

BOOK 1

Exposing Heresy

The Views of the Gnostics

SOME PEOPLE HAVE BEEN setting the truth aside in favor of myths and endless genealogies which, as the apostle says, “promote speculations rather than the divine training that is known by faith” [1 Tim 1:4]. Through their subtly concocted arguments they seduce the minds of the inexperienced and take them captive. They deal unfaithfully with the oracles of God and show that they are bad interpreters of the good word of revelation. They overthrow the faith of many by drawing them away, under a pretense of superior knowledge, from him who founded and adorned the universe, as if they had something more exalted to proclaim than the God who made heaven and earth and everything in them. . . . (1:pref,1)

Error is never set forth in its naked deformity, lest, being thus exposed, it should immediately be detected for what it is. It is craftily decked out in attractive dress, so that, by its outward form, it might appear to the inexperienced—ridiculous as the expression may seem—truer than truth itself. . . . What inexperienced person can readily detect the presence of brass when it has been mixed with silver? . . . The language of these deceivers resembles ours, but what they mean with it is very different. I have read through several works of Valentinus’ disciples and have interacted personally with some of them, and so have become familiar with their teachings. . . . I intend to set forth as well as I can, briefly and clearly, the opinions of these purveyors of heresy. (I am referring especially to the disciples of Ptolemy, whose followers constitute an offshoot of Valentinus.) I will also try, as much as my moderate abilities allow, to provide what is necessary to overthrow them, by showing how absurd and inconsistent with the truth their statements are. . . . (1:pref,2)

... They claim that their views¹ are great, wonderful, and hitherto unspeakable mysteries, which they have been called to develop. That is, in fact, precisely what they do when they find anything in the Scriptures which they can adopt and accommodate to their baseless speculations. (1:1,3)

... They tell us that their special knowledge has not been openly divulged, because all are not capable of receiving it. Rather, it has been mystically revealed by the savior through parables to those qualified to understand it. ... (1:3,1)

In the account which they all give of their “Pleroma” [“fullness”] and of the formation of the universe, they try to adapt the good words of revelation to their own evil inventions. They not only attempt, by perverse interpretations and deceitful expositions, to wring supposed proofs for their views from the writings of the evangelists and the apostles; they deal the same way with the law and the prophets, which contain many parables and allegories that can be taken in various ways, depending on the kind of exegesis used to interpret them. With great craftiness, others of these false teachers try to force various parts of Scripture to agree with the figments of their own imaginations. In this way they lead away captive from the truth those who do not retain a steadfast faith in one God, the Father Almighty, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (1:3,6)

... These false teachers have good reason not to feel inclined to teach these things in public to everyone, but only to those who are able to pay a high price for an acquaintance with these supposedly profound mysteries. For these doctrines bear no resemblance to those of which our Lord said, “You received without payment; give without payment” [Matt 10:8]. ... (1:4,3)

... These heretics deny that the savior actually took anything material to himself [in the incarnation], since—according to them—matter is incapable of salvation. Further, they hold that the consummation of all things will take place when all that is spiritual has been formed and perfected by knowledge [“gnosis”]—by which they mean spiritual people who have attained to the perfect knowledge of God and have

1. In the intervening paragraphs, Irenaeus has summarized Gnostic teaching on the thirty names and major groups of the Aeons, seen as the spiritual meaning behind the thirty years the savior lived before beginning his public ministry.

been initiated into their mysteries. These teachers claim that they and their followers are these “spiritual” people. (1:6,1)

According to these false teachers, “animal” people are instructed in animal things. “Animal” people are those who are established in their works and faith, but who do not have complete knowledge. They say that we who are members of the Church are these persons. These false teachers maintain that good works are necessary for us, because otherwise it would be impossible for us to be saved.

