

On Christian Doctrine, Book III

Augustine of Hippo

Patristic · Nicene & Post-Nicene · Treatise

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INTRODUCTION

Arriving at the third book of a four-book handbook on reading Scripture, the reader meets Augustine at his most practical: having laid out in the earlier books what the interpreter must know and become, he turns here to the actual work of untangling ambiguous passages — where to place a comma, when a phrase is figurative, how the rule of faith constrains a reading. Written by a bishop who had spent years preaching to congregations who heard rather than read their Bibles, the book treats punctuation, idiom, and figure as pastoral matters, not merely grammatical ones. Its account of literal and figurative signs would shape medieval exegesis for a thousand years and remains the seedbed from which the fourfold sense of Scripture grew. Expect close, patient instruction — a manual to be worked through with a Bible open beside it, not read straight through.

On Christian Doctrine (Book III)

Chapter 1. Summary of the Foregoing Books, and Scope of that Which Follows.

I. The man who fears God seeks diligently in Holy Scripture for a knowledge of His will. And when he has become meek through piety, so as to have no love of strife; when furnished also with a knowledge of languages, so as not to be stopped by unknown words and forms of speech, and with the knowledge of certain necessary objects, so as not to be ignorant of the force and nature of those which are used figuratively; and assisted, besides, by accuracy in the texts, which has been secured by skill and care in the matter of correction — when thus prepared, let him proceed to the examination and solution of the ambiguities of Scripture. And that he may not be led astray by ambiguous signs, so far as I can give him instruction (it may happen, however, that either from the greatness of his intellect, or the greater clearness of the light he enjoys, he shall laugh at the methods I am going to point out as childish) — but yet, as I was going to say, so far as I can give instruction, let him who is in such a state of mind that he can be instructed by me know, that the ambiguity of Scripture lies either in proper words or in metaphorical, classes which I have already described in the second book.

Chapter 2.— Rule for Removing Ambiguity by Attending to Punctuation.

2\ But when proper words make Scripture ambiguous, we must see in the first place that there is nothing wrong in our punctuation or pronunciation. Accordingly, if, when attention is given to the passage, it shall appear to be uncertain in what way it ought to be punctuated or pronounced, let the reader consult the rule of faith which he has gathered from the plainer passages of Scripture, and from the authority of the Church, and of which I treated at sufficient length when I was speaking in the first book about things. But if both readings, or all of them (if there are more than two), give a meaning in harmony with the faith, it remains to consult the context, both what goes before and what comes after, to see which interpretation, out of many that offer themselves, it pronounces for and permits to be dovetailed into itself.

3\ Now look at some examples. The heretical pointing, John 1:1-2 *_In principio erat verbum, et verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat_*, so as to make the next sentence run, *_Verbum hoc erat in principio apud Deum_*, arises out of unwillingness to confess that the Word was God. But this must be rejected by the rule of faith, which, in reference to the equality of the Trinity, directs us to say: *_et Deus erat verbum_*; and then to add: *_hoc erat in principio apud Deum_*.

4\ But the following ambiguity of punctuation does not go against the faith in either way you take it, and therefore must be decided from the context. It is where the apostle says: What I shall choose I know not: for I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. Philippians 1:22-24 Now it is uncertain whether we should read, *_ex duobus concupiscentiam habens_* \[having a desire for two things\], or *_compellor autem ex duobus_* \[I am in a strait between two\]; and so to add: *_concupiscentiam habens dissolvi, et esse cum Christo_* \[having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ\]. But since there follows *_multo enim magis optimum_* \[for it is far better\], it is evident that he says he has a desire for that which is better; so that, while he is in a strait between two, yet he has a desire for one and sees a necessity for the other; a desire, viz., to be with Christ, and a necessity to remain in the flesh. Now this ambiguity is resolved by one word that follows, which is translated *_enim_* \[for\]; and the translators who have omitted this particle have preferred the interpretation which makes the apostle seem not only in a strait between two, but also to have a desire for two. We must therefore punctuate the sentence thus: *_et quid eligam ignoro: compellor autem ex duobus_* \[what I shall choose I know not: for I am in a strait between two\]; and after this point follows: *_concupiscentiam habens dissolvi, et esse cum Christo_* \[having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ\]. And, as if he were asked why he has a desire for this in preference to the other, he adds: *_multo enim magis optimum_* \[for it is far better\]. Why, then, is he in a strait between the two? Because there is a need for his remaining, which he adds in these terms: *_manere in carne necessarium propter vos_* \[nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you\].

5\ Where, however, the ambiguity cannot be cleared up, either by the rule of faith or by the context, there is nothing to hinder us to point the sentence according to any method we choose of those that suggest themselves. As is the case in that passage to the Corinthians: Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Receive us; we have wronged no man. 2 Corinthians 7:1-2 It is doubtful whether we should read, *_mundemus nos ab omni coinquinatione carnis et spiritus_* \[let us cleanse ourselves from

all filthiness of the flesh and spirit\], in accordance with the passage, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit, 1 Corinthians 7:34 or, *_mundemus nos ab omni coinquinatione carnis_* \[let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh\], so as to make the next sentence, *_et spiritus perficientes sanctificationem in timore Dei capite nos_* \[and perfecting holiness of spirit in the fear of God, receive us\]. Such ambiguities of punctuation, therefore, are left to the reader's discretion.

Chapter 3.— How Pronunciation Serves to Remove Ambiguity. Different Kinds of Interrogation.

6\.. And all the directions that I have given about ambiguous punctuations are to be observed likewise in the case of doubtful pronunciations. For these too, unless the fault lies in the carelessness of the reader, are corrected either by the rule of faith, or by a reference to the preceding or succeeding context; or if neither of these methods is applied with success, they will remain doubtful, but so that the reader will not be in fault in whatever way he may pronounce them. For example, if our faith that God will not bring any charges against His elect, and that Christ will not condemn His elect, did not stand in the way, this passage, Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? might be pronounced in such a way as to make what follows an answer to this question, God who justifies, and to make a second question, Who is he that condemns? with the answer, Christ Jesus who died. Romans 8:33-34 But as it would be the height of madness to believe this, the passage will be pronounced in such a way as to make the first part a question of inquiry, and the second a rhetorical interrogative. Now the ancients said that the difference between an inquiry and an interrogative was this, that an inquiry admits of many answers, but to an interrogative the answer must be either No or Yes. The passage will be pronounced, then, in such a way that after the inquiry, Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? what follows will be put as an interrogative: Shall God who justifies? — the answer No being understood. And in the same way we shall have the inquiry, Who is he that condemns? and the answer here again in the form of an interrogative, Is it Christ who died? Yea, rather, who is risen again? Who is even at the right hand of God? Who also makes intercession for us? — the answer No being understood to every one of these questions. On the other hand, in that passage where the apostle says, What shall we say then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained to righteousness; Romans 9:30 unless after the inquiry, What shall we say then? what follows were given as the answer to this question: That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness; it would not be in harmony with the succeeding context. But with whatever tone of voice one may choose to pronounce that saying of Nathanael's, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? John 1:47 — whether with that of a man who gives an affirmative answer, so that out of Nazareth is the only part that belongs to the interrogation, or with that of a man who asks the whole question with doubt and hesitation — I do not see how a difference can be made. But neither sense is opposed to faith.

