb, which received not its germ from the womb, which had not its root in the womb, which belongs not to her whose is the womb, and which is no doubt the real fruit of the womb—even Christ? Now, since He is the blossom of the stem which sprouts from the root of Jesse; since, moreover, the root of Jesse is the family of David, and the stem of the root is Mary descended from David, and the blossom of the stem is Mary’s son, who is called Jesus Christ, will not He also be the fruit? For the blossom is the fruit, because through the blossom and from the blossom every

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7228 Isa. vii. 14; Matt. i. 23.
 7229 See the same passages.
 7230 Ipsius.
 7231 Quod concepit: or, “what she conceived.”
 7232 Evacuabitur.
 7233 Luke i. 31.
 7234 An objection.
 7235 The rejoinder.
 7236 Luke i. 41.
 7237 Ver. 43.
 7238 Ver. 42.

product advances from its rudimental condition⁷²³⁹ to perfect fruit. What then? *They*, deny to the fruit its blossom, and to the blossom its stem, and to the stem its root; so that the root fails to secure⁷²⁴⁰ for itself, by means of the stem, that special product which comes from the stem, even the blossom and the fruit; for every step indeed in a genealogy is traced from the latest up to the first, so that it is now a well-known fact that the flesh of Christ is inseparable,⁷²⁴¹ not merely from Mary, but also from David through Mary, and from Jesse through David. “This fruit,” therefore, “of David’s loins,” that is to say, of his posterity in the flesh, God swears to him that “He will raise up to sit upon his throne.”⁷²⁴² If “of David’s loins,” how much rather is He of Mary’s loins, by virtue of whom He is in “the loins of David?”

Chapter XXII.—Holy Scripture in the New Testament, Even in Its Very First Verse, Testifies to Christ’s True Flesh. In Virtue of Which He is Incorporated in the Human Stock of David, and Abraham, and Adam.

They may, then, obliterate the testimony of the devils which proclaimed Jesus the son of David; but whatever unworthiness there be in this testimony, that of the apostles they will never be able to efface. There is, first of all, Matthew, that most faithful chronicler⁷²⁴³ of the Gospel, because the companion of the Lord; for no other reason in the world than to show us clearly the fleshly original⁷²⁴⁴ of Christ, he thus begins *his Gospel*: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”⁷²⁴⁵ With a nature issuing from such fountal sources, and an order gradually descending to the birth of Christ, what else have we here described than the very flesh of Abraham and of David conveying itself down, step after step, to the very virgin, and at last introducing Christ,—nay, producing Christ Himself of the virgin? Then, again, there is Paul, who was at once both a disciple, and a master, and a witness of the selfsame Gospel; as an apostle of the same Christ, also, he affirms that Christ “was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh,”⁷²⁴⁶—which, therefore, was His own likewise. Christ’s flesh, then, is of David’s seed. Since He is of the seed of David in consequence of Mary’s flesh, He is therefore of Mary’s flesh because of the seed of

7239 Eruditur.

7240 Quominus vindicet.

7241 Adhærere.

7242 Ps. cxxxii. 11; also Acts ii. 30.

7243 Commentator.

7244 Originis carnalis: i.e. “origin of the flesh of.”

7245 Matt. i. 1.

7246 Rom. i. 3; 2 Tim. ii. 8.

David. In what way so ever you torture the statement, He is either of the flesh of Mary because of the seed of David, or He is of the seed of David because of the flesh of Mary. The whole discussion is terminated by the same apostle, when he declares Christ to be “the seed of Abraham.” And if of Abraham, how much more, to be sure, of David, as a more recent *progenitor*! For, unfolding the promised blessing upon all nations in the person⁷²⁴⁷ of Abraham, “And in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed,” he adds, “He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”⁷²⁴⁸ When we read and believe these things, what sort of flesh ought we, and can we, acknowledge in Christ? Surely none other than Abraham’s, since Christ is “the seed of Abraham;” none other than Jesse’s, since Christ is the blossom of “the stem of Jesse;” none other than David’s, since Christ is “the fruit of David’s loins;” none other than Mary’s, since Christ came from Mary’s womb; and, higher still, none other than Adam’s, since Christ is “the second Adam.” The consequence, therefore, is that they must either maintain, that those (ancestors) had a spiritual flesh, that so there might be derived to Christ the same condition of substance, or else allow that the flesh of Christ was not a spiritual one, since it is not traced from the origin⁷²⁴⁹ of a spiritual stock.



Chapter XXIII.—Simeon’s “Sign that Should Be Contradicted,” Applied to the Heretical Gainsaying of the True Birth of Christ. One of the Heretics’ Paradoxes Turned in Support of Catholic Truth.

We acknowledge, however, that the prophetic declaration of Simeon is fulfilled, which he spoke over the recently-born Saviour:⁷²⁵⁰ “Behold, this *child* is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against.”⁷²⁵¹ The sign (here meant) is that of the birth of Christ, according to Isaiah: “Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you *a sign*: behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son.”⁷²⁵² We discover, then, what the sign is which is to be spoken against—the conception and the parturition of the Virgin Mary, concerning which these sophists⁷²⁵³ say: “She a virgin and yet not a virgin bare, and yet did not bear;” just as if such language, if indeed it must be uttered, would not be more suitable even for ourselves to use! For “she bare,” because she produced offspring of her own flesh and “yet she did not bear,” since she produced Him not from a husband’s seed; she was “a virgin,” so far as (abstinence) from a husband went, and “yet

⁷²⁴⁷ In nomine: or, “for the sake of.”

