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A literary history of early
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A LITERARY
HISTORY OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY.



A LITERARY HISTORY
OF
EARLY CHRISTIANITY:

INCLUDING THE
*FATHERS AND THE CHIEF HERETICAL WRITERS
OF THE ANTE-NICENE PERIOD.*

For the Use of Students and General Readers.

BY

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CHAPTER V.

JUSTIN MARTYR (A.D. 110?–164?).

FEW, if any, of the apologists are so well known as **Justin**, and few, if any, deserve their reputation better. He is not, indeed, a great man, and he can scarcely be called a great writer; but he is a man of transparent frankness and sincerity, and a writer whose sole aim is to explain and defend the truth. What he lacks in depth of thought he makes up by breadth of sympathy. If his rhetorical skill is imperfect, he is persuasive from his simple earnestness. In his youth he had been devoted to philosophy, and after his conversion he saw no cause either to forego the pursuit or to abandon its distinctive dress. To the last he calls himself Justin the Philosopher, a title which the Church has superseded by the more glorious one of **Justin the Martyr**. The key to his mind is its thirst for intellectual satisfaction. He is no original genius who can think out a system for himself; no bold critic who, while accepting a system, can see through its weak points; but he is pre-eminently the fair-minded student, the man of large culture, to whom the philosophic presentment of truth is so necessary that he cannot rest until he finds it. And so to him the Christian revelation comes in the guise of the true philosophy. He is not blind to its other aspects, but this is the one that holds him. And it is to the quiet but unflinching persistency with which he puts it forward that the effect of his writings upon the Church is mainly due.

We shall include in our notice of him a brief account of his life and works, and then endeavour to estimate his position in Christian literature.

Justin was the son of Priscus, and grandson of Bacchius,

and was born at Flavia Neapolis in Samaria. He calls himself a Samaritan, but this must not be understood to imply that he was of Semitic blood. Undoubtedly he was by extraction a Gentile, probably a Greek, certainly ignorant of Hebrew, uncircumcised, and brought up in heathen customs. The exact date of his birth is uncertain. He speaks of himself in the *Apology* as writing 150 years after Christ, but this is possibly a round number. Tradition places his martyrdom under the prefecture of Rusticus, which began A.D. 163, and speaks of him as being then in the full vigour of his age. If we accept the tradition, his birth may be placed somewhere about 110 A.D.

Like most of the Fathers, Justin is far more precise with regard to his spiritual history than with regard to the history of his outward life. In the dialogue with Trypho he gives an interesting account of the efforts he made in his search for the true wisdom.

In those days, as now, the current philosophy was materialistic. But in those days, as now, the more earnest spirits could find no rest in any teaching which stopped short of God. From the first dawn of his philosophic enthusiasm, Justin assures us that his main object was to learn about God. Full of hope, he attached himself to a Stoic teacher, and received instruction in the triple course of physics, logic, and ethics. But when he ventured to ask for information on the Divine Nature, he was told, as men are told now, that in the realm of physical causation there is no room for God: that the Divine lies outside the sphere of scientific knowledge. Disappointed, but not discouraged, he turned next to the Peripatetic or Aristotelian school, but here he was confronted with a spirit of worldly prudence which showed more anxiety to secure a paying pupil than to impart the gift of knowledge. The idea of making profit out of the difficulties of an inquirer was repugnant to all the nobler spirits of antiquity. The great truths of philosophy were held to be profaned by a bargain as to their money value. The generous spirit of the early philosophers, who had freely communicated their thoughts, was not yet quite extinct.

Justin decided to have no more to do with this unworthy professor, and left him for a Pythagorean of great reputation, to whom he expressed the longings of his heart. This teacher, who appears to have been an honest man, insisted on the necessity of a long course of mathematical and astronomical study as an indispensable preliminary for the still more abstract realm of theology. Justin was in perplexity. He knew little or nothing of these studies, and shrunk from the long delay of acquiring them. He desired to learn about God, and he was told that he must learn geometry first. He respected his teacher, he realised his own ignorance, but it was a true instinct that prompted him to turn from these dry bones. "The world by wisdom knew not God." If God is to be known only as the most abstract of all abstractions, He is virtually not to be known at all. So now with a heavy heart the young inquirer once more turned away and sought his last Pagan guide. This was a Platonist, who appears to have entered more or less successfully into his mind, and to have inspired him with fresh hopes of attaining his object. The Church has always confessed to a tenderness for Plato; there is in him a true affinity with many of her doctrines. It was not by chance that Justin was led direct from Plato to Christ.

One day as he wandered by the seashore rapt in meditation, he was accosted by an aged man of pleasant mien, who drew him into conversation, and discussed the question whether philosophy can really solve the problems of life, or give certainty to the doubting soul. Justin is too honest to say yes, but he asks, "If philosophy fails us, to whom shall we turn?" And then the old man explained to him that there have been men to whom God Himself communicated the truth—holy men, friends of God, prophets, to whom His Spirit came and filled them with a wisdom above their own, and that their words have been preserved through long ages for the guidance of mankind, treasured up hitherto in secret, but recently, in the fulness of time, manifested to all men by Jesus of Nazareth, Himself the greatest of the prophets, and the Son of the Most High. And he bade the young man

lift up his soul in prayer, "that the gates of Light may be opened to thee also; for these things can only be seen and known by those to whom God and His Christ have given understanding."

This interview formed the turning-point of Justin's life. He never saw the old man again, but those stirring words sank deep into his soul. He pondered over them, and became convinced that in the revelation given by Christ and the friends of Christ lay the true Divine philosophy. From henceforth he was a Christian. But, be it noticed, he did not break with philosophy. His spiritual progress presents a continuous movement. He never looked upon philosophy as the enemy or the counterfeit of the Gospel. To him it had been the handmaid of truth. To him the Christian system crowns and glorifies but does not destroy its predecessors.

As soon as he was baptized, he appears to have devoted his life to a public defence of the faith, not seeking controversy, but, in accordance with his philosopher's garb, holding himself ready for discussion with every comer. We hear of him at Ephesus and at Rome, where he resided some years.

The daily presence of a Christian apologist in these great centres must have attracted public attention. We cannot wonder if Justin made enemies. Of these the most bitter was one Crescens, a cynic, whom Justin had publicly convicted of ignorance of the principles of those he attacked, and from whose resentment he justly expected to suffer. On the other hand, as we learn from his Dialogue, he met occasionally with friendly disputants, who debated without bigotry their points of difference. The Jew Trypho, who is there introduced, is a remarkable instance of this. He is as unlike the average of his countrymen as can be conceived. Unprejudiced, courteous, willing to hear and appreciate arguments that make against himself, he seems a model controversialist. He has one defect, however, which neutralises these advantages. For though a scrupulous observer of the ceremonial law, he is evidently a sceptic at heart. The earnestness of Justin is thrown away upon him. He admires, but does not believe. He is a type of that class of enlightened

Hellenists of whom Philo is the highest product, who established a *modus vivendi* with heathen culture; they were far more agreeable companions than the Palestinian bigots to whom Christianity was an abomination, but they were almost equally unpromising subjects for conversion.

Of the remainder of S. Justin's life we have no certain information. We know that he taught a second time at Rome, and was able, while he lived, to hold the fiery spirit of Tatian in subjection to the true faith. A few other names are mentioned in connection with him, but none of any note in the Church. Though he did not seek martyrdom, he was fully prepared for it. He was by nature not insensible to the evidential value of a noble death. He cites with admiration the death of Socrates and other great heathens as valid testimony to the innocence of their lives; and he tells us how, while yet a heathen himself, he was deeply moved by the constancy of the Christians under torture and death, and how on that evidence alone he had refused belief to the calumnies spread against them. And in the Divine providence he was called to give the same evidence himself, we may hope with similar blessed results. Whether on the information of Crescens, as he expected, or of some one else, we know not, he was summoned before the tribunal of Rusticus, and after a brief examination of his faith, was scourged and beheaded (164-166? A.D.). The Acts of his martyrdom may possibly be authentic. They contain, at any rate, little which we need find it difficult to accept. The Church has not grudged her highest honour to this calm and beautiful spirit. Justin ranks both in the "noble army of martyrs" and in the "bright muster-roll of saints." We have no reason to suppose he ever entered the priesthood. As an itinerant lay-evangelist, whose commission came straight from the Holy Ghost, he accomplished a work for Christianity not only greater than any of his contemporaries, but one that has endured in all its essential vitality to our day, and will endure so long as men appreciate simplicity, earnestness and honesty of heart.

The writings that have come down to us under the name

of Justin are sufficiently numerous. But criticism pronounces three alone to be genuine, viz., the two Apologies and the Dialogue with Trypho.¹

Eusebius informs us that he was a voluminous writer. And we should infer the same from his extant books. Their style is diffuse and unsystematic, and reference is made in them to other important works which have now perished, especially to a Treatise against all Heresies² and a Book against Marcion.³ Besides these he wrote an Essay on Psychology,⁴ an Oration to the Greeks,⁵ an Exhortation,⁶ an Essay on the Unity of the Divine Essence,⁷ and some others; treatises under these names have in several cases come down to us, but their authenticity is extremely doubtful.

The three genuine works were probably published in the following order: the first Apology, the second Apology, the Dialogue. In spite of all the learning and ingenuity that has been expended upon them, the dates of composition are still uncertain. The first Apology was evidently written under Antoninus. Eusebius assigns it to the fourth year of that emperor (A.D. 141); but good arguments have been advanced for believing it to be several years later, probably about A.D. 147 or 148. The second Apology was certainly written after the first, and under the prefecture of Urbicus, which extended probably from A.D. 145 to 158 or 159. Within these limits it is sufficient to fix its composition. The Dialogue was written not in Rome, but most probably at Ephesus, whither it is possible that Justin retired as a matter of prudence after the publication of the second Apology. It is the longest and most elaborate of his writings, but has not the freshness and vigour of the first Apology.

¹ Among spurious and doubtful writings we possess (a) a *λόγος πρὸς Ἑλληνας*; (b) a *λόγος παραινετικός πρὸς Ἑλληνας*; (c) a book *περὶ Μοναρχίας*—these are doubtful. The following are spurious: *ἀνατροπὴ δογματῶν τινῶν Ἀριστοτελικῶν*; *Ἀποκρίσεις πρὸς Ὀρθοδόξους*; *Ἐκθεσις τῆς ὑρθῆς πίστεως*; and the Letter to Zenas and Serenus. The Letter to Diognetus was long attributed to him.

² *συντάγμα κατὰ πασῶν αἱρέσεων.*

³ *πρὸς Μαρκίωνα.*

⁴ *περὶ ψυχῆς.*

⁵ *λόγος πρὸς Ἑλληνας.*

⁶ *λόγος παραινετικός πρὸς Ἑλληνας.*

⁷ *περὶ μοναρχίας.*

First Apology.—This celebrated work, which is undoubtedly one of the three or four most important remains of early Church literature, commences thus:—

“To the Emperor Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Pius Augustus Cæsar and to Verissimus his son the philosopher, and to Lucius the philosopher, Cæsar’s son by nature and of Pius by adoption, a lover of learning, and to the sacred Senate and whole people of Rome ; on behalf of those who are unjustly hated and reviled by every class of men, I Justin, the son of Priscus and grandson of Bacchius, of Flavia Neapolis in Palestine, being myself one of them, have composed this address and intercession.”

There is something very effective in this enumeration of august titles, each of which, it is half implied, ought to act as a spur to him who owns it to prove himself in truth what he is in name, the Pious, the Most True, the Philosopher. Justin appeals with confidence to the Emperor and princes, as men who intend to govern well, not to condemn his co-religionists unheard. The Christian Platonist rejoiced that the time had come for which his old master had sighed, when kings should be philosophers and should rule accordingly, and like Plato he augured well for the lot of the righteous in such a time. So he challenges an impartial inquiry into the character of the Christians accused, protesting strongly against the unjust condemnation of the name alone.

He points out the true manner of life among the faithful, shows how superficial are the charges of atheism, of immorality, of revolutionary designs; and vindicates the claim of the Christians to be considered loyal, obedient subjects.

He defends the worship of Christ, incomprehensible as it appears to the heathen, on grounds which they ought to understand. He instances the divine truth of His teaching, the conformity of many of His doctrines with human reason, *e.g.*, the future judgment, the Divine Sonship, the end of the world; even His miracles (he says) can be illustrated from profane experience, though we must carefully guard them against the charge of magic so often brought by unbelievers. The evidence of prophecy is enough to disprove this charge,

since prophecy sketches out with no uncertain pen all the main features in the past history of Christ, and thus gives us confidence that its future fulfilment will equally be made good. Justin strongly urges the antiquity of the Jewish writings, for this was an argument to which the Romans always gave weight.

The concluding chapters contain an account (all too short, unfortunately) of the practice of Christian rites and the method of worship. It is the *locus classicus* in all controversies as to early Church ceremonial, and, taken with the *Apostolic Teaching*, proves how little of ritual existed, or, to speak more accurately, how little questions of ritual were thought of in the services of the primitive Church. The well-known passage about the Eucharist is familiar to many, but the reader may like to have it inserted here.

JUSTIN'S ACCOUNT OF THE EUCHARIST.

“After we have thus washed him who has believed and assented to our doctrine, we lead him to those whom we call the brethren, where they are met together to offer earnest prayers at once for themselves and the newly enlightened, and for all men everywhere, that, having learned the truth, we may be counted worthy to be found practisers of good works and keepers of the commandments, that we may obtain eternal salvation.

“Our prayer ended, we greet one another with a kiss. Then bread is brought to the president among the brethren, and a cup of wine and water mingled, and he, receiving it, utters praise and glory to the Father of all through the name of the Son and Holy Spirit, and offers thanks at some length for these merciful gifts. And when the prayer and thanksgiving are ended, the whole people present assent to them by answering, Amen. This done, the deacons give to each of those present some of the bread and wine and water, over which thanks have been given, to partake thereof, and some they carry away for the absent.

“And this nourishment we call the Eucharist, and none are allowed to partake of it but such as believe our doctrines to be true, and have been washed in the laver of remission of sins and regeneration, and live in the manner that Christ handed down. For we do not receive it as common bread or common drink:

but just as Jesus Christ our Saviour became flesh through the Word of God, and took flesh and blood for our salvation, even so we have been taught that the food blessed by the word of prayer from Him, by which through physical change our own flesh and blood is nourished, is both the flesh and blood of the same Incarnate Jesus. For the Apostles in the Memoirs written by them, which are called Gospels, have handed down that so it was commanded them : that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks He said, 'Do this in remembrance of Me. This is My Body.' And in the same way He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He said, 'This is My Blood,' and gave it to them alone.

"Now the evil demons have copied this in the mysteries of Mithras which they have delivered : for you know or may know that bread and a cup of water are set among the ceremonies of initiation, together with certain forms of words.

"When the service is over, we continually remind one another of what we have done, and those of us who are well-to-do give help to those who are in need, and we always remain together. And for all that we partake of we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. And on the day called Sunday there is a meeting of all who live in the cities or country, and the Memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the Prophets are read, so far as time permits. When the reader has finished, the president addresses words of admonition, and exhorts us to imitate the good things we have heard. Then we all stand up together and utter prayers. And, as I said before, the prayer ended, bread and wine and water are brought in, and the president utters prayers and thanksgivings according to his ability, and the people assent by saying Amen, and the distribution and participation of the consecrated elements follows, and a portion of them is taken by the deacons to those who are absent. And those who are wealthy and willing, each according to his intention gives what he thinks fit, and the sum collected is laid up with the president, who assists the widows and orphans, and those who from sickness or any other cause are in need, and those who are in prison, and the strangers who sojourn among us, and, in a word, he cares for all who are in want."

No one who reads the above passage can fail to be impressed with its simplicity and candour, as well as with its immense importance as an authority on liturgical practice.

Whether Justin's appeal ever found its way into the Emperor's hands we know not. It is hardly likely that a ruler so conscientious as Antoninus could brush aside as of no account a statement couched in language so moderate and dealing so frankly with the point at issue; and yet we cannot tell. There is deep pathos in the concluding words, "If my statement appears to you reasonable and truthful, have regard to it; if it seems absurd, despise it as an absurdity, but do not condemn to death as enemies those who are doing no wrong." If Antoninus read those words, and they made no impression upon his mind, we may form some estimate of the weight of prejudice, accumulated through centuries of national pride and one-sided discipline, which made even the purest and noblest of the Romans inaccessible to the Christian argument—

*"Nec magis inepto vultum sermone movetur
Quam si dura silex aut stet Marpesia cautes."*

The Second Apology is much shorter than the first, and less carefully composed. It is rather an occasional pamphlet drawn forth by a miscarriage of justice than a systematic treatise. The indignation of Justin was aroused by the conduct of Lollius Urbicus, the distinguished soldier who at this time held the prefecture of the city, in the case of some Christians whom he had caused to be put to death without trial. It appears that a Roman lady who was married to a dissolute husband, and had herself led a dissolute life, was converted to Christianity; after which, finding her husband's conduct intolerable to her, and failing to induce him to amend it, she meditated a separation. Her friends persuaded her to bear with him a while longer, but at last his excesses became so flagrant that she was obliged to take advantage of the law. Her husband betrayed her to the authorities, from whom, however, she obtained a respite on the plea of disposing of her property. Determined on revenge, he induced a centurion, a friend of his, to accuse one Ptolemaeus, by whose instrumentality she had been converted, before the prefect as a Christian. Urbicus allowed him to languish some months in prison; he then cited him

to appear, and on hearing his confession at once condemned him to death ; a proceeding which so aroused the wrath of a man named Lucius, who was present at the court, that he publicly arraigned the prefect of injustice. Urbicus contented himself with replying, "It seems, then, that you too are a Christian." And on Lucius confessing that he was, he also was pronounced guilty, and led away to death.

Justin addresses his protest to the Senate and incidentally to the Emperor, and shrinks not from reproaching Urbicus himself as a betrayer of justice. He is not insensible of the danger he incurs by his plain speaking. He confidently expects that, either by the action of the authorities or through the machinations of Crescens his personal enemy, he will himself share the fate of those he champions. But he implores the Emperor, before deciding against him, to hear his arguments, if he has not read them already, and to judge between him and his accusers.

He then passes from the personal question to more general grounds of complaint. He deals with the argument so often advanced that the Christians, if so anxious for death, can save the magistrates the trouble of condemning them by suicide. "Wretched men!" it had been said on one occasion, "are there no halters, no rocks, no deep waters of the sea, by which you can put an end to the existence you loathe, and seek for yourselves the God you are so anxious to meet?" To this taunt Justin answers that to act thus would be to interfere with the Divine plan, which provides for the continuance of the race. "You mistake," he says, "we do not wish to die; but we are resolved to confess the truth, even though we know it will slay us."

Another argument brought by the heathen was the following: "If you were in truth the favourites of Heaven, your God would surely interfere to protect His votaries." Justin's reply to this is very peculiar. He declares that God at first entrusted mankind to the guardianship of angels, some of whom, by their intercourse with women, betrayed their trust, and have thrown the course of human progress into confusion. This necessitates the Christian dispensation

of redemption, and the survival of the holy seed upon the earth to maintain the strife against the demons, and to delay the final catastrophe. He connects this view with his remarkable theory of the Logos, which in various partial and imperfect manifestations has kept alive, through all human history, the true ideal of righteousness. We shall reserve our criticism of this theory to a later part of the chapter. It is the main contribution of this Apology to the body of Christian thought.

The Dialogue with Trypho the Jew.—This is a far longer and more elaborate treatise than either of the Apologies, and contains, more or less fully drawn out, all the leading points of Christian divinity. In form it is modelled on the Dialogues of Plato; but, with the exception of the opening scene, there is nothing dramatic about it. Substantially, it is a defence of the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament, and of Christianity as the successor and supplanter of Judaism. It is conducted throughout on the principles of calm reasoning, and forms a highly favourable example of a controversial treatise. There is no reason to doubt that it embodies with tolerable accuracy the incidents of a real discussion, which Justin tells us occupied two days. The position of Trypho is this. He admits the high moral and spiritual level of Christianity, and only fears that it is too high for practice. He also admits that the Deity, whom genuine Christians acknowledge, is the One God revealed in the Old Testament, the Creator of heaven and earth. On this ground he is at one with Justin, and willing to argue with him. He then advances his objections. These are two. Granting the Old Testament to be a revelation of the Divine Will, he asks (1) How can those who believe in God set at nought His revealed Law? (2) How can any man believe in salvation by a human Saviour?

These are, of course, very real and weighty points. And the reply made by Justin rests entirely upon the authority of Holy Scripture. In meeting Trypho's first objection, he had been preceded by S. Paul, who, in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, had gone to the root of the question,

and by the writer to the Hebrews, who had supplied a different but highly fruitful argument. Justin's treatment approximates more to that of the latter epistle. He proves the transitoriness of the Law by its fulfilment in Christ, who, by taking away sin, took away the necessity for the Law. For, to Justin, as to the author of the Epistle of Barnabas, the Law, though Divinely given, does not reflect the perfection of the Godhead. It was because of the failure of the Jewish race to apprehend God that the Law was granted; and its precepts, he held, were partly pedagogic, partly to be allegorically understood. The great Pauline doctrine of Law as a necessary moment in the Divine purpose of grace was imperfectly grasped by Justin. The Law was, in his view, added rather as a discipline on account of sin already committed, than as a stage in the eternal revelation of Divine Righteousness.

It is, however, to the second objection of Trypho that Justin devotes his fullest powers and the greater portion of the Dialogue. He ranges over the entire Old Testament for proofs of the Divine Nature of Christ, and he finds them not in incidental allusions or mystic oracles, but in the most conspicuous and familiar narratives of the Divine appearance. He shows that these can only be explained by a Duality within the Unity of the Godhead; and, by a masterly use of history, prophecy and poetical passages, he establishes the co-equal Sonship of Christ. In affirming the Incarnation of the Eternal Son, Justin opposes himself to those low views of His Person which are known as Ebionite. He does not, indeed, refuse the name of Christian to such as hold them, but he insists upon Christ's supernatural birth as vitally essential to the Incarnation. His dogmatic Christology is perhaps defective¹ in certain relations, and this is really inevitable, seeing that he lived before the Arian controversy had wrung from the Church a complete logical enunciation of the metaphysical problem. But it is as idle to charge Justin with imperfect Catholicity as it is to seek

¹ As where, from the exigencies of logic, he speaks of the Son as *ἕτερος θεός*.

support in his example for not defining dogma. His place in theology is determined by his date in the first instance, and in the second by his natural bias. As Canon Scott Holland remarks, "his faith was far more pronounced and definite than his Platonic logic." To whatever conclusions his logic may have led, the whole temper of the Dialogue forbids us to doubt that he would have harmonised them with the Nicene exposition had it been possible at that time to place it before him. Trypho confesses that Justin's use of the Old Testament has cast a new light upon it, and, though unwilling to yield, he is at least shaken. Justin concludes his elaborate argument with an exposition of the Catholic Church, the ingathering of the Gentiles, and the inevitable rejection of the circumcision unless they accept the Gospel.

It is obvious that in a sketch like the present only the most general outline can be offered of these most important works; but enough, we hope, has been given to show their immense interest for all to whom Church history has a meaning. And perhaps, if we were to recommend one single volume out of the whole range of ecclesiastical literature as in the noblest sense representative of the whole, we should fix, not, as is usual, on Tertullian's brilliant declamation, but on the more unpretending but simpler and larger-minded Apology of Justin.

His Merits and Influence as a Church Writer.

From what has been said, the reader will perceive that Justin occupies a very original position in Christian literature. He is at once philosopher and saint, a combination as rare as it is delightful. In some respects he may be compared with Origen, though intellectually far inferior to that great thinker; but in the possession of one gift they agree, and that one of the choicest and most beautiful of all, intellectual sympathy. It is a question well worth asking, Why should a strong conviction of dogmatic truth close the heart against the efforts of minds differently constituted to

penetrate the secret of humanity? It cannot be denied that this is generally the case. The greatest theologians have many intellectual excellences, but among them sympathy with those who differ can be rarely reckoned. Yet surely sympathy is a powerful agent of persuasion. It seeks not, indeed, to dominate the intelligence or to coerce the judgment, but it is the still small voice that gains the ear of the soul amid all the fury of the elements, and makes music of life's jarring discord. It is the glory of Justin the philosopher that he saw this, and was not afraid to express it; it is the glory of Justin the saint and martyr that it did not shake his still higher certainty of a divine revelation of truth.

We shall consider the two points in Justin's character which are most distinctively his, and which form his main legacy to the Christian world: first, his method of defending the faith; and second, his theory of the evolution of the Logos in humanity.

His method was strictly dialectic, embodying the spirit of the old Socratics. If he was not a profound metaphysician, if his scientific training was far below the proud requirement, *μηδείς ἀγεωμέτρητος εἰσίτω* ("Let none ignorant of geometry enter here"), at any rate his mental attitude was thoroughly Platonic. He fully believed in the efficacy of honest discussion as a means of arriving at truth. His own candour led him to take an optimist view of human nature. When he addresses Cæsar, he claims the right of an equal to free and open debate, and he gives Cæsar credit on his side for willingness to be convinced. When he disputes with Trypho, he lays down the principles on which his argument will be founded, and proposes to ask for nothing beyond what strict reasoning may involve. And his antagonist himself confesses that Justin has been true to his promise. It is indeed possible that there was another side to Justin's mind. We must not forget that all the treatises we possess are addressed to opponents. In these it was necessary to take a ground common to both sides, and to ignore the special source of Church authority from which the doctrines he defended were derived. But, making all allowance for this,

we may safely assert that the apologetic attitude was the most congenial to Justin's mind, that he loved argument better than assertion, and convincing men's judgment better than overawing it.

And this is what makes him specially valuable at the present time. The demand for a reasonable Christianity is not merely a revolt against the yoke of dogma. It has a deeper source in the springs of the human spirit. A generation whose mental habits are moulded by comparative science, by evolution, by democracy, is not likely to acquiesce in any unreasoned conclusions whatsoever. There may be a lack of reverence, but there is no lack of earnestness. The science of religion, by comparing together the various religions of mankind, does not mean to be, and need not be, destructive. Justin's apologetic method supplies as it were a parable of our own controversies. He assumes nothing as incontrovertible except the facts of history, or what he believes to be such, and on these he builds his argument: while in matters beyond the reach of human research he applies the method of analogy.

It follows from this fundamental characteristic of Justin's mind that he is also liberal in his judgments. His attitude towards Trypho, towards the Judaizing sects, and towards the noblest of the heathen, is remarkably indulgent. Yet Justin could be severe too. The taint of paganism in the theories of the Gnostics was abhorrent to him. And still more unsparingly did he denounce the ditheism of Marcion, whom he speaks of as the Church's most formidable foe. There is no real inconsistency in this twofold attitude. Where the error lay in imperfect apprehension of truth, he was ever ready with the sympathy of superior enlightenment. But where it lay in the perversion of truth, either by way of accommodation to heathenism, or of mere antagonism to the Jewish creed, he roused the entire energy of his nature in stern antagonism, and cared not for the enmity he provoked. It is impossible not to admire his fearless courage, his outspoken honesty. To such as him the crown of the martyr comes as the natural, almost the inevitable, end of life's battle.

A few words must now be said on the subject of his theory of the Logos. Into the question whence he derived it, we need not enter at any length. Its interest is theological rather than literary. On the one hand, he was doubtless familiar with the speculations of Philo, though he never alludes to him by name. On the other hand, it has been asked, if he knew of S. John's Gospel, how comes it that he does not mention so pre-eminent a tower of support to his own views? We cannot tell. But that he was acquainted with the Johannine writings is not only in itself likely, but rendered almost certain by a passage in the first Apology (ch. lxi). "For Christ said, Unless ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. For it is clear to all that those who have once been begotten cannot enter a second time into their mothers' wombs."

The conception of the Logos as the Divine Reason immanent in humanity, and in due season incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, has been truly said to combine the universalism of Philo with the distinctive teaching of the beloved Apostle. The original element in Justin's theory is his application of S. John's great saying, "That was the true light, which lighteth every man coming into the world." The way he applies it is as follows. He holds the Logos to have been originally manifested in humanity as a seed showing itself in gradual development here and there until its full fructification in Christ. He calls it the *Λόγος Σπέρματικός*, which may be rendered The Germinal Word. In a celebrated passage at the close of the second Apology, he says:¹—

"I confess that I count it glory to be found a Christian, and strive mightily to be such; not that the Platonic doctrines are opposed to Christ, but rather that they are not entirely similar, and so too with the Stoics, poets, and historians. For each of these spoke well, from the partial manifestation of the Spermatic Word beholding that which was akin to it; but those who in high matters gave forth inconsistent views appear not to have possessed the unseen knowledge and the irrefutable wisdom. Whatever has been rightly spoken among all men belongs to us

¹ Ch. xiii.

Christians : for we worship and love next to God the *Logos* that is from the unbegotten and unutterable Deity, since for us He became man that He might share our sufferings and effect our cure.¹ For all their writers have been able dimly to discern the truth through the implanted seed of the *Logos* within them. For the seed of a thing, or the power of reproducing it is one thing ; that by the favour of which the communication and imitation of itself takes place is another."

To Justin therefore the Incarnation of the *Logos* in Christ is the fulfilment not only of the conscious prophecy of the Old Testament, but of the unconscious prophecy of the best heathen thought. He is of opinion that God spake by the sages of the ancient world as well as through the chosen race. Indeed, every man has implanted within him a germ of the Divine Word, and it is by virtue of that germ that he knows whatever he truly knows, and wills whatever he wills aright. And in proportion as the wise men, poets and lawgivers of the heathen world, both knew more of truth and acted more powerfully for the good of man than their fellows, so they enjoyed a larger measure of the growth of the Germinal Word within them. And this divinely-manifested growth was met among the heathen, as among the Jews, by the bitter enmity of the unregenerate human will. Heraclitus and Socrates are signal instances of the conflict which all wise and all righteous men have in their measure been obliged to wage. But the manifestation of the Word was in all these cases partial only. In Christ it was complete. And thus Christians are placed in a new position with regard to truth not only as compared with Pagans but also as compared with Jews. They can fearlessly appropriate all that has ever been rightly said or done as their own, and can throw the light of perfect knowledge on the contradictions and doubts of the past. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." The consequences of this doctrine were to be developed at a later period, in the congenial atmosphere of Alexandria. But to Justin belongs the

¹ Ἴασω, no doubt with an allusion to the name Ἰησοῦς, which those ignorant of Hebrew loved to connect with the verb ἰάομαι, "I heal."

credit of having first delivered it. Its importance was by no means exhausted in the early Church. We cannot doubt that a great application of it still lies before Christendom, and that its powerful magnetism will again attract wise and virtuous heathen souls to Christ.

Literary Characteristics.

A few concluding remarks may be added on the literary characteristics of this Father. These are : familiarity with a wide range of Hellenic culture, a fondness for quotation, and a plain unstudied presentation of what he has to say, entirely free from rhetorical artifice or exaggeration.

His acquaintance with Greek poetry and philosophy is considerable. His allusions to the doctrines of Plato and the Stoics in particular are frequent and precise. He had certainly read the Republic, and probably the Timæus. He even imitates the form of Plato's works in the introduction to his Dialogue. With regard to the Stoics, he approves of their moral theories, but criticises unfavourably their views of Providence, fate, and free-will. He implies also that he had read a sufficient amount of Greek poetry and history to entitle him to pronounce an opinion on their value.

His knowledge of the Old Testament is thorough and first-hand. His application of prophecy is often traditional, but sometimes original and suggestive. He is rarely fanciful, except when engaged in proving the universal presence of the Cross as an emblem in Scripture, nature and art.¹ Here he allows the spurious gnosis of Barnabas to carry him far away from his usual sober line of argument. In this as in matters of greater value he was a pioneer, followed by a long line of successors. There is much probability that Tertullian studied Justin's works, from which he draws his most effective weapon of retorting the enemy's charges upon himself. For instance, Justin points out that the very vices of which the heathen world accuses the Christians are actually practised among its own religious rites. He does not deal with

¹ Apol. i. chap. lv.

the point as a rhetorician, but simply states it. Tertullian drives it home with inexorable rigour, and takes care that it shall leave its sting. Again, Justin is the first to point out the analogies between Christian doctrines and many heathen superstitions which in his system admit of a philosophic explanation, but which in that of Tertullian merely serve to a forensic victory. It is true that he falls into some inaccuracies, notably in declaring that Simon Magus was worshipped as a god in Rome, and citing as evidence the existence of a statue with the inscription "SIMONI DEO SANCTO." Here also he is followed by Tertullian, but not by the better instructed Hippolytus, who had probably seen the inscription and was aware that it referred not to Simon Magus, but to the Sabine deity Semo Sancus.

It has often been remarked that Justin's quotations from the Old Testament are for the most part correctly given, while those from the New differ considerably from our texts. The reason is not far to seek. In the former Justin had the open roll before him; in the latter he trusted to his memory. And his memory, though extensive, was not always accurate. He speaks of Herod as sending the manuscript of the Hebrew Scriptures to Ptolemy, an error of more than a century. He speaks of Moses as keeping the flock of his maternal uncle, apparently confounding him with Jacob. He speaks of Musonius Rufus as suffering death for his freedom of speech, whereas he was only banished and afterwards recalled. He quotes several passages from his favourite Plato incorrectly. There is therefore no need to suppose that in his professed citations from the words of Christ and the memoirs of the Apostles he used different documents from those which have come down to us. The question how far he was in possession of our canonical New Testament is one of the deepest theological interest, and has been thoroughly discussed by many able writers, notably by Westcott and Sanday. The conclusion at which they arrive is that though he departs more or less widely from our text, and adduces some details of tradition which are absent from our New Testament, yet the general concurrence of fact and language is sufficiently

close to warrant the belief that most of our documents were known to him, and that he is not to be cited as a witness for any apocryphal Gospel. He speaks of memoirs written by the Apostles and their followers which he says are called Gospels, a sufficiently exact description of the four Canonical Gospels. He mentions the Apocalypse by name and attributes it to S. John. References have been discovered to at least four of S. Paul's Epistles besides that to the Hebrews, and there are abundant traces all through his works of familiarity with the Pauline teaching. His relation to our Bible is admirably expressed in the words of an able writer: "The Old Testament is still for him the sacred guide and companion of the Christian life, the type of the *written* revelation; everything is there. Only by the side of it we already feel in Justin that a new power has appeared, a fresh canon is forming, another book is just beginning to assert itself. It is just because Justin appears at the moment when this is already becoming clear that his work is full of such crucial interest."

His style is thus pithily characterised by Otto, one of his most recent and careful editors: "He was no adept in the rhetorical art. His language rarely departs from the level of common life; the order of the sentences is often involved, the structure of single clauses sluggish and intricate, the words and phrases by no means carefully chosen. He confesses that he has no gift of eloquence; nor does he think it necessary in the defence of the Christian cause. Still he sometimes rises to a higher key, especially when he treats of the grandeur of Christian truth and its power over the human mind." For details the reader is referred to the prolegomena of Otto's edition and the article on Justin in Smith's Biographical Dictionary.

CHAPTER VI.

TATIAN (A.D. 110-180?).

THE name of **Tatian** is linked with that of Justin. They were contemporaries and fellow-sojourners in the world's capital, and are said to have borne the intimate relation of master and pupil. It cannot indeed be proved that Tatian's conversion was due to Justin, but the inference has been made from the remark of Irenæus that "Tatian, after Justin's death, left the orthodox faith, and, puffed up by the conceit of a teacher, fell into divers strange errors."¹

If it be true that Justin's moderating influence held Tatian within bounds, we shall recognise an instance of what is often seen in daily life—the power of a gentle spirit over a fierce one. No two natures could be more unlike than that of the sympathetic, reasonable philosopher, and that of the ardent but sour ascetic. Tatian, like Tertullian, changed his convictions without changing his temper. As in the one, so in the other, nature asserted itself by the side of grace. In both cases nationality counted for something. Tatian inherited with his Assyrian blood that harsh, joyless view of religion which delights to crush the deepest instincts of our nature, and confounds the regeneration with the annihilation of manhood. Born in the burning region beyond the Tigris, he found the language and culture of Hellas universally adopted by his educated countrymen; but their Hellenism was tinged with oriental elements, and not free from a certain charlatanism.

The youthful zealot, with his restless temper and inquiring mind, was not likely to find this satisfactory. He acted as

¹ Irenæus only calls him a hearer of Justin; and Tatian, though he mentions Justin with very great respect, does not ascribe his conversion to him.

many before and since have acted: he endeavoured to find in travel a solace for his doubts. He learned many customs and studied many systems, but could not shake off his secret dissatisfaction, and might possibly as a baffled sceptic have acquiesced in the prevailing intellectual despair had he not at this critical moment come across a copy of the Old Testament. Immediately his interest was aroused. His quick perception saw the vast difference between this and the literature with which he had been familiar. His critical sense was delighted by its simplicity and natural truthfulness, and his intelligence was captivated by its lofty tone of thought. He studied, and became a convert. From henceforth he made the Scriptures his guide, and sought to prove even his errors by their evidence. The account of his conversion is given in his Oration to the Greeks. Though it says nothing of any human agent as co-operating in the work, we need not infer that such agency is altogether precluded. At the same time Tatian speaks as one who has fought his way to truth alone—an uncompanionable mind. He is defective, as might be supposed, in many points of catholic doctrine. He never once alludes to baptism, never once to the organisation of the Church. How different from Cyprian's autobiographical account of his new birth, where the laver of baptism occupies the central place, and admission into the assembly of the redeemed is depicted as the crown of blessedness!

Tatian, unlike Justin, had only bitter recollections of heathenism. He had tasted both its studies and its pleasures, and the experience filled him with disgust. His revolt was final and complete: paganism became for him a mass of contradictions, illusions, falsehoods and immoralities, and nothing more.

We should be glad to know more of the external circumstances of his career, but biographical details fail us. We know not even where, or at what period of his life, he turned to Christ; probably not till he had passed his youth. Certain references to his heathen writings, and particularly to a treatise on zoology,¹ seem to point to something of a literary

¹ *περὶ ζώων.*

career. Moreover, his bitter sense of the emptiness of pagan culture would come most naturally at a time of life when illusions no longer satisfy, and pleasures no longer attract. It is certain that he settled at Rome and remained there several years, investigating the principles of Christian truth, and that he embodied some of his labours in a "*Book of Questions*,"¹ dealing with what was hidden and obscure in the writings of the Old Testament. This important work is lost. And all that remains of his orthodox days is the short Apology, known as the *Oration to the Greeks*,² which is our main authority for his views. Opinions differ as to where it was written, but probability inclines to Rome, either shortly before or shortly after the death of Justin.

The first point to notice with regard to this striking work is that it cannot rightly be called an Apology at all. Its tone is not defensive, but aggressive.³ It is a powerful onslaught on heathenism, coupled with a terse exposition of the essentials of Christianity. It professes to come from "one who knows," not by hearsay, but by experience. Its first protest is against the arrogance of Hellenism, which then claimed for itself what its votaries claim for it now, viz., to be the source and guide of all true civilisation. But Tatian denies this altogether. He points out that Greece has been indebted to the despised barbarians for the gift of nearly all her arts and sciences. They have invented and she has perfected. And he declares the same to be true of religion. All the religious ideas of Greece are either imitations or perversions. The antiquity of Moses and the prophets demonstrates their priority; their immense spiritual superiority proves them the originals and the Greek legends the copies. He admits a certain primeval revelation, but makes little or no use of his admission. He says:—

"My soul being taught of God, I discerned that the former (*i. e.*, heathen) writings lead to condemnation, but that these put

¹ *προβλημάτων βιβλίον.*

² *Τατιανῶ πρὸς Ἕλληνας.* Notice the condensed energy of this title.

³ It may be compared in some respects with Hermias' *Irrisio Gentilium Philosophorum.*

an end to the slavery that is in the world, and rescue us from a multiplicity of rulers and ten thousand tyrants, while they give us not indeed what *we had not before received*, but what we had received, but were prevented by error from retaining" (ch. xxix.).

We have here the germ of that theory which has found favour even in modern times, viz., that a certain deposit of revealed truth was given to man from the first, which was gradually so distorted and overlaid by superstition as to have become unrecognisable. Historically, perhaps, this theory has now died a natural death; but from the metaphysical point of view it still embodies an important truth, emphasising the unity of the human spirit, and the divine education of the race.

There is little besides in Tatian's Oration that calls for special notice. There is plenty of biting satire, plenty of fiery indignation. There is sound theology, though often obscurely expressed; and there is an attempt to reconcile a somewhat spiritualistic psychology with the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh. The most original portion is the theory of demonic natures, on which he dwells with a certain predilection. In spite of its generally orthodox tone, the careful critic can detect in it seeds of heretical thought,¹ more especially in the view that through Adam's sin man lost the Divine likeness, and that the soul is consequently not in itself immortal. His speculations, in fact, though profound, are coloured by his individual bent, and range amid mysterious topics which Scripture has not clearly revealed. One might predict that the mind which framed them would not easily confine itself within the limits prescribed by the Church. At the same time, justice requires that the Oration should be taken by itself, and not be made to suffer from being interpreted by his later aberrations. It is a powerful polemical treatise, full of condensed thought and strong religious conviction, but it lacks the Christian

¹ Irenæus, lynx-eyed to discern the smallest aberration, notes no less than three erroneous tendencies in the Oration: the theory of permanent æons, that of Adam's loss of salvation, and that of the close resemblance between the rational and brute natures.

charity of Justin's works, and adds little to the religious heritage of the Church. The finest passage is where he attacks the immoral doctrine that man's sin is due not to free-will but to fate. This we quote, to give the reader an instance of his style. Our translation follows that of the Ante-Nicene Library:—

“How, then, shall I admit this nativity according to Fate, when I see such managers of Fate? I do not wish to be a king: I am not anxious to be rich: I decline military command: I detest fornication: I am not impelled by an insatiable love of gain to go to sea: I do not contend for chaplets: I am free from a mad thirst for fame; I despise death: I am superior to every kind of disease; grief does not consume my soul.¹ Am I a slave? I endure servitude. Am I free? I do not vaunt my good birth. I see that the same sun is for all, and one death for all, whether they live in pleasure or destitution. The rich man sows, and the poor man partakes of the same sowing. The wealthiest die, and beggars have the same limits to their life. The rich lack many things, and are glorious only through the estimation they are held in; but the poor man, and he who has moderate desires, seeking only the things suited to his lot, more easily obtains his purpose. How is it you are *fated* to be sleepless through avarice? Why are you *fated* to grasp things and fail, perhaps die? Die to the world, repudiating the madness that is in it. Live to God, and by apprehending Him, lay aside your old nature. We were not created to die, but we die by our own fault. Our free-will has destroyed us: we who were free have become slaves: we are sold through sin. Nothing evil has been created by God. We ourselves have manifested wickedness; but we, who have manifested it, are able again to reject it.”

The reader will observe considerable power of sarcasm here, and a certain rugged eloquence. The attacks on

¹ The Latin student will remember the stinging words of Juvenal, which Tatian may have had in his mind (Sat. iii. 41 *sqq.*):—

“Quid Romae faciam? mentiri nescio: librum
Si malus est, nequeo laudare et poscere: motus
Astrorum ignoro: funus promittere patris
Nec volo nec possum: ranarum viscera nunquam
Inspexi,” &c.

mythology, the drama, and the games are also vigorous and at times brilliant. The small compass of the work covers an amount of matter which, in a theological writer, may well strike us as unusual. But this compression is injurious to clearness. Few treatises, in proportion to their bulk, task more severely the attention and patience of the reader.

Besides the Oration and the other writings already referred to, he wrote a treatise on the Pauline Epistles and a work on Christian perfection, which last may have contained allusions to the heathen mysteries, in more than one of which he had been initiated.¹

It is uncertain at what period Tatian's teaching became definitely heretical. His rugged, independent nature was not one to submit unquestioningly to any set of opinions. Moreover, Rome was at that time the focus of every variety of speculation. Irenæus is our authority for supposing him to have been infected with the views of Valentinus;² Clement for his curious misinterpretation of the command "Let there be light" into a prayer, thus showing a leaning to Marcion's error. Jerome³ declares him to have been the patriarch of the Encratites, and, like Marcion, to have rejected some of S. Paul's Epistles. The form of error with which he was popularly identified was that of Encratism. But it must not be supposed that the Encratites formed a distinct school, with definite tenets that marked them off from all other schools.⁴ Encratism represented a tendency common to several schools, some comparatively orthodox, others unquestionably heretical. It consisted in a rigid abstinence from flesh and wine as well as from sexual intercourse. Such abstinence might be taught as a counsel of perfection, or even as a duty, without involving the denial that these things are in themselves innocuous and permitted by God. For instance, there is undoubtedly an approval of Encratite

¹ This work is quoted by Clement (Str. iii. 12), and, to judge from the specimen there given, was extremely obscure.

² Ir. i. 28.

³ Preface to his commentary on the Epistle to Titus.

⁴ *ἐγκρατεῖς* or *ἐγκρατῆται* was the name given to such persons as inculcated abstinence on heretical principles.

practice in S. Paul; but he distinctly views it as a temporary expedient, recommended on account of the present distress and the consciences of the weak brethren. Again, the Ebionite Christians held Enekratite views, but they did not, any more than the Essenes whom they copied, consider them necessary to salvation. The peculiarity of Tatian's Enekratism, and that which makes it heretical, is his condemnation of the use of flesh and wine as in itself evil, and of marriage as essentially impure, differing only conventionally from fornication. The close correspondence between these opinions and those of Julius Cassianus has been referred to in a former chapter.¹ The Church has always refused to endorse these views; nay more, she has sternly condemned them. They depend for their ultimate foundation on the anti-Christian theory that matter is essentially evil, and therefore not the creation of the Good God. There is no decisive proof that Tatian traced them to their logical source, or denied, as the Gnostic Enekratites undoubtedly did deny, the human birth of our Saviour. But there is enough resemblance between these teachers to justify the suspicion with which Tatian came to be regarded. It appears that he found his position at Rome untenable, and retired to his native country, where he resided till his death, abandoning controversy, and preaching Christianity as he understood it to the Syrian tribes. His success in that field was immediate and enduring, and was due to a great extent to his hitting on an original idea, which is now trite enough, but in him proved the inspiration of genius. This was the consolidation of the separate Gospel narratives into a single history of moderate compass, which should embody the main features of all. He called this harmonised, or more correctly speaking, patchwork Gospel, the *Diatessaron*, or *Fourfold Record*.

The Diatessaron.

This title itself is an evidential monument of the greatest significance. It proves that the four Gospels were accepted in his day not only by the Orthodox Church, but by those

¹ See page 231.

who in various respects held heretical views. Until quite recently, the Diatessaron has been to the Church little more than a name; but thanks to the persevering labours of numerous scholars, and above all, of Zahn, it has now been substantially recovered. The process of this discovery will be indicated later on. It is pleasant to think of the restless, weary controversialist, after long wanderings and strange vicissitudes of faith, turning at last to the familiar scenes of his youth, and spending his declining energies in simple missionary work among a people ignorant of controversy, and bequeathing to them the best of gifts—a story of the Saviour's life adapted to their intelligence and suited to their needs.

The notices of the Diatessaron in the early Church are surprisingly few. Irenæus never mentions it. Eusebius alludes to it, but only in the most meagre terms:¹ “Tatian composed a sort of connection, or compilation, I know not how, of the Gospels, and called it the Diatessaron. This work is current in some quarters to the present day.” The words “I know not how”² have been interpreted to imply that Eusebius had never seen the book, but this cannot be inferred with certainty. As, however, there is strong ground for believing that Tatian wrote it in Syriac, and Eusebius was ignorant of that language, the historian may well have seen the volume in the library of Pamphilus without being in a position to criticise its contents.

The earliest first-hand notice we possess is in the work of Theodoret on Heresies, published A.D. 453. This Father was bishop of Cyrrhus, near the Euphrates; and he tells us that in the exercise of his pastoral supervision he found the Diatessaron used by over two hundred churches in his district for purposes of public worship, independently of its use by heretical sects. He procured a copy and set himself to study it. As he expected, he found it gave a mutilated account of the Gospel narrative, particularly in omitting

¹ Eus. H. E. iv. 29, 6.

² οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως. Greek scholars need not be informed that this expression does not always indicate ignorance, but quite as often indifference, or even disapproval. It may be translated, “somehow or other.”

the two genealogies of Christ, and other allusions to His human birth of the seed of David. He therefore ordered all existing copies to be collected and put away, and replaced in every case by the four Canonical Gospels.

This incident reveals to us the long-continued and widespread influence of Tatian's Harmony. Nearly three centuries after his death we find it in established use among a wide circle of orthodox churches, who apparently knew nothing of its heretical source or the imperfection of its teaching. The progress of research has also brought to light evidence of its employment in the Syrian Church at a still earlier period. A commentary on it by S. Ephraem, Bishop of Edessa (A.D. 360), was said by Barsalibi, an Armenian bishop, to exist in his day (A.D. 1171), and this statement is proved by the publication of Ephraem's commentary within the last few years. Twenty-five years further back, Aphraates, a Persian bishop, who resided near Mosul (Nineveh), wrote homilies on the Gospels, which are proved to be founded on Tatian's Harmony, and establish the fact that it was the only Gospel in use among the Syrian churches of that neighbourhood (A.D. 340), while as early as the middle of the third century, in a romance called "The Doctrine of Addai the Apostle," the Diatessaron is mentioned as read in the church service conjointly with the Old Testament. Both this work and the Commentary of Ephraem expressly call the Diatessaron "Scripture."

We are now in a position to trace the process which has led to the recovery of this remarkable work.¹ The first evidence comes, oddly enough, from the Latin Church. Bishop Victor of Capua (A.D. 654) discovered a Latin book of the Gospels without title or author's name, which was clearly a compilation from the four Canonical Books. On referring to Eusebius for information, he found notices of two Harmonies, that of Tatian and that of Ammonius of Alexandria. The principle of arrangement not agreeing with that of the latter

¹ The reader is referred to Hemphill's useful work on the Diatessaron, and to the article in Smith's Dictionary, both of which the writer has freely used.

book, Victor came to the conclusion that his Latin Harmony must be a translation of Tatian's Diatessaron. His conclusion was considered by scholars to be erroneous, and little importance was attached to the work in question. But subsequent discoveries have convinced them that Victor was on the whole right, and that we have for many centuries possessed the substance of Tatian's work without being aware of it.

In 1806 an Armenian version of Ephraem's commentary, dating from the fifth century, was printed at Venice, and was translated into Latin by one of the Mechitarist monks of that city, and published by Dr. Mösinger in 1876. A comparison of this translation with Victor's Harmony established their substantial identity, the differences being chiefly due to the correction of the old Latin text by S. Jerome's version, the order remaining on the whole unchanged.

Yet another link in the chain of discovery was subsequently discovered. Every one knows that, after the Saracens had conquered Syria, the Syrian Christians gradually forgot their native tongue and adopted that of their conquerors. Along with other sacred documents, the Diatessaron was in process of time translated into Arabic. It had long been known that an Arabic MS., entitled *Tatian's Harmony*, existed in the Vatican. But for some reason or other it had not been transcribed. In 1886 Antonius Moreos, Vicar Apostolic of the Catholic Copts, happening to visit the Vatican, and being shown the MS. in question, declared that he had seen a similar one in Egypt, and in better preservation. This was found to be the case, and the MS. was duly collated, and published on the occasion of Pope Leo's jubilee. It dates from the eleventh century, and is a translation of a Syriac original of some two centuries earlier. The contents and arrangement are clearly the same as those of Ephraem's commentary and Victor's Latin Harmony. The text, however, is different from both, being polished and revised in a manner analogous to that in which Victor's Latin was refined into the Vulgate Latin of the *Codex Fuldensis* (A.D. 500), the MS. in which it is embodied. It is evident, therefore,

that though the substance is complete, the form has undergone alteration.

In order to arrive at the expressions actually used by Tatian, it is necessary to go back to Ephraem's fragments and the citations by Aphraates. Ephraem in his Armenian dress is very faithful to the original: but Aphraates' Syriac citations alone give the *ipsissima verba* of Tatian.

Finally, there is some evidence that even in the Greek-speaking churches the Diatessaron was not wholly unknown. In A.D. 1523 the Humanist Luscinius published an epitome of the Gospel History entitled "*Evangelicae historiae ex quatuor Evangelistis perpetuo tenore continuata narratio ex Ammonii Alexandrini fragmentis quibusdam.*" He is no doubt in error in supposing his Greek epitome to be the work of Ammonius: but he seems to have been equally ignorant of Tatian and of Victor's Harmony: Zahn declares that the fragment shows clear traces of the Diatessaron, and thus it would seem that in both the Greek and Latin churches an attempt was made to utilise it.

It was, however, in the Syrian Church that it found its proper home, and there is no reasonable doubt that it appeared first in Syriac.

On leaving Rome, Tatian probably spent a short time at Alexandria, where he has left traces of his teaching. But his retirement to Mesopotamia was virtually the surrender of his position as a Greek theologian. During the remainder of his life he seems to have reverted to Syriac as the vehicle of his literary composition, as of course it was of his oral preaching. He died at Edessa, somewhere about 180 A.D., having accomplished his life's work.

His idea of an eclectic Gospel was as happy as it was original. It remains to discuss the principle on which he carried it out. We must remember that his first object was suitability for public use. The consistency at which he aimed was rather moral than historical. For this purpose he places several events out of their proper order to bring out more vividly the spiritual lesson they embody. The general basis of the work is the Gospel of S. Matthew, which

carries the thread of the history from beginning to end. S. Mark does not supply much. The portions from both these Evangelists are incorporated nearly in their chronological order. Those from S. Luke and S. John, on the contrary, are fitted in with small reference to order or chronology, though frequent use is made of S. John's characteristic passages for emphasising spiritual lessons and clenching historical effects. It is clear that S. John's thoughts had a great attraction for Tatian. We may describe his aim as being to comprise in an edifying form every important event in Christ's history without apparent contradictions. The entire scheme is worth reproducing as an indication of his skill. We borrow the analysis from Mr. Hemphill:—

“It commences with the Preface from S. John on the Logos and the Incarnation; it then goes on to the birth of the Forerunner; the Annunciation; the communications of Joseph with the angel; the scenes at Bethlehem, the Birth, Presentation, Magi, and flight into Egypt. Then follow—Jesus in the temple. John a preacher of repentance. John's testimony to Christ. John's baptism. He baptizes Jesus. The temptation. The five disciples. The first miracle. Jesus preaches at Nazareth. Calls the disciples fishing. The miraculous draught. John's second testimony. His imprisonment. The nobleman's son. Jesus goes to Zebulum and Naphtali. The demoniac in the synagogue. Calling of Matthew. Christ's cures and ministry. Call of Levi. Paralytic healed. Levi's feast. Discourse on fasting. The plucking of the ears of corn. His relatives think Him beside Himself. The withered hand. He prays on the mount and chooses the Twelve. Sermon on the mount. The centurion's servant. The widow's son. The foxes have holes. The stilling of the tempest. The demoniac of Gadara. Jairus' daughter. The two blind men and the dumb spirit. Mission of the Twelve. Martha and Mary. Preaching of the Apostles. Message of John Baptist. Blind and dumb healed. Blasphemy against Christ. Report of the Apostles. The woman that was a sinner. The two debtors. Many believe. Mission of the seventy. The invitation. Doctrine of the Cross. Parables of the tower and the king. The Jews seek a sign. The woman blesses Christ. His mother and His brethren. Circuit with the

disciples and holy women. Teaching on' the shore. The sower. The seed in secret. The tares. The mustard-seed. The leaven. Explanation of the tares. The treasure, the pearl, and the net. His rejection at Nazareth. Herod's idea of Christ. John's martyrdom. Feeding of the five thousand. Walking on the sea. Doctrine of the Bread of Life. Jesus dines with the Pharisee. The Syrophenician woman. The deaf mute at Decapolis. The woman of Samaria. The leper and what follows. The pool of Bethesda. Feeding of the four thousand. The leaven of the Pharisees. The blind man of Bethsaida. Peter's confession. Prophecy of His Passion. Reproof of Peter. The transfiguration. The crowd meets Him. Herod's threat. The demoniac boy. Second prophecy of the Passion. The temple-tribute. The little child. On offences. On divorce. On children coming to Him. The lost sheep. The ten drachmæ. The prodigal son. The unjust steward. The unmerciful servant. Peter's question about forgiveness. On wilful and ignorant sinners. The Galileans. The tower of Siloam. The fig-tree. The woman with a spirit of infirmity. The feast of tabernacles. The rich fool. The young ruler. Dives and Lazarus. The labourers in the vineyard. In the Pharisee's house. The man with dropsy. The king's son and the great supper. The ten lepers. James and John's request. Few to be saved. Zacchæus. Bartimæus. The pounds. The cleansing of the temple. The treasury. The Pharisee and the publican. Bethany. The barren fig tree. Nicodemus. Discourse on the power of faith. The unjust judge. Parable of the two sons. Of the wicked husbandmen. The tribute-money. Doctrine of marriage and the resurrection. The great commandment. The good Samaritan. Teaching on the last day of the feast. What think ye of Christ? The Light of the world. The man born blind. Lazarus. Jesus at Ephraim. Simon the leper. The triumphal entry. Envy of the chief priests. Inquiry of the Greeks. The Pharisees question Him. Lament over Jerusalem and denunciation of the Pharisees. Christ declares His words eternal. The Scribes seek to entrap Him. The disciples and the temple. The priests' plot. The last prophecy on the Mount of Olives. The faithful and unfaithful stewards. The ten virgins. The talents. The warning to watch. The judgment of the nations. Judas and the chief priests. Christ the servant. The disciples prepare the passover. The Lord's Supper. The new commandment. Christ comforts the disciples. The two swords. The last discourse. The

high-priestly prayer. Gethsemane. The betrayal. Peter's first denial. The high priest's question. Peter's second and third denials. The false witness. Jesus condemned. He is brought before Pilate. Herod. Pilate's wife. Barabbas. The flagellation and mocking. Pilate yields. Suicide of Judas. Crucifixion. The Seven Words. The Tenebræ. The pierced side. The woman by the cross. Joseph of Arimathea. Sealing of the tomb. The resurrection. Mary Magdalene. The story of the bribing of the guards. Jesus appears to the women. Emmaus. The upper room. Thomas. The Sea of Galilee. His commission to the Apostles. His ascension."

Such is a brief epitome of this famous work. It obviously affirms the historical credibility of the four Gospels, and finds no difficulty in their apparent discrepancies, treating these with considerable freedom, and without any disposition to regard the chronology of any of them as infallible. Though the narrative is based on S. Matthew, S. John is perhaps Tatian's favourite Evangelist. He appears to have inserted one or two details from the apocryphal tradition, and in two cases to have followed other records in the New Testament, the death of Judas being taken from the Acts and the account of the Last Supper from the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

The sinister reputation of the author for heresy doubtless had much to do with the non-recognition of the work in the Greek and Latin churches. But it is also probable that its circulation in an Oriental language, and in a limited region of the Christian world, may have caused it to be practically unknown in the greater centres of church life. As a matter of fact we find that at a later period, when there were direct relations between the Roman and Syrian churches, and translations of Syriac works into Latin began to be undertaken, the Diatessaron was among those which were so translated.¹ In any case, we may cordially endorse the words of an able writer, that "Tatian, by his very errors, served the Church."

¹ See article in Smith's Dictionary, vol. iii. p. 796.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BEGINNINGS OF CHURCH HISTORY--HEGESIPPUS (A.D. 115?—A.D. 185?).

THERE can be no doubt that a multitude of stories and legends concerning the great masters of the faith were circulated at a very early date. In times of spiritual enthusiasm, when men's minds are strung high by hope or suffering, the creative imagination finds abundant scope for action in the daily record of adventure, peril, conflict, victory, or death. We can well believe that it was one, and not the least arduous, of the Apostles' tasks while they lived to withstand this prevalent tendency. And it is to their firm and sober guidance under God that we owe the complete immunity of the New Testament writings from legendary matter. But this restraint of the pious imagination, always difficult, was not to be expected in the succeeding age. In Palestine especially, where, if we may say so, supernaturalism was the order of the day, a cycle of apocryphal stories soon clustered round the chief names of the Church, and gave birth in later times to a regular literature, which has been referred to in a former book. But, besides these, a large number of traditions, more or less authentic, were current among believers, partly supplementing the inspired narrative by details on which a natural curiosity sought to be informed, and partly satisfying that craving for the marvellous in which a half-educated and uncritical society finds so strong a support to its faith.

By far the greater number of the Church writers whose names have come down to us were men of Hellenic culture and authoritative position, whose minds moved in a sphere of doctrinal disputation or ecclesiastical organisation far

removed from the more plebeian but more romantic field of popular religious literature. In the Acts of Martyrdom, as they are called, such as those of Polycarp, of Justin, and of the churches of Vienne, we are brought within the domain of popular Christian thought, which in these instances found a literary expression, but which was mostly embodied in oral traditions or simple written narratives devoid of style, though none the less widely circulated and highly prized. The work of Papias was the first which attempted to collect together a comprehensive body of this material, and to subject it to a sifting process. Even in his time a considerable element of untrustworthy legend had inwoven itself into the traditionally accepted fabric. If the fragment on the death of Judas, attributed to him by Apollinaris of Laodicea,¹ be genuine, to say nothing of the gross and repulsive amplification of it given by Theophylact,² we can easily see how the popular craving for poetic justice had superseded the simple story of the Gospel by a more dramatic and sensational version. And what happened in this instance undoubtedly happened in countless others. The mythical account of S. Peter's conflicts with Simon Magus, given in the Clementines, was no doubt a spontaneous growth of the pious imagination, and was adopted by the writer to make his theological arguments more attractive. It is not necessary to refer all these legends to heretical sources; it is far more likely that they formed an undercurrent of popular tradition, generally accepted by simpler folk, and only gradually expunged from use by the growing sense of its uncertified and unapostolic origin, and through its unwarrantable adoption by heretical or semi-heretical sects. It is, in fact, a matter for regret that the work of reviewing it was undertaken only by men of second-rate ability. Their lack of critical insight discredited

¹ Quoted by Routh, *Rel. Sac.* vol. i. p. 9.

² See Routh, *ib.* p. 26. It is usual to reject these additions as spurious, but there hardly seems to be sufficient ground for this. Puerile and unedifying as the story is, the account is hardly likely to have been invented so late as the time of Theophylact, and the narrative in Acts i. 18 shows that even in the apostolic age there was more than one version of the traitor's death.

the whole subject, and disposed the ecclesiastics of the Nicene period to pass it over without notice, and relegate it to what they considered well-merited oblivion.

Our concern at the loss of Papias' work is renewed in the case of his successor in a similar field, the Jewish-Christian writer **Hegesippus**, of whose five books of *Miscellanies of Christian Tradition*¹ only a few fragments are preserved. This writer, who came from Palestine, and was evidently well acquainted with the condition of its churches, by his clear, straightforward narratives made a very favourable impression on Eusebius. Unlike Papias, for whom the historian has scant respect, he speaks of Hegesippus as a repository of the genuine apostolic tradition,² and quotes him several times as a trustworthy authority. Our knowledge of his life is unfortunately but meagre. From his own statement that he published during the episcopate of Eleutherus (A.D. 175-189), presumably when in advanced age, we may fix his birth approximately A.D. 115-120, which would agree fairly well with S. Jerome's assertion that he bordered on the apostolic age.³

It has generally been considered that he was by birth a Jew, and converted to Christianity in Jerusalem. But this is quite uncertain. It is just as possible that he was born of Christian parents, though his introduction of Hebrew words, his intimate knowledge of non-Christian Jewish sects, and his enthusiastic admiration of S. James, all point to his being a Christian of the circumcision. He did not, however, confine his sympathies to the Christianity of his native land. He was of a large and inquiring mind, and determined to judge by personal inspection how far the leading churches of the West had remained true to the apostolic faith. For this purpose he made a voyage to Rome, touching probably at many Christian centres on his route, and in particular at Corinth, where he tells us he paid a long and

¹ πέντε ἱπομνήματα ἐκκλησιαστικῶν πράξεων—literally, "five memoranda of ecclesiastical Acts."

² See Eus. H. E. iv. 8. He says, οὗ πλείσταις κεχρήμεθα φωναίς.

³ Vicinus Apostolorum temporibus.—*De Vir. Illustr.*, c. 22.

happy visit to its bishop, Primus, and was pleased to bear emphatic witness to the soundness of his teaching. He arrived at Rome during the pontificate of Anicetus (the most probable date of which is from A.D. 156 to A.D. 167), and drew up a list of the succession of Roman bishops, which he afterwards brought up to date by the addition of Soter and Eleutherus, Anicetus' immediate successors. It is clear from more than one allusion that he had commenced his work several years before he published it. This will account for a passage, which has caused some perplexity to critics, stating that the deification and cultus of Hadrian's favourite Antinous took place in his time.¹

He is usually spoken of as the Father of Church History, and as such, the precursor of Eusebius. But there hardly seems sufficient ground for crediting him with so systematic a design as that of a complete history of the Church. Both Eusebius and Jerome lay stress upon the plain unpretending character of his writings, and from their references to them we can see that they were not chronologically arranged. Their title rather implies that they contained miscellaneous recollections of noteworthy facts as to the personal history and opinions of leading members of the Church, both in Palestine and other parts of the world, as well as a general criticism of the comparative orthodoxy of the various churches.

The question has been much discussed whether Hegesippus was a Judaiser in the narrow sense of the word or an orthodox Catholic. Our impression, from Eusebius' high praise of him, would be decidedly in favour of the latter view. But there is a fragment preserved by Photius² in which he is quoted as saying with reference to the words, "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for the just," that "Such words are spoken in vain, and those who use them lie against the Holy Scriptures and the Lord, who says, 'Blessed

¹ Hadrian died A.D. 138; but possibly a few years may have elapsed before the ceremonial of Antinous' worship was completed.

² Routh, R. S. i. p. 219.

are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear.'” And since these words (as is well known) are quoted by S. Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians,¹ it has been argued that Hegesippus is attacking the Apostle’s interpretation of them and betraying an Ebionite or anti-Pauline tendency. The great authority of Baur lent for a while plausibility to this view, but it will not bear examination. In the first place, the quotation is not given in the form in which S. Paul gives it, the words “the just” being substituted for “them that love him,” a very significant change. And in the second place, we know from Hippolytus that the Gnostic teachers were peculiarly addicted to the use of this text,² applying it, not as S. Paul does, to the condition of the religious world before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but to the condition of those Christians who did not gain the advantage of the Gnostic sacrament of initiation.³ On so slender a ground as this, it is quite unwarrantable to charge Hegesippus with hostility to S. Paul. The same suspicion with which the Tübingen school regard Papias, from his testimony to the early date of the Gospels and the unity of the faith, has biassed their judgment in the case of Hegesippus also. And the reply is in both cases the same. The object of these men’s hostility was not S. Paul or the Pauline school of theology, but the Gnostic misinterpreters of Scripture and perverters of Catholic truth.

The activity of Hegesippus, it will thus be seen, falls at or about the middle of the second century, almost contemporary with that of Justin. From his Palestinian training, however, he gives one the impression of a much more archaic writer. We are indebted to Eusebius for the preservation of several characteristic fragments, two of which, from their great interest, we propose to give at length. Eusebius also informs us that Hegesippus travelled widely in Syria, Greece and Italy, collecting materials for his *Reminiscences*. His

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 9, referring to Is. lxiv. 4.

² The reader will remember that the words in question are not quoted exactly either by S. Paul or by Hegesippus.

³ *Sense-Christians* (*ψυχωοί*) as opposed to *Spirit-Christians* (*πνευματικοί*).

main object, which betrays his Judaic bent, is to ascertain how closely each church keeps to the traditional deposit of faith. In this he resembles Irenæus and Tertullian, who regard with aversion any approach to freedom of thought. His tour of inspection proved eminently satisfactory, and his report was that the apostolic churches, without exception, maintained the truth inviolate. His account of the rise of error in that of Jerusalem has been severely criticised; he attributes it to one Thebuthis,¹ not otherwise known. But there seems no reason to doubt his story, as he had ample opportunities of knowledge. The historical method which he adopted, though not very scientifically carried out, marks him as a man of strong common sense. To the unsettling theories and multiform speculations of Gnosticism he opposed the one consistent doctrine transmitted by succession from the Apostles² in every one of the existing apostolical churches, verified in each case by himself; and therefore to him, more properly than to Irenæus, should be assigned the credit of fixing the fundamental principle of orthodoxy, which the Western Church, by means of its long list of eloquent expositors, has made so thoroughly its own.

The first specimen of his style that we shall give is his account of the martyrdom of S. James:³—

DEATH OF JAMES THE JUST.

“The government of the Church of Jerusalem was entrusted conjointly with the Apostles to James the Lord’s brother, who was universally surnamed the Just from the Lord’s time to our

¹ “On this account I called the Church a virgin, for she was not yet defiled with vain rumours. Thebuthis it was who, disappointed at not being elected bishop, began to undermine her.” He places this heresiarch shortly after the martyrdom of James the Just. (See Routh, p. 215.)

² It is true he used the Gospel according to the Hebrews, but probably not so as to establish any doctrine by it. It is a highly significant fact that this archaic-minded Jewish Christian adopts the very same criterion of orthodoxy as the more progressive spirits of the West, viz., the consensus of those churches which could point to an Apostle as their founder. The reader will find this point referred to again in the chapter on Tertullian. Its controversial importance can hardly be exaggerated.