7\.. There is, again, an ambiguity arising out of the doubtful sound of syllables; and this of course has relation to pronunciation. For example, in the passage, My bone \[_os meum_ \] was not hid from You, which You made in secret, it is not clear to the reader whether he should take the word *_os_* as short or long. If he make it short, it is the singular of *_ossa_* \[bones\]; if he make it long, it is the singular of *_ora_* \[mouths\]. Now difficulties such as this are cleared up by looking into the original tongue, for

in the Greek we find not *ἄνθρωπος*, but *ἄνθρωπος*. And for this reason the vulgar idiom is frequently more useful in conveying the sense than the pure speech of the educated. For I would rather have the barbarism, *_non est absconditum a te ossum meum_*, than have the passage in better Latin, but the sense less clear. But sometimes when the sound of a syllable is doubtful, it is decided by a word near it belonging to the same sentence. As, for example, that saying of the apostle, Of the which I tell you before *[_prædico_]*, as I have also told you in time past *[_prædixi_]*, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Galatians 5:21 Now if he had only said, Of the which I tell you before *[_quæ prædico vobis_]*, and had not added, as I have also told you in time past *[_sicut prædixi_]*, we could not know without going back to the original whether in the word *_prædico_* the middle syllable should be pronounced long or short. But as it is, it is clear that it should be pronounced long; for he does not say, *_sicut prædicavi_*, but *_sicut prædixi_*.

Chapter 4.— How Ambiguities May Be Solved.

8\ And not only these, but also those ambiguities that do not relate either to punctuation or pronunciation, are to be examined in the same way. For example, that one in the Epistle to the Thessalonians: *_Propterea consolati sumus fratres in vobis_*. Now it is doubtful whether *_fratres_* \[brethren\] is in the vocative or accusative case, and it is not contrary to faith to take it either way. But in the Greek language the two cases are not the same in form; and accordingly, when we look into the original, the case is shown to be vocative. Now if the translator had chosen to say, *_propterea consolationem habuimus fratres in vobis_*, he would have followed the words less literally, but there would have been less doubt about the meaning; or, indeed, if he had added *_nostri_*, hardly any one would have doubted that the vocative case was meant when he heard *_propterea consolati sumus fratres nostri in vobis_*. But this is a rather dangerous liberty to take. It has been taken, however, in that passage to the Corinthians, where the apostle says, I protest by your rejoicing \[*_per vestram gloriam_*\] which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. 1 Corinthians 15:31 For one translator has it, *_per vestram_ juro *_gloriam_**, the form of adjuration appearing in the Greek without any ambiguity. It is therefore very rare and very difficult to find any ambiguity in the case of proper words, as far at least as Holy Scripture is concerned, which neither the context, showing the design of the writer, nor a comparison of translations, nor a reference to the original tongue, will suffice to explain.

Chapter 5.— It is a Wretched Slavery Which Takes the Figurative Expressions of Scripture in a Literal Sense.

9\ But the ambiguities of metaphorical words, about which I am next to speak, demand no ordinary care and diligence. In the first place, we must beware of taking a figurative expression literally. For the saying of the apostle applies in this case too: The letter kills, but the spirit gives life. 2 Corinthians 3:6 For when what is said figuratively is taken as if it were said literally, it is understood in a carnal manner. And nothing is more fittingly called the death of the soul than when that in it which raises it above the brutes, the intelligence namely, is put in subjection to the flesh by a blind adherence to the letter. For he who follows the letter takes figurative words as if they were proper, and does not carry out what is indicated by a proper word into its secondary signification; but, if he hears of the Sabbath, for example, thinks of nothing but the one day out of seven which recurs in constant succession; and when he hears of a sacrifice, does not carry his thoughts beyond the customary offerings of victims from the flock, and of the fruits of the earth. Now it is surely a miserable slavery of the soul to take signs for things, and to be unable to lift the eye of the mind above what is corporeal and created, that it may drink in eternal light.

Chapter 6.— Utility of the Bondage of the Jews.

10\ This bondage, however, in the case of the Jewish people, differed widely from what it was in the case of the other nations; because, though the former were in bondage to temporal things, it was in such a way that in all these the One God was put before their minds. And although they paid attention to the signs of spiritual realities in place of the realities themselves, not knowing to what the signs referred, still they had this conviction rooted in their minds, that in subjecting themselves to such a bondage they were doing the pleasure of the one invisible God of all. And the apostle describes this bondage as being

like to that of boys under the guidance of a schoolmaster. And those who clung obstinately to such signs could not endure our Lord's neglect of them when the time for their revelation had come; and hence their leaders brought it as a charge against Him that He healed on the Sabbath, and the people, clinging to these signs as if they were realities, could not believe that one who refused to observe them in the way the Jews did was God, or came from God. But those who did believe, from among whom the first Church at Jerusalem was formed, showed clearly how great an advantage it had been to be so guided by the schoolmaster that signs, which had been for a season imposed on the obedient, fixed the thoughts of those who observed them on the worship of the One God who made heaven and earth. These men, because they had been very near to spiritual things (for even in the temporal and carnal offerings and types, though they did not clearly apprehend their spiritual meaning, they had learned to adore the One Eternal God,) were filled with such a measure of the Holy Spirit that they sold all their goods, and laid their price at the apostles' feet to be distributed among the needy, Acts 4:34-35 and consecrated themselves wholly to God as a new temple, of which the old temple they were serving was but the earthly type.

11\ Now it is not recorded that any of the Gentile churches did this, because men who had for their gods idols made with hands had not been so near to spiritual things.

Chapter 7.— The Useless Bondage of the Gentiles.

And if ever any of them endeavored to make it out that their idols were only signs, yet still they used them in reference to the worship and adoration of the creature. What difference does it make to me, for instance, that the image of Neptune is not itself to be considered a god, but only as representing the wide ocean, and all the other waters besides that spring out of fountains? As it is described by a poet of theirs, who says, if I recollect aright, You, Father Neptune, whose hoary temples are wreathed with the resounding sea, whose beard is the mighty ocean flowing forth unceasingly, and whose hair is the winding rivers. This husk shakes its rattling stones within a sweet covering, and yet it is not food for men, but for swine. He who knows the gospel knows what I mean. Luke 15:16 What profit is it to me, then, that the image of Neptune is used with a reference to this explanation of it, unless indeed the result be that I worship neither? For any statue you like to take is as much god to me as the wide ocean. I grant, however, that they who make gods of the works of man have sunk lower than they who make gods of the works of God. But the command is that we should love and serve the One God, who is the Maker of all those things, the images of which are worshipped by the heathen either as gods, or as signs and representations of gods. If, then, to take a sign which has been established for a useful end instead of the thing itself which it was designed to signify, is bondage to the flesh, how much more so is it to take signs intended to represent useless things for the things themselves! For even if you go back to the very things signified by such signs, and engage your mind in the worship of these, you will not be anything the more free from the burden and the livery of bondage to the flesh.

Chapter 8.— The Jews Liberated from Their Bondage in One Way, the Gentiles in Another.

12\.. Accordingly the liberty that comes by Christ took those whom it found under bondage to useful signs, and who were (so to speak) near to it, and, interpreting the signs to which they were in bondage, set them free by raising them to the realities of which these were signs. And out of such were formed the churches of the saints of Israel. Those, on the other hand, whom it found in bondage to useless signs, it not only freed from their slavery to such signs, but brought to nothing and cleared out of the way all these signs themselves, so that the Gentiles were turned from the corruption of a multitude of false gods, which Scripture frequently and justly speaks of as fornication, to the worship of the One God: not that they might now fall into bondage to signs of a useful kind, but rather that they might exercise their minds in the spiritual understanding of such.

Chapter 9.— Who is in Bondage to Signs, and Who Not.