⁷²⁴⁸ Gal. iii. 8, 16.

⁷²⁴⁹ Censetur.

⁷²⁵⁰ Literally, “Lord.”

⁷²⁵¹ Luke ii. 34.

⁷²⁵² Isa. vii. 14.

⁷²⁵³ Academici isti: “this school of theirs.”

not a virgin,” as regards her bearing a child. *There is not, however, that parity of reasoning which the heretics affect: in other words* it does not follow that for the reason “she did not bear,”⁷²⁵⁴ she who was “not a virgin” was “yet a virgin,” even because she became a mother without any fruit of her own womb. But with us there is no equivocation, nothing twisted into a double sense.⁷²⁵⁵ Light is light; and darkness, darkness; yea is yea; and nay, nay; “whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”⁷²⁵⁶ She who bare (really) bare; and although she was a virgin when she conceived, she was a wife⁷²⁵⁷ when she brought forth *her son*. Now, as a wife, she was under the very law of “opening the womb,”⁷²⁵⁸ wherein it was quite immaterial whether the birth of the male was by virtue of a husband’s co-operation or not;⁷²⁵⁹ it was the same sex⁷²⁶⁰ that opened her womb. Indeed, hers is the womb on account of which it is written of others also: “Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.”⁷²⁶¹ For who is really holy but the Son of God? Who properly opened the womb but He who opened *a closed one*?⁷²⁶² But it is marriage which opens the womb in all cases. *The virgin’s womb*, therefore, was especially⁷²⁶³ opened, because it was especially closed. Indeed⁷²⁶⁴ she ought rather to be called not a virgin than a virgin, becoming a mother at a leap, as it were, before she was a wife. And what must be said more on this point? Since it was in this sense that the apostle declared that the Son of God was born not of a virgin, but “of a woman,” he in that statement recognised the condition of the “opened womb” which ensues in marriage.⁷²⁶⁵ We read in Ezekiel of “a heifer⁷²⁶⁶ which brought forth, and still did not bring forth.” Now, see whether it was not in view of your own future contentions about the womb of Mary, that even then the Holy Ghost set His mark upon you in this passage; otherwise⁷²⁶⁷ He would not, contrary to His usual

⁷²⁵⁴ i.e. “Because she produced not her son from her husband’s seed.”

⁷²⁵⁵ Defensionem.

⁷²⁵⁶ Matt. v. 37.

⁷²⁵⁷ Nupsit.

⁷²⁵⁸ Nupsit ipsa patefacti corporis lege.

⁷²⁵⁹ De vi masculi admissi an emissi.

⁷²⁶⁰ i.e. “The male.”

⁷²⁶¹ Ex. xiii. 2; Luke ii. 23.

⁷²⁶² Clausam: i.e. a virgin’s.

⁷²⁶³ Magis.

⁷²⁶⁴ Utique.

⁷²⁶⁵ Nuptialem passionem.

⁷²⁶⁶ Epiphanius (*Har.* xxx. 30) quotes from the apocryphal Ezekiel this passage: Τέξεται ἡ δάμαλις, καὶ ἐροῦσιν—οὐ τέτοκεν.

So Clem. Alex. *Stromata*, vii. Oehler.

⁷²⁶⁷ Ceterum.

simplicity of style (in this prophet), have uttered a sentence of such doubtful import, *especially* when Isaiah says, “She shall conceive and bear a son.”⁷²⁶⁸

Chapter XXIV.—Divine Strictures on Various Heretics Described in Various Passages of Prophetical Scripture. Those Who Assail the True Doctrine of the One Lord Jesus Christ, Both God and Man, Thus Condemned.

For when Isaiah hurls denunciation against our very heretics, especially in his “Woe to them that call evil good, and put darkness for light,”⁷²⁶⁹ he of course sets his mark upon those amongst you⁷²⁷⁰ who preserve not in the words they employ the light of their true significance, (by taking care) that the *soul* should mean only that which is so called, and the *flesh* simply that which is confest to our view, and *God* none other than the One who is preached.⁷²⁷¹ Having thus Marcion in his prophetic view, he says, “I am God, and there is none else; there is no God beside me.”⁷²⁷² And when in another passage he says, in like manner, “Before me there was no God,”⁷²⁷³ he strikes at those inexplicable genealogies of the Valentinian Æons. Again, there is an answer to Ebion in the Scripture: “Born,⁷²⁷⁴ not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” In like manner, in the passage, “If even an angel of heaven preach unto you any other gospel than *that which we have* preached unto you, let him be anathema,”⁷²⁷⁵ he calls attention to the artful influence of Philumene,⁷²⁷⁶ the virgin friend of Apelles. Surely he is antichrist who denies that Christ has come in the flesh.⁷²⁷⁷ By declaring that His flesh is simply and absolutely true, and taken in the plain sense of its own nature, *the Scripture* aims a blow at all who make distinctions in it.⁷²⁷⁸ In the same way, also, when it defines the very Christ to be but one, it shakes the fancies of those who exhibit a multiform Christ, who make Christ to be one being and Jesus another,—representing one as escaping out of the midst of the crowds, and the other as detained by them; one as appearing



