

third century tertullian prescription heretics CLEANED

Tertullian: Third Century Prescription Heretics **Prescription Against Heretics**

** (Reformatted for modern readability and clarity, main content only) ** --- ###

Necessity of Heresies Heresies must exist to test and strengthen faith. Their existence should not surprise us; they serve as a trial by which true faith is proved. Scripture foretold their coming as inevitable, ensuring faith is continually examined and purified. --- ### 2. Analogies to Disease Heresies are like feverish evils that exist to challenge and destroy. Their strength comes not from truth, but from weakness of faith among people. Like disease, they thrive where resistance (faith) is weak and are powerless against genuinely strong faith. --- ### 3. Why the Faithful Sometimes Fall Those considered wise or strong in the church, like Saul, David, and Solomon, can fall. Only Christ perseveres without fail. The defection of prominent believers does not validate heresy; the faith is tested and proven by steadfast perseverance by the apparent reputation of individuals. --- ### 4. Scripture's Warnings Against Heresy Jesus and the apostle repeatedly warned that heresy and false teachers would arise. Heresies are likened to sheep in clothing, deceivers masquerading as prophets and apostles. Their purpose is to reveal the steadfast ability to resist seduction. --- ### 5. Heresy an Evil, Not a Good Paul condemned heresy, schism, and dissent as evils, not goods. Heresies serve only to be approved and perverted by them. The unity of the church demands that all speak and think the same truth, which has been handed down. --- ### 6. Heresy Is Self-Will Heretics are self-condemned, choosing their own doctrines over apostolic authority, not inventing or choosing teachings but receiving in faith what the apostles received from Christ. Even alleged miracles or revelations must be rejected if they oppose what was originally handed down. --- ### 7. Pagan Philosophy as the Root of Heresies Many heresies originate from pagan philosophies. Greek and Roman systems introducing doctrines and teachings about the nature and origins of God, derived from these philosophies, have no place in the truth handed down from the apostles. --- ### 8-10. The Limits of Seeking and the Sufficiency of the Faith Christ's command "Seek, and you shall find," is not an endless license for curiosity. Once the truth delivered by Christ and the apostles has been found and believed, seeking further is neither necessary nor faithful. Endless seeking implies denial of having found the truth. When you have believed the faith taught by Christ, do not seek beyond it. Continuous searching in the deposit of faith is both unnecessary and potentially destructive. --- ### 12. Right and Wrong Seeking All true inquiry must remain within the boundaries of the apostolic faith. Heretics, by definition, search outside these boundaries, looking for truth among those who do not possess it. --- ### 13. The Rule

of Faith The faith we defend is this: There is God, the Creator of all things, who sent His Word (the Son), seen by patriarchs and proclaimed by prophets, born of the Virgin Mary as Jesus Christ, who was crucified, rose, ascended and will return to judge the living and the dead. The Holy Spirit was sent after Christ to guide believers. This rule of faith, received from Christ and the apostles, is the foundation; all other questions arise from heretical attempts beyond or contradict it. --- ### 14. Curiosity Beyond Rule of Faith Do not let curiosity extend beyond the rule of faith. While discussion is allowed within its boundaries, speculation outside those boundaries leads only to uncertainty and error. Heretics, ever seeking, betray their own foundation. --- ### 1519. Heretics and the Use of Scripture Heretics have no right to use Christian Scripture. Scriptures belong to the apostolic churches, their true custodians. The apostles admonished believers to avoid dealing with them not through debate but through correction and, if necessary, exclusion. Heresies distort or mutilate Scripture, either by excision or by false interpretation, seeking support for their doctrines. Disputes based solely on Scripture with heretics are unproductive; the true appeal lies in tracing doctrine and authority back to the apostles and the churches they founded. --- ### 2022. Apostolic Succession as the Foundation Christ delivered the whole doctrine to the apostles, who founded churches in every city. These churches down the same doctrine, creating unity in its structure. Only those teachings traceable to this apostolic succession are authentic; all others are false. Arguments that the apostles omitted or concealed parts of the doctrine are baseless. The apostles, taught directly by Christ and the Spirit, held nothing back from the churches. --- ### 2328. Faithfully Transmitted Doctrine Any claim that the apostles or the churches failed to transmit the entire deposit of faith is illogical. Even when some churches were rebuked by apostles, correction was possible, and unity in the main teachings was preserved. Divine unity among many churches is evidence of honest transmission and preservation of the faith. --- ### 2931. The Priority and Antiquity of the True Doctrine The true doctrine was established first; heresies, as later deviations, are by definition subsequent and corrupt the original. Heretics like Marcion, Valentinus, and others arose long after the establishment of orthodox doctrine and the church's growth. --- ### 3234. Apostolic Churches vs. Heretical Groups Let heretics produce records of apostolic succession if they can. The true churches can trace their leaders in unbroken succession to the apostles. Even churches, not founded directly by apostles, share in apostolic doctrine and agreement in faith. No heresy can show lineage or continuity. Scripture condemns and anticipates heresies, and those doctrines that appeared after the apostolic age are clearly spurious. --- ### 3536. The Only Valid Test Let heretics attempt to refute Catholic doctrine the same rule by tracing its history and condemnation, if possible. The Catholic faith is earlier than all heresies, now condemned by the apostles, but always defended by the apostolic churches, their faith, succession, and in the truth. --- ### 3738. Heretics Are Not True Christians Heresies originate from individuals deviating from

the apostolic teaching. Therefore, heretics, not being true Christians, have no right to the Scriptures, which are the property of the church. What authority do they have to interpret the writings entrusted to the apostles and their successors?

---###3940. Corrupting the Scriptures The diversity of heretical doctrine proves their corruption of Scripture and its interpretation. The Catholic church, by contrast, has preserved both the original Scriptures and true meaning. Scripture was arranged so as to provide a test of heresies, predicted and resisted by the apostles, reveal true among the false. --- ### 4144. The Conduct and Effects of Heresy Heretical groups display disorder, discipline, and disregard for the apostolic faith and sacramental safeguard. Their practice undermines church unity, encourages dissension, and often departs even from their own tradition. Their teachings lead to worldliness, lack of seriousness, and diminished fear of God, while the rule of faith promotes sincere devotion and moral discipline. --- **Closing** If heretics claim apostolic authority, let them show their succession and agreement in doctrine. The Catholic Church, united in apostolic tradition and discipline, stands as the true and original custodian of Christ's teaching. Heresies, by their novelty, disorder, and departure from this tradition, stand condemned both by the Scriptures and by the faith handed down from Christ and the apostles.[1][2][3][4].