13\.. Now he is in bondage to a sign who uses, or pays homage to, any significant object without knowing what it signifies: he, on the other hand, who either uses or honors a useful sign divinely appointed, whose force and significance he understands, does not honor the sign which is seen and temporal, but that to which all such signs refer. Now such a man is spiritual and free even at the time of his bondage, when it is not yet expedient to reveal to carnal minds those signs by subjection to which their carnality is to be overcome. To this class of spiritual persons belonged the patriarchs and the prophets, and all those among the people of Israel through whose instrumentality the Holy Spirit ministered unto us the aids and consolations of the Scriptures. But at the present time, after that the proof of our liberty has shone forth so clearly in the resurrection of our Lord, we are not oppressed with the heavy burden of attending even to those signs which we now understand, but our Lord Himself, and apostolic practice, have handed down to us a few rites in place of many, and these at once very easy to perform, most majestic in their significance, and most sacred in the observance; such, for example, as the sacrament of baptism, and the celebration of the body and blood of the Lord. And as soon as any one looks upon these observances he knows to what they refer, and so reveres them not in carnal bondage, but in spiritual freedom. Now, as to follow the letter, and to take signs for the things that are signified by them, is a mark of weakness and bondage; so to interpret signs wrongly is the result of being misled by error. He, however, who does not understand what a sign signifies, but yet knows that it is a sign, is not in bondage. And it is better even to be in bondage to unknown but useful signs than, by interpreting them wrongly, to draw the neck from under the yoke of bondage only to insert it in the coils of error.

Chapter 10.— How We are to Discern Whether a Phrase is Figurative.

14\.. But in addition to the foregoing rule, which guards us against taking a metaphorical form of speech as if it were literal, we must also pay heed to that which tells us not to take a literal form of speech as if it were figurative. In the first place, then, we must show the way to find out whether a phrase is literal or figurative. And the way is certainly as follows: Whatever there is in the word of God that cannot, when taken literally, be referred either to purity of life or soundness of doctrine, you may set down as figurative. Purity of life has reference to the love of God and one's neighbor; soundness of doctrine to the knowledge of God and one's neighbor. Every man, moreover, has hope in his own conscience, so

far as he perceives that he has attained to the love and knowledge of God and his neighbor. Now all these matters have been spoken of in the first book.

15\ But as men are prone to estimate sins, not by reference to their inherent sinfulness, but rather by reference to their own customs, it frequently happens that a man will think nothing blameable except what the men of his own country and time are accustomed to condemn, and nothing worthy of praise or approval except what is sanctioned by the custom of his companions; and thus it comes to pass, that if Scripture either enjoins what is opposed to the customs of the hearers, or condemns what is not so opposed, and if at the same time the authority of the word has a hold upon their minds, they think that the expression is figurative. Now Scripture enjoins nothing except charity, and condemns nothing except lust, and in that way fashions the lives of men. In the same way, if an erroneous opinion has taken possession of the mind, men think that whatever Scripture asserts contrary to this must be figurative. Now Scripture asserts nothing but the Catholic faith, in regard to things past, future, and present. It is a narrative of the past, a prophecy of the future, and a description of the present. But all these tend to nourish and strengthen charity, and to overcome and root out lust.

16\ I mean by charity that affection of the mind which aims at the enjoyment of God for His own sake, and the enjoyment of one's self and one's neighbor in subordination to God; by lust I mean that affection of the mind which aims at enjoying one's self and one's neighbor, and other corporeal things, without reference to God. Again, what lust, when unsubdued, does towards corrupting one's own soul and body, is called _vice_; but what it does to injure another is called _crime_. And these are the two classes into which all sins may be divided. But the vices come first; for when these have exhausted the soul, and reduced it to a kind of poverty, it easily slides into crimes, in order to remove hindrances to, or to find assistance in, its vices. In the same way, what charity does with a view to one's own advantage is _prudence_; but what it does with a view to a neighbor's advantage is called _benevolence_. And here prudence comes first; because no one can confer an advantage on another which he does not himself possess. Now in proportion as the dominion of lust is pulled down, in the same proportion is that of charity built up.

Chapter 11.— Rule for Interpreting Phrases Which Seem to Ascribe Severity to God and the Saints.

17\ Every severity, therefore, and apparent cruelty, either in word or deed, that is ascribed in Holy Scripture to God or His saints, avails to the pulling down of the dominion of lust. And if its meaning be clear, we are not to give it some secondary reference, as if it were spoken figuratively. Take, for example, that saying of the apostle: But, after your hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. Romans 2:5-9 But this is addressed to those who, being unwilling to subdue their lust, are themselves involved in the destruction of their lust. When, however, the dominion of lust is overturned in a man over whom it had held sway, this plain expression is used: They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts. Galatians 5:24 Only that, even in these instances, some words are used figuratively, as for example, the wrath of God

and crucified. But these are not so numerous, nor placed in such a way as to obscure the sense, and make it allegorical or enigmatical, which is the kind of expression properly called *_figurative_*. But in the saying addressed to Jeremiah, See, I have this day set you over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, Jeremiah 1:10 there is no doubt the whole of the language is figurative, and to be referred to the end I have spoken of.

Chapter 12.— Rule for Interpreting Those Sayings and Actions Which are Ascribed to God and the Saints, and Which Yet Seem to the Unskillful to Be Wicked.

18\ Those things, again, whether only sayings or whether actual deeds, which appear to the inexperienced to be sinful, and which are ascribed to God, or to men whose holiness is put before us as an example, are wholly figurative, and the hidden kernel of meaning they contain is to be picked out as food for the nourishment of charity. Now, whoever uses transitory objects less freely than is the custom of those among whom he lives, is either temperate or superstitious; whoever, on the other hand, uses them so as to transgress the bounds of the custom of the good men about him, either has a further meaning in what he does, or is sinful. In all such matters it is not the use of the objects, but the lust of the user, that is to blame. Nobody in his sober senses would believe, for example, that when our Lord's feet were anointed by the woman with precious ointment, John 12:3 it was for the same purpose for which luxurious and profligate men are accustomed to have theirs anointed in those banquets which we abhor. For the sweet odor means the good report which is earned by a life of good works; and the man who wins this, while following in the footsteps of Christ, anoints His feet (so to speak) with the most precious ointment. And so that which in the case of other persons is often a sin, becomes, when ascribed to God or a prophet, the sign of some great truth. Keeping company with a harlot, for example, is one thing when it is the result of abandoned manners, another thing when done in the course of his prophecy by the prophet Hosea. Hosea 1:2 Because it is a shamefully wicked thing to strip the body naked at a banquet among the drunken and licentious, it does not follow that it is a sin to be naked in the baths.

19\ We must, therefore, consider carefully what is suitable to times and places and persons, and not rashly charge men with sins. For it is possible that a wise man may use the daintiest food without any sin of epicurism or gluttony, while a fool will crave for the vilest food with a most disgusting eagerness of appetite. And any sane man would prefer eating fish after the manner of our Lord, to eating lentiles after the manner of Esau, or barley after the manner of oxen. For there are several beasts that feed on commoner kinds of food, but it does not follow that they are more temperate than we are. For in all matters of this kind it is not the nature of the things we use, but our reason for using them, and our manner of seeking them, that make what we do either praiseworthy or blameable.

20\ Now the saints of ancient times were, under the form of an earthly kingdom, foreshadowing and foretelling the kingdom of heaven. And on account of the necessity for a numerous offspring, the custom of one man having several wives was at that time blameless: and for the same reason it was not proper for one woman to have several husbands, because a woman does not in that way become more fruitful, but, on the contrary, it is base harlotry to seek either gain or offspring by promiscuous intercourse. In regard to matters of this sort, whatever the holy men of those times did without lust, Scripture passes

over without blame, although they did things which could not be done at the present time, except through lust. And everything of this nature that is there narrated we are to take not only in its historical and literal, but also in its figurative and prophetic sense, and to interpret as bearing ultimately upon the end of love towards God or our neighbor, or both. For as it was disgraceful among the ancient Romans to wear tunics reaching to the heels, and furnished with sleeves, but now it is disgraceful for men honorably born not to wear tunics of that description: so we must take heed in regard to other things also, that lust do not mix with our use of them; for lust not only abuses to wicked ends the customs of those among whom we live, but frequently also transgressing the bounds of custom, betrays, in a disgraceful outbreak, its own hideousness, which was concealed under the cover of prevailing fashions.