But as for themselves, they hold that they will surely be saved, not by their conduct, but because they are “spiritual.” For just as it is impossible that matter should partake of salvation . . . so also it is impossible that those who are spiritual—by which they mean themselves—should ever come under the power of corruption, no matter what kind of activities they indulge in. For just as gold, even if it is dropped into filth, does not lose its beauty since filth cannot damage gold, so they claim that they cannot suffer loss or damage to their “spirituality,” no matter what they do. (1:6,2)

Consequently, it is not surprising that the “most perfect” among them addict themselves without fear to all those kinds of things forbidden in Scripture, which declares that “those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” [Gal 5:21]. . . . (1:6,3)

Although they engage in many abominations and impieties, they disparage us as utterly contemptible and ignorant since from fear of God we guard against sinning even in thought or word. All the while, they exalt themselves highly, claiming they are already perfect and are the elect. . . . (1:6,4)

Some of them also maintain that . . . Christ passed through Mary as water flows through a tube . . . , and that the savior never suffered: that would have been impossible, since he was incomprehensible and invisible. So, they teach that the Spirit of Christ, who had been placed within him, was taken away when he was brought before Pilate. . . . (1:7,2)

These heretics teach that there are three kinds of people—material, animal, and spiritual—represented by Cain, Abel, and Seth. These three natures are not found in a single person; the terms refer to various kinds of people. “Material” people will certainly endure ultimate corruption. If “animal” people live well, they will eventually experience rest in an intermediate place, but if they live badly, they also will be destroyed. They

teach that the “spiritual” people . . . will ultimately be made perfect and be given as brides to the angels of the savior. . . . (1:7,5)

This system of theirs is something which the prophets did not proclaim, the Lord did not teach, and the apostles did not pass on. Nevertheless, these false teachers boast that they have a more perfect knowledge than all of them. These heretics gather their views from other sources than the Scriptures. To use a common proverb, they try to “weave ropes out of sand” when they attempt to present their peculiar notions as the meaning of the parables of the Lord, the sayings of the prophets, and the words of the apostles. They do this in order that their scheme may not seem altogether without support. But to do so, they have to disregard the order and the connections within the Scriptures, and as far as they are able, they dismember and destroy the truth. By moving passages from one place to another and inventing new meanings for them, they have adapted the oracles of the Lord to their notions and so have deceitfully deluded many people. They act like those who, when a beautiful mosaic of a king has been made by some skillful artist out of precious jewels, then dismantle that likeness and rearrange the gems into the form of a dog or a fox (and even that poorly done!). . . . Similarly, these heretics patch together old wives’ tales and then, by grossly misinterpreting the words, expressions, and parables which they find, they make the oracles of God fit what they have concocted. . . . (1:8,1)

In this way, these people deceive themselves, abusing the Scriptures to force them to support their own system of ideas. . . . (1:9,1)

The fallacy of their views is manifest. John, proclaiming one God, the Almighty, and one Jesus Christ, the only-begotten, by whom all things were made, declares that this was the Son of God, the only-begotten [John 1:18], the maker of all things [John 1:3], the true light who enlightens every person [John 1:4], the creator of the world [John. 1:10], the one who came to his own [John 1:11], the one who became flesh and dwelled among us [John 1:14]. But these people pervert these statements by their supposed exposition, to maintain that another “only-begotten” was produced, whom they style the “Arche” [“beginning”]. They also proclaim that there was another savior, and another Logos, the son of the only-begotten, and another Christ who was produced to reestablish the “Pleroma” [“fullness”]. In this way, twisting all the expressions which have been cited and misusing terms found in them, these false teachers have claimed them for their own system. The result is that, according

to these heretics, in all these terms John makes no mention of the Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

But the apostle said nothing about their speculative fancies; he spoke about our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he confesses to be the Word of God, as he makes clear. For summing up the statements he had previously made about the Word, he declared, “And the Word became flesh and lived among us” [John 1:14]. But according to the hypothesis of these false teachers, the Word did not become flesh at all. . . . (1:9,2)

Learn then, you foolish people, that the Jesus who lived among us and suffered for us is himself the Word of God. . . . If the Word of the Father who descended is the same one who also ascended [Eph 4:10]—namely, the only-begotten Son of the only God, who, according to the good pleasure of the Father, became flesh for the sake of humankind—then the apostle certainly is not speaking about someone or something else, but about our Lord Jesus Christ. According to these heretics, though, the Word did not originally become flesh. They maintain that the savior assumed an animal body, formed in a unique manner by an indescribable providence, so that it would be visible and palpable. But what God formed out of the dust at the beginning for Adam was flesh—and that is what John declared the Word of God became. . . . (1:9,3)