³ Eus. H. E. ii. 23.

own. The name James was common enough : but this man was holy from his mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor strong drink, and ate nothing that had life. No razor ever passed upon his head. He never anointed himself with oil, never used a bath. He alone (of Christians) was allowed to enter the Holy Place. For he wore no woollen clothing, but only linen, and used to enter unaccompanied into the shrine, and was (often) found fallen upon his knees, asking pardon for the people : so that his knees grew hard like those of a camel from his constant habit of kneeling in prayer to God, and asking pardon for the people. From his exceeding righteousness he was called Tsaddik¹ and Oblias,² which in Greek mean 'defence of the people' and 'righteousness,' even as the prophets indicate of him. Now certain of the seven Jewish sects already mentioned in my Reminiscences asked of him, What is the door of Jesus? His reply was that Jesus was the Saviour, and so some of them believed that Jesus was the Christ. But the before-mentioned sects neither believed in His resurrection, nor in His coming again to reward every man according to his works. Howbeit those who believed, believed through James. And since many of the rulers believed, there arose a tumult of the Jews and the Scribes and Pharisees, saying that there was danger of the whole people expecting Jesus to return as the Christ. Therefore they came together to James and said, 'We beseech thee, restrain the people, since they have erred concerning Jesus, thinking Him to be the Christ. We beseech thee to persuade all those that come to the feast of the Passover concerning Jesus : for to thee we all give heed. For both we and all the people bear thee witness that thou art just and acceptest not the person of any. Therefore persuade the multitude not to err concerning Jesus, for all of us give heed to thee. Stand therefore upon the pinnacle of the temple, that being on high thou mayest be seen of all, and thy words may be heard by all the people. For all our tribes together with the Gentiles are come together on account of the Passover.' Wherefore the aforesaid scribes and Pharisees set James upon the pinnacle of the temple, and cried unto him and said, 'Thou Just One, whom we ought all to obey, seeing that the

¹ The MSS. give δίκαιος, but it is evident that a Hebrew word is wanted, and Routh after Fuller suggests צדק.

² Oblias seems corrupt ; צבצב signifies a fortified hill. Routh again suggests ὤλιαν, but with less probability than before.

people are in error concerning Jesus who was crucified, tell us what is the door of Jesus (or, who is the door of salvation ?).¹ And he made answer with a loud voice, 'Why ask ye me concerning Jesus the Son of Man? even He sitteth in heaven at the right hand of the Great Power, and is about to come upon the clouds of heaven!' And when many were convinced and glorified God for the testimony of James and said, 'Hosannah to the Son of David!' then again the same Scribes and Pharisees said one to another, 'We have ill done that we have brought about this testimony to Jesus: come now let us go up and cast him down, that they may fear and believe him not.' And they cried out, 'Oh! Oh! Even the Just is led astray.' And they fulfilled the Scripture written by Esaias, 'Let us destroy the Just, for he is unacceptable to us: therefore shall they eat the fruit of their works.'²

"They went up therefore and hurled down the Just, and said one to another, 'Let us stone James the Just.' And they began to stone him, forasmuch as he was not killed by the fall, but turned and sank upon his knees, saying, 'I entreat Thee, Lord God our Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' While thus they were stoning him, one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, a son of those Rechabites to whom the prophet Jeremiah beareth witness, cried aloud saying, 'Stay! what do ye? The Just prayeth for us.' And one of them, a fuller, seized a wooden beam used for pressing cloth, and dashed it upon the head of the Just. So he bare his witness. And they buried him in a place near the temple, and his pillar remaineth there until this day. This man is become a true witness to Jews and Greeks that Jesus is the Christ. And within no long time Vespasian laid siege to them."

The second passage is supposed to come from the fifth book. It relates the story of Domitian and Judas' grandsons,³ to which is added an account of the martyrdom of Simeon:—

"There were yet remaining of the family of the Lord the grandsons of Judas, who was called the Lord's brother after the

¹ This is very obscure. Some think instead of יְשׁוּעָה (Jesus) יְשׁוּעָה (salvation) should be read.

² Referring to Is. iii. 10.

³ H. E. iii. 20.

flesh, against whom they laid information,¹ as being of the seed of David. These a special officer² brought to Domitian; for he, like Herod, was afraid of the coming of Christ. And he asked them whether they were of the family of David. And they admitted that they were. Then he asked them what lands they owned, and how much money they possessed. And they both replied that they had nothing save nine thousand denarii, divided equally between them; and this sum was not in ready money, but was the valuation of an estate of no more than thirty-nine acres, and from it they had to pay their tribute, and maintain themselves by working it with their own hands. They then showed him their hands, pointing out as evidence of their manual labour the toughness of their skin, and the horny excrescences on their hands from continual handling of the plough. Then he asked them about Christ and His kingdom, what it was, when and where it would appear? and they replied that it was not earthly or of this world, but heavenly and angelic, and would come at the end of the world, whensoever He should appear in glory to judge the quick and the dead, and to reward every man according to his works. At this Domitian refused to condemn them; but treating them with contempt as persons of no account, he let them go free, and by an edict stopped the persecution against the Church. They then, being thus dismissed, were appointed to rule over the churches, as being at once martyrs and members of the family of the Lord. And peace following, they remained alive until the days of Trajan. . . . They then came and presided over all the Church as martyrs, and members of the family of the Lord: and the whole Church enjoying profound peace, they remained till Trajan became emperor, until the time came when Simeon, the son of Clopas, who was sprung from the uncle of the Lord, being informed against by the sectaries, was accused in like manner on the same charge before Atticus the proconsul.

“For many days he was shamefully entreated, and died a martyr’s death, insomuch that all marvelled, and the proconsul above all, to see a man of a hundred and twenty years endure such things; and finally he ordered him to be crucified.”³

¹ ἑδομηλατόρησαν, a colloquial word from the Latin *delator*, an informer.

² ὁ ἰουδαίος, Latin *evocatus*, one specially summoned, after he had earned exemption from service.

³ This fragment is quoted by Eus. H. E. iii. 32. It is evidently closely

The reader will not fail to observe the homely tone of simple piety which pervades these two narratives, and the unadorned character of the style. It should be remarked, however, that in spite of its circumstantial details, doubts have been thrown on the accuracy of his account of S. James's death, a very different version of which is given by Josephus. But the passage of Josephus is not absolutely free from suspicion, and if it were, fuller knowledge might enable us to reconcile the two narratives. At any rate, it is difficult to find a more graphic and lifelike picture in any church writer.¹ It seems that the work was in existence so late as the sixteenth century in the library of the convent of S. John at Patmos. Its recovery would be one of the most welcome results of the enthusiastic labour which has been, and still is, so freely bestowed on the task of bringing to light the hidden treasures of the Eastern convents. But though still within the range of possibility, the unearthing of so large and important a work can hardly be regarded as probable.

connected with the former account. The reader will not fail to observe the archaic signification of the word Martyr, which includes those who have borne public testimony to Christ, even though not at the price of their lives.

¹ The reader will notice one or two unconscious evidences of authenticity in these fragments, which must carry weight with an unprejudiced mind. One is the profound appreciation of the Jewish character shown in the willing testimony given by the Pharisees to the righteousness of the man whom nevertheless they have no scruple in stoning to death. The parallel with their conduct towards our Lord and S. Stephen is obvious. The other is the indication, not elsewhere supplied and yet obviously authentic, of the tendency on the part of the Jerusalem Christians to keep the episcopate of their Church in the hands of those who were related to Christ according to the flesh. This throws light on S. Paul's declaration (2 Cor. v. 16) that he will not know any one, even Christ Himself, after the flesh. To the author it appears that, if any fragments of early Christian literature carry genuineness upon the face of them, it is these passages from Hegesippus.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LATER SCHOOL OF S. JOHN—MELITO TO POLYCRATES.

IN our chapters on Papias and Polycarp we referred to the immense impulse given both to dogmatic theology and to ecclesiastical organisation by the master-mind of S. John. We shall see this impulse transferred later on to the Western world when we come to treat of Irenæus. Meanwhile, there is an interval in the Asiatic Church before the rise of Montanism changed the currents of theological thought, during which the Johannine influence held undisputed sway. During this interval the great doctrine of the Incarnation moved on towards a more complete expression in the writings of Melito, while the observance of Easter according to the traditional custom of S. John's churches found an ardent champion in Polycrates.

These two Fathers bear the genuine impress of the apostolic age, in the eminent holiness of their life, the antique flavour of their thought, and the lofty dignity of their controversial tone. The first to be noticed is **Melito**, Bishop of Sardis, who flourished soon after the middle of the second century. His reputation for holiness stood pre-eminent. Polycrates speaks of him as one of the great lights¹ of Asia. He lived a life of rigid continence,² after the example of his master;³ and was remarkable not only for moral excellence but for spiritual gifts of such eminence as to gain him the reputation of a prophet.⁴

¹ *στοιχεῖα* : sometimes, but inaccurately, translated *elementa*.

² So should *ἐντροχός* undoubtedly be translated in Polycrates' letter.

³ The unanimous tradition of antiquity represents S. John as a virgin.

⁴ This from Tertullian ; perhaps not without a side allusion to the Montanist claims to possess the same gift.

His long and laborious life was involved in frequent controversies, the most important being that on the keeping of Easter, in which he defended what was afterwards known as the *Quarto-deciman* practice. He was the author of an Apology addressed to M. Aurelius, now lost, though a Syriac document purporting to be a translation of it exists in the British Museum. The contents, however, do not at all tally with the fragments of the Apology given by Eusebius;¹ so that, unless we suppose him to have written two Apologies, it is necessary to reject the Syriac one. The persecution under stress of which he wrote broke out about the close of the year 176, soon after Commodus had been associated with his father in the Empire. Melito's chief arguments for toleration were (1) the innocence of the Christians; (2) the Emperor's reputation for justice, which made it incumbent on him to hear their cause; (3) the precedents of former good emperors, who had favoured the Christians, while only Nero and Domitian had persecuted them. These arguments reappear in later apologists, especially Tertullian. The Apology was almost if not quite the last work of Melito.

The list of his other works proves him to have been a highly prolific writer. It is as follows:—(1.) Two books *On the Easter Question*, about A.D. 165. (2.) *Excerpts from the Old Testament* in six books, of which the preface addressed to Onesimus is preserved by Eusebius. Its main interest consists in its enumeration of the canon of Scripture, from which the Apocrypha is omitted. (3.) *On (Christian) Conversation and the Prophets*, a title which one is tempted to think must have included two separate treatises; if otherwise, the connection of the two ideas seems to point to an anti-Montanist pamphlet. (4.) *On the Church*. This also may have had for its object the assertion of

¹ The notice of Melito occurs in Eus. H. E. iv. 13, 26, who enumerates most of his writings. The titles are *περὶ τοῦ πασχα. ἐκλογαί. περὶ πολιτείας καὶ προφητῶν. περὶ ἐκκλησίας. περὶ κυριακῆς λόγος. περὶ φύσεως ἀνθρώπου. περὶ πλάσεως. περὶ ὑπακοῆς πίστεως. περὶ αἰσθητηρίων. περὶ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος. περὶ λουτροῦ. περὶ ἀληθείας. περὶ κτίσεως καὶ γενέσεως χριστοῦ. περὶ προφητείας. περὶ φιλοξενίας. κλείς. περὶ τοῦ διαβόλου. περὶ τῆς ἀποκαλίψεως Ἰωάννου. περὶ ἐνωμάτου θεοῦ.*

ecclesiastical authority against the independent spirit of the New Prophecy. (5.) *On the Lord's Day*. (6.) *On the Nature of Man*. (7.) *On Creation*. (8.) *On the Obedience of Faith*. (9.) *On the Senses*.¹ (10.) *On the Soul and Body and Mind*,² an anthropological treatise connected no doubt with those on human nature and the senses. (11.) *On Baptism*. (12.) *On Truth*. (13.) *On the Creation and Birth of Christ*. This title was liable to some misconception, owing to the term *Creation* being used of our Lord. It refers, however, to a well-known text in Proverbs, "The Lord hath created Me the beginning of His ways."³ (14.) *On Prophecy*. This may have referred to the Montanistic prophecy, as there is reason to believe he was engaged in combating it. (15.) *On Hospitality*. (16.) *The Key*. This enigmatical title is still unexplained. A Latin work, bearing the title *Melitonis Clavis Sanctarum Scripturarum*, was published in 1855 by Cardinal Pitra, but was discovered to be a mediæval compilation from the Latin Fathers, ascribed to Melito without the smallest ground of authority. (17.) *On the Devil*. (18.) *On the Revelation of S. John*. Some think these formed one work. (19.) *On the Embodied God*. This would naturally be considered a treatise on the Incarnation, had not Origen, in his commentary on Genesis, classed Melito among the Anthropomorphites, referring by name to this treatise in justification of his censure.⁴ The balance of opinion, however, is decidedly in favour of Melito's orthodoxy, and of Origen having inadvertently misjudged him.

All these works Eusebius says were known to him. Besides these, we learn from Anastasius that he wrote a treatise *On the Incarnation*,⁵ directed against the followers of Marcion,

¹ The text of Eusebius gives *περὶ ὑπακοῆς πίστεως αἰσθητηρίων*, out of which it is hard to extract any meaning. The obvious correction of inserting a *περὶ* has been adopted. So Jerome.

² The reading *ἢ νοῦς* has been altered to *καὶ νοῦς*.

³ Prov. viii. 22. *Κύριος ἐκτίσεν με ἀρχὴν τῶν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ*, which the unanimous voice of patristic exegesis referred to Christ.

⁴ Even if Melito had attributed body to God, he would have gone no further than Tertullian. Augustine, however, blames Tertullian for his view.

⁵ *περὶ σαρκώσεως χριστοῦ*.

and one *On the Passion*, in which he defended the use of the expression, "God suffered." Two Syriac fragments, from works *On the Cross* and *On Faith*, are also extant. In addition to these genuine writings, two spurious treatises were ascribed to him in the Middle Ages, one *On the Passion of S. John*, and one *On the Assumption of the Virgin*.¹

The main contribution of Melito to theology was his able statement of the double nature of Christ. The author of the "Little Labyrinth" (about A.D. 220) says, "Who knows not the books of Irenæus, Melito, and the rest, showing that Christ is God and Man?" How thoroughly Melito had mastered the bearings of this fundamental truth may be seen from two fragments translated by Lightfoot.² The first is from the third book of his treatise on the Incarnation, quoted by Anastasius of Sinai, and from its great theological importance we deem it worthy of insertion here:—

"The things done by Christ after His baptism, and especially the miracles, showed His Godhead concealed in the flesh, and assured the world of it. For being perfect God and perfect man at the same time, He assured us of His two essences—of His Godhead by miracles in the three years after His baptism, and of His manhood in the thirty seasons before His baptism, during which, owing to His immaturity as regards the flesh, He concealed the signs of His Godhead, although He was true God from eternity."

The other is a Syriac fragment, published by Pitra and Cureton, and is even more remarkable. It is as follows:—

"We have made collections from the Law and the Prophets relating to those things which are declared concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, that we might prove to your love that He is the perfect Reason, the Word of God: who was begotten before the light, who was Creator together with the Father, who was the fashioner of men, who was all things in all, who among the patriarchs was Patriarch, who in the law was Law, among the

¹ The Latin title gives "The Passing of Mary," *De transitu B. V. M.*

² *Essays on Supernatural Religion*, No. vii. pp. 230-232.

priests Chief-priest, among the kings Governor, among the prophets Prophet, among the angels Archangel, among voices the Word, among spirits the Spirit, in the Father the Son, in God God, the King for ever and ever. For this is He who was pilot to Noah, who conducted Abraham, who was bound with Isaac, who was in exile with Jacob, who was captain with Moses, who was divider of the inheritance with Joshua, who foretold His own sufferings in David and the prophets, who was incarnate in the Virgin, who was born at Bethlehem, who was wrapped in swaddling-clothes in the manger, who was seen of the shepherds, who was glorified of the angels, who was worshipped by the Magi, who was pointed out by John, who gathered together the Apostles, who preached the kingdom, who healed the maimed, who gave light to the blind, who raised the dead, who appeared in the temple, who was not believed on by the people, who was betrayed by Judas, who was laid hold on by the priests, who was condemned by Pilate, who was transfixed in the flesh, who was hanged on the tree, who was buried in the earth, who rose from the dead, who appeared to the Apostles, who ascended into heaven, who sitteth upon the right hand of the Father, who is the rest of those that are departed, the recoverer of those that are lost, the light of those that are in darkness, the deliverer of those that are captive, the guide of those that have gone astray, the refuge of the afflicted, the Bridegroom of the Church, the Charioteer of the Cherubim, the Captain of the Angels, God who is of God, the Son who is of the Father, Jesus Christ, the King for ever and ever. Amen."

Tertullian is said to have characterised Melito's genius as "elegant and declamatory,"¹ and if the above specimen be a fair sample of his higher style,² no juster criticism could be applied. Though opposed to Melito on the question of Church discipline, Tertullian's own spirit had too many points of kinship not to recognise and respect a worthy antagonist. The work in which he criticises Melito ("*de Ecstasi*," in seven books) has unfortunately perished. It seems to have been a pleasing exception to his usual treatment of his opponents.

¹ S. Jerome, *de Vir. Illustr.* xxiv. p. 93.

² There is good ground for thinking that this passage was incorporated by Irenæus in one of his lost treatises, of which a fragment in an Armenian version is preserved in Venice.

The list of subjects covered by this Father shows him to have been a man of versatile mind. His learning was considerable, including a knowledge of Syriac, and possibly of Hebrew. His exegesis of the Old Testament inclined to the mystical. His rhetorical brilliancy caught the fancy of the Western Church, and many of his works were translated into Latin. Hence his name, like that of Hippolytus, survived even into the Middle Ages, under the forms Meletius and Mellitus, and, as has already been remarked, two celebrated treatises gained currency under his name.

We pass on to the next prominent representative of the school of S. John, **Claudius Apollinaris**, Bishop of Hierapolis, probably the immediate successor of Papias. Like Melito, he addressed an Apology to the Emperor M. Aurelius,¹ which may be assigned to the same year; and, like Melito, he wrote voluminous works on various controverted matters. The following titles have come down to us:—*Against the Greeks* (five books); *On Truth* (two books); *Against the Jews* (two books); *Against the Montanists*; *On Godliness*; *On the Paschal Festival*; and *Against the Severians*.² Jerome is our authority for attributing to this Father a wide acquaintance with profane as well as sacred letters: Photius praises his literary phraseology; and the variety of his interests is shown by the titles of his works. Unfortunately nothing remains but three meagre fragments of a dozen lines. In one of them we have the earliest extant version of the celebrated story of the Thundering Legion, which Eusebius declares was regarded as a wonder by the heathens themselves, though they did not adopt the Christian explanation of it.³ The incident of rain falling to

¹ See Euseb. H. E. iv. 27, for a short account of this Father.

² A sect of Encratites or ascetic rigorists, supposed to be the followers of one Severus. But the origin of the name is doubtful.

³ Eusebius gives Apollinaris full credit for a desire to state the exact truth. Nevertheless it seems undeniable that he has fallen into error. The legion was called already *Fulminca*, not *Fulminatrix* (κεραυνοβόλος) as he says, and was stationed at Melitina, a small town in Armenia. Moreover, it is highly improbable that a whole legion of Christian soldiers existed at this date.

quench the soldiers' thirst, and a thunderstorm breaking upon the enemy in answer to the prayer of a Christian legion, was long believed in the Church, and considered to have influenced the Emperor's attitude towards it.

Another writer of importance was **Miltiades**, a younger contemporary of the two preceding. Eusebius tells us that among other writings he composed a treatise *Against the Greeks*, another *Against the Jews*, as well as an *Apology* addressed to the "Rulers of this World," perhaps Aurelius and Verus. This was a defence of Christianity as the true philosophy, and gained a high reputation for its author. That he took some part in the Montanist controversy appears certain, but whether for or against the sectaries is more doubtful. Owing to an apparent confusion of names, Eusebius seems at one time to regard him as a Montanist, at another as an opponent of Montanism. Possibly there were two men of the same name. Another contemporary was **Modestus**, a rare instance of a Latin name among the Asiatics. He wrote against Marcion and Encratism.

A little later, at the close of the century, we find **Polycrates**, Bishop of Ephesus, taking a prominent part in the great Paschal controversy in opposition to Victor, the Roman Pontiff. In order to understand the important fragment of his Encyclical Epistle, preserved by Eusebius, and given further on, it will be necessary to make the reader acquainted with the points in dispute. We have seen that both Melito and Apollinaris were authorities on this question, and we shall have occasion to refer to it again in the chapter on Irenæus. It belongs to history rather than to literature; nevertheless, a short summary may be of interest.

In the Apostolic Church there was no thought of establishing annual festivals. The Apostles themselves kept the Jewish feasts when they could. And the Gentile Christians seem to have been content with the weekly observance of Sunday, in commemoration of the Resurrection; but, in process of time, the inevitable tendency towards "times and seasons" asserted itself, and the Gentile churches gradually established an annual ecclesiastical cycle.

But although the days of the week on which our Lord suffered and rose were always observed by the Church, there was no trustworthy tradition as to the days of the year on which these events occurred. There would obviously, therefore, be room for diversity of computations, if not of principles of observation. When the matter first comes into clear light, we find a difference of practice existing between the churches of Asia Minor and those of the West. The former, following a continuous tradition, observed as their annual festival the 14th Nisan, the anniversary of the Jewish Passover, as the day on which Christ, the true Passover, was sacrificed for man. The latter, guided both by opposition to Judaic practices and by the analogy of the weekly Sunday, observed not the 14th day of Nisan, which might happen on any day of the week, but the Sunday after the Paschal full moon, keeping the previous Friday as the anniversary of the Passion. There are three occasions on which this diversity comes into prominence in the second century. The first occasion is when Polycarp visited Anicetus at Rome, and endeavoured, though unsuccessfully, to harmonise the two customs. His mission, however, was not wholly fruitless, since the two bishops parted on friendly terms, each agreeing to observe his own use. The second occasion was circ. 172 A.D., at Laodicea, when, owing to a large influx of various Christian bodies to celebrate the martyrdom of Sagaris, who had suffered on the 14th Nisan, the diversity of Easter usages excited attention, and produced the controversy in which Melito and probably Apollinaris joined. We gather from the notices of this controversy that the Asiatic bishops remained true to their old custom, basing their argument on the fact that our Lord suffered on the 14th, and adducing in support of their practice not merely unmemorial usage, but also the authority of S. John's Gospel. The third occasion was in 190 A.D., when Pope Victor, confronted by an attempt to introduce the Asiatic, or, as it was afterwards called, the Quartodeciman practice into Rome, not only interdicted it in his own Church, but everywhere else also, and excommunicated those churches which refused to

conform. His despotic claim was resisted by Polycrates, who, in the name of the Asiatic Synod, addressed to him a letter, of which Eusebius has preserved the following fragment :—

“We therefore observe the day inviolably, neither adding to it nor subtracting from it. For in Asia repose great lights of the Church, who shall rise again on the day of the Lord’s coming, when He shall come in glory from heaven, and raise up all the saints; as Philip, one of the twelve Apostles, who reposes in Jerusalem, and his two aged virgin daughters, and his other daughter who lived in the Holy Spirit and rests at Ephesus. Moreover John, who leaned upon the bosom of the Lord, who became His priest, wearing the golden leaf of the priesthood, and was both martyr and teacher, he also sleeps at Ephesus, and Polycarp of Smyrna, bishop and martyr, and Thraseas of Eumenia, both bishop and martyr, who sleeps at Smyrna. What need to mention Sagaris, bishop and martyr, who sleeps at Laodicea, and Papius the blessed, and Melito the eunuch, who lived continuously in the Holy Spirit, who lies in Sardis, awaiting the visitation from heaven, when he shall rise from the dead! All these kept Easter on the 14th day of the month, according to the Gospel, declining not a whit therefrom, but following the rule of the faith. And now I, Polycrates, who am less than you all, according to the tradition of my kindred, do the same, having followed after some of them. For of my kinsmen seven have been bishops, and I am the eighth; and my kinsmen have ever observed the day on which the Jews ceased to eat leavened bread. Now I, brethren, have lived sixty-five years in the Lord, and have held converse with my brethren throughout the world; and having gone through all the Scriptures, I am not to be terrified by those who threaten us. For those who are greater than I have said that we ought to obey God rather than man. I might have recounted the names of those bishops who were present with me, whom, in accordance with your request, I called together; and if I were to mention all, they form a very goodly number. They all, having seen me, a man of no account, have assented unto this my epistle, knowing that I do not fear grey hairs in vain, but have lived a consistent life in the Lord Jesus.”

The language of this letter is extremely interesting, not only from its unstudied dignity, but from the occurrence of

several rare words,¹ and from the incidental information as to the frequent attainment of episcopal office by members of the saint's family. Some have even thought that a succession from father to son is implied, and no doubt this could be extracted from the Greek; but it is hardly likely that so striking a fact would have been passed over by all the ecclesiastical historians: and moreover, the phrase, "sixty-five years in the Lord," may imply that Polycrates was converted in early life, in which case the theory would fall to the ground.

Weighty as this remonstrance was, it appears to have produced no effect upon Victor. That able and earnest but headstrong man persisted in his resolution to coerce the Christianity of the world. Fortunately, however, his tenure of power was short, and his successors allowed the question to be exhaustively discussed by the leading authorities on both sides for some time longer, until the immense practical advantage of enforcing a uniform observance became generally manifest, and the Council of Nicæa finally ratified Victor's view, and enjoined it upon the whole Church as a condition of orthodox communion.

The history of this celebrated dispute brings to light a principle of the highest importance to the student of ecclesiastical institutions, namely, the different attitude assumed by the Church towards apostolic tradition when concerned with matters of doctrine, and the same tradition when concerned with matters of practical observance. No church was more jealous than the Roman of allowing the slightest deviation from what it believed to have been the teaching of the Apostles in matters of faith. Even doctrines which repose on the testimony of a single Apostle it invariably assumes to represent the unanimous voice of the entire body, and invests them with the complete authority of the sacred college. No claim is ever made by the Church as a whole,

¹ *ἀραδιουργητός*, uninterfered with—*στοιχεῖα*, luminaries, a metaphor from the Zodiacal signs; *πέταλον*, plate of gold leaf—the meaning, however, is uncertain, and in any case its sense is metaphorical and spiritual; *ἐννοῦχος*, used metaphorically for a virgin: *πτύρουαι*, to quail, be shaken; *ἀρνεῖν*, to put away, probably a plebeian expression.

still less by the Roman Church, to revise or alter any portion of the faith once delivered to the saints. But in the case of practical observances the Church allowed herself greater latitude. She claimed the right to modify, vary, and adapt these according to her own convenience. Even the undoubted practice of an Apostle was not permitted to stand in the way of change where change was imperatively required for the good of the Church. Nothing shows this more plainly than the history of the Paschal controversy. S. John's custom of keeping Easter according to the Jewish calendar is as well attested as any other fact in connection with his life. Nevertheless, it is made to give way to the paramount importance of securing general uniformity, and marking off, in a way not to be mistaken, the Christian dispensation from the Jewish. A parallel instance is found in the gradual separation of the Agapé, or Love-feast, from the service of the Holy Eucharist. In the practice of the Apostles there can be little doubt that the two ceremonies were combined. Nevertheless, the requirements of church organisation and of purity of worship manifestly demanded that they should be kept separate. Accordingly, we find that by the end of the second century their separation was completely effected, and those small communities which still combined them were held to be schismatic or heretical.

To dilate on the bearings of this principle would obviously be to exceed the limits of our subject. But we have thought it well to draw the reader's attention to it, not only on historical and theological grounds, but more especially in order to point out the combination of free organising intelligence with definite intellectual limitations which is so remarkable a feature in the development of Ante-Nicene Christianity. It is this vigorous and healthy spontaneity of movement which forms the chief contrast between the Church of the first three centuries and the systematised centralisation of the ages that follow.

In this chapter we have carried our account of the Asiatic school to the end of the second century, from motives of convenience, forestalling to some extent the chronological order.

Most of these writers, as well as others of whom we know not even the names, were ardently engaged in stemming the tide of heretical speculation which inundated Asia like a flood. From Papias onwards, Gnostics, Enekratites, Ophites, Marcionites and Montanists disturbed the Church's peace, often with keen intellectual subtlety and often with strong moral enthusiasm. They were confronted with equal ability and even greater enthusiasm by these lettered and statesmanlike prelates, who combined a deep and often mystic piety with strong good sense and astonishing practical vigour. The loss of all their works except a few pitiful fragments is truly deplorable. It may be compared with the similar loss in the sphere of profane literature of the ante-classical poets and orators of Rome, whose more finished successors by no means fill the void their absence creates. So it is with these grand originators of the ecclesiastical *Corpus Theologicæ*. M. Renan in his "Mare Aurèle"¹ has paid a just tribute to their greatness; and with his striking estimate of them we shall conclude our notice: "A crowd of books (he says) was produced on all sides. Never, perhaps, has Christianity been more prolific of literature than during the second century in Asia. Literary culture was universally spread abroad in that province: the art of composition was well understood, and Christianity profited by it. The patristic Church literature now began. The ages that followed did not surpass these earliest essays of Christian eloquence: but from the point of view of later orthodoxy the works of these early Fathers offered more than one stumbling-block. The study of them was regarded with suspicion; they were less and less transcribed, and so nearly all these beautiful writings disappeared to make room for the Christian classics subsequent to the Council of Nicæa, writers whose doctrine was more correct, but whose general character was inferior in originality to those of the second century."

¹ Page 192.

CHAPTER IX.

IRENÆUS (A.D. 125-203?).

IN the history of Christian doctrine it is not the most profound and original thinkers that always occupy the foremost place. On the contrary, the Church has often found her most useful champions among minds of the receptive rather than the creative order, slow of movement, but unyielding and tenacious, and able to apply the rigid test of orthodoxy with impartial logic to all deviations from the rule of faith. We need not be surprised at this. For the revelation of the Christian idea may be regarded in two different ways. It may be regarded as a pregnant germ of truth, destined to expand with the growth of humanity, and therefore needing restatement from time to time, and readjustment to each successive phase of thought. Or it may be regarded as an inviolable deposit committed once for all to the custody of the Church, upon whom is laid the duty of transmitting it from age to age, unchanged and uncontaminated by the processes of the secular intelligence. This latter point of view is at once the simpler, the easier, and the more congenial to the average of mankind. We see signs of it already in the New Testament in the Pastoral Epistles, and afterwards in the sub-Apostolic Fathers. But the most conspicuous instance of it in the Ante-Nicene Church is to be found in **Irenæus**. To him belongs the distinction of stereotyping the genius of orthodoxy and founding the Church's polemic method. In an age when wild speculations were in the air, he adheres unwaveringly to the apostolic tradition, enticed from the safe path neither by the dancing lights of Gnosticism, nor by the steadier flame of Greek philosophic thought.

This great Father, the bent of whose mind was practical rather than literary, but whose writings are of inestimable value to the student of Church history and doctrine, belonged by race and education to the Eastern world. The date of his birth is uncertain. Lightfoot places it about A.D. 120; Lipsius, with more probability, some ten years later. He was certainly a native of Asia Minor, and, very possibly, of Smyrna. Of his parentage we have no information, but one would incline to believe he was born in a Christian home and in a certain position of life. His education was evidently a careful one. It comprised some considerable acquaintance with poetry and philosophy, as well as the usual course of rhetoric and dialectic; but heathen philosophy obtained no such hold on him as it obtained on Justin, nor, on the other hand, did it inspire him with that fierce repulsion which flashes forth in the arguments of Tatian and Tertullian.

His name signifies *the Peaceful*, and in the spirit of an Old Testament saint he accepted it as an omen for the guidance of his life. Gentle but firm, persuasive rather than imperious, he ever used his great authority on the side of moderation and peace. As an opponent of heresy he is uncompromising, but not uncharitable. He strives to describe without misrepresenting views which he does not understand, and as he had access to and used the best available sources, his statements are accepted with confidence by writers of every school. The influences that surrounded his early years were peculiarly fitted to form his genius in that mould of rigid faith, combined with large-hearted wisdom, which makes him resemble our own Hooker, pre-eminently the Judicious.

The churches of Asia Minor in the first half of the second century marched in the van of Christendom. In doctrine and organisation alike they took the lead. Their missionary activity was great; their literary productiveness remarkable. The prolonged life and unique authority of S. John had resulted in the growth of a school of theology, which numbered in its ranks many eminent writers, of whom unhappily but scanty fragments survive.

Of this school Polycarp was unquestionably the most

his letters which he wrote either to the neighbouring churches for their confirmation, or to certain of the brethren for their warning and exhortation.”¹

True to this picture of himself, Irenæus seems never happier than when, at the close of some difficult argument, he can enforce his conclusion by appealing to the authority of Polycarp, and the other “elders, disciples of the Apostles, better men than myself,” with whom he had been privileged to converse, and many precious fragments of whose teaching he has preserved.

The talents educated in Smyrna were destined for exercise in a widely different field. The inhabitants of Gaul had received their Christianity, as formerly their civilisation, from Asia Minor. A close intercourse was maintained between the churches of the two countries, and more than one custom drawn from Eastern use was retained in Gaul notwithstanding the dominant influence of Rome. Irenæus was sent to work as a presbyter in southern Gaul, we know not by whom or in what year. It is quite possible that he may have previously spent some years in Rome. There is a fragment in the Moscow MS. of the martyrdom of Polycarp, which states that at the date of that event Irenæus was teaching in Rome, and that at the precise moment when the martyr’s soul fled he heard a voice like the blast of a trumpet saying, “Polycarp has borne witness.” Lipsius thinks it possible that the fragment is from some lost work of Irenæus himself, but this, of course, is quite uncertain. So far as it goes, however, it makes for his Roman sojourn. Now the death of Polycarp took place in A.D. 155; and Irenæus was chosen Bishop of Lyons in 177 or 178, after a residence, probably, of some few years. We have thus a considerable interval, during which it is likely that Irenæus paid more than one visit to the capital, and found in its dogmatic surroundings a fit sphere for maturing his theological views. For while he retains many characteristics of the Eastern school, such as the Logos doctrine, reverence for the elders,

¹ The translation is from Lightfoot.

and a distinct Chiliastic theory, he shows even more striking traces of Western and, specially, of Roman influence. His conception of the Catholic Church as a Unity founded on doctrine and secured by the universal Episcopate; his lofty estimate of Rome as the chief centre of genuine Catholic tradition; his extreme disapproval of schism, his mistrust of speculation, his predominantly legal and practical conception of the Christian covenant: though they may all be partly illustrated from Asiatic writers, are just those characteristics of the Western Church which grew stronger with time, and finally found their fullest expression in Rome. In spite, therefore, of the insufficiency of evidence, it may be considered highly probable that between his departure from Smyrna and arrival in Gaul, Irenæus spent some time at Rome, sufficient to study and thoroughly to appreciate the leading tendencies of Roman Christianity.

In the latter half of the second century the churches of Gaul were governed by Pothinus, Bishop of Lyons, himself doubtless an Asiatic, and possibly in his boyhood a hearer of S. John. Under him Irenæus fulfilled the duties of a presbyter, until the great persecution under Marcus Aurelius swept over the district (A.D. 177). Among its martyrs was the Bishop, who had reached the patriarchal age of ninety. At his death the eyes of the Church were turned upon Irenæus, whose influence is traceable in the Letter of the Gallican Confessors,¹ of which many think he was the author, and who was entrusted with the conveyance of it to Rome. He was also commissioned to intercede with Pope Eleutherus on behalf of the Montanists of Asia Minor, with some of whose views he himself was inclined to sympathise. Roman Catholic divines suggest a further object of his visit to Rome, viz., that he might obtain Episcopal consecration. On this point, however, we have no direct evidence.

The Bishop of Lyons, if not the sole bishop of the Gallican churches, was at any rate their chief officer. During the time Irenæus held the See, he was much occupied with resisting the spread of heresy, especially Gnosticism in what

¹ See page 303.

is known as its Western form, which seems to have exercised an extraordinary fascination over the Celtic mind, principally through the teaching of Ptolemæus.¹ The bishop's earnestness is proved by his sparing time from those administrative and missionary labours in which he delighted, to write a controversial treatise, a task for which he had no natural inclination. Besides superintending his own extensive diocese, we find him taking an interest in the affairs of the Church at large, and generally with effect. He remonstrated with Florinus on his errors, and, failing to convince him, wrote to the Bishop of Rome, to put him on his guard against his heretical presbyter. During the Quartodeciman controversy, which at Rome was complicated by its connection with the Montanism of Blastus, he intervened in two directions. He addressed to Blastus a pamphlet entitled *On Schism*, pointing out to him the insubordination of his conduct. At the same time he wrote also to Victor, who had taken occasion by the troubles of his own church to endeavour to force the Western rule for Easter upon the whole Catholic Church on pain of excommunication. This autoeratic action had been met by a temperate but firm opposition on the part of the Asiatic churches, who had made Polycrates their spokesman. The situation was serious, and Irenæus, as the friend of both parties, addressed to Victor a weighty and statesmanlike document, pointing out the importance of maintaining union, and of allowing diversity of practice on all matters that did not touch the essentials of the faith. This letter came with all the better grace from Irenæus, since his own practice agreed with Victor's. But the authority of the greatest living Churchman, backed by the unanimous approval of his diocese, had no effect upon the headstrong Pope. A considerable fragment of this letter is preserved by Eusebius in the fifth book of his history. The reader may be glad to have a quotation from it, exemplifying as it does the wisdom and moderation of this truly holy man:—

¹ See page 221.

“ For the controversy is not only as to the day (of keeping Easter), but as to the mode of fasting (previous to it). Some think a single day’s fast sufficient, others keep two days, others a longer period. Some reckon the fast day to be a period of forty consecutive hours of day and night. Such is the diversity of practice: and this of no modern date, but long anterior to our times, our predecessors having perhaps shown some remissness in administration, so that what to them was a spontaneous custom has hardened into a rule with their successors. Still none the less did they one and all keep at peace with each other, and we too do the same. And the diversity in keeping the fast cements the concord of faith.”

The letter then proceeds in dignified language to point out that Victor’s predecessors had not thought it necessary to break off their Christian fellowship with other churches on account of such differences, and cites in particular the example of Anicetus allowing Polycarp to celebrate the Eucharist in his cathedral during a friendly conference upon this very point.

Happy the communities whose spiritual charge was entrusted to such a bishop! We can easily understand that their growth was steady and prosperous. Scarcely any trustworthy notices are preserved of the later years of Irenæus. The date of his death is usually placed in A.D. 202 or 203, on the supposition that he suffered martyrdom under Severus, but the fact of this martyrdom is extremely doubtful. Eusebius does not mention it, nor does Jerome in his catalogue of ecclesiastical writers, where he is following the authority of Eusebius. He alludes to it in one of his later commentaries in a passing reference, and it is repeated by subsequent authors; but probability inclines to the supposition that the bishop was allowed to end his days in peace, after a most successful episcopate of about a quarter of a century.

His Writings.

This truly eminent man was not primarily or professionally an author. He himself tells us this. At the

commencement of his great work he apologises to the friend at whose request he wrote for his imperfect command of the resources of style, and implies that the daily use of a barbarous dialect had disqualified him for literary excellence. But as a rule we find that when men of real capacity set themselves to write on a subject of which they are masters, they rarely lack the power of expression. And this is the case with Irenæus. He possesses several qualifications for a good theological writer. First of all, he has a firm grasp of his own principles, and is not diverted from them by any subtlety of argument or haziness of definition. Secondly, he has an acute polemical method, dry, no doubt, and disputatious, but forcible enough and no way deficient in clearness. He is inferior in the higher scholarship to Clement, and to Justin in philosophic breadth. Of the historic and metaphysical imagination which sheds such a glow over the pages of Origen, he has not a trace. His mind is essentially prosaic. His long and wearisome discussions are rarely enlivened by any brilliant remarks, and his liveliest weapon of offence is a somewhat pedantic pleasantry.¹ But, on the other hand, he has all the advantages of a matter-of-fact temperament. His orthodoxy is all but unimpeached, a rare thing among Ante-Nicene Fathers. The single exception to this is not one that touches any vital doctrine. It is a defect which he shares in common with nearly all his predecessors from the times of the Apostles, namely, the belief in the speedy return of Christ to earth. This belief was especially distasteful to the theologians of the fourth century, from its tendency to obscure the conception of the visible Church as Christ's earthly kingdom. Irenæus undoubtedly allowed himself to be influenced by the somewhat sensuous views that prevailed in the Church of his birth. And it may occasion some surprise to the reader, who has struggled through the knotty arguments of the first four books, to encounter in the fifth a plane of thought so different from what has gone

¹ As where he suddenly exclaims, *ιὸν, ιὸν,* and *φεῦ φεῦ*; or where he parodies the cosmogony of the Valentinians by the "cucurbitogony" of a gourd.

before. In his case as in that of Tertullian, to whose temper such views were far more congenial, the retention of this pious anticipation is due to reverence for antiquity, and in particular to the influences of his youthful days. It has been used to invalidate the critical judgment of Irenæus on other matters, but most unjustly. It is a genuine though a transitory portion of the apostolic tradition, and is quite compatible with a clear apprehension of the theological and philosophical standpoint of the sects against whom he argues.

But to the modern critic his value after all is more historical than doctrinal. He is our main authority for the leading tenets of Gnosticism, and more particularly of Valentinus. And the progress of criticism has tended to establish the substantial trustworthiness of his account of his opponent's views as well as of primitive catholic tradition. There is indeed no writer before Eusebius so distinguished for accuracy of information, or so free from *à priori* views. That he did not clearly discern the fundamental principle of Gnosticism as an attempt to express Christianity in terms of pure thought, is merely to say that he did not live in our own day. Hippolytus was his superior in erudition and Clement in scholarship: but Irenæus stands above them both in the definiteness of his descriptions, and the cogency of his polemical results.

The great work on which his fame rests is the *Refutation of Gnosticism*,¹ in five books, which exists entire only in a Latin version, the Greek original, with the exception of Bk. i. chaps. i.—xxi., and several shorter fragments, having perished. The translation was probably made in Gaul, and is certainly of very early date, since it was used by Tertullian. From a literary point of view it is worthless, being absurdly literal, and barbarous in its Latinity; but, as has been often observed, this rugged fidelity gives it all the higher value, for it is quite possible in many places to reconstruct the Greek from

¹ Ἐλεγχος καὶ ἀνατροπὴ τῆς ψευδονόμου γνώσεως. Mentioned in Eusebius H. E. v. 7 and elsewhere. The book is commonly styled *πρὸς αἰρέσεις*, *Contra hæreses*.

the Hellenised Latin, and sometimes when a knowledge of the Greek term is important. Fragments of a Syriac version are also preserved, the date of which is not determined; but it is in close accord with the Latin.

The *Refutation* was composed in Gaul. From internal evidence we infer that it was written after Irenæus had become bishop, and that its composition extended over several years. Lipsius assigns the five years from A.D. 180–185 as the probable period of authorship. Much discussion has arisen on the various indications of chronology that occur in the work, and the reader who is desirous of studying the arguments is referred to the admirable article on Irenæus in Smith's "Biographical Dictionary." The general plan of this masterpiece of controversy is as follows:—

Book I.—After a prefatory chapter on the attractiveness of heretical ideas and a modest disclaimer of any special controversial aptitude, he plunges at once into a description of the system of Valentinus, which, as the most widely spread, the most representative, and the most popular of all, forms the chief object of his attack, and in refuting which he considers that he virtually refutes the rest. He points out the chief features in which it differs from the orthodox faith, first in its dualism, most fatal error of all; secondly, in its fantastic and arbitrary interpretation of Scripture, to which, indeed, it professes to appeal, but without paying regard to the true sense of the Inspired Word; thirdly, in its inconsistent moral practice, as to which he particularly notes the custom of requiring money for the communication of its mysteries; and fourthly, in its antithesis between the spiritual and the hylic natures, with its double set of doctrines adapted for each. He compares its treatment of Scripture to the patchwork poems strung together out of unconnected verses of Homer, and passed upon the unlearned reader as genuine selections from the poet.

He then points out the unstable character of the doctrine, and the ever-increasing grandiloquence of its successive professors, ridiculing their attempts to improve upon each other's terminology. From Valentinus he passes on to his disciples,

Secundus, Epiphanes,¹ Ptolemaeus (whose opinions had a wide range in Gaul), Colorbasus, and Marcus. To the last-mentioned he devotes a considerable space, more, one would imagine, than his importance warranted; but no doubt Irenæus was the best judge of the relative strength of the systems he attacked. To us it seems incredible that such a tissue of chicanery and bombast could have imposed upon any person of sense. His mysterious theories about properties of numbers and the letters of the alphabet, and other occult results of a pseudo-scientific method, are refuted with a patient fulness which is rarely betrayed into expressions of anger or disdain. These are reserved for the moral side of the man's teaching, which, by its use of magic formulas and exciting ceremonial, produced the most disastrous results on female virtue. The career of Marcus, as depicted by Irenæus, is entirely that of the successful impostor, and his doctrines are evidence, not so much of his beliefs, as of the credulity of the public.²

The third portion of the book is occupied with tracing the springs of Valentinian error to their sources. It contains a very interesting account of Simon Magus, the Father of heresy, in which this remarkable statement is found: "Simon declares that he is to be adored as God; that he has appeared to the Jews as the Son, to the Samaritans as the Father, and to the Gentiles as the Holy Ghost."³ If this quotation be authentic, as there is no reason to doubt, it testifies to the very early currency of the Trinitarian formula, and of a Noetian or Sabellian interpretation of it.⁴ The successor and disciple of Simon was Menander, who again was followed by Saturninus or Saturnilus, and he by Basilides, whom Irenæus thus directly connects with the school of Simon. It appears, however, that the philosophy of this heretic was somewhat

¹ In the Latin we find *alius vero quidam, qui et clarus est magister ipsorum, i. e., ἄλλος δὲ τις ὅς καὶ ἐπιφανῆς διδάσκαλος αὐτῶν*. The opinions of scholars are divided as to whether *ἐπιφανῆς* is to be taken as a proper name or not. To leave a leading writer with whose tenets he was familiar without a name is hardly consistent with the careful practice of Irenæus. But see note, p. 226.

² For further details about Marcus, cf. pp. 110 *u.*, 220.

³ I. 23.

⁴ See pp. 105 and 251.

imperfectly known to him. At any rate, he seems to confound the doctrines of the master with the depraved and distorted form in which they were held by the later Basilideans. An account is then given of Carpocrates and his sect; then of Cerinthus and the Ebionites, whom we are a little surprised to see in such company; next, of Cerdo and his pupil Marcion, Tatian and the Encratites; and finally, of the Ophites, Cainites, and Nicolaitans.

Book II.—In this book the writer braces himself for a hand-to-hand grapple with Valentinianism. In a long and difficult series of arguments he proves his skill in dialectic, vindicates the consistency of the Church's teaching, and exposes many of the weak points of his adversary. Some able general remarks occur in the course of the controversy. For example, at the end of the tenth chapter we read as follows: "To say that matter was formed out of the thought (*enthy-mesis*) of a wandering Æon (*Sophia*), and to separate the Æon from her thought, and to conceive of the affections and properties of the thought apart from the matter (in which they are manifested), is incredible and inconsistent." Here we have, seized with incomparable clearness, the fundamental fallacy of the Gnostic method, viz., the hypostatizing of attributes. Had Irenæus worked out this line of thought instead of merely indicating it, his *Refutation* would have been less tedious and not less convincing. Again, in the fourteenth chapter he compares the Gnostic mythology with that of the comic poet Antiphanes in his "*Birth of Aphrodite*;" with those of Homer and Hesiod; with the cosmogonical theories of Thales and his successors: and shows that there is not a single original feature in the whole. He also points out its essentially Pagan character, and its entire inability to apprehend the revealed God. Another profound remark, in which for a moment he seems to anticipate the modern point of view, occurs in ch. xxviii.—xxx., where he accuses the Gnostics of making man the measure of the universe, and attempting to transcend the limits of human knowledge, forgetting that God alone is omniscient, and that beyond the realm of the knowable lies that of Divine revelation. In all these

arguments we recognise the voice of the true critic. It is true they are not pursued to their legitimate results, and are sometimes counteracted by the display of the very tendencies which they condemn; but, judging broadly of his controversial method, it is hard to deny to it the virtues of fairness of statement and keen logical power, unspoil, as is too often the case, by exaggeration or ambitious rhetoric.

Book III.—Having dealt with the metaphysical aspects of the Gnostic doctrine, he now proceeds to refute it by the testimony of Holy Scripture. In this department, as in so many others, he is not only the first but the greatest and most explicit of all the early controversialists. Nearly all who follow are indebted to him, if not for their actual arguments, at any rate for the great principles on which these are founded. He opens with the question, "What are the sources of Christian truth?" and answers, "The teaching of Christ and His Apostles, as handed down first by word of mouth and then by authoritative written documents." He proves this by showing the unbroken continuity of apostolic tradition, and more particularly, by vindicating the unique authority of the four Gospels. His celebrated argument for the existence of this number, neither more nor less, is an instance of *à priori* reasoning which is indeed unconvincing to us, but in which allowance should be made for the bias of a reverential mind which delights to trace analogies in what it regards as the phenomena of Divine action. The reader will no doubt be glad to have the passage *in extenso*.¹ It is as follows:—

"For as there are four quarters of the world in which we live, as there are also four universal winds, and as the Church is scattered over all the earth, and the Gospel is the pillar and base of the Church, and the breath (or spirit) of life, it is likely that it should have four pillars breathing immortality on every side and kindling afresh the life of men. Whence it is evident that the Word, the Architect of all things, who sitteth upon the Cherubim and holdeth all things together, having been made manifest

¹ *Adv. Har.* iii. 11, 8. Sanday's translation.

unto men, gave us the Gospel in a fourfold shape, but held together by one Spirit. As David, entreating for His presence, saith: 'Thou that sittest upon the Cherubim, show Thyself. For the Cherubim are of fourfold visage, and their visages are symbols of the dispensation (economy) of the Son of Man. . . . And the Gospels therefore agree with them, over which presideth Jesus Christ.'

But while thus vindicating the exclusive authority of the four Gospels, as against the reception of uncanonical Gospels on the one hand, and the mutilation or rejection of the existing ones on the other, he is no less careful to assign due weight to the judgment of the Universal Church. The Church is regarded by him as the authorised custodian and interpreter of the Christian faith, and if any doubt arises as to where the right of interpretation rests, he refers to the historic apostolic churches, and particularly to that of Rome, as the authentic repositories of the true tradition. Into the theological aspect of this argument it is beside our purpose to enter. It is sufficient to point out its great importance in a historical and literary sense. The mind which could clearly grasp and state for all time an intellectual principle so far-reaching in its effects upon the human race, must be credited with no ordinary power of generalisation, and no small philosophic grasp. It is perhaps the greatest contribution Irenæus has made to the armoury of the Church.

Book IV.—In this long and interesting book the same subject is pursued, chiefly with reference to the contention of Marcion that Christ came to reveal a new and hitherto unknown God. It supplies an able vindication of the identity of origin of the Law and the Gospel, as both coming from the same God, and of the development of the Christian Covenant from the Mosaic. Incidentally, it treats of many questions of the highest importance to theology and Church history, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, the nature of the eucharistic sacrifice, the universality of redemption, the origin of evil, the freedom of the will, the Christology of the Old Testament, the value of apostolic succession, and so forth. It is on the whole the most varied and important of the five books, and should be carefully studied by those who desire

to understand the theological equipment of the Ante-Nicene Church. The writer sums up the issue between himself and the Gnostics in the following pithy sentence: "The true *Gnosis* is the teaching of the Apostles and the ancient system of the Church throughout the world."¹ To him theology is not speculation; it is the analysis and combination of principles given from without.

Book V.—The last book begins with a promise to supply proofs of his arguments from the words of Christ and His Apostles. It is rather loosely connected with the preceding, and may well have been written somewhat later. Its chief theme is the resurrection of the body, which is a distinctive tenet of Christianity in opposition to spiritualistic and metaphysical beliefs about the soul. Irenæus' treatment of this subject is, in accordance with his promise at the outset, strictly Scriptural and ecclesiastical, not speculative or mystical. No doubt his interpretation of Scripture has many weak points, and some of his analogies are strained and fanciful,² but there can be no question that he appreciates and defines accurately the true Catholic doctrine.

A special interest centres round the concluding chapters. The topic of the resurrection naturally suggests that of man's final destiny and the second advent of Christ. Irenæus, as mentioned before, favours what are known as Millenarian³ views. Following the traditions of Papias, and other venerable members of the Asiatic Church, he looks for the return of Christ to earth, to reign for a thousand years with His saints, during which period creation shall renew its youth, and the beatitudes of the Old Testament shall mingle harmoniously with those of the New. The coming of Antichrist will precede that of his Conqueror and Judge. The *locus classicus* on this mysterious subject is the passage of the *Apocalypse* in which the number of the Beast is given, and

¹ *γνώσις ἀληθῆς ἢ τῶν ἀποστόλων διδασχὴ καὶ τὸ ἀρχαῖον τῆς ἐκκλησίας σύστημα κατὰ παντὸς τοῦ κόσμου.*—Lib. iv. cap. 33, § 8.

² *E.g.*, his idea that *Salvation by Wood*, *i.e.*, the Cross, is prefigured by the miracle of Elisha in making the axe-head to swim. Cf. the old interpolation, "Dominus regnavit a ligno." See page 335.

³ More strictly, those known as Pre-millenarian. See page 107.

declared to be the number of a man. Irenæus mentions several solutions of the problem, between whose claims he does not care to decide, prudently remarking that the matter was not intended to be clearly revealed.¹

On the subject of eternal punishment, his statement of the doctrine is as thoughtfully and tenderly expressed as perhaps any that has been put forward. The passage is an excellent example of his restrained and reverent expression, so markedly in contrast to the highly-coloured and vindictive strains of Tertullian :²—

“ Whatsoever things preserve friendship with God, to them He giveth participation in Himself, in other words, life and light, and enjoyment of good things. But upon those who in their hearts revolt from God, He bringeth separation from Himself. Now, separation from God is death, and separation from light is darkness, and separation from God is loss of all His good things. Those, therefore, who by their revolt have forfeited the aforesaid things, being deprived of all good things, are of necessity³ in every kind of punishment. Not that *God* primarily punishes, but that that punishment ensues on their deprivation of all good things. Now, good things from God are eternal and endless : therefore the deprivation of them is also eternal and endless ; just as light being continuous, those who have blinded themselves, or have been blinded by others, are continuously deprived of the enjoyment of the light, without its being implied that *light* brings upon them the penalty of blindness.”

From this necessarily brief analysis of his one treatise that has survived, the reader will easily appreciate the immense importance of Irenæus as a Christian writer. His leading characteristics are, on the one hand, thoroughness of apprehension ; on the other, accuracy of representation and temperance of expression. Unlike Justin and Clement, he is deficient in sympathy towards those from whom he differs ;

¹ The solutions given are Εὐάνθας, Λαρεῖνος, Τετράν. (Titus ?) It seems that he inclined towards the last. It does not seem to have occurred to him that the true key must be sought in the Hebrew alphabet.

² Lib. v. cap. 27, § 2. Compare p. 581.

³ καταγίνονται.

unlike Origen, he lacks the many-sidedness of view which charms even in its inconsistencies. But he is superior to all of them in his clear grasp of the essentials of Catholic doctrine, and in the steadfast maintenance, through a long and difficult argument, of the principles with which he starts; while he excels Tertullian still more conspicuously in the fairness of his judgments and the charitable temper of his mind. The high praise that Lightfoot bestows on one portion of his research may justly be extended to the whole: "Any one" (he says) "who will take the pains to read Irenæus through carefully, endeavouring to enter into his historical position in all its bearings, striving to realise what he and his contemporaries actually thought about the writings of the New Testament, and what grounds they had for thinking it, and, above all, resisting the temptation to read in modern theories between the lines, will be in a more favourable position for judging rightly of the early history of the canon, than if he had studied all the monographs which have issued from the German press for the last half-century."¹

Influence of his Character and Genius.

The estimation in which his writings were held is sufficiently proved by the use made of them. Hippolytus and Tertullian, themselves original investigators, are content, when travelling over the same ground as Irenæus, to rest on his authority, and often to reproduce his words. At a later date Cyprian, and, later still, Epiphanius and Theodoret, drew largely from his vast stores of information. Clement is an independent authority, but he too shows great respect for Irenæus.

This eminence was secured by what in a historian is the highest of all qualities, accuracy of information and carefulness of statement. It is clear that Irenæus drew from original sources. The memoirs of Valentinus and his disciples, and the writings of Ptolemæus and his immediate

¹ Essays on Supernatural Religion, No. iv. p. 141.

followers, are referred to by him. Moreover, the very circumstantial notices of Marcus are evidently from first-hand observation. Lipsius is of opinion that, in addition to the heretical works themselves, Irenæus availed himself of various trustworthy controversial writings, such as those of the Asiatic presbyters,¹ and the *Syntagma* of Justin, the latter with especial reference to the views of Marcion. We are indebted to Eusebius for an appreciative account of the life and writings of Irenæus, from whom he quotes no less than thirty-one passages. His prejudice against the bishop's Chiliastic views does not prevent him doing full justice to the qualities of his mind and character.

Besides his great work, Irenæus was the author of several other writings, of which only a few fragments have come down to us.

He himself announces his intention of combating the views of Marcion in a separate treatise; but it is uncertain whether this intention was ever carried into effect.

His Epistle to Florinus, quoted above, is partly preserved by Eusebius. Its fuller title was *Concerning Monarchy, i. e., that God is not the author of evil.*² Whether this implies, as Lightfoot thinks, a Gnostic theory of the Demiurge, or, as Massuet thinks, the still more anti-Christian view of the Supreme God as the author of evil, cannot now be determined. The date of this work is disputed, but it was probably subsequent to that on heresies.³ It was followed shortly after by another treatise, *On the Ogdoad*, which certainly must have been directed against Gnostic error; from this Eusebius quotes with approval the concluding words, which strikingly indicate the writer's sense of the paramount importance of avoiding all misrepresentation in controversial matters, and imply a not ill-founded anxiety lest ignorant or would-be

¹ See back, p. 110. These included Polycarp, Papias, and the unnamed "elders, companions of the Apostles."

² Eus. v. 20. *περὶ μοναρχίας ἢ περὶ τοῦ μὴ εἶναι τὸν Θεὸν ποιητὴν κακῶν.*

³ Lightfoot thinks the letter to Florinus was among his earliest works; but it seems so closely connected with that on the Ogdoad, that it is safer to regard them as nearly synchronous.

orthodox transcribers should deal unfairly with his own text:—

“I adjure thee, whoever thou art, that transcribest this book, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by His gracious appearance, when He shall come to judge the quick and the dead, to compare what thou hast copied, and to correct it by this original manuscript, from which thou hast carefully transcribed. And that thou also transcribe this adjuration, and insert it in the copy.”

The letter to Victor, and that *On Schism* addressed to Blastus, have been already referred to. Eusebius also mentions treatises *Against the Greeks* (or *On Knowledge*), and *On Apostolic Preaching*, a treatise *On Various Discussions*,¹ which is supposed to have been a collection of homilies on various texts of Scripture, and one *On the Wisdom of Solomon*. Besides these, four Greek fragments were discovered by Pfaff at Turin in 1715. The first treats of the true knowledge; the second is on the Eucharist; the third, on the duty of toleration in subordinate matters of difference, with reference to the Paschal controversies; the fourth, on the object of the Incarnation. Their genuineness has been much disputed; but the third is almost certainly from a work of Irenæus.

The influence of Irenæus on Christian thought has not been so much personal as theological. It is quite possible that this was his own direct intention. His disclaimer of literary excellence in the preface is not borne out by the sequel. It is more probable that he designedly suppressed all display of style. If the Letter of the Gallican Churches be his work, as is very probable, he possessed high powers of pathetic writing. But, like Bishop Butler, he seems to have studiously eliminated all expressions of feeling, and all individual characteristics, from a treatise in which he intended to embody the results of severe argument and the impersonal conclusions of the Catholic reason. If this was his purpose, he has been amply justified by the result.

¹ Βιβλίον διαλέξεων διαφόρων.

Lightfoot truly says that on all the most important points of theology this Father conforms to the standard that has satisfied the Church ever since.

APPENDIX.

THE LETTER OF THE GALLICAN CHURCHES.

Before closing this chapter, a brief notice must be given of this celebrated letter.¹ We have remarked that Irenæus, as yet a presbyter, was chosen to carry it to Rome, and that several scholars have conjectured that he was the author of it. The supposition is probable enough in itself; for the suppression of the writer's name is in accordance with the ancient custom observed in the Epistles of Clement and Barnabas. Eusebius, it is true, says nothing about Irenæus being the author, and his silence must undoubtedly be allowed great weight. Routh's argument against assigning it to him is taken from considerations of style. Irenæus emphatically disclaims all practice in the rhetorical art; and this denial is thought to be incompatible with the high degree of literary pathos to which the letter attains. But we must remember, first, that Irenæus' disclaimer has to be taken with considerable reservation, and secondly, that the undoubted literary effect of the letter arises from its artless simplicity and transparent earnestness, not from any aesthetic qualifications, to which it makes no pretension whatever. Its plain prosaic narrative, recounting the most supreme triumphs of faith without any apparent consciousness of their pre-eminent character, reveals the very type of mind that afterwards grappled in the same thorough unhesitating manner with the multifarious aberrations of heresy. In default of external evidence we strongly incline, from the powerful personality that looms in the background of the letter, to ascribe it to Irenæus. Whoever was the author, it is beyond all question one of the most precious heirlooms which has come down to us from Christian antiquity. All

¹ Preserved almost in its entirety by Eusebius, H. E. v. cc. 1-4.

classes of critics have united to commend it; the sober Routh, the fastidious and sceptical Renan, the warm-hearted and susceptible Archdeacon Farrar. It is impossible for any man or woman with a heart in their breast to read it without being moved. The Christian blesses God, as he reads, for the glorious testimony it affords to the power of the Saviour he loves, and the Agnostic wonders as he feels the spell of an enthusiasm which he deems irrational, but whose unearthly grandeur he cannot deny. We feel that no mere literary criticism will give an adequate idea of the simple majesty of this true story, and therefore we have thought well to give the reader a literal translation of all that Eusebius has preserved, that he may judge of its qualities for himself:—

The Letter of the Gallican Churches, containing an account of the Martyrdoms at Vienne and Lyons under Marcus Aurelius, A.D. 177.

“The servants of Christ who sojourn in Vienna and Lugdunum to the brethren in Asia and Phrygia, who have like faith and hope of redemption with us: Peace, grace and glory from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

“We cannot worthily recount, nor is it possible in writing to describe the greatness of our late persecution, the wrath of the heathen against the saints and all that the blessed martyrs endured. For the adversary rushed upon us with all his strength, giving us a foretaste of his coming that will soon be without fear: and he rehearsed all his part, practising and training his servants against the servants of God: so that we were not merely kept out of the houses, baths and market, but actually forbidden to show ourselves in any place whatever.

“But we on our side were led to battle by the grace of God, which saved the weak, and raised up firm pillars, strong through patience, to draw to themselves all the violence of the wicked one. These withstood him to the face, enduring every kind of reproach and punishment. These made light of great things in their haste to join Christ, truly proving that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. And in the first place they bravely bore all that the multitude when they met together with one accord put

upon them ; revilings and beatings and draggings and plunderings and stonings and imprisonments : and all else that is wont to be done by an infuriated mob to those it believes to be its enemies. At last, being brought into the market-place by the tribune and chief men of the city, and being questioned and confessing before the whole populace, they were confined in prison to await the coming of the governor.

“On his arrival they were brought before him, and treated with signal harshness. Then one of their number, Vettius Epagathus by name, a man filled with the fulness of love to God and his neighbour, whose path was so direct that young as he was he equalled the testimony of the aged Zacharias, ‘that he walked in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blameless’ and was forward in every act of kindness to his neighbour : zealous moreover for God and fervent in spirit :—Being such a one, he brooked not the unjust judgment pronounced against us, but grieved sore and claimed to be heard in the brethren’s defence, saying he could prove there was no godlessness or impiety amongst us. But the nobles on the platform, to whose class he himself belonged, shouted to him to stop ; while the governor refused to accept his just plea for speech, and merely inquired if he was a Christian. He replied with a clear voice that he was : and was at once removed into the company of the martyrs, having won the title of ‘the Christians’ advocate.’ Indeed he had the Advocate within him, the Holy Spirit, in greater measure than Zacharias, as he showed by the fulness of his love, having rejoiced for the sake of defending his brethren to lay down his own life. He was, yea he is, a true disciple of Christ, one that follows the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

“Then indeed the rest were divided. For the protomartyrs were ready and to the front, who with all willingness filled up the confession of their witness. And the unready and untrained were made manifest, yea and the weak also, who could not bear the tension of this great conflict. Of these, ten in all fell away, who also caused us great grief and unbounded sorrow, and hindered the alacrity of the rest, who though not themselves arrested, yet, filled with sympathy, were present with the martyrs and never left their side.

“Then were we all greatly troubled from doubtfulness as to their confession, not dreading the punishments, but looking towards the end, and fearing lest any might fall away. However,

each day those who were worthy were arrested, and these filled the others' places, so that all the best of the two churches, those by whom their state had been established, were gathered into one. They arrested also certain heathen slaves of the Christians, for the governor had ordered that we should all be searched for. These men, by the lying in wait of Satan, through dread of the torments which they saw inflicted on the Christians, and with which they themselves were threatened, falsely accused us of banqueting on human flesh, of incestuous intercourse, and other things which it is not lawful for us even to speak or think of, nor even to believe that such things ever happen among men. On this information being extracted, the multitude were filled with rage against us; so that even those who had from the ties of kinship dealt more gently at first, were now rent with savage anger. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the Lord, 'The time cometh when every one that killeth you will think that he doeth God service.'

"After this the holy martyrs endured punishments past all recounting, Satan desiring above all things to force them to blaspheme. And above all the rest did the governor and the people and the soldiers vent their fury upon the Viennese deacon Sanctus, and upon Maturus, new to the light, but a noble warrior, and upon Attalus, a Pergamene by birth, a pillar and ground at all times of our Church, and upon Blandina, through whom Christ showed how that which is little esteemed and uncomely, and despised by men, is accounted worthy of glory by God, through His love, which is shown in power and not by outward boasting.

"For whereas we all doubted of her, and even her mistress according to the flesh, who herself was one of the combatants, anxiously feared lest she should not be able, through her bodily weakness, to make an open confession, Blandina was filled with such strength as utterly to weary out those who assailed her with every kind of torment from morning till evening, till they themselves confessed that they could do nothing further to her, and marvelled that she still breathed when her whole body was broken and laid open, and she had suffered torments, any one of which was sufficient to have destroyed her life. But the blessed maiden, like a noble athlete, gained new spirit by her confession. To her it was a relief and a refreshment and a deadening of pain to say, 'I am a Christian,' and 'We do nothing wrong.'

"As for Sanctus, he endured gallantly cruelties unutterable

and beyond all human parallel, the ungodly hoping, through the persistency and violence of the tortures, to wring from him some unlawful word. But so steadfastly did he resist them, that he never so much as revealed his name, his country, or his city, nor whether he was bond or free; but returned to all their questions but one answer, 'I am a Christian.' This was his name, this his city, his country, his everything: nor did the Gentiles hear from him any other word. Therefore was there a great contention among the governor and the executioners against him; so that, having nothing else to turn to, they fastened plates of red-hot copper to the softest parts of his body, and so let them burn. But he remained unmoved and unyielding, firm in confession, bedewed and strengthened by the heavenly fountain of the water of life that issueth forth from the heart of Christ.

"His poor body was a witness of his sufferings, being one wound and weal, all drawn together and distorted out of all recognisable shape. In him Christ suffered and accomplished great glory, destroying the adversary, and signifying by this example that nothing is terrible where the Father's love is, nor grievous where Christ's glory is. For when after some days the ungodly once more tortured him, hoping to get the better of him by repeating all the former punishments upon his swollen and inflamed body, which could not bear even the slightest touch of the hand, or else thinking that he might die under the torture and so strike horror into the rest; the result turned out otherwise than was expected, for in the second tortures he recovered himself and straightened his body, and resumed his former appearance and the use of his limbs. Thus the second infliction of torture became no punishment to him, but rather healing through the grace of Christ.

"Then there was *Biblias*, one of those who had denied Christ. The devil, thinking he was already sure of her, but wishing to condemn her also by means of blasphemy, led her to punishment, urging her to speak unhallowed things of us, deeming her spiritless and already crushed. But she by the torture recovered her senses, waking up as it were from a deep sleep; being reminded by temporal chastisements of the eternal punishment of hell. And so she plainly contradicted their calumnies, saying, 'How can such as they devour children, seeing they are not permitted to eat the blood even of brute beasts?' And with that she acknowledged herself a Christian, and was added to the martyrs' list.

