





Sacred Classics' Edition.

LABORE



RELUCENS.

EDITED BY

THE REV. R. CATTERMOLE, B.D.

AND

THE REV. H. STEBBING, M.A.

C

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY;
OR,
THE RELIGION OF THE ANCIENT CHRISTIANS
IN THE
FIRST AGES OF THE GOSPEL.

TO WHICH IS ADDED
AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF PAGANISM UNDER THE
FIRST CHRISTIAN EMPERORS, &c. &c.

BY
WILLIAM CAVE, D.D.

Chaplain to King Charles II.

IN TWO VOLS.—VOL. I.

Ὅτι οὐκ ἐν λόγοις, ἀλλ' ἐν ἔργοις τὰ τῆς ἡμετέρας
θεοσεβείας πράγματα.

Just. Mart. Parænes. ad. Græc. p. 33.

Nos non habitu Sapientiam, sed mente preferimus;
Non eloquimur magna, sed vivimus.

Minuc. Fel. Dial. pag. 31.

WITH AN
INTRODUCTORY ESSAY, AND NOTES,

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM TROLLOPE, M. A.

A NEW EDITION.
MDCCCXXXIX.

323214
—
10. 1. 36.

LONDON:
JOSEPH RICKERBY, SHERBOURN LANE,
KING WILLIAM STREET, CITY.

THE HISTORY OF THE

ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

FROM ITS INSTITUTION TO THE PRESENT TIME

BY JOHN HENRY BURNETT

ESQ. F.R.S.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME I.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY JOSEPH RICKERBY,

SHERBOURN LANE.

1841.

Price 10s.

Half-bound in leather, 12s.

Half-bound in cloth, 8s.

Bound in cloth, 6s.

Bound in paper, 4s.

Bound in vellum, 15s.

Bound in morocco, 18s.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

IN a perusal of Dr. Cave's *PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY*, the attention of the reader is constantly directed to the gross and unfounded calumnies which were cast upon the character, the morals, and the religion of the first believers. While some of the terms of reproach which were used against them, originated even in the miseries to which they were exposed by their enemies; there were others of a more gross, though much more harmless nature, inasmuch as the well-known purity of their morals, both in public and in private life, affords a full refutation of the crimes alleged against them. Indeed it appears wonderful how such unfounded reports, to the detriment of the Christian cause, could gain credit, when we observe that, upon the most strict inquiries, their conduct was universally found to be unimpeachable. Pliny bears the most decisive testimony to their virtues; a fact which Tertullian brings forward as the most solid proof of

their uprightness and integrity.¹ Trypho, the Jew, likewise readily admits, that the charges against the Christians were unworthy of belief;² and as Celsus is silent upon the subject, it is most probable that he also considered them as perfectly groundless. The authority of Trypho may, perhaps, be questioned, as it rests merely upon the word of Justin; but it is not likely that he would have stated it as Trypho's conviction, if such had not been the general opinion of the Jews at the time.

Now whatever may have been the dangers³ to which the Gospel was exposed by the industrious circulation of these gross calumnies in its

¹ Plin. Epist. x. 97, Tertull. Apol. c. 2.

² Just. Dialog. cum Tryphone Judaico; §. 1.

³ There can be no doubt but that the Christians suffered greatly in consequence of these calumnies. Indeed we find them introducing into the public worship certain heathen rites and ceremonies, which might seem to have a tendency to remove some part of the malice with which they were assailed. (Mosheim's Eccl. Hist. Cent. 2, part. ii. c. 4, §. 3.) But, perhaps, among people so completely immersed in superstition as were the ancient heathens, nothing would be more prejudicial to the increase of the religion of Christ, than the custom which prevailed of publicly cursing the new converts to the faith. Three times in the day were anathemas passed upon them, in the synagogues or religious assemblies, under the appellation of *Nazarenes* (Jerom. Comment. in Esaiam; as quoted by Bingham. Antiq. b. i. c. 2.): a title applied in very early times, as a term of reproach to the Christians; though perhaps they did not themselves consider it as such, till after the rise of the heresy so denominated.

infancy, they are more than counterbalanced by the benefits which succeeding ages have derived from them. Had the primitive church met with no opposition of this kind, we should have been deprived of many of those eloquent defences of Christianity, which appeared during the early stages of its progress. By means of these Apologies, we are enabled to trace the evidences of our faith to their highest source, and to produce unequivocal testimony to the authenticity and genuineness of our holy records. Nor is this all. The calumnies and reproaches are in themselves a confirmation of the truth and divine origin of the gospel dispensation. They exhibit a striking fulfilment of many Scriptural predictions; especially of those in which our Saviour describes the sufferings of his apostles, and the circumstances under which his doctrine would be propagated and established in the world; and they afford a valuable commentary in illustration of that simple record, in which the Jews of Rome are mentioned as knowing nothing of the sect of the Nazarenes, but that it was "everywhere spoken against."¹

It will appear also from the following pages, that there were other and more dangerous obstacles with which the primitive church had to struggle, than those arising from calumny and misrepresen-

¹ Acts, xxiv. 5; xxviii. 22.

tation. There was not a public calamity, and indeed scarcely a private misfortune of any illustrious individual, of which the cause was not directly or indirectly charged upon the Christians. Hence arose those ten successive persecutions, which threatened to obliterate Christianity by the extirpation of its professors; and which it not only survived, but with an elasticity peculiarly its own, rose with new vigour from the shock, so that its progress was melancholy indeed, but rapid and unprecedented. While the follower of every other creed was allowed to enjoy his opinions without fear of molestation, the persevering Christian was dragged to the torture and to death, willing rather to forfeit his existence than forsake his Redeemer. Nor were these cruel and disgraceful barbarities confined to the reigns of the more hardened tyrants, the Neros and Domitians; the milder, and in other respects virtuous emperors, felt no compunctions when they beheld the unexampled sufferings of the martyred Christian. Even the philosophic Antonine attributed the heroism and firmness displayed by the martyrs, to an *obstinate* perseverance in error and delusion.¹ Nor is he singular in this respect. It is remarkable, that many of the most eminent characters of antiquity referred the intrepid perseverance of the early Christians to the same unwor-

¹ M. Anton. Philos. de Seipso: lib. ii. c. 3.

thy motive. Pliny, in the passage already cited, at the same time that he bears implicit testimony to the good conduct and virtue of the Christians with whom he had any connexion, considers their *perverseness* alone, as a sufficient justification of any punishment that might be inflicted upon them. But very different was the result of the contemplative and unbiased research of the candid and dispassionate enquirer. In vain did he examine the annals of philosophy to procure a single instance of heroic courage, that would bear a comparison with the fortitude of the Christian martyr. When therefore he beheld the willing sufferer press forward to meet death, rather than forsake his profession ;—when he saw women and even children display the most intrepid firmness in defence of their religion ;—when he witnessed the most excruciating pangs endured by the sincere believer ;—he was at once divested of every vulgar prejudice, and readily assigned such extraordinary effects to their only sufficient cause.¹

It was also a common artifice, when every other

¹ Justin Martyr, who was a follower of Plato's philosophy previous to his conversion to Christianity, and had embraced the faith from a conviction of its truth, speaks of the Christian martyrs in these terms (Apol. ii. §. 12. p. 30.): *Αὐτὸς καὶ ἐγὼ, τοῖς Πλάτωνος χαίρων διδάγμασι, διαβαλλομένους ἀκούων Χριστιανούς, ὁρῶν δὲ ἀφόβους πρὸς θάνατον, καὶ πάντα τα ἄλλα νομιζόμενα φόβερα, ἐννόουν ἀδύνατον εἶναι ἐν κακίᾳ καὶ φιληδονίᾳ ὑπάρκειν αὐτούς.*

expedient failed, to accuse the Christians of forming dangerous conspiracies against the state. Their private meetings for the purpose of divine worship, and the frequent occurrence of their *agapæ* or love-feasts, as they were called, supplied their enemies with a ready means of exciting the suspicions of the Roman government. It was of no avail to plead innocence and integrity, when the jealousy of the state, backed as it was by prejudice, was once inflamed against them. Although an appearance of justice was kept up at the trials which were instituted against the Christians on these and other occasions, there were not many instances of escape from death, and *few indeed* from torture. Even the partial historian of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," though he affirms that "punishment was not the inevitable consequence of conviction," and endeavours to diminish the number of the early martyrs, unwillingly allows, that a recantation afforded almost the only chance of actual acquittal.²

When therefore we consider the circumstances which attended the first rise and promulgation of the gospel; when we reflect upon the dangers which the primitive Christians had to encounter, the calumnies with which they were overwhelmed, and the artifices which they had to elude; and

¹ Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, c. xvi.

when we contemplate on the other hand, the wonderful propagation of the new religion, and its general reception, as the established worship of the Roman empire about three hundred years after the death of its founder; it is impossible to attribute an effect so unprecedented and surprising to any other than a supernatural cause. The rapid progress of Christianity has been repeatedly, and from the earliest times, produced as an argument for its truth; for it is an argument, which carries in its very front the most decisive proof of divine agency. If the *foolish* things of the world were able to confound the *wise*; and the *weak* things of the world to confound the things that were *mighty*; and *base* things of the world, and things which are *despised*, and things which *are not*, to bring to nought things *which are*; ¹ it must have been "because God had chosen them for the purpose, and endued them with the power."²

Still it was not, perhaps, this spirit of vindictive intolerance which opposed the most formidable obstacles to the cause of Christianity. The horrors of persecution will frequently defeat the purpose which it is their object to promote. Men will either avert the blow of the executioner, by a pretended or temporary compliance with the injunctions forced upon them; or by a persevering and

¹ 1 Cor. i. 27.

² Benson's Hulsean Lectures for 1820.

undaunted constancy defy the most ingenious and cruel tortures. But the insinuations of sophistry, and the sneers of contempt, will frequently effect a purpose which has defied the most assiduous attacks of open violence. The influence of ridicule, particularly upon the minds of the unlettered and the uninformed, is sufficiently known; and the devices of specious eloquence have worked a change in the opinions of many who have been most distinguished by their intellectual acquirements. Now, if ever the weapons of subtle reasoning and biting sarcasm were employed with sure and certain aim, it was at the time when Christianity first proclaimed its glorious tidings to the world. In the midst of the most debasing luxury and licentiousness, and a total depravity of morals, there still existed a passionate regard for literature; and philosophy was cultivated with more than ordinary attention. The schools of the contending sects were daily crowded with disputants, who maintained their respective tenets with all the ardour of zeal and emulation. But however they might differ on particular subjects of philosophic inquiry, all of them unanimously concurred in the most indefatigable exertions to counteract the progress of the Christian doctrine. The most conspicuous supporters of the rival systems, whether for acquired knowledge or natural talent, employed their learning and their wit in coining objections,

and composing treatises, against the Gospel. The principal writings, which originated in this determined opposition to the religion of Jesus, are those of Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian,¹ which appeared in the second, third, and fourth centuries respectively, and they exhibit the most decisive marks of refined, though perverted genius. There were others also, who were no less industrious in promoting the same object: among whom were Hierocles, who was answered by Eusebius; Fronto, mentioned in Minucius Felix; and the author of the *Philopatris*, generally supposed to be Lucian. These, however, seem merely to have revived the objections of their more formidable predecessors, and indeed the leading arguments against the faith even at the present day may be traced, for the most part, to the same origin. They have been new modelled according to the circumstances of the period in which they have been brought forward; but the foundations upon which they are built, are as old as the first æra of the Gospel. It may, there-

¹ These three writers have been always regarded as the chief opponents of the Gospel, and as such are generally mentioned without noticing any others. Jerome, in the preface to his work de Script. Ecclesiast. speaks thus: "Discant ergo Celsus, Porphyrius, Julianus, rabidi adversus Christum canes, discant eorum sectatores," &c. &c.; mentioning these three by name, and looking upon all others as *followers* of them. Eusebius says of Hierocles, that all his arguments had been answered by Origen in his reply to Celsus. (*Contra Hierocl.* p. 311.)

fore, be advantageous, as the subject is closely connected with the history of "Primitive Christianity," to take a passing glance at those writers who were the first to wield the pen against the simple, yet invincible, evidence of Gospel truth.

Of the three great anti-christian philosophers, the first in point of time is Celsus.¹ This learned and ingenious, but at the same time virulent and artful infidel, flourished towards the close of the second century, and attacked the Christian religion in a treatise, entitled "The True Word." It seems to have been a work consisting of specious arguments against the gospels, strung together without regard to connexion or arrangement. It was most probably from this cause, that Origen's answer, from which we collect all that remains of the writings of his adversary, is written with a similar inattention to order and design. He professes to follow Celsus regularly throughout his work; and it is not probable that he has left any material objection unanswered. Upon the most cursory perusal of this ancient Father, we cannot but admire the delightful contrast between the malevolence and misrepresentation of the infidel; and the forbearance, charity, and candour of the Christian disputant. The work of Origen, which has been

¹ He lived about A. D. 176, near the end of the reign of Marcus Antoninus. Origen, who answered his work against Christians, wrote about fifty years after.

justly regarded¹ “as the most complete and polished Apology for the Christian Religion which the ancients have left us,” is divided into eight books. Probably this division was adopted from a similar one in the work of his adversary. Independently of the value of his refutations of the cavils and calumnies of his opponent, we may collect, from the large portion of the work of Celsus preserved by him, the most curious and remarkable attestations to the *authenticity, genuineness, and antiquity* of the books of the New Testament; and, as the evidence of our religion materially depends upon the genuineness of our sacred records, of which the best, and perhaps the only complete support is ancient testimony, it will be equally important and interesting to collect and arrange the proofs, which Celsus affords on this important head.

In different parts of his works we have the various circumstances of our Saviour's life, either clearly alluded to, or directly recorded. The miraculous conception is mentioned with a view of accusing the Virgin Mary of adultery.² We also recognize Joseph's intention of putting her away,³ and the consequent appearance of the angel warning him in a dream to take her as his wife.⁴ We meet with a reference to the star which was seen at Christ's birth, and the adoration paid to the new-born

¹ By Du Pin.

² Lib. i. p. 22.

³ Lib. i. p. 22.

⁴ Lib. v. p. 266.

Saviour by the magi at Bethlehem.¹ The murder of the infants by Herod,² in consequence of his being deceived by the wise men, is noticed; as also the re-appearance of the angel to Joseph,³ and his consequent flight into Egypt.⁴ Again we are informed of the descent of the Spirit in the form of a dove,⁵ and the voice from heaven at the baptism of our Saviour in Jordan.⁶ We hear also of the temptation in the wilderness;⁷ and we are told, that Christ was constantly attended by a certain number of disciples, though the number is not correct.⁸ There is an allusion to our Saviour's conversation with the woman of Samaria at the well;⁹ and a reference less distinct to the attempt of the people of Nazareth to throw him down the rock, on which their city was built.¹⁰ Celsus also pretends, as Origen informs us, to believe the *miracles* of Christ; and those of healing the sick, feeding five thousand men, and raising the dead, are expressly mentioned, though they are attributed to magical influence.¹¹ Several passages also in our Saviour's sermon on the Mount are quoted *verbatim*;¹² and his *predictions* relating to

¹ Lib. i. p. 31.

² Lib. i. p. 45.

³ Lib. i. p. 51.

⁴ Lib. i. p. 22, 30.

⁵ Lib. i. p. 31.

⁶ Lib. ii. p. 105.

⁷ Lib. vi. p. 303.

⁸ Lib. i. p. 47.

⁹ Lib. i. p. 55.

¹⁰ Lib. vi. p. 298.

¹¹ Lib. i. p. 53.

¹² Particularly the comparison of the lilies of the field, lib. vii. p. 343; the precept, 'if thy enemy smite thee on one cheek, to

his sufferings, death, and resurrection are recorded.¹ Nor are the *closing* scenes of our blessed Lord's ministry noticed with less exactness. We meet with the treachery of Judas, and Peter's denial of his Master;² we are informed that Christ was bound, insulted,³ beaten with rods, and crucified;⁴ we read of the gall, which was given him to eat, and the vinegar to drink;⁵ and we are insulted with an unfeeling jest upon the blood and water that flowed from our dying Redemer's side.⁶ This writer mentions also some words, which were uttered by Christ on the cross, and alludes to the earthquake and darkness that immediately followed the crucifixion.⁷ There is also mention made of the appearance of the angels at the sepulchre,⁸ and of the manifestation of Christ to Mary Magdalen,⁹ and the disciples,¹⁰ after his resurrection.

Such are many of the facts relating to the ministry and life of our Saviour, as preserved in the remaining part of the works of the author before us. And who was this author? He was an

turn to him the other,' lib. vii. p. 370; and the impossibility of serving two masters, lib. viii. p. 386. The simile of a camel passing through the eye of a needle is also noticed, lib. vi. p. 286.

¹ Lib. ii. pp. 67, 93. ² Lib. ii. p. 7. ³ Lib. vi. p. 282.

⁴ Lib. ii. pp. 79, 81. ⁵ Lib. iv. p. 174; ii. p. 82.

⁶ Lib. ii. p. 82. ⁷ Lib. ii. p. 94. ⁸ Lib. ii. p. 266.

⁹ Lib. ii. p. 94. ¹⁰ Lib. ii. p. 104.

infidel writer, and one of the greatest enemies with whom Christianity ever had to contend. Now, testimony such as the above, to the facts recorded in the New Testament, would be strong proof of the truth of the Gospel, even if recorded by a friend to the cause, or, at least, if recorded by an indifferent writer. But when it comes from the pen of a professed enemy, who, as such, would have denied the facts, had there been any room for so doing, the force of it is almost irresistible. For Celsus never once hints that the history itself is false; but endeavours, from the facts themselves, to disprove the credibility of the Gospel. And the value of this testimony is infinitely increased, by taking into account the time at which the writer lived; which was very little more than a century after the period at which the events themselves happened. He had, therefore, ample means of satisfying himself of the truth of the facts on which he comments; and it is not easily credible that he would have neglected those means, since the mere circumstance of a falsity in the narrative would at once invalidate the testimony of the evangelists, and thus overthrow the religion which that testimony has established.

In his remaining work, Celsus never quotes the evangelists by name; but at the same time he makes no objection to the genuineness of their

Gospels. Indeed he acknowledges them to have been "written by the disciples of Jesus,"¹ which is itself a presumption that they were the works of the persons whose names they bear. And it is also certain, that the Gospels which we have, are the same as those with which Celsus was acquainted; for he quotes from these, and he quotes from no others. This then establishes their antiquity, and also the high respect in which they were held by the primitive Christians. For Celsus himself, as above stated, lived shortly after they were written; and he would not have been so anxious to throw them into disrepute, unless they had been looked upon as books of authority by the professors of the religion which he attacked.²

Near the close of the third century flourished Porphyry,³ a less powerful perhaps, though not less malignant, adversary of the Christian faith than Celsus. His works appear to have been very numerous, and most of them replete with invective against Christ and his followers. The treatise, which he composed professedly against Christianity, was comprised in fifteen books; of which, however, only a few fragments remain, and those are to be collected only from the writings in which they are quoted for the purpose of refutation. Its loss

¹ Lib. i. p. 77.

² See Paley's Evidences, Part i. Prop. 1. ch. ix. §. 9.

³ Porphyry flourished about the year 270.

may chiefly be attributed to the great detestation in which this writer was held by the primitive church; and which gave rise to the repeated edicts for destroying his works, when the profession of Christianity became general.¹ The little, however, that does remain, is sufficient to convince us, that Porphyry attacked the Christian cause with more malignity than judgment. He reviled the Christians as the authors of every national calamity, and endeavoured, by his scandalous insinuations, to inflame the multitude against them.² He represented the apostles as deceivers, and imputed their exertions in the cause of Christianity to motives of worldly interest.³ Had he been directed in his assertions by the sober dictates of reason, instead of the virulent suggestions of intemperate malice, he must have been led to a far different conclusion. What possible advantage could a few poor, illiterate fishermen expect to derive from the publication of a religion which destroyed the hopes, and opposed the prejudices of the world? They had already witnessed the crucifixion of their Master, and could his servants expect a better fate? Besides, at the time when Porphyry lived, many of themselves had sealed their faith with their blood.

¹ Lardner's *Jewish and Heathen Testimonies*; chap. xxxvii.

² Euseb. *Præp. Evan.* v. 1. as quoted by Lardner, in *Jewish and Heathen Testimonies*, c. xxxvii. §. 9.

³ Lardner, c. xxxvii. §. 9.

The twelfth book of the work against Christians was written against the prophet Daniel. In establishing the truth of Christianity, the early Fathers laid greater stress on the evidence from prophecy, than on that from miracles, in consequence of a very general practice among pagans of attributing the latter to the agency of magic. Porphyry was well aware of this, and therefore endeavoured to weaken the prophetic part of the Christian evidence. With this view he pretended to doubt the genuineness of the Book of Daniel,¹ and affected to prove, that the prophecies were written after the events which they foretold, by a person who lived in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. He founded his argument upon the exact coincidence between the prophecy and the history. From this agreement, instead of inferring the supernatural inspiration of the prophet, he arbitrarily assumed the impossibility of foreseeing future events, and thence concluded that the history preceded the prophecy.² Jerome, in his Commentary upon the book of Daniel, has answered, with great learning and perspicuity, the various charges of this writer; and declares that his objections afford

¹ Jerom. Proœm. Comment. in Daniel. Collins, in his 'Scheme of Literal Prophecy,' has followed the steps of Porphyry. See his eleven objections answered in bishop Newton's *Dissertations on Prophecy*, vol. i. p. 303—310.

² Prideaux's *Connection*, part ii. b. iii. B. C. 164.

decisive evidence of the prophet's inspiration.¹ Certain it is that the argument of Porphyry is of the greatest importance in these latter days of the Gospel; for, if it had been reserved to an after period, it might have been more difficult of refutation. Most of the works which were consulted by Porphyry to confirm his assertions, and by Jerome to refute them, are now lost;² so that had the argument been left to be handled in these days, though we might have had adequate, we should not have had so abundant, means for the task. But the objection being stated in an early age, it has been satisfactorily refuted to our hands by persons more competent for the undertaking. A like observation is applicable to the objection to *miracles*, which had been *seen* by persons but few generations older than the objectors. Miracles could not be denied by the infidels of the primitive ages, as they are by those of the present day; for the public records would have convicted them. Their only resource was to attribute them to demoniacal or magical agency; and to this, as in our Saviour's time, they constantly resorted

In Porphyry's work, as in that of Celsus, there are continual references to the books of the New Testa-

¹ "Cujus impugnatio testimonium veritatis est. Tanta enim dictorum fides est, ut Propheta incredulis hominibus non videatur futura dixisse, sed narrasse præterita."—Jerom. Proœm. Comment. in Daniel.

² Prideaux, ubi supra.

ment, which afford ample testimony to their genuineness and authenticity. The facts quoted are the same with those recorded in the histories which are now extant; and nothing is alluded to which is not to be found there.¹ It may be added, that the importance of this testimony of Porphyry is perhaps greater than that of any other heathen writer who has noticed our Scriptures. For he was not only a philosopher, but an historian also. He had been conversant with Christians in Tyre, in Sicily, and at Rome; so that if any man ever had an opportunity of making himself acquainted with the affairs and history of Christ and his followers, Porphyry was the man. And yet this virulent enemy of our holy faith has not pointed out a single inaccuracy in our Sacred Writings, although he has attacked them with greater malignity than almost any other writer. Could Christianity seek for greater evidence to its truth, even in the writings of its most avowed and zealous advocates and apologists?

In the emperor Julian, who flourished² in the fourth century of the Christian æra, the church had to contend with the learning of a philosopher, backed by the influence of imperial authority. In the former character, Julian was no mean adver-

¹ See Paley's Evidences, Prop. 1. c. iv. §. 9.

² A. D. 362.

sary, as he had formerly at least pretended to embrace the Christian faith, and was therefore well acquainted with the doctrines and the practice of believers. His work² against them seems to have been designed, as a complete confutation of the Jewish and Christian religions; as in the answer, which Cyril has left us, there are to be found many passages both from the Old and New Testament; and his objections are severally directed against Moses and the Jews, and against Christ and his disciples. "The pagans," observes his French translator, "preferred it to every thing, and with their Julian in their hands went forth to attack the Christians. Superficial minds took, as usual, witticisms for reasons, trite sophistries for incontrovertible arguments, and the frequent quotations from Scripture, with which the author paraded, as a proof that he was deeply versed in sacred literature, and that he had not ceased to believe it without knowledge of the cause."² They rather prove the general belief which prevailed in his time, that the Gospels were written by those whose names they bear, since he mentions the four evangelists expressly by name, as writers of the history of Christ, and without any suspicion whatever of the authenticity

¹ It was divided into seven books, according to Jerome (Epist. 84.) Cyril was acquainted but with three (Præf. p. 3.)

² See Duncombe's Preface to the Select Works of Julian.

of their narratives.¹ He tells us further, that the history of Jesus, which was doubtless no other than the history contained in those Gospels, had been believed for about 300 years.² And that these Gospels are the same which we have at the present day, is evident from the passages, to which he refers, being found in our books, and from his referring to nothing which they do not contain.

But besides Julian's hostility to Christianity evinced by his writings, he omitted no artifice to delude, and spared no reward to entice, the professors of Christianity to forsake the religion of the cross. A seasonable conversion from Christianity to paganism would procure a candidate an immediate election, and frequently expiate the guilt of a criminal. On receiving the homage of the soldiery on the days of a public festival, the symbols of war, of majesty, and superstition were so dexterously blended, that the subject must either have foregone his loyalty to his sovereign, or forfeited the blessing of his God.³ It would seem almost incredible, if the fact was not indisputable, that a man, who has been exalted above some of the most distinguished characters of antiquity, could conde-

¹ Cyril. contra Julianum, p. 327, A. The edition used is that of Spanheim; Lipsiæ, 1696.

² Ibid. p. 191. D.

³ See Gibbon, ubi supra.

scend to such petty tricks and unworthy devices to overthrow a religion, which had already withstood the most inveterate attacks of sophistry and persecution. He even went so far as to interdict the Christians from giving and receiving instruction in polite literature.¹ The edict, in which this unjustifiable restraint was imposed upon them, has been censured by those who regard the emperor in all other respects with esteem and admiration.² "His more immediate design in this," says Warburton, "was to hinder the youth from taking impressions to the disadvantage of paganism; his remoter view to deprive Christianity of the support of human literature." Not content with this act of injustice, he endeavoured to extirpate whatever learning already existed among Christians, which is evident from his order to destroy all those writings in the library of the archbishop of Alexandria, which related to the doctrines of the impious Galileans, as he called the professors of the religion of Jesus. Can there be stronger evidence, than the conduct of this emperor affords, to the zeal and ability with which the Christians vindicated their religion from the aspersions of infidelity, and the superior force of the arguments alleged in favour of the Gospel,

¹ Julian. Epist. 42. See Duncombe's Julian, vol. ii. p. 112.

² Ammianus, a great admirer of Julian, calls it a severe decree, *inclemens decretum* (c. 21, p. 10.)

when compared with the paltry sophisms of heathen philosophy?

To crown the whole, with a view to shake the foundations of Christianity to their very base, in the madness of infidel arrogance and pride, Julian endeavoured to contravene the express declaration of Jesus, and to rebuild the city and temple of Jerusalem.¹ Our Saviour's prophecy, relating to the utter destruction of the holy city, was so explicit and so precise, that to restore the temple would be effectually to controvert the strongest evidence in favour of Christianity. But, shall presumptuous man dare to oppose the councils of the Most High? Shall the impotent exertions of a mere mortal presume to defy the arm of Omnipotence? The attempt was as vain as it was impious; and the evidence of the complete failure of the design remains unanswered and unanswerable, to the everlasting triumph of the Gospel, and the utter confusion of infidelity. Such were the attempts of this malignant prince, and his philosophic predecessors, to undermine the Christian religion.

But there is a native lustre in truth, which shines forth with increasing splendour amid the attempts of infidelity to extinguish or obscure its brightness. The dazzling effulgence of the Gospel, whatever have been the exertions of human ingenuity to

¹ See Julian. Epist. 25. The history of this circumstance is too well known to require a narration in this place.

cast a shade around it, has not lost a spark of its primitive glory; but, on the contrary, has burst forth into a far more brilliant flame. As the sword of persecution served but to increase the number and influence of its professors, so have the sophistry and malice of those who attacked it in their writings, been abundantly effective in confirming its pretensions to be received as a divine revelation. Not a volume has been composed to prove its incredibility, which has not confirmed its authenticity; not a line has been indited to expose it to contempt, which has not testified to the purity of its precepts, and the excellence of its doctrines.

It is needless to dwell upon the value of the evidence which is thus afforded to the truth of Christianity, by the very opposition with which the Gospel was assailed at its first promulgation.¹ Had the propagation of our religion been effected without any difficulty;—had its precepts been obeyed, and its doctrines received without any dissent;—but, above all, had its pretensions remained unquestioned, and its divine origin been readily admitted;—we should have wanted at the present day, when unhappily the renewed attempts of infidelity render it most necessary, this important testimony to its truth. We do not say, that the ‘rea-

¹ Origen. cont. Cels. lib. ii. p. 106. ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ἐκ τῶν ὑμετέρων συγγραμμάτων, ἐφ’ οἷς οὐδενὸς ἄλλου μάρτυρος χρῆζομεν αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἑαυτοῖς περιπίπτετε.

son of the hope that is in us' would have been insufficient; for the arguments, which are derived exclusively from our own independent sources, are such as must strike conviction into the breast of every candid enquirer. If, however, the objections which were started in the earlier ages of the Gospel, had been left to the present period of its existence, there certainly might, and would have been a greater difficulty in procuring their refutation. There are no persons in existence at this time who were either witnesses, or companions of the witnesses, of the works of our blessed Lord; and, as has been before observed, many of the documents are lost which would have been necessary for meeting the cavils, to which we have now sufficient answers in the works of the primitive apologists.

It may be objected that, although the authenticity of many, or most, of the facts recorded in the Gospel, is established by the ancient heathen writers, there are still some circumstances which they do not notice at all. To this we reply, that the mention of a part of the history of the New Testament is, in fact, a confirmation of the truth of the whole; the part omitted being implied in that which is preserved. It has been remarked,¹ indeed, that a very complete history of our Lord might be readily collected from the work of Celsus; and the

¹ By Dr. Doddridge.

justice of the observation may be appreciated by the references which have been already made to that author. At all events, ample materials might be procured from the writings of the three great philosophers, whom we have noticed, to form a very probable account of the ministry of Christ. The use to which these quotations were applied, does not in the least invalidate their testimony to the truth of the narratives. The arguments which are founded upon them are frivolous: and so easily and satisfactorily have they been refuted, that the injury which the Gospel has to dread from them is not very formidable. They serve most effectually to show, that insignificant as they are, they are the best that could be brought against it.

The *manner* also, in which the arguments against the Gospel are conducted, is no mean presumption in favour of its truth. The writers admit the existence of facts; but dispute, in a most ingenious way, the causes of the facts. They pile argument upon argument, and sophism upon sophism, when it was in their power to convince themselves of the matter without any argument at all. They had the opportunity of ascertaining by actual observation whether such a place, mentioned in the Gospel, did really exist, and whether its situation was such as therein described. They could inform themselves of the prevalence of any particular

custom alluded to in the New Testament, and they could have consulted eye-witnesses of many of the events which it records. But with such opportunities before them, they never once embraced the most proper, and indeed the most natural means of information. The reason of such conduct must be sufficiently obvious. They knew that any inquiry would at once subvert the cause which they were anxiously labouring to promote.

A due estimate of the force with which the facts brought together by Dr. Cave, in his *PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY*, and other considerations closely allied to them, bear upon the truth of the Gospel, may now be formed. We have brought our remarks no lower than the fourth century of the Christian æra, as it is the evidence of these early times, which carries with it the greatest weight. Christianity is no forgery of later ages. The religion, which we now profess, is the same as that of the primitive believers, and is to be traced in a regular succession of writers from the earliest times to the present day. If it is an imposture, it is an imposture which has been believed and been gaining ground for above one thousand eight hundred years;—a circumstance which carries with it a conviction of its truth. For impostures, and particularly religious impostures, are generally detected in their very rise. False systems of theology may be believed for a time, but they cannot be long followed, at least by the more enlightened. Pa-

ganism it is true was of long duration, but it was not on that account more generally believed. It was credited perhaps by the vulgar; but it was looked upon by the learned as totally false, and was protected by the magistrate merely for its utility.¹ Neither is Mohammedanism an exception; for though that system was certainly embraced by numbers, it nevertheless made its converts by the sword, and left them no time for the examination of its principles. And while the professors of the Romish church are prevented from an inquiry into the nature of their faith, its superstitious absurdities have been sufficiently exposed by those, who do not join her communion.

But amid the wreck of systems and the overthrow of empires, the true catholic church still retains its original splendour. "The gates of hell have not, and will not prevail against it." New opponents have arisen in each succeeding century, and enemies of its pure and holy doctrines have never been wanting to prevent 'the kingdoms of the world, from becoming the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ.' The weapons of the sages of old have been repeatedly sharpened, and their edges directed, if not with more force, at least with greater keenness, against the invincible armour of light. Great would have been the glory of the Christian

¹ Paley readily admits this account of the matter as given by Gibbon. See Evidences, Part i. Prop. 1. c. 1.

cause, if it had lost nothing by the repeated attacks of its foes. What then must be the unexampled splendour of its triumphs, in the continued and decisive victories which it has obtained over its infidel antagonists!

W. T.

GREAT WIGSTON,

Nov. 18, 1834.

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY :

OR,

THE RELIGION OF THE

ANCIENT CHRISTIANS

IN THE

FIRST AGES OF THE GOSPEL.

C O N T E N T S.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.—Page 1.

Things charged upon the primitive Christians, respecting their Religion.

CHAPTER II.—Page 13.

Of the Novelty that was charged upon Christianity.

CHAPTER III.—Page 23.

Things charged upon the Christians, respecting their outward Condition.

CHAPTER IV.—Page 56.

The charges brought against them, respecting their Life and Manners.

CHAPTER V.—Page 71.

Of the positive parts of their Religion: and first of their Piety towards God.

CHAPTER VI.—Page 89.

Of Churches, and places of public Worship in the primitive times.

CHAPTER VII.—Page 114.

Of the Lord's-day, and the Fasts and Festivals of the ancient Church.

CHAPTER VIII.—Page 150.

Of the Persons constituting the Body of the Church, both people and ministers.

CHAPTER IX.—Page 181.

Of their usual Worship, both private and public.

CHAPTER X.—Page 204.

Of Baptism, and the administration of it in the primitive Church.

CHAPTER XI.—Page 226.

Of the Lord's Supper, and the administration of it in the ancient Church.

PART II.

THE RELIGION OF THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS,
AS TO THOSE VIRTUES THAT RESPECT
THEMSELVES.

CHAPTER I.—Page 245.

Of their Humility.

CHAPTER II.—Page 256.

Of their Heavenly-mindedness, and Contempt of the World.

CHAPTER III.—Page 267.

Of their Sobriety, in respect of their Garb and Apparel.

CHAPTER IV.—Page 281.

Of their great Temperance and Abstinence.

CHAPTER V.—Page 289.

Of their singular Continence and Chastity.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

I KNOW not whether it may be any satisfaction to the curiosity of the reader, to understand the birth and original of these papers: if it be, let him take this account. No sooner did I arrive at years capable of discerning, but I began to inquire into the grounds of that religion into which I had been baptized: which I soon found to be so noble and excellent; in all its laws, so just and rational; in all its designs, so divine and heavenly; so perfective of the principles, so conducive to the happiness of human nature; a religion so worthy of God, so advantageous to man, built upon such firm and uncontrollable evidence, backed with such proper and powerful arguments; that I was presently convinced of the divinity that resided in it, and concluded with myself (and I thought I had reason so to do) that surely the disciples of this religion must needs be the most excellent persons in the world. But, alas! a few years' experience of the world let me see, that this was the conclusion of one that had conversed only with books, and the reasonings of his own mind. I had not been long an observer of the manners of men, but I found them generally so debauched and vicious, so cor-

rupt and contrary to the rules of this holy religion, that if a modest and honest heathen was to estimate Christianity by the lives of its professors, he would certainly proscribe it as the vilest religion in the world. Being offended hereat, I resolved 'to stand in the ways and see, and inquire for the good old way, the paths wherein the ancient Christians walked :'¹ for I could not think that this had always been the unhappy fate and portion of Christianity ; and that if the footsteps of true Christian piety and simplicity were anywhere to be found, it must be in those times, "when," as St. Jerome notes, "the blood of Christ was yet warm in the breasts of Christians, and the faith and spirit of religion were more brisk and vigorous."²

In pursuance of this design, I set myself to a more close and diligent reading of the first Fathers and ancient monuments of the church than ever I had done before, especially for the three or four first centuries : much lower I did not intend to go, because the life and spirit of Christianity did then visibly decline apace ; noting as I went along whatever contributed to my satisfaction in this affair. Had I consulted my own ease and quiet, I might have gone a nearer way to work, and have taken up with what I could have picked up of this nature in modern compilers. But I could not satisfy myself (and I presume it would as little have satisfied the reader) with shreds ; with things taken

¹ Jerem. vi. 16.

² Jerom. ad Demetr. p. 63. tom. i. "Quando Domini nostri adhuc calebat cruor, et fervebat recens in credentibus fides."

upon trust, and borrowed at the second hand. For the same reason I made little use of the spurious and supposititious writings of the Fathers, or of any but such as are of unquestionable credit and authority. And because the testimony of an enemy is ever accounted of great moment and regard, I have been careful to add the testimonies that have been given to Christians and to their religion by the known and professed adversaries of the Christian faith; such as Pliny, Lucian, Porphyry, Julian, &c. more whereof we might have been furnished with, had those writings of theirs against the Christian religion been extant, which the zeal of the first Christian princes industriously banished out of the world. What other authors of later date I have borrowed any light from in this discourse, I have faithfully noted.

Whether I have discharged myself herein to the satisfaction of the reader, I know not; sure I am, I have endeavoured what I propounded to myself, viz. a specimen of Primitive Christianity, in some of the most considerable branches and instances of religion. Here he will find a piety active and zealous, shining through the blackest clouds of malice and cruelty; afflicted innocence triumphant, notwithstanding all the powerful or politic attempts of men or devils; a patience unconquerable under the biggest persecutions; a charity truly catholic and unlimited; a simplicity and upright carriage in all transactions; a sobriety and temperance remarkable to the admiration of their enemies; and in short he will here see the divine and

holy precepts of the Christian religion drawn down into action, and the most excellent genius and spirit of the Gospel breathing in the hearts and lives of these good old Christians. Here he will find a real and evident confutation of that senseless and absurd calumny, that was fastened upon Christianity, as if it required no more than an easy and credulous temper of mind; as if under a pretence of kindness and indulgence to sinners, it ministered to all vice and wickedness. Celsus confidently begins the charge. "There be some amongst the Christians (says he) that will neither give nor receive a reason of their faith, who are wont to cry out, 'Do not examine, but believe; and thy faith will save thee;' the wisdom of this world is evil, but foolishness good and useful."¹ Julian carries on the charge somewhat higher, as if the Christian religion were not only content with a naked and an empty faith, but gave encouragement to sin, by assuring its most desperate proselytes of an easy pardon. In the conclusion of his *Cæsars*, we have this universal proclamation, from the son of the emperor Constantine: "Whoever is an adulterer, or a murderer, whoever is an impure profligate wretch, let him come boldly, for I declare that being washed in this water" (baptism) "he shall immediately be cleansed: nay, although he again commit

¹ Orig. adv. Cels. lib. i. p. 8.—Φησὶ δὲ τινὰς μηδὲ βελομένους διδόναι ἢ λαμβάνειν λόγον περὶ ὧν πιστεύουσι, χρῆσθαι τῷ μὴ ἐξετάζει, ἀλλὰ πιστεύουσιν· Καὶ ἡ πίστις σε σώζει σε. Καὶ, κακὸν ἢ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ σοφία, ἀγαθὸν δ' ἡ μωρία.—Vid. lib. vi. p. 282.

those sins, let him but knock his breast, and beat his head, and I will make him clean.”¹ Much to the same purpose Zosimus (as good a friend to Christianity as either of the former) spitefully charges it upon Constantine the Great, that being haunted with the conscience of his prodigious villainies, and having no hopes given him by the Gentile priests of the expiation of his crimes, embraced Christianity, being told, that in the Christian religion “there was a promise of cleansing from all sin, and that as soon as ever any closed with it, pardon would be granted to the most profligate offenders :”² as if Christianity had been nothing else but a receptacle and sanctuary for rogues and villains, where the worst of men might be wicked under hopes of pardon. But how false and groundless (especially as urged and intended by them) this impious charge was, appears from the whole design and tenour of the Gospel, and that more than ordinary vein of piety and strictness that was conspicuous in the lives of its first professors, whereof we have in this treatise given abundant evidence.