⁷²⁶⁸ Isa. vii. 14.
⁷²⁶⁹ Isa. v. 20.
⁷²⁷⁰ Istos.
⁷²⁷¹ Prædicatur.
⁷²⁷² Isa. xlv. 5.
⁷²⁷³ Isa. xlvi. 9.
⁷²⁷⁴ John i. 13. Tertullian’s quotation is, as usual, in the singular, “*natus*.”
⁷²⁷⁵ Gal. i. 8.
⁷²⁷⁶ Comp. *de Præscr. Hæret.* c. xxx. p. 257, *supra*.
⁷²⁷⁷ 1 John iv. 3.
⁷²⁷⁸ Disceptatores ejus.

on a solitary mountain to three companions, clothed with glory in a cloud, the other as an ordinary man holding intercourse with all,⁷²⁷⁹ one as magnanimous, but the other as timid; lastly, one as suffering death, the other as risen again, by means of which event they maintain a resurrection of their own also, only in another flesh. Happily, however, He who suffered “will come again from heaven,”⁷²⁸⁰ and by all shall He be seen, who rose again from the dead. They too who crucified Him shall see and acknowledge Him; that is to say, His very flesh, against which they spent their fury, and without which it would be impossible for Himself either to exist or to be seen; so that they must blush with shame who affirm that His flesh sits in heaven void of sensation, like a sheath only, Christ being withdrawn from it; as well as those who (maintain) that His flesh and soul are just the same thing,⁷²⁸¹ or else that His soul is all that exists,⁷²⁸² but that His flesh no longer lives.

Chapter XXV.—Conclusion. This Treatise Forms a Preface to the Other Work, “On the Resurrection of the Flesh,” Proving the Reality of the Flesh Which Was Truly Born, and Died, and Rose Again.

But let this suffice on our present subject; for I think that by this time proof enough has been adduced of the flesh in Christ having both been born of the virgin, and being human in its nature. And this discussion alone might have been sufficient, without encountering the isolated opinions which have been raised from different quarters. We have, however, challenged these opinions to the test, both of the arguments which sustain them, and of the Scriptures which are appealed to, and this we have done *ex abundantia*; so that we have, by showing what the flesh of Christ was, and whence it was derived, also predetermined the question, against all objectors, of what that flesh was not. The resurrection, however, of our own flesh will have to be maintained in another little treatise, and so bring to a close this present one, which serves as a general preface, and which will pave the way *for the approaching subject* now that it is plain what kind of body that was which rose again in Christ.

Elucidations.

⁷²⁷⁹ Ceteris passivum.

⁷²⁸⁰ Acts i. 11.

⁷²⁸¹ Tantundem.

⁷²⁸² Tantummodo.

I.

(In the body of a dove, cap. iii. p. 523.)

The learned John Scott, in his invaluable work *The Christian Life*,⁷²⁸³ identifies the glory shed upon the Saviour at his baptism, with that mentioned by Ezekiel (Cap. xliii. 2) and adds: “In this same glorious splendor was Christ arrayed first at his Baptism and afterward at his Transfiguration....By the Holy Ghost’s descending *like a Dove*, it is not necessary we should understand his descending in the shape or form of a Dove, but that in some glorious form, or appearance, he descended in the same manner as a Dove descends....Came down from above just as a dove with his wings spread forth is observed to do, and lighted upon our Saviour’s head.” I quote this as the opinion of one of the most learned and orthodox of divines, but not as my own, for I cannot reconcile it, as he strives to do, with St. Luke iii. 22. Compare Justin Martyr, vol. i. p. 243, and note 6, this series. Grotius observes, says Dr. Scott, that in the apocryphal *Gospel of the Nazarenes*, it is said that at the Baptism of our Lord “a great light shone round about the place.”

II.

(His mother and His brethren, cap. vii. p. 527.)

It is not possible that the author of this chapter had ever conceived of the Blessed Virgin otherwise than as “Blessed among women,” indeed, but enjoying no especial prerogative as the mother of our Lord. He speaks of “denying her” and “putting her away” after He began His Ministry, as He requires His ministers to do, after His example. How extraordinary this language—“the repudiation of carnal relationship.” According to our author, never charged with heresy on this point, the high rewards of the holy Mary, in the world to come will be those due to her faith, not to the blessing of “her breasts and of her womb.” Christ designates those as “more blessed,” who hear His word and keep it. This the Blessed Virgin did pre-eminently, and herein was her own greater blessedness; that is, (our author shews) her crown of glory depends chiefly, like that of other saints, on her faith and works, not on her mere Maternity.

VI.

⁷²⁸³ I quote the Ed. London, 1739, Vol. V., p. 249.