Chapter 13.— Same Subject, Continued.

21\ . Whatever, then, is in accordance with the habits of those with whom we are either compelled by necessity, or undertake as a matter of duty, to spend this life, is to be turned by good and great men to some prudent or benevolent end, either directly, as is our duty, or figuratively, as is allowable to prophets.

Chapter 14.— Error of Those Who Think that There is No Absolute Right and Wrong.

22\ . But when men unacquainted with other modes of life than their own meet with the record of such actions, unless they are restrained by authority, they look upon them as sins, and do not consider that their own customs either in regard to marriage, or feasts, or dress, or the other necessities and adornments of human life, appear sinful to the people of other nations and other times. And, distracted by this endless variety of customs, some who were half asleep (as I may say)— that is, who were neither sunk in the deep sleep of folly, nor were able to awake into the light of wisdom — have thought that there was no such thing as absolute right, but that every nation took its own custom for right; and that, since every nation has a different custom, and right must remain unchangeable, it becomes manifest that there is no such thing as right at all. Such men did not perceive, to take only one example, that the precept, Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, cannot be altered by any diversity of national customs. And this precept, when it is referred to the love of God, destroys all vices when to the love of one's neighbor, puts an end to all crimes. For no one is willing to defile his own dwelling; he ought not, therefore, to defile the dwelling of God, that is, himself. And no one wishes an injury to be done him by another; he himself, therefore, ought not to do injury to another.

Chapter 15.— Rule for Interpreting Figurative Expressions.

23\ . The tyranny of lust being thus overthrown, charity reigns through its supremely just laws of love to God for His own sake, and love to one's self and one's neighbor for God's sake. Accordingly, in regard to figurative expressions, a rule such as the following will be observed, to carefully turn over in our minds and meditate upon what we read till an interpretation be found that tends to establish the reign of love. Now, if when taken literally it at once gives a meaning of this kind, the expression is not to be considered figurative.

Chapter 16.— Rule for Interpreting Commands and Prohibitions.

24\ If the sentence is one of command, either forbidding a crime or vice, or enjoining an act of prudence or benevolence, it is not figurative. If, however, it seems to enjoin a crime or vice, or to forbid an act of prudence or benevolence, it is figurative. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, says Christ, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. John 6:53 This seems to enjoin a crime or a vice; it is therefore a figure, enjoining that we should have a share \[_communicandem_\] in the sufferings of our Lord, and that we should retain a sweet and profitable memory \[_in memoria_\] of the fact that His flesh was wounded and crucified for us. Scripture says: If your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink; and this is beyond doubt a command to do a kindness. But in what follows, for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head, one would think a deed of malevolence was enjoined. Do not doubt, then, that the expression is figurative; and, while it is possible to interpret it in two ways, one pointing to the doing of an injury, the other to a display of superiority, let charity on the contrary call you back to benevolence, and interpret the coals of fire as the burning groans of penitence by which a man's pride is cured who bewails that he has been the enemy of one who came to his assistance in distress. In the same way, when our Lord says, He who loves his life shall lose it, we are not to think that He forbids the prudence with which it is a man's duty to care for his life, but that He says in a figurative sense, Let him lose his life — that is, let him destroy and lose that perverted and unnatural use which he now makes of his life, and through which his desires are fixed on temporal things so that he gives no heed to eternal. It is written: Give to the godly man, and help not a sinner. The latter clause of this sentence seems to forbid benevolence; for it says, help not a sinner. Understand, therefore, that sinner is put figuratively for sin, so that it is his sin you are not to help.

Chapter 17.— Some Commands are Given to All in Common, Others to Particular Classes.

25\ Again, it often happens that a man who has attained, or thinks he has attained, to a higher grade of spiritual life, thinks that the commands given to those who are still in the lower grades are figurative; for example, if he has embraced a life of celibacy and made himself a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake, he contends that the commands given in Scripture about loving and ruling a wife are not to be taken literally, but figuratively; and if he has determined to keep his virgin unmarried, he tries to put a figurative interpretation on the passage where it is said, Marry your daughter, and so shall you have performed a weighty matter. Sirach 7:27 Accordingly, another of our rules for understanding the Scriptures will be as follows — to recognize that some commands are given to all in common, others to particular classes of persons, that the medicine may act not only upon the state of health as a whole, but also upon the special weakness of each member. For that which cannot be raised to a higher state must be cared for in its own state.

Chapter 18.— We Must Take into Consideration the Time at Which Anything Was Enjoyed or Allowed.

26\ We must also be on our guard against supposing that what in the Old Testament, making allowance for the condition of those times, is not a crime or a vice even if we take it literally and not figuratively, can be transferred to the present time as a habit of life. For no one will do this except lust has domin-

ion over him, and endeavors to find support for itself in the very Scriptures which were intended to overthrow it. And the wretched man does not perceive that such matters are recorded with this useful design, that men of good hope may learn the salutary lesson, both that the custom they spurn can be turned to a good use, and that which they embrace can be used to condemnation, if the use of the former be accompanied with charity, and the use of the latter with lust.

27\ For, if it was possible for one man to use many wives with chastity, it is possible for another to use one wife with lust. And I look with greater approval on the man who uses the fruitfulness of many wives for the sake of an ulterior object, than on the man who enjoys the body of one wife for its own sake. For in the former case the man aims at a useful object suited to the circumstances of the times; in the latter case he gratifies a lust which is engrossed in temporal enjoyments. And those men to whom the apostle permitted as a matter of indulgence to have one wife because of their incontinence, were less near to God than those who, though they had each of them numerous wives, yet just as a wise man uses food and drink only for the sake of bodily health, used marriage only for the sake of offspring. And, accordingly, if these last had been still alive at the advent of our Lord, when the time not of casting stones away but of gathering them together had come, Ecclesiastes 3:5 they would have immediately made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. For there is no difficulty in abstaining unless when there is lust in enjoying. And assuredly those men of whom I speak knew that wantonness even in regard to wives is abuse and intemperance, as is proved by Tobit's prayer when he was married to his wife. For he says: Blessed are You, O God of our fathers, and blessed is Your holy and glorious name for ever; let the heavens bless You, and all Your creatures. You made Adam, and gave him Eve his wife for an helper and stay. . . . And now, O Lord, You know that I take not this my sister for lust, but uprightly: therefore have pity on us, O Lord. Tobit 8:5-7

Chapter 19.— Wicked Men Judge Others by Themselves.

28\ But those who, giving the rein to lust, either wander about steeping themselves in a multitude of debaucheries, or even in regard to one wife not only exceed the measure necessary for the procreation of children, but with the shameless licence of a sort of slavish freedom heap up the filth of a still more beastly excess, such men do not believe it possible that the men of ancient times used a number of wives with temperance, looking to nothing but the duty, necessary in the circumstances of the time, of propagating the race; and what they themselves, who are entangled in the meshes of lust, do not accomplish in the case of a single wife, they think utterly impossible in the case of a number of wives.

29\ But these same men might say that it is not right even to honor and praise good and holy men, because they themselves when they are honored and praised, swell with pride, becoming the more eager for the emptiest sort of distinction the more frequently and the more widely they are blown about on the tongue of flattery, and so become so light that a breath of rumor, whether it appear prosperous or adverse, will carry them into the whirlpool of vice or dash them on the rocks of crime. Let them, then, learn how trying and difficult it is for themselves to escape either being caught by the bait of praise, or pierced by the stings of insult; but let them not measure others by their own standard.

Chapter 20.— Consistency of Good Men in All Outward Circumstances.