To this representation of their lives and man-

¹ Julian. Cæsares, p. 53.—“Οσις φθορεύς, ὅσις μαιφόνος, ὅσις εναγής ἢ βδελυρός, ἴτω θαρρῶν, ἀποφανῶ γὰρ αὐτὸν τριτῷ τῷ ὕδατι λέσας, αὐτίκα καθαρόν. Κἄν πάλιν ἔνοχος τοῖς αὐτοῖς γίνηται, δώσω τὸ σῆθος πλήξαντι, ἢ τὴν κεφαλὴν πατάξαντι, καθαρῶ γίνεσθαι.

² Zosim. Hist. lib. ii. p. 434.—Πάσης ἀμαρτάδος ἀναιρετικὴν εἶναί τὴν τῶν χριστιανῶν διωβεβαιώσατο δόξαν· ἢ τῆτο ἔχειν ἐπάγγελμα, τὸ τῆς ἀσεβεῖς μεταλ ἀμβάνοντασ αὐτῆσ, πάσης ἀμαρτίας ἔξω παραχορῆμα καθίσασθαι.

ners, I have added some account concerning the ancient rites and usages of the church; wherein if any one shall meet with something that does not jump with his own humour, he will, I doubt not, have more discretion than to quarrel with me for setting down things as I found them. But in this part I have said the less, partly because this was not the thing I primarily designed, partly because it has been done by others in just discourses. In some few instances I have remarked the corruption and degeneracy of the church of Rome, from the purity and simplicity of the ancient church; and more I could easily have added, but that I studiously avoided controversies; it being no part of my design to enquire, what was the judgment of the Fathers in disputable cases, especially the more abstruse and intricate speculations of theology, but what was their practice, and by what rules and measures they did govern and conduct their lives. The truth is, their creed in the first ages was short and simple, their faith lying then (as Erasmus observes) not so much in nice and numerous articles, as in a good and a holy life.¹

And because there are some writings frequently made use of in this book, the authors whereof could be reduced to no certain date, especially those called the Apostolical Canons and Constitutions, it may not be amiss here briefly to take notice of them. And first for the Canons. As I am far from their opinion who ascribe them to the apostles, so I

¹ Prefat. in Hilur. Oper.

think their great antagonist Mr. Daillé bends the stick as much too far the other way, not allowing them a being in the world till the year 500 or after. The truth doubtless lies between these two. It is evident both from the histories of the church, and many passages in Tertullian, Cyprian, and others, that there were in the most early ages of Christianity frequent synods and councils for settling the doctrine and discipline of the church, though their determinations under that notion be not extant at this day. Part of these synodical decrees, so many of them as concerned the rites and discipline of the church, we may conceive some person of learning and judgment gathered together, probably about the beginning of the third century, and put them (especially the first fifty, for I look not upon the whole eighty-five as of equal value and authority) if not into the same, into some such form and method, wherein we now have them: styling them ecclesiastical or apostolical canons not as if they had been composed by the apostles, but either because containing things consonant to the doctrines and rules delivered by the apostles, or because made up of usages and traditions supposed to be derived from them, or lastly, because made by ancient and apostolic men. That many, if not all, of these canons were some considerable time extant before the first Nicene council, we have great reason to believe from two or three passages amongst many others. St. Basil, giving rules about discipline, appoints a deacon guilty of fornication to be deposed, and thrust

down into the rank of laics, and that in that capacity he might receive the ἀρχαῖος κανὼν,¹ which Balsamon joins with the twenty-fifth canon of the apostles, which treats of the very same affair: and indeed it cannot in probability be meant of any other, partly because there is no ancient canon about the business but that, partly because the same sentence is applied as the reason both in the apostolical and St. Basil's canon, "Thou shalt not punish twice for the same fault;" which clearly shows whence Basil had it, and what he understands by his ancient canon. Theodoret records a letter of Alexander bishop of Alexandria, to another of the same name, bishop of Constantinople, (this letter was written a little before the council of Nice,) where speaking of some bishops, who had received the Arians whom he had excommunicated, into communion he tells him, that herein they had done what the apostolical canon did not allow;² evidently referring to the twelfth and thirteenth canon of the apostles, which state the case about one bishop's receiving those into communion, who had been excommunicated by another. To this let me add, that Constantine in a letter to Eusebius, commends him for refusing to leave his own bishopric to go over to that of Antioch, to which he was chosen, especially because herein he had exactly observed the rule of ecclesiastical discipline, and had kept the commands of God, and

¹ Epist. Canon. ad Amphil. can. 3.

² Hist. Eccles. lib. i. c. 4, p. 5.

the apostolical and ecclesiastical canon;¹ meaning doubtless the fourteenth apostolic canon, which treats about such removes. Nay learned men both formerly and of late have observed divers passages in the Nicene canons themselves, which plainly respect these canons, as might be made appear, (notwithstanding what Daillé has excepted against it,) were this a proper place to discourse of it. This for the canons.

For the Constitutions, they are said to have been composed by St. Clemens, at the instance and by the direction of the apostles. And this wild and extravagant opinion has not wanted its patrons and defenders; but herein deserted by the more modest and moderate of their own party; besides that their apostolicalness (in this sense) is by the learned Daillé everlastingly shattered and broken. But then he sets them at too wide a distance, assigning them to the latter end of the fifth century: when it is clear as the sun that they were extant and in credit with many before the times of Epiphanius (though somewhat altered now from what they were in his time). They were compiled probably out of many lesser *Διδαχαὶ* and *Διατάξεις*, books containing the doctrines and rites that had been delivered and practised by ancient and apostolical persons, or at least vended under their names; but whether, as some conjecture, composed by Clemens Alexandrinus (and thence by an easy mistake ascribed to Clemens Romanus) I am not

¹ De vit. Constant. lib. iii. c. 61, p. 518.

² De Pseudepigr. Ap. lib. ii. c. 17, p. 408.

at leisure to consider. In this class of writers I may reckon Dionysius the Areopagite, absurdly enough asserted by many to be genuine, by Daillé thrust down to the beginning of the sixth century : but most probably thought to have written about the middle of the fourth age, as a person amongst us deservedly of great name and note has shown in his late vindication of Ignatius's epistles.

One thing there is which I cannot but take notice of, it looks so like a piece of vanity and ostentation, that the notes are charged with so many quotations. But whoever considers the nature of my design, will quickly see that it was absolutely necessary, and that it concerned me not to deliver any thing without good authority. This is the reason why I have, where I could, brought them in speaking their own words; though, to avoid as much of the charge as was possible, I omitted the citing authors in their own languages, and only set them down in English, faithfully representing the author's sense, though not always tying myself to a strict and precise translation. How pertinent my quotations are, the reader must judge. I hope he will find them exact, being immediately fetched from the fountain-head; here being very few (if any) that have not been examined more than once.

For the method into which the book is cast, I chose that which to me seemed most apt and proper, following St. Paul's distribution of religion into piety towards God, sobriety towards ourselves, and righteousness towards others. Accordingly I divided the discourse into three parts, respecting

those three great branches of religion ; though the first is much larger than either of the other, by reason of some preliminary chapters, containing a vindication of the Christians from those crimes that were charged upon them ; that so the rubbish being cleared and thrown out of the way, we might have a fairer prospect of their religion afterwards.

And now, if after all this, it shall be inquired, why these papers are made public, as I can give no very good reason, so I will not trouble myself to invent a bad one. It may suffice to intimate, that this discourse (long since drawn up at leisure hours) lay then by me, when a tedious and uncomfortable distemper (whereby I have been taken off from all public service, and the prosecution of severer studies) gave me too much opportunity to look over my papers, and this especially, which peradventure otherwise had never seen the light. Indeed, I must confess I was somewhat the easilier prevailed with to let this discourse pass abroad, that it might appear, that when I could not do what I ought, I was at least willing to do what I could. If he that reads it, shall reap any delight and satisfaction by it, or be in any measure induced to imitate these primitive virtues, I shall think my pains well bestowed : if not, I am not the first, and probably shall not be the last, that has written a book to no purpose.

should be delivered up to the Councils, and scourged in the synagogues, and be brought before kings and governors, and be hated of all men for his name's sake.'¹ Nay, so high should the quarrel arise upon the account of religion, that men should violate some of the nearest laws of nature; 'betray their friends and kinsfolk; the brother delivering up the brother to death, and the father the child, the children rising up against their parents, and causing them to be put to death.'² This he well foresaw (and the event truly answered it) would be the fate of its first appearing in the world: and indeed, considering the present state and circumstances of the world at that time, it could not reasonably be expected, that the Christian religion should meet with a better entertainment. For the genius and nature of its doctrine was such, as was almost impossible to escape the frowns and displeasure of men: a doctrine it was, that called men off from lusts and pleasures, and offered violence to their native inclinations; that required the greatest strictness and severity of life; obliged men 'to deny themselves, to take up their cross,'³ and to follow the steps of a poor crucified Saviour: and that upon little other encouragement at present, than the invisible rewards of another world. It introduced new rites and ceremonies, unknown to those of former ages, and such as did undermine the received and established principles of that religion, that for so many generations had governed the world; it revealed and brought to light such truths, as were not only contrary to the principles of men's education, but many of them above the

¹ Matt. x. 16, 17, 18, 22.² Matt. x. 21.³ Matt. x. 38.

reach of natural comprehension, too deep for the line of human reason to fathom or find out.

Upon these, and such like accounts, Christianity was sure to encounter with mighty prejudices and potent opposition; and so it did; for no sooner did it peep abroad in the world, but it was 'every where spoken against.'¹ Princes and potentates, and the greatest powers and policies of the world, did for some ages confederate and combine together, to extirpate and banish it out of the world: and certainly, if arms and armies, if strength and subtlety, if malice and cruelty could have stifled it, it had been smothered in its infancy and first delivery into the world. But notwithstanding all these oppositions, it still lifted up its head in triumph, and outbraved the fiercest storms of persecution: and as Tertullian told their enemies, "By every exquisite act of cruelty, they did but tempt others to come over to the party; the oftener they were mowed down, the faster they sprang up again, the blood of Christians making the church's soil more fat and fertile."²

Hereupon the great enemy of mankind betook himself to other counsels, and sought to undermine, what he saw he could not carry by open assault and battery. He studied to leaven the minds of men with false and unjust prejudices against Christianity, and to burden it with whole loads of reproaches and defamations, knowing no speedier way to hinder its reception, than to blast its reputation. For this purpose all the arts of spite and malice were mustered up, and Christians confidently charged with all those crimes that could render them and their religion vile and infa-

¹ Acts, xxviii. 22.

² Apol. c. ult. p. 40.

mous. Now the things that were charged upon the Christians, were either such as respected their religion; or such as concerned their outward state and condition; or such as related to their moral carriage and behaviour, with some things relating to the matter or manner of their worship. We shall consider them in order, and how the Christians of those times vindicated themselves from these imputations.

The Christian religion at its first coming abroad into the world, was mainly charged with these two things, *Impiety and Novelty*. For the first, it was commonly cried out against, as a grand piece of *Atheism*: as an affront to their religion, and an undermining the very being and existence of their gods. This is the sum of the charge, as we find it in the ancient Apologists:¹

¹ J. Martyr. Ap. i. p. 47. Athenag. Legat. p. 4. Arnob. lib. i. p. 7. Min. Fel. p. 7. Of all the writings of primitive antiquity, those of the ancient Apologists, in defence of their religion, and in deprecation of the persecutions by which they were assaulted, are at once the most interesting and important. They are interesting, as exhibiting the honest zeal, the unyielding courage, and the sober piety of the writers themselves and those for whom they plead; and they are important details of the habits, the labours, and sufferings of the early Christians, of their doctrine and discipline, and of the arguments by which they set aside the cavils and calumnies of their opponents. Those of *Justin*, *Athenagoras*, *Tertullian*, *Minucius*, and *Arnobius*, still remain to us. In Justin's first Apology, which was addressed to Antoninus Pius, about the year 140, he demonstrates the innocence and purity of the Christians in life and conduct; shows the absurdity of condemning them unheard; adduces the evidences in favour of the Gospel; explains the nature of baptism and the eucharist; and implores the mercy and justice of the emperor. His second Apology, sometimes improperly called the first, was written in the year 162, and addressed to the senate and the people. The beginning is lost; but it contains much that is valuable and instructive; and concludes with an argument in favour of

more particularly Cæcilius, the heathen in Minucius Felix, accuses the Christians for a desperate, undone, and unlawful faction, who by way of contempt did snuff and spit at the mention of their gods, deride their worship, scoff at their priests, and despise their temples, as no better than charnel-houses, and heaps of bones and ashes of the dead. For these, and such-like reasons, the Christians were every where accounted a pack of *Atheists*, and their religion *the Atheism*; and seldom it is that Julian the emperor calls Christianity by any other name. Thus Lucian,¹ bringing in Alexander the impostor, setting up for an oracle-monger, ranks the Christians with Atheists and Epicureans, as those that were especially to be banished from his mysterious rites. In answer to this charge, the Christians pleaded especially these three things:—

First, That the Gentiles were for the most part incompetent judges of such cases as these, as being

Christianity, built upon the constancy of the disciples under persecution. Athenagoras addressed his *Embassy* (*πρεσβεία*) to M. Antoninus, and his son Commodus, about the year 177, or a little later. He shows that the *name* of Christian was their only offence; vindicates them from the calumnies with which they were assailed; and exposes the impiety and folly of Paganism. The Apology of Tertullian leaves his other voluminous works at an immeasurable distance. It was written to the governors of Africa about the beginning of the third century; and bears, in some respects, a strong resemblance to those of Justin, though it is written in a tone of greater vehemence and unrepressed indignation. Minucius Felix, an eminent jurisconsult, wrote a defence of Christianity about A. D. 210, in the form of a dialogue, which he entitled *Octavius*, in honour of a friend, who is the principal character. The dialogue is mainly directed against the errors of idolatry, and ends in the conversion of Cæcilius, the *heathen* interlocutor. Arnobius flourished about A. D. 306. His treatise *Adversus Gentes* is a storehouse of argument against idolatry, and in defence of the Gospel.—ED.

¹ Pseudomant. Tom. ii. p. 888.

almost wholly ignorant of the true state of the Christian doctrine, and therefore unfit to pronounce sentence against it. Thus, when Crescens the philosopher had traduced the Christians, as atheistical and irreligious, Justin Martyr answers,¹ that he talked about things which he did not understand, feigning things of his own head, only to comply with the humour of his seduced disciples and followers; that in reproaching the doctrine of Christ, when he did not understand it, he discovered a most wicked and malignant temper, and showed himself far worse than the most simple and unlearned, who are not wont rashly to bear witness and determine in things not sufficiently known to them: or, if he did understand its greatness and excellency, then he showed himself much more base and disingenuous, in charging upon it what he knew to be false, and concealing his inward sentiments and convictions, for fear, lest he should be suspected to be a Christian. But Justin well knew, that he was miserably unskilful in matters of Christianity, having formerly had conferences and disputations with him about these things; and therefore offered the senate of Rome, (to whom he then presented his Apology,) if they had not heard the sum of it, to hold another conference with him, even before the senate itself; which he thought would be a work worthy of so wise and grave a council. Or, if they had heard it, then he did not doubt but they clearly apprehended how little he understood these things; or, if he did understand them, he knowingly dissembled it to his auditors, not daring to own the truth, as Socrates did in the face of danger:—an evident argument

¹ Just. Martyr. loc. laud.

that he was *οὐ φιλόσοφος, ἀλλὰ φιλόδοξος*, “not a philosopher, but a slave to popular applause and glory.”

Secondly, They did in some sort confess the charge, that according to the vulgar notion which the heathens had of their deities, they were atheists, i. e. strangers and enemies to them;¹ that the gods of the Gentiles were at best but demons, impure and unclean spirits, who had long imposed upon mankind, and by their villanies, sophistries, and arts of terror, had so affrighted the common people, who knew not really what they were, and who judge of things more by appearance than by reason, that they called them gods, and gave to every one of them that name, which the demon was willing to take to himself. And that they really were nothing but devils, fallen and apostate spirits, the Christians evidently manifested at every turn, forcing them to the confessing it, while by prayer and invoking the name of the true God, they drove them out of possessed persons, and therefore trembled to encounter with a Christian, as Octavius triumphingly tells Cæcilius.² They entertained the most absurd and fabulous notions of their gods, and usually ascribed such things to them, as would be accounted an horrible shame and dishonour to any wise and good man, the worship and mysterious rites of many of them being so brutish and filthy, that the honester and severer Romans were ashamed of it, and therefore overturned their altars, and banished them out of the roll of their deities, though their degenerate posterity took them in again, as Tertullian observes.³

¹ J. Mart. Ap. ii. pp. 55, 56. ² M. Fel. p. 23. ³ Apol. p. 7.

Their gods themselves were so impure and beastly, their worship so obscene and detestable, that Julius Firmicus¹ advises them to turn their temples into theatres, where the secrets of their religion may be delivered in scenes; and to make their players priests, and that the common rout might sing the amours, the sports and pastimes, the wantonnesses and impieties of their gods, no places being so fit for such a religion as they. Besides the attributing to them human bodies, with many blemishes and imperfections, and subjection to the miseries of human life, and to the laws of mortality, they could not deny them to have been guilty of the most horrid and prodigious villanies and enormities, revenge and murder, incest and luxury, drunkenness and intemperance, theft and unnatural rebellion against their parents, and such like; of which their own writings were full almost in every page, which served only to corrupt and debauch the minds and manners of youth; as Octavius² tells his adversary, where he pursues this argument at large with great eloquence and reason. Nay, those among them that were most inquisitive and serious, and that entertained more abstract and refined apprehensions of things than the common people, yet could not agree in any fit and rational notion of a Deity; some ridiculously affirming one thing and some another,³ until they were divided into a hundred different opinions, and all of them further distant from the truth, than they were from one another; the vulgar in the meanwhile making gods of the most brutish objects, such as dogs,

¹ De Err. prof. Relig. p. 9.

² Min. Fel. p. 19. Vide Arnob. adv. gent. lib. i. p. 7.

³ Vid. Min. Fel. p. 15, 16.

cats, wolves, goats, hawks, dragons, beetles, crocodiles, &c. This Origen against Celsus particularly charges upon the Egyptians. "When you approach (says he) their sacred places, they have glorious groves and chapels, temples with goodly gates and stately porticoes, and many mysterious and religious ceremonies; but when once you are entered, and got within their temples, you shall see nothing but a cat, or an ape, or a crocodile, or a goat, or a dog, worshipped with the most solemn veneration."¹ Nay, they deified senseless and inanimate things, that had no life or power to help themselves, much less their worshippers,² as herbs, roots, and plants; nay, unmanly and degenerate passions, fear, paleness, &c. They fell down before stumps and statues, which owed all their divinity to the cost and folly of their votaries; despised and trampled on by the sorriest creatures, mice, swallows, &c. who were wont to build nests in the very mouth of their gods, and spiders to perriwig their heads with cobwebs; being forced first to make them, and then make them clean, and to defend and protect them, that they might fear and worship them, as he in Minucius³ wittily derides them: "In whose worship there are (says he) many things that justly deserve to be laughed at, and others that call for pity and compassion." And what wonder now, if the Christians were not in the least ashamed to be called atheists, with respect to such deities, and such a religion as this was?

Thirdly, In the strict and proper notion of atheism, they no less truly than confidently denied the charge, and appealed to their severest adversaries,

¹ Adv. Cels. lib. iii. p. 121.

² Vid. Athanas. Orat. contr. gent.

³ Min. Fel. p. 20.

whether those who owned such principles as they did, could reasonably be styled atheists. None ever pleaded better and more irrefragable arguments for the existence of a supreme infinite Being, who made and governs all things by infinite wisdom and almighty power; none were ever more ready to produce a most clear and candid confession of their faith, as to this grand article of religion than they. "Although we profess ourselves atheists, with respect to those whom you esteem and repute to be gods, (so their apologist tells the senate,¹) yet not in respect of the true God, the parent and fountain of wisdom and righteousness, and all other excellencies and perfections, who is infinitely free from the least contagion or spot of evil. Him, and his only begotten Son (who instructed us and the whole society of good angels in these divine mysteries) and the spirit of prophesy, we worship and adore, honouring them in truth, and with the highest reason, and ready to communicate these things to any one that is willing to learn them, as we ourselves have received them. Can we then be atheists, who worship the great Creator of this world, not with blood, incense, and offerings, (which we are sufficiently taught he stands in no need of,) but exalt him according to our power with prayers and praises, in all the addresses we make to him: believing this to be the only honour that is worthy of him, not to consume the creatures which he has given us for our use, and the comfort of those that want, in the fire by sacrifice; but to approve ourselves thankful to him, and to sing and celebrate

¹ J. Martyr. Ap. i. pp. 56. 60.

rational hymns and sacrifices, pouring out our prayers to him as a grateful return for those many good things which we have received, and do yet expect from him, according to the faith and trust that we have in him." To the same purpose Athenagoras, in his return to this charge: "Diagoras indeed was guilty of the deepest atheism and impiety; but we who separate God from all material being, and affirm him to be eternal and unbegotten, but all matter to be made and corruptible, how unjustly are we branded with impiety? It is true, did we side with Diagoras in denying a Divinity, when there are so many and such powerful arguments from the creation and government of the world, to convince us of the existence of God and religion, then both the guilt and punishment of atheism might deservedly be put upon us. But when our religion acknowledges one God, the maker of the universe, who being uncreate himself, created all things by his word, we are manifestly wronged both in word and deed; both in being charged with it, and in being punished for it."¹ "We are accused (says Arnobius) for introducing profane rites and an impious religion; but tell me, O ye men of reason, how dare you make so rash a charge? To adore the mighty God, the Sovereign of the whole creation, the Governor of the highest powers, to pray to him with the most obsequious reverence; under an afflicted state to lay hold of him with all our powers, to love him, and look up to him; is this a dismal and detestable religion, a religion full of sacrilege and impiety, destroying and defiling all ancient rites? Is this that bold and prodigious

¹ Athen. *Leg. pro Christian.* p. 5.

crime for which your gods are so angry with us, and for which you yourselves do so rage against us, confiscating our estates, banishing our persons, burning, tearing, and racking us to death with such exquisite tortures?¹ We Christians are nothing else but the worshippers of the supreme King and Governor of the world, according as we are taught by Christ our Master. Search, and you will find nothing else in our religion. This is the sum of the whole affair; this the end and design of our divine offices; before him it is that we are wont to prostrate and bow ourselves, him we worship with common and conjoined devotions, from him we beg those things which are just and honest, and such as are not unworthy of him to hear and grant." So little reason had the enemies of Christianity to brand it with the note of atheism and irreligion.

¹ *Contra Gentes*, lib. i. p. 7. "Hocine est, quæso, audax illud facinus et immane, propter quod vos ipsi, cum libido incesserit sæva, exuitis nos bonis, exterminatis patriis sedibus, irrogatis supplicia capitalia, torquetis, dilaceratis, exuritis, et ad extremum nos feris et belluarum laniatibus objectatis?" It should seem that this charge of Atheism was intended to be entirely fatal to the religious hopes of the Christians, and urged as the principal plea for dooming them to torture and death, when brought to the trials instituted against them by the imperial edicts.—ED.

CHAPTER II.

Of the Novelty that was charged upon Christianity.

THIS artifice proving weak and ineffectual, the next charge was its lateness and novelty; that it was an upstart sect, and but of yesterday standing, not known in the world many years before, whereas the religion of the Gentiles had uncontrollably and almost universally obtained from ages and generations; a doctrine newly sprung up, and come as it were from a far country, προσφάτου ὀδένοντος τοῦ κατ' ἡμᾶς λόγου, as it is in Theophilus Antiochenus:¹ a divorce, or rending themselves from the institutions of their ancestors, as Tertulian has it.² This charge begun betimes. When St. Paul preached at Athens, we find this the first thing charged upon him, that he was 'a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection;³ and it was followed with a loud cry in succeeding times. "You are wont to object to us (says Arnobius⁴) that our religion is novel, start up not many days ago, and that you ought not to desert your ancient way, and the religion of your country, to espouse barbarous and foreign rites." And Eusebius⁵ tells us, the heathens were wont to reason thus: "What strange

¹ Lib. iii. p. 119 B.² Ad Nation. lib. i. c. 10. p. 46.³ Acts, xvii. 18.⁴ Lib. ii. p. 40.⁵ Eusebius was bishop of Cæsarea, between the years 320 and 340. His principal works are the "Præparatio Evangelica" in fifteen books; and the "Ecclesiastical History" in ten books, from the birth of Christ to the year A. D. 324. Where his work ends, those of Socrates, Theodoret, and Sozomen begin.—ED

profession of religion is this? what new way life? wherein we can neither discern the rites amongst us used in Greece, nor amongst any sect of the barbarians? Who can deny them to be impious, who have forsaken the customs of their fathers, observed before in all cities and countries, revolting from a way of worship, which had been universally received from all ages both by Greeks and barbarians, entertained both in cities and villages, countenanced and approved by the common vote and consent of all kings, lawmakers, philosophers, and the greatest persons whatsoever?"¹ Nay we may observe, that after Christianity had been settled for some hundreds of years in the world, and was become the prevailing religion, and had in a manner banished all others out of doors, and driven them into corners, yet this charge still continued. Thus Julian the emperor, writing to the people of Alexandria, concerning the Galileans, (so he was wont in scorn to call the Christians,) that "he wondered that any of them durst dwell amongst them, or that they would suffer these despisers of the religion of their country to be in any place amongst them," calls Christianity the "new doctrine that had been preached to the world."² The very same title Lucian had also long since bestowed upon it, where speaking of our Saviour, he calls him "the great man that was crucified in Palestine, who introduced that new religion into the world."³ So Symmachus some years after Julian (a man no less eminent for his parts and eloquence, than for his power and authority, being chief priest and

¹ Prepar. Evang. lib. i. c. ii. p. 5.

² Ep. 51, Oper. Jul. part ii. p. 208.

³ De Mort. Peregrin. Tom ii p. 762.

prefect of Rome) confidently owns to the emperors themselves, though they were Christians, that he did "endeavour to defend the institutions of their ancestors, the settled rights and laws of the country (he means them of religion); that he designed to settle that state of religion, which for so many ages had been profitable to the commonwealth; and therefore begs of them, that what they had received when they were children, now they were old they might leave to their posterity; that they were to be true to the trust that had from so many ages been devolved upon them, and were to follow their parents, as they had happily done their ancestors that had gone before them."¹ So he, pleading the cause of paganism from its antiquity and prescription, obliquely reflects upon the novelism of Christianity: for more he durst not speak, the emperors, to whom he made his address, being themselves Christians.

This indeed must needs be a mighty prejudice against the Christian religion, at its first coming into the world: for all men, as they have a natural reverence for religion, so they have a great veneration for antiquity, the customs and traditions of their fathers, which they entertain as a most inestimable depositum, and for which they look upon themselves as obliged to contend, as for that which is most solemn and sacred. "What more excellent and venerable (says the heathen in Minucius Felix) than to entertain the discipline of our forefathers; to solemnize that religion that has been delivered to us; to worship those gods, the knowledge of whom has been infused into us by our

¹ Symmach. Ep. lib. 10. Ep. 54. ad. Valent. Theod. Arcad. A. A. A. p. 537, 538, 539.

parents; not boldly to determine concerning the deities, but to believe those who have been before us?"¹ To the same purpose Lactantius,² speaking of the heathens: "They go on (says he) most pertinaciously, to maintain and defend the religion derived down to them from their ancestors, not so much considering what it is, as concluding it to be right and good, because the ancients conveyed it to them; nay, so great the power and authority of antiquity, that it is accounted a kind of impiety to question it, or inquire into it."³ Upon these accounts the Gentiles bore so hard upon Christianity, beholding it as a mushroom sect, sprung up of a sudden; and as an incroaching inmate, undermining the established religions of the world.

Now we find two pleas especially, which the Christians made to this indictment:—

First, That the charge was not wholly and universally true, for besides that many principles of Christianity were the same with those of the law of nature, the Christian religion was for substance the same with that of the ancient Jews; whose religion claimed the precedency of all others in the world. That the religion was in substance and effect the same, is expressly asserted and proved by Eusebius: "The ancient Patriarchs were the Christians of the old world, who had the same faith, religion, and worship common with us; nay, the same name too,"⁴ as he endeavours to prove, from

¹ Min. Fel. p. 5.

² Lactantius, the pupil of Arnobius, was an eloquent Christian writer of the fourth century.—ED.

³ Lactant. lib ii. c. 6. p. 171.

⁴ Præpar. Evang. lib. i. c. 5, p. 9, &c.

that, 'Touch not mine anointed,' τῶν Χριστῶν μὲ, my *Christs* or *Christians*.¹ And how far superior in age they were to any thing that is recorded of the most ancient Gentiles, to their oldest writers, Orpheus, Homer, Hesiod; nay, to their very gods themselves, is sufficiently made good by many of the ancient Fathers;² there being at the easiest computation between Moses and Homer, above six hundred years; nay, Cadmus, the first inventor of letters amongst the Grecians, was some ages junior unto Moses.³ Therefore Origen tells Celsus,⁴ that Moses and the prophets were not only more ancient than Plato, but than Homer himself, yea, than the very invention of letters amongst the Grecians; who yet were as proud of their antiquity, as any other nation in the world. Nay, whatever useful and excellent notions the great masters of religion amongst the heathens had amongst them, it is plain they borrowed, or more truly stole them from the writings of the ancients, Jews, as is abundantly demonstrated by Eusebius at large; as before him it had been done by Clemens of Alexandria,⁵ and by Tertullian before them both, who

¹ Ps. cv. 15. Fanciful and incorrect as the Fathers frequently are in their expositions of Scripture, they may still, in most cases, be consulted with advantage; and, at all events, their practical exhortations are the very essence of unaffected piety, honest enthusiasm, and affectionate zeal.—ED.

² Vid. Athen. Leg. pro Christianis, p. 16. Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. i.

³ Placing the Exodus about B. C. 1648, and the age of Homer, according to the most probable computation, being about B. C. 844, Moses should seem to have lived eight hundred and four years before the poet. Cadmus is supposed to have introduced letters into Greece about A. D. 1045.—ED.

⁴ Adv. Cels. lib. vi. p. 279.

⁵ Clement of Alexandria is so called from having been a presbyter and pedagogue in that city. He was tutor of the cele-

shows that all their poets and philosophers had drunk deep of the fountain of the prophets, and had fetched their best doctrines and opinions from thence, though subtly altering and disguising them, to make them look more like their own: so that upon this consideration, the accusation was unjust and false, and Christianity appears the oldest religion in the world.¹

Secondly, Admit the Christian religion, in a more limited and restrained sense, to be of a far later standing than the religion of the Gentiles, yet they pleaded, that it was infinitely reasonable, that they should change for the better, whenever it offered itself to them; that novel truth was better than ancient error, and that they ought not to be eternally bound up in old inveterate customs and principles, when those which were abundantly more reasonable and satisfactory were presented to them. "You tell us (says Clemens of Alexandria) that you may not subvert the customs received from your ancestors: but if so, why then are we not content without any other food than our mother's milk, to which we were accustomed, when we first came into the world: why do we increase or impair our estates, and not rather keep them at the same pitch, just as we received them from our fathers: why have we left off those toys and sports, to which we were wonted while infants and children; but only because years and dis-

brated Origen, by whom he was succeeded at his death, about A. D. 220. His principal works are an *Exhortation to the Gentiles*; eight books entitled *Stromata*; and a treatise, called *The Pedagogue*, in three books.—ED.

¹ Præparat. Evang. lib. x. Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. i. p. 320. Tert. Ap. c. xlvii. Vid. Theod. de curand. Græc. Assect. Serm. 2.

cretion, although we had no other tutor, would make us quit those childish and trifling vanities ?¹ “ That old age (says St. Ambrose²) has true cause to blush, that is ashamed to reform ; it is not multitude of years, but the goodness of manners that makes gray hairs worthy of praise and honour : no age is too late to learn, nor is it shame to grow better.”³ “ What wilt thou do (says Lactantius to the heathen) : wilt thou follow reason or thy ancestors ? If reason, then thou must needs relinquish the authority and institutions of thy forefathers, because that way only can be right, that is warranted and prescribed by reason : but if piety towards thine ancestors sway with thee to follow them, thou must confess, both that they were fools in devoting themselves to a religion contrary to reason, and that thou thyself art unwise and simple, in worshipping what thou art convinced to be false : besides, that they had little reason to boast of those goodly ancestors, to whom they adhered so close, and upon whose authority they did so much depend ; as he goes on to demonstrate in the remaining part of that chapter.”⁴ “ That you object to us the novelty of our religion (so Arnobius) may we not charge some such fault upon the first and most ancient ages of the world, who at first lived in a very poor and mean state ; but by little and little changed it into a more liberal and splendid course of life ? Was it any crime that they changed their beast-skins into more comely and convenient

¹ Admonit. ad Gent. p. 57.

² He was bishop of Milan, towards the close of the fourth century.—ED.

³ Ambros. Ep. 2. contr. Symmach. inter Ep. Symmach. p. 562.

⁴ Lactant. loco supra laudato.

garments, or that they were no longer fond of their thatched cottages, or chose to dwell like wild beasts in rocks and caverns, when they had learned to build better habitations? It is natural to all mankind to prefer better before what is worse, profitable before what is useless, and to seek after what we are assured is more grateful and excellent. Therefore when you charge us with apostacy from the religion of the ancients, you should rather consider the cause than the action, and not so much upbraid us with what we have left, as examine what it is we have entertained. For if merely to change our opinion, and to pass from ancient institutions to what is more late and new, be a fault and crime; then none so guilty of the charge as yourselves, who have so oft changed your manners and course of life, and by embracing new rites and customs, have condemned those that went before.”¹ This he there makes good by particular instances: and the same answer St. Ambrose gives to Symmachus: “If nothing but ancient rites will please you, how comes it to pass, that there has been a succession of new and foreign rites even in Rome itself;” of which he gives him many particular examples. In short, Arnobius wittily argues thus:—“Our way of religion (you say) is new, and your’s ancient: and what does this either hurt our cause, or help your’s? If our’s be new, it will in time become old; is your’s old, there was a time when it was new. The goodness and authority of religion is not to be valued by length of time, but by the excellency of its worship; nor does it become us to consider so much when it began, as what it is we worship.”²

¹ Adv. Gent. lib. ii. p. 40, 41.

² Ib. p. 42.

It may not be impertinent in this place to take notice of what the heathens objected as a branch of this charge: that, if God's sending Christ into the world was so great a blessing, why did this Saviour of mankind come no sooner, to reveal this religion, to lead men into the truth, to tell the world who this true God was, and to reduce us to the adoration of him? If so, why did God suffer him to stay so long, and to be born as it were but a few hours before, in comparison of the preceding ages of the world? To this Arnobius¹ answers, with a great deal of modesty and reason, that "he could not tell; that it were easy to retort the same captious question upon them. If it were so much to the benefit of the world, that Hercules, Æsculapius, Mercury, &c. should be gods, why were they born and deified no sooner, that not only posterity, but antiquity, might have reaped advantage by them? If there was reason in one case, then there was also in the other; but to assign proper and particular reasons was not possible; it not being within the power of such a short-sighted creature, as man is, to fathom the depth of the Divine councils, or to discover by what ways or methods he disposes his affairs; these things being known only to him who is the grand Parent, the Sovereign Lord and Governor of all things. Although we are not able to assign the cause why a thing comes to pass in this or that particular manner, yet this concludes never a whit the more, that the thing is not so, or that it is less credible, when it has otherwise the most clear and unquestionable evi-

¹ Adv. Gent. p. 43. vid. Greg. Nyss. Orat. Catechet. c. 29. tom. ii. p. 521.

dence and demonstration." More particularly he answers, that "our Saviour cannot be said to have been lately sent in respect of God, because in respect of eternity there is nothing late; where there is neither beginning nor end, there can be nothing too soon, nothing too late. Time indeed is transacted by parts and terms, but these have no place in a perpetual and uninterrupted series of eternal ages. What if that state of things, to which he came to bring relief, required that season of time to come in? what if the condition of ancient and modern times were in this case not alike, or called for somewhat different methods of cure? It may be the great God then chose to send Christ, when the state of mankind was more broken and shattered, and human nature become more weak and unable to help itself. This we are sure of, that if what so lately came to pass had been necessary to have been done some thousands of years ago, the supreme Creator would have done it: or, had it been necessary to have been done thousands of years hence, nothing could have forced God to have anticipated the settled periods of time one moment; for all his actions are managed by fixed and eternal reasons, and what he has once determined, cannot be frustrated by any change or alteration." And thus we see how easily, and yet how satisfactorily, the primitive Christians wiped off that double imputation of impiety and novelty, which the Gentiles had so undeservedly cast upon their religion.

CHAPTER III.

Things charged upon the Christians, respecting their outward Condition.

THE second sort of arts which the enemies of Christianity made use of to render Christians vile and despicable, related to the circumstances of their external state and condition in the world; where two things were laid to their charge: that they generally were a very mean and inconsiderable sort of men, and that they were an useless and unserviceable people; nay, pernicious and mischievous to the world. They were looked upon as the lowest and meanest rank of men; persons neither considerable for their parts and learning, or for their estates and quality. Inconsiderable they were accounted in respect of parts and learning. "You scorn and spit us out as rude and simple, and think that the treasury of all divine and excellent knowledge is open only to yourselves;" as Arnobius tells them.¹ Thus Celsus objected,² that amongst the Christians no wise and learned men were admitted to the mysteries of their religion. "Let no man come that is learned, wise, and prudent (for these things, says he, they account evil and unlawful); but if any be unlearned, an infant or an idiot, let him come and welcome:" openly declaring, that none but fools, and such as are devoid of sense and reason, slaves, silly women, and little children, are

¹ Adv. Gent. lib. iii. p. 49.

² Orig. contra Cels. lib. iii. p. 137.

fit disciples for the God they worship. " We may observe (says he) these trifling and mountebank impostors, bragging great things to the vulgar, not in the presence and company of wise men (for that they dare not): but wherever they espy a flock of boys, slaves, and weak simple people, there they presently crowd in, and boast themselves. You shall see (as he goes on in this charge) weavers, tailors, fullers, and the most rustic and illiterate fellows, at home, when before their elders and betters, as mute as fishes; but when they can get a few children and silly women by themselves, then who so wise and learned, who so full of talk, and so able to teach and instruct as they?"¹ Much to the same purpose Cæcilius discourses in Minucius Felix, that " the Christians were men of a desperate and unlawful faction, who, gathering a company out of the very dregs and refuse of the people, of silly, easy, credulous women, who by reason of the weakness of their sex are easily imposed and wrought upon, combine them into a wicked confederation; a people mute in public, but in corners talkative and full of prattle."²

Now to this part of the accusation Origen answers, that it is for the main false, and proceeds from the spirit of malice and reproach.³ The sum of his answer as he delivers it to the several parts of the charge, take thus: " That the Christian doctrine invites and calls men to wisdom, as appears both from the writings of the Jews of old, and the Scriptures of the New Testament; wherein we find many singularly eminent for wisdom and

¹ Orig. contra Cels. lib. iii. p. 141, 144.

² Min Fel. p. 7.

³ Orig. c. Cels. p. 137. et seq.

learning, Moses, Solomon, Daniel, and such like of old; that the blessed Jesus made choice of such disciples as whom he judged fittest to communicate the secrets of his religion to, and privately opened and explained to them, what he only delivered in parables and similitudes unto others; that he promised to 'send forth prophets, wise men, and scribes,'¹ for the divulging and propagating of his doctrine; that St. Paul reckons *wisdom* and *knowledge* in the first rank of the gifts of God,² and that if he any where seem to reflect severely upon wisdom or human learning, (which probably may be the first rise of this charge,) he only censures the abuse, never intending to blame the thing itself; that when he prescribes the properties of a true bishop, or governor of the church, he requires this as one necessary qualification, 'That he be apt to teach, and able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers:'³ that we are so far from prohibiting any, that come who will, wise, learned, and prudent, provided the rude, simple, and unlearned be not excluded, for to them also the Gospel does promise and provide a remedy, making them meet for God; that no man but must confess that it is an excellent thing to study the best arts and discipline, and that learning, the study of arts, and prudence are so far from being an hindrance to the knowledge of God, that they mightily help it and advance it; that it is a great calumny to compare us to wandering impostors, who, by our reading and expounding the divine oracles, do only exhort the people to piety towards the great God, and to the rest of those virtues.