“Now when the tyrant’s punishments were brought to nought by Christ through the patience of His saints, the devil contrived a fresh plan, namely, to shut them up in a darksome prison and a most loathsome dungeon, where their feet were stretched apart in the stocks even to the fifth hole, and they suffered all sorts of cruelties such as infuriated jailers full of devilish malice love to inflict. So that the greater part were suffocated in the prison, those, that is, whom the Lord willed so to die, manifesting forth His glory. Yet those who had been most bitterly abused, whom it seemed impossible that the most tender nursing could keep alive, remained alive in the dungeon; being deprived indeed of all human care, but strengthened and refreshed in body and soul by the Lord, so that they comforted and exhorted all the rest; whereas the young ones and they who had but just been seized, whose bodies had not been before maltreated, failed to endure the horrors of imprisonment and perished within the prison.

“Now the blessed Pothinus, to whom had been entrusted the Episcopal office in Lyons, being above ninety years old, broken down in body and scarce able to breathe from prolonged sickness, yet being revived by the zeal of his spirit and the strong desire for martyrdom, was himself dragged before the tribunal. His body was sinking down under old age and infirmity, but he kept his soul firm, that Christ might triumph through it. He was brought forward by the soldiers, escorted by the political officers, and accompanied by the loud shouts of the entire populace, and even as though he were Christ, he gave a glorious testimony. Being asked by the governor who the God of the Christians was, he replied, ‘Thou shalt know if thou beest worthy.’ Then was he mercilessly dragged about and suffered innumerable stripes: those who were nearest smiting him with hands and feet, and showing no reverence to his old age, and those at a distance hurling at him whatever missile they had at hand, all of them thinking it an unpardonable omission if they left any kind of cruelty untried. For thus they imagined they were avenging the cause of their gods. At length, scarcely breathing, he was thrown into the dungeon, where after two days he gave up the ghost.

“And here there appeared a signal instance of the providence of God and of the boundless mercy of Jesus; such a thing as happens not often in the brotherhood, but quite in keeping with the practice of Christ. For those who on their first arrest had

recanted were now imprisoned with the rest and shared their miseries. Even their recantation had not availed them. For while those who had confessed what they really were were imprisoned simply as Christians, and on no other charge, these others were detained on the charge of murder and uncleanness, and had to suffer a double punishment. The former were comforted by the joy of martyrdom, and the hope of the promises, by the love of Christ, and the Spirit of the Father. But these were tormented by their own conscience, as their appearance unmistakably showed while they were being led from prison. The one came forth joyously, with glory and great grace spread over their countenances, so that their fetters lay on them like beauteous ornaments, even as a bride is decked with necklets of finely-wrought gold. Moreover, they breathed forth the sweet perfume of Christ, so that people fancied they had been anointed with ointment of this world. But the others came forth down-cast and shamefaced and ill-visaged, being filled with all uncomeliness, so that even the Gentiles reviled them for abjects and cowards, for they lay under the guilt of murderers, and had lost the honourable and life-giving title of martyrs. And the rest beholding them were made the more steadfast, and those that were seized made an unwavering confession, giving no heed to the suggestions of the devil.

“After this their witness was sealed by every form of death. For they had woven a single chaplet of flowers of every hue and offered it to their Father. And it behoved such noble combatants, having fought in every kind of contest and conquered mightily, to receive the great prize of immortality. First, Maturus, Sanctus, Blandina and Attalus were led forth and thrown to the beasts at the inhuman public spectacle of the Gentiles, for a beast-fight was given on that day expressly on account of our brethren. Then Maturus and Sanctus once more went through every form of punishment in the amphitheatre, as though they had endured nothing before, or rather as having vanquished the adversary already in many jousts, and now preparing for the final issue of the crown. First they endured the whole list of scourgings usual on such occasions; then they were dragged about by the beasts; then they suffered whatever else the raging multitude vociferously demanded; and at last the torture of the iron chair, on which their flesh was fried, and the steam enveloped them. Nor did this satisfy their tormentors; they only raged

the more fiercely, being determined to vanquish their resolution. Yet not one word did they extract from Sanetus except the single form of confession which he had uttered from the first. These two, then, having survived through all this varied agony, were at length put to the sword, having become a spectacle to the world in place of the accustomed gladiatorial contests. Blandina was hung up on a cross, and exposed to a succession of wild beasts; and being seen thus lifted up, by her fervent prayer she inspired great courage into the martyrs; for they saw through and beyond their sister, even with their outward eyes, the form of Him who was crucified for them, to assure them that every one who suffers for the glory of Christ shall have everlasting fellowship with the living God. Now since none of the beasts would touch her, she was taken down from the tree and sent back to prison to be kept for another spectacle, to the end that, being victorious in many fights, she might make the condemnation of the crooked serpent inevitable, and small, weak, and contemptible as she was, might encourage the brethren, having put on Christ, the great and invincible Athlete. Yea, in many contests she worsted the enemy and won, through conflict, the incorruptible crown.

“Attalus, moreover, as one of repute, was loudly demanded by the multitude, and entered the lists a ready warrior, owing to his good conscience; since he had been genuinely trained in Christ's discipline, and had been a consistent witness for the truth. He was carried round the arena, preceded by a placard on which was written, ‘This is Attalus, the Christian.’ The multitude were specially eager over him; and the governor, when he knew that he was a Roman, ordered him to be removed with the rest who were confined in prison. About these he wrote to Cæsar, and awaited his orders how to deal with them.

“The interval meanwhile was not idle or profitless, but through their patience the infinite mercy of Christ shone forth. For the dead were quickened by the living; and martyrs showed grace to those who were not martyrs; and great was the joy of the Virgin Mother as she received back alive those whom she had cast forth as untimely born. But the greater part of the lapsed were conceived anew, and cherished and brought to birth, and learned to confess, and at length, alive and vigorous, they approached the judgment-seat; God, who willeth not the death of a sinner, but dealeth kindly with him on repentance, shedding sweetness on them, and preparing them to stand before the governor.

“Now Cæsar’s rescript was that they should be tortured, but released if they denied Christ. Wherefore the governor, seeing that the great festival of this large and populous neighbourhood was commencing, brought the blessed ones before his tribunal to make a show of them and so gratify the mob. He once more questioned them; and such as could prove their Roman citizenship were beheaded, and the rest thrown to the beasts.

“Then was Christ greatly glorified in those who before had denied Him, and now to the surprise of the Gentiles confessed Him. The governor examined them separately, thinking they would be released; but they confessed and were added to the martyrs’ roll. Those only remained without, who had no grain of faith, nor perception of the bridal garment, nor sense of the fear of God, but by their mode of life had done despite unto the way, being the children of perdition; but all the rest were added to the Church. Among those who were questioned was one Alexander, a Phrygian, a physician by profession, who had spent many years in Gaul, and was known to all for his love to God and boldness in the world, and for his share in the apostolic gifts. He stood by the judgment-seat, and beckoning to the rest, he exhorted them to confess, and appeared to those about him like one in travail. But the mob, full of rage at seeing them ready to confess, shouted out that it was Alexander who had made them do it. Then the governor turned to him and asked him who he was. On his replying that he was a Christian, the governor fell into a rage and condemned him to the beasts. And on the next day he and Attalus were brought forward, for Attalus also, to please the multitude, was thrown to the beasts. These two passed through all the forms of torture devised by human cruelty, and having endured a glorious conflict, were at last put to the sword. Alexander uttered not one groan or sound of any kind, but in his heart conversed with God. But Attalus, when placed upon the red-hot chair and consumed, when his flesh melted from his bones, cried out in Latin, ‘Lo! this it is to eat human flesh, and ye are they who do it. But we neither eat human flesh nor do anything unlawful.’ And when asked God’s name, he replied, ‘God has no name as men have.’

“At length, on the last day of the games, Blandina was once more led in with a boy of fifteen, named Ponticus. Each day they had been compelled to witness the torments of the rest, in the hope that they might be induced to swear by the idols. The

people grew more and more savage at the sight of their constancy, pitying neither the youth of the boy nor the sex of the maiden.

“They made them suffer every form of torture, urging them after each was over to swear, but without effect. Ponticus, exhorted by his sister, so that all might see that it was she who gave him courage, after bravely enduring all the punishments, at length yielded up his life. But the blessed Blandina, last of all, like a high-born mother who had encouraged her children and sent them in triumph to the King, herself enduring all the anguish of her children, hastened after them joyful and exulting, not like one thrown to beasts, but like one called to a marriage banquet. And after the scourge, after the beasts, after the iron chair, last of all she was flung into a net and thrown to a wild bull. Then, being tossed many times, and having no sense of anything that happened to her through her hope and expectation of the promise of her fellowship with Christ, she was put to death with the sword, the Gentiles themselves confessing that never had any woman among them endured such grievous woes.

“Yet not even then was their madness assuaged, nor their fierce hatred of the saints; for, like savage tribes of barbarians maddened by a fierce wild beast, they could not be quieted; so their malice took a new beginning, venting itself upon the dead bodies. For, instead of being ashamed at their defeat, as they would if they had had any human feeling, their rage burned all the more fiercely, governor and people vying with each other in the malignity they displayed, that the Scripture might be fulfilled which saith, ‘He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he that is righteous let him be righteous still.’ For those that were suffocated in the dungeon they flung to dogs, keeping strict guard over them day and night, lest any should be buried by us. Then they collected the remnants left from the beasts and flames, all torn and charred, and the severed heads and trunks, and guarded them with a military watch for many days, to ensure their being unburied. Some grinned and gnashed their teeth at them, seeking further vengeance; others laughed and mocked, magnifying their idols, and ascribing to them the martyrs’ punishment. But those that were of gentler mood, and had some human feeling, reproached us, saying, ‘Where is now their God? What did their religion profit them, which they chose before their own lives?’ Such was the different behaviour of these men. Our side was plunged into the deepest mourning because we could not

hide their bodies in the earth. For night helped us not, nor did money avail, nor supplications move them ; but in every way they kept guard over them, thinking it great gain if they could hinder them from burial.

“ For six days the bodies of the martyrs were exposed and exhibited, and then were burnt and reduced to ashes, and thrown all together into the river Rhone, which flows hard by, in order that no relic of them might ever again appear on earth. This they did, thinking they could outwit God, and deprive them of the new birth, saying that now they could have no hope of any resurrection, for the sake of which they had brought in a new and strange creed, and despised torments, and marched joyfully to death. ‘ Now let us see whether they rise again, and whether their God is able to succour them or deliver them out of our hands.’ ”

CHAPTER X.

THE GRAECO-ROMAN SCHOOL—MURATORIAN FRAGMENT—HIPPOLYTUS—CAIUS—VICTOR AND OTHERS (A.D. 170-235?).

AFTER an interval of near a century, we turn our eyes again upon the Roman Church. If we except the Shepherd of Hermas, no literary work had emanated from that Church since Clement wrote his great epistle. Its energies had been concentrated on the more pressing business of discipline and organisation, of establishing relations with foreign churches, and of restraining the spread of heresy. The theologians and controversialists of Christendom had been trained elsewhere. Most of them no doubt had come to Rome on visits more or less prolonged, as Polycarp, Justin, Tatian, Irenæus. But their object was to teach rather than to learn, to give and not to receive. Rome was the meeting-ground of the champions of every school, Catholic and schismatic, orthodox and heretical. The aggressor was there, ready to launch his bolts into the citadel. The defender had need to be there also, and prepared to dispute every inch of ground.

Hitherto the official stamp of Rome had not been clearly impressed on the policy of her Church, or if it had, the world did not recognise it. And yet there are indications of it. Already in S. Clement's letter, an assumption, so natural as to be almost unconscious, of the right to advise and interpose, underlies his pacificatory argument. And this tendency grew and strengthened as much from the necessities of the case as from the deliberate action of the Church. Nowhere was it so natural to look for revision of disputed decisions, for authoritative tradition, for the rule of faith, as to the Church in the Imperial city, the Church sealed with the blood of the two chief Apostles. Had Rome been less willing than she

was to assume the leading part, it would assuredly have been thrust upon her.

There was, however, one obstacle to the effective use of her advantages, viz., her retention of the Greek language. So long as the Christian body in Rome represented an alien community, wholly out of touch with the native population, and using a different language from that of the civil authority, it was impossible adequately to impress upon the world the associations that the name of Rome embodied. Now until near the close of the second century the bishops, as a rule, had borne Greek names, and all Church documents had gone forth in the Greek language. But with the accession of Victor (A.D. 187) a new epoch was inaugurated, a new stage of growth reached. The slumbering spirit of domination awoke fresh and vigorous. The mission of Rome to impose rules of union began to be more or less distinctly realised. The Asiatic Irenæus felt the spell. In him is seen at work the twofold tendency, of speculative theology on the one hand, and organic ecclesiasticism on the other, harmonious as yet, and perhaps unconsciously combined—certainly in no sense contrasted—which was destined in its future development to exercise an incalculable influence over Christendom.

But the new departure did not come all at once. For some time longer the Greek language was retained for liturgical uses, and was employed by more than one leading theological writer. It is not certain when Latin supplanted Greek in public worship; but it is likely that for some years both languages were in use, and it has even been suggested that a second or coadjutor bishop was appointed to attend to the Greek-speaking congregations.

At any rate, by the middle of the third century the Church had become thoroughly Latin; her public documents in language and contents assimilate closely to state-papers; while each step of her policy reveals a trained political intelligence. In effecting this transformation, it is obvious that new qualities were required in the leading men. Aptitude for affairs was the first requisite; theological learning may have been desirable, but was not essential. It is likely that many

Churchmen who lived through the period found themselves out of harmony with its drift. Such seems to have been the case with two men of mark who until lately have been a good deal confused together, Hippolytus and Caius; the former a highly important authority on many subjects, the latter now somewhat shorn of his laurels by their transference to his greater contemporary; both of them intelligent but evidently unsympathetic witnesses of the contemporary development of their church.

The Fragment on the Canon.

Before treating of these two writers, it will be necessary to notice briefly a document which has been ascribed to them both, and which, though short, is of peculiar interest, first as the earliest Latin writing of the Roman Church, and secondly, as an important link in the evidence for the Canon of the New Testament. This is the fragment, discovered in the Ambrosian Library at Milan in a MS. of the seventh or eighth century, which originally belonged to Columban's monastery at Bobbio. It was published in 1740 by Muratori, and is usually known as the **Muratorian Fragment**. It is incomplete both at the beginning and end, and disfigured by remarkable barbarisms, but contains enough valuable matter to make us lament its incompleteness.

The original MS., in addition to other matter, comprised a list of those writings of the New Testament which the Roman Church acknowledged as canonical, besides criticisms on other writings which claimed or had acquired the authority of inspiration. From its peculiar idiom, and also on general grounds, it is almost universally allowed to be a translation from the Greek.¹ Lightfoot has attempted to reconstruct portions of the Greek original, and in doing so has come to the conclusion that it was written in iambic verse, a point

¹ Westcott (*Canon of the New Testament*, part i. ch. ii.) says that, if it be studied as a whole, no one who has much experience in Greek and Latin composition will doubt that it is a translation. Hesse, however, *doubts* it.

which he thinks important in deciding the question of authorship.

A summary of the Roman Church's judgment on the canon must needs possess great theological significance. For this subject, which does not concern us here, the reader is referred to Westcott's work. From certain coincidences in his account of S. Mark and S. John, it has been conjectured that the writer, whoever he may have been, was acquainted with the *Expositions* of Papias. This is highly probable. For instance, the following tradition of the composition of S. John's Gospel surely must have come from Papias :—

“John was urged by his fellow-disciples and bishops to write a Gospel. He replied, ‘Fast with me three days, and then let us report to each other the revelation we may receive.’ On the same night it was revealed to the Apostle Andrew¹ that John should write an account of everything in his own name, and that it should then be revised and approved by the rest.”

Another curious point made by the writer savours strongly of Papias. He draws a parallel between the Apostles Paul and John on the ground that each wrote epistles to seven churches and no more, thus signifying mystically that the One Church in its sevenfold perfection was the true Body of Christ.

As to the date and authorship of the fragment, three conjectures have been made. The first and most generally received attributes it to an anonymous author of A.D. 170 or thereabouts. It relies on the chronological reference in the fragment itself, that “the Shepherd of Hermas was written quite recently in our own times during the pontificate of Pius.” Now this pontificate is variously given as A.D. 127–142, or A.D. 142–157. Taken in their obvious sense, the words above quoted imply a date not long after Pius' death. We refer of course to the Greek original, not to the existing Latin, which is doubtless somewhat later. If this date be accepted, the evidence for the New Testament Canon gains

¹ Observe that, according to this author, S. Andrew survived to the closing years of the first century. This is obviously an ancient tradition.

considerably, being thrown back to a date earlier than Irenæus.

The second conjecture is that of Muratori himself. He ascribed it to the Roman presbyter Caius, about whom something will be said presently. This would bring its date down forty or fifty years, to the first quarter of the third century. This hypothesis is adopted by Salmon, who adduces the following arguments:—

1. Montanism is clearly referred to in the fragment, and this, there is good reason to think, did not make its appearance in the West until after A.D. 200.

2. In estimating the weight of the expression “quite recently in our own time,” regard must be had to the purpose of the writer. He is not writing for purposes of history, but of teaching, and to some extent, of controversy. In disparaging the modernness of Hermas, therefore, as contrasted with the antiquity of the Apostles, he speaks contemptuously of the interval that had elapsed as a mere nothing. Moreover, good grounds can be advanced for thinking he was mistaken about the date of Hermas, as we have already shown is the case; it is probable he was not so near a contemporary of Pius as the words at first imply.

The third conjecture is that first suggested by Salmon, and afterwards adopted by Lightfoot, that Hippolytus is the author. In the list of his works we read one entitled, “Verses about all the Scriptures.”¹ These Lightfoot thinks were metrical descriptions of the books of the Old and New Testaments, and that our fragment is a part of one of them. On this supposition its date need not be brought down so late as A.D. 225, but its evidential value will still be posterior to Irenæus.

Hippolytus.

Leaving the authorship, then, as an unsolved problem, we now proceed to our account of **Hippolytus**. It has been remarked by Professor Schaff that this famous person has lived three lives, a real one in the third century; as an opponent

¹ ὁδαὶ εἰς πάσας τὰς γραφάς. They may have been hymns.

of the Popes of his day, a fictitious one in the Middle Ages as a canonised saint, and a literary one in the nineteenth century after the discovery of his long-lost work on heresies.

The accounts of ancient writers respecting him are very confused. He is sometimes spoken of as a presbyter and sometimes as a bishop. Eusebius calls him a bishop, but admits that he does not know the name of his see; while Jerome, who might be supposed to know the history of the Roman Church, gives no more precise information. He adds, however, the statement that he was a martyr, but without giving any details. We gather from a catalogue of the Popes (about A.D. 354) that the Presbyter Hippolytus and the Bishop Pontianus were banished by Maximin, the successor of Alexander Severus (A.D. 235 or 236), to the mines of Sardinia, from whence their remains were conveyed on the same day to Rome some years later. The climate of this island was notoriously unhealthy, and the hardships of life in the mines terrible. It is very likely that both these eminent men soon succumbed to their sufferings, and were counted as martyrs, like other confessors who died in prison.

The poet Prudentius, who lived in the beginning of the fifth century, is more explicit in his details. He describes Hippolytus as a member of Novatian's party (an anachronism, it should be remarked, of several years), and states that before his death he was reconciled to the Church, and was martyred at Portus by order of the Prefect of Rome, being torn asunder by wild horses after the manner of the Hippolytus of Greek legend.

In spite of its mistakes and improbabilities, Prudentius story is considered by Lightfoot and Schaff to contain some elements of truth, especially as to the schismatical attitude of Hippolytus and his connection with Portus, the seaport of Rome. Other ancient notices allude to him as Bishop of Arabia, others as Bishop of Rome. It is evident that very little was known about him.

In the sixteenth century a marble statue was discovered, dating from the middle of the third century, representing a

seated figure evidently intended for a bishop. On the back of the cathedra or episcopal chair are engraved the Paschal cycle of Hippolytus and the titles of several works, presumably those of the seated figure. Most of these works are now known to have been written by Hippolytus.

Again, in 1851, Miller published from a fourteenth century MS. a work in ten books, of which the first three and a half were wanting, and which purported to be a refutation of all heresies. He saw that it was the same work of which one book was already well known to theologians as the *Philosophumena*, and included among Origen's works. Miller ascribed the whole to Origen, but erroneously. Others claimed it for Caius, but it was gradually established by several scholars, and most convincingly by Döllinger, that the true author was Hippolytus. This fact once established, much light was thrown by the work itself on the authorship of several other treatises which had been doubtfully ascribed to him, and also on certain circumstances of his life, which partly explain the conflicting statements about his relations with the Roman Church.

Putting together the information from various sources, we can infer with certainty that he was a bishop, who flourished in or near Rome during the pontificates of Zephyrinus and Callistus, and probably for some years after the latter's death (A.D. 223); that he was at one time a hearer of Irenæus at Rome; that he received as genuine only thirteen epistles of S. Paul; that he was a man of great learning and a voluminous author, and that he exercised episcopal functions among Gentiles of various nationalities. We know also, from the ninth book of the *Philosophumena*, that he took an active part in the affairs of the Roman Church; that he was in a position of antagonism to both Zephyrinus and Callistus, regarding them (and especially the latter), on account of the laxity of their discipline, as no true bishops; and that they in their turn accused him of ditheism, and cut him off from their communion. Beyond this we are left to conjecture. Döllinger's view is that Hippolytus himself claimed to be the Bishop of Rome in opposition to Callistus, whom he designates

as the leader of a school;¹ and that although he was never acknowledged by the Roman Church, yet, as his writings were widely circulated in the Greek-speaking world, we can easily understand how he was spoken of in the East universally as Bishop, and very frequently as Bishop of Rome.

The difficulty, however, of supposing that a schism so extensive and long-continued in the centre of Western Christianity could have passed unnoticed by every Church historian, is so great that another theory has been advanced which accounts equally well for the facts, and which has substantially secured the adherence of Lightfoot's great authority. This is that Hippolytus was invested with episcopal authority not over any territorial see, but over certain congregations residing either in Rome itself or at Portus, which at this time had almost superseded its opposite neighbour Ostia as the commercial part of Rome. The difficulty is to decide what the congregations were. At Rome it is probable that the Greek-speaking portion of the Church, which was now becoming a fast-diminishing minority, might require the ministrations of a bishop able to speak Greek, and acquainted with Greek customs. And it has been supposed that Hippolytus may have been appointed by Victor for this purpose, which would account for his assumption of a right to interfere in Roman affairs. Lightfoot's view inclines to place the scene of his episcopal activity at Portus, where a motley crowd of all nationalities—seamen, dockers, stevedores, merchants, &c.—was always busily employed, and where undoubtedly a bishop would find plenty of work.²

This hypothesis accounts for nearly all the doubts and contradictions in our authorities. It explains how he was a bishop, yet without a see; how he felt himself justified in intervening so powerfully in Roman affairs, yet without diocesan authority, as to be called in error Bishop of Rome; furthermore, how he gained the title "Bishop of the Gentiles."

¹ διδασκαλεῖον.

² We observe that Hippolytus is not regarded as Bishop of Portus, but as Bishop *in* Portus. Portus itself was under the Roman See.

It also accords best with his description of those to whom he addresses his arguments, as "Greeks and barbarians, Chaldeans and Assyrians, Egyptians and Libyans, Indians and Ethiopians, Celts and Latins on foreign service." Where else in the world, except perhaps at Alexandria, could be seen so various a crowd?

His Writings.

We next come to the list of his writings. The only one now preserved, though unfortunately not entire, is the *Philosophumena*, or "Treatise against all Heretics," and there is no doubt it was his most important work. The plan is simple enough. It is to make heresy self-refuting by an enumeration of its contradictions and absurdities, and still more decisively by pointing out its ultimate derivation from heathen sources.¹ The latter point is an original one, and if it is due to Hippolytus it does credit to his ingenuity; it is repeated by Tertullian, and most likely was derived from the lectures of Irenæus. The impression one obtains from a perusal of the *Philosophumena* is that the author was extremely learned and greatly in earnest, but deficient in originality and power of analysis. Nevertheless there is an immense fund of knowledge, interesting and uninteresting, enlivened by a few smart and occasionally scandalous anecdotes. Of these the most extraordinary is the account in Book IX. of the antecedents of his adversary Callistus. This account, coloured as it is by bitter prejudice, is to be received with caution. Yet the facts were before the world, and must have been notorious in Rome, and we can scarcely believe that even the acerbities of theological controversy would have sanctioned an entirely "fancy" biography of an opponent, worthy to be ranked in racy flavour, though not in descriptive power, with that of Æschines by Demosthenes or that of Antony by Cicero. The reader may think it worthy of reproduction as an anticipation of later incidents of a similar nature in Papal history.

¹ Bk I. proem. v. § 6.

Hippolytus and Callistus.

He declares that Callistus was at first a slave in a rich Christian's establishment; that his financial astuteness caused his master to entrust him with the management of a bank, in which position he took advantage of the confidence of his co-religionists to effect fraudulent investments; that he finally broke the bank, brought his credulous clients to ruin, and absconded. His master traced him, however, and preventing a determined attempt at suicide, consigned him to the corn-factory, which was the lowest and most laborious form of servitude.¹ The sufferers by his roguery showed a forgiving spirit, and petitioned for his release, possibly thinking that his aptitude for finance might be more usefully employed in retrieving their fortunes than in turning a mill. His master acceded to their request. But Callistus, finding himself unable to make good his promises, raised a tumult in a Jewish synagogue, apparently with the intention of bringing on himself the punishment of death. Instead of this he was exiled to the mines of Sardinia, where he spent a few years. But Marcia, the mistress of Commodus, who was a Christian, prevailed on the Emperor to grant an amnesty to her fellow-religionists in Sardinia. Victor, who was then Pope, was ordered to draw up a list of names, and in this list the name of Callistus was not included. But he was equal to the occasion, and by a special petition contrived to obtain his recall. To Victor's surprise and annoyance, he reappeared in Rome (A.D. 190), but was induced, in consideration of a moderate allowance, to retire to Antium. It is evident that the ex-slave had in some way or other managed to make himself a considerable person in the Church. He remained at Antium till the death of Victor, a period of several years, during which his abilities became generally recognised, and at the accession of Zephyrinus (A.D. 202) he

¹ The city slaves dreaded no punishment so much as to be sent into the country, where unremitting labour was never relieved by the social relaxations permitted to their more favoured compeers. The reader will recollect Horace's threat when a slave was urging some uncomfortable home truths: "Ni rapis, accedes opera agro nona Sabino."

was at once placed in a high position of trust, probably that of Archdeacon of Rome. Possibly Hippolytus thought this office should have been conferred on himself. But if so, he misjudged his own qualifications and the spirit of the time. It was not the profound student, but the man of business and expert administrator of revenue that was in request. Callistus at once intrigued for the reversion of the Papacy, trimming his bark in the great Monarchian controversy which then raged, between the Scylla of Sabellianism and the Charybdis of ditheism, with dexterous skill. Hence, when Zephyrinus died, a majority of the clergy chose him as their head, and Hippolytus, though he refused to acknowledge him, was nevertheless obliged to confess that he had numbers on his side. Apparently his discipline was as lax as his doctrine was doubtful. Even during his predecessor's life he had been the hand that had guided the policy of the Church, and that policy had always leaned strongly to liberalism. Callistus carried this tendency so far as to readmit without penance all offenders who applied for readmission, to ordain digamous clergy, to change the marriage laws, and to practise rebaptism. Hippolytus further declares that he taught a Patripassian doctrine as heretical as that of Sabellius. But as Callistus contrived to fix upon Hippolytus the still more deadly charge of ditheism, it is difficult to know how far these mutual recriminations can on either side be established.

The above has been given as a specimen of the lighter portion of Hippolytus' book, and also as an instance of the fatal facility with which unscrupulous ambition was able to assert itself in the Roman Church.

His Treatise against Heretics.

To return to the more purely literary aspect of the *Philosophumena*, we have already stated that the first book was long attributed to Origen. It contains a succinct sketch of the chief systems of Greek philosophy, which are put forward as the original types, from which heretical theories are variations or derivations. The second and third books, which are lost, no doubt dealt with other heathen religions or

philosophies ; but what they were, we can only conjecture. The fourth book, which is extremely difficult, treats of those astrological doctrines which, under the honoured name of mathematics, exercised a potent sway over the minds of all classes. The distinction so obvious to us moderns between the domain of science proper and those outlying speculations, which under the cloak of scientific phraseology build up fanciful analogies or pry into inscrutable mysteries, was by no means clear to the philosophic theologian of the third century. The mixture of Oriental with Greek philosophy had muddled the clear stream of knowledge ; and Hippolytus does but reflect the broken lights of his day in thus combining wholly different forms of thought. He is the more justified in so doing, as his object is to explain Gnosticism ; and Gnosticism, if anything, was a fusion of science, imagination, and half-understood theology.

Book V. commences the list of heretics—Naasseni, Peratae, Sethites, and Justin. Book VI. comprises Simon Magus, Valentinus, whose system he traces to Plato and the Pythagoreans, Secundus, Ptolemæus and Heracleon, of the same school ; Marcus and Colarbasus, of magical proclivities. The account of Simon Magus is very explicit, showing how he pressed not only Scripture but heathen legend into the service of his insane ambition ; that of the Valentinians is to a great extent drawn from Irenæus, as also is that of Marcus. Book VII. is devoted mainly to the great heresiarchs Basilides and Marcion, the former being discussed at considerable length, and supplying valuable material to the critic. The eighth book is occupied with a variety of doctrines, the most important being that of the Montanists. The ninth book begins with an account of the heresy of Noetus ; this is made the peg on which to hang the chronicle of Callistus and his misdeeds, already recounted.¹ Next come the Judeo-Christian sects, Elchasaïtes, Essenes, Pharisees and Sadducees.²

¹ Chapters ii.—xvii.

² The Ebionites are mentioned in Book VII., with Cerinthus and Carpocrates, as infected with Egyptian teaching.

The tenth book gives a brief recapitulation of the preceding (except books iii. and iv.), and then proceeds to lay down a system of Jewish chronology, and a short sketch of the Catholic doctrine, and concludes with a hortatory epilogue.

The list of heresies, though not absolutely exhaustive, is very complete, and the treatment is fairly uniform. Its great merit is that of making the writers speak for themselves, abundant quotations from the original sources being introduced. Occasionally an ambiguity arises from the use of the phrase "he says," sometimes of the master, sometimes of one of his disciples; but on the whole the citations may be received with confidence, and are, of course, most valuable *data* for arriving at the facts. The obstinate resolve to see in every heretic a copy of some heathen thinker detracts greatly from the critical value of the book, *e.g.*, Noetus borrows from Heraclitus, Marcus from Pythagoras, the Eneeritites from the Gymnosophists, &c. Nevertheless, the grand principle that heresy arises from a contamination of the faith with heathen elements is highly important, and the writer deserves our thanks for the careful manner in which he has brought it out. There is no attempt at eloquence or, indeed, at style of any kind; nor, except in the few closing paragraphs, is any constructive theology introduced. The work is essentially the production of a student, who finds his vocation rather in amassing materials for synthetic treatment by others than in elaborating a system of his own.

It should be noticed that this work on heresies is not included in the list of his writings on the Chair. The reason no doubt is that it contains the account of his difference with the Popes. Probably it was agreed to be forgotten. The list on the Chair, conjecturally restored in parts, is as follows:— (1) Against the Jews; (2) On Virginity; (3) On the Psalms; (4) On the Ventriloquist, *i.e.*, the Witch of Endor, or perhaps the Spirit of Divination mentioned in the Acts; (5) Defence of the Gospel according to S. John, and his Apocalypse; (6) On Spiritual Gifts; (7) Apostolic Tradition; (8) Chronicles or Chronology; (9) Against the Greeks; (10) Against Plato, probably the same with A Treatise on the

All; (11) A Hortatory Address to Severina;¹ (12) Demonstration of the Time of the Paschal Feast according to the Order in the Table; (13) Hymns on all the Scriptures;² (14) Concerning God and the Resurrection of the Flesh; (15) Concerning the Good and the Origin of Evil.

To this list must be added several other treatises, known either from allusions in the *Philosophumena* or from later sources. He wrote commentaries on many books of the Old Testament, and on three of the New. His favourite study was the book of Daniel. From this and the Apocalypse he drew those millennial views which, though not avowed in his extant works, there is little doubt he held.

An early work, *Against Thirty-two Heresies*, is mentioned by Photius; it was chiefly a synopsis of information derived from the lectures of Irenæus. Probably the short extant work *Against Noetus* was the last section of it.

Photius also mentions a book of his called *The Labyrinth*, which has been shown to be no separate work, but simply the tenth book of the *Philosophumena*, which commences with the words, "The Labyrinth of Heresies," and was doubtless intended by Hippolytus to be used separately, as a short handbook of heresiology.

The work on the Paschal cycle enjoyed great credit for a while; but as its computations were only valid for thirty-two years, it soon fell out of date. The fact that it is still recommended for practical use on the statue proves the inscription to be contemporaneous.

The two features in S. Hippolytus' teaching which failed to satisfy the orthodox were, first, his Chiliasm; secondly, his Christology. The former he shares with Irenæus and Tertullian, being intermediate in his views between the two. He is of opinion that the reign of the saints on earth will commence about A.D. 500, which, according to his computation, will conclude the six thousandth year of the world. His doctrine of the generation of the Logos was a far more

¹ Possibly the Empress Severa, second wife of Elagabalus.

² ὠδαί, possibly not to be taken strictly as hymns, but merely verses to be recited and committed to memory.

serious matter, and, as has already been said, laid him open to the charge of ditheism. He himself was greatly hurt at the suspicion of unorthodoxy. It is more probable that his metaphysic was defective, than that his belief in the eternity of the Logos was unsound. It is clear that his culture was wide rather than deep, and his learning more conspicuous than his power of thought. The extent of his erudition is remarkable, and in excess of any of his predecessors. It combined subjects so different as philosophy, magic, astrology, Scripture, dogmatic theology, chronology, astronomical and historical, as well as (probably) the criticism and sifting of Biblical tradition. His death in the mines was probably considered as blotting out the memory of his errors; and it is in thorough accordance with the statesmanlike policy of the Roman Church, and immensely to her credit, that she should have overlooked his contumacy and appropriated to herself the honour of his great name, by conferring upon him the glorious title of saint.

Caius the Presbyter.

A few words must be said about **Caius** the Roman Presbyter, to whom Eusebius attributes a Dialogue or Disputation with Proclus, a Montanistic leader, from which he quotes several passages. He seems to have played an important part in the Roman Church during the time of Hippolytus, but the notices of his writings are so mixed up with those of Hippolytus that some critics, and Lightfoot among them, are inclined to regard him as altogether a mythical personage, and probably a mere double of Hippolytus, whose pre-nomen may possibly have been Caius and so have led to the confusion. Certain it is that almost every one of the works which are now with tolerable unanimity ascribed to Hippolytus, have been either by ancient or modern critics ascribed also to him. The only ones that seem to stand apart and to vindicate for Caius a separate personality are the Dialogue named above, and a work called the "Little Labyrinth," quoted by Eusebius, which Lightfoot identifies

with a treatise against the heresy of Artemon. Doubt has been thrown, however, even upon these. Lightfoot suggests that the name Caius may simply have been that of the chief interlocutor in the Dialogue, whom Eusebius supposed to have been a real person, and, by a correct comparison of cross-references, credited with a large number of other writings which really belonged to Hippolytus. It is impossible to be quite certain where the learned disagree. But it seems best on the whole to suppose that Caius was an historical person, who wrote at Rome on subjects similar to those treated of by Hippolytus, and among other things came forward as an opponent of Chiliasm, which is the best ground for distinguishing him from Hippolytus, for the latter, so far from combating Chiliastic theories, sympathised very warmly with them.

Victor, the Roman Bishop.

While on the subject of the Roman Church, we may refer for a moment to its bishop **Victor**, whom we have already mentioned as the first to assert, on behalf of his see, that claim to superior authority in the Church at large which his successors so ably carried to its completion. This remarkable man was also the first ecclesiastical writer who employed the Latin language for controversial purposes. S. Jerome ascribes to him a few slight works, the best known being one on the Paschal controversy.¹ These have all perished. Harnack is also disposed to regard him as the author of the treatise against gambling,² printed at the end of Cyprian's works. This, however, is very doubtful. In any case, his literary character is thrown into the shade by his administrative qualities. From this point of view he is a notable figure in Church history, being the true precursor of that long line of ecclesiastical statesmen who in process of time raised the Papacy to the position of tyrant of the human race. In him

¹ Jerome, *Vir. Ill.* 34, 42, who also mentions a senator named Apollonius as the author, under Commodus, of a Latin defence of Christianity, which he read to the assembled senate.

² *Adversus aleatores.*

the historian describes the ideal pontiff, a type realised again and again, and almost always bearing the same lineaments. In origin obscure, raised from the crowd by merit alone to a height almost superhuman, he at once vindicates and refutes the equality of mankind. Trained in reverence for tradition, he tramples upon tradition, even that of an Apostle, if it presumes to make against his own custom, forcing every form of outward inconsistency to bend to the inner consistency of an aim steadfastly pursued; honouring learning, but rewarding obsequiousness; fearing scandal, but respecting ability none the less because unscrupulous, and utilising rather than provoking it—a man of courage and real integrity, but led by his imperious temper into error which yet he was wise enough to retract: above all things, a statesman and a ruler, who advanced what to his limited understanding seemed the kingdom of God with inflexible decision; and left it to higher and purer spirits to regret what ordinary minds hail as the best evidence of a good cause, namely, the establishment of a precedent which could be carried through centuries of effort to the pinnacle of complete success.

Some other Writers of the Same School.

The Græco-Roman school of theology, under which we have included Irenæus, Hippolytus, and Caius, is so named because it exhibits points of affinity with both divisions of the Catholic Church. While Irenæus in Gaul perpetuates the traditions of S. John's teaching in Asia, and Hippolytus, by his scientific exactness in portraying the doctrines of the heretics, and tracing each to its heathen source, displays the characteristics of the Hellenic intellect, both of them are largely influenced by the peculiar type of Christianity which was rapidly becoming predominant at Rome, namely, strong dogmatic conservatism, joined with remarkable aptitude for Church organisation. The various minor lights that during the same period glistened in the Christian sky are of less manysided lustre. Some of them belong exclusively to the Græco-Asiatic type of Christianity, others almost as

exclusively to the Western; but, on the whole, they deserve to be classed together as exemplifying the plain orthodox point of view, equally removed from the brilliant philosophising of Alexandria and the powerful though narrow rhetoric of the African school. Their works have perished, with the exception of a few scanty fragments, and these we shall proceed to notice.¹

First in time comes **Rhodon**, of whom Eusebius reports² that he was an Asiatic by birth, and came to Rome, where he fell under the influence of Tatian. His literary activity belongs to the reign of Commodus (A.D. 180-192). He was a tolerably prolific writer, his chief energies being directed against the heresy of Marcion, and in particular that aspect of it which was represented by the teaching of Apelles. The picture he gives of the old age of the latter is very pleasing. Firm in his own opinion, though tolerant of those of others, Apelles saw more clearly than Rhodon that the essence of Christianity is not speculation but practice.

“The old man,” says Rhodon, “when I conversed with him, was convicted of uttering many wrong statements. For instance, he declared it unnecessary to investigate the basis of the faith, but thought it best for each to remain in that form of it in which he had been brought up. His idea was that all would be saved who had trusted in the Crucified, on the condition that they were found in good works.”

Their conversation then turned on the unity of the God-head, and how it was cognisable. Here Apelles took his stand on the limitation of the human mind, which made such abstruse subjects impossible to be apprehended by the reason. Nevertheless, he declared himself satisfied of the Divine unity. Rhodon thus continues:—

“On my pressing him for a demonstration, and asking how he was able to assert his view with so much confidence, he replied that the prophecies were self-refuting, inasmuch as their

¹ For these fragments, as well as all the others noticed in this book, the reader is once for all referred to Routh's *Reliquiæ Sacre*.

² H. E. v. 13.

statements were not true, being inconsistent, deceptive, and self-contradictory. Why there should be but one source of Godhead he professed he did not know, but felt irresistibly compelled to believe it. On my adjuring him to speak the truth, he declared on oath that he meant what he said; that he did not know in what way God is unbegotten, but that he believed Him so to be. I then ridiculed him, and convicted him of professing to be a teacher of others without himself knowing the grounds of what he taught."

Eusebius mentions also a work of Rhodon's, in which he proposed solutions of obscure Scripture problems tabulated by Tatian; as well as a series of notes on the six days' work of creation. It is possible that he was also the writer of the anonymous treatise in three books against the Montanists addressed to Avircius Marcellus, which was also ascribed to Apollinaris and Apollonius.¹

To the latter part of the reign of Commodus belongs **Serapion**, Bishop of Antioch (A.D. 190), from whose epistle to Caricus and Pontius, on the subject of Montanism, a few fragments are preserved. Other epistles of his are alluded to by Eusebius. The only work of Serapion that has much interest for us is a treatise on the so-called Gospel of Peter, written at the request of some presbyters of Rhossus, in which city it seems to have been used with disastrous effects on orthodoxy. The following fragment is given by Eusebius:²—

"We, my brethren, receive Peter and the other Apostles as we do Christ. But the works that are falsely attributed to them we reject, knowing what they are, and that we have not received such things. For when I was with you, I thought you all held the right faith; and not having then read the Gospel inscribed with the name of Peter, I said, 'If this be the only cause of your disagreement, let it be read.' But now, having found out that the minds of those men were secretly brooding over heresy, from what was told me, I shall hasten to come to you. So, my brethren,

¹ See Eus. H. E. v. 16, 17.

² For these fragments see Eus. H. E. v. 10 and vi. 12, and on the Gospel of Peter see back, pp. 163 *sqq.*

expect me shortly. But when we shall have discovered to what sect Marcianus belonged, inconsistent as he was with himself and not understanding what he talked about, ye shall learn all these things from what was written you. For we have been able to borrow this book and read it carefully through, having procured it from others who used it (successors of those who went before Marcianus,¹ *Docetae* as they are called, from whom he took his views). And we have found that a considerable portion of it gives the true doctrine of the Saviour, but that certain additions are made in the form of injunctions, concerning which we have instructed you.”

We can easily understand the anxiety felt by the bishops about these plausible figments under apostolic names, which, by mixing heretical views with genuine tradition, often succeeded in winning a place in public worship. The Gnostics generally selected some one Apostle on whom they fathered their peculiar interpretations. The Church, on the contrary, emphasised the common teaching of all the Apostles, and refused to recognise any tradition that purported to come through an individual channel, however authoritative. Serapion was a man of considerable influence, not only from his activity and learning, but also from the rigorous asceticism of his life.

Another Asiatic writer of some importance was **Apollonius**, who is described as Bishop of Ephesus by a late writer, but the silence of Eusebius makes this very doubtful. His chief work was a treatise in five books against the Cataphrygians, *i.e.*, the Montanists. Eusebius gives A.D. 172 as the date of the rise of the New Prophecy. Apollonius writes forty years after this event. A writer named Zoticus had attempted to withstand the influence of the prophetesses Prisca and Maximilla in the Phrygian townlets where their preaching had begun, but without success.² The people were too in-

¹ Who Marcianus was is uncertain, perhaps the same as Marcus. Mr. Robinson would read Marcion.

² More will be found about Montanus and his sect in the chapter on Tertullian. Among other vagaries, he had pitched upon two Phrygian hamlets, Pepuza and Tymium, as seats of the New Prophecy, and had

fatuated to listen to argument, or even to the plainest proofs of imposture. Apollonius attempted the same thankless task with more talent for satire, and apparently with better results, as Eusebius has thought it worth while to give some rather long extracts from his book. As they are not uninteresting evidence of the wilful blindness of sectarian partisanship, we subjoin a translation of them made by an old Eusebian scholar, Dr. Meredith Hammer, whose racy English well reproduces the smartness of the original :—

“But what kind of new Doctor this is his works and doctrine do declare. This is he who taught the breaking of wedlock, who ordained toll-gatherers and money-levies. This is he who under pretence of oblations has cunningly invented a new art of bribery ; this is he which giveth great hire unto the preachers of his doctrine, that by feeding of the paunch his prophecies may prevaile.”

Of the prophetess Maximilla and the other “spiritual dames,” he writes :—

“We have before showed these first prophetesses, from the time they were filled with their false spirit, to have forsaken their husbands. Then how shamefully do they lie, calling Priscilla a virgin ! Again, doth not the whole Scripture forbid that a prophet should receive rewards and money ? When I see a prophetess seeking gold and silver and precious garments, how can I choose but reprobate her !”

Of Themison he says :—

“Themison, also, inflamed with the burning thirst of covetousness, tasted not the sharp experience of confession before the tyrant, but shifted himself out of fetters with large money. And when for this cause he should have humbled himself, yet he in all

declared one or both to be the New Jerusalem. When the writer visited Salt Lake City in 1872, and attended worship in the temple there, he was surprised to hear, in the Mormon profession of Faith, an addition to the Apostles' Creed of the words, “I believe that the New Jerusalem will be established on this continent.” And the president in his harangue more than once spoke of his city as the true Jerusalem. Thus history repeats itself !

braggery, as if forsooth he were a martyr,¹ in his vain conceit writes a catholic epistle to instruct them that believed better than himself, and to exhort them to strive for the new doctrine, and together with him to revile the Lord and His Apostles and Holy Church.”

And again :—

“But that we trouble not ourselves with so many, let the prophetess tell us touching Alexander, who called himself a martyr, with whom she hath banqueted, whom also many do adore, whose thefts and other heinous crimes for which he hath suffered punishment I will not now rehearse, seeing they are in the public registers. And whose sins hath he or she pardoned? Does the prophet grant grace of theft to the martyr, or the martyr grace of greed unto the prophet? For whereas Christ commanded, Ye shall not possess gold nor silver, neither two coats, these on the contrary seek after the possessing of unlawful substance. We have declared how they who are called prophets and martyrs have extorted money, not only from the rich, but from the poor, the fatherless and the widow. If they plead not guilty, let them stay and join issue with us in this matter, on this understanding, that if they be overthrown, they will at least from henceforth refrain from committing the like sins again. The fruits of prophets are to be tried. The tree is known by its fruit. And that the fruit of Alexander may be known of such as desire it, he was condemned at Ephesus by Æmilius Frontinus, not for his Christian profession, but for presumptuous and boldly enterprised theft, being an altogether lewd person.”

And in another portion of the same book :—

“If they deny their prophets to be receivers of gifts, let them say so, only on the condition that if it be proved, they be no longer prophets. Hereof we are able to allege many particular proofs. All the works of a prophet are necessarily to be proved. Tell me, I beseech you, is it seemly for a prophet to paint? is it seemly for a prophet to smooth his complexion with cosmetics? is it seemly for a prophet to pink and gingerly to set forth himself? is it seemly for a prophet to dice and cards? is it seemly

¹ Themison seems to have been an exception to the rule of Montanist enthusiasm. Generally they were forward to suffer martyrdom.

for a prophet to be an usurer? Let them answer me whether these things be lawful or unlawful. I will prove them to be their practice.”¹

It appears that this attack was sufficiently important to demand an answer from Tertullian, which was given in the seventh book of his (lost) work upon Ecstasy.

¹ See Eus. H. E. v. 18.

BOOK IV.

THE ALEXANDRIAN SCHOOL OF
THEOLOGY.

(A.D. 175-300.)

CHAPTER I.

THE ALEXANDRIAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY.

UP to this point of our history the capital of Egypt has been associated mainly with the rise of heretical teaching. We have now to consider it from a more pleasing point of view, as the metropolis of Christian speculative thought. For a century and a half it well deserved this proud title. From the time when the Stoic Pantænus taught the conformity of Christ's revelation with the highest human reason in the newly-founded Catechetical school, till that day when S. Athanasius closed his heroic life of conflict for the true Godhead of the Son in the great arena of Christendom, the destinies of scientific religion were committed to the keeping of a single city.

It will be necessary to state as briefly and as clearly as possible the mental and spiritual surroundings in which these champions of the faith arose.

In the first place, we must emphasise the fact that Alexandria was in a far greater degree than Rome a genuinely cosmopolitan city. All the leading nationalities met there, and all contributed something towards its peculiar type of Christianity. Among them three were pre-eminent. First there was the native Egyptian, with his deep sense of the underlying mystery of existence, and his constant tendency to allegoric symbolism. Next there was the Greek, with his passion for logic and system, and his inimitable precision of thought. Thirdly, there was the Oriental element, with its oppressive consciousness of the power of evil and its wild but imaginative gnosis.

In the master-thoughts of the Alexandrian divines all that was permanent in these influences found a place. And to them must be added yet another element, hardly if at all

less important, namely, the spiritualised Judaism of Philo. That powerful thinker had softened the antithesis between Jewish revelation and Pagan philosophy, and while retaining to the last the admiring reverence of his co-religionists, had really destroyed that exclusiveness on which they built their pre-eminence. After him it was no longer impossible to co-ordinate Judaism with the best religious thought of heathenism on the one hand, and with a comprehensive scheme of Christian philosophy on the other.

The second point to emphasise is the fact that for the first time in human history thought was absolutely free. It was no accident that Alexandria witnessed the growth of a liberal Catholic theology. Nowhere else could the Christian thinker find himself face to face with all the ripest developments of the human mind, and attempt unhindered the task of reconciling them with revealed truth.

The atmosphere of the place was essentially intellectual. Men lived only for science, for discussion and for letters. No opinions were too extravagant, provided only they were ably propounded: no inconsistencies too glaring, provided they were dove-tailed into a system by some subtle process of harmonisation. The prevailing tendency was towards universal inclusion—either by eclecticism, *i.e.*, the juxtaposition of thoughts culled from many systems; or by syncretism, *i.e.*, the fusion into one system of elements borrowed from many.

If Christianity was to succeed in holding its own among so vast a host of competitors, it must be either by showing that it possessed the key by which their results might be interpreted, or by including their partial truths in a fuller and more universal truth of its own. Never perhaps has the free statement of the Christian idea had less prejudice to encounter than at Alexandria at the close of the second century. Never has it more successfully vindicated by argument its right to be the great interpreter of the human spirit.¹

¹ It is indeed most refreshing to observe the utter absence of the *parti pris* spirit in Clement. He is quite free from that ultra-apologetic attitude which seems to think that, because it takes the Christian side, it must be suspected of disingenuousness. He reasons with heathens naturally, as an equal.

The institutions of the great metropolis were highly favourable to this result. The Museum, built by the Ptolemies, was intended to be, and speedily became, the centre of an intense intellectual life. The Serapeum, at the other end of the town, rivalled it in beauty of architecture and wealth of rare MSS. The Sebastion, reared in honour of Augustus, was no unworthy companion to these two noble establishments. In all three, splendid endowments and a rich professoriate attracted the talent of the world. If the ambition of a secured reputation drew many eminent men away to Rome, the means of securing such eminence were mainly procured at Alexandria. It was there that the ordeal of intellectual competition had to be faced; and it was there, after all, that the prizes most dear to the philosophic spirit could alone be obtained.

The Christian Church in this city rose to the height of its grand opportunity. It entered the lists without fear and without favour, and boldly proclaimed its competence to satisfy the intellectual cravings of man. Numbers of restless and inquiring spirits came from all parts of the world, hoping to find a solution of the doubts that perplexed them. And the Church, which had already brought peace to the souls of the woman and the slave, now girded herself to the harder task of convincing the trained intelligence of the man of letters and the philosopher.

The Catechetical School.

She did this by her time-honoured system of **Catechesis**. From the earliest dawn of Christianity, the greatest attention had been paid to the instruction of converts preparatory to baptism. They were made to understand clearly what they were surrendering, and what they were adopting in its stead. In the majority of cases nothing could be simpler than this process. While thorough and fundamental, it was straightforward, and involved no subtilty of argument. It consisted, firstly, in the repudiation of all heathen superstitions, and secondly, in a brief profession of the essentials of Christian belief. The catechumen was, of course, carefully

trained in the moral duties of his new life, but once admitted to baptism, his faith was protected by the constant intercourse of his fellow-believers, and the absolute severance from all his former associations.

But in the case of the intellectual inquirer a much more arduous preparation was required. And here we see the elasticity of such an instrument as the Catechetical school. It expanded naturally from the mere instruction of catechumens in the elements of Christianity to a dialectic process, whereby the preliminary objections to the Gospel were met and refuted, before any actual doctrine was taught. We need not connect it in our minds with any immutable organisation, nor even with any methodical course of spiritual training, far less with any set religious dissertations. The purest Christian tradition had always favoured a direct communication of the truth from soul to soul. The teacher whose words carried spiritual power had always been able to draw around him a knot of reverent listeners. This, as we learn from Papias, was the case with the Apostle S. John; it was the case also with Polycarp, and afterwards with Justin. And there can be little doubt that these precedents were followed at the commencement of the Catechetical school.

Its scope afterwards became greatly enlarged. In the time of Origen and probably before him, numbers of unconverted heathens and many baptized Christians, as well as catechumens proper, were included in its ranks. But it nevertheless retained for some time what we may call its unofficial character. Though recognised by the bishop, it might be conducted by a layman; though attended by crowds, it was held not in a public hall at a set time, but in the catechist's house at whatever hour suited him. In all these respects it recalled rather the ancient schools of philosophy than the official disputations of the contemporary academic chairs.

Moreover, the instruction given in it was essentially an act of devotion. As in the old schools, it was given gratis, and whoever desired, man or woman, heathen or Christian, was made welcome. As its influence grew, it came more

directly under the control of the bishop ; but to the last it retained a certain independence, and existed side by side with the Church organisation as a sort of informal Chair of Apologetics, embracing in that domain, as Oxford used to embrace, the studies which we call the *literae humaniores*.

The first head of this school whom we certainly know of was a converted Stoic philosopher named **Pantænus**. Before his conversion he had abandoned Stoicism for the eclectic Pythagoreanism so much in vogue ; but his Stoic antecedents impressed themselves upon his Christianity ; for it is to him that we owe the prominent conception of the immanent Deity that was to achieve such great results when worked out into the Logos-doctrine of Clement.

Pantænus was no mere intellectualist. The truths of Christianity once grasped filled him with an ardent missionary zeal. He preached the Gospel in the furthest East, in Arabia, and even in India, where we are informed he found the Aramaean Gospel of S. Matthew in use among a Christian community. We know not when he returned to Alexandria to undertake the task to which he devoted his later years : probably it was about the year 175. Clement, who arrived before 180, attached himself to him, and has no words strong enough to express the gratitude he felt towards this earnest and eloquent teacher, who not only satisfied his doubts, but gave him that high ideal of Christian philosophy which he himself raised still higher, and bequeathed to his own successor as the immortal glory of the Catechetical school.

Before proceeding to discuss the two great masters that have come down to us, a few preliminary remarks must be made on the movements of speculative thought in the non-Christian world. These entered so largely into the theology of Clement and Origen that we cannot omit to refer to them.

The earliest forms of Greek speculation sprung directly out of that primeval nature-religion which Hellas brought from her Aryan home. The nearness of the gods to man, and their familiar presence in external nature, were the root-conceptions of Greek religion. Hence resulted a sunny

consciousness, an abounding joy of life. "Everything," said Thales, "is full of gods." The sense of evil was not oppressively felt. The natural bent was towards optimism. But a change came over the Greek spirit. The revolution in philosophy effected by Socrates corresponded to an inward change in the mode of regarding Deity. The conception of God had risen immensely in greatness and in purity; and, simultaneously, the consciousness of moral and physical evil had become intensified. To Plato the Divine Perfection is conceived of as altogether too high to admit of a realisation within this transitory sphere. The existing universe is at best but a poor copy of an immaterial archetype, itself the product of the Divine Mind.¹ Thus a severance was effected between God and man, which the Aristotelian metaphysic softened down, but did not succeed in bridging over.

In the third century before Christ the Stoic philosophy became generally diffused, and for more than four centuries prevailed among the higher minds. Stoicism was inferior to Platonism in splendour of imagination and boldness of speculative insight, but it represented the genuine tradition of the Greek religion, into which Plato had imported a decided Oriental element. Essentially pantheistic, it identified Deity with the life-principle of the material universe, and regarded it as immanent in the entire fabric as well as in the component parts. The soul of man therefore possessed a real affinity with the Divine, and its essence was naturally regarded as immortal. But the Stoic view of the universe as the domain of unvarying law was fatal to the admission of human freedom.² Man's highest good consisted in identifying himself absolutely with the conditions of his existence, which represented the law of his being. Evil as such became non-existent. It might be described from one point of view

¹ It is true that in the *Timæus* Plato attributes the fashioning of the *Kosmos* to the Supreme Deity; but in the *Theætetus* the *ὁμοίωσις τῷ Θεῷ* is declared to involve *τὸ φρονεῖν εἰθεὶς ὅτι τάχιστα*.

² The Stoics compared our illusory sense of freedom to the position of a dog tied behind a carriage. If he realises his position, he will run quietly and will not feel the chain, but if he resists, he will hurt himself,

as ignorance; from another, as good not yet realised; from another, as the necessary sacrifice of the part to the whole.

Towards the end of the second century A.D., thoughtful men throughout the world were deeply affected by a sense of the predominance of evil. The loss of all stimulus to effort, the oppressive burdens of life, and the widespread misery which prevailed, inclined men's minds towards a system of thought which should embody their changed convictions. They naturally turned to Plato, who alone of Greek thinkers had brought into strong relief the inherent imperfection of the visible world. But Plato's comprehensive genius had held in solution two opposing tendencies. One was strictly Hellenic, aiming at the supreme good by contemplation of the ideas, which he strove to render intelligible by his matchless dialectic; the other was un-Greek and Oriental, aiming at an explanation of existing evil by a theory of human and animal creation through intermediate agencies inferior to the Supreme God. It was this latter element which attracted the Platonists of the post-Christian age. Corrupting the doctrines of the *Timæus*, and fusing them with theosophical speculations from the remote East, they produced a spurious Platonism which retained just enough of the immortal master's spirit to be entitled to bear his name, but surrendered almost all the highest and noblest features of his thought.¹

and be dragged on just the same. There is a very beautiful prayer, ascribed to Cleanthes, which embodies this idea:—

“ Ἄγρον δέ μ' ὦ Ζεῦ καὶ σύγ' ὦ Περρωμένη,
 ὅποι ποθ' ὑμῖν εἰμι διατεταγμένος.
 ὡς ἔψομαι γ' ἄοκνος· ἂν δέ μὴ θέλῳ
 κακὸς γενόμενος, οὐδὲν ἤττον ἔψομαι.”—Epicl. *Μαν.* 52.

¹ It has always grieved lovers of Plato to find his most uncharacteristic elements alone identified with his name, as was the case in Neo-Platonism, and for centuries afterwards. The *Timæus*, from which alone these elements were derived, is by no means the portion of his system which he himself would have regarded as typical. Full of interest as it is, and strikingly as it appears to anticipate points of Christian belief, it lies outside the true centre of the philosopher's thought. It is concerned with the sphere of the hypothetical, and only professes to supply more or less probable “guesses at truth.” But the confused thinkers of a later age were incapable of entering into the region of pure, non-mystical dialectic, in which Plato, when most himself, delights to move.

The Church in Alexandria was confronted with this two-fold philosophy. On the one hand, it met the great Stoic doctrine of the Divine immanence, in which, with clear insight, it recognised an ally; on the other, it saw in Plato's cosmogony, and still more in his moral theory, features which seemed closely akin to revealed truth.

The position of Plato towards Christianity is indeed unique. Alone among the first intellects of Greece, he is spiritual as truly as he is intellectual. His philosophy is all but a religion. His intense yearning after the Divine, his unconquerable belief that God is good, his contempt for the things of sense, his clear distinction between the actual and the ideal, his piercing insight into the falsehoods of convention, his bold reconstruction of society, his moral enthusiasm, his perception of the dignity of suffering, his prophetic declaration that when a perfectly virtuous man appeared he would be rejected and probably crucified—all these were not merely points of contact with the Christian system, but seemed so completely to breathe its spirit as almost to justify the belief that Plato, like Abraham, had rejoiced to see the day of Christ.

And so the Alexandrian Fathers, already prepared by the Platonism of Philo, threw themselves upon Plato as by a natural instinct, and found in him at once the method and instrument of union between divine and human knowledge.

But in estimating their debt to Plato, we must not forget that it was the later presentation of his philosophy, not the genuine Attic original, that enchained them. Though, with the exception of Origen, they lived before the rise of Neo-Platonism properly so called, their affinity with the eclectic syncretism of that remarkable system is too striking to be ignored.

The Neo-Platonic school, of which Ammonius Sacas was the founder, and Iamblichus and Plotinus the most original exponents, aimed at affording complete satisfaction to the spiritual cravings of man. These indeed could no longer be suppressed. And it was evident, that unless Christianity were to occupy the field unopposed, a heathen system must

be produced, which could find room for the aspirations of man's soul as well as the workings of his intelligence. The Neo-Platonists endeavoured to provide this satisfaction by the doctrine of a mystic intuition of the absolute, obtained by ecstacy, or by the complete absorption of all the faculties of the spirit, mind and body, in divine contemplation. At the same time they endeavoured to include in their educational process all the previous streams of religious and philosophic thought. The scheme was a noble one; and although its mature development did not take place till a later period than that with which we are concerned, yet there are visible in the works of Origen distinct traces of its influence, especially in his attempt to explain those remote and mysterious problems which are really beyond the reach of human thought.¹

In estimating the task which the Alexandrian school set before it, we must remember that it had hitherto been a reproach to Christianity that it had not succeeded in combating the difficulties of the higher minds. The reproach was certainly not deserved. Yet there was some colour for it. It had been to the Gnostic teachers rather than to the orthodox that anxious Pagan inquirers had hitherto looked for a friendly examination of their doubts. The result was by no means encouraging. They saw the Gnostics, who claimed the title of Christians, expelled from the communion of the Church; and they saw, on the other hand, eminent Church leaders asserting the uselessness of philosophy, and requiring as a condition of Church membership the repudiation of the entire intellectual life.

The difficulty was a real one. The problem was pressing, and well worthy of solution. And a succession of men arose, who, whatever their shortcomings in simplicity of faith, whatever their aberrations from rigid orthodoxy, boldly faced its requirements; and shrank from no mental labour, no risk of misinterpretation, in probing to the very root the

¹ *E.g.*, the origin of evil; the relation of the Incommunicable Deity to creation; the source and final destiny of all spiritual beings; the doctrine of intermediate agencies; the final absorption of all things in God.

fundamental conditions necessary to solve it. The names of Pantænus, Clement and Origen, and especially the two latter, stand out as among the very noblest of those teachers who have striven above everything else to understand, to state, and to assist the efforts of man towards enlightenment.

CHAPTER II.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (145-220 ?).

IT has already been mentioned that Pantænus was the founder of the Catechetical school.¹ But he was something more. He was the teacher and spiritual father of the great **Clement**, who is the most original spirit in the whole Ante-Nicene Church.

His Life.

Oddly enough, we know nothing of Clement's life. Genial and chatty as he is, it never occurs to him that posterity might like to know who he was. Like Plato and Thucydides, he discourses fully on the matter in hand, but keeps his own history to himself. Still, there are indications in his writings which offer some ground for conjecture. There can be no doubt he was a Greek, and very probably an Athenian.² There is not the smallest tinge of Orientalism about his mind. Except the writer to Diognetus, he is the most genuinely Hellenic of all the Fathers. Possessed of good means, he made the search for truth his life's object, and went the round of all the systems that professed to satisfy it. We have seen other instances of this in Justin and Tatian, and more doubtfully in the Roman Clement, whose biography has borrowed this feature from his Alexandrian namesake.

In the first chapter of his *Stromateis*,³ Clement alludes to

¹ That is, in the sense in which it became celebrated, as a centre of apologetics. There is an untrustworthy tradition which mentions Athenagoras as its first president.

² It is true our only authority is the inaccurate Epiphanius. But in this case internal probability points the same way. His name, Titus Flavius Clemens, points to an ancestral connection with Rome.

³ Quoted by Eusebius, H. E. v. 11. Other important notices of him in Eusebius are, H. E. iv. 26 ; v. 28 ; vi. 13, 14.—*Præp. Ev.* ii. 2 and 5.

some of the Christian teachers who had been of use to him in his process from heathen darkness to light. The first was an Ionian, who taught in Greece; another a native of Southern Italy; a third, of Egypt; a fifth had taught in Assyria, a sixth in Palestine (this man was of Jewish origin), and the seventh and last was Pantænus, whose broad and philosophic grasp of truth at length brought the weary soul to anchor, and raised in it a profound sense of gratitude.

These scattered pilgrimages sufficiently reveal the earnestness of Clement's character. He was no dilettante, striving to beguile the aimless leisure of an unfilled life, but a true spiritual athlete, determined, even in his heathen days, to lose no chance of acquiring truth so long as any corner of the known world remained to yield it. His case is doubtless a striking one; but it certainly was far from unique,¹ and it brings vividly before us the reality of the void which Christianity was able to fulfil, and the self-sacrificing enthusiasm which the nobler Pagan minds brought into their quest.

We have no sure data for determining Clement's age when he finally settled in Alexandria; but the style of his writings makes it probable that he had attained the full maturity of his powers. Supposing him to have been at least forty when he succeeded Pantænus as head of the school, we may approximately fix the date of his birth at about A.D. 140-150. For about fourteen years he continued to preside over it as an honoured presbyter of the Alexandrian Church, till in 202, when the persecution arose under Severus, his disinclination for martyrdom caused him to quit the scene of his labours, never more to return. He spent the rest of his life in Palestine, chiefly in the society of his old pupil Alexander

¹ The "quest for a religion" was a very real thing in those days. Earnest men hunted up the different aspects of truth in their native *habitats*. The frequent allusions to wide and prolonged travel seem to suggest a generally diffused possession of good means. We must not forget, however, that the standard of living among students and philosophers was very moderate, and food and lodging cheap.

of Jerusalem.¹ The date of his death is uncertain. His work, however, was already done. He had inspired many noble minds with his broad and genial philosophy, and among them Origen, the greatest of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, and his own worthy successor in the professorial chair.

His Literary Qualities.

We proceed to consider Clement's position as a Christian writer and philosophic theologian. It is difficult to overvalue him in either relation. As a writer he is conspicuous for infusing into theological discussions a rich vein of combined classic learning and racy common-sense, such as the English churchman may find in Fuller, Taylor, or South, but which it is in vain to seek elsewhere among Ante-Nicene Fathers. His reading is immense; but he moves with ease under its weight. It obscures his argument at times, but never his judgment. Though each step that he takes is accompanied by a train of authorities, poetical, rhetorical, and philosophical, he uses these not as props, far less as guides, but solely as consenting witnesses, who endorse the truth he affirms. At the same time he would not move at ease without them; their voices are linked with his own by many a train of pleasant association; he encourages them to venture on fresh paths under his guidance. He resembles that wise householder who brings out of his treasure-house things new and old.

Among the poets Homer is his favourite, among the philosophers Plato. To these he refers in countless instances; but the range of his familiarity extends through the whole domain of Greek letters. Hesiod, the tragic and comic dramatists, the Attic masters of thought, the Stoic and Pythagorean prose-writers and poets, not excluding the so-called Sibylline literature—he levies contributions from them all. The scholar, whose interests are wholly apart from theology, may yet find in Clement a fruitful mine of study.

¹ About A.D. 213 we find him recommended by Alexander to the Church of Antioch. This is the last notice of his life.

Embedded in his lengthy periods lie quotations, allusions, and reminiscences innumerable, some of which are accurate and easily identifiable; others invite the critic's emendating hand; others are unknown to us from any other source. It is probable that some still lie undetected amid the surrounding mass of curious and metaphorical expressions with which he delights to garnish his style.

The idiom used by Clement approximates nearer to the Attic than that of Origen, Irenæus, or Eusebius. But this resemblance is, after all, only comparative. The scholar who has been accustomed to the clear stream of Attic diction of the best age, when he takes up Clement, finds himself obliged to read into old familiar words the accumulated storage of many minds, the deposits of successive strata of thought. Hence their connotation is rendered highly complex, and terms once living and expressive have become allusive and conventional; and this constitutes no small source of difficulty in apprehending Clement's drift. In order thoroughly to master the vocabulary of the Alexandrine Fathers, it is necessary to familiarise oneself not only with the works of Philo, but still more with those of the Pagan rhetoricians and philosophers of the period. It is in the sense of words far more than in modifications of syntax that the true difference between the classical and the theological writers consists.¹

In spite, therefore, of the vigour of Clement's thought, and the spirited language in which he presents it, we find a sort of second-hand allusiveness in his literary style, which is not favourable to clearness of meaning. Our opinion differs from that of many critics, who rank him as the best among the Fathers in point of style. To us he appears inferior to Origen, in whose diction a far more complete fusion of thought and language is attained, though at the cost of a further removal from the conventional fine writing of the

¹ A thoroughly good historical lexicon of the later Greek is still a desideratum. Every Greek scholar is aware of the change in the meaning of words from Homer to Aristotle. Yet the almost equally profound modifications of meaning from the time of Aristotle to that of Clement are often unnoticed or forgotten.

day. Serious and profound writer as he is, Clement is at bottom a rhetorician; one, it is true, to whom the mere form was wholly secondary to the truth conveyed, but in whom the fresh sense of nature was dulled by a long course of artificial training, which it was impossible to shake off.

His Writings.

