

Epistle 73 to Jubaianus (on the baptism of heretics)

Cyprian of Carthage

Early Church (pre-Nicene) · Ante-Nicene · Letter

STROMATA 268

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INTRODUCTION

Written during the mid-third-century controversy over whether converts baptized by heretics needed true baptism on entering the Church, this letter sets out Cyprian's firm answer: outside the Church there is no valid baptism to recognize. Addressed to a fellow bishop who had asked his view, it lays down the principle that would set Carthage at odds with Rome and echo through later debates on the sacraments. Cyprian writes as a pastor and a bishop conscious of defending the Church's unity. The reading is closely reasoned ecclesial argument, courteous but immovable.

Epistle 72

To Jubaianus, Concerning the Baptism of Heretics.

Argument.— Cyprian Refutes a Letter Enclosed to Him by Jubaianus, and with the Greatest Care Collects Whatever He Thinks Will Avail for the Defence of His Cause. Moreover, He Sends Jubaianus a Copy of the Letter to the Numidians and to Quintus, and Probably the Decrees of the Last Synod._

1\ Cyprian to Jubaianus his brother, greeting. You have written to me, dearest brother, wishing that the impression of my mind should be signified to you, as to what I think concerning the baptism of heretics; who, placed without, and established outside the Church, arrogate to themselves a matter neither within their right nor their power. This baptism we cannot consider as valid or legitimate, since it is manifestly unlawful among them; and since we have already expressed in our letters what we thought on this matter, I have, as a compendious method, sent you a copy of the same letters, what we decided in council when very many of us were present, and what, moreover, I subsequently wrote back to Quintus, our colleague, when he asked about the same thing. And now also, when we had met together, bishops as well of the province of Africa as of Numidia, to the number of seventy-one, we established this same matter once more by our judgment, deciding that there is one baptism which is appointed in the Catholic Church; and that by this those are not re-baptized, but baptized by us, who at any time come from the adulterous and unhallowed water to be washed and sanctified by the truth of the saving water.

2\ Nor does what you have described in your letters disturb us, dearest brother, that the Novatians re-baptize those whom they entice from us, since it does not in any wise matter to us what the enemies of the Church do, so long as we ourselves hold a regard for our power, and the steadfastness of reason and truth. For Novatian, after the manner of apes — which, although they are not men, yet imitate human doings — wishes to claim to himself the authority and truth of the Catholic Church, while he himself is not in the Church; nay, moreover, has stood forth hitherto as a rebel and enemy against the Church. For, knowing that there is one baptism, he arrogates to himself this one, so that he may say that the Church is with him, and make us heretics. But we who hold the head and root of the one Church know, and trust for certain, that nothing is lawful there outside the Church, and that the baptism which is one is among us, where he himself also was formerly baptized, when he maintained both the wisdom and truth of the divine unity. But if Novatian thinks that those who have been baptized in the Church are to be re-baptized outside — without the Church— he ought to begin by himself, that he might first be re-baptized with an extraneous and heretical baptism, since he thinks that after the Church, yea, and contrary to the Church, people are to be baptized without. But what sort of a thing is this, that, because Novatian dares to do this thing, we are to think that we must not do it! What then? Because Novatian also usurps the honour of the priestly throne, ought we therefore to renounce our throne? Or because Novatian endeavours wrongfully to set up an altar and to offer sacrifices, does it behoove us to cease from our altar and sacrifices, lest we should appear to be celebrating the same or like things with him? Utterly vain and foolish is it, that because Novatian arrogates to himself outside the Church the image of the truth, we should forsake the truth of the Church.

3\ But among us it is no new or sudden thing for us to judge that those are to be baptized who come to the Church from among the heretics, since it is now many years and a long time ago, that, under Agrippinus— a man of worthy memory — very many bishops assembling together have decided this; and thenceforward until the present day, so many thousands of heretics in our provinces have been converted to the Church, and have neither despised nor delayed, nay, they have both reasonably and gladly embraced, the opportunity to attain the grace of the life-giving layer and of saving baptism. For it is not difficult for a teacher to insinuate true and lawful things into his mind, who, having condemned heretical pravity, and discovered the truth of the Church, comes for this purpose, that he may learn, and learns for the purpose that he may live. We ought not to increase the stolidity of heretics by the patronage of our consent, when they gladly and readily obey the truth.