¹ Matt. xxiii. 34.² 1 Cor. xii. 8.³ Tit. i. 9.

which are its individual companions, endeavouring to rescue men from a contempt of the Deity, and all brutish and irregular passions: a thing which the very best philosophers of them all would wish for; that Christians are so far from admitting any, hand over head, that they first pre-examine the minds of those that desire to become their auditors, and, having privately had trial of them, before they receive them into the congregation, when they perceive them fully resolved to lead a pious and religious life, then they admit them in their distinct orders: some that are newly admitted, but not yet baptized; others that have given some evidence and demonstration of their purpose to live as becomes Christians; amongst whom there are governors appointed to inspect and inquire into the life and manners of those who have been admitted, that they may expel and turn off those candidates of religion who answer not their profession, and heartily entertain those that do, and by daily converse build them up and make them better; that it is false to say that we apply ourselves only to women and children, and that in corners, when we endeavour what we can by all means to fill our societies with wise and prudent persons, and to such we open the more sublime and recondite principles of religion: otherwise, accommodating our discourses to the capacities of meaner persons, who stand more in need of milk than strong meat; that we desire that all men may be trained up in the Word of God, and that servants and children may have such instructions given them, as are suitable and convenient to them, the ministers of our religion professing themselves to be debtors both to the Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise

and to the unwise, that, as much as may be, they may out-grow their ignorance, and attain to the best kind of wisdom. And, whereas we are accused to seduce and circumvent silly women and little children, and to draw them away from more weighty and serious counsels, let him produce any such, and inquire of them whether ever they heard better masters than ours, or if they did, why they would leave so grave a discipline, and suffer themselves to be seduced into a worse? But he will find no such thing to fasten upon us; but that on the contrary we reclaim women from immodesty, from falling out with their husbands, and parting from them, from the wild extravagancies of the sports and theatres, and from all superstition whatsoever. The youth, who are prone to vice and luxury, we restrain, by telling them not only how base and dangerous a thing it is to indulge their lust, but into how much danger they precipitate their souls, and what punishments the Divine vengeance lays up for such profligate offenders. We openly, not in corners, promise eternal happiness to those who live according to the rules of the divine law, who set God always before their eyes, and whatever they do, endeavour to approve themselves to Him. And is this the discipline, these the doctrines, of weavers, tailors, fullers, and the most rustic and illiterate persons? Surely no. If at any time we refuse to produce our instructions and counsels before masters of families, or the doctors of philosophy, know, that if they be studious of virtue, enemies to vice, and such as breathe after the best things, before such we are most willing and ready to instruct our youth, being well assured we shall find them favourable judges; but if they be

enemies to goodness and virtue, and opposers of sound wholesome doctrine, then, if we hold our peace, no fault can justly be laid upon us: for in such circumstances the philosophers themselves would not discover the dictates and mysteries of their philosophy."

This is the substance of the several answers, which Origen pursues more at large through several pages: which, though very rational and satisfactory, yet we find something pleaded more direct and positive to the charge; viz. that, although amongst the Christians, as it is in any society of men, the vulgar and more common sort might not be men of the sharpest understanding, or versed in the more polite arts of learning, yet wanted they not (and those no small number) great scholars, men of acute parts and raised abilities, such as had run through the whole circle of the sciences, who daily came over to them. So Arnobius, urging the triumphant power and efficacy which the Christian faith had over the minds of men, "Who (says he) would not believe it, when he sees in how short a time it has conquered so great a part of the world; when men of so great wit and parts, orators, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, and physicians, and philosophers, have thrown up those former sentiments, of which but a little before they were so tenacious, and have embraced the doctrines of the Gospel."¹ So fast did the Christian church fill with the most eminent professors of all parts of learning, that were then known to the world.

Nor were the Christians of those times more despised upon the account of their weakness and

¹ Adv. Gent. ii. p. 21.

ignorance, than they were for their meanness and poverty. They were looked upon as *de ultima face*, as the scum and refuse of the people, scarce a considerable man to be found amongst them. "See, (says the heathen in Minucius Felix,) the most and best of all your party are a poor, beggarly, hunger-starved generation, that have neither riches, nor reputation to bear them out."¹ This charge (however impertinent, seeing the goodness of any religion depends not upon the greatness of its professors) was yet as untrue as it was unreasonable; the Christians having amongst them persons of the chiefest place and quality; and after some years the princes and potentates of the world, and even the emperors themselves, struck sail to the sceptre of Christ. When Scapula, the president of Carthage, threatened the Christians with severe and cruel usage, Tertullian bids him bethink himself: "What wilt thou do (says he) with so many thousands of men and women of every sex, age, and dignity, as will freely offer themselves? What fires, what swords wilt thou stand in need of? What is Carthage itself like to suffer, if decimated by thee; when every one shall find there his near kindred and neighbours, and shall see there matrons, and men perhaps of thy own rank and order, and the most principal persons, and either the kindred or friends of those who are thy own nearest friends? Spare them therefore for your own sake, if not for ours."² And if there were persons of such quality in Africa, (so remote, and in a manner so barbarous a province,) what may we suppose there were in Rome itself, and other parts of the Roman empire?

¹ M. Fel. p. 9.

² Ad Scap. c. iv. p. 71.

And, in his Apology, speaking of the vast spreading of the party: "Though (says he) we be men of quite another way, yet have we filled all places among you, your cities, islands, castles, corporations, councils, nay your armies themselves, your tribes, companies, yea the palace, the senate, and the courts of justice; only your temples we have left you free."¹ Sure I am, Pliny, in his letter to the emperor, tells him that "Christianity had not only overrun city and country, but that it had infected many of every sex, age, and order of men."²

And indeed it were no hard matter, out of the ancient histories and martyrologies of the church; nay, from the heathen writers themselves; to prove that persons of the highest rank and quality, even in those times, embraced Christianity, and sealed it with their blood. Of which it may suffice to give an account only of some few. Not to insist upon the saints which St. Paul tells us were in Nero's palace,³ we find many considerable persons, and some of them near akin to the emperor under the reign of Domitian, (that cruel prince and persecutor of the Christians,) entertaining the profession of the Gospel. And first, let us hear the account which Dion Cassius, the famous historian, gives us.⁴ He tells us that, about the latter end of Domitian's reign, he condemned many, (some whereof were slain, others stripped of their estates,) and, amongst the rest, Flavius Clemens the consul, his own cousin-german, and his wife Flavia Domitilla, near akin also to the emperor, upon pretence of Atheism (ἐπηνέχθη ἔγκλημα ἀθεότητος); and

¹ Tertull. Apol. c. xxxvii. p. 30. ² Lib. x. Epist. 97.

³ Philip i. 13; iv. 22.

⁴ Lib. lxvii. in Domit. p. 766.

for that they had embraced the rites and religion of the Jews. His nephew Clemens he put to death, his wife Domitilla he banished into the island Pandateria. Upon the same account also he put to death Acilius Glabrio, who, together with Trajan, had been consul the year before. That the persons here described were Christians, is plain, partly from the charge of atheism here fastened upon them, (the common and familiar accusation, and the title given to Christianity by the heathens, as we observed before,) and partly because they are said to have passed over to the rites and customs of the Jews; nothing being more ordinary in the historians of those times, than to mistake Christians for Jews, and to call them so, because both proceeding out of the same country, Christ himself and his apostles being Jews born, and his religion first published and planted there. And that which may give some more countenance to this is, that Suetonius, speaking of Domitian's condemning this Fl. Clemens,¹ represents him as a man *contemptissimæ inertiae*, as a most contemptibly dull and sluggish person, which we know was generally charged upon the Christians, that they were an useless and unactive people, as we shall have occasion by and by more particularly to remark. Besides this Fl. Domitilla, the wife of Clemens, there was another of the same name, his niece by the sister's side, (unless Dion Cassius mistook, and put down wife for niece, which there is no reason to suppose, seeing both may very well consist together,) who (as Eusebius informs us²) was with many more banished by Domitian in the fifteenth

¹ In Domitian, c. xv. p. 303. ² Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. c. 18. p. 89.

year of his reign, into the island Pontia, and there put to death for the profession of Christianity; "whose persecutions and martyrdoms (says he) are recorded by heathen writers themselves." Amongst whom, I suppose, he principally intends Brettius or Brutius the historian,¹ whom he cites elsewhere, and out of whom he there quotes this very passage; "That under Domitian many of the Christians suffered martyrdom; amongst whom was Fl. Domitilla, niece by the sister's side to Fl. Clemens the consul, who for being a Christian was banished into the island Pontia." She is said after a great deal of hard and tedious usage to have been burnt, together with the house wherein she was; and her memory is celebrated in the Roman calendar upon the seventh of May.²

Besides these, we find that Christianity, getting ground under the quiet reign of the emperor Commodus, many of the greatest birth and fortunes in Rome, together with their whole families, flocked over to the Christian faith.³ Amongst whom was Apollonius, a man famous for philosophy, and all polite human literature, who so gallantly pleaded his cause before the senate, and was himself a senator, as St. Jerome informs us.⁴

I shall but mention one instance more, and that is of Philip the emperor; whom Eusebius expressly affirms to have been a Christian, and the first of the emperors that was so;⁵ followed herein by a whole troop both of ancient and modern writers. Nay, we are told by some a formal story, that this

¹ Can. Chron. ad An. Chr. xcvi. p. 208. and Chron. p. 80. Edit. Græc.

² Martyr. Rom. ad 7 Maii.

³ Euseb. lib. v. c. 21. p. 189.

⁴ De Script. Eccles. in Apoll.

⁵ Lib. vi. c. 34, p. 232.

Philip and his son were converted by the preaching of Pontius, the martyr, and baptized by Fabian, bishop of Rome.¹ But, notwithstanding the smoothness of the story, and the number of authorities, I must confess it seems to me scarcely probable, that a person of so bad a life, guilty of such enormous villanies as that emperor was, should either be or be thought a Christian; or if he was, that the whole world should not presently ring of it. Certain I am, that all historians of that time are wholly silent in the case, nor is there the least intimation of any such thing in any writer, either heathen or Christian, before Eusebius. Nay, Origen, who wrote his book in defence of Christianity under the reign of this very emperor, and about this very time, (nay, and two epistles, one to Philip, the other to his wife Severa, if we may believe Eusebius,) yet not only makes no mention of it, when it would have made greatly for his purpose, but tacitly implies there was no such thing. For Celsus, reproving the boldness and petulancy of the Christians, as if they should give out, that if they could but bring over the present emperors to their religion, all other men would quickly be brought over: Origen point blank denies the charge, and tells him there is no need of any answer, for that none of the Christians ever said so.² An answer, which surely he would not have given, had the emperor at that time been a Christian; not to insist upon many other intimations which might be produced out of that book against it. Besides Eutropius reports, that Philip and his son

¹ Act. Pont. apud. Sur. ad 14 Maii. tom. iii.

² Adv. Cels. lib. viii. p. 425.

being slain by the soldiers, were yet *inter divos relati, deified*, or advanced into the number of their Gods.¹ An honour which it is certain the senate would not have done them, had they either been, or but suspected to have been Christians. To all which I may add, that Eusebius himself (in whom the first footsteps of this story appear) builds it upon no better a foundation than a *κατέχει λόγος*, a bare tradition and report.²

That which seems to have given both birth and colour to the story is this. One Philippus, an illustrious person under the emperor Severus, was a long time governor of Egypt; he, by the means of his daughter Eugenia, was converted to Christianity, under whose shelter the Christians there enjoyed great peace and favour, (nay the story adds, though certainly without any ground, that he was created bishop of Alexandria,) till the emperor being acquainted with his being a Christian, presently removed him, and by the help of his successor Terentius caused him to be secretly murdered and made away.³ This (if any thing) was the rise of the story; and that which makes it more probable, is the honour and excellency of that employment, the greatest of all the offices in the Roman empire, the command and state little less than regal; and therefore the emperors in their letter to this Philip, (wherein they reproach him for ingratitude and apostacy,) tell him that in a manner he was made a king, when he was chosen president of Egypt. Accordingly the title of the governor of Egypt (as appears from the historians, but especi-

¹ Hist. Rom. lib. ix. non longe ab init.

² Lib. vi. c. 34.

³ Martyr. Eugen. apud Sur. ad 25 Decemb. tom. vi.

ally the *notitia imperii*) was Præfectus Augustalis; and how easy was it to mistake Philippus Augustus for Philippus Augustalis. But enough of this, as also the falseness of that charge, that the Christians were such a sorry inconsiderable people.

But however, let us suppose them to have been as mean and poor, as the malice and cruelty of their adversaries did endeavour to make them, yet this was no real prejudice to their cause, nor any great hurt to them. "That the most part of us are accused to be poor," says Octavius in answer to Cæcilius' charge, "it is not our dishonour, but our glory. The mind, as it is dissolved by plenty and luxury, so it is strengthened and girt close by indigence and frugality; and yet how can that man be poor who wants not, who is not greedy of what is another man's, who is rich in and towards God? That man is rather poor, who when he has a great deal desires more. The truth is, no man can be so poor as he was when he was born. The birds live without any patrimony entailed upon them, and the beasts find pastures every day; and yet these are born for our use, all which we fully enjoy when we do not covet them. Much lighter and happier does he go to heaven, who is not burdened by the way with an unnecessary load of riches: and yet did we think estates so useful to us, we could beg them of God, who being Lord of all, might well afford a little to us; but we had rather despise them than enjoy them, and rather choose innocency and patience, desiring more to be good than to be great and prodigal. If we endure outward sufferings and tortures, it is not so much pain as it is a warfare; our courage is increased by infirmities, and calamity is very oft the discipline of virtue;

the nerves both of body and mind without exercise would grow loose and faint; and therefore God is neither unable to help us, nor yet negligent of us, as being the Governor of the world, and the Father of his children; but tries and examines every one's temper in an adverse state, as gold is tried in the fire. Besides it must needs be a sight very pleasing to God, to behold a Christian conflicting with grief and misery; preparing himself to encounter threatenings and torments; pressing in upon the very noise of death, and the horror of the executioner; maintaining his liberty against kings and princes, and only yielding to God, whose he wholly is; coming off from all the attempts of adversity with victory and triumph." So argues that excellent person, (and who ever reads him in his native language must confess it,) with equal strength of eloquence and reason; where he also briefly touches that objection so common amongst the heathens, that if Christians were so dear to God, why then did he suffer them to be oppressed with so many miseries and troubles, and not come in to vindicate and relieve them? An argument fully cleared by Arnobius, Lactantius, and other ancient apologists for the Christian faith.¹

But this was not all; they were charged as a very useless and unserviceable people, that contributed nothing to the happiness of the commonwealth; nay, as destructive and pernicious to human society, and as the procuring cause of all those mischiefs and calamities that befel the world. In answer to the first, their being useless

¹ Arnob. adv. Gent. lib. ii. prop. fin. Lactant. lib. v. de Justit. cap. 22.

as to the common good, hear what Tertullian says in the case. "How can this be," says he, "when we live amongst you, have the same diet, habit, manner, and way of life? We are no brahmins or Indian gymnosophists, who live in woods, and banish themselves from all civil life. We are not unmindful of what we owe to our great Creator, and therefore despise none of his creatures, though careful to use them with temperance and sobriety. Wherefore we live not in the world without the use of your markets, shambles, baths, taverns, shops, stables, your marts, and other ways of human commerce: we go to sea with you, bear arms, till and improve the ground, use merchandize; we undergo trades amongst you, and expose our works to your use, and how then we can seem unserviceable to your affairs, with which and by which we live, I see not."¹ "Certainly," says he, "if any have cause truly to complain of our being unprofitable, they are bawds, panders, pimps, hectors, and ruffians, sellers of poison, magicians, soothsayers, wizards, and astrologers; and to be unserviceable to these, is the greatest serviceableness."² But, besides this, they pleaded for themselves, that their religion was highly beneficial to the world, and in its own nature contributed to the peace and happiness of mankind. It cannot be denied but that some of the primitive Christians were shy of engaging in wars, and not very forward to undergo public places of authority and power. But (besides that this was only the opinion of some private persons, and not the common and current practice or determina-

¹ Ap. c. 42, p. 33.

² Ib. c. 43.

tion of the church) it arose partly from some mistaken passages in the Gospel, turning evangelical counsels into positive precepts; but principally because such offices and employments were usually clogged with such circumstances and conditions, as obliged them to some things repugnant to the Christian law. Otherwise, where they could do it without offering violence to their religion and their conscience, they shunned it not, but frequently bore arms, and discharged such public offices as were committed to them, as cannot be unknown to any that are never so little versed in the history of the first ages of the church. Never were there better, more faithful and resolute soldiers, more obedient to the orders of their commanders, more ready to attempt the most hazardous enterprises, never boggling at any thing which they could do without sin: of which, amongst many others, I shall instance only in that of the Thebæan legion, who being commanded upon a bloody and unlawful butchery, to destroy and cut off the Christians their brethren, meekly returned this answer to the heathen emperor Maximianus, under whom they served: "We offer our hands against any enemy, but count it unlawful to embroe them in the blood of the innocent: our swords know how to strike a rebel or an enemy, but not to wound those who are citizens and guiltless; we remember that we took up arms for, not against friends and fellow-citizens: we have always fought for justice and piety, and for the safety of the innocent: these have been hitherto the price of those dangers that we have run upon; we have fought for fidelity, which how shall we be able to keep to you, if we

do not first keep it to our God?"¹ So far were the Christians of those times from refusing to engage in the service of their prince. Nay, those of them who were so bound up by their private sentiments, as not to think it lawful, yet reckoned they otherways made equivalent compensation. Thus, when Celsus pressed the Christians to undergo public offices, and to help the emperors in their wars; Origen answers, that they did so, though by a divine not human help, by praying for their persons, and their prosperity and success. "Above all men," says he, "we fight for the emperor, while we train ourselves in exercises of piety, and contend by prayers for him."² But besides these, there were several other instances which the Christians pleaded to vindicate themselves, from being unserviceable to the good of mankind, amongst which I shall at present take notice only of these two:—

First, that they really sought to reclaim men from vice and sin, to a good and a virtuous life; by which means (besides that they provided for men's highest and nearest interest, the interest of their souls, and their eternal happiness in another life) they greatly consulted the peace and welfare of the places where they lived. For vicious and wicked men are the pests and plagues of human society, that taint and infect others by their bad examples or persuasions, and entail vengeance upon the places of their residence; whilst good men engage the favour and blessing of heaven, and both by their counsels and examples bring over others to sobriety and virtue, whereby they esta-

¹ Martyrol. Adonis ad X. Kalend. Octob.

² Adv. Cels. lib. viii. p. 426, 427.

blish and strengthen the foundations of government, and the happiness of civil life; and none so eminent for this as the Christians of old. This is the great triumphant argument wherewith Origen at every turn exalts the honour of Christianity. "This," says he, "we find in the multitudes of those that believe, who are delivered from that sink of vices, wherein before they were wont to wallow."¹ Enquire into the lives of some of us, compare our former and our present course, and you will find in what filthiness and impieties they tumbled, before they entertained the Christian doctrine; but since the time that they entered into it, how gentle and moderate, how grave and constant are they become, and some so inflamed with the love of purity, that they forbear even what lawfully they might enjoy.² How largely are the churches of God, founded by Christ, spread over all nations, consisting of such as are converted from innumerable evil ways to a better mind."³ And, elsewhere,⁴ vindicating the doctrine of Christ from the mischievous cavils of his adversary, he tells how it was impossible that could be pestilent and hurtful, which had converted so many from their vices and debaucheries, to a course most agreeable to nature and reason, and to a life of temperance and all other virtues: and the same he urges frequently in other places, and what greater kindness and benefit could be done to men? "Does Celsus call upon us," says he, "to bear offices for the good of our country; let him know that the country is much more beholden to Christians than to the rest of

¹ Adv. Cels. lib. 1. p. 9.

² Ib. p. 21.

³ Ib. p. 53.

⁴ Lib. ii. p. 78.

men, while they teach men piety towards God, the tutelar guardian of the country, and show them the way to that heavenly city that is above, which they that live well may attain to, though here they dwell in the smallest city in the world. Nor do the Christians thus employ themselves, because they shun the public offices of the civil life; but only reserve themselves for the more divine and necessary services of the church, in order to the good and happiness of men. For this they think very just and reasonable, that they should take care of all men:—of them of their own party, that they may every day make them better; of others, that they may draw them to the belief and practice of piety and religion; that so worshipping God in truth, and doing what they can to instruct others, they may be united to the great God, and to his blessed Son, who is the wisdom, truth, and righteousness, and by whom it is that every one is converted to a pious and a religious life.”¹

Theodoret² discoursing against the Gentiles, of the excellency of the laws of Christ, above any that were given by the best philosophers or wisest men amongst the heathens,³ gives them instances of whole nations whom Christianity had brought off from the most brutish and savage manners. He tells them of the Persians who by the laws given

¹ Lib. vii. p. 427, 428.

² One of the Greek Fathers, who flourished A. D. 425. He continued the History of Eusebius down to the year 429, and wrote a Commentary on the Scriptures, which is still held in deserved reputation. The customs to which he refers in the extract, which our author has given from one of his minor works, are mentioned by Herodotus and other writers.—ED.

³ De Curand. Græc. affectib. Serm. ix. de Leg. p. 128.

them by Zarada, lived in incestuous mixtures with their own mothers, sisters, and daughters, looking upon it as a lawful and warrantable practice; till entertaining Christianity, they threw off those abominable laws, and submitted to that temperance and chastity which the gospel requires of us. And whereas before they were wont to cast out the bodies of their dead, to be devoured by beasts and birds of prey, since they embraced the Christian religion, they abstained from that piece of inhumanity, and decently committed them to the earth; from which they could not be restrained, either by the laws of their country, or the bitterness of those torments which they underwent. The Massagetes, who thought it the most miserable thing in the world to die any other than a violent death, and therefore made a law that all persons arrived to old age should be offered in sacrifice and eaten, no sooner submitted to Christianity, but abhorred those barbarous and abominable customs. The Tibarens, who used to throw aged persons down the steepest rocks, left it off upon their embracing of the Gospel. Upon the same account the Hyrcani and the Caspians reformed their manners, who were formerly wont to keep dogs on purpose to devour the bodies of the dead. Nor did the Scythians any longer, together with their dead, bury those alive, who had been their nearest friends and kindred. So great a change," says my author, "did the laws of Christ make in the manners of men, and so easily were the most barbarous nations persuaded to entertain them, a thing which Plato, though the best of all philosophers, could never effect amongst the Athenians, his own fellow citi-

zens; who could never induce them to govern the commonwealth, according to those laws and institutions which he had prescribed them.

Nay where the gospel did not produce this effect to reclaim men from their vices and vanities, and to bring them over to the religion of the crucified Saviour; yet had it this excellent influence upon the world, that it generally taught them better lessons, refined their understandings, and filled their minds with more useful and practical notions about religion than they had before. To which purpose it is mainly observable, that those philosophers who lived in the times of Christianity, after the gospel publicly appeared in the world, wrote in a much more divine strain, entertained more public and worthy sentiments about God and religion, and the duties of men in their several capacities, than those of their sect that went before them. Of which I conceive no account can be given so satisfactory as this, that the genius and spirit of the Gospel began then to fly abroad, and to breathe in a freer air, and so could not but leave some tincture and savour upon the spirits of men, though its most inveterate enemies. Besides that many of them did more nearly converse with the writings of Christianity, which they read either out of curiosity, or with a design to confute and answer them.¹ This doubtless sharpened the edge of their understandings, and furnished them with better notions, more useful precepts and rules of life, than are to be met with in any of the old philosophers. Witness those excellent and uncommon strains of piety that

¹ Theod. de Cur. Græc. Ass. Serm. ii. de princip. p. 33.—
Μετὰ δὴ τῆ σωτηρίας ἡμῶν ἐπιφάνειαν ἔτοι γενόμενοι, τῆς
Χριστιανικῆς θεολογίας πολλὰ τοῖς οἰκείοις ἀνέμιξαν λόγοις.

run through the writings of Seneca, Epictetus, Antonius, Arrian, Plutarch, Hierocles, Plotinus, and the rest that lived in those first ages of the Gospel: of which I could give considerable instances, were it necessary to my purpose. I shall only, as a specimen, set down that prayer wherewith Simplicius (enemy enough to Christianity) concludes his comment upon Epictetus: and thus he makes his address to God.

“ I beseech thee, O Lord, thou that art the father and guide of our rational powers, grant that we may be mindful of those noble and generous natures with which thou hast invested us; and assist us, that as persons endued with self-moving principles, we may cleanse ourselves from all bodily and brutish passions, that we may subdue and govern them, and in a due and decent manner use them only as organs and instruments. Help us through the light of the truth, accurately to correct our reason, and unite it to those things that have a real existence. And in the third place, I beseech my Saviour, that he would perfectly dispel the mist that is before the eyes of our minds, that according to that of the poet, we may rightly understand what belongs either to God or man.”¹

Besides the matter of this prayer, which is very

¹ Simpl. ad Epict. p. 33.—*Ἰκετεύω σε, Δέσποτα, ὁ πατήρ ἐκ ἡγεμῶν τῶ ἐν ἡμῖν λόγε, ὑπομνησθῆναι μὲν ἡμᾶς τῆς ἑαυτῶν ἐυγενείας ἧς ἠξιώθημεν, παρά σε, συμπράξαι δὲ ὡς αὐτοκινήτοις ἡμῖν πρὸς τε κάθαρσιν τὴν ἀπὸ τῶ σώματος ἐκ τῶν ἀλόγων παθῶν, ἐκ πρὸς τὸ ὑπερέχειν ἐκ ἄρχειν αὐτῶν, ἐκ ὡς ὄργανοις κεχρησθῆναι κατὰ τὸν προσήκοντα τρόπον. Καὶ πρὸς διόρθωσιν ἀκριβῆ τῶ ἐν ἡμῖν λόγε ἐκ ἔνωσιν αὐτῶ πρὸς τὰ ὄντως ὄντα, διὰ τῶ τῆς ἀληθείας φωτός. Καὶ τὸ τρίτον, τὸν σωτήρα ἰκετεύω, ἀφελεῖν τελῶς τὴν ἀχλὺν τῶν ψυχικῶν ἡμῶν ὀμμάτων, Ὅφρα γινώσκομεν ἐν (κατὰ τὸν Ὅμηρον— II. E. 128) ἢ μὲν θεόν, ἢ δὲ ἐκ ἀνδρα.*

sublime and spiritual, the manner of its composure is considerable; consisting of three parts, and those addressed as it were to three persons, answerable to those in the blessed Trinity, the Lord (or Father) the Saviour (or Christ) and the light of truth (which even in Scripture is a common periphrasis of the Holy Spirit.) Whether he intended this, I will not say, sure I am it looks very like it. But enough of this.

Secondly, That they ordinarily wrought such miracles as were incomparably beneficial to the world, in curing diseases, raising the dead, and rescuing possessed persons from the merciless rage and cruelty of the devil. We may observe, that in those primitive times there were innumerable multitudes of possessed persons, beyond what were in the ages either before or since; the divine Providence doubtless permitting it to be so, that by this means there might be a fairer occasion of commending Christianity to the world; and there is nothing which we more commonly meet with in the writings of the ancient fathers, than testimonies concerning their triumphant power over evil spirits. Justin Martyr discoursing of the end of Christ's coming into the world, for the salvation of men, and the subversion of devils, tells the senate: "That these things are so, you may know by what is done before your eyes; for many that were possessed by devils, throughout the whole world, and even in this city of yours, whom all your enchanters, sorcerers and conjurers were not able to cure, many of us Christians adjuring them by the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, have perfectly cured, and do still cure, disarming and driving out of men those demons that had

seized upon them.”¹ And the same he affirms more than once and again in his discourse with Trypho the Jew. Irenæus, arguing against the heretics, tells us, that the “true disciples of Christ did in his name many strange things for the good of others, according as every one had received his gift: some so signally expelling devils, that those out of whom they were cast came over to the faith; others foretelling future events; others curing men of the most grievous distempers, by putting their hands upon them, and restoring them to their former health. Many, that have been raised from the dead, afterwards lived many years amongst us. And indeed innumerable (says he) are the gifts which God has everywhere bestowed upon his church, whereby in the name of the crucified Jesus, many and great miracles are daily done to the great advantage of the world.”² Tertullian appeals to the heathens, as a thing commonly known amongst them, that they daily restrained the power of devils, and cast them out of men;³ and he tells Scapula the president, that he might be satisfied of this from his own records, and those very advocates who had themselves reaped this benefit from Christians; as for instance, a certain notary, and the kinsman and child of another; besides divers other persons of note and quality (not to speak of the meaner sort) who had been recovered either from devils or from desperate diseases:⁴ nay Severus, the father of Antoninus, having been cured by being anointed with oil by Proculus a Christian, he kept him in his palace till his death; whom

¹ Apol. i. p. 45.

² Adv. Hæres. lib. ii. c. 57, p. 218.

³ Ad. Scap. c. 2, p. 69.

⁴ Ib. c. 4, p. 71.

Antoninus knew well, having been himself nursed by a Christian. And in his Apology he challenges the heathens to produce any possessed person before the public tribunals, and the evil spirit being commanded by any Christian shall then as truly confess himself to be a devil, as at other times he falsely boasts himself to be a god. And elsewhere,¹ putting the case that the Christians should agree to retire out of the Roman empire, he asks them what protection they would then have left against the secret and invisible attempts of devils, who made such havock both of their souls and bodies, whom the Christians so freely expelled and drove out; that it would be a sufficient piece of revenge, that hereby they should leave them open to the uncontrolled possession of those evil spirits. It were endless to produce all the testimonies of this nature, that might be fetched from Origen, Minucius Felix, Cyprian,² Arnobius, Lactantius, Eusebius, and all the old apologists for the Christian religion, (some whereof I have briefly noted below³) who constantly pleaded this as a mighty and uncontrollable argument of the truth and divinity of their religion, and of their great usefulness to mankind. Nay, this miraculous power continued in the church some considerable time after Constantine

¹ Apol. c. 37, p. 30.

² Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, flourished A. D. 250. His works contain extensive information respecting the discipline of the primitive church, and are remarkable as well for their piety as their eloquence.—Ed.

³ Orig. contra. C. lib. i. p. 5, 7, 53; lib. iii. p. 124; lib. vii. p. 334, 376. Cypr. Ep. ad Donat. p. 3; ad Demetrian. p. 201, 206. Min. Fel. p. 23. Arnob. adv. Gent. lib. i. p. 13. Lactant. de Or. error. lib. ii. c. 15, p. 220. Euseb. Demonstrat. Evang. lib. iii. p. 132.

and the world was become Christian, as appears from St. Basil, Nazianzen,¹ and others;² and though I do not give heed to all the miracles which are reported by St. Jerome, in the lives of Hilarion, Paulus, and some others; or by Palladius in his *Historia Lausiaca*; yet doubtless many of them were very true and real; God withdrawing this extraordinary power, as Christianity gained faster footing in the world, and leaving the church to those standing methods by which it was to be managed and governed to the end of the world.³

¹ Basil and Gregory Nazianzen were contemporary writers of the fourth century, and both of them took a prominent part in the Arian controversy. The latter, from the elegance and purity of his diction, has been called the Christian Isocrates; and from his deep theological knowledge, was surnamed the Divine.—ED.

² Naz. Or. i. Apol. p. 35. Aug. de C. D. lib. xxii. c. 8, p. 1339. Greg. Nyss. Or. in suam ordinat. tom. i. p. 876. Athanas. de incarn. Verb. p. 35, edit Lat.

³ In order to invalidate the evidence from miracles, the early opponents of the Gospel represented the mighty works of the first Christians as performed by magical agency. They even pretended that our Saviour had composed a treatise on magic, which he delivered to St. Peter and St. Paul for the use of the apostles.—See Augustine de Consens. Evang. i. 9. This notion, indeed, seems to have been generally prevalent; for Justin Martyr (Apol. i. § 37) expressly states it as a reason for laying the chief stress of evidence for the divine mission upon the fulfilment of prophecy. But the least consideration must have evinced its absurdity; for there must have been some points at which magical operations, like the incantations of the Egyptian magi, would have stopped, and beyond which they could not have proceeded. There must have been some collusion between the agents and the witnesses; some endeavours to confine the miracle to a few, as to particular spectators. “But,” says Quadratus, “the works of our Saviour were always conspicuous, for they were real; both they that were healed, and they that were raised from the dead, were seen, not only when they were healed or raised, but for a long time afterwards; not only while he dwelt upon earth, but for a long time afterwards; indeed some of them have even reached to our times.” Quadratus was

And yet, notwithstanding the case was thus plain and evident, how much the world was beholden to Christians, yet were they looked upon as the pests of human society, counted and called the "common enemies of mankind," as Tertullian complains; that they were the causes of all public calamities, and that for their sakes it was, that vengeance did so often remarkably haunt the Roman empire. This was the common outcry. "If the city be besieged," says Tertullian, "if any thing happen ill in the fields, in the garrisons, in the islands, presently they cry out, 'It is because of the Christians.' They conspire the ruin of good men, and thirst after the blood of the innocent, patronizing their hatred with this vain pretence, that the Christians are the cause of all public misfortunes and calamities. If Tyber overflow the walls, if the Nile do not, as it is wont, overflow the fields, if the heaven do not keep its accustomed course, if an earthquake happen, if a famine, or a plague, presently the cry is, 'Away with the Christians to the lions.'"¹

one of the ancient apologists. He presented an address to the Emperor Adrian, in defence of the Christians, in the year 126. Of this address there is only now extant the single sentence above quoted, which is preserved by Eusebius.—Hist. Eccl. iv. 3.—ED.

¹ Ap. c. 37, p. 30; c. 1, p. 2; c. 40, p. 32.

During the reign of Antoninus, there were several national calamities, which gave a colour to these accusations. In one year a great part of the city was materially injured by an inundation of the Tiber, which produced yet more disastrous effects in the adjoining villages. This misfortune was followed by a dreadful famine, which reduced the citizens of Rome to the severest distress. Such being the state of things at home, the Carians and Lycians were visited by an earthquake, and a similar affliction had caused considerable damages at Rhodes; while a declaration of war from the Parthians threw the whole nation into the greatest consternation and alarm. The priests and phi-

Thus Demetrian, the proconsul of Africa, objected to St. Cyprian, that they might thank the Christians, that wars did oftener arise, that plagues and famines did rage so much, and that immoderate and excessive rains hindered the kindly seasons of the year.¹ The same, Arnobius tells us, the heathens were wont to object at every turn, and to conclude it as sure as if it had been dictated by an oracle, that since the Christians appeared in the world, the world had been well-nigh undone, mankind has been overrun with infinite kinds of evil; and the very gods themselves had withdrawn that solemn care and providence, wherewith they were wont to superintend human affairs.² Nay so hot and common was this charge amongst the pagans, that when the Goths and Vandals broke in upon the Roman empire, St. Augustine³ was forced to write those excellent books *De Civit. Dei*,⁴ purposely to stop the mouth of this objection, as upon the same account and at his request Orosius wrote his seven books of history against the pagans.⁵

losophers reviled the Christians, as the cause of these accumulated evils; affirming that they had brought down the vengeance of heaven by deserting the temples and neglecting the worship of the gods.—See *Jul. Capitolin.* in *Vit. Antonini*; *Universal Hist.* vol. iv. of *Roman History*; and *Mosheim's Eccl. Hist.* Cent. 2, Part. i. 2, 5, 6.—ED.

¹ *Cypr. ad Demetr.* p. 197.

² *Arnob. adv. Gent. lib. i. p. i.*

³ Augustine, one of the most celebrated of the Fathers, both for learning and zeal, was bishop of Hippo, in Africa. He died about A. D. 430. The work which Orosius undertook at his request, was entitled *Mæsta Mundi*, and went to prove that the world, from the creation, had been the theatre of constant calamities; and that the Christians could not be justly stigmatized as the authors of those which then prevailed.—ED.

⁴ *Vid. Retractat. l. ii. c. 43, tom. i. p. 52.*

⁵ *P. Oros. præf. ad lib. Hist. ad D. Aug.*

Omitting some of the answers given by the Fathers, (as being probably less solid, and not so proper in this case; such as, that it was no wonder if miseries happened, and things grew worse in this old age of time, the world daily growing more feeble and decrepit; and that these things had been foretold by God, and therefore must necessarily come to pass; two arguments largely and strongly pleaded by St. Cyprian:¹ that those evils were properly resolvable into natural causes; and that every thing is not presently evil, because it crosses our ease and interest, as Arnobius answers:² passing by these,) I shall take notice only of two things which the Christians pleaded in this case:—

First, that the Gentiles should do very well to seek the true causes of these things nearer home, and to inquire whether it was not for their own sakes, that the Divine Providence was thus offended with them; there being very just reasons to think so. Tertullian points them to such causes as these.³ First, their horrible affronting their natural notions of God, ‘that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, and they changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things,’⁴ as St. Paul had told them long before: and that therefore it was reasonable to suppose, that God was more angry with them, who instead of him worshipped

¹ Ad Demetrian. p. 198, 199.

³ Ap. c. 40, p. 33.

² Arnob. ut supra. p. 4.

⁴ Rom. i. 21, 23.

pieces of wood and statues, or at best genii and devils, than with those who sincerely paid their adorations to him alone.¹ Secondly, passing by God the great master of all goodness and innocence, and the severe revenger of all impiety, they tumbled themselves in all manner of vice and wickedness; and what wonder if the divine justice followed close at their heels. "You are angry," says Cyprian, "that God is angry, as if in living ill you deserved well, and as if all that has happened to you were not less and lighter than your sins. And thou, Demetrian, who art a judge of others, be in this a judge of thyself; inspect the retirements of thy conscience, and behold thyself now, who shalt one day be seen naked by all; and thou wilt find thyself enslaved and led captive by some sins or other; and why then shouldst thou wonder that the flames of the divine anger should rise higher, when the sins of men do daily administer more fuel to it:"² an answer which he there prosecutes to very excellent purpose. Thirdly, their prodigious unthankfulness to God for all the former blessings they had received from him: so far as they were ungrateful, they were highly guilty, and God could not but punish them; had they sought him, whom in part they could not but know, and been observant of him, they would in this case have found him a much more propitious, than an angry Deity, as Tertullian tells them. Upon these, and such like accounts, they might well conclude it was, that the vengeance of God

¹ Ap. c. 41. vid. Arnob, lib. i p. 6, 7.

² Ut supra, p. 199, 200.

did press so hard upon them, and that therefore they had no true reason to lay the fault at any other door but their own.

Secondly, as to the thing itself, as it was charged upon them, they point blank denied it to be true, and that for two reasons especially.

First, because the world had been sadly and frequently pestered with such evils and miseries long before the Christian religion appeared in it. "I pray," says Tertullian, "what miseries did overwhelm all the world, and even Rome itself, before the times of Tiberius, i. e. before the coming of Christ? Have we not read of Hierapolis, and the islands of Delos, and Rhodes, and Cos destroyed with many thousands of men? Does not Plato speak of the greatest part of Asia and Africa swallowed up by the Atlantic Sea? An earthquake drank up the Corinthian Sea, and the force of the ocean rent off Sicilia from Italy: not to ask where were the Christians, the great contemners of your gods? but where were your gods themselves, when the flood overran the world? Palestine had not yet received the Jewish nation out of Egypt, much less had the Christians sat down there, when Sodom and Gomorrah and the adjacent parts were burnt up by a shower of fire and brimstone, of which the country smells to this day. Nor could Tuscia and Campania complain of the Christians, when a fire from heaven destroyed the Vulsinii and the Pompeii. None as yet worshipped the true God at Rome, when Hannibal at Cannæ made such a slaughter of the Romans, that the very rings that he took (which were the honourable badges of none but Roman knights) were measured by the

bushel. They were all your gods that then had the general worship, when the Gauls took the capitol itself.”¹ So smartly does that grave man retort their own arguments upon themselves. Arnobius fully and elegantly pursues this,² that in this respect the former times were no better than these, which they so much complained of, and bids them run over the annals and records that were written in all languages, and they would find that all nations had frequently had their common miseries and devastations: the clearing of which was likewise the great design Orosius proposed to himself,³ in drawing down the history of the world through all the ages and generations of it.