His extant writings are sufficiently voluminous. They consist, in the first place, of three lengthy and closely-connected treatises, intended to sketch out the plan of Christian education, and, from their desultory mode of treatment, doubtless a faithful reproduction of his lectures in the school. These are the *Protrepticus*,¹ or "Exhortation to Greeks," the *Pædagogus*,² or "Tutor," and the *Stromateis*³ or *Stromata*, which literally means "parti-coloured carpets," but may be rendered "Miscellanies." These will be dealt with presently. We possess also three short and defective treatises, which probably belong to the lost *Hypotyposes*,⁴ or "Outlines," the fourth and final division of his scheme of Christian truth. They are—(1.) "Summaries of Doctrines from Theodotus and the Eastern School of Valentinian Gnostics."⁵ (2.) "Prophetic Selections."⁶ (3.) "Adumbrations on some of the Canonical Epistles."⁷ On these also a few words will be said. The only other treatise that has survived is that entitled, "Who is the Rich Man that is to be Saved?"⁸ which Eusebius expressly attributes to Clement, and which is undoubtedly his, though it is inserted in some good MSS.

¹ προτρεπτικός λόγος πρὸς Ἕλληνας.

² Παιδαγωγός, in three books.

³ Στρωματεῖς, in eight books, whence Clement is often called ὁ Στρωματεὺς. Its full title is τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἀληθῆ φιλοσοφίαν γνωστικῶν ὑπομνημάτων Στρωματεῖς Η'.

⁴ Ἑποτυπώσεις.

⁵ ἐκ τῶν Θεοδοῦτου καὶ τῆς Ἀνατολικῆς διδασκαλίας κατὰ τοὺς Οὐαλεντινίου χρόνους ἐπιτομαί.

⁶ ἐκ τῶν προφητῶν ἐκλογαί.

⁷ *Adumbrationes in aliquot Epistolas Canonicas*, preserved in the old Latin version.

⁸ Τίς ὁ σωζόμενος πλούσιος; Quis dives Salvetur?

among the works of Origen, and for a time was attributed to him.

Besides this goodly catalogue, a number of important works have perished. First come the Hypotyposes in eight books already referred to, a grievous loss, which may yet be partially redeemed if the omens of discovery so happily inaugurated of late years be fulfilled.

Then again we read of treatises "On Providence," "On the Paschal Controversy," "On Fasting," "On Slander;" an "Exhortation to Patience," addressed to the newly-baptized; an "Ecclesiastical Canon;" "Various Definitions;" besides several works referred to by Clement himself as contemplated or undertaken, but of which we have no further record: *e.g.*, "On First Principles," "On Prophecy," "On Allegorical Interpretation," "On Angels," "On the Devil," "On the Creation of the World," "On the Unity of the Church," "On the Duties of Bishops, Presbyters, Deacons and Widows," "On the Soul," "On the Resurrection," "On Marriage," "On Contenance," and possibly "Against Heresies."¹ Mention is also made by Palladius of a short commentary on the prophet Amos.

¹ The following remarks may be made on these lost treatises:—(1) *περί προνοίας*. Of this some fragments are preserved in the works of Maximus. (2) *περί τοῦ πάσχα σύγγραμμα*. In this he wrote down the traditions he had collected from the times of the Apostles to his own day. (3) *διαλέξεις περί νηστείας*. (4) *περί καταλαλίας*. (5) *προτροπικὸς εἰς ὑπομονὴν πρὸς τοῖς νεωστὶ φωτισθέντας*. Observe this familiar use of the term "enlightened" = baptized. (6) *κανῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶς, ἢ πρὸς τοῖς Ἰουδαίζοντας*. S. Jerome describes it more fully as "de canonibus ecclesiasticis et adversus eos qui Judaeorum sequuntur errorem, liber unus, quem proprie Alexandro Hierosolymorum episcopo προσεφώνησε." A fragment of this is preserved in Nicephorus. (7) *ὄροι διάφοροι*. The only definition now remaining is that of spirit, which is worth giving, "πνεῦμά ἐστι λεπτὴ καὶ αἴθλιος καὶ ἀσχημάτιστος ἐκπορευτικὴ ἕπαρξις." (10) *περί ἀρχῶν*. Clement declares no less than three times his intention of writing on this subject. We do not believe he ever carried it out. (11) *περί προφητείας*. He promises to give in this treatise a full account of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. (12) De membris et affectibus, quando de Deo dicuntur, allegorice interpretandis, promised in the *Stromata*. (13) *περί ἀγγελῶν*. (14) *περί τοῦ διαβόλου*. (15) *περί γενέσεως κδσμων*, alluded to by Eusebius (H. E. vi. 13) as an unfulfilled promise. (16) De Ecclesiae unitate et excellentia. (17) De officiis Episcoporum, pres-

His Theological Principles.

The works that remain supply ample material for judging of Clement's theological position and the leading features of his thought. Strictly speaking, he has no system. His habit of mind is discursive and his views eclectic. He has neither the intellectual ambition of the systematist nor the passion for consistency of the logician. But the conceptions which dominate his thought are emphasised throughout his writings with a clearness peculiarly valuable for his purpose, which was above all things that of a missionary and an apologist. Surrounded by men of learning and reflection, he set himself to interpret the Christian revelation in terms of the philosophic reason, and to approve it by reference to a standard which his hearers and himself could alike accept. He is not exactly a rationalist: still less is he a mystic. And yet he includes a great deal of both. He is a rationalist, in fearlessly basing the evidence of truth upon the faculty of reason, and a mystic in referring that reason to its Divine and illimitable source. In the dry light of intellect, he surpasses his Christian successors: in his genial humanity and optimistic view of the universe he is equally superior to his Stoic predecessors.

The key to Clement's theology is to be found in his humanistic training. Among all his teachers, only one was of Judæo-Christian extraction, and it is clear that his influence was of little account. Clement approaches Christianity clear of Jewish prepossessions. For him the preparation for Christ's advent had been world-wide, not national. His first and most important principle is the unity of all truth, whether manifested in heathen thinkers, in Jewish prophets, or still more perfectly in the Incarnate Word. And

byterorum, diaconorum et viduarum. (18) *περὶ ψυχῆς*. (19) *περὶ ἀναστάσεως*. (20) *ὁ γαμικὸς λόγος*. This he speaks of as accomplished. Perhaps he refers to the sections in the Tutor and Miscellanies which treat of conjugal relations. (21) *περὶ ἐγκρατείας*. The same remark applies to the last. (22) *πρὸς τὰς αἰρέσεις*. This can hardly refer to a separate work, but rather to the scope of all his greater treatises.

the ground of this unity is the immanence of the Divine Reason (*λόγος*) in the universal human intelligence. The difficulty of maintaining this principle in face of the consciousness of sin, of alienation from God, calls out his highest powers of argument. We do not say that he has solved it. The charge brought against Greek theology in general is that its sense of sin is defective. Nor is this wholly unjust. Clement at any rate is more occupied with developing the beneficent work of the Word as raising man to his original kinship with Deity, than with analysing the nature of that estrangement which demanded so tremendous a sacrifice on the part of the Son of God. But if, in pursuing the great truth that God is light and God is love, he brings it into the closest relation with the illumination of man's intelligence and the purification of his soul, we must allow something for the animating influence of that truth itself, as well as for the special imperfections of Clement's spiritual endowment. He was in fact of a strictly contemplative temperament. The cry of anguish which Tertullian utters, which Origen all but suppresses, which Augustine suffers to well forth in burning words, is not the natural language of his soul. With him the *love* of God, once made known, is meant to be fearlessly appropriated, with only the explanations thrown upon it by the *light* of God, which reveal its essential character and reconcile its seeming contradictions. To this cause we may trace his unsympathetic attitude towards martyrdom, viewed as a baptism of blood washing away post-baptismal sin; his indifference towards the great hierarchical movement in which his bishop, Demetrius, discerned a remedy against the moral dangers that beset the Church; and his insufficient recognition of the power of faith apart from knowledge, and of the atoning efficacy of the Blood of Christ.

The value of a writer's contributions to theology is to be judged either from their completeness as an exposition of what is held by the universal Church, or from the clearness and force with which they emphasise some one or more fundamental truths in their free working. The theology of Clement is of value exclusively from the latter point of view.

He has brought out, as no other Father, the doctrine of indwelling Deity, and its necessary correlative, the divine origin and destiny of man, in whom Deity dwells. It is true that he speaks of God as He is in Himself, in Platonic language, as the One, the Transcendent, the Unknowable. But this view, the product of his heathen days, is not allowed to obscure his grasp of God's immanence as the Logos in His entire rational creation, which He is ever disciplining, ever enlightening, ever fitting for union with Himself.¹ Redemption with him is not so much an accomplished fact as a living process. We are reminded of a passage in the biography of the late Emperor Frederick. When visiting Jerusalem, and gazing on the probable scene of Christ's Passion, he wrote in his diary: "The sight made me contemplate anew the eternal fact of redemption, of which Calvary is the highest expression." This is exactly Clement's point of view, clothed in modern language.

How then does redemption effect its purpose? Through the operation of the Divine Instructor, first as love, then as light and love in one. In the Tutor, Clement shows how the Word leads men through trial and discipline towards moral perfection; how He taught the Greeks through poetry and philosophy, and in a lower degree through custom and law, the Jews through rites and ceremonies and the spiritual witness of prophecy; all the time pointing onward with unwearied emphasis to the fuller disclosure of His divine purpose that should come when the time was ripe. The Incarnation of the Word in Jesus Christ throws back upon this long process the clear light of intelligibility. What was half obliterated becomes decipherable; what was isolated falls into its proper connection. It is seen that all history

¹ Clement is usually regarded as a Christian Platonist. Yet he seems to us to be more influenced in this his central conception by the Stoic philosophy than by Plato. Plato, as Jowett truly remarks (introduction to the *Timæus*, p. 510), is more embarrassed by the sense of the existence of evil in his theory of creation than the Hebrew author of Genesis. Hence Clement instinctively allies himself with the Stoic doctrine of immanence rather than with the Platonic idea of creation partly by God, partly by inferior agencies.

has been a preparation for Christ; or, in other words, a progressive manifestation of Christ in the life of man, gathered into a focus in the divine-human life of Jesus, and now spread by His Church into the universal consciousness of mankind.

The Christian Gnostic.

It results from this view of redemption that the goal of Christian perfection is knowledge (*γνώσις*), and this Clement unhesitatingly asserts. In contradistinction to the false gnosis he propounds the principles of the true gnosis, which is perfect, loving communion, based on spiritual enlightenment. He does not shrink from the name Gnostic. He adopts it as the Christian's highest title of honour. The Christian as such is called to be a Gnostic. The baptism of regeneration not only seals our forgiveness, but brings us within the circle of the light, opening thereby the possibility of infinite development to the soul.

What then is the essential difference which marks off Clement's Gnostic from the Gnostic of the heretics? In one word, it is his freedom. The old Gnostics, it will be remembered, tied by their conception of God as transcendent perfection, refused to allow Him any contact with the world. The world was so imperfect that they regarded it as the work of a Power many stages removed from God. Nevertheless some original germs of deity are found in it, and it is these and these alone which, by their origin, are capable of redemption. Inferior natures are for ever confined within the sphere of their original potentialities, and thus admit only a limited redemption. This dark shadow of necessity hanging over God was abhorrent to Clement. Undeterred by the contradictions of apparent experience, he distinctly asserts the universality of redemption, and makes it realisable through the freedom of man's will. Christ has lifted all into the heavenly sphere, and all may continue within it, if they will.

Freedom of the Will.

Clement is the first of Christian writers to assert clearly the doctrine of freewill.¹ He passes beyond S. Paul's conception of sin as bondage to evil, and righteousness as bondage to Christ, and each as freedom with respect to the other, and arrives at the higher point where freedom means original capacity of moral choice. To this he was driven by his Gnostic antagonists, who declared that if God had created Adam perfect, perfect he must to all eternity have remained. In this instance, as in so many others, the hostility of these brilliant thinkers was a spur to the intellect of the Church.

Though Clement scarcely carried his explanation beyond the human sphere, and did not, like Origen, attack the problem of cosmical evil, yet this contribution of his to theology is of the utmost value, and itself would entitle him to a master's place.

The solidarity of mankind in Adam, which may be called the main principle of S. Augustine's system, is replaced in Clement's by the solidarity of mankind in Christ. Christ is for him not only the type of manhood, but the one perfect man. The deeper question of Christ's own freedom does not engage his attention. How freedom of choice between opposites passes into conscious identification with the absolute good as such he does not determine; but his serene and hopeful view of human nature, as expressed once for all in the freewill of Christ, must ever rank high among the inspiring forces in the Christian's spiritual progress.

Thus far Clement is successful in shaking off the pernicious dualism of the Gnostics, which set a hard and fast line between the carnal and spiritual Christian. But he admits another distinction between believers, which, smooth it down as he will, he cannot render free from danger.

In his day the Church was beginning to lose its original character of a society in which all were bent on holiness.

¹ The phrase *liberum arbitrium*, which states the doctrine with precision, is due to Tertullian. The Greek writers have no equivalent expression, τὸ ἀντρεξούσιον being the nearest.

Its gates were opening wide, and multitudes were pouring in for whom the ideal of the true Gnostic was too high. For these it was necessary to present the Christian life in the form of a new law. The Western Church had already girded itself with enthusiasm to the task. Clement applied to the problem his theory of the higher and lower lives. For those who shrank from the discipline necessary to the attainment of that spiritual insight which alone discerns the Divine Love, it was sufficient to offer as motives faith and hope, springing out of fear. The goal of this life is Holiness, the negative virtue of abstinence from wilful sin. But beyond it lies the sphere of Knowledge, which implies Love and active Righteousness. He does not say that this higher life is impossible for all, but he is contented to acquiesce in its non-attainment by the majority as a matter of fact. Faith is for him imperfect apprehension, not the absolute identification of the soul with Christ, which is S. Paul's conception of it. Thus he banishes faith from the perfect life, as well as fear and hope, the former of which is unworthy, the latter unnecessary. Love remains; indeed, it is the element and the instrument of true knowledge. But Love, as he conceives it, is not an emotion. In his view Christ was absolutely passionless, and as Christ was, so the advanced Christian must be. His love is the apprehension of the absolute good, in harmonious movement with it. As we should express it, love is disinterested, purified from all thought of self. If it were possible to offer it the choice between the joys of heaven and the knowledge of God, it would unhesitatingly choose the latter.¹

The danger of such a theory is patent. It tends to set before men two different ideals, the one for the many, the other for the few; the one based on self-interest, the other on love of truth. But we must not suppose that Clement admitted any such radical divergence. The two ideals are stages in the path of perfection. The first must be passed through before the second can be reached. It is related to

¹ The writer is much indebted throughout this section to Bigg's "Christian Platonists of Alexandria," Lecture III., and to Allen's "Continuity of Christian Thought," ch. i.

it as the incomplete to the complete, not as the essentially inferior to the essentially excellent. Clement forms a church within the Church, contrasting the two much as Origen afterwards contrasted the visible with the invisible Church.

His Attitude to the Scriptures.

We have considered Clement's teaching thus far without reference to his attitude towards the Scriptures. It would be an injustice to his Christian convictions to imply that he at all undervalued them. Though he rates human culture so high as to consider it a stage in the Divine education of the soul, he does not for a moment allow that man can originate a revelation. All truth comes from God; and there can be no schism in the manifestation of the Divine Reason. Nevertheless, he recognises Scripture as pre-eminently God's Word, for in it is heard everywhere the voice of the Divine Instructor, teaching and pleading and correcting, and fashioning man's life into conformity with His own. At the same time, he finds the evidence of the inspiration of Scripture within the human reason, not in any external authority. The relation of inspiration to human genius, and of Biblical to non-Biblical inspiration, are questions of comparatively recent date, and in their modern form are not approached by Clement. But the entire tone of his works indicates unmistakably in what way he would have answered them. Inspiration for him is not an arbitrary or coercive action of the Divine Spirit upon the human, as it was for the Montanists, who likened the Spirit to the player, and the human speaker to the instrument upon which He played. It is rather the highest exercise of that capacity for discerning truth with which the soul is endowed in virtue of its Divine sonship, and which it exhibits in proportion as it has conformed itself to the Divine Image. Revelation, like redemption, is regarded by Clement not as a deposit given once for all, but as a continuous though varying process, appropriated by the soul whose eyes are opened to see it, in greater or less measure according to its spiritual progress,

and also according to the activity of the revealing Word. Thus revelation and inspiration were at their height among the Apostles, because the Apostles both lived in close communion with the Incarnate Word, and because the Word was then in the fulness of time more perfectly revealing Himself.

With such a general attitude towards the subject, we need not expect any great keenness of critical insight. He accepts without misgiving not only the entire LXX. but many apocryphal works both of Jewish and Christian origin; or if his judgment doubts their authenticity, he just raises a passing question without denying himself the support of their testimony. His strongest expression on the comparative value of Scripture writers is where he insists on the equal authority of S. Paul's Epistles with the writings of the Twelve. So far as he enters into the controversy at all, he is a Paulinist, but in no one-sided sense. Nevertheless, he misapprehends S. Paul's teaching in its capital point, in common, it must be allowed, with nearly all the Ante-Nicene Fathers.

In interpreting Scripture, he lays down no new principles. He condemns the literalism of the Rabbins. In conformity with the practice of his day, he allows allegorical explanation, especially in everything that approximates to an anthropomorphic representation of God. He speaks of every text having a threefold application as a sign of truth, a commandment, and a prophecy; but he does not weave this view into the fabric of his theology, and it exercises but little influence over him. The true sense of Scripture is given firstly by the consentient voice of the Church, and secondly, by the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. The former he traces to apostolic tradition; the latter is the believer's inalienable privilege. It was objected to him by the "merely correct believers" (*ὀρθοδοξασταί*) that to do without an authoritative canon of interpretation is to leave the truth uncertain. To this he replied that no one denies there is an art of medicine because different schools of medical science exist and different modes of treatment are followed. All great truths excite

controversy ; in all things there is a genuine and a counterfeit. The great duty as well as the great difficulty is to decide aright. Thus he declares that the true refutation of heresy lies in appealing to the true sense of Scripture, not to isolated texts, but to the general drift. The remedy for error is not less knowledge but more. The path of scientific culture is a necessary preliminary to understanding the Divine Oracles.

His View of the Church.

His doctrine of the Church is nowhere clearly formulated. He is too entirely preoccupied with spiritual theology to do justice to the importance of ecclesiastical organisation. In this respect he compares unfavourably with Irenæus and Tertullian, and still more with Cyprian. His conception of the Church is predominantly ethical. It consists of all those who have accepted the discipline of the Divine Instructor, who realise their calling as the children of God. He probably accepted the orthodox views on apostolical succession, baptism and the Eucharist ; but they are rather incidentally referred to than made the subjects of precise definition. Worship is in his eyes the practice of righteousness ; sacrifice is the oblation of self to do God's will ; the altar is the congregation of those who give themselves to prayer, having one voice and one mind. He has no leaning towards asceticism, though in one place he speaks admiringly of those who practise it. But his conception of the Fatherhood of God leads him to pronounce all human relationships sacred. He applies to the circle of family life the words of Christ, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." He disapproves of community of goods, and declares that true poverty consists not in renouncing riches, but in detaching the heart from them. The world is not indeed the best of possible worlds, but it is in no unreal sense the home of him who knows that Christ dwells in it by His Spirit.

The idea that Christ will shortly come in the flesh to

reward the faithful, and take vengeance upon His enemies, has no attractions for him, believing as he does that Christ is already truly present, and has begun to witness His triumph at the Father's right hand. The judgment of the world is not regarded as an imminent and sudden catastrophe, but as a spiritual process actually going on. The punishment of the wicked he considers to be wholly disciplinary and remedial, God's justice being but the obverse of His love. The unbeliever who refuses exhortation must be terrified by threats, and, if these prove inefficacious, must be curbed by severity. Judgment is not an end, but a means. God judges that he may amend. His punishments are a necessary element of His educational process. Whether Clement carried this theory so far as to believe, like Origen, in a universal restoration, we have not the means of knowing, but such a belief would be in conformity with his principle that the Divine Love is the central power of the universe, and must ultimately prevail.

Defects of his Theology.

We conclude this brief sketch of Clement's theology with one or two remarks upon its defects. The first is the difficulty of connecting the ideal with the actual relationship of man to God. Clement bases all his arguments upon the vital character of this relationship. "Like is known by like," "spirit is discerned by spirit," "man is akin to deity, and is destined, through the teaching of the Word, to become God." Such is the language he uses. Does it imply an identity of essence? Or, if not, is man an emanation of the Deity? Certainly Clement would not admit either of these views. He regards man rather as a product of the Divine Will, yet not in the general sense in which the rest of creation was called into existence, but as moulded, so to speak, directly by the very hands of God, who breathed into his nostrils the spirit or intellect, which is the Divine "image," and man's possession by right of gift, and by which he is enabled to acquire through virtue the further prerogative of the Divine

“likeness.” The question immediately arises, How could such a being fall? Clement replies, Through appetite, of which the serpent is the symbol. But this answer inevitably suggests the suspicion that the body, which is the seat of appetite, is evil. This again Clement refuses to allow; but it nevertheless remains a weak point in his system that the ground of man’s separation from God is not clearly made out.

The second defect follows from the first. His theory of Redemption does not take in all the facts. He looks upon redemption not as the restitution of what was lost at the Fall, but as the “crown and consummation of the destiny of man, leading to a righteousness such as Adam never knew, and to heights of glory and power as yet unsealed and undreamed.”¹ In other words, it is for him a revelation rather than a restoration. He does not apprehend the Church’s doctrine of the propitiation effected by Christ’s death, of the efficacy of His atonement for sin, of the conveyance to man of a righteousness not his own, whereby he is accepted before God. The idea of retribution is foreign to him, as is that of an expiatory sacrifice. He admits that Christ by His death ransoms us from the powers of evil, and bestows forgiveness of pre-baptismal sin, but he teaches the baptized Christian to look “not upon the Crucified, but upon the Risen Lord, the fountain, not of pardon, but of life.”² The great fact of man’s reconciliation to God through the power of Christ’s death and the ministry of the Gospel is all but left out of sight. He thus emphasises one part of the Redeemer’s work at the expense of another, equally necessary to salvation.

His third defect is less vital, but still important. It consists in his inadequate appreciation of faith as the means of apprehending God. No doubt he is inconsistent with himself on this point. He speaks sometimes as S. Paul might have spoken, as when he says, “Wisdom changes its name according to its diverse applications. When mounting up to first causes it is called intelligence; it becomes

¹ See Bigg, *Christian Platonists*, p. 75.

² *Christian Platonists*, p. 73.

science when fortifying intelligence by reasoning ; and faith when, concentrated on holiness, it envisages the primordial Word, without as yet seeing Him, being limited by the conditions of the world." But, as a rule, his estimate of faith is far too low. He relegates it to the sphere of opinion, of half-persuasion of the truth of Christ's promises ; so that, when knowledge is reached, faith has no longer a place in the purified soul, which has now outgrown its sphere. This is the mystic element in Clement's thought ; the vision of Divine truth opened to the Gnostic is so perfect that nothing further is desired. Earth becomes heaven—the soul lies in wakeful rest within the light of God.

His Extant Works.

We shall devote a few pages to an account of the writings from which the foregoing principles are drawn. Clement's systematic teaching is contained in the series of works already mentioned, viz., the *Protrepticus*, *Pædagogus*, and *Stromateis*. These correspond to the three stages of initiation into the heathen mysteries, a process which Clement had more than once gone through, and which left a profound impression upon his mind.¹ The first stage was called *ἀποκάθαρσις*, or purification, by which the soul was freed from error and made to see its need of higher truth ; the second was *μύησις*, the initiatory rite, almost always symbolic of some secret power of Nature, or some feature in the spirit's destiny ; the third was *ἐποπτεία*, or the communication of essential truths without the disguise of parable or myth. Clement makes the successive stages of his teaching answer broadly to these three divisions.

¹ S. Paul several times speaks of mysteries in connection with the Christian faith. He can hardly have used the word without reference to its universal meaning among the Gentiles. He also speaks (as does S. John) of a mystery of iniquity. Hence the idea of the Christian teacher as a *Mystagogue* or *Initiator* is not unnatural. To Clement, as to S. Paul, the mystery was the spiritual revelation clearly apprehended by gnosis, believed by faith. It was not, as later, applied to sacraments.

The Protrepticus.

The Protrepticus is an analysis of mythological and philosophical ideas, with a demonstration of their erroneousness and an indication of the path of truth and holiness. It is addressed to Gentile inquirers. The Pædagogus is a sketch of the discipline of the soul as carried on by the indwelling Word. It consists of three books. The first treats of the general principles of God's government and the evolution of righteousness in human nature. The second and third descend to particular examples, and trace the working of Christ's discipline in all departments of the Christian's life. It is an unsystematic but tolerably complete repertory of Christian ethics, such as was suitable for intelligent catechumens. The Stromateis comprise eight books of philosophical and theological discussions on the higher life of gnosis. The topics are not presented in any definite order, but arise naturally out of the train of thought. They are to a great extent controversial, and doubtless embody the substance of his esoteric teaching to those who had embraced the spiritual ideal of the true Gnostic. The eighth book is of a wholly different character, and in its present incomplete form consists merely of a series of logical definitions, apparently intended as introductory to a minute examination of heathen philosophical systems. It is believed by many critics to belong more properly to some other work, perhaps the Hypotyposes, to which it may have been the prelude. This hypothesis is partly confirmed by the assertion at the close of the seventh book of the Stromateis, that he is about to proceed with his argument from a fresh beginning.¹

The Protrepticus is to all intents and purposes an apologetic treatise, and it may be well in connection with it to state briefly the main features of Clement's apologetic method. This may be characterised as at once sympathetic and incisive. He does not, like so many apologists, content

¹ The classical reader will be reminded of the commencement of the seventh book of Aristotle's Ethics, which opens in the same way.

himself with denouncing heathen mythology, but traces it to its source, justifies his strictures by a most ample quotation of its authorities, and recognises the truth as well as the falsehood of many of its conclusions. He dwells especially on the value of philosophy as proving the inadequacy of the unassisted reason to attain the fulness of truth. His treatment of this part of his subject is particularly brilliant. His thorough familiarity with classic antiquity¹ makes him linger with delight over passages which he cites only to reveal their weakness. He cannot forget, and would not if he could, the unequalled charm of that rich literary inheritance which God had given to Hellas to trade with till He came to reclaim His own with usury. He willingly admits the action of the Divine Word in her poetry and speculative thought, as willingly as he admits it in the prophetic literature of the Jews. But he injures the force of this admission by his theory that the Greek thinkers borrowed from Moses, a superficial view which he borrows from Justin, without troubling himself to sift it. It is an excrescence in his system, and really inconsistent with it. His genuine thought is expressed by the assertion that prophecy and philosophy came from the same source: that the highest minds have always and everywhere been God's servants, and that what the Law was for the Jews, philosophy was for the Greeks, namely, a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ. He enforces this by an application of the Psalmist's words that the oil which fell on Aaron's beard signifies the Old Testament, and that which dropped on the skirts of his clothing refers to the philosophy of the Gentiles. The fundamental principle of the *Protrepticus* is the essential affinity between the Word and the human spirit, and its object is to show how the interrupted harmony may be re-established. Its faults consist in its over-idealism, its conception of revelation too much as a system of truth and too little as a

¹ This must be understood to refer to Greek literature only. Of acquaintance with Roman literature there is not a trace. This is of the less importance, because in the field with which Clement deals that literature was absolutely barren.

redemption from sin, and in its over-strained brilliancy of expression, which too often obscures the thoughts.

The Pædagogus.

None of his works is pervaded by a more genial tone than this. The thought that underlies it is both joyous and fruitful of result. It is Christ as the Educator of the human race: the ever-present enlightener of its intelligence, the trainer of its capacity for virtue. The germ of this idea is to be sought in S. Paul's account of Law as a Tutor which prepared the Jews for Christ. But Clement works it out in a different way. For him Christ is the Tutor, and Law is one of His methods. But not the only one. All the varied issues of man's life are woven into the Divine plan of amelioration. Poetry, art, wealth, patriotism, ambition, success, defeat: all have their formative purpose; all contribute to prepare for the final stage, which is conscious effort towards perfection, conscious union of humanity as one divinely-created brotherhood marching forward to the inheritance won for it by its Elder Brother Christ.

This is in truth a noble optimism. And we emphasise with pleasure the exhilaration of soul which two centuries of pure Christianity had aroused in its most accomplished spokesman. Clement resolutely fixes his gaze on the bright side of human destiny: the side which S. Paul had so magnificently inaugurated, when he announced to the Christian community that "ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

The succession of early apologists which begins with the unknown writer to Diognetus, and is continued by Justin, Athenagoras, and Pantænus, finds in Clement its most eloquent exponent. But already the signs of the times are changing. A growing sense of man's guilt, with a consciousness of his remoteness from God, stamps with a far sadder tone the writings of the great men that follow. In Origen its influence is already felt, in Tertullian and Cyprian it alternates with exultant hope; but in spite of a deeper psychology, in spite of a more heroic sainthood, few if any

of succeeding writers preserve so much of that pure free consciousness of the Father's boundless love, which is the immortal breath of the sayings of Christ.

The second and third books of the *Pædagogus* form a rich mine of information as to the social customs of Clement's day. Many of the particulars are trivial; others tediously minute; others again are enlivened by touches of playful satire. But though they cover the ground of casuistry, their tone is the reverse of casuistical. The details are throughout vivified by the consciousness of a great principle, and are never intended to enslave the judgment or fetter the liberty of the Christian.

At the close of the work are appended two short pieces in verse—the first a hymn to the Word, in anapæstic measure, which may possibly be genuine; the second an apostrophe to Christ "the Tutor," in iambs, which has all the characters of an academical exercise. In neither is there sufficient poetical merit to call for any comment.

The Stromateis.

The *Stromateis* are Clement's longest work; and in them we see his ideas at their widest range and highest level. In spite of its desultory character, the treatise is pervaded by the same general plan as his other books. Its central thought is the ability of the Gospel to fulfil all the desires of men, and to raise to a supreme unity all the objects of the Christian philosopher's knowledge. To give an analysis of its contents would exceed the limits of our chapter. The summary of Clement's theology already supplied will have presented to the reader the chief results of investigation pursued in the *Stromateis* in an unsystematic way. At its close he draws a sharp contrast between his own method and that of the heathen sages. While they begin from man, and work up as they believe to God, he begins with the Word and shows how man's true nature is revealed in Him. While they end by imagining gods like themselves, and so remain ignorant of the true Deity, he, following the lead of

the Word, raises man to his genuine self, and so makes him like the Son of God.

The great reputation achieved by Clement, combined with his gentle and peaceable character, raised him high in the estimation of the Church. Popular opinion reckoned him among the saints, and he was commemorated in the early Western Martyrologies on Dec. 4. His name was, however, erased from the list by Clement VIII., and the omission defended by Benedict XIV., on the ground that some parts of his teaching were open to suspicion, and that mere popular cultus did not constitute a sufficient claim to insertion in the Calendar. The only wonder is that this step was not taken long before. His excellences and defects are alike such as would place him out of sympathy with the prevailing spirit of Latin Christianity.

CHAPTER III.

ORIGEN (A.D. 185-253).

PART I.

CLEMENT was succeeded in the headship of the Catechetical school by **Origen**, the most interesting, the most learned, and in some respects the greatest of patristic writers. So great indeed is he, that in the Greek Church Athanasius alone can be placed above him, being fully his equal in clearness and depth of thought, and his superior in theological soundness. Chrysostom and Gregory excel him in eloquence, but yield to him in learning. Of Western writers, three only are worthy of comparison with him: Tertullian, who surpasses him in force and grasp as much as he falls below him in breadth of mind; Jerome, who follows him not unworthily in the field of scholarship; and Augustine, who stands above him in boldness of thought, splendour of language, and dogmatic genius, but is inferior to him in largeness of heart and single-minded striving after truth. Yet this man, who, as Mosheim says, deserved, if any ever did, the title of saint,¹ has come down to us with a damaged reputation. Not only is the beatific prefix withheld from his name, but from his own time until the present both his conduct and opinions, especially the latter, have been stigmatised as highly reprehensible by some of the highest authorities in the Church. It is true that a few, and those among the greatest, held him innocent of the charges made against him. It is sufficient to mention Athanasius among Greek Fathers, and Jerome, in his earlier and truer days, among Latin. But where the judgment

¹ His words are, "Certainly, if any man deserves to stand first in the catalogue of saints and martyrs, and to be annually held up as an example to Christians, this is the man."

is so diverse, it is reasonable to assume some imperfection in the subject of it. And this the most zealous admirer of Origen is compelled to admit. In the brief sketch of his system which is all that the limits of our work permit, the watchful reader will not fail to discern elements of inconsistency, vagueness, and unauthorised freedom of thought, many of them highly seductive, but dangerous in proportion to their attractiveness.

General Considerations.

It will be desirable at the outset to bring forward two considerations which, in justice to Origen, ought never to be lost sight of in criticising his views.

In the first place, he lived in an age of transition, before the relations between the Church and the individual had been clearly defined. Dogma was still in the making; and though on certain fundamental points the Church's teaching was sufficiently clear, yet on others scarcely less important no decisive pronouncement had been made. With regard to these Origen holds himself free to exercise his reason, restrained only by the supreme arbitrament of Scripture. In the second place, his mind was stamped with the most distinct individuality; it was trained by the severest study and lighted with the purest glow of enthusiasm for truth: and it strove with unceasing energy to express the truth it held in terms of the cultivated intelligence.

It is only to be expected that such a mind, moving amid subjects of surpassing grandeur and difficulty, should reach some conclusions which the general religious sense refused to endorse. The errors of Origen's speculation, numerous as they are, must be taken together with his permanent contributions to theology, and both connected with his entire system, as jointly expressing the results of a thorough investigation into what he believed to be the principles of revealed truth. A mind so many-sided, a personality so peculiar, must needs afford material for conflicting judgments; but to whichever side our own bias inclines, it will be well to reflect how vast is the Church's debt to a thinker who has approached the

entire field of religious knowledge with the sole desire to discover truth, and has expressed with absolute sincerity the processes of his own mind.

His Life—First Period.

Origenes or Origen¹ was born at Alexandria, A.D. 185, of Christian parents. His father, Leonides, was a man of piety, but not a bigot. He allowed his son to attend the public schools, and gain his secular culture from the best heathen masters. But his boy's religious education he reserved for himself, convinced that those studies which the father takes into his own hands will appear to the son also the most important. Nor was he disappointed. A rare soul blossomed beneath his care. While still a mere child, he astonished his father by his insight into the Divine Word, and perplexed him by his penetrating questions. Already he expressed dissatisfaction with the literal meaning, and sought always for the hidden sense. His father felt it necessary to administer a gentle reproof; but in secret he blessed God for the gift of such a child, and sometimes, while the boy slept, he would creep into his chamber, and reverently kiss the bosom which he recognised as a shrine of the Holy Spirit.

The Christian child ripened into a pure and heavenly-minded youth. Untouched by the moral corruption around him, his ardent soul burned only with the desire of Divine knowledge. He had already become a communicant before his father died. He had listened to the lofty teaching of Pantænus, and afterwards to the genial wisdom of Clement.

¹ The name is derived from Or or Horus, an Egyptian deity identified with Apollo. It may seem strange that a Christian should call his son after a heathen god, but the practice was as common then as it has been in later times. Origen is also called Adamanthus. Whether this was his second name, as Eusebius affirms, or an epithet expressive of his "invincible" industry, as Jerome thought, is uncertain; most probably the former. So with Ignatius, of whose other name, Theophorus, there are similar conflicting explanations. The loyal devotion of admirers ever longs to find a correspondence between the signification of the name and the life of him who bears it. This is abundantly illustrated from both sacred and profane history.

Among his fellow-pupils was young Alexander, who became in later days Bishop of Jerusalem. The two youths became fast friends, and this friendship was a haven of refuge to Origen in the greatest trial of his life. In Clement's gifted circle he could not fail to rise to a high conception of the responsibility of the intellect in matters of faith. Before his student days were over, he had conceived the idea of reconciling the claims of religion with those of science. To this grand object he devoted his entire life.

It was in the year 202, the tenth of Severus, that persecution broke out after a long respite. Nowhere was it fiercer than in Alexandria, and nowhere was it faced with more undaunted courage. Among the victims was Leonides, whose ample property invited the confiscator's greed. The youth of sixteen resolved to share his father's fate. He was on the point of delivering himself to the authorities when his mother, by hiding his clothes, compelled him to forego the glory of a martyr's death. He wrote to his father, urging him to stand firm. "See to it" (he said) "that thou change not thy purpose on our account."

His father's death left the family destitute. The rest were provided for, we know not how. Origen was received into the house of a wealthy Christian lady, who treated him as her son. Here he was thrown into the company of one Paulus, a Gnostic teacher, who had acquired an ascendancy over the mind of his benefactress. With this man, so soon as he saw the drift of his teaching, Origen refused to hold any intercourse.¹ He therefore found it necessary to leave his comfortable home, and to work for an independence. This he was easily enabled to do. His thorough knowledge of grammar and philosophy encouraged him to set up a grammatical school.² The experiment was at once successful,

¹ Three points in his teaching were especially hateful to Origen: first, his use of Christian terms, while emptying them of meaning; second, his complete suppression of the moral requirements of Christianity; and third, his denial of divine and human liberty. The repulsion from this heretic's doctrines can be traced in many departments of Origen's philosophy.

² By "grammar" is meant here not the elements merely, but chiefly the higher departments of criticism and exegesis.

and resulted in a revenue sufficient to allow of his purchasing a large and valuable library. The constancy of the martyrs had deeply impressed the more serious-minded of the heathen. Several students, among them Plutarch, a future martyr, and his brother Heraclas, future Bishop of Alexandria, were seized with a desire to be instructed in the Word of God. They applied to the Catechetical school; but finding it closed, owing to Clement's retirement, they turned to Origen, whose seniors they were by several years, but under whom they willingly placed themselves. Demetrius, the bishop, perceiving his extraordinary aptitude for teaching, took the strong step of appointing him, though scarcely eighteen years of age, to the Catechetical chair.

Hardly had the boy-teacher settled down to his work when the persecution broke out again. It became impossible to meet in public. The lectures were carried on within closed doors, which might at any moment be forced by an armed guard and the students led to execution. It is wonderful that under such conditions the tolerant spirit of the Alexandrian school was not exchanged for bigotry. Tribulation, which purifies Christian conduct, is not always so favourable to Christian theology. That it had no cramping effect in this instance, is due to the influence of Origen, who never swerved from his ideal of moral purity, combined with divine wisdom.

His example was consistent with his teaching. Far from avoiding danger, he was the first to court it. Every day he was seen at the prison doors comforting and exhorting the captives. He walked by their side to the place of torture, and gave them the last kiss. Among the martyrs was his pupil Plutarch, who was well known and popular in the city. The people were infuriated at his death, of which they held Origen to be the cause. Many times they set upon him, and would have torn him in pieces, but on each occasion he was rescued from their hands. There can be little doubt that the safety of one so poor and so useful as a provider of wealthy victims was studiously watched over by the governor. At length the storm passed, and the school was able to

reassemble. Its popularity was greater than ever. The young catechist threw himself into his work with an ardour almost superhuman. The whole day and no small part of the night were given to labour. But this was not enough. He determined to carry out his moral ideal to the uttermost. He absolutely refused all salary and all gifts. He sold his library, the sole fruit of his earnings, in exchange for a life-pension of four obols (about sixpence) a day. On this pittance the scholar and the gentleman contrived to subsist. Needless to say, his fare was of the scantiest. Animal food and wine he never touched. His couch was the bare ground. Accepting Christ's command to His Apostles as meant for himself, he wore but one garment; and, by a stretch of literalism extraordinary in the champion of allegorical interpretation, he committed an act of self-mutilation which, however well intended as a precaution against scandal, it is impossible to do otherwise than condemn.

But we must not imagine that he made a parade of his austerity. Nothing would be further from the truth. No Father of the Church is more truly humble-minded, more completely free from affectation or religious pride. But there were two defects in his theological equipment which seriously detract from the value of his results. The first is his too intimate assimilation of the various heathen systems of thought, which tinged his ideal of self-renunciation with the corrupt leaven of asceticism—a practice based on the non-Christian hypothesis of the impurity of matter. The second is his deficiency in the ruling faculty of judgment. With all his ardour for truth, his acuteness, his learning, his logical and metaphysical power, he lacked the master gifts of originality and mental strength. He must be pronounced inferior to Clement in the former, and to Tertullian in the latter. These defects run through all his system, and account for, though they do not justify, the severe denunciations of his enemies.

At present, however, they were not apparent to the world. In Alexandria his fame was extraordinary. The most illustrious professors could not rival his influence. Not only

Christian catechumens, but learned heathens thronged his school, which was open day and night to all comers. To deal fairly with their difficulties, he thought it necessary to acquaint himself with the most recent development of Pagan thought.

Ammonius Sacas, the renowned founder of Neo-Platonism, was expounding to crowded audiences the seductive principles of his system. Origen attended his lectures, and made himself master of this striking attempt at combining the philosophic tradition of Greece, and more especially Platonism, with the theosophic aspirations of the time. He had no scruple in doing this. In his eyes it was not only fair warfare to study the enemy's tactics, but it was the duty of a conscientious defender of the faith not to reject the opportunity of learning at first hand ideas which professed to satisfy the same needs of man's nature as his own. Had all apologists of Christianity been equally honest, religion and science would not have been in their present position of mutual distrust. In the school of Ammonius he formed the acquaintance of a young man named Porphyry, who was destined to become the most formidable of all the antagonists of Christianity. It is pleasant to know that their impressions were mutually favourable, though there is some justice in Porphyry's remark that "Origen's discussions on theology are carried on after the manner of the Greeks."¹

A young man, however ardent his zeal, and however immense his industry, cannot long continue to bear with impunity so severe a strain. The attenuated form and over-brilliant eye told of injured health. Origen's friends, and among them the bishop, desired that he should have some rest. He had long wished to see the Church of the world's capital. To Rome, accordingly, he directed his steps. The Pontiff was Zephyrinus, a man of infirm character and little learning, but hospitable and kindly. We can hardly doubt that he received a teacher so distinguished with at least outward honour. But it is clear that Origen was little satisfied with his visit. If we except Hippolytus, and that

¹ He means, of course, heathen Greeks.

shadowy personage Caius the presbyter, he would scarcely find at Rome one kindred spirit.

Not only were the externals of church-life dwelt on with an emphasis which to him must have seemed wholly disproportionate, but the tumult of worldly policy and ambitious projects which centred in the Papal chair evidently shocked and angered him. Of the few bitter remarks that fell from his pen, the bitterest are directed against the traffic in holy things which he witnessed for the first time in Rome. It is certainly significant that neither he nor Tertullian nor Jerome could remain on a friendly footing with the Roman clergy. It is equally significant that, while Tertullian and Jerome are unsparing of individuals but have not a word to say against the system, Origen never once alludes to an individual, while to the system he only vouchsafes the tribute of a half-regretful, half-contemptuous allusion. The fact is that Origen and the Roman Church were wide as the poles apart. To him the Christian religion was a system of Divine truth thought out by reason; to them it was a Divine polity imposed by authority. The attitude of Origen to Rome was curiosity exchanged for indifference; the attitude of Rome to Origen was suspicion followed by condemnation.

On his return to Alexandria he resumed his labours with undiminished zeal. The number of hearers was so great, that in order to secure leisure for his own reading he found it necessary to divide his work. He took into partnership his former pupil Heraclas, to whom he committed the junior department, reserving for himself the higher class of proficients. By this step he was enabled to complete his system of Christian education, a system of which it may safely be said that nothing like it was known in the ancient church, and nothing superior to it exists in the modern. In estimating its worth, regard should be had to its object. Though nominally a scheme of training for Christian converts, it was practically a seminary for the production of Christian divines or philosophers. It must therefore be compared not with schemes of secular education as such, but rather with the whole course of training ending with the seminary or the

theological college, which prepares young men for the ministry. We owe to Origen's devoted pupil Gregory of Neo-Cæsarea an incomplete but glowing account of his educational method.

(a.) His Educational Method.

His first step was always to understand the character of his pupil, so as to present to him those aspects of ethical and intellectual training which were best suited to spur him on to improvement. He then proceeded by a searching dialectic to remove false impressions, prejudices, conceit of knowledge, or other hindrances to the unbiassed reception of truth. Nor did he trouble himself to make this process pleasant, being wisely convinced that unless the higher knowledge be sought with a pure intention, its acquisition can do no real good. This preliminary over, he placed the scholar on the lower steps of the ladder of knowledge by introducing him to the principles of geometry. From thence he mounted upwards to physics and astronomy, attaching special value to a thorough insight into the orderly sequence of Nature, without which he held it impossible to penetrate to the more recondite order of the moral world. Moral science came next, and here Origen availed himself of the noble example of heathen moralists, who had striven to make morality not merely a science but a doctrine, not merely a theory but a life. This is what raises Origen to the first rank as a Christian teacher. He set himself to satisfy the legitimate desire for an ethical system that should harmonise the Christian ideal with the conceptions of the practical reason. And, according to Gregory, he succeeded in his task. He not only made his disciples see that Christianity was the best life, but he himself lived up to it and inspired them to do the same. So far from depreciating the works of non-Christian philosophers, he strongly recommended a thorough study of them, as an essential pre-requisite of that well-grounded certitude which is the Christian philosopher's most glorious reward. In every

system he considered would be found some element of truth; and to draw this out and disengage it from surrounding error seemed to him a task worthy of a scholar of Jesus Christ. Last of sciences in order and queen in rank came Theology, the knowledge of divine things, to which logic, physics and ethics are handmaidens, and in which the philosophic systems find their meaning and their goal. The primal truths of theology are embodied in the Scriptures, interpreted by the Holy Spirit, acting in the first instance in the Universal Church, and secondarily in the purified soul of the Christian inquirer. He himself accepted as final and absolute those deductions from Holy Scripture on which the entire Church had definitely pronounced. But outside these, he allowed himself and his disciples the utmost freedom of inference, provided it was exercised in the spirit of prayer and with the single-minded desire of truth. He held that the soul of man was made to be nourished on truth, and was given faculties whereby truth was intended to be acquired. And although in our present state we can go but a little way towards that goal for which our true nature yearns, yet the impulse is in itself holy and divine, and carries with it the pledge, if undeviatingly pursued, of its ultimate though perhaps distant satisfaction. It may be that Origen rated too highly the endowments of man's nature, that he allowed too little for the defacement in him of the Divine Image; but his error was that of a noble soul, and sprang from his sense of the inherent attractiveness of the Divine when once clearly revealed.

(b.) His Theological Studies.

The peaceful and prosperous labours of the teacher received an abrupt check by the outbreak of a second persecution in the reign of Caracalla (A.D. 215). Origen withdrew from the danger, and took refuge at Cæsarea in Palestine. Here the bishop Theoctistus, seconded by Origen's old fellow-pupil Alexander of Jerusalem, preferred a request that he would give public instruction in the Scriptures during the

services of the church. It must be remembered that Origen was a layman. He did not, however, on that account think it necessary to decline their invitation. Probably the importance of his action from a disciplinary view never occurred to him. He was signally deficient in that hierarchical instinct which was rapidly becoming the ruling force in the Church. That he intended any disrespect to Demetrius, who had hitherto treated him with unvarying friendliness, is not for a moment to be believed. Unfortunately Demetrius took a different view of his conduct. He peremptorily recalled him, and expressed strong disapproval of the action of the Palestinian bishops, which he stigmatised, though ignorantly, as unprecedented. Origen returned to Alexandria, and resumed his former position (A.D. 218).

About this time he fell in with a wealthy Alexandrian named Ambrosius whom he rescued from heretical opinions, and who at once conceived an ardent affection for his preserver. Under his influence, Origen was persuaded to relinquish to a great extent the teaching of the school, and to devote himself to written expositions. For this purpose Ambrosius provided him with such books as he required, and with a skilled staff of shorthand writers and copyists to transcribe their notes in full.

From this epoch commences that vast succession of literary works which has given Origen the good or ill fame of being the most voluminous author in existence. A torrent of commentaries, homilies and treatises proceeded from his pen, amounting, according to Epiphanius, to no less than 6000, but according to Jerome's more moderate estimate to 2000. A brief summary of their titles will be given later on. It is sufficient to mention here that they covered the fields of textual criticism, exegesis, exhortation, apologetics, correspondence, as well as every department of strictly theological science. Prodigious as was his industry, it did not satisfy Ambrosius. He urged his friend to greater and yet greater efforts, so that Origen playfully complains of his exacting taskmaster. Obviously, however, it was a labour of love on both sides. How thoroughly in earnest he was to leave no

means untried for convincing all opponents is shown by his undertaking what to a Greek must have been the most repulsive of studies, the acquisition of the Hebrew language. It is not certain how far his knowledge of Hebrew went. Probably it was not very profound. But it placed him at once in a unique position as a controversialist. The learned Jews ridiculed the Christian Fathers for resting their evidence on texts which either did not exist at all in the original, or had been tampered with by Greek translators. Origen conceived the magnificent and truly scientific idea of presenting at one view the Hebrew text and all the leading versions from it, so that every scholar might judge for himself of the genuineness of every passage which he adduced as a proof.

This gigantic project took many years to realise. But it was accomplished at length. He gave it the title of *Hexapla*, or sixfold rendering. Each page contained six parallel columns; on the first was the Hebrew original, on the second the same in Greek characters, on the rest were the LXX version, and those of Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus. Besides these Origen found two anonymous versions of parts of the Scripture which he also inserted for comparison. He employed various critical marks to direct attention to interpolations, divergences or inaccuracies. This work may truly be called the inauguration of Biblical criticism. In thus laying the foundations of a science which was resumed only after a lapse of fifteen centuries, he may be compared with Aristotle, whose studies in natural history waited till the time of Linnæus to receive their continuation. But Origen has been less fortunate than the philosopher of Stagira in the loss to mankind of nearly all his research. A few fragments alone remain, which have been edited by Field in a manner worthy of their value.

By this time Origen's fame was spread throughout the Christian world. Some years before, Demetrius had been requested to send him to Arabia on some mission, of which the object is unknown to us. He was now (A.D. 226) singled out for a higher honour in being invited to Antioch by Mammaea, mother of the reigning emperor Alexander, who

was deeply interested in religious questions, and desired to hear from him an exposition of his views. The splendour of a court could have no attraction for Origen. He remained no longer than was necessary to satisfy the empress, and returned well content to resume the thread of his labours. These continued until the year 230, when he was invited to Greece on business connected with the spread of heretical views in the Achaean Church.

On his way he touched at Palestine and paid a visit to Theoctistus at Caesarea. While there he was ordained presbyter by the bishop, assisted by Alexander of Jerusalem. This act was the beginning of his troubles. The discussion of its bearings belongs to the sphere of history. We may remark that while it was natural that Origen should avail himself of his friends' advice and help, it was at least equally natural that Demetrius should take offence at what he regarded as a direct invasion of his prerogative. The mind of Origen was not cast in a practical mould. Though he cannot have been unprepared for some manifestation of displeasure, he certainly did not anticipate the tremendous storm of indignation that burst upon him. From the disciplinary point of view, Demetrius had a strong case. The rash act of Origen's youth, though not calling for moral censure, was undoubtedly a technical disqualification for the ministry. And still more serious a breach of ecclesiastical etiquette was the ordination of a prominent member of one church by the bishop of another. Probably neither the qualifications for orders nor the limits of inter-episcopal jurisdiction were as yet defined by any authority beyond that of mutual understanding. Nevertheless the two bishops and Origen himself, if they did not realise the gravity of their action, ought to have done so. The probability is that they did realise it, and intended it as a significant reply to the ill-concealed jealousy with which the Bishop regarded his too distinguished catechist.¹ Demetrius at any rate was

¹ As Pressensé has truly remarked, Demetrius was not envious of Origen's intellectual superiority. He was essentially a man of affairs, and probably had a good-natured reverence for learning and genius, so long as they did

determined not to pass it over. He did not forbid Origen's return. He allowed him for a time to continue unmolested his commentary on S. John's Gospel. But so soon as he felt sure of his ground, he called a Council of bishops and priests, which ordered the departure of Origen from Alexandria. Not satisfied with this, he afterwards convened another assembly, which passed the still severer sentence of degradation from the priesthood. He also issued letters to the bishops throughout Christendom acquainting them of his decision and the grounds on which it rested. The Roman Church emphatically endorsed his action. Those of Palestine, Arabia, Phœnicia and Palestine, as emphatically repudiated it. Origen might well have withstood his official superior. But no man was ever less pugnacious. Moreover, he feared to divide the Church. He therefore bowed before the storm and quitted Alexandria, where he had spent a quarter of a century in the exercise of an influence altogether unique, and in the enjoyment of nearly universal reverence. He sought refuge at Cæsarea, and Heraclas succeeded him in the Catechetical school (A.D. 231).

His Life—Second Period.

We now come to the second period of his life, which was no less fruitful of great studies than the first. In no fewer than three departments his writings had formed an epoch, the *Hexapla* in criticism, the *Principia* in dogmatics, and the *Commentary on S. John* in exegesis. In one other field, that of the homily or sermon, he had yet to make his mark. It was strongly against his wish that Ambrosius published many of his Scripture commentaries: his extempore discourses he absolutely forbade to be taken down, until he had reached the ripe age of sixty. Great injustice has been done to his views by the assumption that all his published matter was intended to see the light and represents his matured

not cross his path. What he could not tolerate was the immense influence which Origen had acquired, an influence no doubt antagonistic to his own—what Pressensé well calls his moral episcopate.

thought. Such was far from being the case. And much as we may sympathise with the enthusiastic admiration of Ambrosius, we are inclined to think that he has injured his friend's reputation not a little by so strongly pressing him to publish. A mind encyclopædic as Origen's rarely possesses the literary gift. Like Aristotle, with whom he presents more than one point of resemblance, he is far more concerned with matter than with manner, fonder of suggesting comprehensive thought than of proving a definite thesis. He has the same method of starting objections or side-currents of argument suggested by a passing allusion or reminiscence; and thus gives occasion to captious critics of preferring the charge of vagueness and inconsistency. His own prepossessions were decidedly Platonic; but he wholly lacks the distinctive qualities of Plato's genius, his daring indifference to authority, his imaginative grandeur, his piercing insight into the essence of things.

In one respect he showed himself a true philosopher and a true Christian. He offered no retaliation for the indignities inflicted on him. The spiritual vindictiveness of Tertullian and the spiteful satire of Jerome were alike far from him. A cloud indeed passed over his spirit, and it was long, he tells us, before he could command serenity of mind sufficient to continue his commentary on S. John, serenest and yet most aggressive of inspired authors. Only in two or three isolated passages does he betray the secret root of bitterness, when in temperate and guarded language he censures the proud hierarchical spirit which tyrannises over souls whom Christ had freed, and makes those sad whom God had not made sad.

All that devoted friendship could do to soothe and honour him was done by his friends at Cesarea. His advantages were indeed few when compared with those he had enjoyed at Alexandria. Nevertheless he spent some fruitful years in study and in active spiritual influence, till the persecution under Maximin obliged him once more to flee. His friend Ambrosius was among those who were seized by the authorities but afterwards released. To him he addressed the

most touching and eloquent of all his works, the *Exhortation to Martyrs*. He himself found an asylum in Cappadocia, at first with Bishop Firmilian, and then with a rich lady named Juliana, who had inherited the splendid library of Symmachus. The deep emotion of his soul expressed itself in another golden treatise, that *On Prayer*, which rings throughout with the echo of persecution, and brings out with matchless beauty the ennobling doctrine of the Communion of Saints.

In 238 we find him once more at Cæsarea, shortly after which he attended a conference with the heretic Bassus at Nicomedia. To this period belongs the celebrated correspondence between him and Julius Africanus, which will be referred to in the chapter on Africanus. He is next seen at Athens, where he wrote his commentary on the Song of Songs, of which Jerome declares that, while in his other writings Origen surpassed all his contemporaries, in this he surpassed himself, and seemed to verify the mystic words of the Song, "The King hath brought me into His chambers."

He returned soon after to Cæsarea, where he finished his commentary on S. John, as well as those on the Synoptics and Epistles, and perhaps also on Isaiah and Ezekiel. Beryllus, Bishop of Bostra in Arabia, had fallen into a Sabelianising view of the Person of Christ. It appears that the Judaising theosophy of the Essenes had for some time exercised an injurious influence in those quarters. In withstanding this, Beryllus seems to have fallen into the opposite error. He had been condemned by a synod, but did not feel disposed to give way. The bishops of Arabia, sincerely desirous of peace, asked Origen to intervene. This he consented to do on condition that he might first learn the views of Beryllus from himself. The heretical bishop and the condemned presbyter met in friendly conference, their mutual object not victory but truth. The conference issued in Beryllus confessing his error, and publicly admitting that the arguments of Origen had convinced him. What a lesson to controversialists, anathematising synods, and religious prosecutors!

About the same time Origen intervened in another controversy with even more conspicuous success. A heresy had broken out in Arabia to the effect that the resurrection body is a new creation, not the same body. He met the champions of this opinion, and confuted them so persuasively that they yielded to his arguments, and withdrew from their heretical views. It is probable that he wrote in connection with this business his two dialogues *On the Resurrection*, which unhappily are lost, a loss which deprives us of an important feature in his system.

In 244 Philip the Arabian succeeded to the throne. This emperor, if not a Christian himself, was eminently favourable to Christianity. Origen corresponded with him. Ambrosius was much exercised to find that a skilful attack on Christianity published more than fifty years previously by Celsus was still unanswered, and urged Origen to undertake the task. Unwilling at first to enter the field of apologetics, he was happily persuaded to comply. The work of Celsus was specially suited to engage his powers, because with combined earnestness and skill it brought to a focus all kinds of objections, serious and ironical, Jewish and heathen, philosophic and popular, and handled them with the easy effectiveness of a cultivated man of the world. Though written, like all his works, under too great pressure and with insufficient care for style, Origen's reply must be pronounced decidedly the strongest, fullest, and most satisfying of all apologetic treatises. It is not only a mine of information on innumerable points of Pagan and Christian antiquities, but it has the signal merit of resting the defence of the Christian religion on the true ground, namely, the introduction of a new and organic principle of righteousness into human life.

This was the last and in some respects the greatest work of Origen. Shortly after its publication his friend Ambrosius died. The companionship of these two noble souls is honourable to both. We may fitly compare it with that which bound Boswell and Johnson in their oddly-assorted intimacy. There was not, indeed, that disparity of intellect between

them which made the obtrusive loquacity of the little Scot so heavy a burden to his colossal but impatient comrade. Ambrosius was himself a scholar of no mean order, and though inclined to tyrannise over the gentle nature, which nevertheless he revered as far above his own, yet his sound judgment, to say nothing of his unbounded generosity and stimulating encouragement, must have been of immense service in drawing forth the resources of his gifted friend's genius.

A.D. 250.—The Church had enjoyed external peace, except for one brief outburst, for fifty years. But this year saw the commencement of that terrible onslaught upon Christianity that has consigned to execration the memory of Decius. Not as heretofore in isolated regions, but throughout the empire, fire and sword were systematically employed to shake the constancy of the faithful. Origen, who had exhorted others to endure, who had twice fled before the storm, was now called upon to seal his testimony. Into the horrid details of his sufferings we need not enter. It would suffice to cover with infamy a civilisation which brought such punishments to bear upon a gentle and refined scholar, now nearly seventy years of age, did we not recall the still darker horror of a professedly Christian Church tormenting with yet more fiendish ingenuity men and women who served the same God and acknowledged the same Saviour. Neither torture nor threats moved him. He survived the ordeal, though with broken health and strength, and expired at Tyre (A.D. 253) in the sixty-ninth year of his age, where his grave was long the object of affectionate veneration; and even now, amid the desolations of Islam, the poverty-stricken fishermen cherish in their popular legends the half-forgotten heritage of his great name.

CHAPTER IV.

ORIGEN: HIS THEOLOGICAL SYSTEM, INFLUENCE AND LITERARY GENIUS.

PART II.

ORIGEN is the first church writer who can properly be called a systematic theologian. He is not content with grasping a great central principle, he makes it his task to apply that principle to the whole sphere of knowledge. In this respect he shows an advance upon his predecessor Clement. While inferior to him in insight and fearlessness of reasoning, he addresses himself to a more complicated problem, and attains a more complete and many-sided result.

His subject-matter causes him to be ranked among theologians, but his cast of mind is as much philosophical as theological. In one aspect he resembles Justin and Irenæus; in another we must go back to Plato and Aristotle to find his parallel.

The object he set before him was not merely to attain a correct apprehension of revealed doctrine, it was to connect that doctrine rationally with the sources of all knowledge. His treatise on "First Principles" (*ἀρχαί*) may be compared with those dialogues of Plato which establish grounds of truth, or with the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle. It is at least as nearly related to these works as his other writings are to the controversial treatises of preceding Fathers.

In criticising his theory of Christianity it is necessary to bear this in mind. He is sincerely convinced that the Christian Revelation has supplied the only sure foundations of knowledge. At the same time, he regards its *data* as in themselves satisfying to the human reason, not because they are forcibly imposed on it from without, but because they

respond to its inward demands in a way that no other principles can.

To Origen the limits to speculation fixed by the Scripture and the Church are absolute, and on no account to be transgressed. But where neither Scripture nor the Church has pronounced, he regards himself as free to follow the processes of his own thought. To a mind at once so reverent and so subtle, so receptive and yet so discursive, it was inevitable that the line he had marked out for himself should not always be observed. He himself was conscious of this; and often while indulging his speculative bent he expresses a hope that he is not travelling too far, and adds a caution to the reader not to follow him without careful scrutiny.

Origen's theology reflects the twofold inheritance of his spirit. An Egyptian born, he moved instinctively in that dark mysterious borderland between thought and emotion, over which hangs like a cloud the ever-present consciousness of sin, broken here and there by dazzling gleams of far-distant glory. On the other hand, the training of Greek philosophy had predisposed him to seek for clear ideas and a more hopeful vision of the universe as seen in God. It is the convergence of these two influences that makes him so pre-eminently interesting. His ardent personality colours all his thought. Even where his reasoning is most abstract, the force of suppressed emotion lends a subtle heat to his arguments, and while no Christian Father is less directly rhetorical, there is not one in whom the springs of enthusiasm mingle more intensely with the broad current of reasoned thought. This subjective element is at once his strength and his weakness. It has caused him to wander from the safe path of permitted speculation, and so has hurt his influence; but it has endeared him to those who love above all things to hold converse with a real man, and whether they accept or reject his arguments, to feel that they are the result of genuine search, like hard-won steps hewn on the mountain-side of truth.

The mass of his writings is so great and their scope so vast that we should find it impossible, even if we had the

requisite knowledge, to criticise them in detail within the limits of this work. We propose to confine ourselves to a general summary of his views, emphasising those only which are most characteristic of the man. Our remarks will be divided under the four following heads—(1) Exegesis; (2) Dogmatic Theology; (3) Apologetics; (4) Moral and Ecclesiastical Views.¹

1. Exegesis.

(a.) TEXTUAL CRITICISM.

To Origen the Scriptures were in the most pre-eminent sense the fountain of revealed truth. No man ever revered them more, knew them better, strove more patiently

¹ The student may be glad to have presented to him a list of Origen's writings. The annexed catalogue is borrowed from the excellent article in Smith's Biographical Dictionary. Those extant, in whole or in part, are printed in italics:—

Period 1. Before his removal from Alexandria.

The commencement of the Hexapla.

First Commentary on the Canticles: perhaps not published.

A.D. 228-231. *Commentary (τόμος) on the Gospel of S. John* (Bks. i.-v.).

Commentaries on Psalms 1-25, on Genesis (Bks. i.-viii.), on Lamentations and Exodus (Bks. i. and ii.).

Miscellanies (*Στρωματεῖς*) in ten books.

On First Principles, four books.

On Prayer, on the Resurrection (two books), and on Free-will.

The dates of these are doubtful, and very possibly belong to the second period.

Period 2. After his withdrawal to Caesarea (A.D. 231-249).

Commentaries on 1 Cor. and S. Luke. Homilies on Deut. and S. Luke.

A.D. 232-238. *Commentaries on S. John, second series*.

A.D. 235-6. Letter to Gregory. Commentary on Genesis (Bks. ix.-xii.).

Mystical Homilies on Genesis.

A.D. 235. *Ehortation to Martyrs*.

Homilies on Judges and on *Isaiah*. Commentaries on *Isaiah* in thirty books.

A.D. 238-240. Commentaries on Ezekiel, twenty-five books.

A.D. 240. *Letter to Julius Africanus* on the Greek additions to Daniel. *Commentaries on the Canticles*, five books written at Athens, the remaining five at Caesarea.

A.D. 241. Homilies on Psalms 36-38.

To this period may probably be assigned the Commentaries

to sound their meaning. His belief in their Divine inspiration is absolute, and extends to the minutest detail. His Bible is of course the LXX, and includes the Apocryphal Books. The problem that he set before him was so to interpret the entire body of Scripture that every verse of it should both harmonise with man's purest religious instinct, and satisfy the ideal of his enlightened reason. The first step in this task, for him as for us, was the establishment of a correct text. To Origen belongs the glory of having undertaken, single-handed and with most imperfect appliances, the solution of this gigantic problem. That he achieved comparatively little is not to be wondered at; that he apprehended the importance of the subject is his immortal title to renown.

He is justly regarded as the Father of Biblical criticism. We cannot expect to find in him a clear grasp of principles which a century of European scholarship has hardly yet succeeded in making the religious world accept. But there are two salient points in which he stands as the pioneer, and strikes out the right road. The first is his assertion of the superiority of the Hebrew over the LXX text, and his recurrence to it as the ultimate resort in controversy; the second is his recognition of conflicting MS. evidence for the text of the New Testament, and of the need for a careful comparison of authorities. These principles form his contribution to the science of textual criticism. It is true that

and Notes on Exodus and Leviticus; on Isaiah and the Minor Prophets; Notes on Numbers; Homilies on the Historical Books; completion of Commentary on the Psalms.

After A.D. 244. Homilies taken down from extempore addresses on Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges (?), Jeremiah (?), and Ezekiel.

Commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans (fifteen books).

The Complete *Hexapla*.

Commentaries on S. Matthew.

Letters to Fabianus and others. One hundred were extant in the time of Eusebius. Commentaries on 1 Thessalonians and probably on Galatians and the other Pauline Epistles, including Hebrews.

249. *Eight Books against Celsus*.

he could not make much play with them. For example, he by no means appreciates the importance of the first as applied to the question of the Apocrypha. Timidity and prejudice were here too strong. It was Jerome who first stated the true relation of those books to the canonical Scriptures. Origen, however, must not be judged by his shortcomings, but by his performances. And he who conceived and had the perseverance to carry out the plan of the Hexapla can be placed only in the first rank of scholars. It is not too much to say that, if that work had been spared to us, many of the vexed questions of Old Testament exegesis would have been indefinitely simplified. At the same time, it would be an anachronism to credit him with the modern critical sense. Not only was he in this respect signally defective, but he was actually inferior to several of his contemporaries. One has only to read his correspondence with Julius Africanus on the authenticity of the History of Susanna, to see on which side the true critic's judgment lay. Again, among all his observations on the authorship of disputed books, none can compare for acute appreciation of the evidence of style with the remarks of his pupil Dionysius on the Apocalypse. His bent of mind was wholly idealistic, and it was only his intense honesty of purpose that led him to encounter those textual labours which to us form his highest praise. Two flashes of genuine critical inspiration fling a momentary light on the field of his Biblical research; but the light passes as quickly as it came, and leaves the tangled labyrinth of his exegesis to the twilight of groping erudition and will-of-the-wisp fancies.

(*b.*) SYSTEM OF INTERPRETATION.

If, however, we pay an ungrudging tribute to the value of his critical foundations, what are we to say of the pretentious edifice of interpretation which he erected upon them? Of all the achievements of his genius, there is none that has given rise to more decided and yet more contradictory judgments. While one critic declares that his method discovers

nothing, but leaves the sense exactly where it found it, another ridicules it for the opposite capacity of proving anything and everything; another marks it with stern disapproval as scientifically unsound and morally false: while yet another extols it as the pillar of Catholic truth, and claims that orthodoxy and the allegorical method stand or fall together.

That these views cannot all be right is obvious. And yet there is a sense in which one is tempted to agree with each of them. Viewed as a key to the writer's original meaning, allegory must be pronounced a total failure; viewed as a witness to the infinite suggestiveness of the Inspired Word, it still maintains its place, and that a high one, in Christian theology: but whenever and however adopted, it is necessary to judge it in connection with its historical conditions, and not to credit it with the attribute of scientific exactness, as if it was a true system of proof.

Those sterile petrifications which too often pass for allegory are undoubtedly chargeable to Origen's initiative; and yet nothing can be more certain than that in his case the allegorical method was a liberal movement. For him it was an escape from the bondage of the letter into the freedom of the spirit. It is the greatest mistake to regard it as a machinery for enslaving men's intelligence. Never was gift more generously meant or more grievously misapplied. Its true counterpart is to be found not in the canons of an inflexible Rabbinism, not in the authoritative current of Roman Catholic interpretation, but in the Protestant assertion of the right of private judgment—yes, even in the wholly different methods of modern critical exegesis.