4\ Certainly, since I found in the letter the copy of which you transmitted to me, that it was written, That it should not be asked who baptized, since he who is baptized might receive remission of sins according to what he believed, I thought that this topic was not to be passed by, especially since I observed in the same epistle that mention was also made of Marcion, saying that even those that came from him did not need to be baptized, because they seemed to have been already baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Therefore we ought to consider their faith who believe without, whether in respect of the same faith they can obtain any grace. For if we and heretics have one faith, we may also have one grace. If the Patripassians, Anthropians, Valentinians, Apelletians, Ophites, Marcionites, and other pests, and swords, and poisons of heretics for subverting the truth, confess the same Father, the same Son, the same Holy Ghost, the same Church with us, they may also have one baptism if they have also one faith.

5\ And lest it should be wearisome to go through all the heresies, and to enumerate either the follies or the madness of each of them, because it is no pleasure to speak of that which one either dreads or is ashamed to know, let us examine in the meantime about Marcion alone, the mention of whom has been made in the letter transmitted by you to us, whether the ground of his baptism can be made good. For the Lord after His resurrection, sending His disciples, instructed and taught them in what manner they ought to baptize, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. He suggests the Trinity, in whose sacrament the nations were to be baptized. Does Marcion then maintain the Trinity? Does he then assert the same Father, the Creator, as we do? Does he know the same Son, Christ born of the Virgin Mary, who as the Word was made flesh, who bare our sins, who conquered death by dying, who by Himself first of all originated the resurrection of the flesh, and showed to His disciples that He had risen in the same flesh? Widely different is the faith with Marcion, and, moreover, with the other heretics nay, with them there is nothing but perfidy, and blasphemy, and contention, which is hostile to holiness and truth. How then can one who is baptized among them seem to have obtained remission of sins, and the grace of the divine mercy, by his faith, when he has not the truth of the faith itself? For if, as some suppose, one could receive anything abroad out of the Church according to his faith, certainly he has received what he believed; but if he believes what is false, he could not receive what is true; but rather he has received things adulterous and profane, according to what he believed.

6\ This matter of profane and adulterous baptism Jeremiah the prophet plainly rebukes, saying, Why do they who afflict me prevail? My wound is hard; whence shall I be healed? While it has indeed become unto me as deceitful water which has no faithfulness. The Holy Spirit makes mention by the prophet of deceitful water which has no faithfulness. What is this deceitful and faithless water? Certainly that which falsely assumes the resemblance of baptism, and frustrates the grace of faith by a shadowy pretence. But if, according to a perverted faith, one could be baptized without, and obtain remission of sins, according to the same faith he could also attain the Holy Spirit; and there is no need that hands should be laid on him when he comes, that he might obtain the Holy Ghost, and be sealed. Either he could obtain both privileges without by his faith, or he who has been without has received neither.

7\ But it is manifest where and by whom remission of sins can be given; to wit, that which is given in baptism. For first of all the Lord gave that power to Peter, upon whom He built the Church, and whence He appointed and showed the source of unity — the power, namely, that whatsoever he loosed on earth should be loosed in heaven. And after the resurrection, also, He speaks to the apostles, saying, As the Father has sent me, even so I send you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and says, unto them, Receive the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins you retain, they are retained. Whence we perceive that only they who are set over the Church and established in the Gospel law, and in the ordinance of the Lord, are allowed to baptize and to give remission of sins; but that without, nothing can either be bound or loosed, where there is none who can either bind or loose anything.

8\ Nor do we propose this, dearest brother, without the authority of divine Scripture, when we say that all things are arranged by divine direction by a certain law and by special ordinance, and that none can usurp to himself, in opposition to the bishops and priests, anything which is not of his own right and

power. For Korah, Dathan, and Abiram endeavoured to usurp, in opposition to Moses and Aaron the priest, the power of sacrificing; and they did not do without punishment what they unlawfully dared. The sons of Aaron also, who placed strange fire upon the altar, were at once consumed in the sight of an angry Lord; which punishment remains to those who introduce strange water by a false baptism, that the divine vengeance may avenge and chastise when heretics do that in opposition to the Church, which the Church alone is allowed to do.

9\.. But in respect of the assertion of some concerning those who had been baptized in Samaria, that when the Apostles Peter and John came, only hands were imposed on them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost, yet that they were not re-baptized; we see that that place does not, dearest brother, touch the present case. For they who had believed in Samaria had believed with a true faith; and within, in the Church which is one, and to which alone it is granted to bestow the grace of baptism and to remit sins, had been baptized by Philip the deacon, whom the same apostles had sent. And therefore, because they had obtained a legitimate and ecclesiastical baptism, there was no need that they should be baptized any more, but only that which was needed was performed by Peter and John; viz., that prayer being made for them, and hands being imposed, the Holy Spirit should be invoked and poured out upon them, which now too is done among us, so that they who are baptized in the Church are brought to the prelates of the Church, and by our prayers and by the imposition of hands obtain the Holy Spirit, and are perfected with the Lord's seal.