Secondly, because since the coming of Christianity, the world had been in a better and more prosperous state than it was before, especially whenever the Christian religion met with any favour and encouragement. The reason of it Tertullian gives: “Although we should compare present with former miseries, yet they are much lighter now, since God sent Christians into the world; for since then, innocency has balanced the iniquities of the age, and there have been many who have interceded with heaven.”⁴ The author of the questions and answers in Justin Martyr (for that it was not Justin himself, I think no man can doubt that reads him, the man betraying himself openly enough to have lived in the times of prevailing Christianity) putting this question, “Whether paganism was not the better religion, forasmuch as under it there was

¹ Ap. c. 40, p. 32.

³ Præfat. ut supra, p. 2.

² Lib. i. p. 2, 3.

⁴ Apol. c. 40, p. 33.

great prosperity and abundance, whereas it was quite otherwise since Christianity came in fashion,"¹ he answers, amongst other things, that ("besides that plenty was no argument of the goodness of any religion, Christians being to be judged of rather by the holiness than the prosperity of their religion) there was so much the more abundance in these times of Christianity, by how much there were fewer wars, than was while paganism governed the world." Never were wars more successfully managed, never was prosperity more triumphant, than when Christians met with kind entertainment. Melito, bishop of Sardis, in an oration which he presented to the emperor M. Antoninus in behalf of the Christians (part whereof is yet extant in Eusebius²) tells him, that "Christianity, commencing under the reign of Augustus, was a good omen of the prosperity of the empire; and that ever since the majesty of the Roman empire had increased: of whom he being the heir and successor, he could not better assure it to himself and his son, than by protecting that religion that had been born and bred up together with the empire, and for which his ancestors amongst other religions had had an esteem and honour: that there could be no better argument, that this religion contributed to the happiness of the empire (with which it began and had grown up) than that since the reign of Augustus no misfortune, but on the contrary, according to all men's wishes every thing had happened to be

¹ Quæst. 126, p. 476.

² The Apology of Melito, with the exception of this fragment, as well as his other voluminous writings, is unfortunately lost. He seems to have been a man of extensive learning and deep research.—ED.

magnificent and prosperous.”¹ Hence, Eusebius notes once and again, that the affairs of the empire commonly flourished, while Christianity was protected, but when that was persecuted, things began to go to rack, and their ancient peace and prosperity could not be retrieved, till peace and tranquillity was restored to the Christians.² Therefore Cyprian tells the proconsul, that “their cruelty to the Christians was one of those crying sins that had provoked God to inflict so many heavy miseries upon them, not only refusing to worship God themselves, but unjustly persecuting those innocent persons that did, with all the methods of rage and fierceness. So little hand had the Christians in entailing vengeance upon the world, that their enemies rather wilfully pulled it down upon their own heads.”³

CHAPTER IV.

The charges brought against them, respecting their Life and Manners.

ALL the attempts that had been hitherto made against the honour and reputation of Christians, seemed but like the first skirmishings of an army, in respect of the main battalia that was yet behind, the charge that was made against their moral car-

¹ Euseb. Eccles. Hist. lib. iv. c. 26, p. 148.

² Vid. ib. lib. vii. c. 1 ; lib. viii. c. 13. De Martyr. Palest. c. 3, p. 322.

³ Ad Demetr. p. 200.

riage and behaviour; and here they were accused at every turn of no less than sacrilege, sedition, and high-treason, of incest and promiscuous mixtures, of murder, and eating the flesh of infants at their sacramental feasts: these were sad and horrid crimes, and had they been true, would justly have made Christianity stink in the nostrils of all sober and considering men; but they were as false as they were black and hellish. The particular answers to these charges (together with some things relating to matters of worship) shall be considered hereafter, according as they fall into their more proper places; I shall only at present take notice of the general vindication which the Christians made of themselves, from these indictments that were brought in against them; and the sum of what they pleaded lies especially in these three things:—

First, They did openly assert and maintain their innocency, and show by their lives as well as their apologies, that they were men of quite another make and temper, than their enemies did generally represent them. Their religion and way of life was admired by all. “Who (says St. Clement¹ to the Corinthians) did ever dwell amongst you, that did not approve of your excellent and unshaken faith; that did not wonder at your sober and moderate piety in Christ? You were forward to every good work, adorned with a most virtuous and venerable conversation, doing all things in the fear of God, and having his laws and commands

¹ This was Clement, bishop of Rome, one the apostolical Fathers, and the same whom St. Paul calls his fellow-labourer, in Phil. iv. 3. An Epistle to the Corinthians is his only work now extant. Eusebius calls it a *wonderful* epistle; and says that it was read in churches together with the Scriptures.—Hist. Eccl. iii. 12, 16.

written upon the tables of your hearts.”¹ They placed religion then not in talking finely, but in living well. “Amongst us (says Athenagoras,²) the meanest and most mechanic persons, and old women, although not able to discourse and dispute for the usefulness of their profession, do yet demonstrate it in their lives and actions. They do not indeed critically weigh their words, and recite elegant orations, but they manifest honest and virtuous actions. While being buffeted they strike not again, nor sue them at law that spoil and plunder them; ‘liberally they give to them that ask, and love their neighbours as themselves.’³ And this we do, because we are assured that there is a God that superintends human affairs, who made both us and the whole world; and because we must give to him an account of all the transactions of our lives, therefore we choose the most moderate, humane, and benign, and, to many, the most contemptible course of life, for we reckon that no evil in this life can be so great, though we should be called to lay down our lives, which ought not to be esteemed little and of no value, in comparison of that happiness which we hereafter look for from the great Judge of the world, promised to those who are of an humble, benign, and moderate conversation.” Clemens of Alexandria gives us this short account of them. “As the fairest possession we give up ourselves to God, entirely loving him, and reckoning this the great business of our lives. No man is with us a Christian, or accounted truly rich, temperate, and generous, but

¹ Clem. Ep. ad Corinth. p. 2, 4. ² Leg. pro Christ. p. 12.

³ Matt. v. 42, 43; x. 8; xix. 19; Rom. xiii. 9; James, ii. 8, &c.

he that is pious and religious, nor does any further bear the image of God, than he speaks and believes what is just and holy: so that this in short is the state of us who follow God; such as are our desires, such are our discourses; such as are our discourses, such are our actions; such as are our actions, such is our life; so universally good is the the whole life of Christians."¹ Certainly none were ever greater enemies to a naked profession, and the covering a bad life under the title of Christianity. "Do any live otherwise than Christ hath commanded? it is a most certain argument they are no Christians, though with their tongues they never so smoothly profess the Christian doctrine; for it is not mere professors, but those who live according to their profession, that shall be saved;"² as Justin Martyr declares before the emperors. "Let no man (says Basil) impose upon himself with inconsiderate words, saying, though I be a sinner, yet I am a Christian, and I hope that title will be my shelter; but hearken, sinner, all wicked men shall be bundled up together, and in the great day of the divine vengeance shall be indifferently thrown into those merciless and devouring flames."³

Nay, so careful were they to avoid all sin, that they stood at a wide distance from any thing, that, though lawful in itself, yet seemed to carry an ill colour with it. This Origen tells Celsus was the reason why they refused to do any honour to an image, lest thereby they should give occasion to others to think that they ascribed divinity to them.⁴ For this reason they shunned all community with

¹ Admonit. ad Gent. p. 76.

² Ap. 2, p. 63.

³ Comment. in cap. 1, Esai. tom. ii. p. 68.

⁴ Lib. vii. p. 375.

the rites and customs of the heathens, abstaining from things strangled, or that had been offered to idols, from frequenting the public baths, or going to the sights and shows, because they seemed to owe their original to idolatry, and were the occasion of many gross enormities. They refused to wear crowns of laurel, lest they should seem to patronize the custom of the Gentiles, who were wont to do so in their sacred and solemn rites, as appeared eminently in the solemnities of the emperors Severus and Caracalla, when the tribune delivering the donative to the soldiers, and all came to receive it with crowns upon their heads, one of them brought his in his hand, and being demanded the reason, answered, "that he was a Christian, and could not do it;" which was the occasion of Tertullian's book, *de Corona Militis*, wherein he sets himself to defend it.

Secondly, they were willing to put themselves upon the strictest trial, and to undergo the severest penalties, if found guilty of those crimes that were charged upon them. So their Apologist bespeaks the emperors. "We beseech you," says he, "that those things that are charged upon the Christians may be enquired into, and if they be found to be so, let them have their deserved punishment; nay, let them be more severely punished than other men: but if not guilty, then it is not reasonable, that innocent persons should suffer merely upon report and clamour."¹ And speaking of those, that only took sanctuary at the name of Christians, he adds, that "those who lived not according to the laws of Christ, and were only called by his name,

¹ Just. Martyr. Ap. 2, p. 54.

they begged of them that such might be punished." To the same purpose Athenagoras in his embassy, taking notice how their enemies laid wait for their lives and fortunes, loaded them with heaps of reproaches, charging them with things that never so much as entered into their minds, and of which their accusers themselves were most guilty, he makes this offer: "Let but any of us be convict of any crime either small or great, and we refuse not to be punished; nay, are ready to undergo the most cruel and heavy penalty; but if we be only accused for our name (and to this day all our accusations are but the figments of obscure and uncertain fame, no Christian having ever been convict of any fault), then we hope it will become such wise, gracious, and mighty princes as you are, to make such laws as may secure us from those wrongs and injuries."¹ But alas, so clear was their innocence, that their bitterest adversaries durst not suffer them to come to a fair open trial. "If you be so certain that we are guilty," says Tertullian to the heathens, "why then are we not treated in the same nature with all malefactors; who have leave both by themselves and their advocates to defend their innocence, to answer and put in pleas, it being unlawful to condemn any before they be heard, and have liberty to defend themselves; whereas Christians only are not permitted to speak any thing that might clear their cause, maintain the truth, and make the judge able to pronounce righteous sentence? It is enough to justify the public odium, if we do but confess ourselves Christians, without ever examining of the crime; contrary to the manner of procedure against

¹ Leg. pro. Christian. p. 3.

all other delinquents, whom it is not enough barely to charge as being murderers, sacrilegious, or incestuous, or enemies to the public (the titles you are pleased to bestow upon us), unless they also take the quality of the fact, the place, manner, time, partners and accessories under examination. But no such favour is shown to us, but we are condemned without any inquisition passed upon us :”¹ and good reason there was, that they should take this course, seeing they could really find nothing to condemn them for, but for being Christians. This one would think strange, especially amongst a people so renowned for justice and equity as the Romans were, and yet in these times nothing more ordinary. Therefore when Urbicus the prefect of Rome had condemned Ptolomeus, merely upon his confessing himself a Christian, one Lucius that stood by cried out, “What strange course is this, what infamous misdemeanor is this man guilty of; that when he is no adulterer, fornicator, no murderer, no thief, or robber, thou shouldst punish him only because he calls himself a Christian: certainly, Urbicus, such justice as this does not become the piety of the emperor, or the philosophy of Cæsar his son, or the sacred and venerable senate.”² And Tertullian tells us, it was the common accusation they had in their mouths, “such or such a one is a good man, only he is a Christian; or, I wonder at such a one, a wise man, but lately turned Christian.”³ So Cyprian, I remember, reduces his adversary to this unavoidable dilemma: “Choose one of these two things; to be a Christian either is a fault, or it is not; if it be a fault,

¹ Ap. c. 2, p. 2. ² Just. Mart. Ap. 1, p. 33. ³ Ap. c. 3, p. 4.

why dost thou not kill every one that confesses it? if it be not, why dost thou persecute them that are innocent?"¹ Hence we find nothing more common in the old Apologists, than complaints concerning the unreasonableness of being accused, condemned, and punished, merely for their name, this being the first and great cause of all that hatred and cruelty that was exercised towards them.² It was the innocent name that was hated in them; all the quarrel was about this title; and when a Christian was guilty of nothing else, it was this made him guilty, as Tertullian complains at every turn. The truth is, they mightily gloried in this title, and were ambitious to own it in the face of the greatest danger. Therefore when Attalus the famous French martyr was led about the amphitheatre, that he might be exposed to the hatred and derision of the people, he triumphed in this, that a tablet was carried before him with this inscription, "This is Attalus, the Christian:"³ and Sanctus, another of them being oft asked by the president, what his name was, what his city and country, and whether he was a free man or a servant; answered nothing more to any of them, than that he was a Christian, professing this name to be country, kindred, and all things to him.⁴ Nay, so great was the honour and value which they had for this name, that Julian the emperor, whom we commonly call the Apostate, endeavoured by all ways to suppress it, that when he could not drive the thing, he might at least banish the name out of the world; and therefore

¹ Ad Demetrian. p. 200.

² Vid. Tertul. Ap. c. 1, 2, 3; Just Mart. Ap. 2, p. 54, 68, 69; Athenag. Leg. pro Christian. p. 3, 4.

³ Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. v. c. 1, p. 162.

⁴ Ib. p. 158.

did not only himself constantly call Christians Galilæans, but made a law, that they should be called only by that name.¹ But to return; the sum is this: the Christians were so buoyed up with the conscience of their innocency, that they cared not who saw them, were willing and desirous to be scanned and searched to the bottom, and to lie open to the view of all; and therefore desired no other favour, than that that Apology which Justin Martyr presented to them, might be set out with the decree of the senate, that so people might come to the true knowledge of their case, and they be delivered from false suspicions, and these accusations, for which they had been undeservedly exposed to so many punishments.²

Thirdly, They appealed for their vindication to the judgment and consciences of their more sober and impartial enemies, and were accordingly acquitted by them, as guiltless of any heinous crimes. Pliny the younger being commanded by the emperor Trajan, to give him an account of the Christians, tells him, that “after the best estimate that he could make, and the strictest inquisition that he could make by tortures, he found no worse of them than this, that they were wont to meet early for the performance of their solemn devotions; and to bind themselves under the most sacred obligations, to commit no vice or wickedness; and that their religion was nothing else but an untoward and immoderate superstition.”³ This is the testimony which that great man, (who being proconsul of Bithynia was capable to satisfy himself, and who

¹ Naz. invest. in Julian. 1, p. 81.

² Ap. 1, p. 51.

³ Epist. lib. x. Ep. 97.

was no less diligent to search into the matter) gives concerning them. Next after him Serenius Granianus the proconsul of Asia, writes to the emperor Adrian, (Trajan's successor,) to represent to him how unjust it was to put Christians to death, when no crime was duly laid to their charge, merely to gratify the tumultuous clamours of the people: to whom the emperor answers, "that they should not be unjustly troubled; that if any thing was truly proved against them, he should punish them according to the nature of the fault; but if done out of malice or spite, he should then accordingly punish the accuser as a calumniator."¹ Next to Adrian, Antoninus Pius (if he be not mistaken for his successor Marcus) in his epistle to the commons of Asia, tells them, that they had traduced the Christians, and had objected those crimes to them, which they could not prove; that they were more firm and undaunted in their profession than themselves, and had a greater freedom with and confidence towards God;² and that therefore he resolved to ratify and follow the determination of his father.³ After him comes M. Antoninus,⁴ who having obtained that famous and signal victory against the Quades in Germany, confesses in his letter to the senate (which letter, though I know it is questioned by some learned men, as now extant, whether true and genuine, yet that there was such a letter is evident enough from Tertullian,⁵ who himself lived within few years of that time and appeals to it), that it was clearly gotten

¹ Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. iv. c. 8, 9, p. 122.

² *Ἐνπαρορησιασώτεροι.*

³ Just. Martyr. Ap. 2, p. 100.

⁴ *Ib.* p. 101, 102.

⁵ Ap. c. 5, p. 6; and ad Scap. c. 4, p. 71.

by the prayers of the Christian legion¹ which he had in his army, and therefore commands that none be molested for being Christians, and that if any accuse a Christian for being such, without a sufficient crime proved against him, he shall be burned alive for his accusation; that a Christian confessing himself to be one shall be safe and secure, and that the governor of the province shall not drive him to renounce his profession; and this he commands to be confirmed by the decree of the senate. So clear did the Christians appear to their greatest enemies, especially in their more calm and sober intervals. Nay, Trypho the Jew (and that very notion speaks him enemy enough, yet) confesses them clear of those foul aspersions; for when the martyr had asked him, whether he disliked the Christians' manners and way of life, and whether he really believed that they ate man's flesh, and putting out the candles ran together in promiscuous mixtures; the Jew answered "that

¹ That during the German war the Roman army, having suffered severely from want of water, were relieved by a seasonable fall of rain, is recorded by several profane writers, as well as by Tertullian, and confirmed by the indisputable testimony of the Antonine column. On this column, however, the relief is attributed to the immediate intervention of Jupiter Pluvis; which at once disproves the existence of any letters in which the emperor ascribed it to the prayers of the Christians, as told by Tertullian. The story contains nothing miraculous; for, though he evidently insinuates such an inference, he does not assert that the shower would not have fallen independently of the supplications of the Christian soldiers. Subsequent writers have magnified the circumstance, adding, that the storm of thunder and lightning, which accompanied the rain, destroyed the army of the enemy; whence the fact has been dignified with the name of the miracle of the *thundering* legion. It is not to be disputed, however, that the Almighty may have visibly interposed upon this occasion, in support of the interest of the new religion. See Bishop Kaye on Tertullian, p. 105.—ED.

those things whereof they were accused by many were unworthy of belief, as being so extremely abhorrent to human nature; and that the precepts which are commanded in their Gospel (which his curiosity had prompted him to read) were so great and admirable, that he supposed no man could be able to keep and obey them."¹ And to instance in no more, the heathen oracle itself pronounced in favour of the Christians; for Apollo giving forth his oracles, not as he was wont by human voice, but out of a dark and dismal cavern, confessed it was because of just men that lived upon the earth; Dioclesian inquired who those just men were, one of the heathen priests that stood by answered, that they were the Christians.² This Constantine the Great tells he himself heard, being then a young man, and in company at that time with the emperor Dioclesian, and he there solemnly calls God to witness for the truth of the story.³

From all which it appears how innocent the Christians were of those things which the Gentiles charged upon them, how infinitely strict and un-

¹ Just. Mart. Dial. cum Tryph. p. 227.

² Euseb. de Vit. Constant. lib. ii. c. 50, 51, p. 467.

³ The evidence upon which this story is built, as well as that of the same emperor's vision of the cross, is not very satisfactory. Eusebius, who relates both circumstances in his *Life of Constantine*, does not mention them in his *Ecclesiastical History*; he states, moreover, that Constantine gave him the account, of the latter at least, a long time after the event. Be it observed, however, that he asserted that the sight was witnessed, not by himself alone, but by the whole army; and Antoninus, who was deprived of his appointment by Julian, bears him out in the assertion. Although it is extremely difficult to give an opinion in a case upon which so much may be said, and has been said on both sides of the question, it seems scarcely probable that the emperor would have hazarded an assertion, of which the falsehood was so glaringly open to detection.—ED.

blamable in their lives, and therefore triumphed over the heathens in the purity and innocency of their conversations. Origen tells Celsus, "that the churches of God which had taken upon them the discipline of Christ, if compared to the common societies of men, were amongst them like lights in the world." "For who," says he, "is there, but he must needs confess that the worser part of our church is much better than the popular assemblies; as for instance, the church of God at Athens is meek and quiet, as endeavouring to approve itself to the great God; whereas now the popular assembly of Athens is seditious and tumultuous, and no ways to be compared with the church of God in that city; and the same may be said of the churches of God, and the vulgar assemblies which are at Corinth, or Alexandria."¹ So Minucius Felix: "Should we Christians be compared with you, although our discipline may seem somewhat inferior, yet we should be found infinitely to transcend you. You forbid adultery, and then practise it; we keep entirely to our own wives: you punish wickedness when committed, with us even a wicked thought is sin; you stand in awe of those who are conscious of your crimes, we of nothing but our consciences, without which we cannot be; and last of all it is with your party that the prison is filled and crowded: no Christian is there, unless such a one as is either a shame to his religion, or an apostate from it."² And a little after he tells his adversary, how much they exceeded the best philosophers, "who were filthy and tyrannical, and only eloquent to declare against those vices of

¹ Lib. iii. p. 128, 129.

² Page 29.

which themselves were most guilty : that we Christians do not measure wisdom by men's habits, but by their minds and tempers, and do not speak great things, but live them, having this to boast of, that we really attain to those things which they earnestly sought, but could not find."¹ Thus Lactantius, having excellently discoursed of the prodigious debaucheries and wickednesses of the heathens: "But which of these things," says he, "can be objected to our people, whose whole religion is to live without spot or blemish: from whence they might easily gather, had they any understanding, that piety is on our side, and that they themselves are vile and impious."² And Eusebius tells us, "that in his time the Christian faith had by gravity, sincerity, modesty, and holiness of life, so conquered all opposition, that none durst bespatter it, or charge it with any of those calumnies, which the ancient enemies of our religion used to fasten upon it."³ "What religion," says Arnobius, "can be truer, more useful, powerful, just than this? which (as he elsewhere notes) renders men meek, speakers of truth, modest, chaste, charitable, kind and helpful to all, as if most nearly related to us." And indeed this is the genuine and natural tendency of the Christian doctrine, and which it cannot but effect, wherever it is kindly embraced and entertained. So true is that which Athenagoras told the emperors, that no Christian could be a bad man, unless he were an hypocrite; and Tertullian openly declares, that when men de-

¹ Page 31.

² De Justit. lib. v. c. 9, p. 485.

³ Hist. Eccles. lib. iv. c. 7, p. 121; vid. Constant. Or. ad cæ-tum S. S. c. 23, p. 599.

¹ Leg. pro Christian. p. 4.

part from the discipline of the Gospel, they so far cease amongst us to be accounted Christians:¹ and therefore, when the heathens objected, that some that went under that name were guilty of great enormities, and inquired how comes such a one to be a cheat, if the Christians be so righteous; how so cruel, if they be merciful? he answers, "that by this very thing they bore witness, that they who were real Christians were not such; that there is a vast difference between the crime and the name, the opinion and the truth; that they are not presently Christians that are called so, but cheat others by the pretence of a name; that they shunned the company of such, and did not meet or partake with them in the offices of religion; that they did not admit those whom mere force and cruelty had driven to deny Christianity, much less such as voluntarily transgressed the Christian discipline; and that therefore the heathens did very ill to call them Christians, whom the Christians themselves did disown, who yet were not wont to deny their own party."²

¹ Apol. c. 46, p. 36.

² Ad Nation. lib. i. c. 5, p. 43.

CHAPTER V.

Of the positive parts of their Religion: and first of their piety towards God.

HAVING thus seen with how much clearness the ancient Christians vindicated themselves from those unjust aspersions, which their spiteful and malicious adversaries had cast upon them; we come now to take a more direct and positive view of their religion; which according to St. Paul's division,¹ we shall consider as to their piety towards God; those virtues which more immediately concerned themselves; and those which respected their behaviour and carriage towards others. Their piety towards God appeared in those two main instances of it, a serious and hearty detestation of idolatry, and a religious care about the concerns of divine worship.

Idolatry in those times was the prevailing sin of the world; the principal crime of mankind, the great guilt of the age, and the almost sole cause of men's being brought into judgment, as what in a manner contains all sins under it, as Tertullian begins his book upon that subject;² a crime of the first rank, and one of the highest sorts of wickedness, as it is called by the most ancient council in Spain.³ They looked upon it as a sin that undermined the very being of the Deity, and ravished the honour of his crown. Before we proceed any further, we shall first inquire what was the notion

¹ Tit. ii. 12.

² De Idololat. c. 1, p. 85.

³ Conc. Illiberit. Can. 1.

they generally had of idolatry. They then accounted that a man was guilty of idolatry, when he gave divine adoration to any thing that was not God; not only when he worshipped a material idol, but when he vested any creature with that religious respect and veneration that was only due to God. "Idolatry," says Tertullian, "robs God, denying him those honours that are due to him, and conferring them upon others, so that at the same time it does both defraud him and reproach him:"¹ and a little after he expressly affirms, that "whatever is exalted above the standard of civil worship, in imitation of the divine excellency, is directly made an idol."² Thus St. Gregory, for his solid and excellent learning called the divine (a title never given to any besides him but to St. John the apostle) defines idolatry (which, says he, is the greatest evil in the world) to be the translation of that worship that is due to the Creator upon the creature.³ Accordingly we find them infinitely zealous to assert divine adoration, as the proper and incommunicable prerogative of God alone, and absolutely refusing to impart religious worship to any though the best of creatures. Surely if any, one would think angels, the first rank of created beings, creatures, of such sublime excellencies and perfections, might have challenged it at their hands; but hear what Origen says to this: "We adore," says he, "our Lord God, and serve him alone, following the example of Christ, who when tempted by the devil to fall down and worship him, answered, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him

¹ Ut supra, c. 11.

² Ib. c. 19, p. 95.

³ Greg. Naz. Orat. Paneg. in Nativit. Christi, Or. 38, p. 620.

only shalt thou serve ;'¹ which is the reason why we refuse to give honours to those spirits that preside over human affairs, because we cannot serve two masters, to wit, God and Mammon.² We indeed speak well of them, and think them happy, that they are entrusted by God to manage the conveniencies of man's life ; but yet do not give them that honour that is only due to God ; for this neither does God allow of, neither do they desire it ; but equally love and regard us when we do not, as if we did sacrifice to them."³ And when Celsus a little before had smartly pressed him to do honour to dæmons, he rejects the motion with great contempt. "Away, (says he,) with this counsel of Celsus, who in this is not in the least to be hearkened to ; for the great God only is to be adored, and prayers to be delivered up to none but his only begotten Son, 'the first born of every creature,' that as our high-priest he may carry them to his Father and to our Father, to his God and to our God."⁴ It is true that the worship of angels did (and that very early, as appears from the apostle's caveat against it in his epistle to the Colossians⁵) creep into some parts of the Christian church, but was always disowned and cried out against, and at last publicly and solemnly condemned by the whole Laodicean council. "It is not lawful (says the thirty-fifth canon of that council) for Christians to leave the church of God, and to go and invoke angels, and to make prohibited assemblies. If

¹ Matt. iv. 10.

² Matt. vi. 25.

³ Contr. Cels. lib. viii. p. 415, 416.

⁴ Page 395.

⁵ Col. ii. 18. Some of the Gnostics worshipped angels.—
ED.

therefore any one shall be found devoting himself to this private idolatry, let him be accursed; forasmuch as he has forsaken the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and has delivered up himself to idolatry." From which nothing can be more clear, than that it was the sense of these Fathers, that the worshipping of angels was not only downright idolatry, but a plain apostacy from the Christian faith.

Nor were they more peremptory in denying divine honour to angels, than they were to martyrs and departed saints: for though they had a mighty honour and respect for martyrs (as we shall take notice afterwards) as those that had maintained the truth of their religion, and sealed it with their blood, and therefore did what they could to do praise and honour to their memories, yet were they far from placing any thing of religion or divine adoration in it; whereof it will be enough to quote one famous instance. The church of Smyrna, writing to the churches of Pontus, to give them an account of the martyrdom of Polycarpus, their bishop,¹ tells them, that after he was dead, many of the Christians were desirous to have gotten the remains of his body (possibly to have given them decent and honourable burial) but were prevented in it by some Jews, who importuned the proconsul to the contrary, suggesting that the Christians leaving their crucified Master, might henceforth worship Polycarpus: whereupon they add, that this suggestion must needs proceed from ignorance of the true state of Christians. "This they did (say

¹ See a beautiful translation of this highly interesting narrative in archbishop Wake's "Apostolical Fathers."—ED.

they) not considering how impossible it is that ever we should either forsake Christ, who died for the salvation of mankind, or that we should worship any other. We adore him as the Son of God; but the martyrs, as the disciples and followers of our Lord, we deservedly love for their eminent kindness to their own Prince and Master; whose companions and fellow-disciples we also by all means desire to be.”¹ This instance is so much the more valuable in this case, not only because so plain and pertinent, but because so ancient, and from persons of so great authority in the church. For this is not the testimony of any one private person, but of the whole church of Smyrna, according as it had been trained up under the doctrine and discipline of Polycarpus, the immediate disciple of St. John. This was the doctrine and practice of Christians then, and it held so for some ages after, even down to the times of St. Augustine, when yet in many other things the simplicity of the Christian religion began to decline apace. “We set apart,” says he “no temples, nor priests, nor divine services, nor sacrifices to martyrs; because they are not God, but the same who is theirs, is our God. Indeed we honour their memories, as of holy men, who have stood for the truth, even unto death, that so the true religion might appear, and those which are false convinced to be so: but who ever heard a priest standing at the altar, built for the honour and worship of God over the body of the holy martyr, to say in his prayers, I offer sacrifice to thee Peter, or Paul or Cyprian.”²

¹ Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. iv. c. 15, p. 134.

² Aug. de Civ. Dei. lib. viii. c. 27, p. 492, vid. lib. xxii c. 10, col. 1355.

More to the same purpose we may find in that place, as also in infinite other places of his works, where (were it worth the while) I could easily show that he does no less frequently than expressly assert, that though the honour of love, respect, and imitation, yet no religious adoration is due either to angels, martyrs, or departed saints.

But the great instance wherein the primitive Christians manifested their detestation of idolatry was in respect of the idolatrous worship of the heathen world, the denying and abhorring any thing of divine honour that was done to their gods. They looked upon the very making of idols (though with no intention to worship them) as an unlawful trade, and as inconsistent with Christianity. "How have we renounced the devil and his angels," says Tertullian, meaning their solemn renunciation in baptism, "if we make idols? Nor is it enough to say, though I make them, I do not worship them; there being the same cause not to make them, that there is not to worship them; viz. the offence that in both is done to God: yea, thou dost so far worship them, as thou makest them that others may worship them."¹ Therefore he roundly pronounces, that "no art, no profession, no service whatsoever that is employed either in making or ministering to idols, can come short of idolatry."² They startled at any thing that had but the least shadow of symbolizing with them in their idolatry. Therefore the Ancyran council condemned them to a two years' suspension from the sacrament, who sit down with their heathen friends upon their solemn festivals in their idol-temples, although they brought

¹ De Idolat. c. 6, p. 88.

² Cap. 11, p. 92, vid. c. 9, 10.

their own provisions along with them, and touched not one bit of what had been offered to the idol. Their first care in instructing new converts, was to leaven them with the hatred of idolatry. "Those that are to be initiated into our religion," says Origen, "we do before all things instil into them a dislike and contempt of all idols and images, and lift up their minds from worshipping creatures instead of God, to him who is the great Creator of the world."² If any through weakness chanced at any time to lapse into this sin, how pathetically did they bewail it. So Celerinus in his epistle to Lucian, giving him an account of a woman that to avoid persecution had done sacrifice, and thereby fallen from Christ, he bewails her as dead, tells him that it stuck so close to him, that though in the time of Easter, a time of festivity and rejoicing, yet he wept night and day, and kept company with sackcloth and ashes, and resolved to do so, till by the help of Christ and the prayers of good men, she should by repentance be raised up again.³ The better to prevent this sin (wherein weaker Christians were sometimes ensnared in those times of cruelty and persecution) the discipline of the ancient church was very severe against it, of which we can have no better evidence, than to take a little view of the determinations relating to this case of that ancient council of Illiberis, held some years before the time of Constantine. There we find, that if any Christian after baptism took upon him the flaminship or priesthood of the Gentiles (an office ordinarily devolved upon the better sort, and which Christians

¹ Can. 7.

² Adv. Cels. lib. iii. p. 120.

³ Inter Epist. Cypr. Ep. 20, p. 32.

sometimes either made suit for to gain more favour with the people, or had it forced upon them by the laws of the country, so that they must either undergo it, or fly and forfeit their estates) such a one no not at the hour of death was to be received into the communion of the church.¹ The reason of which severity was, because whoever underwent that office must do sacrifice to the gods, and entertain the people with several kinds of sights, plays, and sports, which could not be managed without murders, and the exercise of all lust and filthiness, whereby they did double and treble their sin, as that council speaks.² If a Christian in that office did but allow the charges to maintain those sports and sights (although he did not actually sacrifice, which he might avoid, by substituting a Gentile priest in his room) he was indeed to be taken into communion at last, but was to undergo a very severe penance for it all his life. Nay although he did neither of the former, yet if he did but wear a crown (a thing usually done by the heathen priests) he was to be excluded from communion for two years together?³ If a Christian went up to the capitol (probably out of curiosity) only to see the sacrifices of the Gentiles, and did not see them, yet he should be as guilty as if he had seen them, his intention and will being the same,⁴ as the learned Albaspine (and I think truly) understands the canon; and in such a case, if the person was one of the faithful, he was not to be received till after ten years' repentance.⁵ Every master of a family was commanded to suffer

¹ Concil. Illiber. Can. 2, vid. not. Albaspin. p. 5, et de rit. Eccles. Obs. 22.

² Vid. Can. 3, p. 8

³ Can. 55, p. 69.

⁴ Can. 59, p. 71.

⁵ Can. 41, p. 57.

no little idols or images to be kept in his house, to be worshipped by his children or servants; but if this could not be done without danger of being betrayed and accused by his servants, (a thing not unusual in those times,) that then at least he himself should abstain from them; otherwise to be thrown out of the church. Being imbued with such principles, and trained up under such a discipline as this, it is no wonder, if they would do or suffer any thing rather than comply with the least symptom of idolatry. They willingly underwent banishment and confiscation; amongst several of which sort Caldonius tells Cyprian of one Bona, who being violently drawn by her husband to sacrifice, they by force guiding her hand to do it, cried out and protested against it, that it was not she but they that did it, and was thereupon sent into banishment.¹ They freely laid down their greatest honours and dignities, rather than by any idolatrous act to offer violence to their consciences. Whereof Constantius, the father of Constantine made this wise experiment. He gave out that all the officers and great men of the court should either do sacrifice to the gods, or immediately quit his service, and the offices and preferments which they held under him; whereupon many turned about, while others remained firm and unshaken. Upon this the prudent and excellent prince discovered his plot, embraced, commended, and advanced to greater honours those who were faithful to their religion and their conscience; reproaching and turning off those who

¹ Ep. 18, p. 30.

were so ready to quit and forfeit them.¹ Thus Jovianus, a man of considerable note and quality, and an officer of great place in Julian's army, when the emperor sent out his edict, that all the soldiers should either sacrifice, or lay down their arms, presently threw away his belt, rather than obey that impious command; though the emperor at that time, for reasons of state, would not suffer him to depart.² And after the death of Julian, when by the unanimous vote of the whole army he was chosen emperor, he utterly refused it, till the army had renounced their pagan idolatry and superstition. And though it is true, that life is dearest to men of all things in this world; yet how cheerfully did they choose rather to shed their blood, than to defile their consciences with idolatry; of which Eusebius gives us many instances. Indeed this was the common test in those times, either sacrifice or die. Phileas bishop of the Thmuitæ in a letter to his people,³ giving them an account of the martyrdoms that happened at Alexandria, tells them, that "many after having endured strange and unheard of torments, were put to their choice, whether they would sacrifice and be set at liberty, or refuse and lose their heads; whereupon all of them, without any hesitation, readily went to embrace death; knowing well how the Scripture is, 'that whoever sacrifices to strange gods shall be cut off;'⁴ and again, 'thou shalt have no other gods but me.'"⁵ And in the next chapter Euse-

¹ Euseb. de Vit. Constant. lib. i. c. 19, p. 417.

² Socr. Hist. Eccles. lib. iii. c. 22, p. 195

³ Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. viii. c. 10, p. 304.

⁴ Hos. viii. 4.

⁵ Exod. xx. 3.

bis tells us of a whole city of Christians in Phrygia, which together with all the men, women, and children was burnt to ashes, for no other reason, but because they universally confessed themselves to be Christians, and refused to obey those that commanded them to worship idols: instances of which kind there are enough to be met with in the histories of the church.

And so fixed and unmovable were they in this, that no promises or hopes of reward, no fears or threatenings could either tempt or startle them. Memorable a passage or two that we meet withal to this purpose. It was a custom amongst the Romans to show some respect and honour not only to the emperors themselves, but even to their statues and images, by bowing the body, or some other act of external veneration. Now Julian the emperor (whose great design was to reduce all men, but especially his army back to paganism and idolatry) made use of this crafty project. He placed the pictures of Jupiter, and other heathen gods, so close to his own statues, that they could not bow to the one, but they must also to the other; politiciy reducing them to this strait, that either they must refuse to pay civil honour to their prince, (which had been a sufficient crime against them,) or seem at least to do honour to 'the gods.'¹ With this device the less wary and cautelous were entrapped: but others that were more pious and prudent chose rather to deny the prince that civil homage, and fall into the arms of martyrdom, than by such an ambiguous adoration to seem to patronize idol-

¹ Naz. Orat. Invect. 1, in Julian. Or. 13, p. 83. Vid. Sozom. Hist. Eccles. lib. v. c. 17.

atry.¹ At another time he fell upon this stratagem. Upon a solemn day, when the emperors were wont to bestow largesses upon the soldiers, he caused the army to be called before him, sitting then in great pomp and splendour, and a large donative of gold to be laid on the one side, and a heap of frankincense with fire by it on the other, proclamation being made, that they that would sacrifice the one should have the other. By this means many of the Christian soldiers were ensnared, performed the sacrifice, received the donative, and went home jolly and secure. But being at dinner with their companions, and drinking to each other (as the custom was) with their eyes lift up, and calling upon Christ, and making the sign of the cross, as oft as they took the cup into their hands; one at the table told them, he wondered how they could call upon Christ, whom they had so lately abjured. Amazed at this, and asking how they had abjured him, they were told, that they had sacrificed, which was all one as to deny Christ. Whereupon starting up from the table, they ran up and down the market-place in a furious and frantic manner, crying out, "We are Christians, we are Christians in heart and truth; and let all the world take notice, that there is but one God, to whom we live, and for whom we will die; we have not broken the faith which we swore to thee, O blessed Saviour, nor renounced our profession; if our hands be guilty, our hearts are innocent; it is not the gold that has corrupted us, but the emperor's craftiness that deceived us." With that running to the emperor, they threw down their gold before him, with

¹ Naz. *ib.* p. 84.

this address: "We have not, sir, received a donative, but are condemned to die; instead of being honoured we are vilified and disgraced; take this largess and give it to your soldiers; as for us, kill us and sacrifice us to Christ, whom alone we own as our highest prince; return us fire for fire, and for the ashes of the sacrifice, reduce us to ashes. Cut off those hands, which we so wickedly stretched out; those feet that carried us to so great a mischief; give others the gold, who may have no cause to repent on it; for our part Christ is enough for us, whom we value instead of all things." With this noble and generous resolution though the emperor was highly enraged, yet because he envied them the honour of martyrdom, he would not put them to death, but banished them, and inflicted other penalties which might sufficiently evidence his rage against them.

Nay with so warm a zeal were they acted against idolatry, that many of them could not contain themselves from falling foul upon it, wherever they met it, though with the immediate hazard of their lives. So Romanus deacon and exorcist of the church of Cæsarea, seeing great multitudes of people at Antioch flocking to the temples, and doing sacrifice to the gods, came to them, and began very severely to reprove and reproach them; for which being apprehended, after many strange and cruel usages he was put to death, with all imaginable pain and torture.¹ Thus Apphianus a young man, when the criers by proclamation summoned all the inhabitants of Cæsarea to sacrifice to the gods, the tribunes particularly reciting

¹ Euseb. de Mart. Pal. c. 2, p. 320.

every man's name out of a book, to the great terror of all that were Christians, "privately and unknown to us, (says Eusebius, who lived at that time in the same house with him,) stole out, and getting near Urbanus the president (who was then compassed about with a guard of soldiers) just as he was about to offer sacrifice, caught hold of his right hand, which he grasped so fast, that he forced him to let fall the sacrifice, gravely admonishing him to desist from such errors and vanities: clearly showing (says the historian) that true Christians are so far from being drawn from the worship of the true God, that by threatenings and torments they are rather heightened into a greater and more ingenuous freedom and boldness in the profession of the truth."¹ For this fact the young man was almost torn in pieces by the soldiers, whose rage and fierceness could scarce suffer him to be relieved for acuter tortures, which were exercised towards him with all possible cruelty; and when all could do no good upon him, he was thrown half dead into the sea. The like we read of three famous Christians at Merum, a city in Phrygia, where, when the governor of the province under Julian the Apostate had commanded the heathen temple to be opened, they got by night into the temple, and broke to pieces all the statues and images of the gods.² Whereupon when a general persecution was like to arise against all the Christians of the city, that the ignorant and innocent might not suffer, the authors of the fact came of their own accord to the judge, and confessed it;

¹ *Ib.* c. 4, p. 324.