Let us make this point clear. Two principles enter into the allegorical method, one quasi-scientific, the other individual. Both are long anterior to Origen. The first is traceable to the superstitious belief that language is in itself an enigma, a sort of sacrament of thought, and that to deal with it successfully one must penetrate behind the veil to the concealed mystery. This belief was widely prevalent in ancient times. It was pre-eminently applicable to the poets.

Homer and Hesiod were universally held to be inspired, and thus in a more reflecting age their words were made to bear the strain of a double sense. The Jewish philosopher Philo saw this principle at work in Alexandria and introduced it into the Old Testament, which stood above the poets as in sublimity of inspiration so in obscurity of style. By its unsparing application he believed he could discern the true thoughts which lay hid behind riddling words.

Then, besides the general mystery of their language, there were many things in the poets and no small number in the Bible which the enlightened conscience found it difficult to accept as divinely spoken. Already in the time of Plato ingenious thinkers were busy in explaining away the offending myths. Plato himself was too clear-sighted to admit the soundness of the process. But the Stoics applied it with unshrinking consistency to the entire *corpus* of mythology, which they contrived to expound in the sense of their own philosophical system with an ingenuity which, if not convincing, was at least persuasive, as based on a method to all appearance scientific. Philo seized on this method with eager satisfaction, as enabling him at once to retain his philosophical beliefs and yet to vindicate for the Old Testament that plenary inspiration which his Jewish training demanded. He is the true father of Christian allegory. So far as Origen's method can be called scientific, or rather pseudo-scientific, it is but an extension to the New Testament of the method of Philo, only reading a Christian sense into that in which Philo had been content to find a Jewish one. The Platonic idealism with which both Philo and Origen were deeply imbued made this course the easier, because it enabled them to regard the literal sense as merely a copy or adumbration of the spiritual, which was the true and only primary sense.

But over and above this systematic recasting of the Sacred Scriptures in the form of a spiritualistic philosophy, we can discern another element of a freer and more individual character. This also is traceable to a heathen source. The student of Plato and Aristotle will remember that, after

arriving at some result by a purely logical process, they often clench their argument by appropriate quotations from Homer, which they adduce not exactly as proofs, but as significant corroborations, which suggest that what the thinker has demonstrated, the poet had under divine afflatus anticipated. The limits to this class of illustration are only fixed by the ingenuity of the illustrator. Any philosophic conclusion, physical, moral, or spiritual, could with a little forcing be found already implicit in the poets. We can easily see how important such an instrument as this would be to a Christian writer who desired to preserve his reverence for the inspired Word, while equally determined not to surrender the independent conclusions of his thought. It was the Gnostics who first exemplified both the power and the danger of thus using Scripture. Trained in heathen schools, they exhibit equal originality in forcing Greek poetry and the Old and New Testaments into the witness-box as corroborative evidence of their hybrid theories.¹ And it was in opposition to their daring and illegitimate applications of Scripture that Origen sought to exemplify the true use of Scripture illustration without, as he believed, doing violence to its genuine import.

In order, therefore, to understand the allegorism of Origen we must consider that he had before him two classes of interpretation, against which he thought it needful to contend as destructive on the one hand of Christian spirituality, and on the other of the holiness of Scripture. His theory of the mystical sense was a protest against the carnal literalism of the Jewish Christian ; his theory of the Holy Spirit's aid to the rational inquirer was a protest against the indiscriminate laxity of the Gnostic. In both aspects, it was a decided step in advance ; a blow struck for freedom as against bondage, for rule as against lawlessness. The immense influence of his name has unhappily perpetuated that which was in

¹ The reader is referred to the *Philosophumena* of Hippolytus, where excerpts from Gnostic writings are given, emphasising their views now by a quotation from Homer or Sophocles, now by a reference to the Gospels or Pauline Epistles.

its nature transitional, and crystallised what was fluid. Fixed in dogmatic fetters, and canonised by blind tradition, allegorism has been vaunted as the bulwark of orthodoxy, and its rejection stigmatised as heretical. In this way Origen has suffered great injustice. No man was ever less dogmatically minded. Again and again he protests that he wishes to bind no man's conscience. It is true he himself is convinced that he holds the key of Scripture. And sometimes he allows himself to speak of his method as the privilege of the higher mind, as a secret esoteric wisdom hidden from the rank and file of believers. But a just criticism will regard his entire attitude towards the faith, and not be led by the course of subsequent developments to ascribe to him an intention which was far from him. It is the unconscious tribute of posterity to his unrivalled greatness that in a church full of impassioned hostility to his name, the most erroneous because the most easily grasped features of his interpretation were just those which survived, while the great underlying principle was utterly misunderstood, and, even had it been understood, would have been indignantly repudiated.

It is now time to come to the details of his method. In accordance with man's threefold nature as described by S. Paul, viz., body, soul, and spirit,¹ he lays down that there is a threefold sense in Scripture—the literal, corresponding to the body; the moral, corresponding to the soul; and the mystical, corresponding to the spirit.² He accepted in its completeness the current theory of Scripture inspiration, quoting our Lord's words as evidence of the equal sanctity of all its

¹ *σῶμα, ψυχὴ, πνεῦμα*, corresponding to the fleshly appetites, the moral and intelligent principle, and the spiritual part, which alone can receive divine truth, and is itself, perhaps, an efflux of the Divine Nature. Some have thought he had in mind also the Platonic division of the soul into τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν, τὸ θυμοειδές, and τὸ λογιστικόν. But this is not likely.

² This last has again been subdivided into the analogical, tropological, and anagogical, corresponding to the individual *quā* individual, to the individual *quā* member of the Church on earth, and to the individual *quā* member of the Church of the firstborn in heaven. But it is very doubtful whether Origen is to be credited with this refinement.

parts. In order to hold this view, it is not necessary that every passage of the Bible should be susceptible of all three interpretations. Some are plainly literal and literal only; others as plainly moral, others only spiritual. But in the case of others again, where the literal sense is impossible or immoral, Origen distinctly declared that that sense must be abandoned. He instances the description of nights and days existing before the sun, of the devil showing Jesus all the kingdoms of the earth at one glance, and many others. In all such cases the letter is not only insufficient; it is untrue. Again, where the literal history is not absolutely impossible, but either improbable or unedifying, he sacrifices it without hesitation. The narrative of Adam's creation and fall, the sin of Tamar, and many such stories, are to him evident instances of allegory, in which a literal interpretation would deprive us of the divine lesson which the Spirit intended to convey. He even adopts the curious theory that many details are falsely recorded as facts for the express purpose of arousing the spiritual intelligence, and goading it to leap over the stumblingblock of the letter and reach to the goal of the spirit. Often he imagines obstacles where the uninitiated rightly fails to perceive them. Thus the upper and nether springs given to Caleb's daughter are to him symbols of inscrutable mysteries. In this we see plainly the harmful influence of Plato's idealism. The phenomenal vanishes under contemplation; the invisible essence shapes itself before his gaze. At the same time, he is careful to explain that the foundation of all exegesis is the literal meaning. It is indispensable to understand this first; otherwise the spiritual superstructure will be built on sand. But he asserts no less emphatically that the most complete elucidation of the primary meaning is wholly insufficient for exegesis. He would have utterly repudiated the view, that when we have ascertained what was in the mind of the writer at the time he wrote, we have learnt all that is to be known. He will not indeed go so far as to say nothing is only literal, but he most decidedly says that all is spiritual. His overpowering sense of the Divine Goodness and of human freedom will not permit

cf. Philo

him to interpret in their obvious sense commands that seem to him immoral, such as the extermination of the Canaanites, the imprecations of the Psalms, the inclusion of the innocent with the guilty. In all these he declares the moral interpretation must vanish with the literal, and the mystical alone be accepted. Most especially does he reject all those assertions which imply that God is the author of moral evil, as when He is said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart, to have prepared the wicked for the day of evil, or to have predestined some to life and others to death. His explanations of these texts may not indeed satisfy the highest modern spiritual requirements, but they are most earnest and thorough, and cannot be read without an irresistible sympathy for the mind that saw the difficulty and did not shrink from honestly grappling with it. Space forbids our dilating on this attractive theme. We can but refer the reader to those numerous works in which the subject is dealt with, and specially to Origen's own commentaries on Genesis and Romans, and to the fourth book of the *Ἀρχαί*, where the general outlines of the question are clearly and fully set forth.

The following propositions are an attempt to summarise the attitude of Origen to Scripture Exegesis:—1. The Scriptures are the source of Divine Truth. 2. Consequently, on their correct interpretation depends eternal life, which Christ declares to consist in the knowledge of God. 3. Those points which are absolutely necessary for salvation have been gathered from Scripture and formulated by the Church in her symbols. These symbols bind not only the ordinary Christian, but the philosopher. Origen never questions them. 4. All other points are left open to the ability of the interpreter. But his freedom is not unlimited. It is conditioned on the one hand by the soundness of his method, and on the other by the great principles of God's goodness and man's freewill, which underlie all revelation. 5. A sound method is secured first by a thorough study of the processes of the trained intelligence, and then by direct prayer to the Holy Spirit to make that study fruitful. 6. To Origen, following the greatest minds of his day, the method of allegory,

starting from a correctly established text, approved itself as *par excellence* the scientific method.

It follows from these considerations that the interpretation of Scripture was for Origen the beginning and end of theology. Had his mind been of a more robust order, he might have laid down principles of more enduring value. But let it be repeated, his attempt, with all its imperfect success, is worthy of honour. Its shortcomings were partly rectified by the literalist school of Antioch, which is the direct though remote precursor of modern exegesis. But so long as Christians recognise in the Bible a more than human inspiration, the mystic interpretation can never be out of date, and Origen's labours can never die.

2. His Doctrinal System.

Origen was the first to systematise the whole body of Christian knowledge. Here again he resembles Aristotle. Previous theologians had been content to bring forward important aspects of Christianity. Even those who, like Tertullian, had traversed nearly the whole field, had not reduced it to an orderly system. Origen reared a vast fabric of dogmatic theology, though in a philosophic, not in a dogmatic spirit. It was because the root-principles of Christianity seemed to him to be self-evident, not because they were given on authority, that he based his structure of belief upon them. In this respect he differs completely from Irenæus and Tertullian. These great writers start from authority, and bring all opinions, their own included, to its supreme test. And their authority is virtually, though not admittedly, that of the Roman Church. To Origen the ultimate ground of authority is the self-revealing Word expressing Himself in humanity, in the individual conscience, in Scripture, and in the Church. The outlines of his theory are given in the four books of *ἀρχαί*, or First Principles, published at Alexandria when he was about forty years of age, and held by him without material modification till the end of his life. They are collected also from his other works.

We shall endeavour to present them to our readers as briefly and clearly as we can, remarking that since many inconsistent views were advanced by him from time to time, we cannot pretend to do more than indicate what we conceive to be the main drift of his system.

His theology, then, is an ontology, an explanation of the Universe. He will not be content with any solution less all-embracing than that which his heathen contemporaries, the Neo-Platonists, were attempting. He sets himself to explain the entire problem of being. This is at once the secret of his fascination and of his weakness. The Gnostic and the Pantheist had taken necessity as their starting-point; Origen's key of the Universe is Freedom.¹

(a.) THE DEITY.

God is the One Absolute Being, not supra-cosmic only, but transcendental,² the Self-existent and Self-sufficing Monad, who alone contemplates Himself in unchanging perfection; called in Scripture the Father. Even the Logos does not contemplate the Father as the Father contemplates Himself. The Son and Spirit are not necessary to the Father so far as He is Absolute God, but only so far as He is Love, Father, Creator. This is Origen's Platonic taint. God is absolutely unchangeable. All expressions which imply change or movement on His part are accommodations. He is indeed Love; but to Origen His Love is rather His inseparable attribute³ than His essence. The manifestation of His Love is necessarily eternal. As Father, He must from all eternity have a Son to love; as Almighty, He must from all eternity have a Universe to govern. It is necessary to His immutability that the creative idea and the creative fact should both be without beginning. This view at first sight resembles

¹ The treatment of this section is founded on that of Dr. Pressensé, in his History of the Christian Church.

² For the importance of this distinction the reader is referred to Hatch's ninth Hibbert Lecture.

³ Or *proprium*. ἰδίωμα.

that of Philo, viz., that the Word is an impersonal Idea, an archetypal Thought of Creation not truly distinct from it. But Origen goes beyond Philo in that he does not confound the Word with Creation. The Word is not merely receptive of the Divine *Idiomata* (Perfections), He is the *idiomata*. The sole intelligible distinction between the Word and the Father is that the self-consciousness of the Father is primordial, that of the Word derivative. Thus the Father alone is *αὐτοθεός, ὁ θεός*, God absolutely; the Son is *θεός*, God, and even *δύτερος θεός*, a second God. His derivativeness renders Him capable of change, and so makes His Incarnation possible, but it does not affect His essential Divinity. Origen expressly states Him to be of one substance with the Father.¹ The relation of the Father to the Word is like that of thought to will, not of will to act. The Son is nearer to the Father than to creation, of which He is Himself the fountain (*ἀρχή*) as well as the architect (*δημιουργός*). At the same time He is subordinate to the Father in respect of His Deity as well as in respect of His humanity—a feature in Origen's system from which inferences were, perhaps unfairly, drawn unfavourable to his orthodoxy.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is not treated by Origen with much fulness. He seems to regard Him as derived from the Son, and calls Him the firstborn of creatures. He is the impersonation of the idea of holiness, as the Word

¹ *ὁμοούσιος*. So Pamphilus asserts. The following remarks from Hatch's Hibbert Lectures, ix, p. 266, are worth inserting:—"The generation" (of the Son) "had taken place within the sphere of Deity itself; not by the severing of a part from the whole, as though the Divine Nature admitted of division, but by distinction of function or by multiplication, as many torches may be lit from one without diminishing the light of that one." This metaphor is practically though not professedly accepted by Origen. But in his case it has to be supplemented by the eternity of the Son's generation. "Light could never have been without its capacity to shine. The Supreme Mind could never have been without His Thought." Origen's view is clear and precise, but not always consistently kept to. "He hovers between the Logos as thought and as substance." His doctrine is developed from the cruder forms of it which we trace in Justin, Theophilus, and Tatian, and which are gathered together in Clement. It also gains clearness from antagonism to the Noetian errors which were current in Rome during the time of Origen's sojourn there.

is of reason. The Word rules all rational beings, the Spirit only the saints. In the ultimate analysis, the Father is the sole source of Godhead.

It will be seen that Origen is far from holding the firm ground of Athanasius. His views are not wholly purged of the Gnostic leaven. In spite of his placing the Divine freedom in the foreground, he unconsciously limits it by asserting the necessity of an eternal creation. In spite of his submission to the Church's creed, his account of the generation of the Word is not wholly clear of Philonism. Hence, when in after days the Arian controversy raged, there were not wanting heretics who claimed him for their side. Athanasius, however, with truer discernment, declared him orthodox on the vital point, his enunciation of the "eternal generation" and the "consubstantiality" of the Son being rightly regarded as contributions to the faith which no weakness of logic could impair.

(b.) CREATION—THE SOUL.

Creation is regarded by Origen rather as a divine activity than as a concrete product. It would hardly be untrue to say that this visible world is scarcely by him regarded as creation, but as a copy or duplicate of it. The original creation, which proceeds directly from the Logos, exists as Divine idea before it is drawn into actuality. Hence it is wholly good, for evil is an accident, a negation, which cannot be thought, far less engendered, by God. Hence also it is *spiritual* creation, partaking of the eternal Reason, and of the same nature as that Reason. But created spirits do not possess the good by essence, but only by free moral determinations. Every rational creature therefore is susceptible of good and evil, and its destiny depends, not on its original condition, but on its merit. The quantity of created existence is definite, and its quality uniform.¹ The one only difference

¹ This is a relic of Greek philosophy, to which the infinite is synonymous with the undetermined, that which is irreducible to order, and therefore not to be associated with the Divine perfection, which is essentially orderly, and so finite (*πεπερασμένον*).

between souls is in the degree of their moral steadfastness. All are supposed capable of lapse, but all have not lapsed. The several degrees of lapse express themselves in the material surroundings or worlds. Matter is the concomitant and envelope of spirit. It is God's creation, and is not as such evil. But we must be careful not to confound matter in its original purity with the gross matter which we see around us. Matter is essentially light, plastic, and susceptible of infinite changes, each exactly corresponding to the moral state of the spirits who are associated with it. Our present world is the net result of an antecedent moral history. It is to be considered as a place of reparation and chastisement, suited to the fallen souls who alone inhabit it, and in the course of whose discipline it is a temporary stage. But for higher and purer spirits matter volatilises itself, so to speak: it becomes subtle, ethereal or luminous, wholly different from this "muddy vesture of decay." The hierarchy of spiritual natures is not fixed in character: it admits of transmutation from the angelic to the human or the demonic, according to the varying scale of moral determinations. The Divine Love and Justice, which are in truth one, preside over this ceaseless ascent and descent of souls, the only and sufficient purpose of which is moral purification. Origen, however, confines the sphere of this process to rational souls, and strongly denies any transmigration into irrational natures.

At the summit of the spiritual creation stand those who have declined least, the angelic natures, among which he inclines to include the stars. At its base stand the evil spirits; but even for them recovery is, at least in theory, possible. Intermediate between these two classes is man, in whom the Word sleeps, as Jesus slept in the boat on the lake. Man is responsible for the introduction of evil into this mundane sphere. He might have triumphed over it, but has failed to do so. Hence the Prince of Evil has fearful power over him. He and all the mundane creation with him are lost if not succoured. This suggests the plan of Divine Redemption, which was effected through the Incarnation of the Word.

(c.) REDEMPTION.

We have now arrived at the most original but at the same time the most objectionable feature in Origen's theology. In order to account for the Eternal Word coming into contact with the gross matter of this earthly sphere, he suggests the following theory.

It will be remembered that Origen asserts freewill both of God and of created natures. But there is a difference in their freedom. God possesses the good by essence, and cannot lose it. His liberty, therefore, is something higher than free choice¹—a sort of self-approving or self-reflecting uniformity. Created spirits, on the other hand, possess the good by choice only, and can lose it by choice. But if we can suppose a created soul to have chosen the good undeviatingly from the first, through pure love of it and from no other motive, then such choice has a tendency to become permanent and indefectible, so that it may at length be treated as a part of that soul's nature, and the soul itself be placed above the possibility of lapse, even as a bar of iron in an ever-burning fire, though still in substance iron, loses all its attributes, and assumes those of fire, so that we cannot conceive of it while so circumstanced as admitting the possibility of cold. Now Origen holds that such a rational human soul existed and took a body, and that it was that soul and that body to which the Eternal Word united Himself. In this way the *hypostatic union* is explained, and the problem of contact of Deity with matter solved without prejudice to Its purity. At the same time, the matter of Jesus Christ's Body cannot be regarded as precisely similar to that of ours. Even in His humiliation there were signs of other qualities than those with which we are familiar, as is evident to the attentive reader of the Gospels. Origen

¹ Origen seems to have held not only that God cannot do evil, which all Theists hold, but also that He cannot abstain from doing good; or, to put it in a familiar form, not only can He not do what He ought not to do, but He cannot leave undone what He ought to do. The obvious tendency of this thought is optimism, a thoroughgoing Théodicée.

even held that the impression made by Christ's Body upon the senses varied according to the degree of the beholder's spiritual insight. To the Scribes He appeared mean and ugly, to the believer strong and majestic; to John the Baptist and the Apostles in their higher moments His form was disclosed in its superhuman lineaments.¹

The sacrifice of Christ's death was offered for the whole rational creation, for angels and demons, for the dead as well as the living. To angels He became an angel, to men a man. The bloody scene of Calvary was paralleled by a celestial sacrifice, in which Christ offered the pure essence of His moral will to God. How far Origen admitted a succession of incarnations in different modes of being is uncertain, but it seems impossible to harmonise his beautiful and poetic theory with the dogma of the One Sacrifice once offered, and the eternal retention by the Son of God of His glorified manhood. The Church therefore had no option but to condemn it as unorthodox.

We now proceed to inquire what effect Christ's redemption had upon mankind. Following Clement, Origen regards it first as an illumination (*φωτισμός*), to reveal to us the saving truth, and secondly, as a deliverance from sin and its consequent punishment, but not as a judicial expiation. To him punishment is purely remedial and corrective, in no sense retributive. Its sole end is the eradication of moral evil. The eternal Son offered Himself to God's love as taking away the sin of the world, not to God's justice, as bearing the penalty which guilty sinners must otherwise have endured.² The two great features in later theories of

¹ We easily observe how strong was the influence of Plato upon the Christian theologian. The idea of the purified senses seeing the true outlines of a deity is made familiar to every scholar through the exquisite verse of Virgil, *Æn.* ii. 590:—

“Cum mihi se, non ante oculis tam clara, videndam
 Obtulit et pura per noctem in luce refulsit
 Alma parens, confessa deam, qualisque videri
 Caelicolis et quanta solet.”

² Origen seems to have held that a ransom was paid to Satan, who had acquired certain rights over mankind through man's yielding to his influ-

the Atonement, viz. (1) that Christ appeased God's wrath, and (2) that the sufferings of Deity alone could outweigh the infinite sins of men, are not only absent from his system, but wholly repugnant to it.

3. His Apologetic Theory.

In the latter part of the reign of M. Aurelius, about A.D. 178, a friend of Lucian's named Celsus had written a treatise against the Christians called *Ἀληθὴς λόγος* (*a True Word*). Some fifty years later this work fell into the hands of Ambrosius, who sent it to Origen, with a request that he would answer it. Origen was disinclined at first to comply, thinking it better to be silent under misrepresentation, as Christ was silent before Pilate; but, having studied the argument and being impressed with its importance, he resolved to refute it. He devoted about two years to this task, which he has executed with thoroughness and candour, though not without signs of haste. His method is unsystematic and hard to follow; but he deserves our thanks for quoting the greater part of Celsus' treatise in his own words, and so enabling us to judge of its value.

It will be necessary to give a brief summary of Celsus' position before approaching that of Origen.

It appears that Origen knew Celsus by reputation as the friend of Lucian, and therefore presumably an Epicurean, in other words, an Atheist. He took up the book prepared to find it built on Epicurean principles, and was astonished to find it instead strongly imbued with Platonism. He reconciled this conflicting evidence by the theory that Celsus was really an Epicurean, but not wishing his book to be set aside as godless, disguised his unpopular convictions and assumed the garb of a Platonist. This ingenious supposition is quite needless. So far as Celsus is a philosopher at all, he is

ence. The ransom was Christ's Blood, perhaps also His human soul, which Satan endeavoured to detain in Hades, but with as little success as the Philistines strove to keep the ark of God. This view of Christ's atonement accounts for a strange feature in Origen's belief, viz., that a true human martyrdom has also a certain atoning value, and for this reason is specially hateful to the devil.

clearly a Platonist. But his philosophy does not go very deep. He poses rather as the acute, sensible, cultivated man of the world who admits the need of a reasonable religious belief, and is not without moral convictions. He is a fair specimen of the more thoughtful opponents of the new faith, as Cæcilius in the Octavius is of the average man of society. He had read widely if not profoundly: he had some acquaintance with both the Old and New Testaments, and was not intentionally unjust. He has the gift of skilful and telling exposition, and altogether is by far the strongest antagonist of Christianity, though the Church awarded that distinction to Porphyry on account of his minuter technical knowledge. But Celsus fights the battle on the broad ground of the whole relation of the Church to the world, and with a force and clearness that leave little to be desired. He is an opponent worthy of Origen's steel; and no other Christian Father could have so successfully dealt with him.

With signal adroitness, Celsus takes advantage of the quarrel between Christianity and Judaism to turn the two creeds against each other, and to fix on both the same brand of mere party-spirit. The Jews were a factious band of Egyptian slaves, who set themselves up against the whole world; and the Christians are a still more factious offshoot of that factious stock. On the principle of "Set a thief to catch a thief," he thinks the most fitting character in which to commence his attack is that of an orthodox Jew.

He divides his polemic into two parts; the first in which he speaks as a Jew, the second in which he speaks in his own person. It is not necessary to enter into any details as to the former. Though acutely urged, the argument passed over well-trodden ground, and Origen had no difficulty in meeting it. Its worst sting lay then, as unhappily it has lain since then, in the unhappy party-divisions of Christendom. Jews, Ebionites, Gnostics, Heretics, Schismatics, and Catholics, all bit and devoured one another for differences which to Celsus appeared ridiculous (*ὄνον σκιά*). This is his first real point; and it is a point which the Church of Christ cannot afford to disregard.

His next argument touches the root of Christianity. Celsus is a Monotheist. He admits one Supreme God, good, beautiful, and happy, the Creator of the lower deities who in their turn created the world. But of this God little if anything can be known; and that only by the purest and most abstract thought. That such a Being either should, would, or could come down into the world, he declares to be utterly inconceivable. What should He come for? Why should He so degrade His perfection? Why should He visit this world rather than another, and why Judea of all places in the world? What business have men to think they are an object of special concern to God? Why should not a colony of ants or bats with equal reason declare that God had come to save *them*? and that they by faith became children of God?

To this Origen replies by the doctrine of the Incarnation. God is known, so far as man's knowing faculties can reach, in the Incarnate Christ. Celsus' string of questions, puzzling as they are apart from this truth, when viewed in the light of it, lose their point. All the seeming improbabilities vanish beneath the solvent of the Divine Word through love for man emptying Himself of His glory, and by taking man's nature raising it to His own. Yet there is a flaw in Origen's argument, which Celsus indeed could not detect, but which nevertheless weakens its force. He dwells almost exclusively on the obscuration of the Divine in Christ, whereas the truer view would be to assert the Incarnation, as the result of Divine Love, to be not so much an obscuration as the highest manifestation of the Divine Glory.

The third great argument of Celsus was based on a consideration of the historical Christ. His ignoble birth, His mean surroundings, His ignominious death, His rejection by His own people, His acceptance by ignorant and superstitious slaves, women, and children, His utter failure to establish His claim to Godhead, are facts which he triumphantly urges¹ as proving His insignificance.

¹ He did not deny Christ's miracles, but regarded them as ordinary instances of magic or imposture. The Resurrection he utterly denies, as

The reply of Origen is pertinent: "How then do you account for the rapid and increasing growth of Christ's religion? Some adequate cause must have operated to produce an effect so momentous, and our hypothesis is at least as adequate as yours. The Church is marching from victory to victory, and you are content to explain its progress by infatuation and imposture."

It seems as if Celsus himself had anticipated this retort. Even in his day a seeing eye could discern on whose side the future lay. Though he lashes the social inferiority of the Christians with withering scorn, though he ridicules their belief as a delusion, though he arraigns them as sectaries whose very existence is against the law and full of danger to the State, yet he never even alludes to those odious charges which Tertullian and Minucius found it necessary to disprove. Nay, so far is he from under-estimating the gravity of the situation that he makes a strong appeal to the Christians to reconsider their position, to give the State what it justly asks, and in return to receive the right of free worship. "Surely they cannot expect the Empire to abandon its ancient faith for a barbarous novelty. Let the Church make concessions, and Christ accept a place, as in the Lararium of Alexander Severus, side by side with Apollonius of Tyana and the old gods of Rome." He who thus pleads with his mortal enemy must inwardly acknowledge that his cause is lost. Celsus wrote in bitterness, in wrath, but also in despair.

Origen, with fifty years' continuous record of success before him, confronts Celsus all along the line. He refutes the charges of bad citizenship, idleness, selfishness, faction, superstitious credulity, and points out that the supposed defects of Christianity are in reality its strength, specially the revelation of Deity within the compass of a human life, and the abolition of the great gulf between philosophers and vulgar. The Scriptures are indeed unpolished compositions,

founded on the testimony of a hysterical woman (*γυνή παράσιτος*), and attested by no evidence worthy of the name. Celsus is certainly not yet out of date!

but it is as easy to exaggerate the rudeness of their language as it is to over-belaud its grace. One thing is certain. They appeal to every class of mind: their range is coextensive with humanity.

Our readers will not need to be reminded that for Origen the vital proof of his religion lay in the answer of the human soul to God. Christ speaks direct to His own image in man. That image cannot help recognising its prototype. This is what constitutes his pre-eminence as an apologist. Whatever other proofs he may employ, he never leaves out of sight the greatest of all, the only really convincing one, "Now therefore that ye have known God, or rather are known of Him, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements?" The Godhead of Jesus shines as the sun in heaven: it is enough for us that it is there.

But Origen is not indifferent to secondary proofs. First, the growth of the Church in spite of every disadvantage. This we have already mentioned. Then, side by side with it, the moral reformation which has everywhere accompanied the acceptance of Christ's yoke. This also he insists on again and again. Thirdly, the proof of miracles. This he acknowledges but lays far less stress on, since even in his day miracles had passed into the region of the nebulous, and themselves required to be proved.¹ Fourthly, the proof from prophecy. To this he attaches greater importance, though he admits it is effective only for those who already know the Scriptures. To Origen neither miracles nor prophecy owed their evidential value to their character as external prodigies, but as recurrent because eternal interventions of redeeming wisdom and love. Demons may reproduce Christ's marvels; oracles may rival His prophecies; but the one unanswerable miracle is the spread of Christian faith and Christian holiness; the one unailing prophecy is the inclusion of redeemed humanity within the Church of Christ.

¹ In an interesting passage (*Contra. Cels.* ii. 8) he confesses that but a few traces of miraculous gifts remain in his day. He attributes this in his Homily on Jeremiah (*Hom.* iv. 3) to the corruption of the Church.

4. His Ecclesiastical and Practical Views.

In Origen, what we may call the spiritual view of Christian morality attained its highest point. He stands in this, as in other things, at the close of one epoch and at the dawn of another. He closes the epoch of joyous Christian consciousness, and inaugurates that in which the sense of sin is uppermost. He partakes equally of both. His intelligence basks in the sunlight of a present Christ. His conscience groans, reels beneath the dark cloud of guilt which seems to hide the face of God. This contradiction is due to his intense thoroughness. Certain that God's purpose is to save every soul, and yet certain that every soul has the awful power of resisting that purpose, how could he be otherwise than sad? Moreover, Origen could not bring himself to accept that which was unintelligible. He strove as no theologian has ever striven before or since to get to the root of things. Thus he will have nothing to do with imputed righteousness. God has called us to be righteous even as He is righteous, and has enabled us to achieve this end by union with Christ in His death and life through love. First, in His death by repentance, then in His life by faith, which in the higher spirits culminates in knowledge (*γνωσις*). But this knowledge is not intellectual only, but becomes one with its object by love, and reveals itself in true holiness of life.¹ Yet freedom of choice still remains, and we can never speak of ourselves as sure of heaven. Starting from this principle, he regards the interior life as all-important, for our actions spring out of it and are judged by it. Purity of conscience purifies all acts. The spiritual Christian lives under the direct inspiration of the Lord.

This magnificent theory is too high for Origen never to fall below it. The vein of literalism which led him once to court martyrdom, to injure his manhood, and to punish his flesh, was not absolutely discarded even in his maturer years. Yet all critics have held his Exhortation to Martyrs and his

¹ Here again Plato's influence is seen. Readers of the *Phædrus* and *Symposium* will easily follow the suggestion.

Treatise on Prayer to be as pure examples of spiritual religion as are to be met with in the early Church. We commend these, especially the former, to the study of those who desire to judge for themselves how the soul of Origen could speak when detached from those speculative obscurities which baffled his high intellect and have clouded his renown.

With reference to the Church, his teaching is not very explicit. Ecclesiasticism was not his strong point. As might be expected, he draws a broad distinction between the visible and invisible Church. It is uncertain when he received baptism, but most probably in childhood. His estimate of that sacrament is very high. He allows but one remission of post-baptismal sin, except in the case of martyrdom, which washes away all guilt. But this refers apparently to the Divine forgiveness, and not to ecclesiastical excommunication and readmission, which for him are concerned only with the visible order. His own experience of such things here influenced his judgment. For while obedient to his bishop's commands, and never questioning the Church's right of excommunication on earth, he showed no sign of retracting his views or seeking to re-enter the general communion. The Church reposes on the Rock, which is Christ, and on Peter's faith, but not on his person. For Origen there is no exclusive priesthood, no altar but the believer's heart, no genuine mission except that which is ratified by Christ. With the prevailing tendency to hierarchical organisation he had no sympathy. Authority had no terrors for him. "What matters it to me if a thousand men say a thing is true if it be condemned by the judgment of God? What use if many churches agree in one doctrine if they are led astray by opinion? What I desire above all is that God may confirm my views."

This confirmation he sought in Holy Scripture, interpreted as we have already shown. Yet his position betrays a weakness so soon as the question arises, What is Scripture? Who is to define its canon? Hence, at one time he uses books as inspired,¹ while granting liberty to others to reject them; at

¹ *E.g.*, the Shepherd of Hermas: the Epistle of Barnabas.

another he regards the canon as fixed beyond appeal.¹ To the voice of the Church's inner consciousness, as formulated not in synodical decrees, but in the spontaneous growth of universal belief, he accords implicit submission. But he does not see that for the perpetuation of this belief external authority is absolutely indispensable. He seems to cry with Luther, "Let God take care of His own Church," but he loses the force of S. Paul's similitude that the Church is a building erected on earth as well as in the eternal world.

The real gravamen felt by those who condemned him was not so much his speculative doctrines, though these were afterwards attacked, as his inconvenient and irreducible personality. He would not fall in with the necessary movements of Church government. His influence was enormous; the eyes of the world were upon him; he must be brought to reason or cast out as rebellious. This last step once taken, there were plenty of excuses for it in his opinions also.

His Eschatology.

Pre-eminently obnoxious among these was his Universalism, or belief in the final restoration of all souls, not excluding the evil spirits, which, though not condemned by any authority, was manifestly contrary to the general Christian consciousness. We conclude this section with a brief summary of Origen's eschatology, for which we are indebted to Dr. Hatch's Hibbert Lectures.² It is a *cento* of passages from Origen's own works:—

"The present inequalities of circumstances and character are not wholly explicable within the sphere of the present life. But this world is not the only world. Every soul has existed from

¹ Viz., in his controversy with Julius Africanus. This, however, is strictly speaking true only of the Old Testament. The New Testament canon had not been definitely fixed in his day.

² Dr. Hatch has ably pieced it together from several portions of Origen's works in his own words. It is given *in extenso* at pp. 235-236 of those Lectures, with the references. The passage in the text is the concluding portion of it.

the beginning; it has therefore passed through some worlds already, and will pass through others before it reaches the final consummation. It comes into the world strengthened by the victories or weakened by the defeats of its previous life. Its place in this world as a vessel appointed to honour or to dishonour is determined by its previous merits or demerits. Its work in this world determines its place in the world which is to follow this.

“All this takes place with the knowledge and under the oversight of God. It is an indication of His ineffable wisdom that the diversities of natures for which created beings are themselves responsible are wrought together into the harmony of the world. It is an indication not only of His wisdom but of His goodness that, while no creature is coerced into acting rightly, yet when it lapses it meets with evils and punishments. All ² punishments are remedial. God calls what are termed evils into existence to convert and purify those whom reason and admonition fail to change. He is thus the great Physician of Souls. The process of cure, acting as it does simply through freewill, takes in some cases an almost illimitable time. For God is long-suffering, and to some souls, as to some bodies, a rapid cure is not beneficial. But in the end all souls will be thoroughly purged. All that any reasonable soul, cleansed of the dregs of all vices, and with every cloud of wickedness completely wiped away, can either feel or understand or think, will be wholly God: it will no longer see or contain anything else but God; God will be the mode and measure of its every movement; and so God will be ‘all.’ Nor will there be any longer any distinction between good and evil, because evil will nowhere exist; for God is all things, and in Him no evil inheres. So then, when the end has been brought back to the beginning, that state of things will be restored which the rational creation had when it had no need to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; all sense of wickedness will have been taken away; He who alone is the one good God becomes to the soul ‘all,’ and that not in some souls but ‘in all.’ There will be no longer death, nor the sting of death, nor any evil anywhere, but God will be ‘all in all.’”

5. His Influence and Literary Genius.

We conclude this chapter with a few remarks upon the position of Origen in the history of thought and literature, and on the general characteristics of his genius.

The general effect of his personality in the Church may be judged not only from the storm raised during his life, but still more from the furious controversies that raged after his death. They need not be noticed here; they belong to the history of the Church, of which they form a highly instructive chapter. Their final result was to put Origen under a ban, and to stamp out his direct influence for a thousand years. Indirectly, of course, he still guided, through the lips of great Latin doctors, some of the chief movements of theology. It was impossible to avoid going over ground that he had covered, and equally impossible to avoid indebtedness to him for the treatment of it. Jerome and Augustine, fortunately for Latin theology and still more fortunately for mankind, were deeply imbued with his writings. Thomas Aquinas, writing in the interest of the Vatican theocracy, nevertheless has preserved, imbedded in his granite system, more than one vein of Origenistic ore.

But it is not in the dogmatics of the Church that we are to look for Origen's best memorial. Though his subjects are technical, he is a profoundly human writer. His greatest influence has been outside the doctrinal sphere, in the free current of unfettered religious thought. Among theologians Augustine alone stands above him in this respect, and probably even Augustine's influence will be found to be less pervasive and lasting. Origen indeed wrote no book that can be compared for psychological interest with the wonderful *Confessions*, nor does his eloquence ever rise to the soaring heights of the closing chapters of the *City of God*. But the foundation of his doctrine is deeper laid, and the ambition of system does not lead him to contradict the instincts of human nature.¹

¹ *Naturam expellas furca, says the wise poet, tamen usque recurrit.* We are witnessing a gradual revolution in the attitude of the human mind towards the Augustinian dogmas of sin, predestination, and grace, which have so long been identified with the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Undoubtedly, his weakness lies in the bulk of his writings. He failed to appreciate the old proverb, “*μέγα βιβλίον, μέγα κακόν*” (a long book is a great evil). But though he is little read, his labour is by no means lost. In three respects at any rate, we think he has entered deeply into the heart of the Christian world. First, in his sublime confidence that spiritual truth can be reached by the earnest inquirer; secondly, in his treatment of Scripture as a living voice of inspiration; thirdly, in his absolute and fearless trust in the prevailing power of the Divine Love.

Let us examine these a little more closely. He believes that religious truth can be searched for and attained. He does not begin, like too many theologians, by laying man's reason under a curse. On the contrary, he expressly recognises its kinship with Deity. God has implanted the craving for spiritual truth in man's inmost nature, and He intends that craving to be satisfied in and through man's highest faculties. This position Origen shares with Greek philosophy; but, unlike Greek philosophy, Origen both begins and ends with God. The axioms from which truth starts are to him revealed in the Christian's soul by the manifestation of the Divine Word of Christ, and have not to be sought by induction or abstraction. At the same time, they are not externally imposed; they are immanent in the soul, immediate and self-evidencing. Thus he is enabled to construct a system of knowledge as bold and comprehensive as any of the old Pagan or modern German systems, yet on the basis of Church belief. But he will not accept that belief cut and dried. He makes it the genuine expression of his soul's intuition and reasoned thought. Christian science is for him faith made perfect, the *gnosis* which rises to the direct contemplation of its object, which mounts from the historical Christ to the apprehension of the Eternal Intelligence (Logos).

The highest spiritual minds are now returning to a similar point of view. The dreary doctrine of such books as Mansel's “Limits of Religious Thought” is giving way to a more hopeful attitude towards the source of revelation. If Agnosticism

is to be answered, it must be by some such theory as Origen's, restated in terms of the scientific intellect.¹

Our second assertion is that Origen's view of Scripture, erroneously as he worked it out, is one that will tend to commend itself more and more to the highest minds. He links Scripture with external nature as a living manifestation of God. It is from his writings that Bishop Butler sought the text that suggested his own immortal work. The words are weighty, though Origen can only imperfectly have realised their significance: "He who believes the Scripture to have proceeded from Him who is the Author of Nature may well expect to find the same sort of difficulties in it as are found in the Constitution of Nature."² The great key to nature is Evolution; and the same key is now being applied to Revelation. The idea of the historical progressiveness of Revelation was unknown in Origen's day. Hence, to those who were troubled by its external inconsistencies there seemed no course open but either to reject the Old Testament or to allegorise it. The Gnostics chose the former alternative, Origen the latter. If we judge him by the standpoint of our own day, his method must be condemned; but if we have regard to its spirit rather than its execution, we shall find that he has much to teach us. To him the movement of the Divine Thought, expressing itself in successive moments of human development through the medium of human minds, suggested rather a veil completely though not quite suddenly removed than the organic process from imperfect apprehension to articulate

¹ Is not the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans a beacon-light in connection with this thought? The power and Godhead of the Eternal are clearly known, so soon as they are consciously sought for, in the realm of nature, inorganic, organic and human.

² *Philocal.* p. 23. *χρῆ μέντοι γε τὸν ἀπαξ παραδεξάμενον τοῦ κτίσαντος τὸν κόσμον εἶναι πάντας τὰς γραφὰς πεπεῖσθαι, ὅτι ὅσα περὶ τῆς κτίσεως ἀπαντᾷ τοῖς ζητοῦσι τὸν περὶ αὐτῆς λόγον, ταῦτα καὶ περὶ τῶν γραφῶν.* It should be noticed that the *Philocalia* are an excellent collection of extracts from Origen's writings made by Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil, sent by the former to Theodosius, Bishop of Tyana, about A.D. 382. It is of much interest, not only from its intrinsic excellence, but as showing what great Catholic saints held to be characteristic points of Origen's teaching. It consists of twenty-seven chapters, and should be read by those who desire to get at the pith of his teaching without perusing his complete works.

and conscious utterance. But he grasped the parallel between Nature and Revelation as no other grasped it. And not only so, but he discerned the significance of that parallel in its minutest details. As the student of nature finds the same importance in the small fibres and hidden tissues as in the expanded flower, so the student of Scripture finds infinite suggestiveness in the obscurest corners and most cursory allusions of Holy Writ. So too we, while applying to the Old Testament widely different methods of exegesis from those of Origen, can trace the process of spiritual manifestation to its culmination in Christ, and from Him, by deductive inference, reason down to the subsequent unfoldings of the creative germ which He planted on the earth.

Our third assertion is that Origen, by his absolute trust in the final victory of the Divine Love, is a genuine precursor of the loftiest modern aspirations. Of all theological dogmas, there is none that has so deeply stirred men's minds in recent years as that of Eternal Punishment. Origen stands out as the first who ever ventured to probe this awful subject to its bottom. On this topic he is not open to the charge so often justly brought against him, of inconsistent views. On the contrary, his theory is both clear and logical. He is a thorough-going Universalist. He fearlessly includes not mankind only, but the entire rational creation, within his ken. The Evil Spirit and his fallen angels are not to be debarred from a possibility which rests on nothing less than the all-controlling Will, the all-embracing Love, of God. He does not rest it on the work of Jesus Christ: with true insight he forbears to press the Saviour's atoning sacrifice beyond the limits assigned to it in Scripture. But, regarding the question as undetermined by Revelation and not foreclosed by the Church, he allows his spiritual aspirations their full play, and shrinks not from the utmost conclusion to which they seem to point. That he is dealing with mysteries beyond human ken is unquestionably true: that the Church in her wisdom has refrained from pronouncing on either side, is a significant fact. Nevertheless, it is certain that the human heart will never rest without some definite conclusion

on what is after all the most momentous of all issues. The Latin Church, though refraining from absolute dogmatism, offered a solution by its doctrine of Purgatory and Masses for the dead, which gave practical satisfaction to such as could accept it. But no other Church has been able authoritatively to reconcile the deepest need of the human spirit with the progressive purification of the intelligent conscience. And thus it appears that the question is an open one after all, and Origen's solution cannot be peremptorily set aside. Happy those whose spirits repose so trustfully in the sense of God's love as to be content to leave this mighty problem untouched by their feeble reason. Sweet is their peace, and mighty is their witness to the all-sufficingness of the Divine decree. Yet they across whose souls the dark shadow of an awful doubt has passed ought not surely to be condemned, if they strive with all the earnestness of pleading hope to realise to their trembling hearts the full meaning of that sublimest of all predictions, that "God shall be all in all."

In conclusion, a word must be said on the literary qualities of Origen. He is a great thinker, but not a great writer. He wrote too much and too fast. Scarcely could the experts whom his friend's generosity supplied equal on their tablets the haste of his rapid utterance. He himself was conscious of his fault. He complains that Ambrosius forced his literary productiveness. Many things were published which he desired should never see the light. His extempore addresses, indeed, were not taken down till the closing decade of his life. This he insisted on. It would have been well if he had been firmer with regard to his other writings. His fame as a theologian and his influence as a writer have both suffered thereby. His style is entirely without ornament, except in the Address to Martyrs, and in a few other instances. Its charm, for it is not devoid of charm, consists in the glowing fusion of thought and emotion, which is so characteristic of the man. His book against Celsus is, from a literary point of view, the best of his works. His immense learning is everywhere apparent, and yet is never obtrusive; his keen temper is restrained by the courtesy of

a high-bred scholar, not unversed in courts; and the fulness of his thought is pleasingly varied by the constant necessity of quoting his opponent's words, causing thereby a livelier play of syntactical construction than is usual in his works.

Besides occasional cumbrousness and prolixity, he falls into the error, so abundantly common among the Fathers, of heaping up argument upon argument, generally to the detriment of the effect; for, as a rule, the best reasons are advanced first, and supplemented, hardly ever strengthened, by a long string of weaker ones in their rear.

He has been contrasted, and deservedly, with Tertullian. No two minds could be more diverse. The one is modest and tentative, the other is self-confident and positive: the one is a philosopher, feeling his way to truth, content, should fresh light appear, to efface his own conclusions; the other is an advocate pushing his case, mercilessly pressing his witness to the verge of intimidation, and never so much as suspecting that the whole truth is not on his side: the one burns with a subdued though glowing flame, the other blasts what he touches with the scathing fire of the meteor: the one is reasonable and yet eloquent, the other eloquent yet convincing: the one seeks for truth, first for himself, then for the world, the other holds truth in his hand, and offers it to his opponent at the point of the knife. Yet these two great men, so different, are in some respects alike. Both were for a short time unwelcome visitors in the Roman Church; both were held to be rebellious to authority; both died in separation from the general communion; both were animated above everything with the glorious consciousness that by them the Holy Spirit spoke; both have left to the Church an immortal heritage of noble ideas accepted while rejected, and an example of rare moral strength, the one in attack, the other in defence; the one in contemptuous but honest exclusiveness, the other in suffering and injured, but pure and universal, charity.

CHAPTER V.

THE SUCCESSORS OF ORIGEN.

THE best answer to those who impugned Origen's teaching as heretical was the fact that his friends and pupils occupied for more than a generation the Episcopal throne of Alexandria, while his influence was predominant there until the close of the century.

Nor was it only at Alexandria that his views were held in honour. The great names of Firmilian, Bishop of Cappadocian Cæsarea, Gregory Thaumaturgus, and Pamphilus, the friend of Eusebius, who were all devoted to his memory, sufficiently attest the appreciation of his work in the East.

We shall devote this chapter to a brief notice of the more illustrious of his friends, contemporaries, and successors.

Alexander of Jerusalem.

First comes his tried friend and chivalrous defender, **Alexander**, Bishop of Jerusalem. This prelate was at first bishop of a small town in Cappadocia. Having been imprisoned in the persecution under Caracalla, and obtained the honours of confessorship on his release, he determined to visit Jerusalem in fulfilment of a vow, and in obedience to the warning of a dream. His arrival coincided with a critical moment in the history of the Jerusalem Church. Its bishop Narcissus had reached a great age, and desired the assistance of a coadjutor. It is said that a divine premonition had signified to him the day and hour when the destined helper should arrive. On that very day and hour Alexander appeared; consequently, and in spite of the fact that he held another see, and that no instance of episcopal translation had occurred,

he was appointed to the post. The gravity of the precedent, however, made it advisable to have the decision ratified by a synod. This was done; and Alexander continued assistant-bishop till the death of Narcissus, after which he administered the see alone. He was a man of strong intellect and fearless character, and took part in several issues affecting the welfare of the Church. His devotion to Origen has already been mentioned. The great Alexandrian fully repaid it; in one of his homilies he bears testimony to the sweetness of the bishop's disposition, and the generous tone of his teaching. A few fragments of his correspondence are preserved by Eusebius, but not sufficient to enable us to judge of his literary merits.¹ He survived till the Decian persecution, in which he obtained the crown of martyrdom.

Julius Africanus.

Of about the same standing, or perhaps a little older, was **Julius Africanus**, supposed, though without good ground, to have been Bishop of Emmanus or Nicopolis. His nationality is uncertain; he is said by some authorities to have been a Libyan. Eusebius treats of him under Gordian, who reigned from A.D. 238 to 244. If he was then in the full maturity of his powers, he may have been born about A.D. 170. When he became a Christian we know not. He appears to have been an active man, and, like Hegesippus, to have made several journeys for purposes of research. His great work was a treatise on chronology in five books, intended to give a comparative view of sacred and profane history from the creation to his own time. It was published under Elagabalus (A.D. 221).

¹ The following extract from a letter to Origen is so pleasing that we think the reader will like to see it (Eus. H. E. vi. 14): "For this, as you know, has been God's will, that our ancestral friendship should remain inviolate, or rather should become warmer and more steadfast. For we regard those blessed men who have gone before us as our fathers, to whom we shall ere long be reunited, viz., Pantenus the truly blessed, my master, and the holy Clement, my master and my helper, and many others we may have known, by whom I got to know you, my best valued master and brother."

These Chronologies occupied an important place in controversy. Both Jews and Pagans sneered at the Christian system as modern and devoid of historical prestige. Philo and Josephus had successfully vindicated the antiquity of Judaism as against the heathen religions. But, in order to obtain a similar respect for Christianity, it was necessary to show that its roots, like those of Judaism, were planted firmly in the past. Origen and Clement had approached this question from the broadest point of view, by tracing the progressive manifestation of the Divine Logos in all human history. The more usual course was to connect Christianity genealogically with Judaism, the antiquity of which was on all sides confessed. Africanus followed this method. His book secured the favourable opinion of Eusebius, who incorporated many of its conclusions into his own *Chronicon*. In spite of considerable astronomical knowledge, his treatment of the early period was, as far as the time of Abraham, largely mystical, after which his calculations were based chiefly on historical data. He seems to have known sufficient Hebrew to verify the numerical computations of the LXX by the original text. In reconciling the Egyptian and Chaldean chronologies with that of the Old Testament, he used Manetho and Berosus. In accounting for the Greek mythology, he adopts the principles of Euhemerus, and considers the gods to have been deified human beings. In his third book he attempted to synchronise the leading events of Eastern and Greek history after the first Olympiad with that of the Bible. Of this portion of his work several fragments are inserted in Routh's *Reliquiæ*. The following book supplied an epitome of events from the time of Antigonus to that of Augustus and Herod. The last book contained an interesting disquisition on the seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecy. This fragment is put together by Routh partly from Syncellus, partly from extracts given by Eusebius in his *Demonstratio Evangelica*.

Another important work of Africanus bore the somewhat fanciful title of *Cesti*, or "Variegated Girdles," which we may compare with such titles as "The Tapestries," "The Meadow," "The Nosegay," &c., which were commonly in vogue. This

work seems to have been of a secular character. Its contents comprised geography, natural history, medicine, agriculture, and the art of war. There is no reason on this account to doubt its authorship, but it obviously belongs to Africanus' Pagan days.¹ Africanus was not a missionary or a theological teacher: he belonged to the class of Christian philosophers. His interest lay in the scientific studies which bear upon Christianity, such as chronology, ethnology, and philology. The assumption that he was a bishop is so doubtful that we need pay no regard to the Syrian tradition which ascribes to him in that capacity certain commentaries on the New Testament.

It is in the realm of Biblical criticism that he deserves the chiefest praise. Two documents of this class have come down to us. The first is a comparison of the two genealogies of our Lord, which are accounted for by the hypothesis of the two lines of natural and legal descent. He shows that these were always carefully distinguished by the Jews, and instances the records of Herod's family as a case in point. He adds the curious remark that the early Jews, not having had a firm faith in the resurrection of the body, endeavoured to secure a kind of secondary immortality by carefully preserving the names of all their heads of families. We may compare the custom of embalming in Egypt, the Roman practices of adoption and exhibition of *Imagines* in the family hall, and still more pertinently, the modern Comtist Calendar.

The second instance of Africanus' critical sagacity consists in a letter he wrote to Origen on the question of the authenticity of the History of Susanna. It appears that in a public discussion Origen had cited the work as authoritative. Africanus was present, but his respect for the great master kept him silent. He afterwards, though with some diffidence, committed his objections to writing, and they are very much to the point. He observes (1) that the work is lacking in

¹ It is odd that the mere fact of a book's contents being of a secular kind should be evidence that it was not written by a Christian. Nothing can more strongly illustrate the intensity of the Christians' antagonism to the world. The reader is referred back to the Introductory Essay, p. 1, *n*.

external testimony, not being included in the canon of the Jews; (2) that its original language must have been Greek, not Hebrew, since the play on words which Daniel employs to bring home his judgment on the elders is peculiar to the former language, and has no parallel in Hebrew; (3) that the prophetic gift ascribed to Daniel in this book is inconsistent with the form in which it appears in the genuine Daniel, the one being an *afflatus*, the other an understanding of visions and dreams; (4) that genuine prophets do not quote Scripture to enforce their sayings, whereas Daniel is represented as doing this. Origen replies at considerable length, but, though ingenious, he is unconvincing, and inferior in grasp of the problem to Africanus. After throwing out various conjectures, he falls back upon the old argument that has done duty so often since, that it is safest to accept the entire body of Scripture as it has been handed down to us. As Origen wrote from Nicomedia, the date of the correspondence will be either A.D. 228, or more probably A.D. 240.

Gregory Thaumaturgus.

Another contemporary of Origen, to whom we are indebted for our knowledge of his educational method, is **Theodorus**, called **Gregory** at his baptism, and afterwards known as **Thaumaturgus**, the Wonder-Worker, Bishop of Neo-Cæsarea in Pontus. This celebrated saint, who is himself the subject of unbounded panegyric by the two other Gregories and Basil, has come down to literature as pre-eminently the admirer and panegyrist of Origen. He was born at Neo-Cæsarea early in the third century, of wealthy and noble parents. His father was a devout pagan, and destined Gregory for the profession of a pleader. With this object he sent him to study Roman jurisprudence at Berytus in Syria, a city which Gregory tells us was to a considerable extent Latinised (*Ρωμαϊκωτέρα τις*). He had hardly arrived there when the occasion of his sister's journey to Cæsarea to join her husband made it necessary for him to accompany her as part of her escort. At Cæsarea he and his brother Athenodorus

came into contact with the man who was destined to revolutionise both their lives. Origen was now settled to his work as a theological teacher, and, with characteristic insight, he at once addressed his matchless powers of attraction to the task of gaining over this able and generous-hearted student. He was eminently successful. Gregory at first attempted to resist the great teacher's wondrous spell, clearly discerning that if admitted it must profoundly modify his career and set before him a new ideal of life. Soon, however, he surrendered to the heaven-sent influence, and became an enthusiastic and in every way worthy disciple. For more than five years their intercourse was continued, until in A.D. 238 Gregory left for Neo-Cæsarea, a baptized and whole-hearted Christian. After no long interval, the bishopric fell vacant, and Gregory was selected for the post. Unwilling to undertake so great a responsibility, he was induced by a stratagem to accept consecration, and laboured till the close of his life (A.D. 270) with the most extraordinary success. Tradition asserts that when first he left his native town there were only seventeen Christians in it, and that at the date of his death there were but seventeen heathens.

The events of his spiritual life, as well as the imposing catalogue of his miracles, belong to the sphere of Church history, and need not occupy us here. His genuine writings betray no consciousness of supernatural endowments. Their modest tone forms a pleasing commentary on the halo of thaumaturgic majesty with which within a century of his death his fame was encircled.

He is credited with being a voluminous writer. A considerable number of fragments are ascribed to him, of which four are genuine. The dubious or spurious treatises are more numerous—(1.) *A Sectional Confession of Faith*,¹ which, interesting as it is, must from various expressions it contains

¹ The Greek title is very obscure, *ἔκθεσις τῆς κατὰ μέρος πίστεως*. It is variously explained as (1) an exposition of the faith *in part*, or *by parts*. The Jesuit commentator Franciscus Torrens renders it *fides non universa sed ex parte*, by which is to be understood, a creed not of all the dogmas of the Church, but only of some, in opposition to the heretics who deny them.

be referred, at any rate in its present form, to the Post-Nicene age. It is, however, highly probable that some such statement was formulated by Gregory. (2.) *A Fragment from his Discourse on the Trinity*, translated by Mai from the Arabic.¹ *Twelve Topics on the Faith*, which obviously belong to a later age.² (3.) *A Discourse addressed to Tatian on the Subject of the Soul*. (4.) *Four Homilies*, three on the Annunciation, and one on the Holy Theophany. (5.) Fragment of a *Commentary on S. Matthew*, which may or may not be genuine. (6.) *A Discourse on All the Saints*.

His genuine writings, though short, are of more than ordinary interest. The first is a *Declaration of Faith*,³ which is highly important as revealing what Gregory took to be the essential teaching of his master. It is as follows: ⁴—

“There is one God, the Father of the Living Word, who is His subsistent Wisdom and Power and Eternal Image; perfect Begetter of the Perfect, Father of the only-begotten Son. There is one Lord, Only of the Only, God of God, Image and Likeness of Deity, Efficient Word, Wisdom comprehensive of the constitution of all things, and Power formative of the whole creation, true Son of true Father, Invisible of Invisible, and Incorruptible of Incorruptible, and Immortal of Immortal, and Eternal of Eternal. And there is only One Holy Spirit, having His subsistence (ὑπαρξιν) from God, and being made manifest by the Son, to wit to men; Image of the Son, Perfect (Image) of the Perfect; Life, the Cause of the living; Holy Fount; Sanctity, the Supplier (or Leader, χορηγός) of Sanctification; in whom is manifested God the Father, who is above all and in all, and God the Son, who is through all. There is a perfect Trinity, in glory and eternity and sovereignty, neither divided nor estranged. Wherefore there is nothing either created or in servitude in the Trinity; nor anything superinduced, as if at some former period it was

¹ Given in his *Spicilegium Romanum*, vol. iii. p. 696.

² See Ante-Nicene Library, vol. xx., in which all the remains of Gregory are translated.

³ The title as it stands has this addition, “Which he had by revelation from the blessed John the Evangelist, by the mediation of the Virgin Mary, Parent of God.”

⁴ Ante-Nicene Library, xx. p. 5.

non-existent, and at some later period it was introduced. And thus neither was the Son ever wanting to the Father, nor the Spirit to the Son ; but without variation and without change the same Trinity (abides) ever."

Another writing we possess is a *Paraphrase* (or *Metaphrase*) of the *Book of Ecclesiastes*. It is not remarkable for acuteness or depth, but contains some valuable moral reflections. He has quite misunderstood the long sequence of metaphors in the eleventh chapter, and adds little or nothing to the criticism of the book. The sententious proverbial style of Hebrew philosophy looks oddly in Greek trappings. A bare translation, like the LXX, though strange and rude to Greek ears, is far more effective than the insipid mixture of rhetoric and Rabbinism which is all that Gregory gives us.

A third fragment which we must notice is his "Canonical Epistle concerning those who in the inroad of the barbarians ate things sacrificed to idols, or offended in certain other matters." It is addressed to a neighbouring bishop, who had solicited his advice. We gather from his language that owing to the persecution there had been serious lapses from the Christian standard of conduct, and Gregory lays down canons for the guidance of those who had to deal with the question. It is probable that the large scale on which conversions had taken place had been unfavourable to moral strictness. At the first temptation many had returned not only to conformity with the Pagan superstition, but to the commission of Pagan atrocities, which called down the bishop's severest censure. It is noteworthy that the guilt of eating sacrificial food, strangled, or blood, was almost universally held equally heinous with that of fornication. Even Origen places them in the same category. It is difficult for us to appreciate the attitude of the early Church to this question. But it seems clear that the regulations of the Jerusalem Council formed part of its regular discipline, and that the broader judgment of S. Paul was not followed. It is quite possible that the Church was actuated not only by purely spiritual considerations, but also by the almost universal belief in the physical

impurity contracted by indiscriminate indulgence in food. This belief was by no means so groundless as in these days it is generally held to be. It is possible without any materialising tendency to hold that simplicity of diet conduces directly to a spiritual frame of mind. Great medical authorities have discussed how far it would be desirable, both from a physical and moral point of view, to reconsider the whole question of flesh diet. At any rate, the Church has always encouraged a strict discipline of the appetite as an essential element in the religious life. We need not therefore be surprised at the extreme vigilance with which the prohibition of sacrificial meat was guarded.

We now come to the most interesting relic of Gregory's pen, the well-known panegyric on Origen, delivered in his presence, on the eve of the speaker's departure from Cæsarea. Its style is in the verbose and artificial manner of the time, but the strain of praise comes from the heart, and does the highest honour to both giver and receiver. Gregory compares their friendship to that of David and Jonathan, the soul of the lesser comrade being knit to that of the greater in indissoluble loyalty. It must have been no small comfort to the great teacher to see how noble a compensation God had provided for his loss of position and country in the devoted love of this pupil, soon to attain the honours of the most eminent sainthood, and to give to posterity a reading of his master's character with which the most prejudiced opponent would have to reckon.

After detailing the circumstances of his early life, and pointing out how each step was controlled by the guiding hand of God, he expresses the deepest gratitude for those five happy years of spiritual communion, the sundering of which he compares to the departure of Adam from Paradise. He sketches in warm but discriminating language the means by which Origen had won him over to the truth, and gives a lifelike picture of his educational method. To this we have referred in a previous chapter. We shall only remark here that, allowing for the progress in critical principles since Origen's day, no sounder course of mental and spiritual

training could be desired. The following noble passage breathes the very spirit of Origen :—

“ He constrained us, if I may so speak, to practise righteousness on the ground of the personal action of the soul itself, which he persuaded us to study, drawing us off from the officious anxieties of life, and from the turbulence of the forum, and raising us to the nobler vocation of looking into ourselves and dealing with the things that concern ourselves in truth. Now, that this is to practise righteousness, and that this is the true righteousness, some also of our ancient philosophers have asserted. . . . To practise righteousness after this fashion, therefore, he impressed on us by a sort of force. And he educated us to prudence none the less, teaching us to be at home with ourselves, and to desire and endeavour to know ourselves, which indeed is the most excellent achievement of philosophy. . . . And that this is the genuine function of prudence, and that such is the heavenly prudence, is affirmed well by the ancients ; for in this there is one virtue common to God and man ; while the soul is exercised in beholding itself as in a mirror, and reflects the Divine Mind in itself, if it is worthy of such a relation, and traces out a certain inexpressible method for the attaining of a kind of deification.”

His impression of the sanctity of his master's life is forcibly shown by the following striking words :—

“ Who alone of all men of the present time with whom I have been acquainted, or of whom I have heard by the report of others, has so deeply studied the clear and luminous oracles of God as to be able at once to receive their meaning into his own mind, and to convey it to others. For that Leader of all men, who inspires God's dear prophets, and suggests all their prophecies and their mystic and heavenly words, has honoured this man as He would a friend, and has constituted him an expounder of these same oracles ; and things of which He only gave a hint by others He made matters of full instruction by this man's instrumentality. . . . Now, this greatest of gifts this man has received from God, and this noblest of all endowments he has had bestowed upon him from heaven, that he should be an interpreter of the oracles of God to men, and should understand the words of God, even as if God spake them to him, and should recount them to men in such wise that they might hear them with intelligence.”

It is pleasant to know that this ardent affection was fully reciprocated. As soon as Gregory had reached home, Origen wrote him a letter, expressing his deep sense of his pupil's spiritual aptitude, and counselling him to press forward to yet higher attainments, and, by daily study of the Scriptures, to prepare himself for the lofty career that awaited him.

Dionysius the Great.

We pass now to Alexandria, where, on Heraclas' appointment to the bishopric, **Dionysius**, another pupil of Origen's, succeeded to the Catechetical (A.D. 232) and finally to the Episcopal, chair (A.D. 248). Dionysius the Great, as he is deservedly called, is one of the purest, noblest souls of the early Church. Born to wealth and influence, he surrendered both to become a Christian. He attended Origen's class, and was ordained presbyter before 232. At his death in 265 he was already an old man. His episcopate fell in troubled times, times of controversial bitterness, times of fierce persecution, and times of physical calamity. In all these troubles he took a leading part, sparing neither his strength nor, what is a much rarer thing, his personal feelings. He carried the temper of Origen into active life. As a consequence, he was often misunderstood, but by perfect frankness and true humility he was able to right himself. His writings were numerous, but called forth chiefly by the exigencies of events.

He is conspicuous among Church rulers for his faith in the power of argument. He rested neither on the infallibility of synods nor on the efficacy of anathema, but always and solely on discussion conducted with sympathetic courtesy on both sides.

It is to Eusebius that we are indebted for the best account of his life and character, and for the preservation of the most important fragments of his works. These are divisible into three classes, controversial treatises, letters, and commentaries.¹

¹ The list is as follows:—(a) Fragment from the two Books on the Promises, in opposition to Nepos, an Egyptian bishop. This is translated

The remains of such a writer are all worthy of perusal. But there is one of such exceeding interest that we think it best to quote it entire. It is taken from his treatises "On the Promises," a book directed against the opinions of Nepos, an Egyptian bishop, who had been the leading champion of millenarian views in that country, and had written a treatise called "A Refutation of the Allegorists." Nepos had recently died; but his views became more and more popular. There had always been a strong party at Alexandria who disapproved of the philosophical theology of the Christian Platonists, and were more particularly hostile to their theory of exegesis. Clement complains of them more than once, and Origen shows in several places that he has them in view. To the school of thought of which Origen and Dionysius were the leading representatives, the doctrine of the millennium was extremely distasteful, as it was also from a totally different point of view to the Roman Church. To Origen its objectionable feature lay in its literalism; in its regarding the final glory of the redeemed as essentially a reproduction of the actual Church, merely changed from militant to triumphant, and in no proper sense idealised or spiritualised. To Rome the fault of Chiliasm lay in its interference with the Church's orderly march towards the conquest of the world, which was the Roman conception of the kingdom of God, and from which the continued shocks of an expected catastrophe tended to divert the Christian mind.

The stronghold of the Millenarians had always been the

in the text, Eus. H. E. vii. 24, 25. (b) From his Book on Nature against the Epicureans, Eus. *Præp. Ev.* xiv. 23-27. (c) From his Books against Sabellius, Eus. *Præp. Ev.* vii. 19. (d) From his Letter to Dionysius of Rome on the Persons of the Trinity, collected chiefly from the works of Athanasius. (e) Epistle to Basilides, containing Canons on Matters of Ecclesiastical Discipline. (f) Letters to Domitius and Didymus, to Novatus, to Fabius of Antioch on the persecution, to Cornelius of Rome, to Stephen on the question of re-baptism, to Sixtus, Dionysius Sixtus; also a justification of his behaviour in the persecution against the accusations of Germanus; letters to Hermammon, to the Alexandrians, to Hierax. These are all given in Eus. H. E., Books vi. and vii. (g) The portions of Commentaries on Ecclesiastes and S. Luke are given in Gulland's *Bibliotheca veterum patrum*.

Book of Revelation. So long as this book came stamped with S. John's authority, it would necessarily hold an exalted place among inspired writings. Dionysius, on critical grounds alone, ventured to assail its authenticity. This criticism forms the kernel of his letter. But the personal considerations with which it commences are also of the highest interest, as showing the charitable temper of the bishop, and the immense pains he was willing to take in order to convince, not to overawe, those who differed from him. The translation is taken from that in the Ante-Nicene Library: ¹—

“But as they produce a certain composition by Nepos, on which they insist strongly, as if it demonstrated incontestably that there will be a temporal reign of Christ upon earth, I have to say, that in many other respects I accept the opinions of Nepos, and love him at once for his faith, and his laboriousness, and his patient study in the Scriptures, as also for his great efforts in psalmody, by which even now many of the brethren are delighted. I hold the man, too, in deep respect still more, inasmuch as he has gone to his rest before us.² Nevertheless, the truth is to be prized and revered above all things else. If, then, he had been himself present, and had been stating his opinions orally, it would have been sufficient to discuss the question together without the use of writing, and to endeavour to convince our opponents and carry them along by interrogation and reply. . . . Being then in the Arsinoitic prefecture, where this doctrine was current long ago, I called together the presbyters and teachers among the brethren of the villages, and such of the brethren also as wished to attend were present. I exhorted them to make an investigation into that dogma in public. Accordingly, when they had brought this book (*i.e.*, the work of Nepos) before us, as though it were a kind of weapon or impregnable battlement, I sat with them for three days in succession, from morning till evening, and attempted to set them right on the subjects propounded in the composition. Then, too, I was greatly gratified

¹ Vol. xx. pp. 161 *sqq.*

² The idea that his earlier passage to the unseen world gives, as it were, greater value to a man's testimony, is to be discerned also in the Letter of Polyerates (see above, page 370), where various saints are quoted “who now sleep in the Lord,” but who will rise again at the great day to maintain if necessary their true opinions.

by observing the constancy of the brethren, their love of the truth, their docility and intelligence, as we proceeded, in an orderly method, and in a spirit of moderation, to deal with questions, and difficulties, and concessions. For we took care not to press, in every way and with jealous urgency, opinions which had once been adopted, even although they might appear to be correct. Neither did we evade objections alleged by others; but we endeavoured as far as possible to keep to the subject in hand, and establish the positions pertinent to it. Nor, again, were we ashamed to change our opinions if reason convinced us, and to acknowledge the fact: but rather, with a good conscience, and in all sincerity, and with open hearts before God, we accepted all that could be established by the demonstrations and teachings of the Holy Scriptures, and at last the author and introducer of this doctrine, whose name was Coracion, in the hearing of all the brethren present, made acknowledgment of his position, and engaged to us that he would no longer hold by his opinion, nor discuss it, nor mention it, nor teach it, as he had been completely convinced by the arguments advanced against it. The rest of the brethren, also, who were present, were delighted with the conference, and with the conciliatory spirit and harmony exhibited by all."