10\ There is no ground, therefore, dearest brother, for thinking that we should give way to heretics so far as to contemplate the betrayal to them of that baptism, which is only granted to the one and only Church. It is a good soldier's duty to defend the camp of his general against rebels and enemies. It is the duty of an illustrious leader to keep the standards entrusted to him. It is written, The Lord your God is a jealous God. Deuteronomy 4:24 We who have received the Spirit of God ought to have a jealousy for the divine faith; with such a jealousy as that wherewith Phineas both pleased God and justly allayed His wrath when He was angry, and the people were perishing. Why do we receive as allowed an adulterous and alien church, a foe to the divine unity, when we know only one Christ and His one Church? The Church, setting forth the likeness of paradise, includes within her walls fruit-bearing trees, whereof that which does not bring forth good fruit is cut off and is cast into the fire. These trees she waters with four rivers, that is, with the four Gospels, wherewith, by a celestial inundation, she bestows the grace of saving baptism. Can any one water from the Church's fountains who is not within the Church? Can one impart those wholesome and saving draughts of paradise to any one if he is perverted, and of himself condemned, and banished outside the fountains of paradise, and has dried up and failed with the dryness of an eternal thirst?

11\ The Lord cries aloud, that whosoever thirsts should come and drink of the rivers of living water that flowed out of His bosom. Whither is he to come who thirsts? Shall he come to the heretics, where there is no fountain and river of living water at all; or to the Church which is one, and is founded upon one who has received the keys of it by the Lord's voice? It is she who holds and possesses alone all the power of her spouse and Lord. In her we preside; for her honour and unity we fight; her grace, as well as her glory, we defend with faithful devotedness. We by the divine permission water the thirsting people of God; we guard the boundaries of the living fountains. If, therefore, we hold the right of our possession, if we acknowledge the sacrament of unity, wherefore are we esteemed prevaricators against truth? Wherefore are we judged betrayers of unity? The faithful, and saving, and holy water of the Church cannot be corrupted and adulterated, as the Church herself also is uncorrupted, and chaste, and modest. If heretics are devoted to the Church and established in the Church, they may use both her baptism and her other saving benefits. But if they are not in the Church, nay more, if they act against the Church, how can they baptize with the Church's baptism?

12\ For it is no small and insignificant matter, which is conceded to heretics, when their baptism is recognised by us; since thence springs the whole origin of faith and the saving access to the hope of life eternal, and the divine condescension for purifying and quickening the servants of God. For if any one could be baptized among heretics, certainly he could also obtain remission of sins. If he attained remission of sins, he was also sanctified. If he was sanctified, he also was made the temple of God. I ask, of what God? If of the Creator; he could not be, because he has not believed in Him. If of Christ; he could not become His temple, since he denies that Christ is God. If of the Holy Spirit; since the three are one, how can the Holy Spirit be at peace with him who is the enemy either of the Son or of the Father?

13\ Hence it is in vain that some who are overcome by reason oppose to us custom, as if custom were greater than truth; or as if that were not to be sought after in spiritual matters which has been revealed as the better by the Holy Spirit. For one who errs by simplicity may be pardoned, as the blessed Apostle

Paul says of himself, I who at first was a blasphemmer, and a persecutor, and injurious; yet obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly. 1 Timothy 1:13 But after inspiration and revelation made to him, he who intelligently and knowingly perseveres in that course in which he had erred, sins without pardon for his ignorance. For he resists with a certain presumption and obstinacy, when he is overcome by reason. Nor let any one say, We follow that which we have received from the apostles, when the apostles only delivered one Church, and one baptism, which is not ordained except in the same Church. And we cannot find that any one, when he had been baptized by heretics, was received by the apostles in the same baptism, and communicated in such a way as that the apostles should appear to have approved the baptism of heretics.