Let them believe, on the contrary, that the apostles of our faith were neither puffed up when they were honored by men, nor cast down when they were despised. And certainly neither sort of temptation was wanting to those great men. For they were both cried up by the loud praises of believers, and cried down by the slanderous reports of their persecutors. But the apostles used all these things, as occasion served, and were not corrupted; and in the same way the saints of old used their wives with reference to the necessities of their own times, and were not in bondage to lust as they are who refuse to believe these things.

30\ . For if they had been under the influence of any such passion, they could never have restrained themselves from implacable hatred towards their sons, by whom they knew that their wives and concubines were solicited and debauched.

Chapter 21.— David Not Lustful, Though He Fell into Adultery.

But when King David had suffered this injury at the hands of his impious and unnatural son, he not only bore with him in his mad passion, but mourned over him in his death. He certainly was not caught in the meshes of carnal jealousy, seeing that it was not his own injuries but the sins of his son that moved him. For it was on this account he had given orders that his son should not be slain if he were conquered in battle, that he might have a place of repentance after he was subdued; and when he was baffled in this design, he mourned over his son's death, not because of his own loss, but because he knew to what punishment so impious an adulterer and parricide had been hurried. For prior to this, in the case of another son who had been guilty of no crime, though he was dreadfully afflicted for him while he was sick, yet he comforted himself after his death. 2 Samuel 12:19-23

31\ . And with what moderation and self-restraint those men used their wives appears chiefly in this, that when this same king, carried away by the heat of passion and by temporal prosperity, had taken unlawful possession of one woman, whose husband also he ordered to be put to death, he was accused of his crime by a prophet, who, when he had come to show him his sin, set before him the parable of the poor man who had but one ewe-lamb, and whose neighbor, though he had many, yet when a came to him spared to take of his own flock, but set his poor neighbor's one lamb before his to eat. And David's anger being kindled against the man, he commanded that he should be put to death, and the lamb restored fourfold to the poor man; thus unwittingly condemning the sin he had wittingly committed. 2 Samuel 12:1-6 And when he had been shown this, and God's punishment had been denounced against him, he wiped out his sin in deep penitence. But yet in this parable it was the adultery only that was indicated by the poor man's ewe-lamb; about the killing of the woman's husband — that is, about the murder of the poor man himself who had the one ewe-lamb — nothing is said in the parable, so that the sentence of condemnation is pronounced against the adultery alone. And hence we may understand with what temperance he possessed a number of wives when he was forced to punish himself for transgressing in regard to one woman. But in his case the immoderate desire did not take up its abode with him, but was only a passing . On this account the unlawful appetite is called even by the accusing prophet, a . For he did not say that he took the poor man's ewe-lamb to make a feast for his king, but for his . In the

case of his son Solomon, however, this lust did not come and pass away like a , but reigned as a king. And about him Scripture is not silent, but accuses him of being a lover of strange women; for in the beginning of his reign he was inflamed with a desire for wisdom, but after he had attained it through spiritual love, he lost it through carnal lust.

Chapter 22.— Rule Regarding Passages of Scripture in Which Approval is Expressed of Actions Which are Now Condemned by Good Men.

32\ Therefore, although all, or nearly all, the transactions recorded in the Old Testament are to be taken not literally only, but figuratively as well, nevertheless even in the case of those which the reader has taken literally, and which, though the authors of them are praised, are repugnant to the habits of the good men who since our Lord's advent are the custodians of the divine commands, let him refer the figure to its interpretation, but let him not transfer the act to his habits of life. For many things which were done as duties at that time, cannot now be done except through lust.

Chapter 23.— Rule Regarding the Narrative of Sins of Great Men.

33\ And when he reads of the sins of great men, although he may be able to see and to trace out in them a figure of things to come, let him yet put the literal fact to this use also, to teach him not to dare to vaunt himself in his own good deeds, and in comparison with his own righteousness, to despise others as sinners, when he sees in the case of men so eminent both the storms that are to be avoided and the shipwrecks that are to be wept over. For the sins of these men were recorded to this end, that men might everywhere and always tremble at that saying of the apostle: Wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 1 Corinthians 10:12 For there is hardly a page of Scripture on which it is not clearly written that God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.

Chapter 24.— The Character of the Expressions Used is Above All to Have Weight.

34\ The chief thing to be inquired into, therefore, in regard to any expression that we are trying to understand is, whether it is literal or figurative. For when it is ascertained to be figurative, it is easy, by an application of the laws of things which we discussed in the first book, to turn it in every way until we arrive at a true interpretation, especially when we bring to our aid experience strengthened by the exercise of piety. Now we find out whether an expression is literal or figurative by attending to the considerations indicated above.

Chapter 25.— The Same Word Does Not Always Signify the Same Thing.

And when it is shown to be figurative, the words in which it is expressed will be found to be drawn either from like objects or from objects having some affinity.

35\ But as there are many ways in which things show a likeness to each other, we are not to suppose there is any rule that what a thing signifies by similitude in one place it is to be taken to signify in all other places. For our Lord used leaven both in a bad sense, as when He said, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and in a good sense, as when He said, The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. Luke 13:21

36\ Now the rule in regard to this variation has two forms. For things that signify now one thing and now another, signify either things that are contrary, or things that are only different. They signify contraries, for example, when they are used metaphorically at one time in a good sense, at another in a bad, as in the case of the leaven mentioned above. Another example of the same is that a lion stands for Christ in the place where it is said, The lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed; Revelation 5:5 and again, stands for the devil where it is written, Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour. 1 Peter 5:8 In the same way the serpent is used in a good sense, Be wise as serpents; Matthew 10:16 and again, in a bad sense, The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety. 2 Corinthians 11:3 Bread is used in a good sense, I am the living bread which came down from heaven; John 6:51 in a bad, Bread eaten in secret is pleasant. Proverbs 9:17 And so in a great many other cases. The examples I have adduced are indeed by no means doubtful in their signification, because only plain instances ought to be used as examples. There are passages, however, in regard to which it is uncertain in what sense they ought to be taken, as for example, In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red: it is full of mixture. Now it is uncertain whether this denotes the wrath of God,

but not to the last extremity of punishment, that is, to the very dregs; or whether it denotes the grace of the Scriptures passing away from the Jews and coming to the Gentiles, because He has put down one and set up another,— certain observances, however, which they understand in a carnal manner, still remaining among the Jews, for the dregs hereof is not yet wrung out. The following is an example of the same object being taken, not in opposite, but only in different significations: water denotes people, as we read in the Apocalypse, Revelation 17:15 and also the Holy Spirit, as for example, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water; John 7:38 and many other things besides water must be interpreted according to the place in which they are found.

37\ And in the same way other objects are not single in their signification, but each one of them denotes not two only but sometimes even several different things, according to the connection in which it is found.

Chapter 26.— Obscure Passages are to Be Interpreted by Those Which are Clearer.

Now from the places where the sense in which they are used is more manifest we must gather the sense in which they are to be understood in obscure passages. For example, there is no better way of understanding the words addressed to God, Take hold of shield and buckler and stand up for mine help, than by referring to the passage where we read, You, Lord, hast crowned us with Your favor as with a shield. And yet we are not so to understand it, as that wherever we meet with a shield put to indicate a protection of any kind, we must take it as signifying nothing but the favor of God. For we hear also of the shield of faith, wherewith, says the apostle, you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Ephesians 6:16 Nor ought we, on the other hand, in regard to spiritual armor of this kind to assign faith to the shield only; for we read in another place of the _breastplate_ of faith: putting on, says the apostle, the breastplate of faith and love.

Chapter 27.— One Passage Susceptible of Various Interpretations.