² *Socrat. H. Eccles. lib. iii. c. 15, p. 186.*

who offered them pardon if they would sacrifice; which they rejected with disdain, and told him they were much readier to endure any torments and death itself, than to be defiled with sacrificing; and accordingly were first treated with all sorts of torments, and then burnt upon an iron grate; retaining their courage to the last, and took their leave of the governor with this sarcasm: "If thou hast a mind, Amachius, to eat roast meat, turn us on the other side, lest we be but half roasted, and so prove ungrateful to thy taste." So mightily did a restless passion for the divine honour possess the minds of those primitive Christians: and, though it is true such transports of zeal are not ordinarily warrantable (for which reason the council of Illiberis justly prohibited those who were killed in the defacing and demolishing idols, to be reckoned in the number of martyrs¹) yet do they sufficiently show what a spirit of eagerness and activity ruled in those times against the false religions of the world.²

By all this we may see how unjustly the Christians were traduced and accused for idolaters. Three things were commonly charged upon them, that they worshipped the sun, the cross, and an ass's head. For the first, their worshipping the sun, Tertullian answers, that the mistake arose from a double cause; partly that the Christians of those times did generally pray towards the east and the sun-rising, which the heathens themselves also did, though upon different grounds: and partly because

¹ Can. 60, p. 72.

² For some excellent observations on the subject of martyrdom, see bishop Kaye on Tertullian, p. 154.—ED.

they performed the solemnities of their religion upon the day that was dedicated to the sun, which made the Gentiles suspect that they worshipped the sun itself.¹ They were next charged with worshipping crosses; a charge directly false. "As for crosses," says Octavius, "we neither desire, nor worship them. It is you who consecrate wooden gods, that perhaps adore wooden crosses as parts of them;"² the very same answer which Tertullian also returns to this charge.³ The occasion of it no doubt was, the Christians talking of, and magnifying so much their crucified Master, and their almost constant use of the sign of the cross, which (as we shall see afterwards) they made use of even in the most common actions of their lives; but for paying any adoration to a material cross, was a thing to which those times were the greatest strangers. Otherwise understanding the cross for him that hung upon it, they were not ashamed with the

¹ Apol. c. 16, p. 16.

The custom of praying toward the east was very ancient in the Christian church; for which many reasons are adduced by Bingham, in the thirteenth book of his Ecclesiastical Antiquities. Clemens Alexandrinus considers the custom to intimate the rising of the Sun of Righteousness to dispel the darkness of ignorance.—Strom. vii. p. 856. Ἐπεὶ δὲ γενεθλίον ἡμέρας εἰκὼν ἢ ἀνατολή, κάκειθεν τὸ φῶς αὖξεται ἐκ σκότους λάμψαν τὸ κρῶτον· ἀλλὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐν ἀγνοία κυλινδόμενοις ἀνέτειλε γνώσεως ἀληθείας ἡμέρα, κατὰ λόγον τοῦ ἡλίου· πρὸς τὴν ἐωθίνην ἀνατολήν αἱ εὐχαί. Tertullian (*Adv. Valent.* § 3.) calls the east, *figura Christi*: probably alluding to Zech. iii. 8; vi. 12; Mal. iv. 2; See also Augustine, *de Serm. Dom.* ii. 5. The custom of building churches with the altar in the east, had doubtless a similar origin.—ED.

² Minu. Fel. p. 24.

³ Loc. supra citat: Cruces nec colimus, nec optamus: vos plane, qui ligneos deos consecratis, cruces ligneos, ut deorum vestrorum partes consecratis.—ED.

great apostle, 'to glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,'¹ and to count it the matter of their highest joy and triumph. But the absurdest part of the charge was, that they worshipped the head of an ass. "I hear," says the heathen in Minucius Felix, "that being seduced by I know not what fond persuasion, they worship the consecrated head of an ass, one of the filthiest creatures; a religion fitly calculated for persons of such a dull and stupid disposition."² Hence Tertullian tells us, that Christians were called *Asinarii*, ass-worshippers, and that Christ was painted, and publicly exposed by the bold wicked hand of an apostate Jew, with ass's ears, one of his feet hoofed, holding a book in his hand, and having a gown over him, with this inscription: *DEUS CHRISTIANORUM ONONYCHITES*,³ "The ass-hoofed God of the Christians." A most ridiculous representation, and the issue of the most foolish spite and malice. "When I saw it," says he, "I laughed both at the title and the fashion."⁴ This Octavius tells his adversary was the result and spawn of lying fame, begot and nourished by the father of lies. "For who," says he, "can be so silly as to worship this? or who can be so much more silly as to believe that it should be worshipped? unless it be that you yourselves do consecrate whole asses in the stable with your goddess Epona, and religiously adorn them in the solemnities of Isis, and both sacrifice and adore the heads

¹ Gal. vi. 14.

² Page 8.

³ *Ononychites*. [From *ὄνος*, an ass, and *ὄνυξ*, a hoof.—E.D.] *De variis hujus vocis lectionib. vid. Rigalt. in loc. et Voss. de Idol. lib. iii. c. 75, p. 565.* [Other readings are *Ὀνοχοότης* and *Ὀνοκοίτης*. See also Tertullian. *adv. Nation. i. 14.*—E.D.]

⁴ *Vid. ad Nation. lib. i. c. 14, p. 50.*

of rams and oxen. You make gods of a mixture of a goat and a man, and dedicate them with the faces of dogs and lions."¹ More he has there to the same purpose, as Tertullian also had answered the same thing before him. The true ground of this ridiculous charge, as Tertullian observes, was a fabulous report that had been a long time common amongst the heathens, that the Jews when wandering in the wilderness, and almost ready to die of thirst, were conducted by wild asses to a fountain of water, for which great kindness they formed the shape of an ass, and ever after worshipped it with divine honours.² This is confidently reported both by Tacitus and Plutarch,³ as it had been many years before by Apion the Alexandrian, in his books against the Jews, and by this means the heathens, who did frequently confound the Jews and Christians, came to form and fasten this charge upon them; when it was equally false in respect of both. For as Tertullian observes, the same Tacitus who reports this, tells us in another place, that when Pompey at the taking of Jerusalem presumptuously broke into the Holy of Holies, whither none but the high-priest might enter, out of a curiosity to pry into the most hidden secrets and arcana of their religion, he found no image at all there;⁴ whereas (says Tertullian) had they worshipped any such thing, there had been no likelier place to have met with it, and therefore brands him with the charge of the most lying historian in the world. And

¹ Page 23. ² Vid. etiam ad Nation. lib. i. c. 11, p. 49.

³ Tacit. Hist. lib. v. c. 4; Plut. Sympos. lib. iv. Quest. 5, p. 670.

⁴ Tacit. Hist. v. 9; see also Josephus, c. Apion. ii. 7.—E.D.

thus we see how the ancient Christians manifested and maintained their love and piety towards God, by a most vigorous and hearty opposition of that idolatry that reigned so uncontrolably in the heathen world.

CHAPTER VI.

Of Churches, and places of public Worship in the primitive times.

THE primitive Christians were not more heartily zealous against the idolatrous worship of the heathen gods, than they were religiously observant of whatever concerned the honour and worship of the true, as to all the material parts and circumstances of it; as will easily appear, if we consider what care they had about the place, time, persons, and both the matter and manner of that worship that they performed to God: under each of which we shall take notice of what is most considerable, and does most properly relate to it, so far as the records of those times give us an account of it.

Place is an inseparable circumstance of religious worship; for every body by the natural necessity of its being requires some determinate place either for rest or motion. Now the worship of God being in a great part an external action, especially when performed by the joint concurrence of several persons, does not only necessarily require a place, but

a place conveniently capacious of all that join together in the same public actions of religion. This reason put all nations, even by the light of nature, upon erecting public places for the honour of their gods, and for their own conveniency in meeting together to pay their religious services and devotions. But my present inquiry reaches no further than the primitive Christians: not whether they met together for the discharge of their common duties (which I suppose none can doubt of;) but whether they had churches, fixed and appropriate places for the joint performance of their public offices: and that they had even in those early times, will I think be beyond all dispute, if we take but a short survey of those first ages of Christianity. In the sacred story we find some more than probable footsteps of some determinate places for their solemn conventions, and peculiar only to that use. Of this nature was that *ὑπερῶον*, or upper room¹ into which the apostles and disciples, after their return from the ascension of our Saviour, went up; as into a place commonly known and separate to that use, there by fasting and prayer to make choice of a new apostle; and this supposed by a very ancient tradition to have been the same room wherein our Saviour the night before his death celebrated the passover with his disciples, and instituted the Lord's supper. Such a one, if not (which I rather think) the same, was that one

¹ Acts, i. 13. Tradition has variously placed this *upper room* in the houses of Mary, the mother of John, of Nicodemus, of Simon the Leper, and of Joseph of Arimathea. It is also said, that in this room Jesus made his several appearances after his resurrection; that in it the seven deacons were ordained, and the apostolic councils held; and upon its site, according to Jerome, the first Christian church was erected.—ED.

place, wherein they were all assembled with one accord upon the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost visibly came down upon them;¹ and this the rather because the multitude (and they too strangers of every nation under heaven) came so readily to the place upon the first rumour of so strange an accident, which could hardly have been, had it not been commonly known to be the place where the Christians used to meet together. And this very learned men take to be the meaning of Acts, ii. 46. 'They continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread *κατ' οἶκον*, (not as we render it, from house to house; but) at home, as it is in the margin, or 'in the house, they ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart;' i. e. when they had performed their daily devotions at the temple at the accustomed hours of prayer, they used to return home to this upper room, there to celebrate the holy eucharist, and then go to their ordinary meals. This seems to be a clear and unforced interpretation; and to me the more probable, because it immediately follows upon their assembling together in that one place at the day of Pentecost, which room is also called by the same name of house, at the second verse of that chapter; and it is no ways unlikely (as Mr. Mede conjectures) but that when the first believers sold their houses and lands, and laid the money at the apostles' feet to supply the necessities of the church, some of them might give their houses (at least some eminent room in them) for the church to meet in, and perform their sacred duties: which also may be the reason why the apostle, writing to par-

¹ Acts, ii. 1.

ticular Christians, speaks so often of the church that was in their house; which seems clearly to intimate not so much the particular persons of any private family living together under the same band of Christian discipline, as that in such or such a house (and more especially in this or that room of it) there was the constant and solemn convention of the Christians of that place, for their joint celebration of divine worship. This will be further cleared by that famous passage of St. Paul, where taxing the Corinthians for their irreverence and abuse of the Lord's supper, one greedily eating before another, and some of them to great excess, 'What,' says he, 'have you not houses to eat and to drink in, or despise ye the church of God?'"¹ Where that by church is not meant the assembly meeting, but the place in which they used to assemble, is evident partly from what went before: for 'their coming together in the church,' is expounded 'by their coming together into one place;'² plainly arguing that the apostle meant, not the persons, but the place; partly from the opposition which he makes between the church and their own private houses. If they must have such irregular banquets, they had houses of their own, where it was much fitter to do it, and to have their ordinary repast, than in that place which was set apart for the common exercises of religion; and therefore ought not to be dishonoured by such extravagant and intemperate feastings. For which cause he enjoins them in the close of that chapter, that 'if any man hunger he should eat at home.' And that this place was always thus understood by the fathers of old, were

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 22.

² Ib. v. 18, 20.

no hard matter to make out, as also by most learned men of later times, of which it shall suffice to intimate two of our own, men of great name and learning, who have done it to great satisfaction.¹

Thus stood the case during the apostles' times; for the ages after them we find that the Christians had their fixed and definite places of worship; especially in the second century, as, had we no other evidence, might be made good from the testimony of the author of that dialogue in Lucian² (if not Lucian himself, of which I see no great cause to doubt) who lived under the reign of Trajan, and who expressly mentions that house or room wherein the Christians were wont to assemble together. Clemens in his famous epistle to the Corinthians assures us, that Christ did not only appoint the times when, the persons by whom, but the places where he would be solemnly served and worshipped.³ Justin Martyr expressly affirms, that upon Sunday, all Christians, whether in town or country, used to assemble together in one place,⁴ which could hardly be done, had not that place been fixed and settled. The same we find afterwards in several places of Tertullian, who speaks of their coming into the church and the house of God, which he elsewhere calls the house of our dove, i. e. our innocent and dove-like religion, and there describes the very form and fashion of it;⁵ and in another place, speaking of their going into the water to be baptized, he tells us they were wont first to go into the church to make their solemn

¹ Nic. Full. Miscell. S. lib. ii. c. 9. Mr. Mede, p. 405

² Philopat. tom. ii. p. 1007.

³ Page 52.

⁴ Ap. 2, p. 98.

⁵ De Idololat. c. 7, p. 88; Adv. Valentin. c. 3, p. 251.

renunciation before the bishop.¹ If it shall be said that the heathens of those times generally accused the Christians for having no temples, and charged it upon them as a piece of atheism and impiety, and that the Christian Apologists did not deny it, as will appear to any that will take the pains to examine the places alleged below;² to this the answer in short depends upon the notion which they had of a temple, by which the Gentiles understood the places devoted to their gods, and wherein their deities were inclosed and shut up; places adorned with statues and images, with fine altars and ornaments. For such temples as these they freely confessed they had none, no, nor ought to have, for that the true God did not (as the heathens supposed theirs) dwell in temples made with hands, nor either needed nor could possibly be honoured by them: and therefore they purposely abstained from the word temple, and I do not remember that it is used by any Christian writer for the place of the Christian assemblies, for the best part of the first three hundred years. And yet those very writers who deny Christians to have had any temples, do at the same time acknowledge, that they had their meeting-places for divine worship; their *conventicula*, as Arnobius calls them,³ and complains they were furiously demolished by their enemies. If any desires to know more concerning this, as also that Christians had appropriate places of worship for the greatest part of the three first centuries, let him read a discourse pur-

¹ De Coron. Mil. c. 3, p. 101.

² Min. Fel. p. 8—26; Arnob. adv. Gent. lib. vi. p. 83; Lact. de Orig. Error. lib. ii. c. 2, p. 141.

³ Lib. iv. p. 67.

posely written upon this subject, by a most learned man of our own nation ;¹ nor indeed should I have said so much as I have about it, but that I had noted most of these things, before I read his discourse upon that subject.

Afterwards their churches began to rise apace, according as they met with more quiet and favourable times; especially under Valerian, Gallienus, Claudius, Aurelian, and some other emperors. Of which times Eusebius tells us, that the bishops met with the highest respect and kindness both from people and governors; and adds, "But who shall be able to reckon up the innumerable multitudes that daily flocked to the faith of Christ; the number of congregations in every city; those famous meetings of theirs in their oratories or sacred places, so great, that not being content with those old buildings which they had before, they erected from the very foundations more fair and spacious churches in every city."² This was several years before the times of Constantine, and yet even then they had their churches of ancient date. This indeed was a very serene and sunshiny season, but alas it begun to darken again, and 'the clouds returned after rain;' for in the very next chapter he tells us that in the reign of Dioclesian, there came out imperial edicts, commanding all Christians to be persecuted, the bishops to be imprisoned, the Holy Bible to be burnt, and their churches to be demolished and laid level with the ground: which how many they were, may be guessed at by this,

¹ Mr. Jos. Mede's Discourse concerning Churches, oper. part 1. lib. ii.

² Hist. Eccles. lib. viii. c. 1, p. 292.

that there were about this time above forty *basilicæ* or churches in Rome only.¹

Upon Constantine's coming into a partnership of the empire, the clouds began to disperse and scatter, and Maximinus, (who then governed the eastern parts of the empire,) a bitter enemy to Christians, was yet forced by a public edict to give Christians the free liberty of their religion,² and leave to repair and rebuild τὰ κυριακὰ τὰ ὀικεῖα, their churches;³ which shortly after they every where set upon, raising their churches from the ground to a vast height, and to a far greater splendour and glory than those which they had before, the emperors giving all possible encouragement to it by frequent laws and constitutions. The Christians also themselves contributed towards it with the greatest cheerfulness and liberality, even to a magnificence, comparable to that of the Jewish princes towards the building of Solomon's temple, as Eusebius tells them in his oration at the dedication of the famous church at Tyre.⁴ And no sooner was the whole empire devolved upon Constantine, but he published two laws, one to prohibit pagan worship, the other commanding churches to be built of a nobler size and capacity than before;⁵ to which purpose he directed his letters to Eusebius and the rest of the bishops to see it done within their several jurisdictions, charging also the governors of provinces to be assisting to them, and to furnish them with whatever was necessary and convenient: insomuch that in a short time the world was beautified with

¹ Optat. de Schismat. Donat. lib. ii. p. 40.

² Euseb. lib. ix. ci. 10, p. 364.

³ Id. lib. x. c. 2, p. 370.

⁴ Ib. c. 4, p. 377.

⁵ De Vit. Constant. lib. ii. c. 45, 46, p. 464.

churches and sacred oratories, both in cities and villages, and in the most barbarous and desert places, called *κυριακὰ*, says the historian, (from whence our kirk and church,) the Lord's houses, because erected not to men, but to the honour of our Lord and Saviour.¹ It were needless to insist any longer upon the piety of Christians in building churches in and after the times of Constantine, the instances being so vastly numerous; only I cannot omit what Nazianzen reports of his own father, who, though bishop of a very small and inconsiderable diocess, yet built a famous church almost wholly at his own charge.²

Thus we have seen that from the very infancy of the Gospel, the Christians always had their settled and determinate places of divine worship. For the form and fashion of their churches it was for the most part oblong; to keep (say some) the better correspondence with the fashion of a ship, (the common notion and metaphor by which the church was wont to be represented,) and to put us in mind that we are tossed up and down in this world, as upon a stormy and tempestuous sea, and that out of the church there is no safe passage to heaven, the country we all hope to arrive at.³ They were generally built towards the east, (towards which also they performed the more solemn parts of their worship, the reasons whereof we shall see afterwards in its due place,) following herein the custom of the Gentiles, though upon far other grounds than they did, and this seems to have obtained from the first ages of Christianity. Sure I am it was so in Ter-

¹ Orat. de Laud. Const. c. 17, p. 660.

² Or. Funer. in Laud. Patr. Or. 19, p. 313.

³ Constit. Apost. lib. ii. c. 57, p. 875.

tullian's time, who, opposing the plain and simple way of the orthodox assemblies to the skulking and clancular conventicles of the heretics, who serpent-like crept about in holes and corners, says: "The house of our dove-like religion is simple, built on high and in open view, and respects the light as the figure of the Holy Spirit, and the east as the representation of Christ."¹ It cannot be thought that in the first ages, while the flames of persecution raged about their ears, the Christian churches should be very stately and magnificent, but such as the condition of those times would bear, their splendour increasing according to the entertainment that Christianity met withal in the world, till the empire becoming Christian, their temples rose up into grandeur and gallantry; as, amongst others, may appear by the particular description which Eusebius makes of the church at Tyre, mentioned before, and that which Constantine built at Constantinople in honour of the apostles, both which were incomparably sumptuous and magnificent.²

I shall not undertake to describe at large the exact form, and the several parts and dimensions of their churches (which varied somewhat according to different times and ages) but briefly reflect upon such as were most common and remarkable. At the entrance of their churches (especially after they began to arrive at more perfection) was the *vestibulum* (called also *atrium* and *προνάον*); the porch, in greater churches of somewhat larger capacity, adorned many times with goodly porticos,

¹ Adv. Valentin. p. 251.

² De Vit. Const. lib. iv. c. 58, 59, p. 555.

marble columns, fountains, and cisterns of water, and covered over for the conveniency of those that stood or walked there. Here stood the lowest order of penitents, begging the prayers of the faithful as they went in. For the church itself, it usually consisted of three parts; the first was the *narthex* (which we have no proper word to render by.) It was that part of the church that lay next to the great door by which they entered in. In the first part of it stood the *catechumens*, or first learners of Christianity; in the middle the *energumeni*, or those who were possessed by Satan; and in this part also stood the font, or place of baptismal initiation; and towards the upper end was the place of the hearers, who were one of the ranks of penitents. The second part contained the middle, or main body of the church (called by the Greeks *νάος*, by the Latins *navis*, from whence our term the nave of the church comes), where the faithful assembled for the celebration of divine service. Here the men and women had their distinct apartments,¹ lest at such times unchaste and irregular appetites should be kindled by a promiscuous interfering with one another; of which pious and excellent contrivance mention is made in an ancient funeral inscription found in the Vatican cemetery at Rome; such a one buried, *SINISTRA PARTE VIRORVM*, on that side of the church where the men sat.² In this part of the church, next to the entering into it, stood the class of the penitents, who were called *ὑποπίπτοντες*, because at their going out they fell down upon their knees

¹ Const. Apost. lib. ii. c. 57, p. 374.

² Roma Subterranean. lib. ii. c. 10; Num. 23, p. 205.

before the bishop, who laid his hands upon them. Next to them was the *ambo*, the pulpit or rather reading-desk, whence the Scriptures were read and preached to the people. Above that were the faithful, the highest rank and order of the people, and who alone communicated at the Lord's table. The third part was the *βῆμα*, or *ἱερατεῖον*, separated from the rest of the church by neat rails, called *cancels*, whence our English word *chancel*, to denote the part of the church to this day. Into this part none might come but such as were in holy orders, unless it were the Greek emperors, who were allowed to come up to the table to make their offerings, and so back again. Within this division the most considerable thing was the *Θυσιαστήριον*, the altar (as they metaphorically called it, because there they offered the commemorative sacrifice of Christ's body and blood) or the communion-table (*ἡ ἁγία τράπεζα* as it is frequently styled by the Greek Fathers); behind which, at the very upper end of the chancel, was the chair or throne of the bishop, (for so was it almost constantly called,) on both sides whereof were the *σύνθρονοι*, the seats of the presbyters (for the deacons might not here sit down.) The bishop's throne was raised up somewhat higher from the ground, and from hence I suppose it was that he usually delivered his sermons to the people. Therefore Socrates seems to note it as a new thing in Chrysostom, that when he preached, he went to sit *ἐπὶ τῷ ἄμβωνος* "upon the pulpit,"¹ (he means that in the body of the church, for so Sozomon tells us that he sat in the reading-desk in the middle of the church,²) that by reason of his low voice he might be bet-

¹ Hist. Eccl. lib. vi. c. 5, p. 304. ² Lib. viii. c. 5, p. 764.

ter heard of the people. Adjoining to the chancel on the north-side, probably, was the *diacōnicon*, mentioned both in the Laodicean council (though I know both Zonaras and Balsamon, and after them the learned Leo Allatius will have another thing to be meant in the place) as also in a law of Arcadius and Honorius against heretics, and probably so called either because peculiarly committed to the deacon of the place, or as the great commentator upon that law will have it, because set apart τῆ ἱερῆ διακονίᾳ, “to some sacred services.”¹ It was in the nature of our modern vestries, the sacristy, wherein the plate, vessels, and vestments belonging to the church, and other things dedicated to holy uses, were laid up, and where in after times relics and such-like fopperies were treasured up with great care and diligence. On the side of the chancel was the *prothesis*, or place where things were prepared in order to the sacrament, where the offerings were laid, and what remained of the sacramental elements, till they were decently disposed of. And this may serve for a short view of the churches of those first times, after they began to grow up into some beauty and perfection.

But though the Christians of those times spared no convenient cost in founding and adorning public places for the worship of God, yet were they careful to keep a decent mean between a sordid slovenliness, and a too curious and over-nice superstition. In the more early times, even while the fury and fierceness of their enemies kept them low and mean, yet they beautified their oratories and

¹ Can. 21. De Templ. Græc. Num. 14, p. 25; C. Th. lib. xvi. Tit. 5, lib. xxix. ubi vid. Jac. Gothofr. Com.

places of worship; especially if we may believe the author of the dialogue in Lucian (whom we mentioned before, and who lived within the first age) who, bringing in one Critias that was persuaded by the Christians, to go to the place of their assembly, (which by his description seems to have been an ὑπερῶον, or upper room,) tells us that after they had gone up several stairs, they came at last into a house or room that was overlaid with gold, where he beheld nothing but a company of persons with their bodies bowed down, and pale faces. I know the design of that dialogue in part is to abuse and deride the Christians, but there is no reason to suppose he feigned those circumstances which made nothing to his purpose. As the times grew better, they added more and greater ornaments to them; concerning two whereof there has been some contest in the Christian world, altars and images. As for altars, the first Christians had no other in their churches than decent tables of wood, upon which they celebrated the holy eucharist. These, it is true, in allusion to those in the Jewish temple, the Fathers generally called altars, and truly enough might do so, by reason of those sacrifices they offered upon them, viz. the commemoration of Christ's sacrifice in the blessed sacrament, the sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving, and the oblation of alms and charity for the poor (usually laid upon those tables) which the apostle expressly styles a sacrifice.¹ These were the only sacrifices (for no other had the Christian world for many hundreds of years) which they then offered upon their altars, which were much of the same

¹ Heb. xiii. 16.

kind with our communion-tables at this day. For that they had not any such fixed and gaudy altars as the heathens then had in their temples, and papists still have in their churches, is most evident, because the heathens at every turn did charge and reproach them for having none, and the Fathers in their answers did freely and openly acknowledge and avow it; asserting and pleading that the only true sacred altar was a pure and a holy mind, and that the best and most acceptable sacrifice to God was a pious heart, and an innocent and religious life. *Hæc nostra sacrificia, hæc Dei sacra sunt*; "these" say they "are our oblations, these the sacrifices we give to God."¹ This was the state of altars in the Christian churches for near upon the first three hundred years; till Constantine coming in, and with him peace and plenty, the churches began to excel in costliness and bravery every day, and then their wooden and moveable altars began to be turned into fixed altars of stone or marble, though used to no other purpose than before, and yet this too did not so universally obtain (though severely urged by Sylvester, bishop of Rome) but that in very many places tables or moveable altars of wood continued in use a long time after, as might easily be made appear from several passages in Athanasius and others, yea, even to St. Augustine's time, and probably much later, were it proper to my business to search after it.² No sooner were altars made fixed and im-

¹ Vid. Clem. Alex. Stromat. lib. vii. p. 717; Orig. adv. Cels. lib. iv.; lib. viii. p. 383; M. Felix. p. 8—26; Arnob. adv. Gent. lib. vi. p. 83; Lactant. lib. ii. c. 2.

² Athanas. ad Orthodox. p. 729, tom. i. et Ep. ad Solit. Vit. Agent. Aug. Quest. V. et N. T. Quest. 101, et alibi sæpe

moveable, but they were compassed in with rails to fence off rudeness and irreverence, and persons began to regard them with mighty observance and respect; which soon grew so high, that they became asylums and refuges to protect innocent persons and unwitting offenders from immediate violence and oppression; an instance whereof Nazianzen gives us in a Christian widow, a woman of great place and quality, who, flying from the importunities of the president, who would have forced her to marry him, had no other way but to take sanctuary at the holy table in St. Basil's church at Cæsarea. She was demanded with many fierce and terrible threatenings, but the holy man stoutly refused, although the president was his mortal enemy, and sought only a pretence to ruin him.¹ Many such cases may be met with in the history of the church: nor was this a privilege merely founded upon custom, but settled and ratified by the laws of Christian emperors; concerning the particular cases whereof, together with the extent and limitation of these immunities, there are no less than six several laws of the emperors Theodosius, Arcadius, and Theodosius junior, yet extant in the Theodosian code.² But how far those *asyla* and sanctuaries were good and useful, and to what evil and pernicious purposes they were improved in after-times, is without the limits of my present task to inquire.³

¹ Orat. 20, in Laud. Basil. 353.

² Lib. ix. Tit. 45, de his qui ad Ecclesias confugiunt.

³ Tacitus (Hist. iii. 60) complains of the heathen *asyla* as affording refuge to criminals of the worst description; and a like abuse of the prerogative of Christian sanctuary rendered it no less injurious to morality, and opposed to the due administration of civil justice. In the eighth century it became necessary to

But if in those times there was so little ground for altars (as used in the present sense of the church of Rome) there was yet far less for images; and certainly might things be carried by a fair and impartial trial of antiquity, the dispute would soon be at an end; there not being any one just and good authority to prove that images were either worshipped, or used in churches, for near upon four hundred years after Christ; and I doubt not but it might be carried much further, but that my business lies mainly within those first ages of Christianity. Nothing can be more clear than that the Christians were frequently challenged by the heathens, as for having no altars and temples, so that they had no images or statues in them, and that the Christian Apologists never denied it, but industriously defended themselves against the charge, and rejected the very thoughts of any such thing with contempt and scorn, as might be abundantly made good from Tertullian, Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, Minucius Felix, Arnobius, and Lactantius, many of whose testimonies have been formerly pointed to. Amongst other things Origen plainly tells his adversary (who had objected this to the Christians) that the images that were to be dedicated to God were not to be carved by the hand of artists, but to be formed and fashioned in

pass a decree, compelling all abbots and bishops to deliver such notorious offenders as fled to them for protection. Still, the institution, which had been clearly intended as a security for the innocent, continued to afford encouragement for every species of crime; till at length, though within a comparatively recent date, it has been wholly abolished. See Lewis' *Life of Wicliff*; Burn's *Eccl. Law*; and Blackstone's *Comm. b. iv. c. 26.*
—ED.

us by the Word of God, the virtues of justice and temperance, of wisdom and piety, &c. that conform us to the image of his only Son. "These," says he, "are the only statues formed in our minds, and by which alone we are persuaded it is fit to do honour to him who is the image of the invisible God, the prototype and architypal pattern of all such images."¹ Had Christians then given adoration to them, or but set them up in their places of worship, with what face can we suppose they should have told the world, that they so much slighted and abhorred them? Indeed what a hearty detestation they universally showed to 'any thing that had but the least shadow of idolatry, has been before proved at large. The council of Illiberis, that was held in Spain some time before Constantine, expressly provided against it, decreeing that no pictures ought to be in the church, nor that any thing that was worshipped and adored should be painted upon the walls:² words so clear and positive, as not to be evaded by all the little shifts and glosses which the expositors of that canon would put upon it. The first use of statues and pictures in public churches was merely historical, or to add some beauty and ornament to the place, which after ages improved into superstition and idolatry. The first that we meet with upon good authority (for all the instances brought for the first ages are either false and spurious, or impertinent and to no purpose) is no elder than the times of Epiphanius,³ and then too met with no very welcome entertainment, as may appear from Epipha-

¹ Lib. viii. p. 389.

² Can. 36, p. 50.

³ Epiphanius flourished about A. D. 368.--E.D.

nius's own epistle translated by St. Jerome; where the story in short is this. "Coming," says he, "to Anablatha, a village in Palestine, and going into a church to pray, I espied a curtain hanging over the door, whereon was painted the image of Christ or of some saint; which when I looked upon, and saw the image of a man hanging up in the church, contrary to the authority of the holy Scriptures, I presently rent it, and advised the guardians of the church rather to make use of it as a winding-sheet for some poor man's burying: whereat when they were a little troubled, and said it was but just, that since I had rent that curtain, I should change it, and give them another; I promised then I would, and have now sent the best I could get, and pray entreat them to accept it, and give command that for the time to come no such curtains, being contrary to our religion, may be hung up in the church of Christ; it more becoming your place solicitously to remove whatever is offensive to and unworthy of the church of Christ, and the people committed to your charge."¹ This was written to John, bishop of Jerusalem,² in whose diocess the thing had been done, and the case is so much the more pressing and weighty, by how the greater esteem and value Epiphanius (then bishop of Salamine, in Cyprus) for his great age and excellent learning, had in the church of God. This instance is so home and pregnant, that the patrons of image-worship are at a mighty loss what to say to it, and after all are forced to cry out

¹ Inter opera Hieron. tom. ii. p. 161.

² St. Chrysostom. This name, which signifies *Golden Mouth*, was given him in reference to his eloquence. He died A. D. 407.—ED.

against it as supposititious. Bellarmine brings no less than nine arguments (if such they may be called) to make it seem probable:¹ but had he been ingenuous, he might have given one reason more true and satisfactory than all the rest, why that part of the epistle should be thought forged and spurious, viz. because it makes so much against them. More might be produced to this purpose, but by this I hope it is clear enough, that the honest Christians of those times, as they thought it sufficient to pray to God without making their addresses to saints and angels, so they accounted their churches fine enough without pictures and images to adorn them.

Their churches being built and beautified (so far as consisted with the ability and simplicity of those days) they sought to derive a greater value and esteem upon them by some peculiar consecration; for the wisdom and piety of those times thought it not enough barely to devote them to the public services of religion, unless they also set them apart with solemn rites of a formal dedication. This had been an ancient custom both amongst Jews and Gentiles, as old as Solomon's temple, nay as Moses and the Tabernacle. When it was first taken up by Christians is not easy to determine; only I do not remember to have met with the footsteps of any such thing in any approved writer (for the Decretal Epistles² every one knows what their faith is) till the reign of Con-

¹ De Eccles. Triumph. lib. ii. c. 9, col. 776.

² These Decretal Epistles were a forgery of the ninth century, concocted for the purpose of supporting the pretensions of the papal see. They have long been given up even by the Romanists themselves.—ED.

stantine. In his time Christianity being become more prosperous and successful, churches were every where erected and repaired, and no sooner were so, but (as Eusebius tells us) they were solemnly consecrated, and the dedications celebrated with great festivity and rejoicing; an instance whereof he there gives of the famous church of Tyre, at the dedication whereof he himself made that excellent oration inserted into the body of his history.¹ About the thirtieth year of his reign he built a stately church at Jerusalem over the sepulchre of our Saviour, which was dedicated with singular magnificence and veneration, and for the greater honour, by his imperial letters he summoned the bishops, who from all parts of the east were then met in council at Tyre, to be present and assisting at the solemnity.² The rites and ceremonies used at these dedications, as we find in Eusebius, were a great confluence of bishops and strangers from all parts, the performance of divine offices, singing of hymns and psalms, reading and expounding of the Scriptures, sermons and orations, receiving the holy sacrament, prayers, and thanksgivings, liberal alms bestowed on the poor, and great gifts given to the church, and in short, mighty expressions of mutual love and kindness, and universal rejoicing with one another. What other particular ceremonies were introduced afterwards, concerns not me to inquire; only let me note, that under some of the Christian emperors, when paganism lay gasping for life, and their temples were purged and converted into Christian

¹ Hist. Eccl. lib. x. c. 3, p. 370.

² De Vit. Constant. lib. iv. c. 42, 43.

churches, they were usually consecrated only by placing a cross in them, as the venerable ensign of the Christian religion, as appears by the law of Theodosius the younger to that purpose.¹ The memory of the dedication of that church of Jerusalem was constantly continued and kept alive in that church, and once a year, to wit, on the 14th of September, on which day it had been dedicated, was solemnized with great pomp and much confluence of people from all parts, the solemnity usually lasting eight days together,² which doubtless gave birth to that custom of keeping anniversary days of commemoration of the dedication of churches, which from this time forwards we frequently meet with in the histories of the church, and much prevailed in after ages, some shadow whereof still remains amongst us at this day, in the wakes observed in several counties, which in correspondence with the *encœnia* of the ancient church, are annual festivals kept in country villages, in memory of the dedication of their particular churches.

And because it was a custom in some ages of the church, that no church should be consecrated till it was endowed, it may give us occasion to inquire what revenues churches had in those first ages of Christianity. It is more than probable that for a great while they had no other public incomes, than either what arose out of those common contributions which they made at their usual assemblies, every one giving or offering according to his ability or devotion, which was put into a common stock or

¹ Cod. Theod. lib. xvi. Tit. 10, de Pag. Sacrific. et Templis. leg. 25, ubi vid. Com. Gothofr.

² Niceph. Call. Hist. Eccl. lib. viii. c. 50, p. 653.

treasury; or what proceeded from the offerings which they made out of the improvements of their lands, the apostolic canons providing that their first fruits should be partly offered at the church, partly sent home to the bishops and presbyters: the care of all which was committed to the president or bishop of the church,¹ (for who, says the author of the fore-cited canons, is fitter to be trusted with the riches and revenues of the church, than he who is entrusted with the precious souls of men²) and by him disposed of for the maintenance of the clergy, the relief of the poor, or whatever necessities of the church.³ As Christianity increased, and times grew better, they obtained more proper and fixed revenues; houses and lands being settled upon them; for such it is certain they had even during the times of persecution; for so we find in a law of Constantine and Licinius, where giving liberty of religion to Christians, and restoring them freely to the churches which had been taken from them, and disposed of by former emperors, they further add;—"And because," say they, "the same Christians had not only places wherein they were wont to assemble, but are also known to have had other possessions, which were not the propriety of any single person, but belonged to the whole body and community; all these by this law we command to be immediately restored to those Christians, to every society and community of them what belonged to them."⁴ And in

¹ Can. 3, 4.

³ Can. 41.

³ That this order of things affords no colour to the demand for a tripartite division of ecclesiastical property in England, see an admirable essay on the subject, recently published, by the Rev. W. H. Hale, M. A. chaplain to the bishop of London.—E. D.

⁴ Euseb. lib. x. c. 5, p. 389.

a rescript to Anulinus the proconsul about the same matter, they particularly specify, whether they be gardens or houses, or whatever else belonged to the right and propriety of those churches, that with all speed they be universally restored to them ;¹ the same which Maximinus also (though no good friend to Christians, yet either out of fear of Constantine, or from the conviction of his conscience awakened by a terrible sickness) had ordained for his parts of the empire.² Afterwards Constantine set himself by all ways to advance the honour and interests of the church ; out of the tributes of every city which were yearly paid into his exchequer, he assigned a portion to the church and clergy of that place, and settled by a law,³ which (excepting the short reign of Julian, who revoked it) was as the historian assures us, in force in his time.⁴ Where any of the martyrs or confessors had died without kindred, or been banished their native country, and left no heirs behind them, he ordained that their estates and inheritance should be given to the church of that place, and that whoever had seized upon them, or had bought them of the exchequer, should restore them, and refer themselves to him for what recompence should be made them.⁵ He took away the restraint which former emperors had laid upon the bounty of pious and charitable men, and gave every man liberty to leave what he would to the church :⁶ he gave salaries out of the public corn, which though taken away

¹ Euseb. lib. x. c. 5, p. 390.

² Lib. ix. c. 10, p. 364.

³ Sozom. Hist. Eccles. lib. i. c. 8, p. 411.

⁴ Ib. lib. v. c. 5, p. 600.

⁵ Euseb. de Vit. Const. lib. ii. c. 36, et seq.

⁶ Cod. lib. i. tit. 2, de S. S. Eccl. leg. 1.

by Julian, was restored by his successor Jovianus, and ratified as a perpetual donation by the law of Valentinian and Marcianus.¹ After his time the revenues of churches increased every day, pious and devout persons thinking they could never enough testify their piety to God, by expressing their bounty and liberality to the church.

I shall conclude this discourse, by observing what respect and reverence they were wont in those days to show in the church, as the solemn place of worship, and where God did more peculiarly manifest his presence: and this certainly was very great. They came into the church, as into the palace of the great King (as Chrysostom calls it) with fear and trembling, upon which account he there presses the highest modesty and gravity upon them.² Before their going into the church they used to wash at least their hands, as Tertullian probably intimates,³ and Chrysostom expressly tells us; carrying themselves while there with the most profound silence and devotion; nay so great was the reverence which they bore to the church, that the emperors themselves, who otherwise never went without their guard about them, yet when they came to go into the church used to lay down their arms, to leave their guard behind them, and to put off their crowns,⁴ reckoning that the less ostentation they made of power and greatness there, the more firmly the imperial majesty would be entailed upon them, as we find it in the law of Theodosius and Valen-

¹ *Ibid.* leg. 12.

² *Ep. ad Hebr.* in c. 9, *Hom.* 15, tom. x. p. 1862.

³ *Tert. de Orat.* c. 11, p. 133.

⁴ *Chrysost. Hom.* 52, in *Math.* p. 463; *Hom. in Joan.* 72, p. 371.

tinian, inserted at large into the Theodosian code.¹ But of this we may probably speak more, when we come to treat of the manner of their public adoration.

CHAPTER VII.

Of the Lord's-day, and the Fasts and Festivals of the ancient Church.