14\ For as to what some say, as if it tended to favour heretics, that the Apostle Paul declared, Only every way, whether in pretence or in truth, let Christ be preached, Philippians 1:18 we find that this also can avail nothing to their benefit who support and applaud heretics. For Paul, in his epistle, was not speaking of heretics, nor of their baptism, so that anything can be shown to have been alleged which pertained to this matter. He was speaking of brethren, whether as walking disorderly and against the discipline of the Church, or as keeping the truth of the Gospel with the fear of God. And he said that certain of them spoke the word of God with constancy and courage, but some acted in envy and dissension; that some maintained towards him a benevolent love, but that some indulged a malevolent spirit of dissension; but yet that he bore all patiently, so long only as, whether in truth or in pretence, the name of Christ which Paul preached might come to the knowledge of many; and the sowing of the word, which as yet had been new and irregular, might increase through the preaching of the speakers. Besides, it is one thing for those who are within the Church to speak concerning the name of Christ; it is another for those who are without, and act in opposition to the Church, to baptize in the name of Christ. Wherefore, let not those who favour heretics put forward what Paul spoke concerning brethren, but let them show if he thought anything was to be conceded to the heretic, or if he approved of their faith or baptism, or if he appointed that perfidious and blasphemous men could receive remission of their sins outside the Church.

15\ But if we consider what the apostles thought about heretics, we shall find that they, in all their epistles, execrated and detested the sacrilegious wickedness of heretics. For when they say that their word creeps as a canker, 2 Timothy 2:17 how is such a word as that able to give remission of sins, which creeps like a canker to the ears of the hearers? And when they say that there can be no fellowship between righteousness and un-righteousness, no communion between light and darkness, 2 Corinthians 6:14 how can either darkness illuminate, or unrighteousness justify? And when they say that they are not of God, but are of the spirit of Antichrist, 1 John 4:3 how can they transact spiritual and divine matters, who are the enemies of God, and whose hearts the spirit of Antichrist has possessed? Wherefore, if, laying aside the errors of human dispute, we return with a sincere and religious faith to the evangelical authority and to the apostolic tradition, we shall perceive that they may do nothing towards conferring the ecclesiastical and saving grace, who, scattering and attacking the Church of Christ, are called adversaries by Christ Himself, but by His apostles, Antichrists.

16\ Again, there is no ground for any one, for the circumvention of Christian truth, opposing to us the name of Christ, and saying, All who are baptized everywhere, and in any manner, in the name of Jesus

Christ, have obtained the grace of baptism,— when Christ Himself speaks, and says, Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 7:21, And again, He forewarns and instructs, that no one should be easily deceived by false prophets and false Christs in His name. Many, He says, shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many. And afterwards He added: But take heed; behold, I have foretold you all things. Matthew 24:5, 25 Whence it appears that all things are not at once to be received and assumed which are boasted of in the name of Christ, but only those things which are done in the truth of Christ.

17\.. For whereas in the Gospels, and in the epistles of the apostles, the name of Christ is alleged for the remission of sins; it is not in such a way as that the Son alone, without the Father, or against the Father, can be of advantage to anybody; but that it might be shown to the Jews, who boasted as to their having the Father, that the Father would profit them nothing, unless they believed on the Son whom He had sent. For they who know God the Father the Creator, ought also to know Christ the Son, lest they should flatter and applaud themselves about the Father alone, without the acknowledgment of His Son, who also said, No man comes to the Father but by me. John 14:6 But He, the same, sets forth, that it is the knowledge of the two which saves, when He says, And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. John 17:3 Since, therefore, from the preaching and testimony of Christ Himself, the Father who sent must be first known, then afterwards Christ, who was sent, and there cannot be a hope of salvation except by knowing the two together; how, when God the Father is not known, nay, is even blasphemed, can they who among the heretics are said to be baptized in the name of Christ, be judged to have obtained the remission of sins? For the case of the Jews under the apostles was one, but the condition of the Gentiles is another. The former, because they had already gained the most ancient baptism of the law and Moses, were to be baptized also in the name of Jesus Christ, in conformity with what Peter tells them in the Acts of the Apostles, saying, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For this promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. Acts 2:38-39 Peter makes mention of Jesus Christ, not as though the Father should be omitted, but that the Son also might be joined to the Father.