38\ When, again, not some one interpretation, but two or more interpretations are put upon the same words of Scripture, even though the meaning the writer intended remain undiscovered, there is no danger if it can be shown from other passages of Scripture that any of the interpretations put on the words is in harmony with the truth. And if a man in searching the Scriptures endeavors to get at the intention of the author through whom the Holy Spirit spoke, whether he succeeds in this endeavor, or whether he draws a different meaning from the words, but one that is not opposed to sound doctrine, he is free from blame so long as he is supported by the testimony of some other passage of Scripture. For the author perhaps saw that this very meaning lay in the words which we are trying to interpret; and assuredly the Holy Spirit, who through him spoke these words, foresaw that this interpretation would occur to the reader, nay, made provision that it should occur to him, seeing that it too is founded on truth. For what more liberal and more fruitful provision could God have made in regard to the Sacred Scriptures than that the same words might be understood in several senses, all of which are sanctioned by the concurring testimony of other passages equally divine?

Chapter 28.— It is Safer to Explain a Doubtful Passage by Other Passages of Scripture Than by Reason.

39\.. When, however, a meaning is evolved of such a kind that what is doubtful in it cannot be cleared up by indubitable evidence from Scripture, it remains for us to make it clear by the evidence of reason. But this is a dangerous practice. For it is far safer to walk by the light of Holy Scripture; so that when we wish to examine the passages that are obscured by metaphorical expressions, we may either obtain a meaning about which there is no controversy, or if a controversy arises, may settle it by the application of testimonies sought out in every portion of the same Scripture.

Chapter 29.— The Knowledge of Tropes is Necessary.

40\.. Moreover, I would have learned men to know that the authors of our Scriptures use all those forms of expression which grammarians call by the Greek name *_tropes_*, and use them more freely and in greater variety than people who are unacquainted with the Scriptures, and have learned these figures of speech from other writings, can imagine or believe. Nevertheless those who know these tropes recognize them in Scripture, and are very much assisted by their knowledge of them in understanding Scripture. But this is not the place to teach them to the illiterate, lest it might seem that I was teaching grammar. I certainly advise, however, that they be learned elsewhere, although indeed I have already given that advice above, in the second book — namely, where I treated of the necessary knowledge of languages. For the written characters from which grammar itself gets its name (the Greek name for letters being *ἁλφάβητος*) are signs of sounds made by the articulate voice with which we speak. Now of some of these figures of speech we find in Scripture not only examples (which we have of them all), but the very names as well: for instance, *_allegory_*, *_enigma_*, and *_parable_*. However, nearly all these tropes which are said to be learned as a matter of liberal education are found even in the ordinary speech of men who have learned no grammar, but are content to use the vulgar idiom. For who does not say, So may you flourish? And this is the figure of speech called *_metaphor_*. Who does not speak of a fish-pond in which there is no fish, which was not made for fish, and yet gets its name from fish? And this is the figure called *_catachresis_*.

41\.. It would be tedious to go over all the rest in this way; for the speech of the vulgar makes use of them all, even of those more curious figures which mean the very opposite of what they say, as for example, those called *_irony_* and *_antiphrasis_*. Now in irony we indicate by the tone of voice the meaning we desire to convey; as when we say to a man who is behaving badly, You are doing well. But it is not by the tone of voice that we make an antiphrasis to indicate the opposite of what the words convey; but either the words in which it is expressed are used in the opposite of their etymological sense, as a grove is called *_lucus_* from its want of light; or it is customary to use a certain form of expression, although it puts *_yes_* for *_no_* by a law of contraries, as when we ask in a place for what is not there, and get the answer, There is plenty; or we add words that make it plain we mean the opposite of what we say, as in the expression, Beware of him, for he is a good man. And what illiterate man is there that does not use such expressions, although he knows nothing at all about either the nature or the names of these figures of speech? And yet the knowledge of these is necessary for clearing up the difficulties of Scripture; because when the words taken literally give an absurd meaning, we ought immediately to

inquire whether they may not be used in this or that figurative sense which we are unacquainted with; and in this way many obscure passages have had light thrown upon them.

Chapter 30.— The Rules of Tichonius the Donatist Examined.

42\ One Tichonius, who, although a Donatist himself, has written most triumphantly against the Donatists (and herein showed himself of a most inconsistent disposition, that he was unwilling to give them up altogether), wrote a book which he called the Book of Rules, because in it he laid down seven rules, which are, as it were, keys to open the secrets of Scripture. And of these rules, the first relates to the Lord and His body, the second to the twofold division of the Lord's body, the third to the promises and the law, the fourth to *_species_* and *_genus_*, the fifth to times, the sixth to recapitulation, the seventh to the devil and his body. Now these rules, as expounded by their author, do indeed, when carefully considered, afford considerable assistance in penetrating the secrets of the sacred writings; but still they do not explain all the difficult passages, for there are several other methods required, which are so far from being embraced in this number of seven, that the author himself explains many obscure passages without using any of his rules; finding, indeed, that there was no need for them, as there was no difficulty in the passage of the kind to which his rules apply. As, for example, he inquires what we are to understand in the Apocalypse by the seven angels of the churches to whom John is commanded to write; and after much and various reasoning, arrives at the conclusion that the angels are the churches themselves. And throughout this long and full discussion, although the matter inquired into is certainly very obscure, no use whatever is made of the rules. This is enough for an example, for it would be too tedious and troublesome to collect all the passages in the canonical Scriptures which present obscurities of such a kind as require none of these seven rules for their elucidation.

43\ The author himself, however, when commending these rules, attributes so much value to them that it would appear as if, when they were thoroughly known and duly applied, we should be able to interpret all the obscure passages in the law — that is, in the sacred books. For he thus commences this very book: Of all the things that occur to me, I consider none so necessary as to write a little book of rules, and, as it were, to make keys for, and put windows in, the secret places of the law. For there are certain mystical rules which hold the key to the secret recesses of the whole law, and render visible the treasures of truth that are to many invisible. And if this system of rules be received as I communicate it, without jealousy, what is shut shall be laid open, and what is obscure shall be elucidated, so that a man travelling through the vast forest of prophecy shall, if he follow these rules as pathways of light, be preserved from going astray. Now, if he had said, There are certain mystical rules which hold the key to some of the secrets of the law, or even which hold the key to the great secrets of the law, and not what he does say, the secret recesses of the whole law; and if he had not said What is shut shall be laid open, but, Many things that are shut shall be laid open, he would have said what was true, and he would not, by attributing more than is warranted by the facts to his very elaborate and useful work, have led the reader into false expectations. And I have thought it right to say thus much, in order both that the book may be read by the studious (for it is of very great assistance in understanding Scripture), and that no more may be expected from it than it really contains. Certainly it must be read with caution, not only on account of the errors into which the author falls as a man, but chiefly on account of the heresies which he advances as a Donatist. And now I shall briefly indicate what these seven rules teach or advise.

Chapter 31.— The First Rule of Tichonius.

44\ The first is about _the Lord and His body_, and it is this, that, knowing as we do that the head and the body — that is, Christ and His Church — are sometimes indicated to us under one person (for it is not in vain that it is said to believers, You then are Abraham's seed, Galatians 3:29 when there is but one seed of Abraham, and that is Christ), we need not be in a difficulty when a transition is made from the head to the body or from the body to the head, and yet no change made in the person spoken of. For a single person is represented as saying, He has decked me as a bridegroom with ornaments, and adorned me as a bride with jewels and yet it is, of course, a matter for interpretation which of these two refers to the head and which to the body, that is, which to Christ and which to the Church.

Chapter 32.— The Second Rule of Tichonius.