TIME is a circumstance no less inseparable from religious actions than place, for man consisting of a soul and body cannot always be actually engaged in the service of God: that is the privilege of angels, and souls freed from the fetters of mortality. So long as we are here, we must worship God with respect to our present state, and consequently of necessity have some definite and particular time to do it in. Now, that man might not be left to a floating uncertainty in a matter of so great importance, in all ages and nations men have been guided by the very dictates of nature to pitch upon some certain seasons, wherein to assemble and meet together to perform the public offices of religion. What and how many were the public festivals instituted and observed either amongst Jews or Gentiles, I am not concerned to take notice of. For the ancient Christians, they ever had their pe-

¹ Lib. ix. Tit. 45, leg. 4. Vid. Chrysost. Orat. post retid. ab exil. tom. iv. p. 350.

cular seasons, their solemn and stated times of meeting together to perform the common duties of divine worship; of which, because the Lord's-day challenges the precedency of all the rest, we shall begin first with that. And being unconcerned in all the controversies¹ which in the late times were raised about it; I shall only note some instances of the piety of Christians in reference to this day, which I have observed in passing though the writers of those times.

For the name of this day of public worship, it is sometimes, especially by Justin Martyr and Tertullian, called Sunday, because it happened upon that day of the week, which by the heathens was dedicated to the sun;² and therefore as being best known to them, the Fathers commonly made use of it in their Apologies to the heathen governors. This title continued after the world became Christian, and seldom it is that it passes under any other name in the imperial edicts of the first Christian emperors. But the more proper and prevailing name was Κυριακή, or *Dies Dominica*, the Lord's-day, as it is called by St. John himself,³ as being that day of the week whereon our Lord made his triumphant return from the dead. This Justin Martyr assures us was the true original of the title. "Upon Sunday," says he, "we all assemble and meet together, as being the first day wherein God,

¹ Controversies of a like nature have recently been again agitated; but the obligatory observance of the Lord's-day can only be given up with the Bible.—ED.

² It should be associated in the mind of the Christian with that Sun of Righteousness, the great Light of the world, who has chased away the darkness of superstition, and illumined the world with the knowledge of salvation.—ED.

³ Rev. i. 10.

parting the darkness from the rude chaos, created the world, and the same day whereon Jesus Christ our Saviour rose again from the dead; for he was crucified the day before Saturday, and the day after (which is Sunday) he appeared to his apostles and disciples :”¹ by this means observing a kind of analogy and proportion with the Jewish sabbath which had been instituted by God himself. For as that day was kept as a commemoration of God’s sabbath, or resting from the work of creation, so was this set apart to religious uses, as the solemn memorial of Christ’s resting from the work of our redemption in this world, completed upon the day of his resurrection. Which brings into my mind that custom of theirs so universally common in those days, that whereas at other times they kneeled at prayers, on the Lord’s-day they always prayed standing, as is expressly affirmed both by Justin Martyr and Tertullian; the reason of which we find in the author of the Questions and Answers in Justin Martyr. “It is,” says he, “that by this means we may be put in mind both of our fall by sin, and our resurrection or restitution by the grace of Christ; that for six days we pray upon our knees, is in token of our fall by sin; but that on the Lord’s-day we do not bow the knee, does symbolically represent our resurrection, by which through the grace of Christ we are delivered from our sins, and the powers of death.”² This he there tells us was a custom derived from the very times of the apostles, for which he cites Irenæus in his book concerning Easter; and this custom was maintained with so much vigour, that when

¹ Ap. 2, p. 99.

² Ap. 2, p. 93; De Coron. c. 3, p. 102; Resp. ad Quest. 115, p. 463.

some began to neglect it, the great council of Nice took notice of it, and ordained that there should be a constant uniformity in this case, and that on the Lord's-day (and at such other times as were usual) men should stand when they made their prayers to God.¹ So fit and reasonable did they think it to do all possible honour to that day, on which Christ rose from the dead. Therefore we may observe, all along in the sacred story, that after Christ's resurrection the apostles and primitive Christians did especially assemble upon the first day of the week: and whatever they might do at other times, yet there are many passages that intimate, that the first day of the week was their more solemn time of meeting. On this day it was that they were met together, when our Saviour first appeared to them, and so again the next week after:² and on this day they were assembled when the Holy Ghost so visibly came down upon them, when Peter preached that excellent sermon, converted and baptized three thousand souls.³ Thus when St. Paul was taking his leave at Troas, upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, i. e. as almost all agree, to celebrate the holy sacrament,⁴ he preached to them, sufficiently intimating that upon that day it was their usual custom to meet in that manner; and elsewhere giving directions to the church of Corinth (as he had done in the like case to other churches) concerning their contributions to the poor suffering brethren, he bids them lay it aside upon the first day of the

¹ Can. 20.

² John, xx. 19, 26.

³ Acts, ii. 1, 41.

⁴ Rather, to partake of the *agapæ*, or *love-feast*, which preceded the celebration of the Eucharist. See 1 Cor. x. 16.—ED

week,¹ which seems plainly to respect their religious assemblies upon that day, for then it was that every one according to his ability deposited something for the relief of the poor, and the uses of the church.

After the apostles the Christians constantly observed this day, meeting together for prayer, expounding and hearing of the Scriptures, celebration of the sacraments, and other public duties of religion. "Upon the day called Sunday," says Justin Martyr, "all of us that live either in city or country meet together in one place;"² and what they then did, he there describes, of which afterwards. This doubtless Pliny meant, when giving Trajan an account of the Christians, he tells him that they were wont to meet together to worship Christ *stato die*, upon a set certain day;³ by which he can be reasonably understood to design no other but the Lord's-day; for though they probably met at other times, yet he takes notice of this only, either because the Christians, whom he had examined, had not told him of their meeting at other times, or because this was their most public and solemn convention, and which in a manner swallowed up the rest. By the violent persecutions of those times the Christians were forced to meet together before day. So Pliny in the same place tells the emperor, that they assembled before daylight, to sing their morning-hymns to Christ.⁴ Whence it is that Tertullian so often mentions their nocturnal convocations. This gave occasion to their spiteful adversaries to calumniate and as-

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2.

² Lib. x. Ep. 97.

³ Ap. 2, p. 98.

⁴ Ad Uxor. lib. ii. c. 4, p. 168.

perse them. The heathen in Minucius charges them with their night-congregations, upon which account they are there scornfully called *latebrosa et lucifugax natio*, an "obscure and skulking generation;"¹ and the very first thing that Celsus objects is, that the Christians had private and clancular assemblies, or combinations. To which Origen answers, "that if it were so, they might thank them for it, who would not suffer them to exercise it more openly; that the Christian doctrine was sufficiently evident and obvious, and better known through the world, than the opinions and sentiments of their best philosophers; and that if there were some mysteries in the Christian religion which were not communicated to every one, it was no other thing than what was common in the several sects of their own philosophy. But to return.

They looked upon the Lord's-day as a time to be celebrated with great expressions of joy, as being the happy memory of Christ's resurrection, and accordingly restrained whatever might savour of sorrow and sadness. Fasting on that day they prohibited with the greatest severity, accounting it utterly unlawful, as Tertullian informs us.³ It was

¹ M. Fel. p. 7. This was not the only calumny which originated even in the persecutions to which they were exposed. They were called *Suicides*, from their readiness to suffer death rather than apostatise; and *Desperati*, because they were exposed, without hope of delivery, to the fury of wild beasts. Other terms of reproach were also applied to them, such as *Impostors*, *Pistores*, *Semarii*, *Sarmentitii*, *Homiuc Plautinæ Prosapia*, &c. for the origin of which, see Bingham's Antiquities, b. i. c. 2.—ED.

² Orig. adv. C. lib. i. p. 4—7.

³ De Cor. mit. c. 3, p. 102.

a very bitter censure that of Ignatius (or whosoever that epistle was,¹ for certainly it was not his) that whoever fasts on a Lord's-day is a murderer of Christ.² However it is certain, that they never fasted on those days, no not in the time of Lent itself; nay the Montanists, though otherwise great pretenders to fasting and mortification, did yet abstain from it on the Lord's-day.³ And as they accounted it a joyful and good day, so they did whatever they thought might contribute to the honour of it. No sooner was Constantine come over to the church, but his principal care was about the Lord's-day. He commanded it to be solemnly observed, and that by all persons whatsoever; he made it to all a day of rest; that men might have nothing to do but to worship God, and be better instructed in the Christian faith, and spend their whole time without any thing to hinder them in prayer and devotion, according to the custom and discipline of the church. And for those in his army, who yet remained in their paganism and infidelity, he commanded them upon Lord's-days to go out into the fields, and there pour out their souls in hearty prayers to God; and that none might pretend their own inability to the duty, he himself composed and gave them a short form of prayer, which he enjoined them to make use of every Lord's-day: so careful was he that this day should not be dishonoured or misemployed, even by those who were yet stran-

¹ The question respecting the genuine and spurious epistles of this apostolical Father, has been finally set at rest by bishop Pearson, in his learned essay on the subject, entitled *Vindiciæ Ignatianæ*.—ED.

² Ep. ad Philip. p. 112.

³ Tertul. de Jejun. c. 15.—ED.

gers and enemies to Christianity.¹ He moreover ordained, that there should be no courts of judicature open upon this day, no suits or trials at law; but that for any works of mercy, such as emancipating and setting free of slaves or servants, this might be done.² That there should be no suits nor demanding debts upon this day, was confirmed by several laws of succeeding emperors; and that no arbitrators who had the umpirage of any business lying before them, should at that time have power to determine to take up litigious causes, penalties being entailed upon any that transgressed herein.³ Theodosius the Great, anno 386, by a second law ratified one which he had passed long before, wherein he expressly prohibited all public shows upon the Lord's-day, that the worship of God might not be confounded with those profane solemnities.⁴ This law the younger Theodosius some few years after confirmed and enlarged, enacting, that on the Lord's-day (and some other festivals there mentioned) not only Christians, but even Jews and heathens, should be restrained from the pleasure of all sights and spectacles, and the theatres be shut up in every place; and whereas it might so happen that the birth-day or inauguration of the emperor might fall upon that day, therefore to let the people know how infinitely he preferred the honour of God, before the concerns of his own majesty and greatness, he commanded that if it should so happen, that then the imperial

¹ Euseb. de Vit. Const. lib. iv. c. 18, 19, 20, p. 534.

² Cod. Just. lib. iii. tit. 12, de Feriis, lib. iii.

³ Cod. Theod. lib. ii. tit. 8, de Feriis, lib. i. viii. tit. 8. lib. iii.

⁴ Ib. lib. xv. tit. 5, de Spectac. lib. ii.

solemnity should be put off, and deferred till another day.¹

I shall take notice but of one instance more of their great observance of this day, and that was their constant attendance upon the solemnities of public worship. They did not think it enough to read and pray and praise God at home, but made conscience of appearing in the public assemblies, from which nothing but sickness and absolute necessity did detain them: and if sick, or in prison, or under banishment, nothing troubled them more, than that they could not come to church, and join their devotions to the common services. If persecution at any time forced them to keep a little close, yet no sooner was there the least mitigation, but they presently returned to their open duty, and publicly met all together. No trivial pretences, no light excuses were then admitted for any one's absence from the congregation, but according to the merit of the cause severe censures were passed upon them. The synod of Illiberis provided, that if any man dwelling in a city (where usually churches were nearest hand) should for three Lord's-days absent himself from the church, he should for some time be suspended the communion, that he might appear to be corrected for his fault. They allowed no separate assemblies, no congregations but what met in the public church. If any man took upon him to make a breach, and to draw people into corners, he was presently condemned, and a suitable penalty put upon him.² When Eustathius bishop of Sebastia (a man pretending to great strictness and austerity of life) be-

¹ Ib. Leg. 5, Dominico.

² Can. 21, p. 28.

gan to cast off the discipline of the church, and to introduce many odd observations of his own, amongst others, to contemn priests that were married, to fast on the Lord's-day, and to keep meetings in private houses, drawing away many, but especially women, (as the historian observes,)¹ who leaving their husbands were led away with error, and from that into great filthiness and impurity; no sooner did the bishops of those parts discover it, but meeting in council at Gangra the metropolis of Paphlagonia about the year 325, they condemned and cast them out of the church, passing these two canons among the rest: "If any one shall teach that the house of God is to be despised, and the assemblies that are held in it, let him be accursed: If any man shall take upon him out of the church, privately to preach at home, and making light of the church shall do those things that belong only to the church, without the presence of the priest, and the leave and allowance of the bishop, let him be accursed."² Correspondent to which, the canons called apostolical, and the council of Antioch, ordain, that if any presbyter setting light by his own bishop, shall withdraw and set up separate meetings, and erect another altar, (i. e. says Zonaras, keep unlawful conventicles, preach privately, and administer the sacrament,) that in such a case he shall be deposed, as ambitious and tyrannical, and the people communicating with him be excommunicate, as being factious and schismatical; only this not to be done, till after the third admonition.³ After all that has been said, I

¹ Sozom. lib. iii. c. 14, p. 521.

² Conc. Gangr. Can. 4, 5.

³ Can. 31, Conc. Antioch. Can. 5.

might further show what esteem and value the first Christians had of the Lord's-day, by those great and honourable things they have spoken concerning it; of which I will produce but two passages. The one is that in the epistle *ad Magnesios*, which if not Ignatius,¹ must yet be acknowledged an ancient author: "Let every one," says he, "that loves Christ keep the Lord's-day festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and empress of all days, in which our life was raised again, and death conquered by our Lord and Saviour."² The other that of Theophilus bishop of Alexandria, who speaks thus: "That both custom and reason challenge from us, that we should honour the Lord's-day, and keep it festival, seeing on that day it was that our Lord Jesus Christ completed his resurrection from the dead."³

Next to the Lord's-day, the sabbath, or Saturday (for so the word *sabbatum* is constantly used in the writings of the Fathers, when speaking of it as it relates to Christians) was held by them in great veneration, and especially in the eastern parts honoured with all the public solemnities of religion. For which we are to know, that the Gospel in those parts mainly prevailing amongst the Jews, they being generally the first converts to the Christian faith, they still retained a mighty reverence for the Mosaic institutions, and especially for the sabbath, as that which had been appointed by God himself, (as the

¹ The genuineness of this epistle is fully established by bishop Pearson.—ED.

² Page 149.

³ Edict. Theoph. apud Balsam. in Synod. tom. ii. part 1, p. 170.

memorial of his rest from the work of creation,) settled by their great master Moses, and celebrated by their ancestors for so many ages, as the solemn day of their public worship, and were therefore very loath that it should be wholly antiquated and laid aside. For this reason it seemed good to the prudence of those times (as in others of the Jewish rites, so in this) to indulge the humour of that people, and to keep the sabbath as a day for religious offices. Hence they usually had most parts of divine service performed upon that day, they met together for public prayer, for reading the Scriptures, celebration of the sacraments, and such-like duties. This is plain not only from some passages in Ignatius, and Clemens's Constitutions,¹ but from writers of more unquestionable credit and authority. Athanasius bishop of Alexandria tells us, that they assembled on Saturdays, not that they were infected with Judaism, but only to worship Jesus Christ the Lord of the sabbath:² and Socrates, speaking of the usual times of their public meeting, calls the sabbath and the Lord's-day the weekly festivals, on which the congregation was wont to meet in the church, for the performance of divine services.³ Therefore the council of Laodicea amongst other things decreed, that upon Saturdays the Gospels and other Scriptures should be read, that in Lent the Eucharist should not be celebrated but upon Saturday and the Lord's-day, and upon those days only in the time

¹ See the author's preface.—ED.

² Homil. de Sement. in init. Athanasius flourished about A. D. 326. He distinguished himself by his zealous opposition to the Arian heresy.—ED.

³ Hist. Eccl. lib. vi. c. 8, p. 312.

of Lent it should be lawful to commemorate and rehearse the names of martyrs.¹ Upon this day also as well as upon Sunday all fasts were severely prohibited, (an infallible argument they counted it a festival-day,) one Saturday in the year only excepted, viz. that before Easter-day, which was always observed as a solemn fast: things so commonly known as to need no proof. But though the church thought fit thus far to correspond with Jewish converts, as solemnly to observe the sabbath; yet to take away all offence, and to vindicate themselves from compliance with Judaism, they openly declared that they did it only in a Christian way, and kept it not as a Jewish sabbath, as is expressly affirmed by Athanasius, Nazianzen, and others; and the forementioned Laodicean synod has a canon to this purpose, that Christians should not judaize, and rest from all labour on the sabbath, but follow their ordinary works, (i. e. so far as consisted with their attendance upon the public assemblies,) and should not entertain such thoughts of it, but that still they should prefer the Lord's-day before it; and on that day rest as Christians; but if any were found to judaize they should be accursed.²

Thus stood the case in the eastern church; in those of the west we find it somewhat different. Amongst them it was not observed as a religious festival, but kept as a constant fast, the reason whereof (as it is given by pope Innocent, in an epistle to the bishop of Eugubium, where he treats of this very case) seems most probable. "If," says

¹ Can. 16, 49, 51.

² Athanas. Homil. de Sement. tom. i. p. 385, Can. 29.

he, "we commemorate Christ's resurrection not only at Easter, but every Lord's-day, and fast upon Friday, because it was the day of his passion, we ought not to pass by Saturday, which is the middle-time between the days of grief and joy; the apostles themselves spending those two days (viz. Friday and the sabbath) in great sorrow and heaviness."¹ He thinks no doubt ought to be made but that the apostles fasted upon those two days, whence the church had a tradition, that the sacraments were not to be administered on those days, and therefore concludes, that every Saturday or sabbath ought to be kept a fast. To the same purpose the council of Illiberis ordained, that a Saturday-festival was an error that ought to be reformed, and that men ought to fast upon every sabbath.² But though this seems to have been the general practice, yet it did not obtain in all places of the west alike. In Italy itself, it was otherwise at Milan; where Saturday was a festival; and it is said in the life of St. Ambrose, who was bishop of that see, that he constantly dined as well upon Saturday as the Lord's-day (it being his custom to dine upon no other days but those, and the memorials of the martyrs) and used also upon that day to preach to the people; though so great was the prudence and moderation of that good man, that he bound not up himself in these indifferent things, but when he was at Milan he dined upon Saturdays, and when he was at Rome, he fasted as they did upon those days.³ This St. Augustine assures us he had from his own mouth; for when

¹ Innocent. Ep. ad Decium Eugubium. c. 4, Sabbato vero.

² Can. 36, p. 35.

³ Paulin, in Vit. Ambr. Operibus Ambros. prefix.

his mother Monica came after him to Milan (where he then resided) she was greatly troubled to find the Saturday-fast not kept there, as she had found it in other places; for her satisfaction he immediately went to consult St. Ambrose, who told him he could give him no better advice in the case, than to do as he did. "When I come to Rome," said he, "I fast on the Saturday as they do at Rome, when I am here I do not fast.¹ So likewise you, to whatsoever church you come, observe the custom of that place, if you mean not either to give or take offence." With this answer he satisfied his mother, and ever after when he thought of it, looked upon it as an oracle sent from heaven. So that even in Italy the Saturday-fast was not universally observed.²

And now that I am got into this business, I shall once for all dispatch the matter about their fasts, before I proceed to their other festivals. It is certain the ancient Christians had two sorts of solemn fasts, weekly and annual. Their weekly fasts (called *jejunia quartæ et sextæ feriæ*) were kept upon Wednesdays and Fridays, appointed so, as we are told, for this reason, because on Wednesday our Lord was betrayed by Judas, on Friday he was crucified by the Jews. This custom Epiphanius (how truly I know not) refers to the apostles, and elsewhere tells us that those days were observed as fasts through the whole world.³ These

¹ Hence the trite proverb of *doing at Rome as they of Rome do.*—ED.

² Ad Januar. Epist. 118, col. 557, tom. ii.

³ Vid. Constit. App. lib. v. c. 14, p. 929, lib. vii. c. 24, p. 978; Serm. Compend. p. 466; Hæres. 85, p. 387.

fasts they called their stations, (not because they stood all the while, but by an allusion to the military stations and keeping their guards, as Tertullian observes,¹ they kept close at it,) and they usually lasted *ἕως ὥρας ἐννάτης*, as Epiphanius informs us,² till the ninth hour, i. e. till three of the clock in the afternoon, at which time having ended their fast-devotions, they received the Eucharist, and then broke up the station, and went home. Whence it is that Tertullian calls them *stationum semijejunia*, the ‘half-fasts of stations:’³ and he seems to censure the practice of some who having privately resolved upon an entire fast of the whole day, refused to receive the Eucharist at the public stationary fasts, because they thought that by eating and drinking the sacramental elements, they put a period to their fasting:⁴ for it was usual in those times with many, after the stationary fasts were ended, to continue and hold on the fast until the evening.⁵ The historian tells us that it had been a very ancient custom in the church of Alexandria, upon these days to have the Scriptures read and expounded, and all other parts of divine service, except the celebration of the sacrament, and that it was chiefly in those days that Origen was wont to teach the people.⁶ Whether the omitting of the sacrament then might be a peculiar custom to that church, I know not; certain I am it was upon those days administered in other places. So St. Basil, enumerating the times how oft they received

¹ De Orat. c. 14, p. 136.

² Serm. Compend de Fid. p. 466.

³ De Jejun. c. 13, p. 551.

⁴ De Orat. c. 14, p. 135.

⁵ Vid. de Jejun. p. 445, A. p. 549, B.

⁶ Socrat. lib. v. c. 22, p. 287.

it every week, expressly puts Wednesday and Friday into the number:¹ the remains of these primitive stations are yet observed in our church at this day, which by her fifteenth canon has ordained, that though Wednesdays and Fridays be not holy days, yet that weekly upon those times minister and people shall resort to church at the accustomed hours of prayer.

Their annual fast was that of Lent, by way of preparation to the feast of our Saviour's resurrection. This (though not in the modern use of it) was very ancient, though far from being an apostolical canon, as a learned prelate of our church has fully proved.² From the very first age of the Christian church it was customary to fast before Easter; but for how long, it was variously observed according to different times and places; some fasting so many days, others so many weeks, and some so many days on each week; and it is most probably thought, that it was at first styled τεσσαρακοστή, or *quadragesima*, not because it was a fast of forty days, but of forty hours, begun about twelve on Friday (the time of our Saviour's falling under the power of death) and continued till Sunday morning, the time of his rising from the dead.³ Afterwards it was enlarged to a longer time, drawn out into more days, and then weeks, till it came to three, and at last to six or seven weeks. But concerning the different observations of it in several places, let them who desire to know more consult Socrates and Sozomen, who both speak enough about it.⁴

¹ Tom. iii. Epist. 289, p. 279.

² Bp. Tayl. Duct. Dub. lib. iii. c. 4, p. 629.

³ Id. Ib. vid. Thorndike. Rel. Assembl. c. 8, p. 276.

⁴ Socrat. lib. v. c. 22; Sozom. lib. vii. c. 19

This *quadragesimal* fast was kept in those times with great piety and religion, people generally applying themselves with all seriousness to acts of penance and mortification. Whence Chrysostom calls Lent the remedy and physic of our souls;¹ and to the end that the observation of it might be more grave and solemn, Theodosius the Great, and his colleague emperors passed two laws, that during the time of Lent all process and inquiry into criminal actions should be suspended, and no corporal punishments inflicted upon any; it being unfit, as the second of those laws expresses it, that in the holy time of Lent the body should suffer punishment, while the soul is expecting absolution.²

But with what care soever they kept the preceding parts, it is certain they kept the close of it with a mighty strictness and austerity, I mean the last week of it, that which immediately preceded the feast of Easter. This they consecrated to more peculiar acts of prayer, abstinence, and devotion; and whereas in the other parts of Lent they ended their fast in the evening, in this they extended it to the cock-crowing, or first glimpse of the morning;³ to be sure they ended it not before midnight, for to break up the fast before that time was accounted a piece of great profaneness and intemperance, as Dionysius bishop of Alexandria determines in a letter to Basilides, wherein he largely and learnedly states the case.⁴ This was the *Hebdomeda Magna*, the great or holy week;

¹ Hom. 1, in Gen. tom. ii. p. 1.

² Cod. Theod. lib. ix. tit. 35; de Question. l. l. 4, 5.

³ Constit. Apostol. lib. v. c. 17, 18, p. 932; Epiphani. Exposit. Fid. p. 466.

⁴ Apud Zonar. in Synod, tom. ii. part 1, p. 1.

“so called,” says Chrysostom, “not that it has either more hours or days in it than other weeks, but because this is the week in which truly great and ineffable good things were purchased for us; within this time death was conquered, the curse destroyed, the devil’s tyranny dissolved, his instruments broken, heaven opened, angels rejoiced, the partition-wall broken down, and God and man reconciled. For this cause we call it the great week, for this cause men fast, and watch, and do alms, to do the greater honour to it: the emperors themselves, to show what veneration they have for this time, commanding all suits and processes at law to cease, tribunal-doors to be shut up, and prisoners to be let free, imitating herein their great Lord and master, who by his death at this time delivered us from the prison and the chains of sin:”¹ meaning herein those laws of Theodosius, Gratian, and Valentinian, which we lately mentioned.

We proceed now to enquire what other festivals there were in those first ages of the church, which I find to be chiefly these; Easter, Whitsuntide, and Epiphany, which comprehended two, Christmas and Epiphany, properly so called. I reckon them not in their proper order, but as I suppose them to have taken place in the church. Of these Easter challenges the precedence both for its antiquity, and the great stir about it. That in and from the very times of the apostles (besides the weekly returns of the Lord’s-day) there has been always observed an anniversary festival in memory of Christ’s resurrection, no man can doubt, that has any insight into the affairs of the ancient church. All the dispute was about the particular time when it was to

¹ Hom. 30, in Gen. p. 328.

be kept, which became a matter of as famous a controversy as any that, in those ages, exercised the Christian world. The state of the case was briefly this. The churches of Asia the Less kept their Easter upon the same day, whereon the Jews celebrated their passover, viz. upon the fourteenth day of the first month, (which always began with the appearance of the moon,) mostly answering to our March; and this they did, upon what day of the week soever it fell, and hence were styled *quartodecimans*, because keeping Easter *quarta decima luna*, upon the fourteenth day after the $\phi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ or appearance of the moon. The other churches, and especially those of the west, did not follow this custom, but kept Easter upon the Lord's-day following the day of the Jewish passover, partly the more to honour the day, and partly to distinguish between Jews and Christians. The Asiatics pleaded for themselves the practice of the apostles, Polycarpus bishop of Smyrna, who had lived and conversed with them, having kept it upon that day, together with St. John and the rest of the apostles, as Irenæus (who himself knew Polycarpus, and doubtless had it from his own mouth) speaks in a letter about this very thing, though himself was of the other side.¹ And Polycrates in a letter to the same purpose, instances not only in St. John, but St. Philip the apostle, who himself and his whole family used so to keep it, from whom it had been conveyed down in a constant and uninterrupted observance through all the bishops of those places; some whereof he there enumerates, and tells us that seven bishops of that place in a constant succession had been his kinsmen, and himself the

¹ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. v. c. 24, p. 193.

eighth, and that it had never been kept by them upon any other day.¹ This we are not so to understand, as if St. John and the apostles had instituted this festival, and commanded it to be observed upon that day; but rather that they did it by way of condescension, accommodating their practice in a matter indifferent to the humour of the Jewish converts (whose number in those parts was very great) as they had done before in several other cases, and particularly in observing the sabbath or Saturday. "The other churches also," says Eusebius, "had for their patronage an apostolical tradition, or at least pretended it; and were the much more numerous party."² This difference was the spring of great bustles in the church; for the bishops of Rome stickled hard to impose their custom upon the eastern churches, whereupon Polycarpus comes over to Rome to confer with Anicetus who was then bishop about it; and, though they could not agree the matter yet they parted fairly.³ After this pope Victor renewed the quarrel, and was so fierce and peremptory in the case, that he either actually did, or (as a learned man inclines rather to think, probably to mollify the odium of the fact) severely threatened to excommunicate those eastern churches for standing out against it:⁴ this rash and bold attempt was ill resented by the sober and moderate men of his own party, who wrote to him about it; and particularly Irenæus (a man, as Eusebius notes, truly answering his name,⁵ both in his temper and his life, quiet and peaceable) who gravely reprov'd him for

¹ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. v. p. 191. ² Ib. c. 23, p. 190.

³ Ib. lib. iv. c. 14, p. 127.

⁴ H. Vales. Annot. in Euseb. lib. v. c. 24, p. 105, col. 1.

⁵ From the Greek εἰρηνῆ, which signifies *peace*. He wrote

rending the peace of the church, and troubling so many famous churches for observing the customs derived to them from their ancestors, with much more to the same purpose. But the Asian bishops little regarded what was either said or done at Rome, and still went on in their old course; though by the diligent practices of the other party they lost ground, but yet still made shift to keep the cause on foot till the time of Constantine; who finding this controversy amongst others much to disquiet the peace of the church, did for this and some other reasons summon the great council of Nice, by whom this question was solemnly determined, Easter ordained to be kept upon one and the same day throughout the world, not according to the custom of the Jews, but upon the Lord's-day, and this decree ratified and published by the imperial letters to all the churches.¹

The eve or vigil of this festival was wont to be celebrated with more than ordinary pomp, with solemn watchings, with multitudes of lighted torches both in the churches and their own private houses, so as to turn the night itself into day, and with the general resort and confluence of all ranks of men, both magistrates and people.² This custom of lights at that time was, if not begun, at least much augmented by Constantine, who set up lamps and torches in all places as well within the churches as without; that through the whole city the night seemed to outvie the sun at noonday.³ And this

five books against heresies, and is supposed to have suffered martyrdom in the beginning of the third century.—ED.

¹ Euseb. de Vit. Constant lib. iii. c. 14—17.

² Naz. Or. 2, in Pasch. Orat. 42, p. 676.

³ Euseb. de Vit. Const. lib. iv. c. 22, p. 536.

they did (as Nazianzen intimates) as a prodromus or forerunner of that great light, even the Sun of Righteousness, which the next day arose upon the world.¹ For the feast itself, the same Father calls it the holy and famous passover, a day which is the queen of days, the festival of festivals, and which as far excels all other, even of those which are instituted to the honour of Christ, as the sun goes beyond the other stars.² A time it was famous for works of mercy and charity, every one both of clergy and laity striving to contribute liberally to the poor : a duty (as one of the ancients observes) very congruous and suitable to that happy season ; for what more fit, than that such as beg relief should be enabled to rejoice at that time, when we remember the common fountain of our mercies.³ Therefore no sooner did the morning of this day appear, but Constantine used to arise, and in imitation of the love and kindness of our blessed Saviour, to bestow the richest and most noble gifts, and to diffuse the influences of his bounty over all parts of his empire.⁴ And his example herein it seems was followed by most of his successors, who used upon this solemnity by their imperial orders to release all prisoners, unless such as were in for more heavy and notorious crimes, high-treason, murders, rapes, incest, and the like. And Chrysostom tells us of a letter of Theodosius the Great sent at this time throughout the empire, wherein he did not only command, that all prisoners should be released and pardoned, but wished he was able to recal those that were already executed, and to

¹ Euseb. de Vit. Const. lib. iv. c. 22, p. 677.

² Ibid. et Orat. 19, p. 304.

³ Commod. Instruction. c. 75, p. 57. ⁴ Euseb. ut supra.

restore them to life again.¹ And because by the negligence and remissness of messengers, or any accident those imperial letters might sometimes happen to come too late, therefore Valentinian the younger provided by a standing law, that whether order came or not, the judges should dispense the accustomed indulgence, and upon Easter-day in the morning cause all prisons to be open, the chains to be knocked off, and the persons set at liberty.²

The next feast considerable in those primitive times, was that of Whitsunday or Pentecost,—a feast of great eminency amongst the Jews, in memory of the law delivered at Mount Sinai at that time, and for the gathering and bringing in of their harvest; and of no less note amongst Christians for the Holy Ghost's descending upon the apostles and other Christians, in the visible appearance of fiery cloven tongues, which happened upon that day, and those miraculous powers then conferred upon them. It was observed with the same respect to Easter, that the Jews did with respect to their Passover, viz. (as the word imports) just fifty days after it, reckoning from the second day of that festival. It seems to some to have commenced from the first rise of Christianity, not only because the apostles and the church were assembled upon that day, but because St. Paul made so much haste to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost, which they understand of his great desire to keep it there as a Christian feast.³ But the argument seems to me no way conclusive,

¹ Hom. 20, ad Pop. Antioch. p. 323, tom. i.

² Lib. ix. C. Theod. tit. 38, de Indulg. l. 8.

³ Acts, xx. 16.

for the apostle might desire to be there at that time, both because he was sure to meet with a great number of the brethren, and because he should have a fitter opportunity to preach the Gospel to the Jews, who from all parts flocked thither to the feast, as our Saviour himself for the same reason used to go up to Jerusalem at all their great and solemn feasts. But however this was, it is certain the observation of it is ancient, it was mentioned by Irenæus in a book which he wrote concerning Easter, as the author of the questions and responses in Justin Martyr tells us; ¹ by Tertullian, and after him by Origen more than once.² This feast is by us styled Whitsunday, partly because of those vast diffusions of light and knowledge which upon this day were shed upon the apostles, in order to the enlightening of the world; but principally because this (as also Easter) being the stated time for baptism in the ancient church, those who were baptized put on white garments, in token of that pure and innocent course of life they had now engaged in (of which more in its proper place.) This white garment they wore till the next Sunday after, and then laid it aside; whence the octave or Sunday after Easter came to be stiled *Dominica in albis*, the Sunday in white, it being then that the new-baptized put off their white garments. We may observe that in the writers of those times the whole space of fifty days between the Easter and Whitsunday goes often under the name of Pentecost, and was in a manner accounted festival, as Tertullian informs us, and the forty-third canon of

¹ Quest. 115.

² Tert. de Idol. c. 14, p. 94; Adv. Cels. lib. viii. p. 392.

the Illiberitan council seems to intimate.¹ During this whole time baptism was conferred, all fasts were suspended and counted unlawful, they prayed standing as they did every Lord's day; and at this time read over the Acts of the Apostles, wherein their sufferings and miracles are recorded, as we learn from a law of the younger Theodosius, wherein this custom is mentioned,² and more plainly from St. Chrysostom, who treats of it in an homily on purpose, where he gives this reason why that book which contained those actions of the apostles which were done after Pentecost, should yet be read before it, when as at all other times those parts of the Gospel were read, which were proper to the season, because the apostles' miracles being the grand confirmation of the truth of Christ's resurrection, and those miracles recorded in that book, it was therefore most proper to be read next to the feast of the resurrection.³

Epiphany succeeds. This word was of old promiscuously used either for the feast of Christ's nativity, or for that which we now properly call by that name. Afterwards the titles became distinct; that of Christ's birth (or as we now term it, Christmas-day) was called *γενέθλια*, the nativity, and *Θεοφάνια*, the appearance of God in the flesh; two names importing the same thing as Nazianzen notes.³ For the antiquity of it, the first footsteps I find of it are in the second century, though I doubt not but it might be celebrated before, mentioned by Theophilus bishop of Cæsarea, about the time of

¹ Tert. de Idol. c. 14; de Bapt. c. 19; de Cor. mil. c. 3. Vid. Max. Taurin. Homil. 3, de S. Pentecost. p. 223.

² C. Th. lib. xv. Tit. 5, lib. v.

³ Serm. 73, Cur Act. App. legantur in Pentec. tom. v.

⁴ *Εἰς τὰ θεοφάνια*, Orat. 38, p. 613.

the emperor Commodus: but if any credit might be given to the Decretal Epistles, it was somewhat elder than that; pope Telesphorus, who lived under Antoninus Pius, ordaining divine service to be celebrated, and an angelical hymn to be sung, the night before the nativity of our Saviour.¹ However, that it was kept before the times of Constantine, we have this sad instance: that when the persecution raged under Dioclesian, who then kept his court at Nicomedia, amongst other acts of barbarous cruelty done there, finding multitudes of Christians young and old met together in the temple, upon the day of Christ's nativity, to celebrate that festival, he commanded the church-doors to be shut up, and fire to be put to it, which in a short time reduced them and the church to ashes.² I shall not dispute, whether it was always observed upon the same day that we keep it now, the 25th of December. It seems probable, that for a long time in the east it was kept in January, under the name, and at the general time of the Epiphania; till receiving more light in the case from the churches of the west, they changed it to this day; sure I am St. Chrysostom, in a homily on purpose about this very thing affirms, that it was not above ten years since in that church (i. e. Antioch) it began first to be observed upon that day, and there offers several reasons to prove that to be the true day of Christ's nativity.³

The feast of Epiphany, properly so called, was

¹ Decret. Telesph. sect. nocte vero.

² Niceph. H. Eccles. lib. vii. c. 6, p. 446, forsan ex Sim. Metaphrast. qui eadem habet in Martyr. Ind. et Domn. apud Ser. ad 26 Decemb. tom. vi.

³ Serm. 31, tom. v. p. 417.

kept on the 6th of January, and had that name from a threefold apparition or manifestation commemorated upon that day, which all happened, though not in the same year, yet upon the same day of the year. The first was the appearance of the star, which guided the wise men to Christ. The second was the famous appearance at the baptism of Christ, when all the persons in the Holy Trinity did sensibly manifest themselves, the Father in the voice from heaven, the Son in the river Jordan, and the Holy Ghost in the visible shape of a dove. This was ever accounted a famous festival, and as St. Chrysostom tells us, was properly called Epiphany; because he came in a manner into the world *incognito*, but at his baptism openly appeared to be the Son of God, and was so declared before the world.¹ At this time it was that by his going into the river Jordan he did sanctify water to the mystical washing away of sin (as our churches expresses it) in memory whereof, Chrysostom tells us, they used in this solemnity at midnight to draw water, which they looked upon as consecrated this day, and carrying it home to lay it up, where it would remain pure and uncorrupt for a whole year, sometimes two or three years together, the truth whereof must rest upon the credit of that good man.² The third manifestation commemorated at this time, was that of Christ's divinity, which appeared in the first miracle that he wrought in turning water into wine. Therefore it was called Bethphania, because it was done in the house at that famous marriage in Cana of Galilee, which our Saviour honoured with his own presence. All

¹ Hom. 23, de Baptismo Christi. tom. i. p. 278. ² Ibid.

these three appearances contributed to the solemnity of this festival.

But beside these, there was another sort of festivals in the primitive church, kept in commemoration of martyrs: for the understanding of which we are to know, that in those sad and bloody times, when the Christian religion triumphed over persecution, and gained upon the world by nothing more than the constant and resolute sufferings of its professors, whom no threatenings or torments could baffle out of it; the people generally had a vast reverence for those who suffered thus deep in the cause of Christianity, and laid down their lives for the confirmation of it. They looked upon confessors and martyrs as the great champions of their religion, who resisted unto blood, and died upon the spot to make good its ground, and to maintain its honour and reputation; and therefore thought it very reasonable to do all possible honour to their memories, partly that others might be encouraged to the like patience and fortitude, and partly that virtue even in this world might not lose its reward. Hence they were wont once a year to meet at the graves of martyrs, there solemnly to recite their sufferings and their triumphs, to praise their virtues, and to bless God for their pious examples, for their holy lives and their happy deaths, for their palms and crowns. These anniversary solemnities were called *memoriæ martyrum*, the "memories of the martyrs," a title mentioned by Cyprian,¹ but certainly much older than his time; and indeed when they were first taken up in the church is I think not so exactly

¹ Epist. 37, p. 51.

known. The first that I remember to have met with, is that of Polycarp (whose martyrdom is placed by Eusebius, anno 168, under the third persecution¹) concerning whose death and sufferings the church of Smyrna (of which he was bishop) giving an account to the church of Philomelium, and especially of the place where they had honourably entombed his bones, they do profess that (so far the malice of their enemies would permit them, and they prayed God nothing might hinder it) they would assemble in that place, and celebrate the birth-day of his martyrdom with joy and gladness.² Where we may especially observe, that this solemnity is styled his birth-day, and indeed so the primitive Christians used to call the days of their death and passion, (quite contrary to the manner of the Gentiles, who kept the natalials of their famous men,) looking upon these as the true days of their nativity, wherein they were freed from this valley of tears, these regions of death, and born again unto the joys and happiness of an endless life. The same account Origen gives (if that book be his, a very ancient author however.) "We keep," says he, "the memories of the saints, of our ancestors, and friends that die in the faith, both rejoicing in that rest which they have obtained, and begging for ourselves a pious consummation in the faith: and we celebrate not the day of their nativity, as being the inlet to sorrow and temptation, but of their death, as the period of their miseries, and that which sets them beyond the reach of temptations. And this we do, both

Euseb. Chron. ad An. 168.

² Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. c. 15, p. 135.

clergy and people meeting together, inviting the poor and needy, and refreshing the widows and the orphans; that so our festival may be both in respect of them, whom we commemorate, the memorial of that happy rest which their departed souls do enjoy; and in respect of us the odour of a sweet smell in the sight of God.¹

Under Constantine these days were commanded to be observed with great care and strictness, enjoining all his lieutenants and governors of provinces to see the memorials of the martyrs duly honoured;² and so sacred were they accounted in those days, that it was thought a piece of profaneness to be absent from them. Therefore St. Basil thought he could not use a more solemn argument, to persuade a certain bishop to come over to him upon this occasion, than to adjure him by the respect he bore to the memories of the martyrs, that if he would not do it for his, yet he should for their sakes, towards whom it was unfit he should show the least disregard.³ Hence it is that Libanius sometimes takes notice of the Christians under no other character than this, “ Enemies to the gods, τὰς περὶ τῶς τάφους, that haunt and frequent tombs and sepulchres.”⁴ For the time of these assemblies it was commonly once a year, viz. upon the day of their martyrdom, for which end they took particular care to keep registers of the days of the martyrs’ passions. So Cyprian expressly charges his clergy to note down the days of their decease, that there might be a commemoration of

¹ Expos. in Job. lib. iii. fol. 39, tom. ii.

² De Vit. Const. lib. iv. c. 23, p. 536.

³ Epist. 336, tom. iii. p. 328.

⁴ Apologet. pro Doctr. sua. p. 592.

them amongst the memories of the martyrs.¹ Theodoret tells us, that in his time they did not thus assemble once or twice, or five times in a year, but kept frequent memorials, oftentimes every day celebrating the memorials of martyrs, with hymns and praises unto God.² But I suppose he means it of days appointed to the memory of particular martyrs, which being then very numerous, their memorials were distinctly fixed upon their proper days, the festival of St. Peter, or St. Paul, Thomas, Sergius, Marcellus, &c. as he there enumerates them.

For the places, these solemnities were kept at first at the tombs where the martyrs had been buried, which usually were in the *cæmeteria* or church-yard, distinct in those times from their places of public worship, and at a great distance from them, as being commonly without the cities. Here their burying-places were in large *cryptæ* or grots under ground, where they celebrated these memorials, and whither they used to retire for their common devotions in times of great persecution, when their churches were destroyed or taken from them. And therefore when Æmilian the governor of Egypt under the reign of Valerian would screw up the persecution against Christians, he forbade their meetings, and that they should not so much as assemble in the places which they called their church-yards; the same privilege which Maximinus also had taken from them.³ By reason of the darkness of these places, and their frequent assembling there in the night, to avoid the fury of

¹ *Loco supra annot.*

² *De Cur. Græc. Assect. Serm. 8, de Martyrib. p. 121.*

³ *Euseb. Hist. lib. vii. c. 11, p. 258; lib. ix. c. 2, p. 349.*

their enemies, they were forced to use lights and lamps in their public meetings, but they who make this an argument to patronize their burning of lamps and wax-candles in their churches at noon-day (as it is in all the great churches of the Roman communion) talk at a strange rate of wild inconsequence. I am sure St. Jerome when charged with it, denied that they used any in the day-time, and never but at night when they rose up to their night-devotions.¹ He confesses indeed it was otherwise in the eastern churches, where when the Gospel was to be read, they set up lights, as a token of their rejoicing for those happy and glad tidings that were contained in it, light having been ever used as a symbol and representation of joy and gladness: a custom probably not much elder than his time. Afterwards when Christianity prevailed in the world, the devotion of Christians erected churches in those places; the temples of the martyrs (says Theodosius) being spacious and beautiful, richly and curiously adorned, and shining with great lustre and brightness.² These solemnities, as the same author informs us, were kept not like the heathen festivals with luxury and obsceneness, but with devotion and sobriety, with divine hymns and religious sermons, with fervent prayers to God, mixed many times with sighs and tears.³ Here they heard sermons and orations, joined in public prayers and praises, received the holy sacrament, offered gifts and charities for the poor, recited the names of the martyrs then commemorated with their due eulogies and commenda-

¹ Adv. Vigilant. tom. ii. p. 123.

² Ibid.

³ Vid. Constit. App. lib. viii. c. 45, p. 1040. Vid. Epiphani. λόγ. συντομ. περ. πίς. p. 466.

tions, and their virtues propounded to the imitation of the hearers. For which purpose they had their set notaries who took the acts, sayings, and sufferings of martyrs, which were after compiled into particular treatises, and were recited in these annual meetings; and this was the first original of martyrologies in the Christian church.

From this custom of offering up prayers, praises, and alms at those times, it is that the Fathers speak so often of oblations and sacrifices at the martyrs' festivals. Tertullian says: "Upon an anniversary day we make oblations for them that are departed, in memory of their *natalitia* or birthdays," and to the same purpose elsewhere.¹ "As oft," says Cyprian, "as by an anniversary commemoration we celebrate the passion-days of the martyrs, we always offer sacrifices for them."² And the same phrases oft occur in many others of the Fathers. By which it is evident, they meant no more than their public prayers, and offering up praises to God for the piety and constancy, and the excellent examples of their martyrs, their celebrating the eucharist at these times, as the commemoration of Christ's sacrifice, their oblation of alms and charity for the poor, every one of which truly may, and often is styled a sacrifice or oblation; and are so understood by some of the more moderate, even of the Romish church:³ and with good reason: for that they did not make any real and formal sacrifices and oblations to martyrs, but only honour them as holy

¹ De Cor. Mil. c. 3, p. 103; De Exhort. Castil. p. 523; De Monog. p. 531.

² Epist. 34, p. 48, et Ep. 37.

³ Rigalt. Obs. ad Cypr. H. Vales. Annot. ad Euseb. Hist. Annot. p. 262; Picharell. de Missa. p. 103—107.

men, and friends to God, who for his and our Saviour's honour, and the truth of religion, chose to lay down their lives, I find expressly affirmed by Theodoret.¹

These festivals being times of mirth and gladness were celebrated with great expressions of love and charity to the poor, and mutual rejoicings with one another. Here they had their *Συμπόσια*, or feasts, every one bringing something to the common banquet, out of which the poor also had their share. These feasts at first were very sober and temperate, and such as became the modesty and simplicity of Christians, as we heard before out of Theodoret, and is affirmed before him by Constantine in his oration to the saints.² But degenerating afterwards into excess and intemperance, they were every where declaimed against by the Fathers, till they were wholly laid aside. Upon the account of these feasts, and for the better making provisions for them, we may conceive it was that markets came to be kept at these times and places, for of such St. Basil speaks *ἀγορασῖαι ἐν τοῖς μαρτυρίοις γινομέναι*, markets held at the memorials and tombs of martyrs. These he condemns as highly unsuitable to those solemnities, which were only instituted for prayer, and a commemoration of the virtues of good men, for our encouragement and imitation, and that they ought to remember the severity of our otherwise meek and humble Saviour, who whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple, when by their marketings they had turned the 'house of prayer into a den of thieves.'³ And the

¹ *Loco supra cit.* p. 116.

² Cap. 12, p. 585.

³ Reg. Fus. Disput. Interrogat. 40, tom ii. p. 589.

truth is, these anniversary commemorations, though in their primitive institution they are highly reasonable and commendable, yet through the folly and dotage of men they were after made to minister to great superstition and idolatry; so plain is it that the best and usefulest things may be corrupted to bad purposes. For hence sprung the doctrine and practice of prayer and invocation of saints, and their intercession with God, the worshipping of relics, pilgrimages, and visiting churches, and offering at the shrines of such and such saints, and such-like superstitious practices, which in after ages overrun so great a part of the Christian church; things utterly unknown to the simplicity of those purer and better times.¹

¹ In consideration of the sad abuses to which the custom had given rise in the Romish church, the church of England had retained certain *festivalia* only, in commemoration of the primitive saints and martyrs. Of these bishop Horne remarks, in his Sermon on the Purification, that "they are few, and they are important: so few, that the necessary prosecution of secular business is not too much broken in upon; so important, that nothing seems to have been appointed in vain. They visit us in their annual course with messages from above, each teaching us something to believe, and in consequence something to do; they bring repeatedly to our remembrance truths, which we are apt to forget; they secure to us little intervals of rest from worldly cares, that our hearts with our hands may be lifted up to God in the heavens; they revive our zeal and fervour in performing the offices of religion; they cheer the heart with sentiments of gratitude and thankfulness; they confirm us in habits of obedience to the institutions of the church, and the injunctions of our superiors; they stir us up to an imitation of those who have gone before us in the way of holiness; they minister an occasion to our children of inquiring into the meaning of their institution, and afford us an opportunity of explaining the several doctrines and duties of Christianity to which they refer." See also Nelson on the Fasts and Festivals of the Church of England.—ED.

CHAPTER VIII.

*Of the Persons constituting the Body of the Church,
both people and ministers.*

FROM the consideration of time and place, we proceed to consider the persons that constituted and made up their religious assemblies; and they were either the body of the people, or those who were peculiarly consecrated and set apart for the public ministrations of religion. For the body of the people, we may observe that as Christianity at first generally gained admission in great towns and cities, so all the believers of that place usually assembled and met together: the Christians also of the neighbour-villages resorting thither at times of public worship. But religion increasing apace, the public assembly, especially in the greater cities, quickly began to be too vast and numerous, to be managed with any order and conveniency; and therefore they were forced to divide the body into particular congregations, who had their pastors and spiritual guides set over them, but still were under the superintendency and care of him that was the president or bishop of the place. And according as the church could form and establish its discipline, the people, either according to their seniority and improvement, or according to the quality of the present condition they were under, began to be distinguished into several ranks and classes, which had their distinct places in the church, and their gradual admission to the several parts of the public worship. The first were the catechumens, and of

these there were two sorts. The *τελεώτεροι*, or more perfect, were such as had been catechumens of some considerable standing, and were even ripe for baptism. These might stay not only the reading of the Scriptures, but to the very last part of the first service. The others were the *ἀτελέεσσοι*, the more rude and imperfect, who stood only amongst the hearers, and were to depart the congregation, as soon as the lessons were read.¹ These were as yet accounted heathens, who applied themselves to the Christian faith, and were catechised and instructed in the more plain grounds and rudiments of religion. These principles were gradually delivered to them, according as they became capable to receive them; first the more plain, and then the more difficult. Indeed they were very shy of imparting the knowledge of the more recondite doctrines of Christianity to any till after baptism. So St. Cyril expressly assures us, where, speaking to the illuminate or baptized, “If during the catechetical exercise,” says he, “a catechumen shall ask thee, what that means which the preachers say, tell him not, for he is yet without; and these mysteries are delivered to thee only: the weak understanding of a catechumen being no more able to bear such sublime mysteries, than a sick man’s head can large and immoderate draughts of wine.”² And at the end of his preface he has this note; “These catechetical discourses may be read by those that are to be baptized, or the faithful already baptized: but to catechumens or such as are no

¹ Basam. Zonar. Aristen. in Can. 5, Conc. Neo-Cæsar.

² Præf. ad Catech. Illum. p. 13. [Cyril was bishop of Alexandria, about A. D. 412.—ED.]

Christians thou mayest not impart them; for if thou dost, expect to give an account to God.”¹

St. Basil² discoursing of the rites and institutions of Christianity, divides them into two parts, the *τὰ κηρύγματα*, and the *τὰ δόγματα*.³ The *τὰ κηρύγματα* were those parts of religion which might *δημοσιένεσθαι*, be familiarly preached and expounded to the people: the *τὰ δόγματα* were the more sublime and hidden doctrines and parts of the Christian faith; and these were *ἀπόρρητα*, things not rashly and commonly to be divulged, but to be locked up in silence. Of this nature were the doctrines of the Trinity and hypostatic union, and such like; especially the two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper.⁴ For though they acquainted their young hearers with so much of them as was necessary to stir up their desires, yet as to the main of the things themselves, the sacramental symbols, the manner of their celebration, the modus of the divine presence at the holy eucharist, the meaning of all those mystical rites and ceremonies that were used about them; these were carefully concealed both from strangers and catechumens, and communicated only to those who were solemnly initiated and baptized. Hence that ancient form so common in the sermons and writings of the Fathers, whereby, when accidentally discoursing before the people of any of these mysterious parts of religion, they used to fetch themselves off with an *ισασιν οι μεμνημενοι*, “Those that are initiated know what is said.” This was so usual, that this phrase occurs

¹ Præf. ad Catech. Illum. p. 21.

² Basil flourished about A. D. 370.—ED.

³ De Spirit. S. c. 27, p. 352, tom. ii.

⁴ Vid. Dionys. Areop. de Eccl. Hierarch. c. 1, p. 230.

at least fifty times in the writings of St. Chrysostom only,¹ as Casaubon hath observed; who has likewise noted three reasons out of the Fathers, why they so studiously concealed these parts of their religion:—First, the nature of the things themselves, so sublime and remote from vulgar apprehensions, that they would signify little to pagans or catechumens not yet fully instructed and confirmed in the faith, and would either be lost upon them, or in danger to be derided by them. Secondly, that hereby the catechumens and younger Christians might be inflamed with a greater eagerness of desire to partake of the mysteries and privileges of the faithful; human nature being desirous of nothing more, than the knowledge of what is kept and concealed from us. Thirdly, to beget in men's minds the higher esteem and veneration for these religious mysteries, nothing producing a greater contempt, even in sacred things, than too much openness and familiarity. So that a little obscurity and concealment might seem necessary to vindicate them from contempt, and secure the majesty and reverence that was due to them.

And as they were careful to keep the higher parts of Christianity within the cognizance of the faithful, so they were not less careful to teach and instruct the catechumens in all those principles they were capable of being taught. This at their first coming over was done privately and at home, by persons deputed on purpose to that office by the bishop, (as Balsamon clearly intimates,²) till they

¹ Chrys. Hom. 67, in Genes. p. 719, tom. i. et alibi sæpius. Isid. Pelus. lib. iv. Epist. 162, p. 82, aliique. Exercit. 16, ad Annal. Bar. S. 42, p. 556.

² In Can. 26, Conc. Laodic.

were sufficiently instructed in the first and more intelligible principles of the faith. Then they were admitted into the congregation, and suffered to be present at some parts of the divine service, especially the sermons, which were made for the building them up unto higher measures of knowledge; which being ended, they were commanded to depart the church, not being suffered to be present at the more solemn rites, especially the celebration of the Lord's supper: and in this manner they were trained up, till they were initiated by baptism, and taken into the highest form of Christians. How long persons remained in the state of the catechumens is difficult to determine, it not being always nor in all places alike, but longer in some and shorter in others, and probably according to the capacity of the persons. The apostolic constitutions appoint three years for the catechumen to be instructed; but provide withal that if any one be diligent and virtuous, and have a ripeness of understanding for the thing, he may be admitted to baptism sooner: for, say they, not the space of time, but the fitness and manners of men, are to be regarded in this matter.

The next sort were the penitents, such as for some misdemeanours were under the censures and severity of the church, and were gradually to obtain absolution from it. Of these there were several degrees, five especially mentioned by St. Gregory of Neo-Cæsarea,² who lived about the year 250. The first were the *οἱ προσκλαίοντες*, such as wept and lamented, and were rather candidates to be re-

¹ Lib. viii. c. 32, p. 1032.

² Epist. Canon. *περὶ τῶν εἰδωλόθ. φαγ.* Can. 11, p. 121.

ceived into the order of penitents, than penitents properly so called. These usually stood in a squalid and mournful habit at the church-porch, with tears and great importunity begging of the faithful as they went in, to pray for them. The second were the Ἀκροώμενοι, the hearers, who were admitted to hear the holy Scriptures read and expounded to the people. Their station was at the upper end of the narthex, or first part of the church, and they were to depart the congregation at the same time with the catechumens. The third class of penitents was that of the ὑποπίπτοντες, the prostrate, because service being ended, they fell down before the bishop, who together with the congregation falling down and making confession in their behalf, after raised them up, and laid his hands upon them.¹ These stood within the body of the church next the pulpit or reading-pew, and were to depart together with the catechumens. The fourth were the Συνιστάμενοι, the *consistentes*, such as stayed with the rest of the congregation, and did not depart with the catechumens, but after they and the other penitents were gone out, stayed and joined in prayer and singing (but not in receiving the sacrament) with the faithful. These after some time were advanced into the fifth and last order of the *communicantes* (μέθεξιν τῶν ἁγιασμάτων St. Gregory calls it) and were admitted to the participation of the holy sacrament. This was the state of the penitents in the primitive church. Persons having fully passed through the state of the catechumenate, became then immediate candidates of baptism, presented their names to the bishop, and

¹ Sozom. H. Eccl. lib. vii. c. 16, p. 727.

humbly prostrating themselves begged that they might be entered into the church. These were called *competentes*, because they did *competere gratiam Christi*, sue for the grace of Christ conferred in baptism. The last rank was that of the *πιστοί*, or the faithful, who having been baptized and confirmed, and having approved themselves by the long train and course of a strict pious life, were then admitted to the participation of the Lord's supper; which being the highest and most venerable mystery of the Christian religion, was not then rashly given to any, but to such only as had run through all other degrees, and by a course of piety evidenced themselves to be such real and faithful Christians, as that the highest mysteries and most solemn parts of religion might be committed to them. This was the highest order, and looked upon with great regard, and for any of this rank to lapse and be overtaken with a fault, cost them severer penances, than were imposed upon the inferior forms of Christians.

This in short was the state of the people. But because it is not possible any body or community of men should be regularly managed without some particular persons to superintend, direct, and govern the affairs of the whole society, therefore we are next to inquire what persons there were in the primitive church, that were peculiarly set apart to steer its affairs, and to attend upon the public offices and ministrations of it. That God always had a peculiar people, whom he selected for himself out of the rest of mankind, is too evident to need any proof. Such were the patriarchs, and the holy seed of old: such the Jews, chosen by him above all other nations in the world. This

was his Κληρoς, his particular lot and portion, comprehending the body of the people in general. But afterwards this title was confined to narrower bounds, and became appropriate to that tribe, which God had made choice of to stand before him, to wait at his altar, and to minister in the services of his worship: and after the expiration of their economy, was accordingly used to denote the ministry of the Gospel, the persons peculiarly consecrated and devoted to the service of God in the Christian church: the clergy being those, *qui divino cultui ministeria religionis impendant*, (as they are defined in a law of the emperor Constantine,) who are set apart for the ministries of religion, in matters relating to the divine worship.¹ Now the whole κατάλογος ιερατικὸς, (as it is often called in the apostles' canons,) the roll of the clergy of the ancient church, taking it within the compass of its first four hundred years, consisted of two sorts of persons; the ιερoμένοι, who were peculiarly consecrated to the more proper and immediate acts of the worship of God: and the ὑπηρέται, such as were set apart only for the more mean and common services of the church. Of the first sort were these three, bishops, presbyters, and deacons.

The first and principal officer of the church was the president or bishop, usually chosen out of the presbyters. I shall not here concern myself in the disputes, whether episcopacy as a superior order to presbytery, was of divine institution, (a controversy sufficiently ventilated in the late times,) it being enough to my purpose, what is acknowledged both by Blondel and Salmasius, the most

¹ C. Th. lib. xvi. tit. 3, de Episc. Eccl. et Cler. lib. ii.

learned defenders of presbytery, that bishops became distinct from, and superior to presbyters in the second century, or the next age to the apostles. The main work and office of a bishop was to teach and instruct the people, to administer the sacraments, to absolve penitents, to eject and excommunicate obstinate and incorrigible offenders, to preside in the assemblies of the clergy, to ordain inferior officers in the church, to call them to account, and to suspend or deal with them according to the nature of the offence, to urge the observance of ecclesiastical laws, and to appoint and institute such indifferent rites, as were for the decent and orderly administration of his church. In short, according to the notation of his name he was σκοπὸς, a watchman and sentinel, and therefore obliged Ἐπισκοπεῖν, diligently and carefully to inspect and observe, to superintend and provide for those that were under his charge. This Zonaras tells us was implied in the bishop's throne being placed on high in the most eminent part of the church, to denote how much it was his duty from thence to overlook, and very diligently to observe the people that were under him.¹ These and many more were the unquestionable rights and duties of the episcopal office; which, because it was very difficult and troublesome for one man to discharge, especially where the παροικία or diocess (as we now call it) was any thing large, therefore upon the multiplying of country churches, it was thought fit to take in a subordinate sort of bishops called *chorepiscopi*, country or (as amongst us they have been called) *suffragan* bishops, whose business it was to super-

¹ In Can. Apost. Can, 58.

intend and inspect the churches in the country, that lay more remote from the city, where the episcopal see was, and which the bishop could not always inspect and oversee in his own person. These were the *vicarii episcoporum* (as they are called in Isidore's version of the thirteenth canon, both of the Ancyran and Neocæsarean council) the bishop's deputies, chosen out of the fittest and gravest persons. In the canon of the last mentioned council, they are said to be chosen in imitation of the seventy, not the seventy elders which Moses took in to bear part of the government, (as some have glossed the words of that canon,) but of the seventy disciples whom our Lord made choice of, to send up and down the countries to preach the Gospel, as both Zonaras and Balsamon understand it: and thereupon by reason of their great care and pains are commanded to be esteemed very honourable. Their authority was much greater than that of presbyters, and yet much inferior to the bishop. Bishops really they were, though their power confined within narrow limits. They were not allowed to ordain either presbyters or deacons, (unless peculiarly licensed to it by the bishop of the diocess,) though they might ordain sub-deacons, readers, and any inferior officers under them.¹ They were to be assistant to the bishop, might be present at synods and councils, (to many whereof we find their subscriptions,) and had power to give letters of peace, i. e. such letters, whereby the bishop of one diocess was wont to recommend any of his clergy to the bishop of another, that so a fair understanding

¹ Conc. Antioch. Can. 10.

and correspondence might be maintained between them; a privilege expressly denied to any presbyter whatsoever.¹ But lest this wandering employment of the *chorepiscopi* should reflect any dishonour upon the episcopal office, there were certain presbyters appointed in their room, (called *περιοδευταί*, or visitors, often mentioned in the ancient canons and acts of councils,) who being tied to no certain place, were to go up and down the country, to observe and correct what was amiss.² And these doubtless were those *Ἐπιχώριοι πρεσβύτεροι* (spoken of in the thirteenth canon of the Neocæsarean council) those rural presbyters, who are there forbid to consecrate the eucharist in the city church, in the presence of the bishop or the presbyters of the city.

As Christianity increased and overspread all parts, and especially the cities of the empire, it was found necessary yet further to enlarge the episcopal office, and as there was commonly a bishop in every great city, so in the metropolis (as the Romans called it) the mother city of every province (wherein they had courts of civil judicature) there was an archbishop or a metropolitan, who had ecclesiastical jurisdiction over all the churches within that province. He was superior to all the bishops within those limits; to him it belonged either to ordain, or to ratify the elections and ordinations of all the bishops within his province, insomuch that without his confirmation they were looked upon as null and void. Once at least every year he was to summon the bishops under him to a synod, to enquire into and direct the ecclesiastical affairs within

¹ Conc. Antioch. Can. 8.

² Conc. Laod. Can. 57.

that province; to inspect the lives and manners, the opinions and principles of his bishops, to admonish, reprove, and suspend them that were disorderly and irregular; if any controversies or contentions happened between any of them, he was to have the hearing and determination of them; and indeed no matter of moment was done within the whole province without first consulting him in the case. Besides this metropolitan there was many times another in the same province, who enjoyed nothing but that name and title; his episcopal see being by the emperor's pragmatic erected into the dignity of a metropolis. He was only an honorary metropolitan, without any real power and jurisdiction, and had no other privilege, but that he took place above other ordinary bishops, in all things else equally subject with them to the metropolitan of the province, as the council of Chalcedon determines in this case.¹ When this office of metropolitan first began, I find not: only this we are sure of, that the council of Nice settling the just rights and privileges of metropolitan bishops, speaks of them as a thing of ancient date, ushering in the canon with an *ἀρχαῖα ἔθη κρατεῖτω*, "let ancient customs still take place."² The original of the institution seems to have been partly to comply with people's occasions, who oft resorted to the metropolis for dispatch of their affairs, and so might fitly discharge their civil and ecclesiastical concerns both at once; and partly because of the great confluence of people to that city, that the bishop of it might have pre-eminence above the rest, and the

¹ Can. 12.² Can. 6.

honour of the church bear some proportion to that of the state.¹

After this sprang up another branch of the episcopal office, as much superior to that of metropolitans, as theirs was to ordinary bishops. These were called primates and patriarchs, and had jurisdiction over many provinces. For the understanding of this it is necessary to know, that when Christianity came to be fully settled in the world, they contrived to model the external government of the church, as near as might be to the civil government of the Roman empire. The parallel is most exactly drawn by an ingenious person of our own nation: the sum of it is this:—The whole empire of Rome was divided into thirteen diocesses (so they called those divisions,) containing about one hundred and twenty provinces, and every province several cities. Now as in every city there was a temporal magistrate for the executing of justice, and keeping peace both for that city, and the towns round about it, so was there also a bishop for spiritual order and government, whose jurisdiction was of like extent and latitude. In every province there was a proconsul or president, whose seat was usually at the metropolis or chief city of the province; and hither all inferior cities came for judgment in matters of importance: and in proportion to this there was in the same city an archbishop or metropolitan for matters of ecclesiastical concernment. Lastly, in every diocess the emperors had their *vicarii* or lieutenants, who dwelt in the principal city of the diocess, where all imperial edicts were published,

¹ Vid. Conc. Antioch. Can. 9.

and from whence they were sent abroad into the several provinces, and where was the chief tribunal, where all causes not deterrainable elsewhere were decided: and to answer this, there was in the same city a primate, to whom the last determination of all appeals from all the provinces in differences of the clergy, and the sovereign care of all the diocess for sundry points of spiritual government did belong. This in short is the sum of the account which that learned man gives of this matter. So that the patriarch, as superior to metropolitans, was to have under his jurisdiction not any one single province, but a whole diocess (in the old Roman notion of that word) consisting of many provinces. To him belonged the ordination of all the metropolitans that were under him, as also the summoning them to councils, the correcting and reforming the misdemeanours they were guilty of, and from his judgment and sentence in things properly within his cognizance there lay no appeal.¹

The next office to bishops was that of presbyters, to whom it belonged to preach to the people, to administer baptism, consecrate the eucharist, and to be assistant to the bishop both in public ministrations, and in dispatching the affairs of the church. The truth is, the presbyters of every great city were a kind of ecclesiastical senate, under the care and presidency of the bishop, whose counsel and assistance he made use of in ruling those societies of Christians that were under his charge and government, and were accordingly reckoned next in place and power to him. They are called *clerici*

¹ Edward Breeewood's Patriarch. Governm. of the ancient Church, Quest. 1.

superioris loci, and otherwhiles (unless we understand it of the *chorepiscopi*) *antistites in secundo ordine*; and accordingly in churches had seats of eminency placed for them next to the bishop's throne. "Whereby was implied," says Zonaras, "that they ought to use a proportionable care and providence towards the people, to inform and teach them, to direct and guide them, being appointed as fellow-labourers with, and assistants to the bishop.¹ But though presbyters by their ordination had a power conferred upon them to administer holy things, yet after that the church was settled upon foundations of order and regularity, they did not usually exercise this power within any diocess, without leave and authority from the bishop, much less take upon them to preach in his presence. This custom (however it might be otherwise in the eastern church) we are sure was constantly observed in the churches of Africa till the time of Valerius, St. Augustine's predecessor in the see of Hippo; who being a Greek, and by reason of his little skill in the Latin tongue, unable to preach to the edification of the people, admitted St. Augustine (whom he had lately ordained presbyter) to preach before him. Which though at first it was ill resented by some bishops in those parts, yet quickly became a precedent for other churches to follow after.²

After these came deacons. What the duty of their place was appears from their primitive election, the apostles setting them apart to serve or minister to the tables,³ i. e. to attend upon and take

¹ C. Theod. lib. xi. tit. 39, De Fid. Test. lib. x. Sidon. Apoll. lib. iv. Epist. 11, p. 96, in Can. 58, Apost.

² Possid. in Vit. Aug. c. 5, col. 862, tom. i. ³ Acts, vi.

charge of those daily provisions that were made for poor indigent Christians; but certainly it implies also their being destined to a peculiar attendance at the service of the Lord's table. And both these may be very well meant in that place, it being the custom of Christians then to meet every day at the Lord's table, where they made their offerings for the poor, and when poor and rich had their meals together. And hence it was ever accounted part of the deacon's office, as to take care of the poor, and to distribute the monies given for their relief and maintenance, so to wait upon the celebration of the eucharist, which being consecrated by the bishop or presbyter, the deacon delivered the sacramental elements to the people. Besides this they were wont also to preach and to baptize, and were employed in many parts of the public service, especially in guiding and directing of the people. The number of them in any one place was usually restrained to seven, this being the number originally instituted by the apostles, and which might not be altered, although the city was never so great and numerous, as it is in the last canon of the Neocæsarean council. As the presbyters were to the bishop, so the deacons were to the presbyters, to be assistant to them, and to give them all due respect and reverence. Accordingly the first council of Arles forbids the deacons to do any thing of themselves, but to reserve the honour to the presbyters.¹ Out of the body of these deacons there was usually one chosen to overlook the rest, the arch-deacon; an office supposed to have been of good antiquity in the

¹ Cæn. 18.

church, and of great authority, especially in after times, being generally styled the "eye of the bishop," to inspect all parts and places of his diocess. This was he that in the church of Rome was called the cardinal deacon, who (as Onuphrius tells us) was at first but one, though the number increased afterwards.¹ While churches were little, and the services not many, the deacons themselves were able to discharge them, but as these increased so did their labours, and therefore it was thought fit to take in some inferior officers under them. This gave being to

Subdeacons, who were to be assistant to the deacon, as the deacons to the presbyter, and he to the bishop. One great part of his work was to wait at the church-doors in the time of public worship, to usher in, and to bring out the several orders of the catechumens and penitents, that none might mistake their proper stations, and that no confusion or disorder might arise to the disturbance of the congregation.² When he was first taken in, I cannot find, but he is mentioned in an epistle of the Roman clergy to them of Carthage about St. Cyprian's retirement, and elsewhere very often in Cyprian's epistles.³ He also speaks of the *acolythus*. What his proper business was, is not so certain; by some his office is said to have been this, to follow (as the word implies) or to go along with the bishop in the quality of an honourable attendant, to be ready at hand to minister to him, and to be a companion and witness of his honest and unblamable conversation, in case any evil

¹ De Episc. Tit. et Diacon. Cardin. p. 24.

² Conc. Laodic. Can. 43, ubi vid. Zon. et Balsam.

³ Inter Epist. Cypr. Epist. 2, p. 8; Epist. 28, p. 41.

fame should arise, that might endeavour to blast his reputation. But by others he is said to have been a taper-bearer to carry the lights, which were set up at the reading of the Gospel. And this seems to be clear from the fourth council of Carthage, where at his ordination he is appointed to receive at the archdeacon's hand a candlestick with a taper, that he may know it is the duty of his place, to light up the lights in the church.¹ This might very well be in those times, but it is certain the office of acolythus was in use long before that custom of setting up lights at the reading of the Gospel was brought into the church. By Cyprian also is mentioned the office of the exorcist, whose business was to attend the catechumens and the *energumeni*, or such as were possessed of the devil.² For after the miraculous power of casting out devils began to cease, or at least not to be so common as it was, these possessed persons used to come to the out-parts of the church, where a person was appointed to exorcise them, i. e. to pray over them in such prayers as were peculiarly composed for those occasions; and this he did in the public name of the whole church, the people also at the same time praying within; by which means the possessed person was delivered from the tyranny of the evil spirit; without any such charms and conjurations, and other unchristian forms and rites, which by degrees crept into this office, and are at this day in use in the church of Rome. Besides, to the exorcist's office it belonged to instruct the catechumens, and to train them up in the first

¹ Can. 6.

² Epist. 16, p. 29, 146. [Eusebius enumerates these several officers in Hist. Eccl. vi. 43:—ED.]

principles of the Christian faith: in which sense the exorcist is by Hermenopulus explained by catechist, and to exorcise (says Balsamon) is *κατεχεῖν ἀπίστας* to instruct unbelievers.¹

Next to the exorcist was the *lector* or reader (mentioned frequently by St. Cyprian) whose business was to stand near the *ambo* or pulpit, and to read those portions of holy Scripture which were appointed to be read as principal parts of the divine service. This office Julian (who was afterwards emperor) when a young student at Nicomedia took upon him, and became a reader in that church, which he did only to blind his cousin Constantius, who began to suspect him as inclining to paganism, to which he openly revolted afterwards, and became a bitter and virulent enemy to Christians, making an ill use of those Scriptures, which he had once privately studied and publicly read to the people.² I know not whether it may be worth the while to take notice of the *ostiarii* or door-keepers, answerable to the *nethinims* in the Jewish church, who were to attend the church-doors at times of public meetings, to keep out notorious heretics, Jews, and Gentiles, from entering into the Christian assemblies. It doubtless took its rise in the times of persecutions, Christians then being forced to keep their meetings as private as they could, and to guard their assemblies with all possible diligence, lest some Jew or infidel stealing in, should have gone and accused them before the magistrate. What other officers there were (or

¹ Epist. Can. S. 1, tit. 9, Jur. Græc. Rom. p. 16. In Can. 26, Conc. I.aod.

² Socrat. H. Eccl. lib. iii. c. 1, p. 166.

whether any at all) in those times in and about the church, will not be worth our labour to enquire.

To these offices they were set apart by solemn rites of prayer and imposition of hands; a ceremony (so far as *χειροτονία* is strictly taken for lifting up the hand in suffrage) commonly used at Athens, and some of the states of Greece in the designing and electing persons to be public magistrates; but more particularly in use amongst the Jews, and from them doubtless (as many other of the synagogue-rites) transferred into the Christian church, and there constantly used both as to the lifting up and laying on the hands, as the rite of conferring ordination upon the ministers of Christ. Only it is here to be remembered, that there was a double imposition of hands, in setting apart ecclesiastical officers. The one was *καθιέρωσις*, by way of consecration, and this was the proper way of ordaining the first rank of officers, bishops, presbyters, and deacons: the other *ένλογία*, by way of blessing, hands being laid upon them only as in the absolution of penitents by way of solemn benediction, and thus the inferior officers, subdeacons, readers, &c. and deaconesses were set apart: all orders under bishops were ordained by the bishop; the bishop himself by all the bishops of that province, who used to meet together for that purpose, if nearness of place and other conveniences would allow. Otherwise three (and in cases of necessity two) might do it; the rest testifying their consent in writing; and the person thus ordained was to be confirmed by the metropolitan of that province.¹

¹ Conc. Nicen. Can. 4.

For the ordination of the rest of the clergy, priests, deacons, &c. the act and presence of one bishop might suffice: and as no more than one was required, so one at least was necessary, the power of conferring orders being, even by those who otherwise have had no mighty kindness for episcopacy, acknowledged an unquestionable right of the episcopal office. Insomuch that in the case of Athanasius it was a just exception against Ischyras, that he had been ordained by Caluthus, who was no higher than a presbyter, and consequently his ordination by the council was adjudged null and void.¹

At all ordinations, especially of superior officers, the people of the place were always present, and ratified the action with their approbation and consent. And indeed it cannot be denied but that the people in some places especially, were very much considered in this affair, it being seldom or never done without their presence and suffrage.² To this end the bishop was wont before every ordination to propound and publish the names of those who were to have holy orders conferred upon them, that so the people who best knew their lives and conversations, might interpose, if they had any thing material to object against it.³ By which means the unworthy were discovered and rejected, the deserving honoured and admitted, the ordination became legitimate and satisfactory, having past the common vote and suffrage, without any exception made against it, as Cyprian speaks. Hence, the clergy of what order soever were said *predicari*, to be propounded or published: and

¹ Athan. Apol. 2, de Fug. sua, p. 570, tom. i.

² Vid. Constit. App. lib. viii. c. 4, p. 1004.

³ Cypr. Epist. 63, p. 113, 114.

this way seemed so fit and reasonable, that Severus the emperor (a wise and prudent prince) in imitation of the Christians established it in the disposal of civil offices.¹ When the case so happened that the ordination was more remote or private, they were then required to bring sufficient testimonials. Thus Cyprian, when ordaining Saturus and Optatus to be readers; "We examined," says he, "whether the testimonials agreed to them, which they ought to have, who are admitted into the clergy."²

And indeed they proceeded in this affair with all imaginable care and prudence. They examined men's fitness for the place to which they were set apart, inquired severely what had been the course and manner of their life, how they had carried themselves in their youth, and whether they had governed it by the strict rules of piety.³ This ancient custom (as S. Basil calls it) was ratified by the Nicene council, declaring that none should be ordained presbyter without previous examination, especially a strict inquiry into his life and manners.⁴ They suffered not men in those days to leap into ecclesiastical orders, but by the usual steps, and staying the appointed times. Cyprian commends Cornelius bishop of Rome, that he did not skip into the chair, but passed through all the ecclesiastical offices, ascending through all the degrees of religion, till he came *ad sacerdotii sublime fastigium*, to the top of the highest order.⁵ Men were then forced to stay their full time before they

¹ Lamprid. in Vit. Alex. Sev. c. 45, p. 570.

² Epist. 24, p. 35.

³ Basil. Epist. 181, p. 194, tom. iii.

⁴ Can. 9. ⁵ Ad Antonian. Epist. 52, p. 67.

could be promoted to any higher order. They did not commence divines and bishops in a day, (*ἀνθήμερον ἄγιοι καὶ θεολόγοι*, as Nazianzen elegantly calls them,¹) like some he complains of in his time, who were not polished by time and study, but fitted and made bishops all at once; whom therefore he wittily compares to the dragon's teeth,² which the fable tells us Cadmus sowed at Thebes, which immediately sprung up giants out of the earth, armed cap-a-pie, perfect men and perfect warriors in one day. "Just such," says he, "were some prelates, consecrated, made wise and learned in one day, who yet understood nothing before, nor brought any thing to the order, but only a good will to be there." For the age of the persons that were to be ordained, they usually observed the apostolic canon, not to choose a novice,³ but of an age competent to that office, that he was chosen to; though it varied according to times and persons, and the occasions of the church. For that of bishops, I find not any certain age positively set down. Photius in his Nomo-Canon speaks of an imperial constitution that requires a bishop not to be under thirty-five;⁴ but the apostolical constitutions allow not a man to be made a bishop under fifty years of age, as having then passed all juvenile petulances and disorders.⁵ It is certain they were not generally (some extraordinary instances alter not the case) promoted to that office, till they were of a considerable age, and thence frequently styled *majores natu* in the writings of the church. Pres-

¹ Orat. 1, de Theot. p. 535, et in Laud. Bas. Or. 20, p. 335.

² Ovid. Met. iii. 105.—ED.

³ 1 Tim. iii. 6.

⁴ Τιτλ. ἀ. κεφ. κή. p. 20.

⁵ Lib. ii. c. 1, p. 824.

byters were commonly made at thirty; yea the council of Neocæsarea decreed, that no man, though otherwise of never so unquestionable a conversation, should be ordained presbyter before that age; the reason whereof they give, because Christ himself was not baptized, nor began to preach till the thirtieth year of his age.¹ The council of Agde requires the same age, but assigns another reason: not before thirty years of age, because then, say they, he comes to the age of a perfect man.² Deacons were made at twenty-five, and the like distance and proportion observed for the inferior officers under them. I take no notice in this place of monks, hermits, &c. partly because, although they were under a kind of ecclesiastical relation, by reason of their more than ordinarily strict and severe profession of religion, yet were they not usually in holy orders; and partly because monachism was of no very early standing in the church, beginning probably about the times of the later persecutions; and even then too monks were quite another thing, both in profession, habit, and way of life, from what they are at this day, as will abundantly appear to him that will take the pains to compare the account which St. Jerome, Augustine, Palladius, Cassian, and others give of those primitive monks, with the several orders in the church of Rome at this day.