. . . One who holds steadfastly in his heart to the rule of truth,² which he received at baptism, will undoubtedly recognize the names, expressions, and parables taken from the Scriptures by these heretics, but he will not tolerate the blasphemous way they use them. Although he will recognize the gems, he will definitely not accept a fox’s likeness instead of the king’s. . . . (1:9,4)

But we should offer a finishing stroke to this exposition, so that anyone who follows out the farcical teaching of these heretics to the end will be able to give an argument which will overthrow it. So, we will point out, first of all, the ways the very fathers of these fables differ among themselves, as if they were inspired by different spirits of error. This fact itself forms an a priori proof that the truth proclaimed by the Church is

2. The “rule of truth” (or “rule of faith,” the designation Irenaeus uses in *On the Apostolic Preaching*) is a basic element in Irenaeus’ teaching. By it he refers to the “standard of sound teaching” (2 Tim 1:13) which he understood the Church had followed to assure faithful adherence to apostolic proclamation. He gives a rendition of it at 1:10,1, and another version at 3:4,2.

sure, and that the theories of these false teachers are only a flimsy tissue of falsehoods. (1:9,5)

The Church dispersed throughout the whole world to the ends of the earth has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and sea and all that is in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the works of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and his future manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father “to gather up all things in him” [Eph 1:10], and to resurrect the entire human race, so that to Christ Jesus, our Lord and God and savior and king, according to the will of the invisible Father, “every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess” [Phil 2:10–11] him, and that he should execute just judgment on all. At that time he will send the “spiritual forces of evil” [Eph 6:12] (the angels who rebelled and became apostate), along with the ungodly, unrighteous, wicked, and profane among humanity, into everlasting fire; but in the exercise of his grace, he will grant eternal life to the righteous and holy (those who have kept his commandments and persevered in his love, some from the beginning of their lives, but others from their repentance) and will surround them with everlasting glory. (1:10,1)

While scattered throughout the whole world, the Church has received this message and this faith and still—as if living in only one house—carefully preserves it. She believes these points of doctrine as if she had only one soul, and one and the same heart. She proclaims them, teaches them, and hands them down harmoniously, as if she had only one mouth. Although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the meaning of the tradition has remained one and the same, for the churches planted in Germany do not believe or hand down anything different than those in Spain or in Gaul or in the East or in Egypt or in Libya or in the central regions of the world.³ Just as the sun created by God is one and the same throughout the whole world, so also the

3. By this designation, Irenaeus referred to Palestine. He may have used this designation because the lands at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea were geographically “central” to the known world of his day; since those lands had been the locus of God’s redemptive work for humanity over the centuries, culminating in Jesus Christ, though, Irenaeus’ use of the designation may carry more than just geographical import.

preaching of the truth shines everywhere and enlightens all those who are willing to come to a knowledge of the truth. No leader in any of the congregations, however highly gifted in eloquence, teaches doctrines different from these (for no one is greater than the master); nor, on the other hand, does even one who is deficient in expression injure the tradition. The faith always remains one and the same: the one who is able to expound it at great length does not add anything to it, and the one who can say only a little does not thereby diminish it. (1:10,2)

It does not follow that, since people are endowed with greater or lesser degrees of intelligence, they end up changing the subject matter of the faith itself, such that someone conceives of some other God than the one who is the framer, maker, and preserver of this universe (as if he were not sufficient for them), or another Christ, or another only-begotten. It only means that one may more fully than another bring out the meaning of what has been spoken in parables and accommodate it to the general scheme of the faith; and set forth with greater clarity what God has done for human salvation; and show that God manifested longsuffering in regard to the apostasy of the angels who transgressed, as well as toward the disobedience of humanity; and set forth why it is that one and the same God made some things temporal but others eternal, some heavenly and others earthly; and understand why God, although invisible, showed himself to the various prophets in different ways [Heb 1:1]; and indicate why more than one covenant was given to humankind, and teach what the special character of each of these covenants was; and search out why “God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all” [Rom 11:32]; and gratefully describe why the Word of God became flesh and suffered; and relate why the advent of the Son of God took place in these last times (that is, in the end, rather than in the beginning, of the world); and unfold what the Scriptures teach about the end of all things and the things to come; and not be silent about how God has made the Gentiles, whose salvation was despaired of, fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers with the saints [Eph 2:19]; and discourse how it is that “this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality” [1 Cor 15:53]; and proclaim what God means when he says, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved’” [Rom 9:25; cf. Hos 2:7]; and in what sense he declares that “the children of the desolate woman are more numerous than the children of the one who is

married” [Gal 4:27; cf. Isa 54:1]. For in reference to these points, and others like them, the apostle exclaims: “O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” [Rom 11:33]. . . . The catholic Church possesses one and the same faith throughout the whole world. . . . (1:10,3)