45\ The second rule is about _the twofold division of the body of the Lord_; but this indeed is not a suitable name, for that is really no part of the body of Christ which will not be with Him in eternity. We ought, therefore, to say that the rule is about the true and the mixed body of the Lord, or the true and the counterfeit, or some such name; because, not to speak of eternity, hypocrites cannot even now be said to be in Him, although they seem to be in His Church. And hence this rule might be designated thus: Concerning _the mixed Church_. Now this rule requires the reader to be on his guard when Scripture, although it has now come to address or speak of a different set of persons, seems to be addressing or speaking of the same persons as before, just as if both sets constituted one body in consequence of their being for the time united in a common participation of the sacraments. An example of this is that passage in the Song of Solomon, I am black, but comely, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Song of Songs 1:5 For it is not said, I was black as the tents of Kedar, but am now comely as the curtains of Solomon. The Church declares itself to be at present both; and this because the good fish and the bad are for the time mixed up in the one net. Matthew 13:47-48 For the tents of Kedar pertain to Ishmael, who shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. Galatians 4:30 And in the same way, when God says of the good part of the Church, I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight: these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them; Isaiah 42:16 He immediately adds in regard to the other part, the bad that is mixed with the good, They shall be turned back. Now these words refer to a set of persons altogether different from the former; but as the two sets are for the present united in one body, He speaks as if there were no change in the subject of the sentence. They will not, however, always be in one body; for one of them is that wicked servant of whom we are told in the gospel, whose lord, when he comes, shall cut him asunder and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. Matthew 24:50-51

Chapter 33.— The Third Rule of Tichonius.

46\ The third rule relates to the _promises and the law_, and may be designated in other terms as relating to the spirit and the letter, which is the name I made use of when writing a book on this subject. It may be also named, of grace and the law. This, however, seems to me to be a great question in itself, rather than a rule to be applied to the solution of other questions. It was the want of clear views on this question that originated, or at least greatly aggravated, the Pelagian heresy. And the efforts of Tichonius

to clear up this point were good, but not complete. For, in discussing the question about faith and works, he said that works were given us by God as the reward of faith, but that faith itself was so far our own that it did not come to us from God; not keeping in mind the saying of the apostle: Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 6:23 But he had not come into contact with this heresy, which has arisen in our time, and has given us much labor and trouble in defending against it the grace of God which is through our Lord Jesus Christ, and which (according to the saying of the apostle, There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you 1 Corinthians 11:19) has made us much more watchful and diligent to discover in Scripture what escaped Tichonius, who, having no enemy to guard against, was less attentive and anxious on this point, namely, that even faith itself is the gift of Him who has dealt to every man the measure of faith. Romans 12:3 Whence it is said to certain believers: Unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake. Philippians 1:29 Who, then, can doubt that each of these is the gift of God, when he learns from this passage, and believes, that each of them is given? There are many other testimonies besides which prove this. But I am not now treating of this doctrine. I have, however, dealt with it, one place or another, very frequently.

Chapter 34.— The Fourth Rule of Tichonius.

47\ The fourth rule of Tichonius is about _species and genus_. For so he calls it, intending that by species should be understood a part, by genus the whole of which that which he calls species is a part: as, for example, every single city is a part of the great society of nations: the city he calls a species, all nations constitute the genus. There is no necessity for here applying that subtlety of distinction which is in use among logicians, who discuss with great acuteness the difference between a part and a species. The rule is of course the same, if anything of the kind referred to is found in Scripture, not in regard to a single city, but in regard to a single province, or tribe, or kingdom. Not only, for example, about Jerusalem, or some of the cities of the Gentiles, such as Tyre or Babylon, are things said in Scripture whose significance oversteps the limits of the city, and which are more suitable when applied to all nations; but in regard to Judea also, and Egypt, and Assyria, or any other nation you choose to take which contains numerous cities, but still is not the whole world, but only a part of it, things are said which pass over the limits of that particular country, and apply more fitly to the whole of which this is a part; or, as our author terms it, to the genus of which this is a species. And hence these words have come to be commonly known, so that even uneducated people understand what is laid down specially, and what generally, in any given Imperial command. The same thing occurs in the case of men: things are said of Solomon, for example, the scope of which reaches far beyond him, and which are only properly understood when applied to Christ and His Church, of which Solomon is a part. 2 Samuel 7:14-16

48\ Now the species is not always overstepped, for things are often said of such a kind as evidently apply to it also, or perhaps even to it exclusively. But when Scripture, having up to a certain point been speaking about the species, makes a transition at that point from the species to the genus, the reader must then be carefully on his guard against seeking in the species what he can find much better and more surely in the genus. Take, for example, what the prophet Ezekiel says: When the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way, and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it: and I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way, and according to their doings, I judged them. Ezekiel 36:17-19 Now it is easy to understand that this applies to that house of Israel of which the apostle says, Behold Israel after the flesh; 1 Corinthians 10:18 because the people of Israel after the flesh did both perform and endure all that is here referred to. What immediately follows, too, may be understood as applying to the same people. But when the prophet begins to say, And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which you have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, Ezekiel 36:23 the reader ought now carefully to observe the way in which the species is overstepped and the genus taken in. For he goes on to say: And I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my commandments, and do them. And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses. Ezekiel 36:23-29 Now that this is a prophecy of the New Testament, to which pertain not only the remnant of that one nation of which it is elsewhere said, For though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall be saved, Isaiah 10:22 but also the other nations which were promised to their fathers and our fathers; and that there is here a promise of that washing of regeneration which, as we see, is now imparted to all nations, no one who looks into the matter can doubt. And that saying of the apostle, when he is commending the grace of the New Testament and its excellence in comparison with the Old, You are our epistle . . . written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart, 2 Corinthians 3:2-3 has an evident reference to this place where the prophet says, A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. Ezekiel 38:26 Now the heart of flesh from which the apostle's expression, the fleshy tables of the heart, is drawn, the prophet intended to point out as distinguished from the stony heart by the possession of sentient life; and by sentient he understood intelligent life. And thus the spiritual Israel is made up, not of one nation, but of all the nations which were promised to the fathers in their seed, that is, in Christ.

49\ This spiritual Israel, therefore, is distinguished from the carnal Israel which is of one nation, by newness of grace, not by nobility of descent, in feeling, not in race; but the prophet, in his depth of meaning, while speaking of the carnal Israel, passes on, without indicating the transition, to speak of

the spiritual, and although now speaking of the latter, seems to be still speaking of the former; not that he grudges us the clear apprehension of Scripture, as if we were enemies, but that he deals with us as a physician, giving us a wholesome exercise for our spirit. And therefore we ought to take this saying, And I will bring you into your own land, and what he says shortly afterwards, as if repeating himself, And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, not literally, as if they referred to Israel after the flesh, but spiritually, as referring to the spiritual Israel. For the Church, without spot or wrinkle, gathered out of all nations, and destined to reign for ever with Christ, is itself the land of the blessed, the land of the living; and we are to understand that this was given to the fathers when it was promised to them for what the fathers believed would be given in its own time was to them, on account of the unchangeableness of the promise and purpose, the same as if it were already given; just as the apostle, writing to Timothy, speaks of the grace which is given to the saints: Not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour. 2 Timothy 1:9-10 He speaks of the grace as given at a time when those to whom it was to be given were not yet in existence; because he looks upon that as having been already done in the arrangement and purpose of God, which was to take place in its own time, and he himself speaks of it as now made manifest. It is possible, however, that these words may refer to the land of the age to come, when there will be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein the unrighteous shall be unable to dwell. And so it is truly said to the righteous, that the land itself is theirs, no part of which will belong to the unrighteous; because it is the same as if it were itself given, when it is firmly settled that it shall be given.

Chapter 35.— The Fifth Rule of Tichonius.