A little further on, referring to the different estimates of the Apocalypse of S. John, he says:—

"I, for my part, could not venture to set this book aside, for there are many brethren who value it highly. Yet, having formed an idea of it as a composition exceeding my capacity of understanding, I regard it as containing a kind of hidden and wonderful intelligence on the several subjects which come under it. I do not measure and judge its expressions by the standard of my own reason; but, making more allowance for faith, I have simply regarded them as too lofty for my comprehension, and I do not forthwith reject what I do not understand, but I am only the more filled with wonder at it, in that I have not been able to discern its import."

After examining the whole book, and proving that it cannot be interpreted according to the bald literal sense, he continues:—

“That the writer was called John I do not deny. I admit, further, that it is the work of some holy and inspired man. But I could not so easily admit that this was the Apostle, the son of Zebedee, the same person who wrote the Gospel and the Catholic Epistle. But from the character of both, and the forms of expression, and the whole disposition and execution of the book, I draw the conclusion that the authorship is not his. For the Evangelist nowhere else subjoins his name, and he never once proclaims himself either in the Gospel or in the Epistle.”

This argument is dealt with at considerable length. It concludes thus:—

“That it is a John, then, who writes these things we must believe, for he himself tells us. What John this is, however, is uncertain. For he has not said, as he often does in the Gospel, that he is the disciple beloved by the Lord, or that leaned on His bosom, or the brother of James, or one that was privileged to see and hear the Lord. And surely he would have given us some of these indications if it had been his purpose to make himself clearly known. . . . There were probably many Johns, . . . and I think that this John was one of those who were in Asia. For it is said that there were two monuments in Ephesus, and that each of these bears the name of John.

“And from the ideas, and expressions, and collocations of the same John, it may reasonably be conjectured that this one is distinct from him. For the Gospel and Epistle agree with each other, and both commence in the same way. For the one opens thus, ‘In the beginning was the Word;’ while the other opens thus, ‘That which was from the beginning.’ The one says, ‘The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father.’ The other says the same things with a slight alteration, ‘That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life: and the life was manifested.’ . . . Thus he keeps to himself, and does not diverge inconsistently from his subjects, but goes through them all under the same heads and in the same phraseologies. Thus the attentive reader will find the phrases, *the life, the light*, occurring often in both; and also such expressions as *fleeing from darkness, holding the truth, grace, joy, the flesh and blood of the Lord, the judgment, the remission of sins, the love of God towards*

us, the commandment of love on our side toward each other. . . . And altogether, through their whole course, it will be evident that the Gospel and the Epistle are distinguished by one and the same character of writing. But the Revelation is totally different; neither does it contain a syllable in common with these other books.¹ Nay more, the Epistle, to say nothing of the Gospel, does not make any mention or evince any notion of the Revelation; and the Revelation, in like manner, gives no note of the Epistle. Whereas Paul gives some indication of his revelations in his epistles; which revelations, however, he has not recorded in writings by themselves.

“And, furthermore, on the ground of difference in diction, it is possible to prove a distinction between the Gospel and Epistle on the one hand, and the Revelation on the other. For the former are written, not only without actual error as regards their Greek, but even with the greatest elegance, both in their expressions and in their reasonings, and in the whole structure of their style. They are very far from betraying any barbarisms or solecisms or vulgarisms in their diction. For, as might be presumed, the writer possessed the gift of both kinds of discourse, the Lord having bestowed both these capacities upon him, viz., that of knowledge and that of expression. That the author of the latter, however, saw a revelation, and received knowledge and prophecy, I do not deny. Only I perceive that his dialect and language are not of the exact Greek type, and that he employs barbarous idioms, and in some places also solecisms. And I would not have any one suppose that I have said these things in a spirit of ridicule, for I have done so only with the purpose of setting right this matter of the dissimilarity subsisting between these writings.”

In this long extract we have an example of Origen's critical method, employed by a mind freer than Origen's from inconsistent prepossessions. The teacher who can impress such canons of discussion on his pupil cannot be regarded as the exponent of an extinct erudition.

The letters of Dionysius are characterised by the same moderation of mind, and as a rule by the same clearness of

¹ Dionysius is wrong here. The title “Word of God” is applied to Christ in the Revelation, and nowhere else except in the Gospel and Epistle of S. John.

exposition. In the Epistle to Dionysius of Rome he vindicates himself from the charge of unorthodoxy, to which his warm defence of the Trinity, as he understood it, against Sabellius had exposed him. He pleads for a fair construction of his opinions, based not on isolated expressions struck out in the heat of controversy, but on his deliberate utterances conveyed in works devoted to calm exposition. He does not address Dionysius as his superior, far less as his judge, but as a revered brother and equal, whose good opinion he does not wish to lose. To found an argument on this letter for the Roman supremacy is simply ridiculous. Even when sending authoritative decisions to one of his own provincial bishops who had applied for them, he is most careful not to thrust them upon him as compulsory, but expressly begs him to weigh their merits, and, if he finds anything objectionable, to let him know his views.

The letter of most general interest is that addressed to Fabius of Antioch, given in the forty-first and following chapters of the sixth book of Eusebius. It contains a graphic and touching narrative of the persecution under Decius. It should be read together with the letter in answer to Germanus, preserved in the same book,¹ which explains his own conduct in avoiding persecution, and with that to the Alexandrians,² which describes the awful calamity of the plague, and the heroic ministry of the Christians to their heathen fellow-sufferers.

Comparison with Cyprian.

If Origen may be contrasted with Tertullian, Dionysius may be equally contrasted with Tertullian's disciple Cyprian. In both cases the principles of the master in the field of thought were reproduced by the pupil in the field of action.

Dionysius and Cyprian were both well-born, wealthy, and of commanding personal qualities. Both were great administrators in a period of exceptional difficulty, and both found

¹ Eus. H. E. vi. 40, vii. 11.

² Eus. H. E. vii. 22.

themselves in opposition to the see of Rome. Both were obliged to submit to the harsh judgment of their contemporaries for the enlightened prudence with which they refused to grasp the privilege of martyrdom. And yet both, notwithstanding this disadvantage, were able to retain their influence unimpaired. Both were men of affairs rather than of speculative genius, though Dionysius combined with practical wisdom a certain originality of thought which Cyprian lacked. Both were disposed to pass a merciful judgment on the conduct of the lapsed. Both took the same side on the great question of heretical baptism. Both showed the same pure instinct of Christian heroism in preferring the inglorious risks of the plague to the splendour of an anticipated martyrdom. Both advanced by their remarkable letters the growing organisation of the Church.

Their differences were no less striking than their resemblances. Cyprian's tone of mind was arbitrary though his manner was conciliating. Dionysius was disposed to under-exercise rather than over-exercise his prerogative. Cyprian's ideal was towards outward unity, enforced by exclusion. Dionysius, relying only on discussion, strove to increase the comprehensiveness of the Church. Cyprian provoked enmity by his conduct: Dionysius by his opinions. Cyprian loved official majorities: Dionysius friendly debates. Cyprian, though opposed to Rome, is admitted by Rome herself to be the strongest champion of her claims. Dionysius has been granted indeed the honour of a great name, but his writings have been allowed almost to perish. In Cyprian we see the administrative, hierarchical manipulation of Scripture already in perfection: in Dionysius we have the brilliant inauguration of a Scripture criticism which, with a few partial revivals, was destined to slumber till reawakened in the nineteenth century. The one is the type of the ecclesiastical statesman: the other of the gentler "Father in God."

Later Origenists.

Among other Alexandrian worthies we may mention **Pierius**, who filled the chair of the Catechetical school with such unswerving adherence to what he considered Origen's views as to gain the honourable title of the younger Origen. He was famous for his allegorical expositions, and wrote several treatises that were extant in Jerome's time. His older contemporary **Theognostus** (circ. A.D. 260) was also a writer of mark. His seven books of *Hypotyposes* (outlines) were in circulation two centuries after his death. He was charged with using language of an Arianising tendency; but, like Origen and Dionysius, was fortunate enough to have his reputation cleared by Athanasius. The line of bishops after Dionysius was continued by **Maximus** (A.D. 265), **Theonas** (A.D. 282), and **Peter** (A.D. 300), who in their theological views all represented the best traditions of the school. The troubled episcopate of Peter closed with his death by martyrdom under the persecution of Maximin (A.D. 311). The edict of Diocletian seven years previously had severely tested the fidelity of his flock. So many defections had taken place that Peter found it necessary to draw up a series of Canons of Reconciliation, proportioning various penances to the varying degrees of weakness or guilt.¹ They are of great importance to the student of Church history. We need do no more than just notice them here. The last, as usually reckoned, does not belong to the series, but is part of a pamphlet on the Paschal Festival. He wrote also an important work on the Divinity of Christ, of which use was made at the Council of Ephesus. Its title is uncertain. Leontius of Byzantium refers to it as the treatise "On the Saviour's sojourn amongst us." A name familiar to every Church history reader is that of **Pamphilus**, presbyter of Cæsarea, the guide and friend of Eusebius. So greatly did the great historian cherish his master's memory, that on his death by martyrdom he added the name of Pamphilus to his

¹ These will be found in Routh, *Rel. Sacr.*, vol. iv.

own, and is always known as Eusebius Pamphili. Pamphilus was a native of Tyre, and born in a good position. This he surrendered from a desire to devote himself wholly to ascetic practices and unremitting study of Scripture. He repaired to Alexandria, where he became a disciple of Pierius. The work of his life was the collection of the famous library, of which Eusebius made such excellent use, and some volumes of which Jerome was able to obtain, esteeming them as his most precious possession. Its two most noteworthy treasures were the original copy of Origen's Hexapla and the Hebrew Gospel which passed as the original S. Matthew. It was also rich in early MSS. of the New Testament, and contained nearly all the works of Origen, transcribed by Pamphilus' own hand. His admiration for Origen was unbounded, and in the glowing pages of Eusebius we catch a reflection of their joint estimate of the master. Thrown into prison on the outbreak of the Diocletian persecution, he devoted two years to the composition of an elaborate vindication of Origen's memory, in six books, five of which he lived to complete, while the sixth was added after his death by Eusebius. He suffered gloriously in 309, and has left us the truly beautiful legacy of a spotless and devoted life.

Lucian of Antioch.

Passing once more to the Asiatic Church, we find some names that claim attention. First, the martyr **Lucian**, a presbyter of Antioch, whose brilliant learning was combined with a certain doctrinal unsoundness, to the principles of which the school of Arius afterwards appealed. He was born at Samosata about A.D. 240, and educated under Macarius at Edessa. He settled at Antioch, while Paul was bishop, and, falling under suspicion, was separated from the Church communion for a considerable period (A.D. 265-280). On his restoration he became, jointly with Dorotheus, the head of the Antiochene school, whose leading principle was the literal interpretation of Scripture. The greatest renown of this school belongs to a later epoch; but Lucian

laid its foundations. His opinions were gradually modified, and at his death at Nicomedia, in 311, he had long enjoyed the confidence of the Catholic Church. His chief literary work was the revision of the LXX, which was so well done as to receive the name of the Vulgate Version, and to be accepted by the churches of Constantinople, Asia Minor and Antioch. But to students of Church history he is best known as the author of a creed submitted to the Council of Antioch (A.D. 341), which has been the subject of much discussion, its language being so nicely balanced as to admit either of a Catholic or an Arian interpretation.

Archelaus.

Archelaus, Bishop of Carchar in Mesopotamia, was the author of a disputation with the heresiarch Manes (A.D. 277). A fragment of considerable length stands under his name, but internal evidence shows that in its present form it is not the work of Archelaus. He almost certainly wrote in Syriac, whereas the Latin translation which we possess is evidently based on a Greek original. It is highly interesting as preserving the Western tradition of the career and doctrines of the heretic.¹

Methodius.

We conclude this chapter with a brief notice of **Methodius**, Bishop of Patara in Lycia, or, according to Jerome, of Olympus and afterwards of Tyre. Jerome also asserts that he suffered martyrdom in the Diocletian persecution, but this statement seems due to some confusion, as Eusebius, who was well acquainted with the history of Methodius, does not mention the fact. His literary activity was considerable, and his works highly esteemed. Of his books, besides some fragments, one has come down to us entire, the *Symposium*, or

¹ We have not noticed in the text the treatise of Alexander of Lycopolis against Manichæism, because it is written from a general, not a Christian, point of view. Its author became a Christian late in life. He flourished early in the fourth century.

Banquet of the Ten Virgins, a dialogue in imitation or rivalry of Plato, in which Methodius gives the report of a discussion that took place in the garden of one Arete, on the subject of chastity. The chief part of the composition is occupied with ten prolix discourses by the virgins present, each taking one aspect of the virtue as her subject, and enforcing its grandeur by arguments from philosophy or Scripture. Those who desire to read it will find it excellently translated in the Ante-Nicene Library. To the modern reader, however, it can hardly fail to be wearisome, and in parts offensive. From several allusions to the incorrectness of allegorical exegesis¹ and other debated matters, we gather that the dialogue had Origen in view, and was designed to counteract elements in his teaching of which Methodius disapproved. This was still more pointedly the case with the Dialogue *On the Resurrection*, of which large extracts are preserved by Epiphanius and Photius. In this he grappled with Origen's denial of the materiality of the resurrection body, or rather, with the denial of its materiality which he attributed to Origen, and which may possibly have been held by some of his disciples. Methodius has the advantage of defending the orthodox position, and many of his arguments are telling and well put.

Of his other works the fragments are extremely scanty. One was entitled *On Things Created* (*περὶ τῶν γενητῶν*), and appears also to have been in the form of a dialogue and directed against the Origenistic theory of an eternal creation. It is possible that Methodius misunderstood his opponent's point of view. Judging from his extant dialogue, we should scarcely rate his intellectual calibre highly enough to consider him a fit critic of Origen's subtle and difficult ideas.

Another important treatise mentioned by Jerome was a refutation of Porphyry's attack on Christianity. Of all the enemies of the faith, Porphyry was held to be the most formidable, and two other writers of repute, Eusebius and

¹ In spite of this censure, he frequently adopts the same method himself. Indeed, it was so universal that its employment by Methodius was unavoidable. Origen carried it out consistently; Methodius did not. This was the only difference.

Apollinaris, addressed themselves to the task of refuting him. Unfortunately, both attack and defences have perished. The last writing of Methodius to which we shall refer is a Dialogue on Freewill, the extant portion of which is probably a transcript from the work of Maximus, a much earlier writer, an account of whom has already been given.¹ Jerome and others speak of various works attributed to him which are now lost, and the genuineness of which seems to have been at best doubtful.

¹ See p. 312.

BOOK V.

LATIN CHRISTIANITY.

CHAPTER I.

LATIN THEORY OF THE CHURCH.

HITHERTO we have been moving in a Greek world. The Spirit of Jesus has spoken in the tongue of Plato and utilised his forms of thought. It has reaffirmed the principle of Stoicism that Deity indwells within the Universe and in the heart of man, has given it a new certainty and filled it with a profounder meaning. It has admitted the claim of Hellas to be the trainer of man's intelligence¹ by adopting her educational system and consecrating it to the true God. Thus, while insisting on the fact that humanity has taken a new departure through the Gospel, it has nevertheless borne witness to the continuity of human progress. It has recognised the old truth, "*nihil per saltum*," to be applicable to the spiritual as well as to the physical world.

If we ask what is the prevailing conception of the Christian Church during this period, we shall find it to be in conformity with the above-mentioned fundamental ideas. Though presented in somewhat vague outline, it is unquestionably presupposed by all the most characteristic writers. The Church is conceived as a purely spiritual society, an aggregate of elect souls held together by a common union with their Lord. This idea is often overlaid with metaphysical accretions or disguised by alien admixture. There is perhaps but one writer who presents it pure and unadulterated, the author of the Epistle to Diognetus. "Christians," he says, "stand to the rest of mankind in the same

¹ Even so far back as the fifth century B.C., the discerning mind of Herodotus saw this. "Ἡ Ἑλλάς οὐκέτι τοῦ γένους ἀλλὰ τῆς διανοίας εἶναι δοκεῖ." "Hellas is not so much the name of a race as of a state of culture."

relation in which the soul stands to the body.”¹ Stripped of all metaphysics, all rhetoric, all dogma, this is the essential conception of the Church, which, struck out first by S. Paul, flashes forth in Diognetus, and descending through Justin and Clement, attains in Origen its most elaborate statement. In order to make it fully intelligible, two postulates are required. The first is the accompaniment of a continuous Divine revelation; the second is the continuous indwelling of a Divine Personality. Both these postulates are clearly present to the mind of S. Paul, and are apprehended with more or less distinctness by all the representative Greek theologians, though the inferior vividness of their spiritual intuitions combines with the complexity of their materials of thought to obscure the clearness of their apprehension.

Nevertheless, taking a broad view of the Greek Fathers down to Athanasius, and discarding everything but the central principle of their thought, we shall hardly err in pronouncing them to have held the Church to be the company of all those souls in whom the Divine Word was realised to be the energising power and personality of their life, and to stand to the rest of mankind in the same relation as the soul of man stands to his body.

But from the very commencement of Christianity a totally different conception of the Church was formed—a conception that allied itself with Jewish as the other allied itself with Greek ideas.²

Already in the Pastoral Epistles we see the lines sketched out on which the so-called Apostolic Fathers, and especially Hermas, drew their picture of a great organised community governed by divinely-commissioned delegates, to whose hands alone was entrusted the knowledge that was to illuminate and the ordinances that were to save mankind. In a word,

¹ The reader is referred to Book II., chap. iv. p. 305, where the whole passage is translated, showing the working out of the thought.

² I am in no way questioning the directly Divine source of both these conceptions as revealed by Christ to the Apostles. They are in truth complementary to each other, and in the present dispensation both are equally necessary. They will doubtless be reconciled in a more comprehensive unity in the world to come.

the Church from this point of view expressed the apparatus of salvation, not the fact of it. The religion of Christ became the New Covenant, the New Law, in which the Old Covenant and the Old Law found their fulfilment. In Justin and Irenæus the two conceptions stand side by side. At one time they speak of the Church as the life of the Spirit in man; at another, as the corporate body to which Christ's doctrine and sacraments are committed as a Divine trust. The latter conception, however, is that to which their spirit and temper most inclines, and we rank them accordingly among those that hold it.

But it is not to Greek theologians that we must look for the full development of such an idea. This was the special work allotted by Divine Providence to the Latin Church.

Nothing can bring more clearly home to the thinking mind the permanence of ideas in man's changing history, or if we prefer so to express it, the reign of law in man's development, than the undoubted connection which exists between Greek Christianity and Greek philosophy on the one hand, and between Roman Christianity and Roman imperialism on the other. This forms at once the most decisive fact of religious history in the past, and the most fertile source of religious anticipation for the future.

From the very first the Roman Church had seized, as by a creative intuition, on the idea of Order as the basis of the Universe. This forms the main argument of Clement's Epistle. The Order of God's Universe must be reflected in the Order of Christ's Church: the old Creation is to be the pattern of the new. But Christians are not left to seek their principles of order from the remote and inaccessible analogies of nature. God Himself, in founding the Jewish Church, has drawn a picture for them, reduced to scale, expressly that they may copy it. This is the key to the Christian position, and by its application the problem of human destiny is solved.

But though Clement and his successors were thus laying the foundations of Latin Christianity, it was not by Roman bishops that the superstructure was laid. Incapable of ideas genuinely spiritual, the Roman mind materialised all it

touched. The spiritual presentation of the theory came not from Europe, but from Africa.

In three successive stages, each represented by a man of commanding genius, the fabric of Latin Christianity was built up. The first stage was the laying of the spiritual foundation; this is represented by Tertullian. The second was the raising of the ecclesiastical framework; this is represented by Cyprian. The third was the consolidation and completion of the entire edifice; this is represented by Augustine. This pre-eminent doctor of the Latin Church, who towers above predecessors and successors alike, stamped theology so completely with his individual impress as virtually to arrest its further progress; so that the teaching of Augustine and the teaching of the Church have ever since been convertible terms. As, however, he belongs to a later period than that of our history, we must pass him by and confine our criticism to the theories of Tertullian and Cyprian.

That of **Tertullian** is the more original, and in point of precision has never been surpassed. It is contained in his famous treatise, "On the Prescription of Heretics."¹ His argument is founded on the principles of Roman law, and was exactly suited to the apprehension of the Roman mind. Christ has bequeathed the faith to the Church as her property, to be administered for the salvation of mankind. Her title-deeds are the Scriptures, guaranteed by the signature of Christ, and the witness of the Apostles. For a long period her title has never been disputed, nor her administration questioned. At length certain persons appear who claim an independent right to interpret Scripture and discover truth for themselves. Tertullian replies: You have no such right; the Scripture is ours; we hold it by prescription, and we alone have the power to interpret it. Truth is not a thing to be discovered by research. It has been given once and for ever. Christ gave it to the Apostles, and they handed it down, with the key of its meaning, to the churches they founded. Taught themselves by Christ, they took security for the safe

¹ For a further criticism of this treatise, see p. 569.

transmission of their teaching. That this was done is abundantly proved by the substantial agreement of all the Apostolic Churches throughout the world. Heresy is at bottom nothing else but self-will. It is instigated by philosophy, the proud working of the human spirit in rebellion against God. Heresy and philosophy speak in different dialects, but they are one and the same thing. They can only end in falsehood, for humanity is of itself powerless to arrive at truth. The Divine society of believers, acting through the apostolic sees, is truth's sole custodian; and every doctrine that conflicts with the "Rule of Faith"¹ of any of these churches stands self-condemned.

The above train of reasoning obviously carries great weight, and to the Roman Church has always appeared unanswerable. Yet Tertullian drifted away from it, and that after no long interval. Having embraced rigorist opinions, and failed to obtain a recognition for them within the Church, he abandoned his former doctrine and sought a new basis of Church fellowship in the visible manifestations of the Spirit. It would no doubt be unjust to appraise the value of any argument by the hold it has upon the mind of its propounder. No one, for example, would depreciate the reasoning of Gladstone's "Church and State" because the accomplished author of it has changed his point of view. Every argument must stand or fall according to its intrinsic strength or weakness; and it must be admitted that Tertullian's is a strong one. At the same time it needed supplementing, and his own bitter experience furnished the material required.

Cyprian's extraordinarily able pamphlet "On the Unity of the Church"² marks a great advance on the position of Tertullian. It has well been called the Charter of the Latin Church. In Cyprian's view the Church is a visible society, radiating from a visible centre, which is the Episcopate.

¹ The "*Regula Fidei*," on which Tertullian continually insists, is, in its most authoritative shape, the Creed. It means the form of instruction given to catechumens. The creeds of the different churches varied in phraseology, but agreed in substance.

² See also p. 606.

He conceives of the Episcopate as an organic whole complete in itself, everywhere diffused, and endowed with the Divine powers necessary for the salvation of men. It is derived from the Apostles, who handed down to those whom they ordained as their successors the power with which Christ Himself had invested them, viz., of transmitting the grace of consecration, by which alone the means of salvation can be perpetuated. By ordination, therefore, a man is made a priest or bishop of the whole Church, his acts being equally valid everywhere. The Church is the Ark of Noah, riding safely on the waves of the world, and opening its doors to all who will conform to its conditions of entrance. Outside the Church is no salvation; but those within its pale have already entered by anticipation on an assured inheritance, and can await with tranquil confidence the subsidence of the waters and the emergence of a renewed earth.

It may be remarked that this theory as it stands implies the salvation of all members of the Church. Beyond this point Cyprian does not go, though events were already suggesting grave and anxious doubts. The question of the forgiveness of post-baptismal sin had always been a difficult one, and it was in Cyprian's day complicated by the still more difficult problem how to deal with those who had abjured their faith. Cyprian allows for the possibility of such mortal sin, and lays down stringent regulations for guarding the prerogative of pardon. But, strictly speaking, this is to him a question of discipline, not of doctrine. His theory requires that all baptized Christians who do not cut themselves off from their faith by heresy or impenitence should be permitted to die in the Church's grace.

On these two primary documents is based the organisation of the Western Church. They are unquestionably the most important Latin writings of the Ante-Nicene period. They deserve to be read and re-read by all ecclesiastical students. They enclose in embryo every subsequent development. Augustine's immortal "City of God" is but a sermon from their text. His doctrines of predestination, freewill, and grace, spring from them as a root. In them the famous

antithesis of Aquinas between the kingdoms of nature and of grace is already latent. The history of the Papacy is but one long comment on them. From their pregnant pages may be deduced, with spiritual if not logical consistency, the modern Anglican revival with all its loyalty to the past, with all its significance for the future. The theology of apostolic tradition, as distinct from the theology of sanctified reason, finds in them its authoritative and indispensable support.

These two writers alone occupy the first rank. It will be necessary to discuss the works of several other apologists; but they are of altogether secondary importance. Minucius, Novatian, Arnobius and Lactantius, have left writings of considerable interest. But whatever their merits, they lie outside that mighty stream of development, which, diverging at its source from that of Greek theology, was destined to carry between its banks the mind of Europe for thirteen centuries, to mix again perhaps with that other "ancient river," whose calmer, broader stream is also wending on towards the ocean of Divine truth.

CHAPTER II.

THE AFRICAN CHURCH—Q. SEPTIMIUS FLORENS TERTULLIANUS (A.D. 160-230?).

S. AUGUSTINE, with pardonable exaggeration, speaks of Rome and Carthage as the two great nurseries of Latin literature.¹ He probably implies that what Rome achieved for profane letters, Carthage achieved for the literature of the Church. And even within the ecclesiastical sphere, a comparison might be drawn between the two cities on almost equal terms. If the world is indebted to Rome for the organisation of the Church, Rome is indebted to Carthage for the theory on which that organisation is built.

The career of Carthage as a Christian centre exemplifies the strange vicissitudes of history. The city which Rome in her jealousy had crushed, which, not content with crushing, she had obliterated from the face of the earth, had at the bidding of Rome's greatest son risen from her ashes, and by her career almost verified the poet's taunt that the greatness of Carthage was reared on the ruin of Italy.² For in truth the African capital was in all but political power no unworthy rival of Rome. It had steadily grown in commercial prosperity. Its site was so advantageous as to invite, almost to compel, the influx of trade, which ever spontaneously moves along the line of least resistance. And the people were well able to turn this natural advantage to account. A mixed nationality, in which the original Italian immigration lent a steady force to the native Punic and kindred

¹ "Duæ urbes literarum Latinarum artifices Roma atque Carthago."—*S. Augustine.*

² "O magna Carthago, probrosis
Altior Italiae ruinis!"—*Horace.*

African elements that formed its basis, with its intelligence enriched by large accessions of Greek settlers from Cyrene and Alexandria — Carthage had developed in the second century of our era into a community at once wealthy, enterprising and ambitious. Once again she stood in the front rank of world-famous states, the acknowledged leader of a group of vigorous cities, which looked to her, not indeed for political supremacy, but for literary and philosophical inspiration. Some of these cities had even outstripped their chief in the race for fame. Leptis had produced Annaeus Cornutus, the genial-minded Stoic, master and friend of Persius and Lucan: she had produced Septimius Severus, the poet-soldier, whom Statius praises in his brilliant verse. Cirta had given birth to Fronto, Madaura to Apuleius, Adrumetum to Salvius Julianus. These men were not merely the idols of their countrymen, but stood on the loftiest pinnacle of glory in the world of letters, were the chosen friends of great emperors, and were deemed worthy of filling offices of high public trust. And all these had appeared before Carthage had given a single man of the first rank to the world.

But the renown of these cities gradually paled before the rising brightness of the mother state. The time had now arrived when the star of Carthage was once again to rise brilliant upon the horizon, and to shine with a lustre which waxed with the ages, and can never again grow dim. It was no longer in the sphere of profane literature, but in her contributions to the cause of Christianity and the spiritual armoury of the Church, that the proud Queen of Africa was to win her second crown of fame.

If Rome, in the brutal exercise of material power, had stamped to dust her rival in the sphere of worldly empire, Carthage by a just retaliation imposed on mankind the terms on which Rome was to rest her claims to spiritual dominion. It is certain that, but for the charter of legislation put into her hands by Carthage, her spiritual dominion could not have been so securely founded, while to the lofty far-seeing intelligence which framed that legislation she

owes whatever of respect and voluntary homage is paid to her dominion now. The names of Tertullian, Cyprian and Augustine,¹ at once suggest the source from which Papal Rome drew the principles of Church controversy, Church organisation, and Church doctrine, which have consolidated her authority, and to some extent justified her pretensions to rule the conscience of Christendom.

The history of the Church of Africa is in its origin obscure; but, at the time when it bursts into light in the pages of Tertullian, a state of things is revealed which implies a long and flourishing past. Carthage could indeed claim no apostolic founder of her faith. The authority of an original and unbroken tradition was not hers. She looked to Rome for her rule of orthodoxy, partly as being the nearest Apostolic Church, partly as embodying the fullest stream of teaching in its descent from the two chief Apostles.² But this quasi-filial respect did not imply any subordination. When Stephanus tried to force on the African churches a practice contrary to their immemorial custom, the Bishop of Carthage, supported by all his comprovincials, maintained an unflinching opposition to his claims. But as yet Carthage had given no leader to the world of Christian thought. She was content with the more modest glory of a flourishing and prosperous Church, among whom the seeds of enthusiasm, kindled by occasional persecutions, had borne some good fruit; but whose danger lay rather in too ready a compromise with the customs of the world, in a tendency to laxity of manners, and to a fashionable crust of Christianity without its spirit, which in some cases went so far as to outrage the healthy common sense of average men, and to call imperatively for reform.³

¹ S. Augustine was a native of Tagaste in Numidia, and spent the years of his episcopal activity at Hippo. But the critical period of his intellectual life was passed at Carthage; and, in any case, the influence of Carthage was in his day paramount in Africa.

² *Præser. adv. Hort.* xxxvi.

³ As in the custom alluded to by Cyprian of the *Subintroductæ*, or female companions of the clergy.

Personality of Tertullian.

Into this community, with its luxurious religionism, its latent earnestness, and its serene self-satisfaction, the personality of Tertullian must have fallen like a thunderbolt. Who was this man, who, to judge from his writings, for we know scarce anything of his life, cannot have failed to awaken the conscience of all who heard him ?

The historical man is hidden from us, but the essential man is clearly enough discerned. The date of his birth is quite uncertain. Jerome's meagre outline states that he was the son of a proconsular centurion, of sharp and vehement temper, the first Latin writer after Victor and Apollonius, a native of Carthage ; who remained a presbyter of the Church until he had attained the middle age of life, and was driven by the envy of the Roman clergy to embrace the opinions of Montanus, which he calls the New Prophecy ; that he wrote several books against the Church, some of which were lost at an early period ; that he lived to extreme old age. Eusebius adds that he was accurately acquainted with Roman law, and in other respects distinguished and in great repute at Rome. A late author adds that he practised rhetoric for many years, which is extremely probable, for rhetoric was essential to the success of an advocate, a calling which in his pagan days he undoubtedly followed. We learn from his own writings that he was a convert from heathenism, and had lived in the usual heathen sins, despising Christ and His professors. His conversion took place probably in early middle life, in the full plenitude of his powers ; he was married, and in the interval, no long one apparently, between his conversion and secession, was admitted to the priesthood. The date of his conversion is given approximately as A.D. 192.¹ If so, his continuance in the Church must be limited to at most eight years, as in 201 it seems certain that he was a Montanist. His life was prolonged through the reign of Elagabalus (218-222), most probably far into that of Severus (222-235).

¹ Pusey places it as late as 196.

whose edict, allowing the existence of the Christian religion, he may have just lived to see.

From the above scanty details it is vain to attempt any sketch of the progress of Tertullian's mind. All we can do is, by conjecture, and by piecing together allusions scattered through his works, to picture to ourselves the influences that surrounded his younger and maturer years, and assisted the development of his singularly independent genius. The Latin language had become, we know not whether by an act of authority, the language of Provincial Africa. No language could be less suited to the ardent and yet subtle nature of these mixed races. The habitual caution and studied reserve of its idiom was the result of centuries of diplomacy and public administration. Its total inadequacy for metaphysical exactness was not more obvious than its unsuitableness for the exaltation of religious zeal. The Carthaginian, like the Syrian, could readily express his thoughts in Greek; but the effort to think in Latin must have been enormous. It is not surprising that no Father had arisen whose command of it was equal to the task of controversial disputation. But the brilliant heathen writers who were Tertullian's earlier contemporaries had done much to bridge over this difficulty. And to the study of their writings we can imagine him devoting all the fresh powers of his vigorous mind. That his education had been coextensive with the circle of rhetorical culture then in vogue is clear, from the varied erudition abundantly displayed in his works. He was able to write fluently in Greek, and alludes to Greek recensions of several of his treatises. But with the natural ambition of gaining the ear of the Western world, and with a wise comprehension of the superiority of the vernacular to any other medium, he addressed himself to the hitherto unattempted problem of expounding the ideas of Christianity in a Latin dress.¹ The magnitude of the task is the measure of his

¹ Some critics have placed Minucius Felix before Tertullian in point of date. The present writer does not share this view. And even if it be admitted, the statement in the text is not invalidated, for Minucius does not attempt to use the theological dialect peculiar to Christianity, but retains the classical vocabulary.

capacity. The vocabulary of ecclesiastical theology, like a new and higher Minerva, springs forth full-grown from his brain. Scarce a shade of distinction, metaphysical or religious, exists but he strives to represent it; and so well has he performed his task that his writings have ever remained the great original repertory of Latin theology, on which that of Augustine, and through him of the whole Roman Church, is ultimately based.

The cast of his mind is eminently rhetorical and argumentative. His natural eloquence is somewhat fierce and rude, and exults in drawing pictures of terror; his reasoning is trenchant, full and yet compressed; but it is the reasoning of the advocate, not of the philosopher. Though trained in the schools, and profoundly influenced by many systems, especially those of Plato and the Stoics, he is entirely devoid of the supreme quality of the philosopher, the patient searching after truth. For him truth is already found, and discovery is a fruitless quest. It would be highly interesting to inquire what was his attitude to the heathen religion in his pagan days, but as we have no data to guide us, it is useless to speculate. One thing is certain. Unlike Justin, Clement and Minucius, he broke altogether with his intellectual past. Whether he had been a believer in heathenism or a mere outward conformist, he cast it aside once and for ever. In his unqualified condemnation of all the efforts of the human mind to attain to truth, he recalls Tatian far more than Justin, or even Cyprian. His immense stores of culture are used solely for controversial purposes: even when citing instances of lofty heathen virtue to shame Christian professors, he ascribes them to the envy of the devil, who tries every shift to secure his empire over souls. He assumes that irreconcilable attitude towards mere human culture which the Papacy, borrowing from him, has consistently maintained, and wields as its most telling weapon at the present day.

His most striking characteristics are thoroughness and vigour. He gives no quarter: he strikes with the full force of an ungloved and muscular hand. But his thoroughness is

maintained at the cost of eccentricity ; and his vigour degenerates into brutal vehemence. In the refinement of mind for which Cyprian and Augustine are so conspicuous, he is wholly deficient. He has neither the sense of propriety to know when he has said enough (which makes many of his arguments tediously prolix), nor the considerateness to avoid crushing a fallen antagonist. His eagerness in the moment of victory betrays him into strains of coarse exultation, and his praises of virtue are marred by repulsive caricatures of vice. No great writer offends so often against good taste, and yet no writer who so often offends against good taste is so truly great. His style is himself. Carried away by the ardour of a vivid yet turbid and narrow imagination, he bristles with condensed phrases of more than poetic intensity ; and some of them have passed into the proverbial lore of the Church.¹

His pregnant epigrams² reveal a new power of the Latin language, the vocabulary of which he has enriched by hundreds of new and striking combinations. His fertility in this respect is unexampled among Christian writers, but is to some extent paralleled by his heathen contemporary Apuleius. One characteristic of his style is a fondness for archaisms, which was a fashion of his day.

His difficulty is well known. In this respect he stands pre-eminent among Latin writers, heathen or Christian. S. Augustine is perhaps the nearest to him, but even his involved clauses give place to the riddling brevity of Tertullian. As a rule, his speculative treatises are easier reading than his moral pamphlets. The long and elaborate argument against Marcion is perhaps the most clearly written of all his works ; as the justly celebrated Apology is the most brilliant, and the short treatise on the Witness of the Soul the most acute and original.

¹ Especially the beautiful saying, " The blood (of Martyrs) is the seed of the Church ; " " Christians are made, not born ; " " Truth is the eldest of things."

² The reader is referred especially to the beginning of the treatise *De Monophtmia*, and to the list of Philosophical schools in the *De Anima*.

From a mind constituted like his it would be vain to expect a sympathetic or appreciative treatment of opponents. The charity which illumines the controversial writings of Justin and Origen is unknown to Tertullian. He is as incapable of doing justice to an adversary's point of view as he is supremely successful in demolishing it. Whether it be the injustice of the authorities against which he pleads, or the aberrations of heretics which he controverts, or the laxity of indulgent Catholics which he stigmatises, the lash of scorn, the pride of assured superiority, the rigour of the logician, are ever in exercise. Incapable of half measures, stern to himself as to others, inexorable in his demand for consistency, he loses by vehemence what he gains by argumentative power, and, as we shall see, died a separatist from the communion of the Church he had striven so mightily to serve.

But these grave defects are more than balanced by signal virtues both of the writer and of the man. In the first place, he is conscious of his faults. He often alludes with pain to his errors, past and present. His impatient temper was a special source of regret, and he bewails it in one of the noblest bursts of self-reproach which have ever been uttered.¹ There is not one false ring in all his works. Such as he was he displays himself to us. We cannot indeed love him, but he compels our respect. The sourness and austerity which were perhaps the necessary reaction from a licentious youth, belong also to the nature of the man. He would not, for instance, profess to fast without undergoing real hunger. He would not embrace a life of purity except at the cost of painful self-sacrifice. The idea that holiness is compatible with the maximum of innocent self-indulgence (so dear to the British Philistine) was simply hateful to him. So it was with his doctrinal beliefs. The approaching end of the world was with him no hollow convention; it was a potent factor

¹ "In like manner, I, wretched man that I am, ever sick with the fever of impatience, must needs sigh for and call upon and speak all my thoughts upon that healthy state of patience which I possess not, when I call to mind and in the contemplation of my own weakness ruminate on the thought, that the good health of faith and soundness in the Lord's religion do not easily result to any one, unless patience sits at his side" (*De Pat.* i.).

in his life. The eternal punishment of sin was for him no barren dogma, but an ever-present goad to righteousness. If his Christianity was imperfect, it was unmistakably genuine; neither reserve nor compromise clouded the reality of his confession of faith. And even in error his sincerity is most touching. But his error was of discipline, not of faith; it estranged him, indeed, from the company of the orthodox, but no Father is more free from heresy. As a champion of Christian doctrine he stands second to none. On all the cardinal points he is not only at one with the Catholic view, but his statements of it are as accurate as those of any other Ante-Nicene writer. He allowed his speculative faculty the least possible licence. In this respect he compares favourably with the Alexandrian theologians. He cast and recast the fundamental doctrines in the fire of his thought till he was able to state them with the utmost possible precision. In this respect he is far superior to Justin, and deeper, though not more accurate, than Irenæus.

His greatest merit of all is the intense personal fervour he throws into his arguments, and this is what makes him as an apologist supreme. Beliefs are not matter for mere discussion, but must be fought for as one fights for one's life. The methodical argumentativeness of Irenæus, the enlightened reasonableness of Clement, pale before the fiery heat of Tertullian. When the labour of mastering his style has been surmounted, the power of his eloquence makes itself felt. And this eloquence never slips away from the control of revealed truth. It oversteps the limits of moral wisdom, of good taste, of decency, but of Catholic tradition never. In a few points he deviates from strict orthodoxy, as in assigning a body to God and to the soul, in speaking of the Logos as created, in his hypothesis of the transmission of souls; but some of these eccentricities are explained by his early date, others by his innate incapacity to attain to abstract spirituality of conception. Even Augustine admits that they do not interfere with the general correctness of his teaching—a correctness far from easy to maintain amid so great a variety of subjects, and such constant temptation to forsake it.

Tertullian and Montanism.

It is uncertain at what period of his life Tertullian became affected by the tenets of Montanism. S. Jerome's language implies that he was past middle age; the cause he ascribes to the jealousy of the Roman clergy. It is possible that the clergy, whether of Rome or of Carthage, may have found it hard to understand, and harder to sympathise with, the rapid movements of so restless a mind; and as the most uncommon natures are often the most sensitive, it may well be that Tertullian felt himself slighted and misunderstood.¹ But the true reason lay deeper than this. It was grounded in an affinity between his spirit and that of the founder of the New Prophecy. This may be allowed without at all implying that the two men were on the same level either of moral goodness or of intellectual power.

Montanus, so far as we can judge, was in no sense a great man; but, like all enthusiasts, he had the faculty of attracting minds superior to his own. Tertullian's impulse towards an ascetic rigorism which the bishops were too wise to encourage, drew him towards this teacher of a remote and more impressionable region. It was in Phrygia, once the home of orgiastic superstitions, now the cradle of chiliastic dreams, that the new force so hurtful to the Church's peace had arisen. In a country where the convulsions of nature found a parallel in scarcely less frequent or less violent religious shocks, men were predisposed to welcome a system that promised to revive the unearthly splendours of the Christian dawn. Instead of the dull round of ecclesiastical functions, they were offered the excitements of a free and living inspiration. The supernatural once more occupied the foreground: a dead mechanical routine was superseded by the living transports of ecstasy: weak women were the

¹ We have had occasion to notice the intolerance on the part of the Roman clergy of any strongly-marked individuality of character, and still more, of opinions. Tertullian fared as Hippolytus and Marcion had fared before him, and as Origen probably and Jerome certainly fared after him.

chosen vehicles of celestial warnings, of mysterious visions; prophecies of coming woe, arising none knew whence, disturbed even the careless, and caused the pulse of faith to beat high. Far beyond its original birthplace the contagion spread; the world and its pleasures lost their hold; gloomy views of life, and of God's providence, prevailed. One of the most striking testimonies to the reality of the spiritual impression was the eager thirst for martyrdom that animated these sectaries: in many quarters the end of the world was fully believed to be at hand.

To certain minds there is an irresistible fascination in revivalism. It is a comfort to see and feel that God is in the midst of us, that He works visibly among us, and gives daily tokens which cannot be denied. The weary task of patience seems shortened; special providences are in the air; the soul's pulse is quickened; men breathe as it were the oxygen of mountain heights.

To Tertullian it did not seem absurd that Montanus should surrender himself as a passive instrument to be played on by the Holy Ghost: that Prisca and Maximilla should suddenly emerge from darkness, endowed with the prophetic gift. Where calmer spirits inquired into the circumstances of their lives, their character, the truth of their predictions, and found little to reassure them in any of these, Tertullian, leaping such difficulties at a bound, thought he saw in the movement the ideal he had long been dreaming of, the Spiritual Church, the white-robed company of the elect, the royal priesthood of true believers. There was much in the condition of Carthaginian Christianity to excuse his aberration. The standard of holiness had sunk very low. Worldliness was rampant among those who should have set an example of self-denial. The effeminate luxury of the priesthood excited his daily scorn: the love of dress had made the very Virgins of the Church vie with their heathen sisters in each art that could captivate the eye of man. Even the veil, that immemorial badge of maiden modesty, was discarded. Christian men and women frequented the public shows, those vile nurseries of profligacy and cruelty. It seemed

as if the Church had striven to quench the Spirit, and the Spirit, affronted, had deserted the Church.

The stern nature of Tertullian hailed a doctrine which, by acknowledging a present Deity, compelled a severer discipline. He accepted Montanus' announcement of the dispensation of the Paraclete, and with it denied the finality of the apostolic revelation. But this denial has for him its limits. He does not profess to supersede the doctrines of the New Testament, but only to renew and enlarge its provisions for the spiritual life of the Church. He founds his view on the words of Christ, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." He regarded his own time as the first of a series of epochs of Divine outpouring, which should continue from time to time to regenerate Christian society. But this attitude led him to a narrow and unscriptural exclusiveness. He learned to speak of himself and those who held with him as the spiritual (*Spirituales*), and the rest of the Christian body as the carnal (*Psychici*). His rigorism was especially displayed in his theory of marriage and of meats and drinks. In his tract on Monogamy (*de Monogamia*) he lays down that marriage is the eternal union of two spirits through the instrumentality of the flesh; from which he draws the conclusion that a second marriage is in all cases inadmissible, and speaks of Hermas, who will not venture to condemn such unions, as the shepherd of adulterers. In his treatise on Fasting (*de Jeuniis*) he asserts the absolute obligation of fixed abstinences (*stationes*), and lays down the additional principle of partial fastings (*acrophagiæ*). The doctrine of baptismal grace, as now held by him, was put forward in its sternest form. According to him, the remission of sins in that sacrament was a Divine act performed once for all, so that the promises of forgiveness were not to be extended to such as sinned wilfully after baptism. In answer to the question, Why, then, does Holy Scripture hold out the efficacy of the Blood of Christ as an atonement for all sin? he replies, The Scripture gives no promise of a second absolution. It is, no doubt, the duty of the Church to warn those who have fallen.

to exhort them to repentance, in the hope that the Divine mercy may be extended to them; but she has no warrant for receiving them again within her pale, or for assuring them of their acceptance with God. So uncompromising is he on this point that, although he exalts the martyr as the most perfect of Christ's servants, he yet refuses to him the privilege, then universally recognised, of interceding with the Church for post-baptismal transgressors.

In all these declensions from Catholic doctrine we may trace, as the originating cause, a genuine overmastering desire to realise the conception of the new birth. Tertullian united with a fervid, sensuous imagination a profound vein of speculative thought, which had never been thoroughly disciplined by the training of philosophy, and so resisted his control. But, though he swerved to some extent from the true Catholic tradition, it would be unjust to class him with heretical teachers, or even with schismatics. His heart and soul, it is impossible to doubt, were loyal to Christ. He judges himself from the standpoint of the converted man, one whom Christ has redeemed for Himself, and to whose renewed nature He has the sole claim. And, as a matter of fact, his Montanistic tenets have not been without an effect upon the Church. Though exaggerated, and obtruded with ill-balanced zeal, they contain germs which have been transplanted into orthodox soil and there borne fruit.

The ground-principle of them all, viz., the conflict between the natural and the supernatural, and the superior might of the latter, undoubtedly needed to be reasserted when Tertullian wrote; and it has gradually wrought itself out in the Christian commonwealth through the leavening of human society by Christian ideas, less manifestly, less strikingly, than Tertullian in his impatience desired, but more surely, more solidly, and not less convincingly. It has ever been man's weakness to be unable to leave to the Divine Master the choice of His own method of carrying out His will. If the gradual perception that the Church's work among men ought to be confined to things moral and spiritual has grown clearer with the ages; if the pressure of public opinion has

exacted a higher ideal of renunciation among those who profess the faith of Christ; if the frank adoption of each great discovery in the realm of natural truth is combined with its due subordination to the supreme truths of revelation; if the spiritual freedom of the Gospel is acknowledged to be the indispensable companion of the spread of civilisation; the reflecting mind will see in all these things no slight proofs of the principle for which Tertullian strove, only carried out on a vaster scale, and amid the infinite long-suffering of that righteous Arbitrator, who is strong and patient, and endures to be provoked every day. Moreover, within the strictly ecclesiastical sphere, the views of Tertullian, pruned of their extravagance, have met with considerable recognition. His strong conviction of the prophetic office of the Church is now almost a commonplace. His intense belief in the living presence of the Spirit has long been incorporated into the Church's faith through the sober medium of her councils and recognised teachers. The kernel of truth in his theory of marriage has been emphasised by the sacramental or quasi-sacramental character that Catholic Christianity has always attached to it. The distinction so dear to him between spiritual and carnal Christians has been retained in the great conception of the visible and invisible churches, while its offensive and self-righteous assumption of judicial powers has been avoided. While therefore we recognise the justice of refusing this great Father the highest title of sainthood, which is reserved for such as combined special holiness with submission to the Church's authority, we may nevertheless admit that even his errors have been of use to the Church, and may look with admiration upon the single-minded devotion to what seemed to him to be truth, which, whether in orthodox or schismatic, is perhaps the most inspiring spectacle which Christian history presents.

CHAPTER III.

TERTULLIAN CONTINUED:—HIS WRITINGS.

IN considering Tertullian's works, it is usual to divide them into Orthodox and Montanist. As a matter of fact this difference is not always apparent. Some of his earliest writings give promise by their violence of the one-sided development that was to follow; while some of his latest works, and notably the *ad Scapulam*, are quite free from objectionable elements.

We shall consider briefly the following groups of writings, (*a*) Apologetic and Controversial; (*b*) Doctrinal and Philosophical; (*c*) Practical,—without reference to the question of Orthodoxy. The reader is referred to the list in the footnote for a discrimination between the two periods of his theological development.¹

His Apologetic Writings.

These are the most forcible and original of all the products of his mind. Two of them at least have never been excelled, if equalled, in the Church. Their tone of righteous anger

¹ The writer in Smith's Biographical Dictionary thus catalogues them:—

1. Orthodox writings, written while still a member of the Church (c. A. D. 197–200). (*a*) Apologetic—*ad Martyres*, *Apologeticum*, *de Testimonio Animæ*, *ad Nationes*, *adversus Judæos*. (*b*) Non-apologetic—*de Oratione*, *de Baptismo*, *de Penitentia*, *de Spectaculis*, *de Cultu Feminarum i.*, *de Idololatria*, *de Cultu Feminarum ii.*, *de Patientia*, *ad Uxorem i.* and *ii.*, *de Præscriptione Hæreticorum*.

2. Montanistic writings (c. A. D. 202–223?). (*a*) Defending the Church and her teaching—*de Corona Militis*, *de Fuga in Persecutione*, *de Exhortatione Castitatis*. (*b*) Defending the Paraclete and his discipline—*de Virginibus Velandis* (a transition work), *adv. Marcionem i.*–*v.*, *adv. Hermogenem*, *adv. Valentinianos*, *de Carne Christi*, *de Resurrectione Carnis*, *de Pallio*, *de Anima*, *Scorpiacæ*, *ad Scapulam*, *de Monogamia*, *de Jejunio*, *de Pudicitia*, *adv. Praxean*, also the lost treatise, *de Censu Animæ*.

points to a time of persecution. The apologist speaks with the sword hanging over him. Tertullian, like Justin, is fully conscious of the risk he runs, but his sterner temper is moved to indignant remonstrance where the sweet reasonableness of Justin is content with mild expostulation. Yet it seems as if the lapse of years or the lessons of Christian experience were not without their effect on his mind, for the Address to Scapula, written twelve or thirteen years after the Apology, while it traverses the same ground, assumes a far gentler and more gracious tone. It testifies to the frequent interposition of the magistrate to prevent or counteract the fury of the multitude. We cannot doubt that to the humanity of those in office were to a large extent due the long periods of rest which the churches of Africa enjoyed. Tertullian indeed misconstrues their motive, and, charging them with the subtlest cruelty in thus tempting Christians to lose their souls, loudly insists upon his right to earn the martyr's crown. Let us examine the chief points advanced by Tertullian in the **Apology**. We find they are mainly these:—

1. He appeals for bare justice. The authorities do not understand what Christianity is. They brand it as a crime, and yet, by forcing people to disavow it, show that they do not believe it to be such. They punish the name, not the thing. Trajan's rescript to Pliny, which is the authoritative statement of the attitude of the government to Christianity, stands self-condemned. It forbids Christians to be sought for, but when found, enjoins their punishment. Nothing can be more contradictory. In the relations of law with justice, of magistrates' practice with the principles of Roman jurisprudence, Tertullian is thoroughly at home; and he exposes with crushing skill the inconsistent and unjust treatment of Christianity by the State, driving it from shift to shift, till at last it is compelled to take its stand upon the assertion of naked force—*You shall not crist* (non licet esse vos). Tertullian is superior to other apologists in his clear insight into the irreconcilable antagonism that underlies the favour or toleration accorded by individual emperors; he feels that the Church and the Empire are really incompatible,

but while he claims for Christians that in spite of this they are not bad subjects, because they obey Cæsar in all things lawful, he cannot give the authorities credit for genuinely misconceiving the drift of Christianity, but attributes their occasional kindness in discouraging persecution to a subtler cruelty, which would rob the martyr of his reward.

2. He refutes the crimes popularly ascribed to the "sect," and retorts every one of them upon the accusers. Human sacrifices, incest and infanticide are brought home with terrible force to the votaries of Paganism. He does not spare either their religion or their morality. The former he proves to be atheism thinly veiled under a multitude of gross superstitions, the latter he proves to retain what pure elements it does retain not because of but in spite of its divine examples. In retort and repartee Tertullian is at his strongest; the *argumentum ad hominem* is his favourite weapon. And this weapon, however logicians may deprecate it as beside the point, never fails to have a strong effect upon the average man of the world. We must remember that the Apology is not an abstract treatise, but a real vindication, intended to have a practical effect. And if it uses methods that savour of forensic triumph rather than of Christian meekness, it is but fair to allow the advocate full liberty to present his case as favourably for himself and as damagingly to his opponents as he can.

3. After refuting misconceptions, he next proceeds to state what Christians really do worship. From the seventeenth to the twenty-eighth chapters he gives an account of the true God, as revealed in nature and in Scripture, and partly recognised by the higher minds among the heathen. He then treats of Christ, and in a brief but interesting *résumé* of the evidence of the prophets, he compares his own Christological doctrine with the Jewish notions of Messiah and the Stoic theory of the *λόγος*.¹ He cites documentary evidence to prove that "even the Cæsars would have believed in Christ, if Cæsars were not necessary for the world, or if Christians could have been Cæsars."

¹ See Hatch, Hibbert Lectures.

4. The closing chapters are devoted to a justification of the Christians as loyal subjects. Though they will not, cannot recognise an emperor as God, they yet hold his power to be divine, and pray for him to God, not with the lips, but from the heart—not only because it is laid upon them as a duty, but from the yet stronger motive of averting the final doom, of which the Empire, while it remains, is a preventive.

One objection against the Christian community was the jealousy felt towards all clubs and associations, lest they should lend themselves to political ends. But this Tertullian shows to be without foundation. “Nothing is so indifferent to us as the government; we have but one duty to it, *i.e.*, to submit to it in all lawful things.” “To us,” he adds, “our worship is the main concern, and with that you and yours have nothing to do.” He rightly appreciates the formidable effect of a body so spiritually harmonious upon the mechanically united sections of a society which, but for external pressure, would go to pieces; and he does not exaggerate when he cries, “’Tis our mutual love that makes you hate us. The smallest pretext is seized to bring us into odium; to deliver us to shame or death. This discipline purifies our ranks, and makes us what we were meant to be, the people of the true God.”

The foregoing does not pretend to be in any sense an analysis of this powerful and varied work, which, written in the heat of just excitement, concentrates within a moderate compass an immense store of argument, learning, and independent thought. Its faults are patent. It lacks moderation, considerateness, sympathy; its style is too vehement, its syntax too forced; but its logic is unanswerable, its facts generally trustworthy, and its eloquence at times sublime. It must be allowed the first place in point of effectiveness of all the Apologies. It is bolder than Justin’s, stronger than Origen’s, juster than Tatian’s, and shorter than Augustine’s. It presents in a compendious shape the repertory of apologetic arguments, from which even now theologians are fain to draw. As a specimen of his eloquence, we subjoin part of the peroration:—

Peroration of the Apology.

“Victory is nothing but to win that which you have fought for. Our victory wins the glory of pleasing God and the reward of eternal life. We are indeed withdrawn from earth at the moment we gain it. Therefore, with us to die is victory; to be withdrawn is to be set free. You may call us faggot-lighters and wheel-turners¹ when you bind us to a halfpenny stake, pile faggots round us and burn us to death. This is our condition of success, this our robe of victory, this our triumphal car. Naturally, those we conquer do not love us; naturally, they call us miserable, spiritless wretches. But this very misery and want of spirit, when displayed by one of themselves, are extolled as the highest pinnacle of glory. Mucius thrust his right hand upon the altar and let it burn to ashes. What sublime courage! Empedocles hurled himself into the seething flames of Etna. What steadfastness of soul! The foundress of Carthage gave her body to be wedded to her husband’s funeral-pyre. What surpassing purity! Regulus, to avoid buying the lives of his enemies as the price of his own, endured the torments of the cross over his whole body. Ah! he was a brave man, and though a captive, a conqueror. Anaxarchus, ground to death by a pestle, cried out, ‘Grind away! you cannot hurt me, Anaxarchus.’ Yes; he was a high-souled philosopher, who could jest at such a death. I pass by those who have won high praise by slaying themselves with the sword or other deadly weapon. You crown even the conflict with torture. An Attic harlot, after wearying her tormentor, bit off her tongue and spat it in his face, lest she should betray the names of the conspirators. Zeno of Elea, when asked by Dionysius what philosophy could do for him, made answer, ‘It can teach me to scorn death;’ and so, when torn by the tyrant’s scourge, he persevered steadfast to the end. The stripes of the Spartan boys, multiplied by the incitements of their parents as they watched the punishment, brought as much honour as they involved shedding of blood. This, forsooth, is a legitimate theme of pride; this is not scoffed at as mad presumption or the fanaticism of despair. Patriotism, ambition, friendship, all justify a stubborn resolve, a contempt of life, that are not justified by the Christian’s loyalty to his God. Yes! you erect

¹ *Sarmenticii et senarii*—opprobrious epithets ridiculing the tortures of the Christians.

statues to these heroes, and engrave inscriptions in their honour, giving them, so far as marble monuments can do it, the meed of immortality—you grant to them, in a certain shadowy sense, a resurrection from the dead. Yet those who suffer for God's sake, for the hope of a real resurrection, these are madmen. Go your ways, good guardians of your people, all the better in their eyes if you shed the blood of Christians; crucify us, rack us, crush us, stamp us under foot. Your injustice is the seal of our innocence. This is why God permits us to suffer such things. By the cry so often heard of late, 'Christian maids to the pandar,' instead of, as it used to be, 'to the lion,' you confess that loss of purity is to us worse than any punishment, than any death, and yet it has never yet availed to tempt us. The more refined your cruelty, the more our sect grows. The more you mow us down, the more we increase. The blood of Christians is the seed of Christianity. Many of your teachers counsel you to bear pain and death, as Cicero, Seneca, Diogenes, Pyrrho, and Callinicus. But their words find fewer to imitate them than do the Christians' deeds. That very obstinacy which you execrate is their teacher. For who, when he beholds it, is not driven to inquire what it really means? Who, when he has inquired, does not straightway join us? Who, when he has joined us, does not long to suffer, to purchase God's grace in its entirety, to gain a full pardon at the price of his blood? For the act of martyrdom wins free forgiveness of every sin. Thus it is that when condemned we thank you for the sentence. There is emulation in Divine things as in human. When you condemn us, God acquits us."

The treatise *ad Nationes* is a shorter sketch or study of the Apology, and was probably written about the same time. The *Address to Scapula* belongs to a much later period, but runs in the same vein, sobered and softened by time. The *Witness of the Soul to God*, which must be ranked among Tertullian's apologetic writings, is a short but very suggestive tract, founded on a passage in the seventeenth chapter of the Apology, of which it is an amplification. It is written throughout in his best manner, and reveals in its method the practised hand of the advocate. He begins by asserting that former apologists have laboured to show from the records of heathen antiquity that the doctrine of Christianity is not

wholly new, but was in a way latent in their own poets and philosophers. But the heathen have hardened their hearts. Up to a certain point they have gone with the apologists, but as soon as the specific doctrines of Christianity are alluded to, they stop their ears. Like Agrippa, they are willing to be almost Christians, but no more; and this, says Tertullian, makes me despair of gaining them over unless their heart is already Christian. Therefore, he summons to the bar a new witness, namely, the soul in its native simplicity, before it has been tampered with by argument or learning, and bids it state its opinion. His words are so characteristic that they deserve to be quoted:—

Address to the Soul.

“Soul, stand thou forth in the midst, whether thou art a thing divine and eternal, according to most philosophers, and therefore the less able to speak falsely, or, as seems to Epicurus only, in no sense divine, because mortal, and therefore the less likely to give false evidence in this cause. Whether thou art received from heaven or conceived in the earth, or fitly framed together of parts or of atoms, from whatsoever source and in whatsoever manner thou comest, thou makest man a reasonable creature more capable than any of understanding and knowledge. But I summon thee, not such as when formed in the schools, exercised in libraries, nourished in the academies and porches of Athens, thou utterest thy crude wisdom. I address thee as simple and rude, and unpolished and unlearned, such as they have thee who have nothing else but thee; the very and entire thing that thou art, in the road, the highway, the shop of the artisan. I have need of thy inexperience; since in thy experience, however small, no one putteth faith. I demand of thee those truths which thou carriest with thyself into man, which thou hast learned to know either from thyself or from the Author, whosoever He be, of thy being. Thou art not, I well know, a Christian soul; for thou art wont to be made, not to be born, Christian. Yet now the Christians demand a testimony from thee, a stranger, against thy own friends, that they may be put to the blush before thee, for hating and scoffing at us on account of those very things which now claim thee as a witness on their side.”

In confirmation of the above argument, he adduces such involuntary remarks, heard every day, as "*If God will,*" "*God grant,*" "*God is good*" (not "*Jupiter grant,*" and the like), which not only imply the Unity of God, but suggest also the evil nature of man. The word *δαιμόνιος* ("possessed by a demon"), *Malum!* (implying the principle of evil), are in daily use, though their significance is not realised. When men speak of the dead as wretched or poor, they point to punishment after death. When they pray, "*Light be the turf of thy tomb,*" they suggest continued sensation. When they say, "*Such a one is gone,*" they suggest the thought of a return. These indications are not to be dismissed as trivial or unimportant, being as they are the voice of Nature, unsophisticated, simple, majestic. In fact, polytheism is a degeneracy. *God* was worshipped before *gods* were thought of. These voices of truth are not Greek or Punic or Roman, they belong to *man* as such. We cannot disregard them; and if we acknowledge their value, we shall count them as precious witnesses to the Christian faith.

We may remark on this, as Neander has remarked, that Tertullian here shows a deeper apprehension of the supreme claims of revealed religion than his rivals of the great Alexandrian school. His argument is but a restatement of S. Paul's thesis: "*The world by wisdom knew not God.*" The truths of Christianity can neither be evolved from nor proved by the processes of human reason. Their foundation is indeed laid deep in the heart of man, but on this foundation has been reared a useless structure, which must be swept away before the edifice can be securely laid upon the old base. It is true he confounds the witness to mere theism with the witness to Christianity. And even here his argument is at fault; for although polytheism represents a stage in man's spiritual development, it is indubitably true that the whole tendency of serious heathen thought was tending irresistibly towards the acknowledgment of the Unity of God. *We* can see this, and we wonder at the inability of so many of the Fathers to see it too. But the close alliance between philosophy and the Pagan religion made them unjust

towards the real teaching of the former, and Tertullian is too much in earnest in his conflict with the current superstition to make distinctions which were rather speculative than practical. He must be allowed full credit for the splendid originality of his argument in this treatise, and for the vivid force with which he presses the instinct of humanity into the service of truth.

The treatise *Against the Jews* is naturally of somewhat narrower scope, but it has the merit of bringing out into bold relief some important deductions from the Old Testament.

Setting aside the conventional or fanciful lines of reasoning with which, in deference to prevailing fashion, he varies his argument, his main point is well worthy of consideration. It is this, that the Law in its deeper and only true sense is not Jewish but universal. The Mosaic system is but a stage in the great process from the primeval law of unreflecting custom to the higher law of voluntary obligation. Tertullian interprets the meaning of the Law by applying the commentary of prophecy. He is not, like Barnabas, satisfied with making the Law purely symbolical; nor, like Origen, with spiritualising it into allegory. He seeks for something more tangible, more real, and he finds it in the theology of the prophets, for whom the Law was above all things a manifestation of the Divine character. Had the modern theory of the posteriority of the Priestly Code to the great prophetic era been known to him, it is probable he would have accepted it. He seems to feel the presence of a Jewish bias in the existing recension of the Old Testament, and he accordingly treats the Scriptures, and especially the prophets, with considerable freedom. His interpretations are not indeed free from the faults of his age, but on the whole they show a stronger grasp upon the essence of revealed truth than those of the Alexandrian school, and, though lacking the historical insight of the school of Antioch, they are always instructive from their earnestness, originality, and force.

In his computations of dates he is less happy; indeed, his temper of mind was unsuited to the dispassionate examination

of any evidence, to say nothing of the conflicting and obscure records of ancient chronological systems. The last chapters (ix. to the end) cover the same ground as is gone over in the third book against Marcion.

This work is one of those that have been laid under contribution by Cyprian, who was not only a constant reader but a constant imitator of Tertullian, adopting his arguments while diluting their language. This is especially seen in his treatises *ad Quirinum* and *de Patientia*, when compared with the similar writings of Tertullian.

We may just notice here the short work *de Pallio*, a somewhat burlesque apology for wearing the philosopher's cloak. It is a slight and not very pleasing sketch; and one could wish that the writer, who, whatever his powers of satire, is absolutely without a trace of humour, had been content to wear his cloak without thinking it necessary to write about it.

Controversial Writings.

Tertullian's controversial writings, if any can monopolise that title where all bristle with controversy, may next be considered. They are as follows:—*De Præscriptione Hæreticorum*, *adversus Marcionem*, *adversus Valentinianos*, *adversus Hermogenem*, *Scorpiace adversus Gnosticos*, *adversus Praxean*, all but the first being coloured by his Montanistic prejudices. They are all characterised by the same boldness of language, ingenuity of argument, and logical cogency, and they all alike lack the power of understanding his opponent's ground, which we rightly judge to be the foremost qualification for controversy.

In the *de Præscriptione* (a legal term, implying what is sanctioned by law and usage), he deals with the general tendencies of heretical teaching as distinct from individual systems; for the latter part of the work, which enumerates the various leaders of heresy, with their characteristic doctrines, is evidently a later production from another and much inferior pen. As usual, we shall not attempt to give an

analysis of the treatise, but shall briefly indicate its main points.

These are two—(a) the relation of heresy to philosophy, (b) the relation of heretics to Scripture:—

(a.) Tertullian regards heresy as the daughter of heathen philosophy. In this he is at one with Hippolytus, whose earlier work he may possibly have read. He is so far right, that beyond question the Greek philosophic systems were the main source from whence the Gnostics drew; but he does not allow sufficiently for the Oriental elements (probably very imperfectly known to him) which so largely affected their speculations.

(b.) With regard to the authority of Holy Scripture as the final court of appeal, he is not content with affirming it, but he absolutely denies the right of heretics to use it for their own benefit. Being already cut off from the Catholic Church, which alone can pretend to interpret Scripture aright, their recourse to it as a common arbiter can only involve misconception. Where the relations of the two parties differ so fundamentally, no good can come of concessions on either side. The only safe criterion is the rule of faith, *regula fidei*,¹ handed down from the first in the churches known to be apostolic. These are the guardians of the truth, and from these alone the true sense of Scripture is to be sought. Difference between these is not to be thought of. Their testimony is one and undivided, and their common judgment is final. The Roman Church he extols as representing the fullest measure of apostolic teaching; but he by no means ascribes to it any supremacy over the churches of Greece, Alexandria, and Asia Minor, which can show an equal claim to apostolic origin. As locally nearer to Italy, he looks to Rome as his guide; but the Greek would more naturally turn to Corinth or Philippi, the Asiatic to Ephesus or Smyrna, the Syrian to Jerusalem or Antioch.

The Five Books against Marcion.—This work, which in its present form belongs to his latest period, was rewritten twice

¹ This is given in several of his treatises. It contains the nucleus of our Apostles' creed.

or three times. The Marcionite heresy, on which Tertullian pours out the fiercest vials of his wrath, arose at so early a date (probably as far back as the death of Hadrian, A.D. 138), that Tertullian does not trouble himself to inquire very deeply into its origin. His extreme dislike of it is attributable chiefly to two of its features, first, to its separation between the God of the Old Testament and that of the New, and secondly, to its pronounced moral rigorism. The former, as he truly remarks, subverts the essence of Christianity; the latter, being closely akin to his own peculiarities, roused his special ire as a counterfeit and a rival.

The history of the treatise is probably as follows. The first draft may have been written hastily about A.D. 199, at the time he was composing his *Præscriptio*, but was afterwards replaced by a more finished composition. This composition he afterwards disavowed, as a friend, who had become a Marcionite, procured it by stealth and published it in a garbled form. He therefore wrote a third and completer edition, probably about 207 or 208, the same which we now possess.