When you have read through all this,⁴ you can enjoy a hearty laugh at the preposterous folly of these heretics! But people who promulgate such a religion, playing with letters and numbers perversely and, without any ultimate benefit, dividing and rearranging the greatness of the genuinely unspeakable power and works of God which are so striking, deserve to be mourned. All those who turn away from the Church and give heed to such old wives’ fables as these are truly self-condemned [1 Tim 4:7; Titus 3:11]. These are the people about whom Paul commands us, “after a first and second admonition, have nothing more to do with” [Titus 3:10]. John, the disciple of the Lord, has intensified their condemnation when he tells us not even to bid them welcome if they come to us, since, he says, “to welcome is to participate in the evil deeds of such a person” [2 John 11]—and that with good reason, for the Lord says, “there is no peace for the wicked” [Isa 48:22]. Beyond even the usual limits of wickedness are these heretics who dare to claim that the maker of heaven and earth, the only God Almighty, besides whom there is no God, was the product of a defect, which itself sprang from another defect—so that, according to them, he was the product of the third defect. . . . When sick people fall into delirium, the more they laugh and believe they are well, and do everything as if they were healthy or even in superior health, the sicker they show themselves to be. Similarly, while these people claim that they excel others in wisdom, their ravings show that they are fools. . . . (1:16,3)

While they affirm a wide variety of nonsense about the creation,⁵ each of them generates something new every day, according to his ability. Indeed, no one is deemed perfect among them who does not develop further prodigious fables! . . . (1:18,1)

4. In chs. 11–15 Irenaeus has rehearsed the views of a number of heretical teachers, including Valentinus, Secundus, Ptolemy, Colorbasus, Marcus, and their various followers.

5. In the intervening paragraphs, Irenaeus pointed out the Gnostics’ focus on the “four elements” (earth, water, fire, and air) argued about in ancient philosophy, reliance on the zodiac, and their fixation on numerology.

Beyond all this, they appeal to an incredible number of apocryphal and spurious writings⁶ which they themselves have forged, to bewilder the minds of foolish people and those who do not know the Scriptures of truth. . . . (1:20,1)

The “tradition” they hold about redemption focuses on the invisible and so is incomprehensible. . . . However, it is impossible to describe their teaching on this simply and in one piece, since each of them hands it down as he sees fit. Consequently, there are as many schemes of redemption among these heretics as there are teachers among them. When we turn to refuting them, we will show in its proper place that these men have been instigated by Satan to deny that baptism which is regeneration to God [Titus 3:5] and thus to renounce the whole Christian faith. (1:21,1)

. . . Since they differ so widely among themselves about doctrine and tradition,⁷ and since those of them who are recognized as most up-to-date daily endeavor to invent some new opinion and to declare something no one else has ever thought of previously, it is difficult to describe all their opinions. (1:21,5)

The rule of truth which we hold is this: there is one God Almighty, who made all things by his Word, and fashioned and formed everything that exists out of nothing. This is what Scripture teaches: “By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth” [Ps 33:6], and “All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being” [John 1:3]. No exception or exclusion is allowed here: the Father made all things by him, whether

6. By these terms, Irenaeus is pointing to the numerous books produced by various Gnostics, usually purporting to have come from one or another of the apostles. Many of these books have been lost over the centuries: with Gnostic teaching being repudiated by the Church, most of these books were destroyed, and there was little reason to keep or copy them. However, in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, a cache of Gnostic books was found. While some of these were known (at least by name) to scholars of the NT and of early Christianity, some others were not. Irenaeus subsumed them all—including, probably, others not found at Nag Hammadi—in this category of “apocryphal [i.e., “hidden”] and spurious writings.” (It should be noted that, like most of the Church fathers, Irenaeus used the Septuagint of the Old Testament, which included several books that were ultimately not accepted into the Hebrew canon. As can be seen below, Irenaeus quoted and alluded to these books—commonly denominated “Apocrypha” in Protestant circles—as Scripture. It is certain that he is not using the term here to refer to those books.)