50\ The fifth rule Tichonius lays down is one he designates of times, — a rule by which we can frequently discover or conjecture quantities of time which are not expressly mentioned in Scripture. And he says that this rule applies in two ways: either to the figure of speech called synecdoche, or to legitimate numbers. The figure synecdoche either puts the part for the whole, or the whole for the part. As, for example, in reference to the time when, in the presence of only three of His disciples, our Lord was transfigured on the mount, so that His face shone as the sun, and His raiment was white as snow, one evangelist says that this event occurred after eight days, Luke 9:28 while another says that it occurred after six days. Now both of these statements about the number of days cannot be true, unless we suppose that the writer who says after eight days, counted the latter part of the day on which Christ uttered the prediction and the first part of the day on which he showed its fulfillment as two whole days; while the writer who says after six days, counted only the whole unbroken days between these two. This figure of speech, which puts the part for the whole, explains also the great question about the resurrection of Christ. For unless to the latter part of the day on which He suffered we join the previous night, and count it as a whole day, and to the latter part of the night in which He arose we join the Lord's day which was just dawning, and count it also a whole day, we cannot make out the three days and three nights during which He foretold that He would be in the heart of the earth. Matthew 12:40

51\ In the next place, our author calls those numbers legitimate which Holy Scripture more highly favors such as seven, or ten, or twelve, or any of the other numbers which the diligent reader of Scripture

soon comes to know. Now numbers of this sort are often put for time universal; as for example, Seven times in the day do I praise You, means just the same as His praise shall continually be in my mouth. And their force is exactly the same, either when multiplied by ten, as seventy and seven hundred (whence the seventy years mentioned in Jeremiah may be taken in a spiritual sense for the whole time during which the Church is a sojourner among aliens); Jeremiah 25:11 or when multiplied into themselves, as ten into ten gives one hundred, and twelve into twelve gives one hundred and forty-four, which last number is used in the Apocalypse to signify the whole body of the saints. Revelation 7:4 Hence it appears that it is not merely questions about times that are to be settled by these numbers, but that their significance is of much wider application, and extends to many subjects. That number in the Apocalypse, for example, mentioned above, has not reference to times, but to men.

Chapter 36.— The Sixth Rule of Tichonius.

52\ The sixth rule Tichonius calls the recapitulation, which, with sufficient watchfulness, is discovered in difficult parts of Scripture. For certain occurrences are so related, that the narrative appears to be following the order of time, or the continuity of events, when it really goes back without mentioning it to previous occurrences, which had been passed over in their proper place. And we make mistakes if we do not understand this, from applying the rule here spoken of. For example, in the book of Genesis we read, And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food. Genesis 2:8-9 Now here it seems to be indicated that the events last mentioned took place after God had formed man and put him in the garden; whereas the fact is, that the two events having been briefly mentioned, viz., that God planted a garden, and there put the man whom He had formed, the narrative goes back, by way of recapitulation, to tell what had before been omitted, the way in which the garden was planted: that out of the ground God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food. Here there follows, The tree of life also was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Next the river is mentioned which watered the garden, and which was parted into four heads, the sources of four streams; and all this has reference to the arrangements of the garden. And when this is finished, there is a repetition of the fact which had been already told, but which in the strict order of events came after all this: And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden. Genesis 2:15 For it was after all these other things were done that man was put in the garden, as now appears from the order of the narrative itself: it was not after man was put there that the other things were done, as the previous statement might be thought to imply, did we not accurately mark and understand the recapitulation by which the narrative reverts to what had previously been passed over.

53\ In the same book, again, when the generations of the sons of Noah are recounted, it is said: These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations. Genesis 10:20 And, again, when the sons of Shem are enumerated: These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations. Genesis 10:31 And it is added in reference to them all: These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations; and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood. And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. Now the addition of this sentence, And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech, seems to indicate that at the time when the nations were scattered over the earth they had all one language in common; but this is evidently inconsistent with the previous words, in their families, after their tongues. For each family or nation could not be said to have its own language if all had one language in common. And so it is by way of recapitulation it is added, And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech, the narrative here going back, without indicating the change, to tell how it was, that from having one language in common, the nations were divided into a multitude of tongues. And, accordingly, we are immediately told of the building of the tower, and of this punishment being there laid upon them as the judgment of God upon their arrogance; and it was after this that they were scattered over the earth according to their tongues.

54\ This recapitulation is found in a still more obscure form; as, for example, our Lord says in the gospel: The same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Luke 17:29-32 Is it when our Lord shall have been revealed that men are to give heed to these sayings, and not to look behind them, that is, not to long after the past life which they have renounced? Is not the present rather the time to give heed to them, that when the Lord shall have been revealed every man may receive his reward according to the things he has given heed to or despised? And yet because Scripture says, In that day, the time of the revelation of the Lord will be thought the time for giving heed to these sayings, unless the reader be watchful and intelligent so as to understand the recapitulation, in which he will be assisted by that other passage of Scripture which even in the time of the apostles proclaimed: Little children, it is the last time. 1 John 2:18 The very time then when the gospel is preached, up to the time that the Lord shall be revealed, is the day in which men ought to give heed to these sayings: for to the same day, which shall be brought to a close by a day of judgment, belongs that very revelation of the Lord here spoken of. Romans 2:5

Chapter 37.— The Seventh Rule of Tichonius.

55\ The seventh rule of Tichonius and the last, is about _the devil and his body_. For he is the head of the wicked, who are in a sense his body, and destined to go with him into the punishment of everlasting fire, just as Christ is the head of the Church, which is His body, destined to be with Him in His eternal kingdom and glory. Accordingly, as the first rule, which is called _of the Lord and His body_, directs us, when Scripture speaks of one and the same person, to take pains to understand which part of the statement applies to the head and which to the body; so this last rule shows us that statements are

sometimes made about the devil, whose truth is not so evident in regard to himself as in regard to his body; and his body is made up not only of those who are manifestly out of the way, but of those also who, though they really belong to him, are for a time mixed up with the Church, until they depart from this life, or until the chaff is separated from the wheat at the last great winnowing. For example, what is said in Isaiah, How he is fallen from heaven, Lucifer, son of the morning! and the other statements of the context which, under the figure of the king of Babylon, are made about the same person, are of course to be understood of the devil; and yet the statement which is made in the same place, He is ground down on the earth, who sends to all nations, does not altogether fitly apply to the head himself. For, although the devil sends his angels to all nations, yet it is his body, not himself, that is ground down on the earth, except that he himself is in his body, which is beaten small like the dust which the wind blows from the face of the earth.

56\ Now all these rules, except the one about the promises and the law, make one meaning to be understood where another is expressed, which is the peculiarity of figurative diction; and this kind of diction, it seems to me, is too widely spread to be comprehended in its full extent by any one. For, wherever one thing is said with the intention that another should be understood we have a figurative expression, even though the name of the trope is not to be found in the art of rhetoric. And when an expression of this sort occurs where it is customary to find it, there is no trouble in understanding it; when it occurs, however, where it is not customary, it costs labor to understand it, from some more, from some less, just as men have got more or less from God of the gifts of intellect, or as they have access to more or fewer external helps. And, as in the case of proper words which I discussed above, and in which things are to be understood just as they are expressed, so in the case of figurative words, in which one thing is expressed and another is to be understood, and which I have just finished speaking of as much as I thought enough, students of these venerable documents ought to be counselled not only to make themselves acquainted with the forms of expression ordinarily used in Scripture, to observe them carefully, and to remember them accurately, but also, what is especially and before all things necessary, to pray that they may understand them. For in these very books on the study of which they are intent, they read, The Lord gives wisdom: out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding; Proverbs 2:6 and it is from Him they have received their very desire for knowledge, if it is wedded to piety. But about signs, so far as relates to words, I have now said enough. It remains to discuss, in the following book, so far as God has given me light, the means of communicating our thoughts to others.

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