18\ Finally, when, after the resurrection, the apostles are sent by the Lord to the heathens, they are bidden to baptize the Gentiles in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. How, then, do some say, that a Gentile baptized without, outside the Church, yea, and in opposition to the Church, so that it be only in the name of Jesus Christ, everywhere, and in whatever manner, can obtain remission of sin, when Christ Himself commands the heathen to be baptized in the full and united Trinity? Unless while one who denies Christ is denied by Christ, he who denies His Father whom Christ Himself confessed is not denied; and he who blasphemes against Him whom Christ called His Lord and His God, is rewarded by Christ, and obtains remission of sins, and the sanctification of baptism! But by what power can he who denies God the Creator, the Father of Christ, obtain, in baptism, the remission of sins, since Christ received that very power by which we are baptized and sanctified, from the same Father, whom He called greater than Himself, by whom He desired to be glorified, whose will He fulfilled even unto the obedience of drinking the cup, and of undergoing death? What else is it then, than to become a partaker with blaspheming heretics, to wish to maintain and assert, that one who blasphemes and gravely sins against the Father and the Lord and God of Christ, can receive remission of sins in the name of Christ? What, moreover, is that, and of what kind is it, that he who denies the Son of God has not the Father, and he who denies the Father should be thought to have the Son, although the Son Himself testifies, and says, No man can come unto me except it were given unto him of my Father? John 6:65 So that it is evident, that no remission of sins can be received in baptism from the Son, which it is not plain that the Father has granted. Especially, since He further repeats, and says, Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up. Matthew 15:13

19\ But if Christ's disciples are unwilling to learn from Christ what veneration and honour is due to the name of the Father, still let them learn from earthly and secular examples, and know that Christ has declared, not without the strongest rebuke, The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. Luke 16:8 In this world of ours, if any one have offered an insult to the father of any; if in injury and frowardness he have wounded his reputation and his honour by a malevolent tongue, the son is indignant, and wrathful, and with what means he can, strives to avenge his injured father's wrong. Think you that Christ grants impunity to the impious and profane, and the blasphemers of His Father, and that He puts away their sins in baptism, who it is evident, when baptized, still heap up evil words on the person of the Father, and sin with the unceasing wickedness of a blaspheming tongue? Can a Christian, can a servant of God, either conceive this in his mind, or believe it in faith, or put it forward in discourse? And what will become of the precepts of the divine law, which say, Honour your father and your mother? Exodus 20:12 If the name of father, which in man is commanded to be honoured, is violated with impunity in God, what will become of what Christ Himself lays down in the Gospel, and says, He that curses father or mother, let him die the death; Matthew 15:4 if He who bids that those who curse their parents after the flesh should be punished and slain, Himself quickens those who revile their heavenly and spiritual Father, and are hostile to the Church, their Mother? An execrable and detestable thing is actually asserted by some, that He who threatens the man who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, that he shall be guilty of eternal sin, Himself condescends to sanctify those who blaspheme against God the Father with saving baptism. And now, those who think that they must communicate with such as come to the Church without baptism, do not consider that they are

becoming partakers with other men's, yea, with eternal sins, when they admit without baptism those who cannot, except in baptism, put off the sins of their blasphemies.

20\.. Besides, how vain and perverse a thing it is, that when the heretics themselves, having repudiated and forsaken either the error or the wickedness in which they had previously been, acknowledge the truth of the Church, we should mutilate the rights and sacrament of that same truth, and say to those who come to us and repent, that they had obtained remission of sins when they confess that they have sinned, and are for that reason come to seek the pardon of the Church! Wherefore, dearest brother, we ought both firmly to maintain the faith and truth of the Catholic Church, and to teach, and by all the evangelical and apostolic precepts to set forth, the plan of the divine dispensation and unity.

21\.. Can the power of baptism be greater or of more avail than confession, than suffering, when one confesses Christ before men and is baptized in his own blood? And yet even this baptism does not benefit a heretic, although he has confessed Christ, and been put to death outside the Church, unless the patrons and advocates of heretics declare that the heretics who are slain in a false confession of Christ are martyrs, and assign to them the glory and the crown of martyrdom contrary to the testimony of the apostle, who says that it will profit them nothing although they were burnt and slain. 1 Corinthians 13:3 But if not even the baptism of a public confession and blood can profit a heretic to salvation, because there is no salvation out of the Church, how much less shall it be of advantage to him, if in a hiding-place and a cave of robbers, stained with the contagion of adulterous water, he has not only not put off his old sins, but rather heaped up still newer and greater ones! Wherefore baptism cannot be common to us and to heretics, to whom neither God the Father, nor Christ the Son, nor the Holy Ghost, nor the faith, nor the Church itself, is common. And therefore it behooves those to be baptized who come from heresy to the Church, that so they who are prepared, in the lawful, and true, and only baptism of the holy Church, by divine regeneration, for the kingdom of God, may be born of both sacraments, because it is written, Unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