7. In the intervening sections, Irenaeus has laid out the particulars of the various Gnostic teachers’ views on the question.

visible or invisible, objects known by the senses or by intelligence, temporal or everlasting. He did not make the everlasting things with the assistance of angels. . . . God needed no help creating: by his Word and Spirit he makes and disposes and governs all things, and commands all things into existence; he is the one who formed the world; he is the one who fashioned humankind—he is the one who is the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. There is no other God above him, nor any “initial principle,” nor “power,” nor “pleroma”: he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we will show. Diligently holding this rule of truth, we will easily demonstrate, despite the great variety and multitude of their opinions, that these heretics have deviated from the truth. . . .

Reluctant as they may be to do so, these false teachers will one day rise again in the flesh, to confess the power of him who raises them from the dead. Because of their unbelief, though, they will not be numbered among the righteous. (1:22,1)

. . . These heretics are called Simonians, after Simon Magus,⁸ the author of these impious doctrines. From them “what is falsely called knowledge” [1 Tim 6:20] received its beginning, as one may learn from their own claims. . . . (1:23,4)

. . . Saturninus set forth a father who was unknown to all, but who made angels, archangels, powers, and potentates. The world and everything in it were made by a special group of seven angels. Humanity too was the workmanship of angels. It was a shining image bursting forth below from the presence of the supreme power. When the angels could not keep it under control, because it kept soaring upwards again, they said to each other, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness” [Gen 1:26]. Accordingly, humanity was formed but was not yet able to stand erect, because the angels could not convey that ability. . . . (1:24,1)

Saturninus has also laid it down as truth that the savior had no birth, body, or shape, and that he only seemed to be a visible man. Further, Saturninus maintained that the God of the Jews was one of the angels. . . . Christ came to destroy the God of the Jews, but to save those who believe in him (that is, those who possess the spark of his life). This heretic was the first to affirm that two kinds of people were formed by the angels,

8. In the intervening sections, Irenaeus presented the views and influence of Simon Magus of Samaria, whom Christian teachers in antiquity commonly viewed as the originator of heresies (cf. Irenaeus’ comments to that effect below: 1:27,4; 3:pref).

one wicked and the other good. Since the demons assist the wicked, the savior came to destroy evil people and the demons, but to save the good. He also declares that marriage and procreation are from Satan. Many of those who belong to his school also abstain from meat and impress many people with such abstinence [1 Tim 4:3]. . . . (1:24,2)

According to Basilides, the angels who dwell in the lowest heaven—the one visible to us—formed everything in the world and apportioned it and the nations on it among themselves. The head angel is the one thought to be the God of the Jews, but since he tried to make all the other nations subject to his own people, the Jews, all the other angels resisted and opposed him. As a consequence, all the other nations hated his nation. But the father without birth and without name, perceiving that they would be destroyed, sent his own first-begotten “Nous” [“mind”], who is called Christ, to grant to all who believe in him deliverance from the power of those angels who made the world. Toward this end, he appeared on earth as a man to the nations of these powers and worked miracles, but he did not himself suffer death. Simon of Cyrene was compelled to bear the cross in his place, but Simon was transfigured by him, so that Simon was thought to be Jesus. So, through ignorance and error, Simon was crucified, while Jesus took on the appearance of Simon and, standing nearby, laughed at them. (Since he was an incorporeal power, and the Nous of the unborn father, he could transfigure himself as he pleased.) Then he ascended to him who had sent him, deriding the ones who had intended to crucify him, for they could not lay hold on him, since he was invisible to all.