This work is written with great care, and grapples more or less thoroughly with all the main doctrines of the heresiarch. The tenets of Marcion are given under the chapter devoted to him, and need not be mentioned here. It is sufficient to remark that the most difficult, and to a believer the most dangerous of them all, viz., the evidences against the goodness of the Creator of the World, is the one with which Tertullian is least competent to deal. The problem is one that demands the exercise of faith rather than of abstract argument; but Tertullian is fully justified in his severe assertion that as a rule "heretics labour not to convert heathens, but to subvert Christians."

Adversus Valentinianos and *adversus Hermogenem* are two shorter treatises directed against the Gnostic leader and one of his somewhat aberrant disciples. In common with the treatise against Marcion, they are characterised by ungenerous attacks upon the character of his opponents. Hermogenes can scarcely with any colour be called a Christian. Tertullian,

therefore, has an easy task in refuting him. As an instance of his incapacity to give heretics credit for the motives they profess, we may cite a passage from the first book against Marcion (chap. xxvii.), where he argues that the claim advanced by him to be above the fear of Divine wrath must be false :—

“ If God be not an object of fear (he says), why do you not take your fill of the enjoyments of this life? Why do you not frequent the arena, the circus, the theatre? Why do you not boil over with every kind of lust? When the censer is handed you, and you are asked to offer a few grains of incense, why do you not deny your faith? ‘ God forbid,’ you cry. Then you fear sin; and you show that He who forbids it is an object of fear.”

So impossible does disinterested holiness seem in the person of a heretic! And so truly is Tertullian the precursor of some modern champions of orthodoxy!

The *Scorpiace*, or “ Antidote to the Scorpion-like Venom of Heretical Doctrine,” was written in A.D. 211, evidently in a time of persecution. It combats the Gnostic argument that martyrdom is unnecessary. As a Montanist, Tertullian held the absolute obligation of meeting persecution instead of flying from it; and he urges this view with unfeigned sincerity. His little treatise burns with a white glow of zeal; the writer lives as in an enemy’s camp; he hears the rumble of a world’s doom muttering round him, but his eye is fixed on the glory that awaits the warrior saint, and the charm of life has no power to withdraw his gaze.

Adversus Praxean.—This pamphlet, written probably as late as A.D. 222, is directed against a heresy of a different class from those which had engaged Tertullian’s earlier powers, namely, that of Monarchianism, or Patripassianism as its antagonists preferred to call it. The personality of this Praxeas is enveloped in mystery. Hippolytus, writing near Rome, mentions Noetus, Epigonus, Callistus and Sabellius as favouring or propagating Monarchian views, but he never alludes to Praxeas. Hence some have thought that Praxeas is a nickname, due to Tertullian’s harsh pleasantry. This,

however, is very improbable. Praxeas was no doubt a real person, who transferred his activity from Rome to Carthage, where Tertullian came into contact with him. It seems that years before (A.D. 185) when Pope Eleutherus was almost gained over by the Montanists, Praxeas came to Rome from Asia Minor, and induced him to pronounce against them. While at Carthage some seventeen years later, Praxeas is said to have been converted to the orthodox side by Tertullian; but when the latter became a Montanist, he made use of the name of Praxeas as a cover for attacking the Patripassian party generally, and among them the Popes Zephyrinus and Callistus. The Monarchian party, whose tenet was the acknowledgment of a single principle only in the Godhead, spread widely at the close of the second century over both the Eastern and Western world. It was divided into two sections—

(1.) The Ebionite Monarchians, as they were somewhat incorrectly called, who held humanitarian views of Christ, regarding the Divine Sonship as a mere metaphor.

(2.) Those who denied the distinction of Persons in the Godhead, and regarded the Logos as essentially identical with the Father, holding that the Son did not exist until after the Incarnation.

Both these divisions were of Eastern origin, where they were known by the name of Sabellians. The term *Monarchian* is as old as Justin, though the development of the doctrine is later. Monarchianism was a reaction against Gnosticism, with its endless subdivisions of the Godhead. The Sabellian *heresy*¹ is first noted at Rome by Novatian, where it was found by Origen at his visit in 219. About the middle of the third century (A.D. 260) it burst out in Africa and Egypt, and was combated by the great Dionysius. And even far into the fourth century the controversy continued to rage.

¹ The doctrine of the *Μονοθεΐα*, i.e., the Single Fount of Deity, is orthodox, and found in Irenæus, A.D. 190. The heresy of Sabellius rose from a just protest one-sidedly maintained. Hippolytus and Irenæus draw from it the inference that if the Son is but a manifestation of the Supreme God, God the Father must have suffered. Hence the epithet *Patripassian*.

Tertullian, as usual, avoiding metaphysical subtlety, brings out for the benefit of the average believer the paramount importance of not compromising the doctrine of the Unity of God. But he nevertheless holds the Trinity, typical illustrations of which he declares have been revealed to him by the Paraclete. In the course of the argument, he is led to a statement of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, one of the earliest witnesses to the position held by the Third Person of the Trinity in the belief of the early Church.

Dogmatic Treatises.

We come now to his dogmatic treatises—*De Baptismo, de Carne Christi, de Resurrectione Carnis, de Anima*; all of which are very remarkable, and worthy of attentive study. The treatise on the Trinity is unhappily lost.

De Baptismo.—The opening sentence is so characteristic a specimen of his style, that it deserves to be quoted:—

“A certain most venomous serpent of the heresy of the Cainites lately dwelling in these parts, hath carried away very many with her doctrine, beginning with the overthrow of Baptism; plainly according to her nature; for vipers, asps and basilisks mostly seek out places that are dry and waterless. But we, poor fishes, following after our FISH (*ἰχθῦς*) Jesus Christ, are born in water, nor are we safe except by abiding in the water. Therefore that monstrous woman Quintilla, who had not the right even to teach pure doctrine, knew excellently well how to kill the fishes by taking them out of the water.”

The discourse is divided into two parts, the first, treating of the efficacy of the sacrament, the second, of the questions of practice connected with it. The first is the most important; and affords an excellent instance of the different attitudes with which an ancient and a modern approach a question of religious or metaphysical thought. Several chapters are taken up in an investigation into the position assigned to the element of water in the history of religion, false and true. He himself is astonished at the multitude

of instances he is able to adduce; and breaks off with an apology, lest the reader should think that, instead of a Christian rite, he was after the manner of sophists writing on "The Praises of Water." Now we see here, as Hatch reminds us, a state of mind and thought wholly different from our own. To us the use of water rather than any other medium, rests on the command of Christ, and has no relation whatever to the physical properties of water. No doubt our Lord chose water from its special appropriateness as an emblem of cleansing; but probably no one at the present day believes in any direct action of the baptismal water upon the soul. This, however, is precisely the belief that Tertullian *does* hold; to him the mystical union of the Spirit with the physical element and His operation through it are the cardinal verities of the sacrament.

"Shall the wit of man (he says) be permitted to summon a spirit into water, and by adjusting the hands above, to *animate the compound of the two* with another spirit of such dulcet sound (*i.e.*, the music of a hydraulic organ); and shall not God be permitted by means of holy hands to tune His own instrument (*viz.*, man) to the lofty strains of the Spirit?"

To us the chasm between spirit and matter is unbridged, the direct action of either upon the other is inconceivable: to an ancient, familiar with the materialism of the Stoics, such action appeared the most natural thing in the world.

The many topics of interest discussed in the second part of this treatise can here only be alluded to; such as whether the Apostles were baptized, and if so, whether by John's baptism; whether heretical baptism is to be accepted, which he decides emphatically in the negative,¹ enjoining their rebaptism in the Church: whether laymen and women can baptize; whether baptism should be hastened or delayed in the case of infants, unmarried men, and widows. His conclusions on these latter points are sufficiently startling, and prove that he regarded baptism not as an *opus operatum*, but as a voluntary and conscious act of individual responsibility,

¹ See under Cyprian.

which ought never to be lightly undertaken; in fact, much as Protestant churches regard participation in the Lord's Supper. He concludes with directions as to the fittest times for administering the rite, and the preparation necessary for those who receive it.

The treatises *de Carne Christi* and *de Resurrectione Carnis* are closely connected, and are directed against the fashionable Gnostic misconceptions, especially those of Marcion and his school. The former is highly controversial: the style lively and nervous, very rhetorical, and extremely difficult, abounding in philosophical terms, many apparently coined for the occasion, and sufficiently expressive and original. The physiological examination of the circumstances of our Lord's birth appears somewhat revolting; but it should be borne in mind that the process of arriving at clear doctrinal statements was not to be attained without a thorough sifting of the objections raised, many of them by men of sensual and irreverent minds, who gloried in the objectionable conclusions to which they strove to drive those who maintained the orthodox faith.

Both this treatise and that *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* belong to his Montanist period. In the latter we find a striking instance of Tertullian's power of seizing the gist of a Christian doctrine and stripping it of adventitious elements. He insists upon the essentiality of a bodily resurrection to the Christian's hope. The immortality of the soul he regards as only part of the truth, and the part which is least specifically Christian. The analogy of nature, he rightly argues, leads us to believe the resurrection of the body rather than the immortality of the soul. The splendid chapter of Pearson, in which the annual quickening of nature is adduced as a witness of the eternal resurrection, owes its force and much of its beauty to the old African Father.

Another instance of Tertullian's strong common sense is his refusal to weaken the testimony of Scripture to the Resurrection by any allegorical interpretation. Allegory he affirms to be often useful, sometimes necessary; but where the language of the Bible is clear, direct, and obvious, the

plain sense must at all costs be followed, and mystical explanations eschewed. This treatise is lively reading; full of repartee, retort and irony.

De Anima.—This is the only work of Tertullian that can be called philosophical. It is the latest outcome of his mind on the subject of the soul. The work on the Origin of the Soul (*de Censu Animæ*), which was intermediate between it and the early work on the Witness of the Soul already noticed, is unfortunately lost. The subjects comprehended in this treatise are very varied. He shows strong traces of Stoic and Platonic influence, especially in his assertion that the soul is more akin to God than to the world. The object of the work is the refutation of philosophy, “the mother of heresy.”

He attributes corporeity to the soul, but in a Stoic, not in an Epicurean sense,¹ and he even goes so far as to postulate a body for the Divine Being Himself. This error has called forth the censure of Augustine, expressed, however, with generous tenderness:—

“Tertullian, as his writings show, affirms the immortality of the soul, but declares that it is a body with a shape (*effigiatum corpus*). And not only so, but he asserts also that God is corporeal, though without a form. Yet this is not sufficient to make him rank as a heretic. For he may be supposed to speak of the nature and substance of Deity as corporeal without necessarily attributing to it a body with greater and lesser parts, as is the case with bodies properly so called, although he does seem to attribute to the soul this kind of corporeity. But he may be considered to have spoken of God as a body in the sense that He is not nothing, that He is not void, that He is not a quality of body or soul, but is everywhere entire; not divided according to the regions of space, but immutably constant in His own nature and substance.”

¹ He naturally shrinks from the idea that the universe itself is the body of the Deity. His mind oscillates between the view of the Divine Immanence in creation, and the deistic theory of an Omnipotent Creator enthroned in a distant region of space, and not entering into contact with the Universe He has made. His immense inferiority to Augustine as a metaphysician is evident the moment they are compared.

This generous and appreciative criticism from so high an authority must be allowed great weight. There can be little doubt that a mind so strongly sensuous and unmetaphysical as Tertullian's was unable to conceive of substance apart from matter, and that all he intended to assert dogmatically was, as Augustine says, the essential reality of God. As before remarked, there was not the same absolute severance in ancient philosophy between the realms of matter and spirit as there is in modern thought; and it took some generations of Christian metaphysics to establish on a firm basis the immateriality of the Divine principle. His theory of Traducianism, or the sowing of the soul with the body in the womb, is another point of departure from what was afterwards established as orthodox doctrine.

The short treatise *On Prayer* may be noticed in this connection. It belongs to his earlier period, and, as we learn from Hilary, was highly thought of by the Church, though to some extent superseded by the more elegant imitation of it by Cyprian. After an exposition of the several petitions of the Lord's Prayer, in which the most noteworthy feature is his transposition of the second and third clauses, he prescribes rules for prayer in general, and takes occasion to notice several customs of his day, which to us form the most interesting portion of the work. We learn, for instance, that it was usual before praying to wash the hands, and sometimes the entire body; that it was the practice of some not only to lift up their hands in prayer, but to spread them out in imitation of the Saviour's attitude on the cross; that some prayed with their cloaks put off, as the heathen approached their idols; that others, after praying, sat down, another heathen custom which they adopted on the authority of Hermas, forgetting that it was unseemly to be seated in the presence of God. Others, again, prayed in stentorian tones, as though God were deaf; others, after prayer, withdrew from the kiss of peace. This practice he attributes to a desire to gain credit for stricter fasting than their neighbours, since those who fasted usually abstained from this ceremony. Many other details are mentioned, for which we must refer the curious reader to the treatise itself.

Moral and Practical Treatises.

It remains to consider very briefly his moral and practical treatises, the greater part of which are infected with Montanistic error. They may be conveniently divided into four groups, those which touch on martyrdom, those which relate to idolatry and its accessories, those which relate to female conduct, and those on fasting, penitence, and patience.

(1.) **The first group** contains two works, the *Ehortation to Martyrs* and the pamphlet *On Flight in Persecution*. The former is one of his most beautiful productions, breathing a spirit of ardent devotion and deep Christian humility. While praising the constancy of the "blessed men" who are awaiting their fate in the gloomy prison, he stops far short of the fulsome encomiums with which Cyprian loads the martyrs and confessors to whom he writes. The second treatise is of a different cast. The tone is strained and overwrought, and the conclusion to which he comes, that flight from danger is never permissible to the Christian, is in direct contradiction to the Lord's own words and the decision of the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, it contains some fine passages and several smart home-thrusts. He is exceptionally severe on the already common practice of securing immunity from persecution by paying blackmail. The class of public informers who had once been the terror of the Roman nobles now plied their base avocation to the injury of the Christians, and such Christians as were well-to-do were glad to bargain for their safety. Not only individuals, but whole churches, headed by their bishops, stood in this position. The persuasive sophistry which justified the practice as only giving to Cæsar what was Cæsar's, was indignantly rejected by Tertullian. He protests against it for the credit of the Christian name, as well as on prudential grounds. Clandestine bribes are worse than open ones; they become an ever-increasing and at last a ruinous burden; and, when they can no longer be borne, then comes exposure and the vengeance of the insulted laws. It would, however, be possible to remove this objection

if the State would take the initiative, and, as a means of increasing its fast-falling revenue, would impose a direct tax on the Christian profession. Whether this suggestion is meant seriously or in irony is hard to say; but, in so degenerate a society as the Church of Carthage had become, one cannot wonder at the stern impatience of compromise which in this, as in nearly every question of conduct, seems to Tertullian the first condition of righteousness.

(2.) **The second group** contains some highly important writings, which, though belonging to different periods, and revealing a progressive intolerance of spirit, are sufficiently alike to be dealt with together. They are the *de Spectaculis*, *de Idololatria*, and *de Corona Militis*. The sum of these brilliant works is this: the Christian must flee, at whatever cost to feelings, comfort, or safety, from everything that savours of idolatrous worship. Since the daily life of the Christian was encircled on every side with heathen customs, and scarce a social gathering, an act of business, or a day's amusement could be had without coming into contact with the accessories of paganism, we may imagine the difficulty of coming to a right decision in this all-important matter. If Tertullian's views strike us as too severe, it is certain that the error with most people lay on the other side. It is certain that the Christian society had suffered in truthfulness, in purity, and in courage, by good-natured or timid connivance at things they were bound to condemn. The more carefully we consider the circumstances of the Christian churches, the need of holding their heavenly trust undefiled, and the danger of compromise with heretical laxity of doctrine or manners, the more we shall be convinced that Tertullian is in the right, and that the stern joy of the warrior in a combat to the death was the true note to sound, the true frame of mind for the army of saints. The sophistries which allowed Christian men and women to wreath their heads, to hang out festal lamps, to attend the circus and the theatre and even the bloody games of the arena, are torn to shreds by the fierce irony of a true man, and branded with the name of the devil whose best weapon they were. It is true there is little charity in

his burning logic. His heart boils with a lava stream of wrath, but, like the fiery rain of Sodom, the purging flood was needed, and even if it left the surface salt and treeless, destruction is sometimes the only remedy left.

We append two examples of the style of these works. The first is taken from the *de Spectaculis*, which, in its tone of unhallowed vengeance, sinks the Christian in the apocalyptic denouncer of woe, but from its extraordinary intensity of conviction compels the wonder of the coldest. It is hard for a translator, not himself kindled by the same mighty passion, to do justice to the terrible vividness of the original.

Peroration of the "de Spectaculis."

"But if you are minded to devote this short space to delights, why are you so unthankful as to reject and scorn the many and great pleasures that God has given you? For what can be more delightful than the reconciling of our Father and Lord, the revealing of the truth, the acknowledgment of our faults, the forgiveness of all past sins? What pleasure can be higher than the contempt of pleasure, aye, and of the whole world? than true liberty, a pure conscience, an abounding life, with no fear of death? than to tread under foot the gods of the nations, to expel demons, to work cures, to ask for revelations, to live for God? These are the joys, these are the shows of Christians, holy, everlasting, free to all: in these I would have you find your circus games, in these behold the race of the ages, and the headlong gallop of time; mark these out as the laps of your course, look for these as the attainment of your winning-post. Guard the associations of the churches, rouse yourself at the trumpet-call of God, start at the angel's blast, boast of the martyr's crown. Or if the splendours of the theatre delight you, we Christians have an ample literature, abundance of poetry, and pithy saws; plenteous store of songs and recitations, not fables but truth, not artistic compositions, but simple fact. Or do you ask for boxing and wrestling matches? They are at hand, neither few nor insignificant. Look on, and see chastity hurl down lewdness: look at perfidy slain by faith, cruelty bruised by pity, arrogance thrown into the shade by modesty; such are our contests, and such the

crowns we win. Or do you crave to see the shedding of blood? Then behold Christ slain. And what a spectacle we have at our very doors. The advent of the Lord, with title undisputed, proud, triumphant! What exultation of angels, what splendour of saints as they rise from the dead! Then what a kingdom for the just! What a city is this of ours, the new Jerusalem! And yet other sights remain. That last immortal judgment-day, unlooked-for by the nations, theme of their mockery; when this old worn-out world and all its births will be consumed in one vast fire. How grand will that spectacle be! How I shall admire it! How I shall laugh, rejoice and exult, when I behold all those mighty kings, officially declared to have been received into heaven, groaning in outer darkness together with Jove himself and all the witnesses of their apotheosis. And the governors who persecuted the name of the Lord melting in fiercer flames than those with which they raged against the servants of Christ. And those wise philosophers blushing red before their disciples as they burn to ashes in company with those whom they persuaded that God did not care for human things, that souls either did not exist at all, or if they did, could never return to their bodies. And the poets too, quivering at the tribunal not of Rhadamanthus or Minos, but of Christ whom they had scorned. Then the tragic actors' voices will be better heard, as they shriek aloud in agony. Then the players will exhibit still more lissome gestures as they twist and writhe in the fire. Then the charioteer will be indeed a spectacle, all glowing red in his fiery chariot, and the acrobats will hoist their bodies about, not in the gymnastic school, but in the fiery flame. Only I would not greatly care to look at these, but would turn my insatiable gaze to those rather who vented their fury upon Jesus the Lord. See! I will say to them; here is He whom you call the carpenter's son, the Sabbath-breaker, the Samaritan that hath a devil. Here is He whom you bought from Judas; here is He whom you mangled with rods, fouled with spittings, and gave to drink vinegar mingled with gall. Here is He whom His disciples stole away secretly to report Him risen, or if you prefer it, whom the gardener put away lest his herbs should be crushed by the press of feet. What prætor, consul, quæstor, or pontiff will of his bounty grant you such a spectacle as this to gaze at, to gloat over? Yet such is the one we enjoy, pictured to our spirit by the eye of faith. And yet what must those others be, which

neither eye hath seen nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive? Pleasanter, I ween, than circus, theatre or amphitheatre, or any racecourse on earth."

The second passage is taken from the *de Corona Militis*, and gives Tertullian's judgment on the authority of non-Scriptural tradition. Its interest is so great that the reader will be glad to have it in full:—

The Authority of Tradition.

"What is the authority of non-Scriptural custom? It is binding on us. To begin with baptism, when we are about to advance to the water, in the same place, but at a somewhat earlier time, we do in church testify, under the hand of a chief minister, that we renounce the devil, his pomps, and his angels. Then we are thrice dipped, pledging ourselves to do something more than the Lord hath prescribed in the Gospel; then, some undertaking the charge of us, we first receive a mixture of honey and milk, and from that day we abstain for a whole week from our daily washing. The sacrament of the Eucharist commanded by the Lord at the time of the supper and to all, we receive at our meetings before daybreak, and from the hands of no other than the heads of the Church. We offer, on one day every year, oblations for the dead as birthday honours. On the Lord's day we count it unlawful to fast or to worship upon the knees. We enjoy the same freedom from Easter to Pentecost. We feel pained if any of our wine or even of our bread be spilled upon the ground. In all our travels and movements, in all our coming in and going out, in putting on our shoes, at the bath, at the table, in lighting our candles, in lying down, in sitting, whatever employment occupies us, we mark our forehead with the sign of the cross. For these and such like rules if thou requirest a law in the Scriptures, thou shalt find none. Tradition will be pleaded to thee as originating them, custom as confirming them, and faith as observing them. That reason will support tradition and custom faith, thou wilt either thyself perceive, or learn from some one who hath perceived it. Meanwhile thou wilt believe that some reason there is, to which submission is due."

The thorny question as to the lawfulness of military service is discussed in the same treatise. Tertullian will not

absolutely deny its lawfulness under all circumstances; but he regards the supreme duty of abstaining from all idolatrous acts as the one principle to be followed, and if, as in his time was almost necessarily the case, the profession of the soldier involved such acts, a sincere Christian could have no choice but to resign his commission.

(3.) **The third group** contains those writings which are addressed to the womenfolk in the Christian community. The female element in the Church, always predominant, was specially conspicuous at Carthage owing to the prominent part taken by women in social life. The Eastern and Western worlds were in nothing more distinct than in the position assigned to their women. Carthage was wholly Western, in some respects more Roman than Rome itself; and in the freedom from control enjoyed by the brilliant and ambitious ladies who led her fashions, she set an example of the new order of things which Italian and Spanish dames might envy.

Tertullian gives a startling picture of the luxury, the display, the extravagance, the all but compromising laxity of deportment which made the Carthaginian ladies the theme alike of panegyrist and satirist. His sketches, warmly coloured as they are, do not go beyond those of Apuleius, Juvenal, and Seneca. But while the poet's and rhetorician's pencil depicts a heathen society, the preacher is drawing identically the same designs from Christian models. Good old Rhenanus apologises for Tertullian's unsparing realism by the round assertion, "*Sexus mulierum in luxum valde propensus est, et natura philocosmos.*"¹ Be this as it may, it seems certain that the churchwomen of Carthage, ignoring the good example of their husbands and brothers, who dressed soberly and without display, vied with their heathen sisters in every kind of ostentation and amusement. The prosperity of the times and the peace of the Church contributed to this result. It must have been highly painful to a moral teacher to see his choicest arguments rebutted by the very persons

¹ The sex is extremely addicted to luxury, and naturally fond of adornment.

to whom he should have pointed as their best support. Tertullian writes like one who had lost patience. His caustic wit is at its sharpest, his fiery wrath at his hottest, as he lashes the luxurious habits that made religion a sham and the Church a matrimonial market. But if he lost patience he did not lose heart. In none of his writings does his tone rise higher, in none is his appeal more stirring, in none are his pleadings more confidently backed by faith in the power of his cause. Yet the result was far from encouraging. Whether his methods were unwise—for he lacked that genial sympathy with human nature which is stronger than any argument—or whether the “dearly beloved sisters” were really obdurate, his later addresses are even more severe than his early ones, and the latest of all is the most exacting and repulsive.

Tertullian's nature was too rhetorical to fit him for the delicate manipulation of consciences. He lacked the sense of proportion, which gave to Jerome, in spite of his acid temper and even more rigidly ascetic views, such unrivalled success in dealing with the female heart. In spite of his stern consistency of life, in spite of his intense earnestness of purpose, we fear that his pamphlets produced little or no effect. At any rate, the rebukes of Cyprian, a generation later, though couched in more modest language, fully justify the unsparing severity of his great master and model.

The following treatises comprise the list to which we are alluding:—*De Cultu Feminarum*, in two drafts, the first unfinished, and probably relinquished from a sense of its too great vehemence; the second practical and persuasive, and ranking among the best of his shorter works; the two letters to his wife (*ad Uxorem*), in which he earnestly dissuades her from a second marriage: these four were written during his Catholic period. Then follow among his Montanistic works, the *de Exhortatione Castitatis*, *de Virginibus Velandis*, both of which betray a lingering affection for the Church he had left; the *de Monogamia* and the *de Pudicitia*, in which the sour precepts of the schismatic turn into gall

and wormwood the wholesome admonitions of the Christian moralist. It is perhaps unnecessary to give any separate account of these writings. It will be enough to note one or two of their most characteristic doctrines, which he enforces with the whole force of his powers and the entire armoury of his scholarship.

His conception of the relation of the sexes, and more especially of the nature of woman, is essentially coarse, imperfect, and unscriptural. Woman is regarded in the light of a tempter of the continence of man, and her beauty as a snare of the devil. In the *de Habitu Muliebri* he uses these words:—

“The sentence of God on the sex remains to this day in force ; therefore the guilt that provoked it remains. Thou (woman) art the gate of Satan, thou art the opener of the fatal tree, the first deserter of the Divine law ; thou art she who enticed him whom the devil dared not to attack. Thou didst thus easily break God’s image, which is man. For thy desert, which was death, the Son of God was obliged to die : and yet thou hankerest after ornament, as if the coat of skins was not enough for thee.”

“If we cannot actually condemn beauty,” says Tertullian, “we ought to fear it. To boast of beauty is to fall into sin ; no flesh should be commended but the lacerated flesh of the martyr. To increase one’s natural charms by the appliances of art is to depreciate God’s creation. Whatever is not formed by the hand of God is not only unnecessary but harmful. Sheep do not grow with scarlet fleeces, fishes do not swim in purple shells. If God has not willed to form these things, it was because He did not wish them to exist.¹ Christ says, ‘Ye cannot make one hair white or black.’ We know better. The dark-tressed African maids strive to reproduce the golden locks of Germany—a sorry augury for their future in the next world, where flaming heads of hair will be a reality and not a sham.” Then he goes on :—

¹ It will be noticed that this argument is reproduced at the present day to condemn the use of alcohol.

“Do you expect to meet Christ on the resurrection morn with a tower of false hair? Let God behold you now as you hope He will behold you then. Clothe yourselves in the silk attire of purity, the fine linen of righteousness, the purple robe of modesty. Decorated with these, you will have God Himself for your Lover.”

His conception of marriage is far from a worthy one. Sometimes, indeed, he rises to the height of the Inspired Word, and in one truly exquisite passage depicts the blessings of Christian wedlock:¹—

“How shall I sufficiently express the blessedness of that wedlock which the Church joins, the oblation confirms, whose seal the angels witness, and the Father pronounces valid? What a bond between two faithful souls, to have one hope, one prayer, one rule, one service! Both are brethren, both are fellow-servants; no division of flesh or spirit. Together they pray, together they kneel, together they fast, guiding each other, exhorting each other. These are one in the Church of God, one in the wedlock of God.”

But he cannot maintain this point of view. To his mind marriage is at best a permitted concession to the infirmity of the flesh. And in a time of conflict and peril, when none can tell what awful catastrophe may be impending over society, how much wiser and better, he argues, to steel one's senses against all earthly delights, and keep oneself unfettered from ties that may probably prove a curse. The desire of children, which so many women allege as their motive for entering upon marriage, is a weakness that ought to be overcome. What are children but the bitterest of pleasures? so much so, that Christian parents are only anxious that their little ones should go before them into heaven and escape the pollutions and miseries of a longer life. And then we know that affection, once let loose, cannot be controlled. What if a Christian woman should marry a heathen husband, forgetful of the Apostle's injunction, “Only in the Lord”? This was no chimerical fear. Such cases had happened again

¹ *Ad. Ur.* ii. ch. v.

and again. And how impossible it was that in such circumstances the wife should continue to serve the Lord.

“Is a meeting for prayer appointed? Her husband will propose a resort to the bath. A fast? He will have a feast instead. A procession? Household duties will forbid it. Besides, would he allow her to go from house to house, from street to street, from cabin to cabin, to visit the brethren? Would he permit her to take part in the nightly assemblies, when her turn came? Or when Easter called her to partake of the Lord’s Supper, an institution which they suspect? To creep to the prison to kiss the chains of the martyrs? To salute the brethren? To wash the saints’ feet? To offer them hospitality? To minister to them when sick? Or if he endured these things in silence, what else would it be for, but to treasure up the means of revenging himself on her, if at any future time she happened to provoke him?”

Such were the considerations which induced Tertullian, acting as they did on a mind naturally predisposed to solitude and gloom, to discountenance altogether the acceptance of the nuptial bond. He does not, however, go so far as to regard marriage as an evil in itself; nor is he so extravagant in his praises of virginity as some of the later ascetics. But on one point he is inflexible. A second marriage is adultery pure and simple. No Divine Law can be allowed to permit it. If certain passages of Scripture seem to countenance such unions, they must be interpreted by the general sense of Holy Writ, which is absolutely against them.

The Church had always acknowledged this in the case of priests and deacons. It was never laid down in her law that a priest *ought not* to have contracted a second marriage, but always that he *could not*. The injunction is found among the apostolical canons, and is referred to by Theodosius in his decree for the deposition of Irenæus of Tyre. Theodore of Mopsuestia is the first to impugn the enactment, but he does so entirely on *à priori* grounds. He objects to it, and wishes it abrogated, but bears witness to its undisputed prevalence. Tertullian therefore has the whole sense of the Catholic Church with him in asserting the unlawfulness of

digamy among the clergy. But, not content with this, he extends the prohibition to the laity also, and, carried away by his Montanistic zeal, ridicules those who would venture to restrict it. The argument of the orthodox, that what is specially prescribed for bishops cannot be meant to be understood universally, he thus answers:—

“What He prescribes to all, does He not prescribe to bishops also? What He prescribes to bishops, does He not prescribe to all Christians? Or is it not rather true, that because He prescribes it specially to bishops, He means it for all? and for this very reason, because He prescribes it specially to bishops? For whence are bishops and clergy drawn? From the whole body. If the whole body is not bound to monogamy, how can the clergy be so bound? Must you create an order of lay monogamists out of which alone the clergy can be chosen? The fact is, when we exalt and plume ourselves against the clergy, we are all on a level, we are all priests *then*. Christ has made us all priests to God. But, when we are summoned to equal responsibilities with the priesthood, we speedily drop our vestments, and sink to our own level.”

Enough has perhaps been extracted from these interesting writings to show both the strength and the weakness of the writer. In his zeal for purity, for example, for sincerity of profession, Tertullian stands on the highest level of ecclesiastical greatness; in his persistent disregard of the wise moderation of men far more competent to deal with such matters than himself, men who sought, and as we believe found, the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their difficult decision, he betrays the self-sufficient pride of the Puritan, and the harsh anti-social bias of the revolutionary schismatic.

The fourth and last group of the practical treatises contains three somewhat isolated writings, those *On Patience*, *On Penitence*, and *On Fasting*. The first of these is a product of his earlier and better period, and is written throughout in a truly Christian spirit. It may be recommended to the student as the fittest wherewith to commence the study of his works. Besides much thoughtful reasoning on spiritual graces in general, it contains a truly beautiful panegyric on

this particular virtue, which recalls the style of the later rhetoricians, Christianised and purified :—

“Patience satisfieth Faith, guideth Peace, assisteth Charity, instructeth Humility, waiteth for Penitence, setteth her mark upon Confession, ruleth the flesh, preserveth the Spirit, bridleth the tongue, restraineth the hand, treadeth temptations under foot, driveth away offences, perfecteth martyrdom, consoleth the poor, ordereth the rich, straineth not the weak, wasteth not the strong, delighteth the believer, inviteth the heathen, commendeth the servant to his master, the master to God ; adorneth the woman, approveth the man ; is loved in the boy, praised in the young man, respected in the old ; is beautiful in either sex, in every age. Come now, let us describe her form and demeanour. She hath a countenance serene and mild, a forehead smooth, contracted by no wrinkle of grief or anger, her brows evenly and cheerfully relaxed, her eyes cast down, in humility, not in melancholy. Her mouth beareth the seal of honourable silence. Her colour is such as those have who are free from care or crime. Her head is often shaken at the devil, and her smile defieth him. For the rest, her clothing about her bosom is white and closely fitted to the body, as being neither puffed out nor ruffled. For she sitteth on the throne of that most kind and gentle Spirit, who is not in the gathering of the whirlwind nor in the blackness of the cloud, but belongeth to the soft calm, clear and single, such as Elias saw Him at the third time. For where God is, there is also Patience, His foster-child.”¹

The treatise *On Penitence* also belongs to Tertullian's catholic works, and deserves equally high praise. His analysis of the Christian grace of repentance, as distinct from mere reproach of conscience or remorse on the one hand, and from self-upbraiding for an imprudence on the other, is worthy of careful attention, for its lesson is as appropriate now as it was when Tertullian wrote. The grand result of his arguments is the announcement that penitence, to secure the absolution of the Church, must be publicly performed, and having been once allowed, can never be repeated. Though he presumes not to limit the Divine prerogative of

¹ Chap. xv.

pardon, he is very decided in limiting that of the Church. This work should be read in close connection with that on baptism, as each explains the other. The evidence he gives of the enforcement of discipline upon offenders is important, and his crushing retorts upon those who put off repentance till they have done sinning are still highly useful to preachers. It is almost impossible to overrate the value of Tertullian as a guide to the preacher. His works, even when comparatively dispassionate, seem to presuppose a disaffected or indifferent audience, whom he strives to animate with the zeal of which he himself is full. The curious doctrine of a second baptism (that of blood in martyrdom) washing away post-baptismal guilt is implied in his argument on Exomologesis or public confession. The Roman doctrine of repeated secret confession, and repeated restoration to Church privileges, is not merely unknown to Tertullian, but would have been abhorrent to his soul. The Christian is to him the man who lives up to the standard of Christianity, and if he falls from that standard, he is no longer a Christian. Though dangerously near to sectarian narrowness, there is yet an eternal element of truth in this view, to which modern laxity would do well to give heed.

There remains only the treatise *On Fasting* (de Jejuniiis), written avowedly against the Psychics, *i.e.*, the members of the Catholic Church. Like the *de Pudicitia*, it is a lamentable witness to the decline in charity and largeness of heart which schism invariably entails. Except to the theological student, there can be no pleasure in reading the passionate attacks upon his former friends, the arrogant assumption of superior enlightenment, and the narrow rules of sanctity, which spoil an otherwise able and vigorous argument. It is clear that Tertullian found no more peace in the Montanistic sect than he had found in the wider communion of the Church. His temper was restless, dissatisfied with the actual, and unable to acquiesce in the conditions which Divine providence has assigned to our moral progress here on earth.

We must now bid farewell to this truly great and fruitful

Church Father. If the reader have followed us through our somewhat lengthy criticism of his works, he will conclude that in Tertullian we have given to us by God's Holy Spirit a man of genuine truth and courage, inflamed with the prophetic fire, scorning falsehood, cowardice and hypocrisy: eloquent among the eloquent, learned in books, though without the faculty of reducing his learning to a few illuminating principles; convinced that he is taught of God, yet lacking in that holy warmth of affection which teaches us that the Spirit speaks in many tones, some of which we cannot hope to understand: at first an ardent disciple, next, a stern reformer, and then, unable to endure the non-acceptance of his views, transferring his allegiance to a misguided sectary, whom in the flesh he knew not, and whom, had he known, it is impossible to believe he would ever have honoured by his adherence; but, once converted, throwing himself heart and soul into his new alliance, and, by his powerful advocacy, endowing it with a fresh and far more enduring lease of life; and last of all becoming, in his old age, impracticable and probably dissatisfied with a reality that belied his anticipation, isolating himself still further by forming a sect within a sect, until he who had pleaded so nobly for the unity of the Church and the rule of Faith gave his name to an insignificant rabble of Tertullianists, who dragged out a tolerated existence in Carthage and the vicinity, until in the days and under the influence of Augustine they once more returned into the pale of the Catholic Church. He died in extreme old age, it is uncertain in what year, but probably not until he had heard the edict of Alexander Severus, allowing the Christians freedom of worship: a living witness to the fact that amid all the temptation of popular clamour and his own fierce and repeated challenges, the heathen authorities were not so unjust as he represented them, but were sometimes willing to allow an implacable adversary to exist among them unmolested, and to undermine by his writings the edifice on which their religion and their polity were alike built.

CHAPTER IV.

CYPRIAN (A.D. 200?-257).

INFERIOR to Tertullian in natural genius and vehemence of mind, but far above him in prudence, moderation, and aptitude for practical affairs, **Cyprian**, the second great writer of the Carthaginian Church, now comes before us. As in the case of his predecessor, we know but little of his unconverted life. It is clear, however, from the testimony of Lactantius and Augustine, as well as from the tone of his own writings, that he was a man of education, means, and experience in public life. The lofty courtesy of his address, combined with a certain air of unconscious superiority, seems to point to aristocratic birth. He followed the fashionable profession of a master of rhetoric, and probably also of an advocate; and such was the esteem in which his character was held that his popularity survived the usually fatal shock of conversion to Christianity, and he retained the respect of his early heathen associates to the last.

Both the place and date of his birth are unrecorded. His conversion took place in the year 246, and, as the evidence clearly points to his being at that time in the full vigour of life, we may not improbably suppose him to have been born about the close of the second or beginning of the third century. His original name was Thascius Cyprianus, but at his baptism he took the name of Cæcilius¹ from an aged presbyter of the Church of Carthage, who had been the chief human instrument of his new birth.

When once admitted into the Church, his rise to the highest position was singularly rapid. The question has been

¹ So Jerome; but Cyprian's rhetorical biographer Pontius calls him Cæcilianus.

raised whether he served in the diaconate before his elevation to the priesthood. There is no direct evidence for the fact; but it is in itself highly probable, and seems to be implied by the statement of his biographer Pontius, himself a deacon, that he was "one of us." His admission to the presbyterate took place at the end of A.D. 247; and with such liberality, activity, and zeal did he perform its sacred duties that, on the death of Donatus in the following year, he was demanded by the voice of the people, with the concurrence of the greater number of the clergy, to succeed him as their bishop. Though unwilling to accept the hazardous dignity, his reluctance was overruled, and he stands forth in history with Ambrose, Athanasius, and Fabian, as one of those instances in which the congregation instinctively discerned its ruler, in which the people's voice may without exaggeration be called the voice of God. His election, however, was not unanimous; there existed a party of dissentients, headed by five presbyters, of whom the well-known Novatus was one. These, by a skilful use of Cyprian's mistakes, and an adroit manipulation of favouring circumstances, were able to oppose and thwart him all through his career. Thus his episcopate, brilliant as it was, was clouded by many storms; but his clear judgment and indomitable will carried him safely through them all, and in nearly every instance brought the principles for which he contended to a triumphant issue.

Before entering into a consideration of the conflicts in which this great prelate engaged, let us pause a moment to sketch the salient features of his character.

His Character.

By nature generous, affable, and considerate; by education well versed in the best literature, and himself not unworthy to be ranked with the classic masters of style; by profession accustomed to grasp the points of a case and make them plain to others, Cyprian had essentially and above all things a statesman's mind. To him the Church was a polity, divinely conceived and divinely ordained, but meant to be realised and

made to work on earth. To the fulfilment of this ideal he brought a master-spirit, self-reliant and autocratic, which neither feared to act alone, nor shrank from influencing or, if need were, coercing others.

But his was no mere personal ambition. Immediately on his ordination he sold his large estates for the benefit of the poor. They were indeed repurchased by his friends, and he did not think it needful to refuse the gift. But his wealth was always used for charity, never for his own aggrandisement. His love of power, which was great, arose from his sense of responsibility. He was fitted to command, and he knew it; but he lived and acted as one answerable to the Divine Judge. Of a high-strung temperament, he believed himself to be the subject of special intimations from Heaven, on which more than once he distinctly rests the authority of his acts. It was a time when a strong hand was needed. Lax in discipline and cold in faith, the Church of Carthage still showed the symptoms of decline which had aroused Tertullian's wrath. Cyprian set himself to instruct and reform it. If his strict administration brought him dislike, if his decisions have in some cases been reversed, his fame has not suffered with posterity. Those who dissent from his views admit that his aim was single, and his services to the Catholic cause untarnished by self-seeking. As an administrator and organiser, he has had no superior and but few equals among Christian bishops.

His chief defect is want of spiritual depth. Though trained in philosophy, and able to handle moral questions with freshness, force, and beauty,¹ his theology lacks that profound sympathy with the workings of the human spirit that lends to the writings of Augustine so enduring a charm. It seeks to constrain from without, not from within. In the application of Holy Scripture he displays a controversial command of the text which all must admire; but he has been charged, not without justice, of mistaking its drift and forcing its meaning. As compared with Tertullian, he

¹ See especially his tracts on Resentment, Patience, Envy, and his treatment of the theory of Probation.

is superior in orthodoxy, but less massive, less intense, less spiritually great. He delighted to call Tertullian his master, and is said to have daily studied his works. This close study is betrayed by frequent imitation not only of his arguments, but of his language. But while Tertullian strives to subjugate the will, Cyprian aims rather at dictating the course of action. Obedience to the Church, and to the bishop as its mouthpiece, such is his watchword. But though firm and even inflexible in this demand, he is singularly temperate in the language he uses to enforce it. Except in one instance,¹ we meet with no unseemly vehemence, no passion, no lapse from self-control. He never writes, like so many disputants, as if his first object were to force conviction on himself. All is clearly laid down, and calmly urged. The letters that passed between him and his numerous correspondents read like state-papers. It is not merely the training of the advocate that impresses us, but the dignity of a clear conscience and a judgment sure of itself.

At the same time, it may be doubted whether Cyprian did not create some of the difficulties that beset him; or rather, it is certain that he did create them. A character so dominant must under any circumstances have provoked opposition. And Cyprian's lofty view of a bishop's prerogative increased this inevitable tendency. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that on the outbreak of persecution he left Carthage for a securer retreat, thus laying his motives open to misconstruction, and giving his enemies a freer hand. We need not doubt that his own explanation of his conduct is sincere, nor that he was justified in his prudent course; but the withdrawal of the captain from the scene of danger, as Cyprian must have known, could not fail to furnish a strong weapon to his opponents. It argues no small moral courage to resolve on such a step, and no mean dialectical skill to defend it. That Cyprian not only did this with success, but retained his hold upon the loyalty of his diocese during fourteen months of absence, under circumstances of

¹ The letter to Pupianus, in which Cyprian seems to forget himself; but it stands quite alone in this respect.

unexampled difficulty, is perhaps the best vindication of his conduct in leaving it.

Controversies in which he took part.

(I.) THE LAPSED.

We must now return to the circumstances of his life. The Decian persecution began with the edict of A.D. 249. It was aimed specially against the leaders of the Church. Fabian of Rome was the first to suffer, leaving the Roman Church long without a head. Cyprian, warned as he tells us by a Divine sign, retired before the storm. He probably thought to divert its fury, but in this he was mistaken. The prefects were ordered, under heavy threats, to put the severest pressure upon the worshippers of Christ. The Church was in no condition to meet the danger. Every order was tainted with laxity; the laity were luxurious, the clergy covetous; the demands of religion seemed easy, its advantages were great. The fraternity was connected by the closest ties; its numbers were large, its profession fashionable. When the trial came, the majority fell beneath it. A day was fixed on or before which Christianity must be renounced. So eager was the desire to escape the martyr's fate that the magistrate's chair was thronged with crowds volunteering to sacrifice. Those who refused were banished or shut up in prison, but they were few out of many. The guilty were graduated according to the measure of their guilt. Those who complied at once, those who after a long struggle walked to the altar, those who yielded only to torture, were classed apart. They were, however, all branded by the name of *Sacrificati* or *Thurificati*, according as they had sacrificed or merely sprinkled incense before Caesar's image.

Another class of apostates were those called *Libellatici* or certificate-holders. The authorities were not unwilling to spare the feelings as well as the persons of Christian professors, provided they were paid for their considerateness. It was understood that certificates of subscription (*libelli*)

could be purchased, to hold one of which it was not necessary to appear and offer sacrifice. This ingenious method of avoiding danger without touching the accursed thing was greatly appreciated. The scale on which business was transacted was highly remunerative, and many of the purchasers were members of the priesthood. They evidently hoped to remain undiscovered, or at any rate to slip back without question in quieter times. But they had miscalculated. The constancy of the faithful few under torture and death had awakened the conscience of all. The confessors, languishing in prison, were visited by crowds of weaker brethren, whom they encouraged, comforted, or rebuked. A higher public opinion sprang up. The heinousness of this cowardly compromise was admitted, though Cyprian, with his imperfect spiritual discernment, shows more indulgence to a *libellatic* than to one who under torture had offered sacrifice. His appreciation of the martyr's example is untinged by a spark of jealousy; he writes letters full of ardent panegyric to those whose constancy had purified the Church.

In the meantime the emperor's attention was diverted by difficulties on the frontier. The persecution, deprived of its instigator, abated; and the Church had leisure to reflect upon its lessons. The general falling away, which Cyprian had likened to a mass of ruins, was in his opinion due to an imperfectly enforced religious standard. And this opinion was shared by the Church at large. Her ranks must be reformed, and steady discipline must prepare for decisive victory. In Italy as in Africa the great question was, how to deal with the *lapsel*, those who under whatever pretext had denied the faith, but now craved readmission to the Church's peace?

The decision of this question was at Carthage complicated by two difficulties. In the first place, the martyrs had used with much freedom their undisputed privilege of recommending the restoration of penitents to communion, and the confessors had followed their lead. But they had not been content with merely recommending; they had actually readmitted to communion without the sanction of the bishop, a distinct breach of prerogative. In the second place, a body

of factious presbyters, hostile to Cyprian's authority, had practised on the simplicity of the martyrs and confessors, and induced them by flattery to extend their indulgence to unworthy persons. Cyprian met the difficulty with his usual clear-sighted courage. While admitting the martyrs' royal prerogative of pardon, he laid down as indispensable its ratification by the bishop. He threw the chief blame on those presbyters and deacons who had led the martyrs into unconstitutional acts, and while not excusing the latter, he threatened to suspend the former from their office unless they changed their conduct.

The statesmanlike qualities of the bishop's mind are well brought out in this controversy. By natural disposition he was inclined to rigour. By the provocation of the party opposed to him, this natural inclination would be still further stimulated. By the lamentable defection of so many of its members the Church might seem compelled to be severe. But Cyprian took a broad view of the situation. He laid down two great principles, which have held good in such cases ever since. The first is that the proper minister of reconciliation is the bishop, who alone has dispensing power; the second is that whatever the decision of the Church as to accepting or rejecting a lapsed member, such decision can in no way prejudice the Divine award. By keeping these principles clearly in the foreground, he meets the arguments of his opponents. The object of the martyrs and confessors was at bottom a holy and merciful one, viz., to assure penitent sinners of the Divine pardon; but it was mingled with a more earthly desire to display their influence and to be known as friends of the unfortunate. They meant no direct disloyalty to the bishop; but were induced to risk such disloyalty as a thing of secondary importance compared with the good effects of their intervention. To them Cyprian's argument is directed, that even though an occasional hardship may be inflicted by keeping to the Church's rule, this does not in any way prejudice the Divine power to pardon. The factious presbyters, on the contrary, set before them as their chief object the diminution of Cyprian's authority. The

discipline of the Church and the consolation of the penitent were less near their heart than the extension of their own influence. Hence they made the confessors their instruments in flooding the Church with a large body of returned "lapsed," of whose adherence to their party in any future disputes they might feel secure. To all their specious pleas for charitable action, the clear enunciation of the bishop's undoubted prerogative was a sufficient reply.

Subject to these two limitations, Cyprian was not averse to a merciful treatment of the lapsed. His directions on the subject are in striking contrast to the rigorist views which Novatian, the schismatical bishop of Rome, endeavoured under the influence of Novatus¹ to thrust upon that Church. He first laid down in clear language the different degrees of guilt, and apportioned to each its corresponding penance; and then directed that the main body of cases should await his return, which he hoped might not be deferred beyond the following Easter (A.D. 251), while such as were urgent, as of those who were sick or otherwise in danger of their lives, might be dealt with at the discretion of the presbyters. A large and highly interesting portion of his letters is concerned with this question, and the matters of discipline connected with it. On comparing his views with those of the stern and unbending Tertullian, we recognise the gentleness of the Christian, as well as the prudence of the man of the world, and the sagacious judgment of the ruler.

(2.) THE REBAPTISM OF HERETICS.

Another controversy which agitated the Church, and in which Cyprian took a still more leading part, was that of the rebaptism of heretics and schismatics. It extended over the years 255 and 256; and to a most able and exhaustive treatment of it he devoted some of his longest and most

¹ Novatus had fomented the agitation for readmission when in Carthage; but finding Cyprian's influence too strong for him, had found his way to Rome, and there with glaring inconsistency, but actuated by the same desire of thwarting Cyprian, had attached himself to the opposite views of Novatian.

important letters. In A.D. 254, the rude and violent Stephen was elected Bishop of the Roman Church; and he at once adopted a policy of comprehension, one feature of which was the admission of heretics to communion by imposition of hands without a second baptism. The question was obviously one of vital importance to the Church, and one in which uniformity, if it could be secured, was highly desirable. But how could this be done without trenching upon the independence of the individual bishops? The only authority recognised by all would have been an Œcumenical Council of the whole Christian world. But in the third century, under Pagan emperors, such a decision was impossible. Other grounds of appeal were therefore resorted to by the disputants on both sides. Of these, apostolical tradition, Scripture proof, and local custom, were the strongest. But as the two former were doubtful, and the latter diverse, it came to this, that the individual bishop of a diocese, or the united bishops of a province, generally decided for themselves. Both the Asiatic and African custom had been against accepting the baptism of heretics. The Roman seems to have been in favour of it. At first the controversy was carried on by friendly letters, but it soon transformed itself into a duel between Stephanus and Cyprian, the latter being supported by all the bishops of his province. Into the history of this great conflict it is beside our purpose to enter. It will be sufficient to make clear to the reader Cyprian's own view, which he formulated in answer to an application from eighteen Numidian bishops, and which was considered by Stephanus as a direct challenge.

In contradistinction from many other disputes which have agitated the Church, this was no mere question of words. It was a clear issue, the two alternatives of which were incompatible. Stephanus, if we may believe Cyprian's statement, was willing to accept all heretical baptism, Cyprian refused to accept any. At the same time, he would not have admitted himself to be in favour of rebaptism. His whole argument was built on the assumption that there is but one baptism, that of the Catholic Church, in the name and in

the faith of the Trinity. In his view the fact of being outside the communion of the Church was an absolute bar. Whether the error were one of doctrine or of discipline, whether the administrator of the so-called sacrament were a heretic or a schismatic, in either case his administration was null and void. Cyprian's argument is clearness itself. Neither precedent nor custom, nor reliance on the letter of Scripture, can possibly stand against the reason of the thing. If Christ entrusted to the Church and to no other body the dispensing of the gift of the Holy Ghost, it was impossible that those who were out of communion with the Church could dispense that gift.¹ To strengthen his hands, Cyprian called together no less than three synods of African bishops to pronounce on this question. The first contained thirty-three bishops, together with the presbyters of Carthage. The second contained seventy-one bishops, partly Numidian and partly African, who sent their synodical epistle to Stephanus, representing the unanimous vote of the entire number. Stephanus retaliated by circulating in the East a paper in which he declared he would hold no communion with churches that practised rebaptism.

This manifesto, which breathed the very spirit of the Papal chair, called forth from Dionysius of Alexandria a remonstrance temperate but dignified, which, however, produced no effect. Stephanus was as inflexible as Cyprian, and the Church of Carthage came beneath his ban. Cyprian now proceeded to convene his third Council, which met at Carthage in A.D. 256. Eighty-seven bishops from the provinces of Numidia, Mauretania, and Africa voted, and a vast concourse of presbyters and laity attended the debate. Cyprian's opening speech was marked by breadth and moderation. He does not seek to impose the views of the Council upon the whole Church, since he fully recognises the diversity of precedent and the absence of oecumenical authority; but he claims for every bishop the right to judge for himself, and altogether denies the right of the Roman bishop to exclude from communion those who differed from himself. The entire

¹ Ep. lxx.

Council was unanimous; and the expressions of its opinion are happily preserved. Some of the suffrages contain argument, others only assertion; but the aggregate result affords a high testimony to the capacity and conscientiousness of the assembled prelates, and the moral effect of so large a consensus of opinion must have been immense.

The final decision of the whole Church was not given till the Council of Arles (A.D. 314). The position then taken was to some extent a compromise, but on the whole it may be considered adverse to Cyprian's view. It affirmed the *validity*, though not the *lawfulness*, of schismatical baptism; it accepted the baptism of such heretics as were orthodox in respect of the Trinity, and used the words of Christ's institution; but set aside the baptism of those that denied the doctrine of the Trinity, or neglected to use Christ's words of institution, as both invalid and unlawful.

The error of Cyprian was one of judgment, not of principle. It arose from that characteristic of his mind which led him not only to connect the spiritual grace of baptism with the appointed channel of it, but absolutely to limit its conveyance to that channel, thus throwing into the background the supreme truth that Christ Himself is the Giver of the Holy Ghost, and that the Church exists in order to provide for this grace being duly given, not that she may deny it to those who in genuine faith and in Christ's words, though not in the regular way, invoke it in His Name. His decision was the result of a single-minded zeal for the honour of the sacrament; it was endorsed by every bishop of his province; though erroneous, it was more truly catholic than that of his opponent, for Stephen's attitude seems one of policy rather than of principle. But it is a striking instance of the spiritual danger of too external a conception of heavenly things; and while we pay a just tribute of admiration to his courage, his consistency, and his persuasive power, we recognise the higher wisdom and the diviner charity which enabled the Church, without any sacrifice of truth, to vindicate the free action which Christ claimed for the Spirit.¹

¹ S. John iii. 8.

His Writings.

As a writer, Cyprian stands very high. His genuine works consist of several short treatises and eighty-one letters, including some from his numerous correspondents. The objects of most of the former and all the latter were practical. The elegance of their style and literary form makes them interesting to the student, independently of their great historical value. The language is, indeed, somewhat artificial. A mixed diction, in which poetical phrases and idioms were interwoven with the ordinary prose style, had become the established vehicle of composition. But Cyprian must be judged by the standard of his age, and from this standpoint he deserves the highest praise. His most polished effort is the treatise on the Grace of God, addressed shortly after his baptism to his friend Donatus. It embodies in powerful terms his experience of the transforming effects of the sacrament :—

“So entirely was I immersed (he says) in the deadly atmosphere of my former life, so enveloped in the habits and commission of sin, that I despaired of ever freeing myself, and began to look upon these things and love them as a part of myself. But when the sullage of my past iniquities was washed away by the waters of baptism, the pure and serene light from above infused itself into my whole spirit. When my second birth of the Spirit had formed in me a new man, all at once what had been doubtful before became certain; what had been shut was opened; into the darkness light shined; that was easy which before was difficult, and that only difficult which before was impossible; and now I knew that that was earthly and mortal which had formerly included me in the bondage of sin, but that the Holy Spirit of God had animated me with a new and better nature.”¹

We have only to read this early tract with the subsequent history before our mind, to appreciate the consistency with which Cyprian wrought out into the sphere of Church politics the conclusions of this his first Christian argument.

¹ Poole's translation.

Another work that belongs to the same period is the three books of Scripture Proofs against the Jews (*Testimonia adversus Judæos*). He here supplies a large and well-arranged body of texts for controversial use. His familiarity with Scripture from the very commencement of his career is strikingly shown, though his application of it does not go beyond the ordinary commonplaces of such controversy, and betrays the training of the special pleader.

His essays on general subjects are very readable, and should be compared by the student with those of Tertullian and those of Seneca. They are inferior to the former in depth, and to the latter in brilliancy and point; but more tasteful than either. Such are the tracts "On the Vanity of Idols" (*Quod idola dñi non sint*), "On the Dress of Virgins" (*De habitu virginum*), "On Works and Alms" (*De opere et elemosynis*), "On Patience" (*De bono patientiæ*), "On Zeal and Envy" (*De zelo et livore*). An important paper "On the Lapsed" was addressed by him to the Church of Carthage after the persecution had ceased. Its tone is lofty and authoritative. He does not hesitate to assert that the discipline of pain was required for the purification of the Christian body; and he appeals to his own denunciations and warnings as having long before emphasised this necessity. It is in this pamphlet that Cyprian, with admirable sense, vindicates the claim of such as retired before the persecution to be considered true confessors. The passage is worth quoting:—

"Let no one (he says) detract from their glory, or weaken by malignant depreciation the firmness of those who still stand upright. For when the day fixed by the authorities had passed, then every one who had not come forward to sacrifice virtually professed himself a Christian. No doubt the chief meed of victory is with those who under the hands of the Gentiles made confession of Christ; but the second grade of distinction belongs to those who by a cautious withdrawal reserved themselves for God's service. The one confessed in public, the other in private: the one overcame the judge of this world, the other, content with God as their Judge, guarded a pure conscience in the integrity of

their heart: the one showed the readier courage, the other the more careful solicitude.”¹

The strong good sense of this advice was emphasised by his own example. Ready for death, if death came in the way of duty, he was wholly opposed to that passionate thirst for martyrdom which is so strange a symptom of that unhappy age. To those who chose it as the best gift they could render to God, he was more than just: without a trace of jealousy, he exhausts the powers of his style in doing them honour, and when he thought the hour had come, he himself gladly followed their lead.

Owing to the machinations of his enemies, his return was delayed for some months; but in the early summer of 251 all obstacles were overcome, and his reception was so genuinely enthusiastic as fully to repay him for his long and anxious time of waiting. He was, however, speedily involved in the disputes with Novatian, in which the question of the lapsed was closely connected with that of Novatian's schismatical episcopate. This period is signalised by the calling together of the First Council of Carthage, an event of high importance in the history of the Church. For although Councils and Synods had met from the earliest times both in East and West, there had been no decisive enunciation of the principle of Church government logically involved in them. It was reserved for Cyprian by his strong and boldly-defined policy to bring out the full significance of these great assemblies, and by the frequency of their employment to familiarise the Church with their action; so that when, two generations later, outward circumstances at length allowed them full scope, their power was already felt and their prerogative recognised. The treatise in which Cyprian's scheme of Church polity is embodied is the celebrated essay “On the Unity of the Church” (in its original form an address to bishops), which is the greatest of all his writings, and, in proportion to its bulk, one of the most influential documents in the world. Its argument, though copiously illustrated,

¹ Chap. iii.

is simple and uniform. It is directed primarily against the double schism which rent the Roman and African churches. But the treatment is based on first principles, and is therefore applicable to every age of Christianity. Cyprian takes it for granted that schism is in itself an evil. The modern view had not yet arisen, that amid the clash of jarring sects the voice of truth is most plainly heard. Hence he has no misgiving when he confronts the fact of schism with the ideal of unity, and pronounces the one evil and the other good. To him the spiritual union of believers in Christ is not to be conceived apart from the visible communion of Christ's Church. The ideal Unity includes the Church in heaven and the Church on earth; but the second must be a faithful copy of the first. The actual unity, therefore, is with him no mere mechanism, no mere sentiment, no mere aspiration, but a *Sacrament*, that is, a divinely-appointed visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. We need not here criticise the theological aspect of this view. But the boldness and the power of it are at once apparent. The language in which he states the Scriptural warrant for it is remarkable, and, strange to say, less clearly expressed than is his wont: ¹—

“Addressing Peter, the Lord saith, *‘I say unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it: and to thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven also; and whatsoever things thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven also.’* And again to the same (Peter) He saith after His resurrection, *‘Feed My sheep.’* He builds His Church upon one (and commits His sheep to him to be fed). And although he committed an equal power to all the Apostles, saying, *‘As My Father hath sent Me, so send I you: receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted unto them; whose soever sins ye retain,*

¹ There can be little doubt that a mind so practical as Cyprian's was sensible of the turn that could be given to his argument by the advocate of complete centralisation. In point of pure logic, Cyprian's reasoning is good; but in view of the tendencies of human affairs, it served but to defeat its own original purpose.

they shall be retained:' yet, for the exemplification of unity, He so disposed by His authority the original of that unity, that it might rise from one. The rest of the Apostles were, indeed, what Peter was; endowed with an equal fellowship both of dignity and power; yet the beginning proceeds from unity, that the Church may be shown to be one."¹

We see from this passage that Cyprian declared Peter to be the *type* of union, but he is silent as to his being the *centre* or the *instrument* of union. What, then, in his view is the earthly instrument of union? He tells us plainly, The Episcopate; which is a whole in itself, one and undivided; but each bishop, like the shareholder in a joint-stock company, so shares in it as to have a direct interest in the whole.²

This acute and masterly definition of the bishop's right in the Church is practically the basis of the Anglican theory, as distinct on the one hand from the mechanical centralisation of the Papacy, and on the other from the sentimental vagueness of Latitudinarianism and Dissent. It forms the keystone of Cyprian's ecclesiastical polity, and was the root-principle for which, at the risk of the charge of imperiousness, he contended with unflinching vigour.

It involved the supremacy of each bishop within his own diocese, and his independence of all external jurisdiction in all decisions not contrary to Scripture or the apostolic tradition. But it required to be supplemented by a second principle, which is really an extension of itself. The episcopate represents not only a *unity* but a *solidarity* of power. Thus, in order to eliminate the fallible element of individual judgment, it is necessary to ascertain the combined judgment of the entire episcopate of the Church in matters where the whole Church is affected. Hence Cyprian's instinctive statesmanship led him from the first to rely on the General Council as the paramount instrument of union. He himself presided at no less than seven such councils; and although these assemblies were but partially representative, including either the province in which he was metropolitan, or two or at the

¹ Poole's translation.

² "Episcopatus unus est, cuius a singulis in solidum pars tenetur."

most three of the provinces which made up the African Church, and although their decisions were only of force within the limits of their respective jurisdictions, yet the principle, once established, was obviously of wider application, and, so soon as the empire was made Christian, became naturally the embodiment of the Supreme Authority of the Church.

Of Cyprian's other works, that "On the Mortality of the Great Plague" will be read with the greatest interest. It is a terrible picture of devastation and misery, enhanced by the inhuman indifference with which the heathen left their brethren to perish alone and unattended. But it has also its brighter side. In accents of burning eloquence Cyprian calls upon the Christian fraternity to rise to the height of their holy calling, and to show by good works the reality of their faith. This they did right nobly, and by their self-denying labours not only soothed the prevailing terror, but did good service to their Master's cause.

Cyprian has also left an exposition of the Lord's Prayer, probably one of his earlier works, and not distinguished by any special merit. His frequent quotations from the old Latin translation of the New Testament are of value to the scholar as giving information as to the comparative antiquity of disputed readings.

We must not omit to notice the pamphlet addressed to Demetrianus, a professor of rhetoric and opponent of the Gospel, which contains some of his most valuable thoughts. It deals with the common argument that the decrepitude of the world and the decay of society were to be ascribed to the wrath of the gods against the Christian "atheists." Cyprian admits the premises, but denies the conclusion. In a passage of singular descriptive power, he shows that the cycle of nature and of humanity must inevitably draw to its close; but the lesson he draws from it is that, while there is yet time, the heathen should turn to the true God, and find that deliverance from the impending catastrophe which the Christians have already received. From this he is led to work out the thought that human life is essentially a probation, which,

familiar as it is to us, was perhaps never before so clearly comprehended and so forcibly stated.

Cyprian, however, only applies this theory as between those without and those within the fold. Its extension to indicate a process within the Church itself, whereby the Divine purpose of salvation is confirmed in some of its members and negatived in the rest, though perhaps implicit in his system, was not contemplated by him. It arose in the time of Augustine, when, owing to the decline of Christian life, it had become impossible to regard the visible Church as synonymous with the number of the elect. We are not now concerned with the Augustinian views of predestination and election, which at this epoch were wholly unknown, but are merely indicating those elements in the thought of Tertullian and Cyprian, which, by their aptitude for the needs of the age, were destined to expand into vaster and more widely dominant growths. We owe to the masterly clearness of Cyprian's style and the intelligible cast of his thought, which never rises beyond the reach of an average reader, our ability to discern with something like confidence the difficult spiritual problems through which the Church of that age had to be steered.

It will not be out of place to draw the reader's attention to the remarkable despondency to which this and other writings of the age bear witness. It is a despondency which affects men's view not only of human nature and human society (for this we have observed before), but of the external world, which is regarded as worn-out and ready to collapse. Neither in nature nor in man did any signs of recuperation appear. The one element of hope that remained on earth was the Christian's belief in the advent of Christ. Yet even this was no longer the object of unalloyed hopefulness. The corruptions of the Church had imported into the Christian circle the same gloomy consciousness of guilt which oppressed the heathen world, and from which in earlier ages the Church had been wholly free. Though pure and lofty minds like that of Cyprian strove to maintain the old ideal of the Church as an ark of eternal safety, it is clear that this reassuring conviction was not universal among its members. Already

a heathen attitude towards the Divine Power was mixing with the filial consciousness of the first believers. Plagues, earthquakes, persecutions, troubles of all sorts, began to be regarded as signs of the Divine wrath, and secret misgivings as to the Divine forgiveness began to agitate men's souls. It is greatly to Cyprian's honour that, although his intellect accepted the pessimistic theories of nature and man advanced by his heathen contemporaries, he was still able, in spite of the moral convulsions of the Church, to hold fast to his faith in the power of Christ to save all those who confessed Him, and to preach to the Pagan world the great truth that this life is a test of character which remains valid for ever, a commencement of that eternal tendency towards good or evil which is decided by our attitude to Christ and His Church.

Indeed, this is the great merit of all Cyprian's writings. His grasp of a subject and his clearness of exposition both spring from that practical aptitude for administration which is the great characteristic of his mind. In spite of his African birth, his intellectual gifts were pre-eminently of the Roman type. For the deep mysteries of theology he had little taste, and in the history of doctrine he must be ranked among the expounders, not the discoverers of truth.

His end was worthy of his greatness. It is related in the biography by Pontius, already alluded to, and in the "Acts of S. Cyprian, Bishop and Martyr." In the year 257, the Emperor Valerian, who had at first been favourable to the Christians, was induced to issue an edict forbidding the assembling of Christians in churches or cemeteries, and in the autumn of this year the edict reached Carthage. The proconsul, Aspasius Paternus, summoned Cyprian before his tribunal and interrogated him concerning his own faith and that of his presbyters. The bishop replied with dignity, refusing to compromise his fellow-labourers, and was sentenced to exile at Curubis. The consideration with which he was treated indicates the respect felt for him by his judge, the sentence being a mild one, and carried out without the additional hardships of confiscation or personal restraint.

It is recorded by Pontius that on the first night of his banishment at Curubis he saw a vision, which he interpreted to mean that a year's respite was granted him; and the event proved that his interpretation was correct.

Towards the close of this period, Paternus was succeeded by Galerius Maximus, who recalled Cyprian to Carthage, allowing him to reside in his "gardens," probably the same estate sold by him years before, and which had been restored by the kindness of his friends. Shortly after this, Valerian's second and much more stringent edict arrived, accompanied with letters to the governors of provinces, directing them how to deal with the churches within their jurisdiction. Galerius, who was at Utica, summoned Cyprian to his presence, but the bishop had determined if possible to suffer at Carthage, among his own people. He therefore retired for a time, but as soon as the proconsul returned to the vicinity of the city he reappeared in his place. He was again sent for, and escorted to Sextus, a village not far from Carthage, where, amid the breathless interest of his faithful flock, he was publicly examined, and being found guilty, condemned to be beheaded. He met his death with the expression of thanks to God; and perhaps the strongest testimony to his goodness is the place his name holds in the Roman calendar; for though in his lifetime he had inflexibly withstood the aggression of the Roman pontiff, and had died, so far as we know, in outward separation from the Roman communion, yet such was the sanctity of his name, and so unrivalled were his services to the Catholic Church, that no prejudice was allowed to interfere with the just appreciation of his career, and he has ever been honoured with a high place in the great roll of saints.

CHAPTER V.

THE ROMAN CHURCH—MINUCIUS FELIX—NOVATIEN.

OF all the writings included in the period of our survey there are two, and two only, which can rightly be described as charming. One is the Epistle to Diognetus, the other the *Octavius* of **Minucius**. The one tempers a profoundly philosophic insight with a rich glow of enthusiasm, kindling into language of elaborate grace; the other veils the difficulties of a skilfully framed logical disputation beneath a high-bred ease of manner and light touches of picturesque description. In volume both these writings are insignificant, but in literary value they are priceless, for they show the manner in which Christianity was apprehended by intelligent heathens of the higher rank. Let the reader who wishes to see the different ways in which Christianity can be presented peruse first the *Apologeticus* of Tertullian, and then the *Octavius*. He will observe how fitted the Gospel is for taking hold of the most diverse minds; how fresh and various are the ways in which its saving truths may be presented. He will observe how the bold uncompromising attitude of defiance may stand side by side with the gentler method of serious yet friendly expostulation, and how truly there is room for both in the great work of winning souls.