22\ On which place some, as if by human reasoning they were able to make void the truth of the Gospel declaration, object to us the case of catechumens; asking if any one of these, before he is baptized in the Church, should be apprehended and slain on confession of the name, whether he would lose the hope of salvation and the reward of confession, because he had not previously been born again of water? Let men of this kind, who are aiders and favourers of heretics, know therefore, first, that those catechumens hold the sound faith and truth of the Church, and advance from the divine camp to do battle with the devil, with a full and sincere acknowledgment of God the Father, and of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost; then, that they certainly are not deprived of the sacrament of baptism who are baptized with the most glorious and greatest baptism of blood, concerning which the Lord also said, that He had another baptism to be baptized with. But the same Lord declares in the Gospel, that those who are baptized in their own blood, and sanctified by suffering, are perfected, and obtain the grace of the divine promise, when He speaks to the thief believing and confessing in His very passion, and promises that he should be with Himself in paradise. Wherefore we who are set over the faith and truth ought not to deceive and mislead those who come to the faith and truth, and repent, and beg that their sins should be remitted to them; but to instruct them when corrected by us, and reformed for the kingdom of heaven by celestial discipline.

23\ But some one says, What, then, shall become of those who in past times, coming from heresy to the Church, were received without baptism? The Lord is able by His mercy to give indulgence, and not to separate from the gifts of His Church those who by simplicity were admitted into the Church, and in the Church have fallen asleep. Nevertheless it does not follow that, because there was error at one time, there must always be error; since it is more fitting for wise and God-fearing men, gladly and without delay to obey the truth when laid open and perceived, than pertinaciously and obstinately to struggle against brethren and fellow priests on behalf of heretics.

24\ Nor let any one think that, because baptism is proposed to them, heretics will be kept back from coming to the Church, as if offended at the name of a second baptism; nay, but on this very account they are rather driven to the necessity of coming by the testimony of truth shown and proved to them. For if they shall see that it is determined and decreed by our judgment and sentence, that the baptism wherewith they are there baptized is considered just and legitimate, they will think that they are justly and legitimately in possession of the Church also, and the other gifts of the Church; nor will there be any reason for their coming to us, when, as they have baptism, they seem also to have the rest. But further, when they know that there is no baptism without, and that no remission of sins can be given outside the Church, they more eagerly and readily hasten to us, and implore the gifts and benefits of the Church our Mother, assured that they can in no wise attain to the true promise of divine grace unless they first come to the truth of the Church. Nor will heretics refuse to be baptized among us with the lawful and true baptism of the Church, when they shall have learned from us that they also were baptized by Paul, who already had been baptized with the baptism of John, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles.

25\ And now by certain of us the baptism of heretics is asserted to occupy the (like) ground, and, as if by a certain dislike of re-baptizing, it is counted unlawful to baptize after God's enemies. _And this_, although we find that they were baptized whom John had baptized: John, esteemed the greatest among the prophets; John, filled with divine grace even in his mother's womb; who was sustained with the

spirit and power of Elias; who was not an adversary of the Lord, but His precursor and announcer; who not only foretold our Lord in words, but even showed Him to the eyes; who baptized Christ Himself by whom others are baptized. But if on that account a heretic could obtain the right of baptism, because he first baptized, then baptism will not belong to the person that has it, but to the person that seizes it. And since baptism and the Church can by no means be separated from one another, and divided, he who has first been able to lay hold on baptism has equally also laid hold on the Church; and you begin to appear to him as a heretic, when you being anticipated, have begun to be last, and by yielding and giving way have relinquished the right which you had received. But how dangerous it is in divine matters, that any one should depart from his right and power, Holy Scripture declares when, in Genesis, Esau thence lost his birthright, nor was able afterwards to regain that which he had once given up.

26\ These things, dearest brother, I have briefly written to you, according to my abilities, prescribing to none, and prejudging none, so as to prevent any one of the bishops doing what he thinks well, and having the free exercise of his judgment. We, as far as in us lies, do not contend on behalf of heretics with our colleagues and fellow bishops, with whom we maintain a divine concord and the peace of the Lord; especially since the apostle says, If any man, however, is thought to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the Church of God. Charity of spirit, the honour of our college, the bond of faith, and priestly concord, are maintained by us with patience and gentleness. For this reason, moreover, we have with the best of our poor abilities, with the permission and inspiration of the Lord, written a treatise on the Benefit of Patience, which for the sake of our mutual love we have transmitted to you. I bid you, dearest brother, ever heartily farewell.

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