The ones who know these things have been freed from the principalities who formed the world. The result of this teaching is that it is not necessary to confess him who was crucified, but rather one who came in the appearance of a man, and was thought to be crucified, and was called Jesus. . . . If anyone, therefore, he [Basilides] declares, confesses the crucified, that person is still a slave, under the power of the angels who created our bodies; but the one who denies him has been freed from these beings and has come to know the ways of the unborn father. (1:24,4)

According to the heretics, only the soul will be saved, since the body is by nature subject to corruption. . . . (1:24,5)

Another heretic, Carpocrates, and his followers maintain that the world and the things in it were created by angels greatly inferior to the unbegotten Father. They also hold that Jesus was the son of Joseph and

was just like other men—with only this difference, that, since his soul was steadfast and pure, he perfectly remembered those things which he had witnessed within the sphere of the unbegotten God. Because of this, a power descended upon him from the Father, so that through it he could escape from the creators of the world. . . . (1:25,1)

. . . Some of them have come to such a pitch of pride that they declare they are similar to Jesus. Others of them claim they are superior to his disciples, Peter and Paul and the other apostles—whom they consider equal to Jesus! . . . (1:25,2)

. . . Satan has sent forth these false teachers to dishonor the Church. When people hear what the heretics teach, they imagine that we all are like them, and so they turn away their ears from the preaching of what is truth. Or, seeing the things these false teachers practice, people speak evil of us all, even though we have no fellowship with these heretics in doctrine, morals, or daily conduct. They lead a licentious life and abuse the name of Christ as a way of concealing their wicked deeds and doctrine. For all this, “their condemnation is deserved” [Rom 3:8]: they will certainly receive fitting retribution from God. (1:25,3)

Their madness is so unbridled that they claim to have power over all that is irreligious and impious, and so are at liberty to engage in such acts. They teach that the distinction between evil and good is nothing more than human opinion. Indeed, some teach that it is necessary for souls, by transmigration from body to body, to experience every kind of life and action. . . . (1:25,4)

. . . In their writings we read . . . that Jesus privately taught mysteries to his disciples and apostles, and that they asked and received permission to hand down the things thus taught them to others who would be found worthy and believing. . . . (1:25,5)

. . . Another heretic, Cerinthus, taught that Jesus was not born of a virgin, but was the son of Joseph and Mary according to the ordinary course of human generation. Even so, Jesus was more righteous, prudent, and wise than other people. After his baptism Christ descended upon him in the form of a dove from the Supreme Ruler. Then Jesus began to proclaim the unknown Father and to perform miracles. But later Christ departed from Jesus, and then Jesus suffered and rose again—while Christ remained impassible, since he was a spiritual being. (1:26,1)

Marcion of Pontus . . . advanced the most daring blasphemy against the one who is proclaimed as God by the law and the prophets, declar-

ing that he is the author of evil, delights in war, is inconstant, and even is contrary to himself. . . . Besides this, he mutilates the Gospel of Luke, removing all that is written in it about the generation of the Lord and deleting many passages in the teaching of the Lord in which he clearly confesses that the maker of this universe is his Father.

Marcion likewise persuaded his disciples that he himself was worthier to be believed than the apostles who have handed down the gospel to us, although Marcion only provided them with a fragment of the gospel. He similarly dismembered the letters of Paul, removing all the passages in which the apostle clearly spoke of the God who made the world as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as those passages from the prophets which the apostle quotes to show that they announced beforehand the coming of the Lord. (1:27,2)

He teaches that salvation will only be attained by those souls who have learned his doctrine. The body, though, since it was taken from the earth, cannot share in salvation. . . . (1:27,3)

This man is the only one who has dared openly to mutilate the Scriptures. . . . But all those who corrupt the truth in any way and damage the preaching of the Church are the disciples and successors of Simon Magus of Samaria. . . . To be sure, they put forth the name of Christ Jesus as a lure, but in various ways they introduce the blasphemies of Simon. In this way they destroy multitudes. . . . (1:27,4)

Many heretical branches have already developed out of those heretics we have described. This happens because many of them—we might even say all—want to be teachers on their own, and to branch off from the particular heresy in which they have been involved. . . . They insist upon teaching something new. . . . (1:28,1)

. . . We should pity those who, embracing these miserable and baseless fables, have reached such a pitch of arrogance that they count themselves superior to everyone else because of this knowledge—or, as it should rather be called, ignorance. They have now been fully exposed; to set forth their teachings is enough to win a victory over them. (1:31,3)

. . . Not many words will be needed to overturn their system of doctrine, now that it has been made manifest to all. . . . (1:31,4)