Who was Minucius? when did he live? where did he write? what were the incidents of his life? Unfortunately, we are not in a position to give a perfectly satisfactory answer on any one of these points. The same obscurity that shrouds so many of the most interesting writers of the early Church lies wrapped in a tantalising haze around the figure of Minucius. It is true we have a few notices of him by Lactantius, Jerome, and, later on, by Eucherius, but of such

a character as to leave us in doubt whether these authors knew anything more about him than what they thought they could gather from his book.

His name is given as Marcus Minucius Felix. He belonged, either by birth or admission, to a *gens* that was widely spread at Rome, many of whose members attained at different times to high distinction. We learn from himself that he practised at the bar both before and after his conversion, and from Lactantius that he gained a high reputation as a jurist and advocate. The inference that he occupied a good position in life, drawn from the setting of the Dialogue, is confirmed by a careful study of its contents. The *urbanitas* that breathes through the whole composition suggests the type of character which we see nowadays produced by a public school and university training, followed by the pleasant and healthy rivalry of professional life. The date at which he wrote is within certain limits open to conjecture. The resemblances between his arguments and those of Tertullian are far too close to be the result of chance. One of them must have used the work of the other. If Minucius was the imitator, we have in the date of Tertullian's *Apologeticus* a *terminus a quo* for that of the Octavius. Opinions differ, however, on this important point. Several high authorities, among them Teuffel in his *Roman Literature*, consider Minucius to have been first in the field, and place him, mainly on account of his elegant Latin, as far back as the time of the Antonines. To us, on the contrary, it appears most improbable that so original a mind as Tertullian's should have borrowed not only arguments but phrases from one so greatly his inferior in grasp of mind and force of expression.¹ It is mainly, of course, a question of opinion; but we unhesitatingly pronounce on the side of those who consider Minucius the copyist. Tertullian's Apology may be

¹ The most striking of all Tertullian's arguments, that of the *Testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ*, is embodied also in the Octavius, but apparently without much sense of its force. Whereas not only does Tertullian express it with signal vividness, but he has devoted a whole treatise to bringing out its latent and unsuspected capabilities.

assigned with probability to 198 A.D. We therefore place the Octavius after that date. On the other hand, the treatise of Cyprian, *de Idolorum Vanitate*, shows an even closer correspondence with the Octavius; and as Cyprian's literary talent was essentially of the imitative order, and this work is altogether slighter and poorer than the Octavius, we may almost certainly regard it as written after it. Cyprian died A.D. 258; but the treatise in question was probably one of his earlier works. This would bring the Octavius well within the first half of the third century. But we are enabled, from certain indications, to fix the date more exactly. The Dialogue implies that the Christians were then living in a state of comparative freedom from persecution. During the period A.D. 200-250 there were three short intervals when the Church enjoyed rest; under Caracalla (A.D. 211-217), under Alexander Severus (A.D. 222-235), and under Philip the Arabian (A.D. 244-249). A tradition of doubtful authority, but probable in itself, speaks of Minucius as a contemporary of Pope Urban at Rome, which would coincide with the early part of Severus' reign. On the whole, this seems the most likely time for the composition of the work, which we accordingly fix at *circa* A.D. 225-235.

It will be seen that we regard the writer as a Roman. This view, however, is by no means universally accepted. Several eminent critics consider him to have been an African, relying mainly on his *rappports* with Tertullian and Cyprian, and on an allusion to Cornelius Fronto as *Cirtensis noster*. But this expression, be it observed, is not used by Minucius himself, but by Cæcilius, the heathen interlocutor, who may have been an African for anything we know; and besides, it need not imply more than that Fronto belonged to the same party as Cæcilius, in other words, was a heathen. Moreover, the scene of the dialogue is laid at Ostia, whither it is implied Minucius had invited his friends Cæcilius and Octavius, the latter of whom had come to Rome expressly to visit him. We are evidently intended to believe that Minucius lived at Rome; and though this does not prove that he was not of African extraction, yet the inference

from his name, and still more the peculiarities of his style, point to one trained in the school of Suetonius and Aulus Gellius, rather than in that of Fronto and Apuleius. There are many idioms of the late silver age, many poetical and unnatural combinations; but there is nothing of the stilted antiquarianism and forced *éclat* so characteristic of the African style. Minucius is an ardent admirer and constant imitator of Cicero; and however deficient in the natural strength and matchless lucidity of his master, he is still further removed from the questionable taste and barbarian intensity of Tertullian.

The dialogue, of which we now proceed to give some account, opens after the manner of Cicero with a short introduction, relating the circumstances of the discussion that follows. Minucius is bewailing the death of his friend Octavius, and among other reminiscences dwells with special delight on a conversation held some years before, when Octavius had been the means of winning their common friend Cæcilius from heathenism to Christianity. The three companions were strolling along the beach at Ostia, amusing themselves with the beauties of nature, and the games of the children, when on passing a statue of Serapis, Cæcilius saluted it, according to custom, by kissing hands. This gave occasion for a remark of Octavius, which Cæcilius rightly interpreted as a reproof to himself. Somewhat nettled, he challenged Octavius to a formal discussion on the relative merits of the rival religions. Octavius accepted the challenge, and the two disputants appointed Minucius umpire. They sat down on some large stones which had been placed for the protection of the bathing tents, and began their argument. In the end, Cæcilius owned himself vanquished, and promised to seek further instruction in the faith of his two friends.

The following analysis of the composition is borrowed from Baudouin's Dissertation, embodied in Holden's useful edition, from which other details are taken. The reader will observe how exactly the refutation answers each point of the attack, and how careful the workmanship of the treatise is:—

Summary of the Argument of the Octavius.

The argument of Cæcilius is arranged under four heads, and stands thus:—

- I. The Christians add nothing to human knowledge by the doctrines of their religion (*a*) on God, (*b*) on Creation, and (*c*) on Providence.
 - (*a*) For the knowledge of God is conditioned by various limitations, such as—
 1. The inaccessibility of truth in itself.
 2. The inability of human faculties to discover it.
 3. The sufficiency of a knowledge of self for the purposes of practical life.
 4. Moreover, the environment of man being terrestrial, terrestrial phenomena are his proper study.¹
 - (*b*) The idea of Creation is a fallacy, for science can explain the existing state of things by the theory of chance combinations.
 - (*c*) The Providential theory of final causes is utterly unphilosophical: mechanical causation accounts for everything; it is uniform and unceasing, and admits of no exceptions.
- II. It is therefore right to hold fast to the religion handed down to us, on the ground (*a*) of its certainty and (*b*) utility.
 - (*a*) It is certain (*i.e.*, *relatively*, not *absolutely*)—
 1. Because it is in possession of the field; in other words, where nothing truly certain can be had, prescription is the best title.
 2. Because it is ancient; and antiquity is worthy of veneration.
 3. Because it is accredited by those who were wiser than we, living as they did nearer to the time of the gods.

¹ This is from the old maxim *θητὸν ἔντα θνητὰ φρονεῖν*, which Aristotle repudiates, saying that the truly virtuous and wise man will strive *ἄσπον ἐνδέχεται, ἀθανατίζειν*.

(b) It is useful—

Because Rome owes to it (1) her piety, which gives her the capacity for greatness; (2) her empire, which is the Divine reward for her piety.

This is proved by a consideration of Roman religion: its native deities, its imported deities, the purity of its Vestals, the complex arrangements for showing gratitude for Divine benefits, or deprecating Divine wrath; the power of auguries to reward obedience, and the penalties of disobedience; the fulfilment of oracles and prophecies.

III. The Christian religion, on the other hand, is not useful but injurious. This is shown (*a*) by its failure to improve the people, (*b*) by its degradation of religious rites, and (*c*) by its monstrous beliefs.

(*a*) Its failure to improve the people is shown by the fact that Christians—

1. Are taken from the lowest dregs of the people, chiefly women and children.
2. Are full of factions and disputes.
3. Cannot defend their cause by public argument.
4. Increase no one knows how, not by reputable methods.
5. Have a system of secret signs for recognition.

(*b*) Its degradation of religion is shown by—

1. Its erecting an ass's head into an object of worship.¹
2. Its worshipping obscene symbols.
3. Its adoring a crucified malefactor.
4. Its nefarious ceremony of initiation by means of an infant's blood.
5. Its promiscuous feasts, with their incestuous accompaniments.
6. Its secrecy of worship.

¹ This strange misconception is illustrated by the caricature discovered under the ruins of the Palatine palace, "a rough sketch, traced, in all probability, by the hand of some Pagan slave in one of the earlier years of the third century of our era."—Liddon, "Bampton Lectures," eleventh edition, p. 404.

(e) Its monstrous beliefs, viz.—

1. Its single, solitary God; who is too weak to protect His people, yet is called Almighty, All-knowing, Omnipresent yet Invisible.
 2. The future destruction of the universe, which reason necessarily conceives as eternal.
 3. Above all, the resurrection of the dead, the absurdity of which is shown by numerous considerations; for instance, the necessity of giving up cremation for fear the bodies should be lost, the folly of deferring rewards and punishments till after death, the injustice of punishing men for the accident of ignorance of Christ, the impossibility of conceiving of the process, the disastrous effects of the belief on those who hold it, since it exposes them to hatred, isolation, tortures and death, deprives them of the use of lawful enjoyments, and mocks them with illusory future delights in exchange for real present miseries.
- IV. It follows therefore that we should abstain from inquiring after the Deity, whose Nature is unknowable to us, and whom the wisest and best men have advised us not to attempt to search out.

Each one of these objections is answered in turn by Octavius, who also strengthens his argument by five polemical digressions. The reader will be interested to see his counter-statement, which follows the plan of the attack:—

I. Christianity can and does introduce a new certainty into the field of human research, by its doctrines of God, Creation, and Providential Government.

(a) The knowledge of God is possible; for—

1. Divine truth is *per se* knowable: the defect is in the subject, not the object.
2. Divine truth is apprehended by immediate intuition; to which the pride of learning and the intoxication of prosperity are highly disadvantageous.

3. Self-knowledge *is* sufficient for salvation; but it cannot be attained without the knowledge of God.
 4. The true nature of man looks upward, and can never be satisfied with a mere knowledge of phenomena.¹
- (b) The idea of Creation is necessarily reached by the mind as soon as it has clearly realised that chance combinations are unable to account for the existing order of things.
- (c) The Providential government of the world is shown by the perfection of nature, as a whole, and in all its parts; and specially by the evidences of design, which point unmistakably to a Designer.
- II. It is not right to accept what is handed down to us, if it is evidently false. It can be shown that the heathen religion is neither (a) certain, nor (b) useful.
- (a) It is not certain; for—
1. Its certainty is admitted to be only relative; a mere makeshift; whereas that of Christianity is absolute.
 2. Antiquity is venerable, but not infallible.
 3. The ancients were in no better position than we for knowing the truth.²
- (b) It is not useful; for neither the supposed piety of the Roman people nor their actual dominion can be traced to their religious belief.
1. The piety of Rome is very dubious. Her indigenous deities were of the most unspiritual type; her imported ones sanctioned all kinds of immorality. As to the Vestals, whatever they may once have been, chastity can no longer be affirmed of them.

¹ This argument is beautifully embodied in the golden saying of Augustine, "Fecisti nos, Domine, ad Te: et irrequietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in Te."

² This is Bacon's favourite argument, that "Antiquity was the childhood of the race, and we are the true Ancients."

2. The dominion of Rome is not traceable to her religion, for other nations have won empires. Auguries and oracles may have *coincided* with Roman victories; but it has yet to be proved that they *caused* them.

III. The Christian religion is useful and not injurious. This is shown (*a*) by its unparalleled success in improving men's moral character; (*b*) by its purification of worship; (*c*) by its beliefs, which, so far from being monstrous, are in the highest degree elevating.

(*a*) The opinion that Christians are a depraved race is a pure fallacy, instigated by demons. At the same time—

1. They *do* come chiefly from the lower classes, and contain a large proportion of women and children. But these form the largest part of the human race; and there are many Christians of good position, men and women.
2. They are not factious, but closely united.
3. They do not speak in public, but that is because they are refused a hearing.
4. They *do* increase rapidly, but their increase has all the evidences of healthy, not of noxious growth.
5. Their secret signs are innocent precautions against betrayal, not tokens of guilt.

(*b*) The opinion that Christians degrade religion is also a falsehood. Every one of the evidences alleged by Cæcilius can not only be disproved but retorted upon the Pagans. The wonder is that they have ever been believed.

(*c*) The so-called monstrous beliefs of Christians are in reality most rational, *e.g.*—

1. The Unity of God. His omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence. His allowing the Jews to perish is in strict conformity with His message to them, if they forsook Him. It in no way proves His weakness.

2. The destruction of the universe is neither repugnant to reason nor to the views of philosophers. Many sects actually teach it.
 3. The resurrection of the dead is a thing quite apart from the superstitious adjuncts confused with it. As to the miseries it causes the Christians, opinions differ as to what is good or evil. Christians willingly suffer in the body, knowing that they will gain an eternity of spiritual bliss. They willingly give up loose and guilty pleasures, and in doing so are conscious of no unhappiness, but the reverse.
- IV. We ought not to shrink from contemplation and investigation of the Divine Nature, because Truth is within our grasp. If it has not always been, it is now; and it forms the best food for the soul of man. The scepticism even of great philosophers has no weight with Christians, for they learn from quite other teachers.

Besides this scheme of direct refutation, there are certain episodic proofs inserted where needed, and calculated to strengthen the argument. They are five in number: (1) On the Unity of God, proved from reason and testimony. (2) On the origin of the false gods, who are shown by many evidences to have been merely deified men, a process which, in the time of Minucius, was still going on.¹ (3) On the vanity of idols. (4) On the existence of demons, and their intimate association with the doctrines and ceremonies of heathenism. (5) On the injustice of persecuting Christianity, and especially of calling it a crime, and yet applying torments to extort a denial of it,² a topic also treated with the greatest fulness by Tertullian.

These digressions are closely interwoven with the thread of

¹ When Vespasian was attacked by his last illness, he remarked, "Ut puto, deus fio." To call an emperor Divus before his death was a crime.

² Ch. xxviii. It is this passage more than any that seems as if it must be an imitation of Tertullian.

the argument, and the attentive reader will easily discern to which point each belongs. The remark he will at once make on the whole is that, as a statement of the Christian case, it is extremely incomplete. The personality of Christ is dwelt on but slightly, His divinity only hinted at, His pre-existence as the Eternal Logos never mentioned; the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is conspicuous by its absence. If none of the Apologies is so elegantly written, none is so barren of distinctive teaching. Possibly Minucius thought the method he pursued the best for attracting the intelligent heathen, who might be repelled by a more esoteric treatment; possibly the work is a genuine piece of history, and reproduces what Octavius really said. From the epilogue we infer that Cæcilius desired initiation into the inner mysteries of the faith, and that Minucius intended to reserve this process for a future dialogue. If so, we have no means of knowing whether he fulfilled his intention.

Some recent evidence has come to light which seems to confirm the idea that the Cæcilius of the Dialogue is identical with Cæcilius Natalis, who was chief magistrate of Cirta in Numidia from 210 to 215 A.D., in which latter year he erected a triumphal arch in honour of Caracalla. His conversion therefore must, on this hypothesis, be posterior to the above date, so that, if Minucius wrote about twenty years later, the date suggested for the composition (A.D. 235) seems on every ground the most probable.

The literary history of the work is curious. For centuries it appeared among the writings of Arnobius as the eighth book of his treatise *adversus Gentes*, the similarity of its title to the number *octavus*, and the general resemblance of its contents, being no doubt the cause of the confusion. The difference of style, however, is so great that we cannot compliment the early critics on their sagacity. It was Francis Bandonin (Bauduinus), A.D. 1560, who first restored it to its true author, and wrote an excellent dissertation on its contents. Jerome states that a work was current in his time on Fate (*de Fato*), which was attributed to Minucius, but that the difference of style proved it not to be his.

Novatian.

The work of Minucius, supposing it to have been written at Rome, supplies no information about the Roman Church. It lies absolutely outside the ecclesiastical sphere. It is a melancholy fact that the only three writers whom we can refer with certainty to this Church, one and all express the keenest dissatisfaction with it. Of Hermas and Hippolytus we have already treated. It remains to speak shortly of **Novatian**, who is a prominent figure in the Church history of the time, and a writer and theologian of no ordinary merit. Of his sincere but stern and harsh character, of the stormy events of his schismatic episcopate, of his final suppression and the decadence of his sect, we need say little here. They may be gathered from any work on Church history, or may be learned from the excellent and appreciative essay in Evans' *Theological Biography*. Our attention will be confined to two features in his career—his Puritanism, and his position as a writer.

Novatian was, if not a Roman, at any rate an Italian by birth. When we first meet with him he is a presbyter in the Roman Church, taking a leading part during the interregnum which followed the martyrdom of Fabian. The Emperor Decius, in his furious hostility to the Gospel, had given the Christians of the capital to understand that if they elected a bishop he would unquestionably be one of the first victims of the Imperial vengeance. The Church, with wise prudence, determined to wait its opportunity. Meanwhile Novatian, by his moral strictness and commanding talents, had so gained the confidence of all parties as to be commissioned to write in the Church's name two important letters to Cyprian on the question of the readmission of the lapsed to communion. These letters are extant, and form the thirtieth and thirty-first of the Cyprianic collection. We are somewhat surprised to find that he expresses himself as completely at one with the decision of his brethren, which agreed with that of Cyprian himself, viz., to treat the question in a liberal and indulgent spirit.

A man so trusted might well aspire to the bishopric. Novatian, however, solemnly declared that he had no such intention. Nevertheless, when after an interval of a year and a quarter (A.D. 251) the choice of the Church fell with almost complete unanimity upon Cornelius, Novatian felt himself aggrieved. The new bishop was an untried man, and of comparatively mean intellect, though his moral firmness, displayed on more than one trying occasion, abundantly justified his election. It may seem strange that the Roman community should pass over their ablest man, but several circumstances combined to make Novatian unsuitable for the Episcopal throne. He had been converted late in life, and had only received the imperfect form of baptism known as clinical, which was a canonical bar to orders.¹

Notwithstanding this, and strongly against the wishes of his clergy, Fabian had ordained him priest, without requiring him to pass through the inferior grades of the ministry. These irregularities, to a church so tenacious of formality as the Roman, formed a serious obstacle to his consecration. But a still more important objection lay behind. The temper of Novatian was thoroughly uncongenial to the ruling spirit of the Church. Stern in his own self-discipline, he expected equal austerity in others. Holding a lofty conception of the Church as the company of elect and holy souls, he was disinclined for that temporising laxity which is so necessary an element in the policy of ruling societies, whether ecclesiastical or civil. Moreover, his convictions, though orthodox, were formed by the rigid logic of systematic thought, and might prove lacking in that pliancy and adaptability to practical exigencies which the dangers of the age demanded. In spite of his formal recommendation of a lenient treatment of the lapsed, a suspicion was felt that, once in power, a severer

¹ Novatian had been subject to periods of terrible depression, during one of which he had employed the aid of Christian exorcists, who succeeded in relieving him for a time. On a subsequent seizure, being, as was supposed, at the point of death, he received baptism by sprinkling. In his previous life as a heathen, he had been known as an adherent of the Stoic philosophy.

temper would be disclosed. And the instinct of Rome, as usual, was right. Novatian was at heart a Puritan. Having subdued his own natural impulses, he had no toleration for such as failed to conquer theirs. To this stern precisian grades of guilt seemed unmeaning. The Church's scale of penance, graduated to suit the delicate shades of abjuration, based as it was not only on common sense, but on the principles of equity, appeared to him profane trifling. Ambition lurked under his fair disclaimer, and spiritual pride made submission to an inferior man intolerable. He allowed himself to be consecrated Anti-pope under circumstances little creditable to his reputation. His adherents were few, but devoted. Like him, they were distinguished by orthodoxy as well as by rigid purity of life. They gave themselves the name of *the Clean* (*καθαροί*).

Novatian has suffered from being painted by his enemies. Though induced by unscrupulous partisans, such as Novatus, to lend himself to proceedings that were unquestionably culpable, and involved him in the condemnation of a schismatic, we must distinguish between his position and theirs. His ruling idea was a strictly religious one, the identity between the visible and invisible churches. Possessed with this, he could not endure the laxity of discipline which he saw around him. He doubtless persuaded himself that in the sight of God he was the true bishop and Cornelius the interloper. His attitude to Cornelius resembles that of Hippolytus to Callistus, but with this essential difference, that Cornelius was a godly and orthodox prelate, whereas Callistus had obtained his position by the basest intrigue. The fact that the influential body of Confessors at first gave him their support is sufficient testimony to his genuine piety: but the dignified reproof of Dionysius of Alexandria,¹ the stern sarcasms of Cyprian, and the subsequent submission of

¹ This gentle prelate could write severely when occasion demanded. He says, "It is with reason that we detest Novatian for rending asunder the Church, drawing some of the brethren into impieties and blasphemies, introducing a novel and impious doctrine respecting God (i.e., limiting His mercy), traducing our most kind Lord Jesus Christ as devoid of pity,

the Confessors to Cornelius, taught him the important lesson that resistance to authority is not to be justified by mere purity of moral conviction.

His Writings.

The writings ascribed to Novatian that have come down to us are few, but not unimportant. They are distinguished for their calm cultivated tone, their clearness of thought, and their admirable style. The two letters to Cyprian are perhaps the best composed documents of the kind that we possess. The treatise *On the Trinity*, which used to be included among Tertullian's works, is very different from the writings of that Father, though it shows abundant traces of a careful study of them. In fact, Tertullian is treated by subsequent Latin theologians as a mine from which they dig without scruple, only subjecting the rough ore to a process of refinement. This treatise opens with a declaration of belief in One God, who is described in philosophical language, the Deity of Theism as well as of Christianity. The writer's pen lingers with a tenderness rare in the theologic sphere over pictures of nature which by their grandeur, sweetness, or beauty testify the goodness of God. They recall well-known passages from the *De Natura Deorum* of Cicero, and the moral letters of Seneca, whom he justly designates as *sapienter noster*.

The greater part of the work is an exposition of the Person of Christ, the double nature of which he defends both from the necessities of reasoning, and from the authority of Scripture. He falls into a few unguarded expressions which appear to derogate from the majesty of God, but do not substantially affect the value of his argument as a contribution to the Church's Christology. His quotations

and, in addition, setting at nought the holy laver, subverting the faith and confession which precedes it, and utterly putting to flight from among them (his adherents) the Holy Spirit."—Eus. H. E. vii. 8. I am glad to borrow the translation from Evans' article, as an acknowledgment of its value.

from the New Testament are numerous, and of special interest from the various readings they embody, as well as from their peculiar Latinity. It seems probable that the earliest Latin version was made in Africa, and was in circulation at Rome; at any rate, the Latin of Novatian's quotations shows an African element.

The subject of the Holy Ghost is dismissed in one short chapter. The great controversies as to His Personality, eternity, and Godhead had not yet come to the front. From one expression, where he says that the Fount of the whole Spirit remained in Christ,¹ we perceive that the Western Church already displayed that bias towards the Double Procession which afterwards caused its separation from the Eastern Church. The style of this treatise is comparatively simple, flowing and unimpassioned.

The little pamphlet *On Jewish Meats*,² usually printed with Cyprian's works, is also ascribed to him. It has the character of an episcopal charge, and the tone of schismatic exclusiveness is seen in his addressing his flock as "the people that stand steadfast in the Gospel, who maintain and teach the Gospel in sincerity, and undefiled with any spot of perverse doctrine." Not content with addressing his readers in the usual manner as "Beloved," he salutes them as "Most holy."³

Novatian must be carefully distinguished from his associate and evil counsellor Novatus. The latter seems to have been a really worthless man, of doubtful morals, and an inveterate organiser of vexatious factions. Novatian was a far nobler nature, carried partly by perverse spiritual pride, partly by the inducements of others, into a position with which he was unfitted to cope, and in which his worst qualities were unfortunately brought into prominence. Had he resigned all pretensions to episcopal authority, and contented himself with the unofficial dissemination of his views, he might have been blamed as a schismatic, but he would not have forfeited

¹ "Totius spiritus in Christo fonte remanente,"

² *De Cibis Judæorum*.

³ For this criticism I am indebted to Professor Evans.

the respect of the impartial historian. As it is, however, it is difficult to praise him. In bigotry of Puritan exclusiveness he may be compared with Tertullian, and in this and other respects with Marcion. But he lacks the element of nobility which redeems Tertullian's lack of charity, and he falls far below Marcion in theological genius, and in what we may call the romance of misfortune.

CHAPTER VI.

ARNOBIUS (FLOR. A.D. 290?)—*LACTANTIUS* (A.D. 240–325?)—*COMMODIAN* (A.D. 260?)—*VICTORINUS PETAVIENSIS*.

WHAT may be called the liberal or undogmatic method of stating the Christian faith was approached by leading minds both in the East and in the West, but with only limited success. In the East the great Alexandrian Fathers, by their profound speculations, their vast learning, and their literary ability, compelled universal respect, yet within a century and a half after the death of Origen his influence had already begun to wane and his reputation to enter upon its long eclipse. In the Western Church the attempt was made under less favourable conditions and by men of inferior power. The West was always less tolerant of diversity of opinion, and this in itself was hostile to independence of thought. Moreover, the writers who represent the liberal tendency cannot be said to aim at transcending the limits of dogma, but rather to show an inclination to ignore them. Minucius, Arnobius, Lactantius, are the three chief names. They are directly connected by a spiritual succession, and have many common features. It must be confessed that theology is but little indebted to any of them. Far from comparing with the great thinkers with whom we have for a moment coupled them, they must be pronounced to be men of only moderate talent, deficient in depth, rhetorical and argumentative rather than speculative, and above all, essentially stylists.

In the domain of style they stand high. Of Minucius we have already spoken; of Lactantius it is enough to state that he fully vindicates his claim to be considered the Christian Cicero. **Arnobius**, the least distinguished of the three,

nevertheless ranks as a considerable man of letters. His name is of Greek origin. He is generally associated with the town of Sicca in Numidia, where he exercised with conspicuous success the profession of a rhetorician during the latter part of the third century.¹

His labours were not confined to the lecture-hall. He used his pen in the great duel of religions on the side of Paganism, and made some name as a controversialist. But a change came over him, which resulted in his deciding to profess the Christian faith. He himself tells us nothing of the process. If we are to believe S. Jerome, it was by dreams that he was led from error to truth. The view of Neander is, however, more probable, namely, that Arnobius had long been dissatisfied with the Pagan creed, and that convictions which culminated (possibly not without the aid of dreams) in the Christian belief had been slowly ripening in his mind. He determined to present himself as a candidate for baptism, and applied to the bishop with that intent. The bishop not unnaturally hesitated to accept without further evidence an application so unexpected; he probably feared that under the guise of a catechumen the convert sought an opportunity of acquiring information for polemical purposes; at any rate he refused to administer the sacrament. To dispel his doubts, Arnobius wrote the *Seven Books of Disputations against the Heathen*, which we still possess, and their manifest sincerity removed all obstacles to his admission within the Church. Such at least is Jerome's account, and it may be accepted as true, though it does not quite account for all the features of the work.

Of his subsequent life and spiritual history nothing further is known. It is likely that he continued as a Christian to

¹ In II. 71, he speaks of the time since the building of Rome as *1050 years, more or less*, probably, in his inexactness, echoing the words of an ancient chronicler:—

“Sunt septingenti paulo plus aut minus anni
Augusto augurio postquam incluta condita Roma est.”

Strictly speaking, his date A.D. 297 will not stand, as there are evident allusions in his book to the Diocletian persecution, which began A.D. 30

give instruction in rhetoric, for, in spite of his frequent encomiums on the unadorned simplicity of the Scriptures, it is clear that he, in common with most ecclesiastical writers, fully appreciated the advantages arising from technical knowledge and trained controversial skill. An impression prevailed among early critics, doubtless derived from Jerome's story, that Arnobius wrote his work in haste. This is rendered probable also by internal evidence. Though obviously penned with facility, and drawn from the resources of a well-stored mind, the arrangement is unequal, the treatment prolix and full of repetitions, especially in the last two books, and the conclusion abrupt and inadequate.

Under such circumstances of composition, it would be out of place to expect any very profound treatment of his subject. A novice could hardly penetrate to the inner mysteries of the faith. Yet it is instructive to contrast Arnobius' performance with the two productions of another African novitiate, not far removed in time from his own, viz., the *Vanity of Idols* and the *Testimonies against the Jews*, written by Cyprian in the twelve months following his conversion. We observe in Cyprian's case two strong influences at work, the oratorical impulse to confute the errors which once held him captive, and the learner's desire to gain from a study of the sacred books the true key to the Church's position. Though Cyprian did not owe his conversion to the Bible, he devoted himself with enthusiasm to the study of it, and in a remarkably short time obtained a thorough controversial mastery of its contents. Arnobius, on the contrary, betrays no knowledge of either the Old or New Testaments. One would almost think he had never read them. He does not even interest himself at second-hand in their doctrinal teaching, except so far as it concerns the Deity and Messiahship of Christ. His single quotation from Scripture is prefaced by the formula, "*illud vulgatum,*" as if it was a trite saying picked up he knew not where.¹

¹ This indifference to the fountain-source of doctrine may be paralleled in the present day among the adherents of the Latin Church. It is, however, right to state that Neander, who is a highly appreciative critic

On the central question of the Divinity of Christ, his language is generally orthodox, and much fuller and more explicit than that of Minucius. At the same time, it is liable to criticism on account of its deficiencies. The moral purity of Jesus is strongly insisted on; and the proof from His miracles is well brought out. But the sacrificial value of His death is not understood; and it would not be difficult, by taking his statements to pieces, to fix upon him the charge of an Arianising tendency, in common, it must be confessed, with several other Ante-Nicene writers.¹

The most successful portion of his work is the attack on Paganism, which, threadbare as it had become, he invests with more than ordinary interest by incorporating several legends entire, and letting us see what they are when divested of poetical dressing. The student who has confined his classical reading to the great masters, from *Æschylus* to Aristotle, and from *Lucretius* to *Tacitus*, will scarcely be prepared for the assumption universally made by the Christian apologists, that all the absurd and immoral fables of the poets must be taken as they stand and literally believed. The intellectual atmosphere of the giants of literature stands so completely apart from these degrading superstitions, that we are inclined at first sight to charge the ecclesiastical writers with wilful blindness to the higher aspects of heathenism. In order to do them justice, it is necessary to bear in mind two important facts. First, that the great classics were lifted so far above the mass, even of their educated contemporaries, as to be very inadequate representatives of their religious beliefs; still less did they reflect, except in the most distant manner, the currents of popular superstition. Secondly, that in the first and second centuries after Christ a very widespread and remarkable revival of the religious spirit of Paganism had taken place,

of Arnobius, believes that he had read some of the New Testament, and at any rate the four Gospels. See vol. ii., p. 450, of his *Church History*.

¹ Irenæus is perhaps the only one to whose Christology no exception can be taken from the post-Nicene standpoint.

which is clearly enough portrayed to us in the works of less read and second-rate writers, but is disguised in the best authors under the less recognisable form of Stoic philosophy. The Christian apologists, as a rule, address themselves to the mass of the educated heathen, not to the few choicer spirits. Moreover, they are concerned less with the theories of philosophy than with the practical effect of the accepted mythology upon the social and moral life of the people. Consequently, it by no means follows that in exposing the immorality and incredibility of the Pagan faith they were insensible to the efforts of its best men for spiritual purification; but they attacked what they saw every day in the market, in the theatre, in the circus, in the street, for which in all its moral hideousness they rightly held the recognised theology responsible.

The revival of religious feeling to which we have alluded was connected with a general belief in the deterioration and decay of the world. Men laboured everywhere under a strange sense of misery, and, in their inability to understand its cause, they referred it to the displeasure of the gods. Filled with unrest and despondency, they conceived even the course of nature to be affected with similar decrepitude, and in the frequent famines, earthquakes, pestilences, and conflagrations, they thought they saw unmistakable evidences of a falling state of things. The only new factor in the world's history of sufficient magnitude to account for this change was the rise of the Christian religion. Hence they connected the two things in their minds, and openly asserted that Christianity had caused the offended gods to withdraw their protection from the visible world, and from man as a part of it.

This is the first point which Arnobius sets himself to answer. He begins by flatly denying it. He challenges his opponents to produce any single sphere in which the natural sequence of cause and effect does not still hold good. He appeals to the realm of nature and to the evidence of history to show that physical catastrophes and human calamities have always existed in the same proportion; and

points out that the fallacy arises from men's persisting in measuring the universe by their own standard, and in proportion as their desires increase, expecting the resources of nature to increase with them. As to the Christian religion having injuriously affected the world, he proves that the greatest recorded calamities all preceded its rise, while during the three centuries of its existence the Roman Empire has grown, and the general conditions of life have, on the whole, greatly improved. The horrors of war have been mitigated, and, if the precepts of Christianity were generally followed, would cease altogether.

It may not be without interest to inquire briefly into the psychological causes of this widespread belief in the decay of the age, a belief specially calculated to damp the spirits and crush man's natural hopefulness. It was by no means confined to heathens. S. Cyprian, one of the most vigorous spirits of the age, fully accepted it. In his tract addressed to Demetrius he not only admits that all things are in a state of decrepitude, but sets himself to prove it in detail, and then triumphantly turns the fact into a strong argument for the Christian's warning that the end of the world is at hand, and that men must use the brief respite which is granted for securing their salvation.

The external world is to men only what they make it by their perceptions; the phenomena which to the men of those days appeared beyond question objective, were in reality altogether subjective. We have no reason to believe that there was any valid ground for this universal persuasion, the causes of which were of course mainly psychological. We may instance three of the principal. In the first place, the constant wars, followed by the extinction of political freedom, had resulted in the exhaustion of the race. The minds of men were less able than they had been to confront the circumstances of their environment. Everywhere a leaden weight of administrative uniformity depressed the spirit, and deadened that sense of power which is the most inspiring stimulus to practical effort. The complaint of Juvenal that the earth brought forth poor and stunted specimens

of humanity was not unjust.¹ The brain-power of the world was indeed enfeebled, and despairing spirits read into nature what they felt in themselves. Then again, the perfection of the Imperial organisation in facilitating intercourse and multiplying information was not without its effect. The vast complexity of materials on all sorts of subjects, social, religious, and educational, overwhelmed men's minds, confined hitherto within the narrow limits of nationality, and only expanding with difficulty to grasp the proportions of a social fabric outwardly united but internally heterogeneous. Moreover, the transmission of news from all parts of the Empire, itself a novel phenomenon, stunned men's imaginations as if by a series of electric shocks; tidings of calamities in distant regions succeeding one to another with numbing effect, in startling contrast to the self-centred isolation of former times. The attention, thus incessantly stimulated, and unable to co-ordinate the mass of facts brought under it, naturally concentrated itself on those of a gloomy type, and by association formed them into a kind of law or sequence, for which its next step was to invent a cause as imaginary as itself.²

Another psychological fact of importance was the growing disbelief in the providential government of the world, owing greatly to the mixing up of religious systems which the Empire entailed.

The impotence of local deities to protect their worshippers against the might of Rome had not been without a solvent effect on people's belief. The disintegrating process ran on apace when Roman luxury and Roman Epicureanism invaded the provincial capitals. By the middle of the first century before Christ the provinces, disappointed with their native faiths yet craving for a real object of worship, had already introduced the cultus of material force under the

¹ "Terra malos homines nunc educat atque pusillos."—*Sat.* xv. 70.

² Even minds of the highest order, as that of Tacitus, were profoundly impressed by the apparent increase of physical catastrophes, due to the organisation of news. The demands made on the attention of politicians at the present day from the same cause undoubtedly tend to overload the judging faculty with materials, and *pro tanto* to paralyse it.

symbol of Caesarism. This, at first looked on with suspicion, then connived at, was finally authorised by the Emperors, and long remained the chief support of a power that was really destitute of all spiritual prerogative. By the third century of our era, the Divine government of the world in any effective sense had ceased to be believed in. Caesar was the symbol of omnipotence, the present deity; and those spiritual instincts, ineradicable from the heart of man, which the state-cult failed to satisfy, found a sphere of exercise in the countless mysteries, secret rites, and esoteric interpretations which experts of all kinds provided. In a way the comparative study of religions was forced upon the ancient world. For though the modern student of ancient faiths may for convenience group together many systems under a common title, yet we must remember that these systems really differed as widely from one another as do the different religions of the present day; indeed, several of them were substantially the same now as they were then, *e.g.*, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Zoroastrism. Hence an inquiring mind of that era, desirous of searching all accessible channels of truth, would be drawn over a field not greatly inferior in complexity to that which is offered at the present day. We have ourselves witnessed how slow has been the recognition afforded to the comparative science of religions in our time; and yet we know how completely that science is in harmony with the attitude of the modern spirit to all subjects of inquiry. It need cause us therefore no surprise if to minds in an earlier stage of history, unprepared for so great a generalisation, the simultaneous presentation of conflicting systems should, if not destroy, at any rate disintegrate and weaken all belief. These considerations will help us to some extent to understand how it was that the human spirit lost its native buoyancy, imagined itself forsaken by heaven, and, driven to superstitious fears, strove to fix the blame for its woes upon the uncongenial and intrusive element in its midst. The answer of Arnobius to the accusing cry of Paganism is no doubt rational, and from the scientific standpoint absolutely conclusive; but that of Cyprian rings far more true to the Church's note of

exultation. In accepting the verdict of self-condemnation to which the world had submitted, he turns it to his own advantage, and reads the lesson of Divine wrath, which he does not deny, in a sense full of terror for his adversaries, full of triumph for his friends.

Another important argument which is well handled by Arnobius is that founded on the extent of human ignorance. The reader of Butler's Analogy will not need to be reminded of the force with which the bishop drives this home; but we are so accustomed to connect it with the more modern stages of theological controversy, that its familiar and effective employment by a writer so remote as Arnobius strikes us with some surprise. Many of the questions that agitated the thinkers of antiquity are declared by Arnobius to be insoluble by argument. For instance, the Nature of God, His creative purpose in respect of man, the origin of evil, the immortality of the soul, the mysteries of nature, are all beyond our ken. We must be content in these topics and many others to say, "I know not: taught by Christ, I leave these things to God." We must not wait for certainty; but (as Epictetus says), "Seeing so great a thing as the safety of the soul is at stake, I will act without a (full) reason, lest I fail altogether, and miss my end."¹

The first two books are more general, and deal with philosophic theology; the last five are devoted more especially to the exposure of prevailing errors, and are easier and more entertaining. Their amount of constructive truth is but slender. The theology of Arnobius is more philosophical than ecclesiastical; in fact, in some points it is inconsistent with the teaching of the Church—*e.g.*, his Christology is peculiar. Though speaking in terms of glowing enthusiasm of the greatness and goodness of Christ, and confessing Him

¹ In Book III. ch. 19 we find the following striking assertion: "We must not only abstain from predicating bodily attributes to God, but also moral and intellectual. Every such predication, unless it is distinctly guarded, is anthropomorphism." He then adds: "Unus est hominis intellectus de Dei natura certissimus, si scias et sentias nihil de illo posse mortali oratione depromi." Cf. also Book II. ch. 7-10. In some points Arnobius approaches closely to the standpoint of modern Agnosticism.

to be truly God, he yet regards Him rather as the Divine Revealer of the One God than as Himself the object of worship. In Book I., ch. 27, he thus explains the Christian's position :—

“We Christians are nothing else but worshippers of the Supreme King and Ruler, according to Christ's teaching; if you examine our religion, that is the whole gist of it. This is the goal of our worship, the whole meaning of our devotions; we adore Him with united prayers, we ask Him for things just and honourable, and worthy for Him to listen to, not because He desires to have us for His suppliants, or loves to see so many thousands prostrate at His feet; but we do it for our own advantage, seeking benefit for ourselves. For since we are naturally prone to sin, and by our vicious appetites inclined to evil lusts, He permits Himself to be always envisaged by our thoughts, in order that while we pray to Him, and strive to deserve His gifts, we may receive the character of innocence, and by the suppression of all faults purge ourselves of every stain.”

This extract throws some light on the character of Arnobius' belief. He is evidently nearer to philosophic theism than to the popular Christianity of his day. His views on prayer are compatible with doubts of its efficacy in changing the order of causation; and they show a very imperfect grasp of the truth of our communion with God. In other places, it is true, he speaks of intercessory prayer as a Christian duty; but his scientific bias makes the common view of particular providences distasteful to him, and he prefers to regard the action of the Deity upon man as that of a spiritual influence acting only through the will.

It is in his theories about the soul that he departs furthest from the orthodox standard. He will not admit the creation of man to be directly the work of God, but inclines to attribute it to an intermediate agency, not that of God the Son, in accordance with the Nicene creed, but of some angelic and therefore imperfect Nature.¹ Consistently with

¹ His words are (Book II. ch. 36): “Si enim forte nescitis et antea vobis incognitum propter rei novitatem fuit, accipite sero et discite ab eo qui novit et protulit in medium Christo, non esse animas regis maximi filias,

this, he denies the inherent immortality of the soul, affirming that those souls only are everlasting on which from their holiness God confers the gift of permanence. To the soul itself he attributes a *media qualitas* between matter and spirit, and denies the view that man is necessary to the universe; still less that he is the end and object of it.

About angels he says little, though he believes in their existence. But he accepts the common theory that the heathen gods were demons,¹ and accuses them of jealousy in refusing to permit the worship of the true God. He hardly seems to realise, what heathendom felt from the first, the absolute exclusiveness of the Christian faith, and therefore its absolute incompatibility with the existence of idolatry anywhere.

One of the best points he makes is when he proves that heathen thinkers, such as Cicero and Varro, while professing to elucidate theology, have really annihilated the popular creed; and, indirectly, he does good service by showing how their destructive criticism prepared the way for higher knowledge. The web of contradictions in which he involves the current justification of idolatry is interesting as a specimen of clever argument; but such weapons are two-edged, and belong rather to the sphere of nature than to that of grace.

On the whole, while admitting the value of his protest *nec ab eo quemadmodum dicitur, generatas coepisse se nosse, atque in sui nominis essentia praedicari, sed alterum quempiam genitorem his esse, dignitatis et potentiae gradibus satis plurimis ab Imperatore disiunctum; ejus tamen ex aula et eminentium sublimitate natalium nobilem.*" The reader will not need to be informed that Arnobius is here not merely unorthodox but historically incorrect. Our Lord never uses any words which can be drawn into implying that souls are not the immediate creation of God. It is clear that Arnobius was not wholly free from Gnostic conceptions of the relation of the Supreme God to the material world. Possibly the reference here may be to one of the Gnosticising Apocryphal Gospels.

¹ S. Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians asserts that an idol is nothing at all; and that therefore meats sacrificed to idols may be eaten by such as realise this. But in another place he seems to endorse the popular view that the heathen sacrificed to demons. This view, though common to all the Fathers, is Jewish in its origin.

against heathenism, and the sincerity of his Christian convictions, we cannot agree with those¹ who complain that the neglect into which he has fallen is wholly undeserved. The intense interest which surrounds the efforts of Greek philosophers to find out God, and the inferior but still powerful charm which invests even the second-hand products of Roman thought, do not extend to the semi-philosophical, semi-religious discussions of this partially instructed Christian, who has neither the metaphysical depth of Origen, nor the uncompromising ardour of Tertullian, and who has bequeathed to us only the elegant refutation of an already dying system, and a rhetorical statement of Christian truth, both incomplete and imperfectly apprehended.

The literary student and the antiquarian, on the other hand, will find in him much to repay their study. His flowing and musical style, rich in varied luxuriance and bursts of fine eloquence, proves how flourishing a height the schools of African rhetoric had attained. And the multitude of quaint words, especially in lists of common objects, which he piles together with the consciousness of an unrivalled vocabulary, are a mine of interest for the lexicographer. His Latinity, though not pure, is far superior to that of Tertullian in clearness and neatness; and has been compared, not without justice, to that of Apuleius, though it is neither so brilliant nor so thickly studded with *recherché* ornaments. As a man of science, his chief defect is an inability to grasp the difference between problems that are really beyond the reach of the human mind, and such as, like those of physical science, are discoverable by the use of a true method. His wise maxim, therefore, that we should in theorising always bear in mind the extent of human ignorance, requires to be supplemented by the conclusions of the critical philosopher, which confine it to the domain of the transcendental, and do not allow it to affect the vast extent of knowledge to which our faculties may legitimately aspire.²

¹ *E.g.*, Woodham, in Preface to Tertullian's Apology.

² In some points he is beyond his age; *e.g.*, he sees the possibility of contradictory propositions being put forward with equal *à priori* plausi-

In the field of antiquarianism, he supplies much that is of value. We are indebted to him for the preservation of several interesting legends, and many details of religious ceremonial and obscure rites of worship. He is a man of real learning, and knows how to bring it to bear. Unlike Minucius, he is not an imitator, but thinks for himself, and uses his own modes of statement. He would scarcely seem to have read Tertullian, with whose mind and genius he has little in common. From one sentence, where he asks the rulers to be content with rejecting the Christian arguments without proceeding to treat those who use them as criminals, we should infer that he had read the Apology of Justin. If so, he must have appreciated that most sympathetic and reasonable of Christian philosophers. He is said to have numbered Lactantius among his pupils, but this fact is slenderly attested, and questions of chronology make it doubtful. What part, if any, he took in the Church's life; whether he wrote other apologetic works; when he died; are all questions to which we can give no answer. It is possible he may have followed the example of Justin in allowing himself to be approached at any time for purposes of discussion, and so have succeeded in interesting men of intelligence and education in the tenets of Christianity and the salvation of their souls. He certainly did not enter the ministry, but must be ranked along with Justin, Tertullian, Minucius and Lactantius among those lay teachers who, by simply keeping in touch with the educated outside world, have done excellent service to the Church.

Lactantius.

The last of the Latin apologists, and by far the most generally popular, is **Lactantius Firmianus**, who in several MSS. has the prænomen and nomen Lucius Cæcilius (or bility on many important subjects, *e.g.*, the immortality of the soul, the corporeity of God, &c. It was a clear perception of this fact that led Kant to his statement of the antinomies of the pure reason, and the discovery of the critical philosophy.

Cælius) ascribed to him. His nationality is uncertain. From the name Firmianus, some have conjectured that he came from Firmium in Italy. But this conjecture is unnecessary, as Firmus was the name of several small towns in Numidia, and the evidence we have all points to Africa, rather than to Italy, as his native country.

As we have already said, S. Jerome's statement that he was a pupil of Arnobius at Sicca, though possibly true, cannot be accepted as certain. Whoever was his master, he was trained in an admirable school; and the moderation of his judgment and the beauty of his style prove that even in that period of decline there were teachers who knew how to impress on their pupils both these great excellences. Lactantius is in no sense an original thinker. His gifts are brilliant enough in their way. He has a powerful memory, an acute logical method, a clear grasp of his subject, a penetrating analysis, and a sound judgment. His power of expression, naturally very great, was brought to perfection by earnest study of the best models, especially Cicero, to whose philosophical style his own bears no small resemblance. A conscientious laboriousness, which will be content with nothing short of the best it can produce, is the secret of his success. His natural temperament was melancholy and somewhat austere. Though not ascetic in his views, he inclines always to the sterner side; and we find in him a survival of the old Roman *gravitas*, rare among his Italian contemporaries, and rarer still among African writers.

His reputation as a teacher of rhetoric stood so high that about the year 290 Diocletian appointed him professor of eloquence in his new capital of Nicomedia, which he had resolved should be the intellectual as well as the political equal of Rome. Apparently the duties of the post were not very burdensome. Whether Lactantius felt a growing disinclination for his somewhat unsatisfactory profession, or whether he was taken up with philosophical and religious questions, he does not seem to have had many pupils. Some time between A.D. 290 and 303 he was converted to Christianity. In this latter year the great persecution broke out.

Lactantius threw himself into the work of defence, and wrote against Hierocles, the governor of Bithynia, who was the chief instigator of the persecution, and had himself written two treatises against Christianity. To what causes he owed his own immunity during those ten terrible years, we know not. Possibly the emperor's friendship may have shielded him, or perhaps he may have been looked on rather as a Christianising philosopher than as a *bona fide* Christian.¹ When Constantine obtained the supreme power, Lactantius, then in advanced age, was sent for by him to Gaul to preside over the education of his eldest son Crispus, whom Constantine designated Cæsar and destined as his successor (A.D. 317). He died at Trèves (about A.D. 325) in extreme old age, and, according to Eusebius, in the greatest poverty. His philosophy was of that practical type which resists all the enticements of luxury and all the opportunities of wealth. He was so completely free from ambition that he never once alludes to the high position his merit had won; and altogether he must be pronounced, so far as our scanty information extends, a thoroughly consistent example of a true Christian philosopher.

The writings that have come down to us under his name are tolerably numerous. The first and most important is the *Seven Books of Divine Institutions*, the title of which is borrowed from the Institutions of Civil Law, so frequently issued under the Empire. The date of this work is uncertain; but it seems clear that he wrote it while in Bithynia, probably between 311 and 314, which latter year is the earliest assignable date for his migration to Gaul. While in Gaul, he revised the Institutions, adding the addresses to Constantine, and several allusions to events posterior to their first publication. He also condensed them into an *Epitome*, according to the fashion of the times, for the benefit of such

¹ It is not absolutely certain that his conversion took place so early as A.D. 303. His friend Donatus, afterwards the celebrated bishop, suffered torture and a six years' imprisonment in Nicomedia. His release in 311, under the edict of Galerius, may possibly have been the occasion of Lactantius' open profession of Christianity; but undoubtedly he had resolved to give up heathenism some years before.

as found the entire treatise too long or too difficult to master. He speaks of it as a "Headless Book" (*Acephalus*), alluding to the omission of the introductory disquisition on the causes of error, which fills the first three books of the Institutions. The language and style are simpler than in the larger work; and the latter part (beginning with the fifty-sixth chapter), which deals chiefly with the moral aspects of Christianity, forms an admirable popular compendium of religious ethics.

The next extant work is that "On the Anger of God" (*de Ira Dei*) alluded to in the Institutions, in which he proves, in opposition to the Epicureans, that the Divine character is capable of just resentment, and that our conception of it would be imperfect unless we included this attribute. This work is highly praised by S. Jerome, and compared with the dialogues of Cicero. The reader will recall the striking sermons of Butler on Resentment and the Love of God. Its date is uncertain, perhaps about A.D. 320.

Another treatise of popular interest is that "On the Workmanship of God" (*de Opificio Dei*). This belongs to an earlier period, during the persecution of Diocletian, and is addressed to one Demetrianus. It is in twenty chapters, and is divided into two parts, the first containing a very full and learned account of the anatomy of the human body, the second a short discussion on the nature of the soul. Its object is theological, in opposition to the Epicurean philosophy. The impossibility of obtaining human bodies for dissection compels him to found many of his arguments on the analogy of the lower animals; and the mysterious nature of the bodily mechanism is asserted with great emphasis in proof of the inscrutability of the Divine Power. Like Arnobius, he falls into the error of supposing that these subjects are essentially unknowable, and draws inferences favourable to religious reverence, but inconsistent with the claims of science and philosophy. Nevertheless, it is surprising how wide his knowledge was, and how accurately he had informed himself on many highly technical points. He unhesitatingly adopts the Creationist view of the soul, affirming it to be the immediate workmanship of God without human co-operation.

The treatise may be taken as a comment on the Psalmist's words, "I will give thanks unto Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well."

The last of the genuine writings of Lactantius which we possess is a tract partly historical, partly religious, "On the Deaths of Persecutors" (*de Mortibus Persecutorum*). It gives a brief *résumé* of the history of persecution from the time of Nero to his own day; with the object of proving that all the emperors who authorised persecution were punished by the Divine Justice in the manner of their deaths. The earlier examples are hurriedly enumerated: Nero, Domitian, Decius, Valerian, Aurelian: Diocletian is spoken of at more length, but the greater part of the work is occupied with the history of Maximianus, whose defeat by Licinius and fearful death are described with graphic power. This work shows Lactantius in a new light as compared with those we have hitherto considered. He appears as the stern and triumphant justifier of the Divine vengeance, and loses altogether his usual calm equanimity in horror at the sufferings he depicts and the guilt that inflicted them. Besides its apologetic value to the Church, the book is useful also to the historical student.

Some important writings of Lactantius have perished, as the *Treatise on Grammar*,¹ which belonged to his heathen days; the *Itinerary*,² a poetical account in hexameters of his journey from Africa to Bithynia, also belonging to the same period (A.D. 290); two books addressed to a friend named Asclepiades, to whom he also wrote a short treatise *On Providenc*e;³ two books of *Letters to Demetrianus*, written during the Diocletian persecution. These last may yet be recovered, as they were known to be in existence during the latter half of the sixteenth century. Besides these he wrote, after his removal to Gaul, two books of *Letters to Severus*, a Spanish friend, and four of *Letters to Probus*, who was probably a Roman resident in Gaul.

We possess further a trifling collection of one hundred

¹ *Grammaticus*, or "the Grammarian"

² ὁδοιπορικόν.

³ *De summa Dei Providentia*.

riddles in hexameter verse, under the title of *Symposium*, ascribed to Lactantius. There is no doubt that in his youthful days he wrote a poem with this title; but the extant lines are unworthy of his reputation, and, in the absence of more satisfactory attestation, we decline to pronounce them genuine. It is otherwise with the *Phœnix*, an elegiac study, which exhibits much neatness of style, and may very possibly have been written by him in his earlier academic days. The poems *On the Pascha* and the *Passion of Christ*, which used to be printed among his works, are undoubtedly spurious.

His Divine Institutions.

It will be sufficient to give a short account of the Institutions as a specimen of his genius, and as being the work on which his fame rests. It is intended, as the title implies, not merely as a refutation of heathen error, but as an exposition of Christian doctrine. Its scope, therefore, is far more ambitious than that of the Octavius or that of Arnobius' Disputations. As a work of constructive theology, it must be pronounced highly interesting, but extremely deficient. S. Jerome points this out in the following words: "Would that he had been able to state the Christian position as satisfactorily as he demolishes the heathen one."¹

The work is divided into seven books. The first two are concerned with proving the falsehood of Polytheism. He states his object in writing to be the desire to assist those who were in earnest in the pursuit of truth, but who had not been led to investigate the claims of Christianity; and also to encourage those who were inclined to accept the Christian revelation, but feared the imputation of ignorance or want of polite culture. He points out how much higher is the function of a moral and spiritual teacher than that of a professor of rhetoric, and how greatly theology excels philosophy, even as righteousness excels intellect.

The second book deals specially with the source of error in

¹ "Utinam tam nostra affirmare potuisset quam facile aliena destruxit."
—S. Jerome, Ep. 58, 10, *ad Paulinum*.

false conceptions about the Deity, covering very much the same ground as does Arnobius.

The third book contrasts the truths of theology with the misleading wisdom of philosophy and eloquence: and in this the writer is seen at his best. His extensive learning, his real sympathy with the purest heathen thought, his passionate admiration for eloquence, all combine to qualify him in a very high degree for this branch of his undertaking, while the moderation of his censure contrasts favourably with the violent attacks of Tertullian on those who, whatever their errors, were undoubtedly seekers after God.

The fourth book commences the positive side of his teaching. He shows that the doctrines of Christianity are built upon the Person of Christ. Separate sections are devoted to an investigation of the prophetic annunciation of Messiah, of Christ's Divine pre-existence, of His ineffable Name, of His Incarnation, of His double Nature, of His miracles, passion, resurrection and glorification. The argument advanced on behalf of the Divine and human natures of Christ is as follows:—

“Whoever issues commands touching conduct should himself observe them, that men may both see them to be practicable and entertain a proper respect for their author. Moreover, He should be from above, since no earthly teacher can have sufficient authority or knowledge of man's heart: but He should wear a mortal form, in order that men may be able to endure His presence, which they could not do if He appeared as God, and also that they may be without the excuse they would otherwise have for sinning.”

Christ alone can be proved to have fulfilled these conditions. The reason of His becoming man was to give us a perfect example; the reason of His suffering was to teach us that wisdom and holiness would always be hated and oppressed by man, and to encourage us to endure as He endured. The reasons of His dying on the Cross were; that no man, however humble, should be unable to follow His example; that His Body might be preserved entire for the Resurrection, which it would not have been had He been decapitated; and that

by the publicity of His death the whole world might be brought to hear of Him. The power of the Cross is shown by the expulsion of demons and the exposure of magicians: and its effect is the overthrow of false religions and the implanting of the true knowledge of God.¹

Beautiful as this portion of his work is, and full of subdued but striking eloquence, its utter inadequacy from a spiritual and theological point of view will be at once apparent. The ground he takes is throughout philosophical rather than religious; indeed, on several occasions he expressly speaks of Christianity as "the true philosophy." In this aspect the doctrine of Christ's Atoning Sacrifice would be out of place, seeing that it belongs to the sphere of things inexplicable by human reason.

The latter part of the book contains a discussion of the relation of God the Father to God the Son. He is fully aware of the difficulty of so presenting this doctrine as not to conflict with the supreme truth of the Unity of God. And the most striking feature in his argument, as well as apparently the most original, is the parallel he draws between the Unity of the Godhead in two Persons and the usage of Roman law, by which a father may so delegate his authority to an only son as to enable the latter to assume in a legal sense his father's personality. He also applies the analogy of the civil law with great aptness to explain the twofold relationship of God to man as at once his Father and his Master. The Roman burgess, he reminds us, is legally the owner of his sons as well as of his slaves, and the father of his slaves as well as of his sons. The title *Paterfamilias*, "father of the household," is no empty name; it implies at once a legal status and a moral relationship. Hence a slave, when enfranchised, is obliged to assume the name of his late owner, who in turn becomes the *patronus* or father-at-law of his former chattel; while the son needs the legal ceremony of emancipation as truly as the slave in order to become *sui juris*, or independent.

The fifth book contains a summary of the ethical code

¹ Book IV. chaps. xxiii.-xxviii.

of Christianity, which calls for no particular comment. It closes with an eloquent vindication of Christians from the charges and misapprehensions of which they were so generally the objects.

The sixth book treats of the true worship of God, more, however, from a philosophico-religious standpoint than from that of revelation pure and simple. It includes the familiar doctrine of *The Two Ways*, which we can trace as far back as the apostolic *Didaché* at the close of the first century.

The last book treats of the Happy Life, including a discussion of the *Summum Bonum*, or chief good for man, which, in accordance with our Lord's teaching, he declares to be eternal life. He then proceeds to the question of man's future destiny, in which he betrays decided millenarian proclivities, and is led into various peculiar views from his interpretation of the Apocalypse, a book for which he evidently had a strong predilection. He concludes with a fine peroration, in which he thankfully acknowledges the goodness of God in giving the Church peace at last under the protection of a Christian emperor, and exhorts all men to turn from error without delay, lest the impending judgment come upon them unawares.

Theologians have detected many flaws in his orthodoxy. It cannot be denied that he is unsatisfactory in his definition of the Godhead of Christ; that his theory of the part assigned to angels in the government of mankind is unscriptural and unwarranted; and that his omission of all mention of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is a grave theological defect. In fact, as has already been stated, his contribution to Christian dogma is of little theological value. It is rather to his earnestness, his purity of spirit, and his soundness of moral judgment, that he owes his high position as a Christian writer.

A few words may be added on the subject of his literary merits, which are universally allowed to be very great. As a truly eloquent philosopher, and a writer of pure prose, he ranks among the best authors of the Latin Church. His style is conspicuous for its calm and equable flow, its transparent

clearness, and its success in embodying with the greatest precision all the steps of a long and elaborate argument. Few Church writers have attained so wide a popularity, as is evidenced by the large number of MSS. in which his writings are preserved, and the numerous editions of his works, of which over sixty had already appeared before the close of the eighteenth century.

At the present time he is less read. The spirit of research is more occupied with the great original authorities than with those who confined themselves to the task of second-hand exposition. At the same time, those who are not deterred by the complexity of his subject and the obscurity of some of his arguments, will find him a pleasant and instructive companion, if not always a safe religious guide.

We have now concluded our review of the Ante-Nicene apologists of the Latin Church. We have to notice that the greater part of them were laymen, highly educated, of liberal and enlightened minds, thoroughly versed in all the questions and controversies of their day. Judged by the rigid theology of the subsequent epoch, they must be pronounced imperfectly instructed in the faith. At the same time, they testify to the toleration in the Latin Church of broad views and a philosophical freedom of discussion which unhappily soon gave place to a despotic restriction of belief within certain prescribed limits, and culminated in the acceptance of the Augustinian system, not as being the brilliant and powerful effort of a single gifted mind to embrace the whole sphere of revealed knowledge, but as being the authoritative and final pronouncement of the Universal Church on all questions of Divine truth.

Commodian.

We conclude our chapter with a brief notice of two insignificant writers of this period, the quasi-poet **Commodianus**, and the Scripture commentator **Victorinus Petaviensis**. The nationality of the former is disputed, but there seems

little doubt that he was an African. He may have lived in the latter half of the third century. From his style and habit of thought, we should conjecture that he belonged to the lower class and had been imperfectly educated.¹ His extant works comprise two poems, one called *Curmen Apologeticum*, directed against both Jews and heathens, containing 1060 lines, first printed by Pitra in 1852. It is defective at the close, and has no title or author's name prefixed. The similarity of its diction to that of Commodian's undoubted work proves it to be his. The *Instructiones per litteras versuum primus*, in two books, bears the author's name. Each book contains a series of acrostics, embodying some subject of instruction which is given in the title, and worked out verse by verse, until the letters of the title are completed. As an example of his method and poetical gifts we select No. 28, from Book I., on the Resurrection of the Just :—

JUSTI RESURGENT.

“ Iustitia et bonitas, pax et patientia vera
 Vivere post fatā facient, et cura de actu :
 Subdola mens autem, noxiā, perfida, prava,
 Tollit se in partes, et fēra morte moratur.
 Impie nunc audi, quid per malefacta lucraris,
 Respice terrenos iūdices, in corpore qui nunc
 Exeruciant poenis diros : aut ferrō parentur
 Supplicia meritis aut longo carcere flere.
 Ultime tu speras Dēum irridere cælestem
 Rectoremque poli, per quem sunt omnia facta ?
 Grassāris, insanis, detractās nūc et Deī nomen ?
 Unde nōn effugies, poenas per factaque ponet.
 Nunc volo sis cautus, ne veniās ignis in aestum.
 Trade tē iam Christo, ut te benefacta sequantur.”

The Latin scholar will observe that neither syntax nor metre satisfies the classical standard. The poetical merit of the composition is even lower than the technical.

¹ It is curious that of all the writers we have passed under review, only three appear to have belonged to the imperfectly educated classes, Hermas, Polyrates, and Commodian. The other writers, however limited their intellectual gifts, all seem to have mastered the art of correct writing. This is no small testimony to the widespread influence of the Hellenic culture.

Victorinus of Petavia (Pettau in Styria) is mentioned by S. Jerome as a bishop, who, although Greek was his native language, preferred to write in Latin,—a most unusual phenomenon. His commentaries on parts of the Old and New Testaments were ill composed, but contained valuable matter. In addition to these, he wrote a book against all heresies, besides others which Jerome does not name. Routh has preserved the fragments that are usually ascribed to him in the third volume of his *Reliquiæ Sacræ*, but it is very doubtful whether they are really his.

CONCLUSION.

THE reader who has followed the criticisms and argument of the foregoing pages, will perhaps expect a few brief words of summary or retrospect. It may be also that he will look for some explanation of what is omitted as well as of what is included. I am conscious that two highly important sources of information on the thought and feeling of the early Church have been passed over. I have not once alluded to the evidence of the Catacombs, and hardly once to those wonderful Church symbols and liturgies which began to shape themselves during the period covered by this book.

As regards the former, I would not for a moment under-rate the importance of the epigraphy and funeral art of the first Christian ages. They are not only full of promise as a subject of research, but full of human interest as embodying a genuine popular sentiment. But they cannot be ranked as literature without some straining of the term; and an adequate presentation of their results would demand special study and a separate volume.

The case is different with regard to the rise of creeds, liturgies, and formulas. These no doubt come strictly within the province of the literary historian. I have thought it best, however, to exclude them: first, because they could only have been presented in their rudimentary stages, the period of their adult development beginning with the Nicene Council; secondly, because from their vast dogmatic importance anything short of a thorough and original treatment would have been unsatisfactory.

Happily both these subjects are in their main outlines accessible to the English reader. It is otherwise with another important branch of literature, viz., the various

versions of the Bible, and especially of the New Testament. A vast field of investigation still lies open in connection with the fragments of the early Latin versions, and the light thrown by them upon the textual criticism of the New Testament. The results in this field, though fruitful and encouraging, are not yet sufficiently established to justify a popular exposition; but I could have wished, had it been in my power, to have included a chapter on this subject.

On the whole, I have adhered strictly to the treatment sketched out in the preface, and stopped short at the period anterior to Arius. It would have been tempting to notice, however briefly, the earlier works of Athanasius; to essay to estimate the debt of Christian science to Eusebius; to consider how it came to pass that the conversion of an emperor, which Tertullian held to be inconceivable, was actually realised within a century of his death.

But in refusing to pass within the borders of a new epoch, I hope I have gained the advantage of conveying clearly to my readers the two grand results of the Ante-Nicene period: first, the interpretation put upon the historical career of Jesus Christ by minds of the first order, unbiassed by Jewish preconceptions; secondly, the gradual development of the self-consciousness of the Church as a spiritual body diffused throughout the world, held together by a doctrine and practice traced back to the Apostles.



In their baldest statement these two results are the work respectively of the Greek and Latin Churches, and correspond to the spheres of intellect and practice, of science and law.

The first arose from a synthesis between Greek philosophy (mis-called heathen) and the Gospel; the second from a synthesis between Roman Imperialism and the hierarchy of the Church.

The immense service done by Greek Christianity to mankind is this, that it discerned the need of placing the Personality of Christ upon a cosmical basis¹ before it pro-

¹ I prefer this word to Universal, Transcendental, or Supra-Mundane, because the first two suggest an abstract sphere of thought, the last a Deistic; but I am aware that the term is not free from objection.

ceeded to deduce from that Personality effects which reached to the entire creation. It disengaged its Christology from those Messianic associations which, though essential to its truth, limited its universality, and required to be transcended in order to be properly understood. It virtually presents the Person of Jesus Christ as the key to all human history; and by its analysis of that Person its theory of human nature and human history stands or falls.

I need not here enter into details. These have been given in the course of the book. But I would venture to point out that it by no means follows that the Christology of the Greek Fathers is out of date, because the metaphysical terms which embody it are not congenial to our age. What we want to get at is the essential thought lying behind the imperfect vehicle of it. And if such terms as Substance, Person, Being, Matter, Eternity—even Incarnation, Redemption, Salvation—require to be re-examined in the light of our progressive self-consciousness, this is surely a task worth doing, and will prevent us from hastily discarding the only philosophic interpretation of Christianity which has as yet stood its ground. As I have indicated more than once, I believe that our metaphysical apparatus needs complete recasting in conformity with the categories of inductive science; but the Person of Christ still stands forth as the central fact of human history, and will still require to be intelligibly connected with the entire fabric of knowledge. No doubt our theology must be expressed in terms of law, and by *law* I mean law in the scientific sense. And until this is clearly recognised by theologians, the highest intellects will refuse to accept its pronouncements. The idea of an antithesis between two kingdoms, one of Nature, in which uniformity reigns, and one of Grace, in which it does not, and the confinement of spiritual and religious truth to the latter, was conceivable in the thirteenth century when stated by an “Angelical Doctor,” but is not conceivable in the nineteenth, even though stated by the “Angel from heaven” himself. Greek theology has many faults, many aberrations, many shortcomings; but, inasmuch as it honestly attempts

to connect our religious beliefs by an organic process with our scientific knowledge, it can never lose its significance, and least of all in the present day.

The second net result of the Ante-Nicene age I have called the self-consciousness of the Church as a body ideally coextensive with the human race, but actually limited by agreement with the doctrine and fellowship of the Apostles. This is pre-eminently the work of the Latin thinkers. It is not thoroughly wrought out into a complete system until after the close of the period with which I have dealt. But to Tertullian must be conceded the honour of first presenting it in a clear, forensically convincing way. On the incalculable significance of this conception in human history it is unnecessary to dilate. One whole millennium was wholly engrossed with it. And even now, three centuries after the emancipation of the secular intelligence, we should do ill to imagine that we are within measurable distance of the deposition of the Church from its spiritual throne. Signs are not wanting, which the discerning eye can read, that a vast development of the hierarchical principle is in store for mankind. Only, if it is to fulfil its divinely-appointed mission, it must ally itself, not with any particular or partial embodiment of the apostolic spirit, but with the undivided and living WORD OF GOD, as rendered articulate by the consensus of intelligent, truth-seeking humanity.

It may be permitted to a humble learner at the feet of the Church's ancient worthies to express his hope and prayer that the terrible mental unrest of the present time, and the successive disillusionments of competing remedial agencies which our age has witnessed, may ere long give place to a more submissive attitude to that all-loving yet irresistible Power above us, Who is waiting with infinite patience, yet with infinite reserve of strength, to guide His wayward children, if only they will let themselves be guided, into the haven of "rest in the truth."

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