I shall only add, that out of the monks persons were usually made choice of to be advanced into the clergy, as is evident not only from multitudes of instances in the writers of the fourth, and following centuries, but from an express law of the

¹ Can. 11

² Can. 17.

emperor Arcadius to that purpose:¹ the strictness of their lives, and the purity of their manners more immediately qualifying them for those holy offices; insomuch that many times they were advanced unto the episcopal chair, without going through the usual intermediate orders of the church. Several instances whereof (Serapion, Apollonius, Agatho, Aristo, and some others) Athanasius reckons up in his epistle to Dracontius,² who being a monk refused a bishopric to which he was chosen. But because we meet in the ancient writings of the church with very frequent mention of persons of another sex, deaconesses, who were employed in many offices of religion, it may not be amiss in this place to give some short account of them. Their original was very early, and of equal standing with the infancy of the church. Such was Phebe in the church of Cenchrus, mentioned by St. Paul;³ such were those two servant-maids spoken of by Pliny in his letter to the emperor, whom he examined upon the rack; such was the famous Olympias in the church of Constantinople, not to mention any more particular instances. They were either widows, and then not to be taken into the service of the church under threescore years of age, according to St. Paul's direction; or else virgins, who having been educated in order to it, and given testimony of a chaste and sober conversation, were set apart at forty. The proper place and ministry of these deaconesses in the ancient church, principally consisted in such offices as these; to attend upon the women at times of public worship, especially in the

¹ Cod. Theod. lib. xvi. tit. 2, de Episcopis, &c. lib. xxxiii.

² Tom. i. p. 738.

³ Rom. xvi. 1.

administration of baptism, that when they were to be divested in order to their immersion, they might overshadow them, so as nothing of indecency and uncomeliness might appear;¹ sometimes they were employed in instructing the more rude and ignorant sort of women, in the plain and easy principles of Christianity, and in preparing them for baptism; otherwhiles in visiting and attending upon women that were sick, in conveying messages, counsels, consolations, relief (especially in times of persecution, when it was dangerous for the officers of the church) to the martyrs and them that were in prison.² Of these women no doubt it was that Libanius speaks of amongst the Christians, who were so very ready to be employed in these offices of humanity.³ But to return.

Persons being thus set apart for holy offices, the Christians of those days discovered no less piety in that mighty respect and reverence which they paid to them. That the ministers of religion should be peculiarly honoured and regarded, seems to have been accounted a piece of natural justice by the common sentiments of mankind; the most barbarous and unpolished nations that ever had a value for any thing of religion, have always had a proportionable regard to them, to whom the care and administration of it did belong. Julian the emperor expressly pleads for it as the most reasonable thing in the world, that priests should be honoured, yea in some respects above civil magistrates, as being the immediate attendants and domestic servants of God, our intercessors

¹ Epiph. Hæres. 79, p. 447.

² Cl. Alex. Strom. lib. iii. p. 448. Concil. 4, Carthag. Can. 12.

³ Orat. de Vincit. p. 56.

with Heaven, and the means of deriving down great blessings from God upon us.¹ But never was this clearer demonstrated than in the practice of the primitive Christians, who carried themselves towards their bishops and ministers, with all that kindness and veneration which they were capable to express towards them. St. Paul bears record to the Galatians, that he was accounted so dear to them, that if the plucking out their eyes would have done him any good, they were ready to have done it for his sake.² The truth is, bishops and ministers were then looked upon as the common parents of Christians, whom as such they honoured and obeyed, and to whom they repaired for counsel and direction in all important cases.³ It is plain from several passages in Tertullian, that none could lawfully marry till they had first advised with the bishop and clergy of the church, and had asked and obtained their leave;⁴ which probably they did to secure the person from marrying with a Gentile, or any of them that were without, and from the inconveniences that might ensue upon such a match.⁵ No respect, no submission was thought great enough, whereby they might do honour to them. They were wont to kiss their hands, to embrace their feet, and at their going from, or returning home, or indeed their coming unto any place, to wait upon them, and either to receive or dismiss them with the universal confluence of the people. Happy they thought themselves if they could but entertain

¹ Julian. Fragm. Oper. p. 1, p. 542.

² Gal. iv. 15.

³ Vid. Constit. Apost. lib. ii. c. 33, p. 859.

⁴ De Monogam. c. 11, p. 531. Ad Uxor. lib. ii. c. 2-9.

⁵ Vid. de Coron. Mil. c. 13, p. 139.

them in their houses, and bless their roofs with such welcome guests.¹ Amongst the various ways of kindness which Constantine the Great showed to the clergy, the writer of his life tells us, that he used to treat them at his own table, though in the meanest and most despicable habit, and never went a journey, but he took some of them along with him, reckoning that thereby he made himself surer of the propitious and favourable influence of the divine presence.²

A pious bishop, and a faithful minister was in those days dearer to them than the most valuable blessings upon earth, and they could want any thing rather than be without them. When Chrysostom was driven by the empress into banishment, the people as he went along burst into tears, and cried out, "it was better the sun should not shine, than that John Chrysostom should not preach;"³ and when through the importunity of the people he was recalled from his former banishment, and diverted into the suburbs, till he might have an opportunity to make a public vindication of his innocency, the people not enduring such delays, the emperor was forced to send for him into the city; the people universally meeting him, and conducting him to his church, with all expressions of reverence and veneration.⁴ Nay, while he was yet presbyter of the church of Antioch, so highly was he loved and honoured by the people of that place, that though he was chosen to the see of Constanti-

¹ Vid. Chrysost. de S. Melet. Antioch. Hom. 45, tom. i. p. 526, et Annot. p. 91.

² De Vit. Constant. lib. i. c. 42, p. 429.

³ Chrysost. Ep. 125, tom. iv. p. 763.

⁴ Socrat. Hist. Eccl. lib. vi c. 16, p. 324.

nople, and sent for by the emperor's letters ; though their bishop made an oration on purpose to persuade them to it, yet would they by no means be brought to part with him ; and when the messengers by force attempted to bring him away, he was forced, to prevent tumult, to withdraw and hide himself ; the people keeping a guard about him, lest he should be taken from them : nor could the emperor or his agents with all their arts effect it, till he used this wile :—he secretly wrote to the governor of Antioch, who pretending to Chrysostom, that he had concerns of moment to impart to him, invited him to a private place without the city, where seizing upon him, by mules which he had in readiness, he conveyed him to Constantinople ; where that his welcome might be the more magnificent, the emperor commanded that all persons of eminency, both ecclesiastical and civil, should with all possible pomp and state go six miles to meet him.¹ Of Nazianzen (who sat in the same chair of Constantinople before him) I find, that when he would have left that bishopric by reason of the stirs that were about it, and delivered up himself to solitude and a private life, as a thing much more suitable to his humour and genius, many of the people came about him, with tears beseeching him not to forsake his flock, which he had hitherto fed with so much sweat and labour. They could not then lose their spiritual guides, but they looked upon themselves as widows and orphans, resenting their death with a general sorrow and lamentation, as if they had lost a common father.² Nazianzen

¹ Metaphrast. in Vit. Chrysostomi apud Surium, ad diem 27 Jan. tom. i.

² Greg. Presb. de Vit. Gregor. Nazian. prefix. oper. Naz.

reports, that when his father (who was bishop of but a little diocess) lay very sick, and all other remedies proved unsuccessful, the people generally flocked to church, (and though, it was then the joyful time of Easter,) broke out into mournful and passionate complaints, and with the most earnest prayers and tears, besought God for his life.¹ And of Basil bishop of Cæsarea he tells us, that when he lay a dying, the whole city came about him, not able to bear his departure from them, praying as if they would have laid hands upon his soul, and by force detained it in his body. "They were," says he, "even distracted with the thoughts of so great a loss, nor was there any who would not have been willing to have been deprived of part of his own life, might it have added unto his." His funeral was solemnized with all possible testimonies of love and honourable attendance, and with the abundant tears, not only of Christians, but of Jews and heathens; the confluence so vast, that many were pressed to death in the crowd, and sent to bear him company to his long home.² And that we may see that their respect did not lie merely in a few kind words, or external protestations, they made it good in more real and evident demonstrations, by providing liberal maintenance for them, parting at first with their own estates to supply the uses of the church, and after that making no less large than frequent contributions, which could not but amount to very considerable sums, the piety of Christians daily adding to their liberality; of which we may make some estimate, by what the heathen

¹ In Laud. Patr. Or. 19, p. 304.

² In Laud. Basil. Or. 20, p. 371.

historian with a little kind of envy relates only of the church of Rome, (and doubtless it was so in some proportion in other places,) that the profits of the clergy arising from oblations chiefly was so great, as to enable them to live in a prince-like state and plenty.¹ And not long after it became the object not only of admiration but envy, inso-much that Chrysostom was forced to make one whole sermon against those that envied the wealth of the clergy.² It was also the great care of those times, to free them from what might be either scandalous or burdensome to their calling. Constantine decreed, that the orthodox clergy should be exempt from all civil offices, or whatever might hinder their attendance upon the services of the church: his son Constantius, that bishops in many cases should not be chargeable in the secular courts, but be tried in an assembly of bishops,³ which privilege was extended by Honorius to all the clergy, that they should be tried before their bishops:⁴ and, because next to his person nothing is so dear to a clergyman as his credit and reputation, therefore the emperor Honorius took care by a law, that whosoever (be he a person of the highest rank) should charge any clergyman with crimes which he was not able to make good, he himself should be publicly accounted vile and infamous; "it being but just and equal," says the law, "that as guilt should be punished, and offenders reckoned as spots and blemishes to the church, so that injured

¹ Amm. Marcellin. lib. xxvii. p. 1739.

² Περὶ τῆς ὅτι ἐ χρηὴ δυνειδίξειν τῆς ἱερεῖς ὑπὲρ ὧν ζῶσιν, &c. tom. vi. p. 896, edit. Savil.

³ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. x. c. 7, p. 394, et Cod. Theod. lib. xvi. tit. 2, leg. 1, 2. Ib. leg. 12. Ib. leg. 21.

⁴ Ib. tit. 11, lib. i.

innocency should be righted and maintained.”¹ So sacred and venerable did they then account the persons and concernments of those who ministered in the affairs of divine worship.

CHAPTER IX.

Of their usual Worship, both private and public.

THUS far we have discovered the piety of those ancient times, as to those necessary circumstances that relate to the worship of God. We are next to see wherein their worship itself did consist, which we shall consider both as private and public; that which they performed at home, and that which was done in their solemn and church assemblies: only let it be remembered, that under the notion of worship I here comprehend all those duties of piety that refer to God. The duties of their private worship were of two sorts, either such as were more solemn and stated, and concerned the whole family, or such as persons discharged alone, or at least did not tie up themselves to usual times. For the first, which are properly family duties, they were usually performed in this order. At their first rising in the morning, they were wont to meet together, and to betake themselves to prayer, (as plainly implied in Chrysostom's exhortations,) to praise God

¹ Cod. Theod. lib. xvi. tit 2, L. 41.

for the protection and refreshment of the night, and to beg his grace and blessing for the following day. This was done by the master of the house, unless some minister of religion were present.¹ It is probable that at this time they recited the creed, or some confession of their faith, by which they professed themselves Christians; and, as it were, armed themselves against the assaults of dangers and temptations. However I question not, but that now they read some parts of Scripture, which they were most ready to do at all times, and therefore certainly would not omit it now. That they had their set hours for prayer, the third, sixth, and ninth hour, is plain, both from Cyprian, Clemens Alexandrinus, and others.² This they borrowed from the Jews, who divided the day into four greater hours, the first, third, sixth, and ninth hour; the three last whereof were stated hours of prayer: the first hour began at six in the morning, and held till nine; the third from nine till twelve; and at this hour it was that the apostles and Christians were met together, when the Holy Ghost descended upon them;³ the sixth hour was from twelve till three in the afternoon, and at this time 'Peter went up to the house-top to pray';⁴ the ninth was from three till six at night, and now it was that Peter and John went up to the temple, 'it being the ninth hour of prayer.'⁵ This division was observed by the Christians of succeeding times, though whether punctually kept to in their family devotions I am not able to affirm.

¹ Hom. 1, de Precat. tom.i. p. 750. Vid. Basil. Ep. ad Greg. de Vit. Solit. tom. iii. p. 43, A.

² De Orat. Dom. p. 196; Strom. lib. vii. p. 722.

³ Acts, ii. 15.

⁴ Ib. x. 9.

⁵ Ib. iii. 1.

About noon, before their going to dinner, some portions of Scripture were read, and the meat being set upon the table, a blessing was solemnly begged of God, as the fountain of all blessings:¹ and so religious herein was the good emperor Theodosius junior, that he would never taste any meat, no not so much as a fig, or any other fruit, before he had first given thanks to the great Sovereign Creator.² Both meat and drink were set apart with the sign of the cross,³ (a custom they used in the most common actions of life,) as is expressly affirmed both by Tertullian and Origen; where he also gives a form of such prayers as they were wont to use before meals. Lifting up their eyes to heaven, they prayed thus: "Thou that givest food to all flesh, grant that we may receive this food with thy blessing; thou Lord hast said, that if we drink any thing that is deadly, if we call upon thy name it shall not hurt us, thou therefore who art Lord of all power and glory, turn away all evil

¹ Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. vii. p. 728. Tert. Apol. c. 39, p. 32. [Chrysostom (Hom. 42, on Matt. xxiv.) observes, that Christ's blessing the bread before he gave it to the multitude, was designed to teach us, *μη πρότερον ὑπτέσθαι πραπέζης, ἕως ἂν εὐχριστήσωμεν τῷ τὴν τροφήν ἡμῶν ταύπην ταρῆχοντι.* See 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5.—ED.]

² Sozom. Præfat. ad Hist. Eccl. p. 395.

³ Tertul. de Cor. Mil. c. 3. Origen, on Job, lib. ii. p. 36. The passage of Tertullian is cited at length at p. 219. It is expressly stated, however, both by Tertullian (Apol. c. 16) and Minuc. Felix, (c. 29,) that the cross was not an object of worship. See above, p. 86. With respect to the primitive custom of expanding the hands in prayer, so as to represent a cross, see p. 199. Justin Martyr (Apol. lib. i. c. 72; Dial. Tryph. p. 317, 332) has some curious speculations respecting the use of the figure of the cross; and so likewise Minucius, in the passage above cited.—ED.

and malignant quality from our food, and whatever pernicious influence it may have upon us." When they were at dinner, they sung hymns and psalms; a practice which Clem. Alexandrinus commends as very suitable to Christians, as a modest and decent way of praising God, while we are partaking of his creatures.¹ They used also to have the Scriptures read;² and, as I have elsewhere noted out of Nazianzen, every time they took the cup to drink, made the sign of the cross and called upon Christ. Dinner being ended, they concluded with prayer, giving thanks to God for their present refreshment, and begging his continued provision of those good things which he had promised to them.³ So great a place had religion in those days even in men's common and natural actions; and so careful were they not to starve the soul, while they were feeding the body. • Much after the same rate they spent the rest of the day, till the night approached, when before their going to rest, the family was again called to prayer, after which they went to bed. About midnight they were generally wont to rise to pray, and to sing hymns to God.⁴ This custom was very ancient, and doubtless took its original from the first times of persecution, when, not daring to meet together in the day, they were forced to keep their religious assemblies in the night; and though this was afterwards antiquated, as being found inconvenient for the

¹ Pædag. lib. ii. c. 4, p. 165. See also Chrysostom, in Psalm xli. tom. iii. p. 147.

² Cypr. Epist. 1, p. 7; Clem. Alex. ut supra.

³ Basil. Ep. ad Greg. tom. iii. p. 46.

⁴ Clem. Alex. Pædag. lib. ii. c. 9, p. 185.

generality of Christians, yet did it still continue in the nocturnal hours of monasteries and religious orders.

But besides these stated and ordinary devotions, performed by a joint concurrence of the family, the Christians of those days were careful to spend all the time they could, even when alone, in actions of piety and religion. They were most frequent in prayer. Eusebius reports of St. James the Just, that he was wont every day to go alone into the church, and there kneeling upon the pavement so long to pour out his prayers to God, till his knees became as hard and brawny as a camel's;¹ the same which Nazianzen also tells us of his good sister Gorgonia, that by often praying her knees were become hard, and did as it were stick to the ground.² Constantine the Great though burdened with the cares of so vast an empire, did yet every day at his wonted hours withdraw from all the company of the court, retire into his closet, and upon his knees offer up his prayers to God;³ and to let the world know how much he was devoted to this duty, he caused his image in all his gold coins, in his pictures and statues, to be represented in the posture of a person praying, with his hands spread abroad, and his eyes lift up to heaven.⁴ Their next care was diligently and seriously to read the Scripture, to be mighty in the divine oracles, as indeed they had an invaluable esteem of and reverence for the word of God, as the book which they infinitely prized beyond all others; upon which

¹ Hist. Eccl. lib. ii. c. 23, p. 63; ex Hegesippo.

² In Laud. Gorgon. Or. 10, p. 183.

³ De Vit. Const. lib. iv. c. 22.

⁴ Ibid. c. 15, p. 533.

account Nazianzen very severely chides his dear friend Gregory Nyssen, that having laid aside the holy Scriptures (the most excellent writings in the world) which he was wont to read both privately to himself, and publicly to the people, he had given up himself to the study of foreign and profane authors, desirous rather to be accounted an orator than a Christian.¹ St. Augustine tells us, that after his conversion (how meanly soever he had before thought of them) the Scriptures were become the matter of his most pure and chaste delight, in respect whereof all other books (even those of Cicero himself, which once he had so much doted on) became dry and unsavoury to him.² In the study of this book it was that Christians then mainly exercised themselves, as thinking they could never fully enough understand it, or deeply enough imprint it upon their hearts and memories. Of the younger Theodosius they tell us, that rising early every morning, he together with his sisters interchangeably sung psalms of praise to God; the Holy Scriptures he could exactly repeat in any part of them, and was wont to discourse out of them with the bishops that were at court, as readily as if he had been an old bishop himself.³ We read of Origen, though then but a child, that when his father commanded him to commit some places of Scripture to memory, he most willingly set himself to it, and not content with the bare reading, he began to inquire into the more profound and recondite meaning of it, often asking his father (to his no less joy than admiration) what the sense of this or that

¹ Epist. 43, p. 804,

² Vid. Confess. lib. iii. c. 5, et lib. vii. c. 20, 21.
Socrat. H. Eccles. lib. vii. c. 22, p. 361.

place of Scripture was; and this thirst after divine knowledge still continued and increased in him all his life.¹ St. Jerome reports it out of a letter of one that was his great companion and benefactor, that he never went to meals without some part of Scripture read; never to sleep, till some about him had read them to him; and that both by night and day no sooner had he done praying but he betook himself to reading, and after reading returned again to prayer.² Valens, deacon of the church of Jerusalem, a venerable old man, had so entirely given up himself to the study of the Scriptures, that it was all one to him to read, or to repeat whole pages together.³ The like we find of John, an Egyptian confessor, (whom Eusebius saw and heard,) that though both his eyes were put out, and his body mangled with unheard of cruelty, yet he was able at any time to repeat any places or passages either out of the Old or New Testament; "which when I first heard him do in the public congregation, I supposed him (says he) to have been reading in a book, till coming near, and finding how it was, I was struck with great admiration at it."⁴ Certainly Christians then had no mean esteem of, took no small delight in, these sacred volumes. For the sake of this book (which he had chosen to be the companion and counsellor of his life) Nazianzen professes he had willingly undervalued and relinquished all other things.⁵ This was the mine where they enriched themselves with divine treasures; a book where they furnished themselves

¹ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. vi. c. 2, p. 202.

² Ep. ad Marcell. tom. i. p. 129.

³ Euseb. de Martyr. Palest. c. 11, p. 336.

⁴ Ib. c. ult. p. 334. ⁵ De Pace, Or. 12, p. 193.

with a true stock of knowledge; as St. Jerome speaks of Nepotian, that by daily reading and meditation she had made her soul a library of Christ.¹ And he tells us of Blesilla, a devout widow, that though she was so far overrun with weakness and sickness, that her foot would scarce bear her body, or her neck sustain the burden of her head, yet she was never found without a Bible in her hand.²

Nor did they covetously hoard up, and reserve this excellent knowledge to themselves, but freely communicated it to others. Especially were they careful to catechise and instruct their children and servants in the principles of religion.³ St. Clemens praises the Corinthians that they took care to admonish their young men to follow those things that were modest and comely; and accordingly exhorts them to instruct the younger in the knowledge of the fear of God, to make their children partakers of the discipline of Christ, to teach them how much humility and a chaste love do prevail with God, that the fear of him is good and useful, and preserves all those who with pure thoughts lead a holy life according to his will.⁴ The historian observes of Constantine, that his first and greatest care towards his sons, was to secure the happiness of their souls, by sowing the seeds of piety in their minds, which he did partly himself, instructing them in the knowledge of divine things, and partly by appointing such tutors as were most approved for religion:⁵ and when he had taken them into a partnership of the government, and either by private admonitions, or by letters, gave them counsels for

¹ Epitaph. Nepot. tom. i. p. 25.

² Ep. ad Paul. p. 157.

³ Page 3.

⁴ Ib. p. 31.

⁵ De Vit. Const. lib. iv. c. 51.

the steering themselves, this was always the first and chief, that they should prefer the knowledge and worship of God, the great King of the world, before all other advantages, yea before the empire itself.¹ For this Nazianzen peculiarly commends his mother, that not only she herself was consecrated to God, and brought up under a pious education, but that she conveyed it down as a necessary inheritance to her children;² and it seems that her daughter Gorgonia was so well seasoned with these holy principles, that she religiously walked in the steps of so good a pattern, and did not only reclaim her husband, but educated her children and nephews in the ways of religion, giving them an excellent example while she lived, and leaving this as her last charge and request when she died.³ This was the discipline under which Christians were brought up in those times. Religion was instilled into them betimes, which grew up and mixed itself with their ordinary labours and recreations; inso-much that the most rude and illiterate persons, instead of profane wanton songs, which vitiate and corrupt the minds of men, (*τὰς σατανικὰς ᾠδὰς*, as Chrysostom calls them, songs of the devil's composure,⁴) used nothing but spiritual and divine hymns, so that (as Jerome relates of the place where he lived) you could not go into the field, but you might hear the ploughman at his hallelujahs, the mower at his hymns, and the vine-dresser singing David's Psalms.⁵

Thus they carried themselves at home. What

¹ De Vit. Const. lib. iv. c. 52, p. 552.

² In Laud. Cæsaris, Or. 10, p. 161.

³ Id. Or. 11, p. 180.

⁴ In Psalm cxvii. tom. iii. p. 358.

⁵ Ep. ad Marcell. tom. i. p. 127.

they did in public in their church assemblies, on the Lord's-day especially, is next to be considered; the manner whereof I shall briefly represent, as it generally and for the most part obtained in those ages; for it could not but vary something according to time and place. And here I should save myself the trouble of any further search, by setting down the account which Justin Martyr and Tertullian give of their public worship in their Apologies for the Christians, but that I am satisfied they did not design to give a perfect and punctual account of what was done at their religious assemblies, as might sufficiently appear from this one thing, that the first of them in those places speaks not any thing of their hymns and psalms, which yet that they were (even in the times wherein they lived) a constant part of the divine service, no man that is not wholly a stranger in church-antiquity can be ignorant of. I shall therefore out of them and others pick up and put together what seems to have constituted the main body of their public duties, and represent them in that order wherein they were performed, which usually was in this manner:—

At their first coming together into the congregation, they began with prayer, as Tertullian at least probably intimates (for I do not find it in any besides him.) “We come together,” says he “unto God, that being banded as it were into an army we may besiege him with our prayers and petitions; a violence which is very pleasing and grateful to him.”¹ I do not from hence positively conclude that prayer was the first duty they began with,

¹ Apol. c. 39, p. 31.

though it seems fairly to look that way; especially if Tertullian meant to represent the order as well as the substance of their devotions. After this followed the reading of the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, both the commentaries of the apostles, and the writings of the prophets, as J. Martyr informs us.¹ How much of each was read at one meeting, in the first times, is not known, it being then unfixed and arbitrary, because their meetings, by the sudden interruption of the heathens, were oft disturbed and broken up, and therefore both Justin and Tertullian confess that they only read as much as occasion served, and the condition of the present times did require: but afterwards there were set portions assigned, both out of the Old and New Testament, two lessons out of each, as we find it in the author of the Apostolical Constitutions.² Nay not only the canonical Scriptures, but many of the writings of apostolical men (such as were eminent for place and piety) were in those days publicly read in the church. Such was the famous epistle of St. Clemens to the Corinthians; of which and of the custom in like cases Dionysius bishop of Corinth, who lived about the year 172, gives Soter bishop of Rome this account: "To-day," says he, "we kept holy the Lord's-day, wherein we read your epistle, which we shall constantly read for our instruction, as we also do the first epistle which Clemens wrote to us."³ The like Eusebius reports of Hermas's

¹ Apol. 2, p. 98. For this passage see bishop Kaye, on the Writings of Justin.—ED.

² Lib. ii. c. 57, p. 375

³ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. c. 23, p. 145. [See also Euseb.

Pastor¹ (a book so called;) and St. Jerome of the writings of St. Ephrem the famous deacon of Edessa, that in some churches they were publicly read, after the reading of the holy Scriptures.² About this part of the service it was that they sung hymns and psalms, a considerable part of the divine worship (as it had ever been accounted both amongst Jews and Gentiles) and more immediately serviceable for celebrating the honour of God, and lifting up the minds of men to divine and heavenly raptures. It was in use in the very infancy of the Christian church, spoken of largely by St. Paul,³ and continued in all ages after; in-somuch that Pliny reports it as the main part of the Christians' worship, that they met together before day to join in singing hymns to Christ as God.⁴ These hymns were either extemporary raptures, so long as immediate inspiration lasted; or set compositions, either taken out of the holy Scriptures, or of their own composing, as Tertul-lian tells us:⁵ for it was usual then for any persons to compose divine songs to the honour of Christ, and to sing them in the public assemblies,⁶ till the council of Laodicea ordered, that no psalms composed by private persons should be recited in the

Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. 16; Jerom. Ver. Ill. § 15; Epiphani. Hær. xxx. 15; Phot. Bibl. Cod. 123.—ED.]

¹ H. Eccles. lib. iv. c. 3, p. 72. [This Hermas is frequently classed with the apostolical Fathers, and is said to have been the individual mentioned in Rom. xvi. 14. His Pastor, or Shepherd, is written under the form of a vision, but is not regarded as of very high authority.—ED.]

² De Script. Ecclesiast. in voc. Ephrem. p. 300.

³ Eph. v. 19; Col. iii. 16.

⁴ Lib. x. Ep. 97.

⁵ Ap. c. 39, p. 32.

⁶ Euseb. lib. v. c. 28, p. 196.

church ;¹ where though by the *ιδιωτικοὶ ψαλμοὶ* the two Greek scholiasts will have certain psalms ascribed to Solomon and others to be understood, yet it is much more reasonable to understand it of private compositions, usual a long time in the church, and here for good reason prohibited. By this council it was likewise appointed, that the psalms should not be one entire continued service, but that a lesson should be interposed in the midst after every psalm ;² which was done (as Balsamon and Alexius Aristenus tells us) to take off the weariness of the people, whose minds might be apt to tire in passing through those prolix offices all together, especially the lessons being so large and many. In this duty the whole congregation bore a part, joining all together in a common celebration of the praises of God. Afterwards the custom was to sing *alternatim*, course by course, answering one another, first brought in (as we are told) by Flavianus and Diodorus in the church of Antioch, in the reign of Constantine ;³ but, if we may believe Socrates, some hundreds of years before that, by Ignatius who was bishop of that church ; who, having in a vision heard the angels praising the holy Trinity with alternate hymns, thereupon introduced the use of it in that church, which from thence spread itself into all other churches.⁴ And whether Pliny (who lived about that time) might not mean some such thing by his *secum invicem canere*, that the Christians sung hymns one with another, or in their courses, may be consi-

¹ Can. 59.

² Can. 17.

³ Theod. Hist. Eccl. lib. ii. c. 24, p. 73.

⁴ Hist. Eccl. lib. vi. c. 8, p. 313.

dered by those who think it worth their labour to enquire. In the meantime we proceed.

The reader having done (they are the words of Justin the Martyr) the president of the assembly makes a sermon by way of instruction and exhortation, to the imitation and practice of those excellent things that they had heard.¹ And indeed sermons in those times were nothing else but the expositions of some part of the Scriptures which had been read before, and exhortations to the people to obey the doctrines contained in them, and commonly were upon the lesson which was last read, because that being freshest in the people's memory, was most proper to be treated of, as St. Augustine both avers the custom, and gives the reason.² Hence, in the writers of the church, preachers came to be called *tractatores*, and their sermons *tractatus*, because they handled or treated of such places of Scripture as had been a little before read unto the people. According as occasion was, these sermons were more or fewer, sometimes two or three at the same assembly, the presbyters first and then the bishop, as is expressly affirmed in the apostolical constitutions. "Then" (i. e. after the reading of the Gospel) "let the presbyters exhort the people one by one, not all at once, and after all the bishop, as it is fitting for the master to do."³ And thus Gregory Nyssen excuses himself for not introducing his sermons with a tedious preface, because he would not be burdensome to the people, who had already taken pains to hear those admirable discourses that had been made before him.⁴

¹ Loc. supr. cit.

² Serm. 237, de Temp. tom. x. col. 1116.

³ Ut supra, p. 876.

⁴ Εἰς τῆς ἑαυτῶ χριστογονίας, tom. i. p. 872.

This course they held not in the morning only, but likewise in the afternoon (at sometimes at least) when they had their public prayers and sermons to the people. This Chrysostom assures us of in a homily upon this very subject, in commendation of those who came to church after dinner, and that, as he tells them, in greater numbers than before; who instead of sleeping after dinner, came to hear the divine laws expounded to them; instead of walking upon the exchange, and entertaining themselves with idle and unprofitable chat, came and stood amongst their brethren, to converse with the discourses of the prophets. And this he tells them he put them in mind of, not that it was a reproach to eat and to drink, but that having done so, it was a shame to stay at home, and deprive themselves of those religious solemnities.¹ The same it were easy to make good from several passages in St. Basil, St. Augustine, and others, who frequently refer to those sermons which they had preached in the morning

But how many soever the discourses were, the people were ready enough to entertain them, flocking to them as to their spiritual meals and banquets. "We meet together (says Tertullian) to hear the holy Scriptures rehearsed to us, that so according to the quality of the times we may be either forewarned or corrected by them: for certainly with these holy words we nourish our faith, erect our hope, seal our confidence, and by these inculcations are the better established in obedience to the divine commands."²

¹ Ἐπαινός τῶν μετὰ τὴν ἑστίασιν ἀπηντηκότων εἰς τὴν ἀκρόασιν. Hom. 10, ad Pop. Antioch. p. 116, tom. 1.

² Apol. c. 39.

Nazianzen tells us what vast numbers used to meet in his church at Constantinople, of all sexes, of all sorts and ranks of persons, rich and poor, honourable and ignoble, learned and simple, governors and people, soldiers and tradesmen, all here unanimously conspiring together, and greedily desirous to learn the knowledge of divine things.¹ The like Chrysostom reports of the church at Antioch, that they would set aside all affairs at home, to come and hear his sermons at church. He tells them it was the great honour of the city, not so much that it had large suburbs and vast numbers of people, or brave houses with gilded dining-rooms, as that it had a diligent and attentive people.² And indeed the commendation is the greater, in that commonness did not breed contempt, it being usual in that church (as Chrysostom often intimates) for a good part of the year to have sermons every day.

Well, sermon being ended, prayers were made with and for the catechumens, penitents, possessed, and the like, according to their respective capacities and qualifications; the persons that were in every rank departing as soon as the prayer that particularly concerned them was done;³ first the catechumens, and then the penitents, as is prescribed in the nineteenth canon of the Laodicean council. For no sooner was the service thus far performed, but all that were under baptism, or under the discipline of penance, i. e. all that might

¹ Orat. 32, p. 517.

² Hom. 56, tom. i. p. 623. See also Hom. 4, in Verb. Esaiæ, vid. Dom. &c. tom. iii. p. 750

³ Constit. Apost. lib. viii. c. 6, p. 1006.

not communicate at the Lord's table, were commanded to depart, the deacon crying aloud; *Οσοι κατηχουμενοι προελθετε*, "Those that are catechumens go out." In the Latin church the form was, *ITE, MISSA EST*, "Depart, there is a dismissal of you:" *missa* being the same with *missio*, as *remissa* oft used in some writers for *remissio*: and so the word *missa* is used by Cassian even in his time, for the dismissal of the congregation. Hence it was that the whole service, from the beginning of it till the time that the hearers were dismissed, came to be called *missa catechumenorum*, the mass or service of the catechumens; as that which was performed afterwards at the celebration of the eucharist was called *missa fidelium*, the mass or service of the faithful, because none but they were present at it; and in these notions and no other the word is often to be met with in Tertullian,¹ and other ancient writers of the church. It is true, that in process of time, as the discipline of the catechumens wore out, so that title which belonged to the first part of the service was forgotten, and the name *missa* was appropriated to the service of the Lord's supper, and accordingly was made use of by the church of Rome, to denote that which they peculiarly call the mass or the propitiatory sacrifice of the altar at this day; and the more plausibly to impose this delusion upon the people, they de with a great deal of confidence muster up all those places of the fathers where the word *missa* is to be found, and apply it to their mass; though it would puzzle them to produce but one place, where the word is used in the same sense as they

¹ De Institut. Monach. lib. iii. c. 7, p. 26.

use it now, out of any genuine and approved writer of the church for at least the first four hundred years. But to return. The catechumens, &c. being departed, and the church-doors shut, they proceeded to the Lord's supper, at which the faithful only might be present, wherein they prayed for all states and ranks of men, gave the kiss of charity, prayed for consecration of the eucharist; then received the sacramental elements, made their offerings, and such like; of which I do not now speak particularly, because I intend to treat distinctly of the sacraments afterwards; for the same reason I say nothing concerning their admonitions, church-censures, absolutions. &c. because these will come under consideration in another place, as also because, though managed at their public assemblies, were yet only accidental to them, and no settled parts of the divine service. This in short was the general form of public worship in those ancient times, which although it might vary somewhat according to times and places, did yet for the main and the substance of it hold in all.

That which remains, is a little to remark how the Christians carried themselves in the discharge of these solemn duties, which certainly was with singular reverence and devotion, such gestures and actions as they conceived might express the greatest piety and humility. "Let both men and women (says Clemens of Alexandria) come to church in comely apparel, with a grave pace, with a modest silence, with a love unfeigned, chaste both in body and mind, and so as they may be fit to put up prayers to God."¹ "Let our speech in prayer

¹ Pædag. lib. iii. c. 11, p. 255.

(says Cyprian) be under discipline, observing a decorous calmness and modesty; we are to remember that we are under the eye of God, whom we are not to offend either in the habit of our body, or the manner of our speech; for as it is the fashion of those that are impudent to clamour and make a noise, so on the contrary it becomes a sober man to pray with a modest voice. When therefore we come together with our brethren into the assembly, to celebrate the divine sacrifices with the minister of God, we ought to be mindful of order and a reverent regard, and not to throw about our prayers with a wild and confused voice, or with a disorderly prattling to cast forth those petitions, which ought with the greatest modesty to be put up to God.”¹ The men prayed with their heads bare, as not ashamed to look up to heaven for what they begged of God; the women covered, as a sign of the modesty of that sex; and therefore Tertullian severely checks the practice of some women in his time, who in time of worship had no covering on their heads, or what was as good as none.² Their hands they did not only lift up to heaven, (a posture in prayer common both among Jews and Gentiles,) but they did expand and spread them abroad, that so by this means they might shadow out an image of the cross, or rather a resemblance of him that hung upon it, as Tertullian more than once and again informs us:³ “Prayer,” says another, “is a conversing with God, and the way to heaven, and to stretch

¹ De Orat. Dom. p. 133.

² De Virg. Veland. p. 504. [Compare 1 Cor. xi. 4—15.
—FD]

³ De Orat. c. 11 Apol. c. 16. See above, p. 133.

out our hands is to form the resemblance of Christ crucified; which whoever prays should do, not only as to the form and figure, but in reality and affection; for as he that is fastened to the cross surely dies, so he that prays should crucify the desires of the flesh, and every inordinate lust and passion.”¹ In the performing of this duty, they either kneeled, which was most usual, or stood, which they always did upon the Lord’s-day, for a reason which we have spoken of before. Sitting was ever held a posture of great rudeness and irreverence; nay Tertullian falls heavy upon some that used presently to clap themselves down upon their seats, as soon as ever prayer was done, and downright charges it as against Scripture. “If it be an irreverent thing,” as he argues, “to sit down before, or over against a person for whom thou hast a mighty reverence and veneration; how much more does it savour of irreligion to do so in the presence of the living God, while the angel is yet standing by thee to carry up the prayer to heaven, unless we have a mind to reproach God to his face, and tell him that we are weary of the duty.”²

Another custom which they had in prayer was, that they constantly prayed towards the east. This was so universally common, that there is scarce any ancient ecclesiastical writer but speaks of it; though not many of them agree in assigning the reason of it. The custom doubtless begun very early, and is generally ascribed to the apostles. So the author of the questions and answers assures us, and tells it was because the east was accounted the most ex-

¹ Asterius Amasen. Hom. de Precat. apud. Phot. Cod. 271, col. 1496.

² De Orat. c. 12, p. 134.

cellent part of the creation, and seeing in prayer we must turn our faces towards some quarter, it was fittest it should be towards the east: "just," says he, "as in making the sign of the cross in the name of Christ, we use the right hand, because it is better than the left, not in its own nature, but only in its posture and fitness for our use."¹ St. Basil likewise reckons it amongst the traditions that had been derived from the apostles, but tells us the mystery of it was, that hereby they respected Paradise, which God planted in the east, begging of him that they might be restored to that ancient country from whence they had been cast out.² This might probably be with those who dwelt in the western parts of the world, but how it could be done by those who lived east of the garden of Eden (suppose in any parts of India) I am not able to imagine. But whatever the true reason was, I am sure it is a sober account which Athanasius gives of it. "We do not," says he, "worship towards the east, as if we thought God any ways shut up in those parts of the world, but because God is in himself, and is so styled in Scripture, the 'true light;' in turning therefore towards that created light, we do not worship it, but the great Creator of it; taking occasion from that most excellent element, to adore that God who was before all elements and ages of the world."

This was their carriage for prayer: nor were they less humble and reverent in other parts of worship. They heard the Scriptures read and preached with all possible gravity and attention,

¹ Quest. 118, p. 471.

² De Spirit. S. c. 27, p. 352, tom. ii.; Athanas. ad Antioch. Quest. 37, p. 285, tom. ii.; Const. App. lib. ii. c. 57, p. 876.

which that they might the better do, they were wont to stand all the while the sermon continued, none sitting then but the bishop and presbyters that were about him. So Optatus expressly tells us, that the people had no privilege to sit down in the church :¹ though, whether the custom was universally so in all places, I much doubt; nay St. Augustine tells us, that in some transmarine (I suppose he means the eastern) churches it was otherwise, the people having seats placed for them as well as the ministers.² But generally the people stood, partly to express the greater reverence, partly to keep their attentions awake and lively. Hence it was part of the deacon's office (as Chrysostom tells us, and the same we find in the ancient Greek liturgies) to call upon the people with an' *Ὁρθοὶ στῶμεν κάλως*, "Let us duly stand upright;" respecting the decent posture of their bodies, though withal principally intending the elevation of their minds, the lifting up their thoughts from low sordid objects to those spiritual and divine things, they were then conversant about.⁶ But whatever they did in other parts of the public service, they constantly stood up at the reading of the Gospel; a custom generally embraced in all parts of the Christian world. Therefore Sozomen discoursing of the various rites observed in several churches, notes it as an unusual thing in the bishop of Alexandria, that he did not rise up when the Gospels were read.⁴ Nor did the greatest personages think themselves too high to express this piece of reverence in their attendance upon the

¹ De Schism. Donatist. lib. iv. p. 115.

² De Catechis. rudib. c. 13, tom iv. col. 907.

³ De incomparab. Dei Natur. Hom. 4, p. 353, tom. i.

⁴ Hist. Eccl. lib. vii. c. 19, p. 734.

King of kings. It is very memorable what we read concerning the great Constantine, that when upon occasion Eusebius was to make a panegyric concerning the sepulchre of our Saviour, though it was not in the church, but in the palace, yet he refused to sit all the time; affirming, that it was very consonant to piety and religion that discourses about divine things should be heard standing.¹ So great a reverence had that excellent prince for the solemnities of divine worship.

In the discharge of these holy exercises as they carried themselves with all seriousness and gravity, so they continued in them till they were completely finished. There was then no such airiness and levity as now possesses the minds of men; no snatching at some pieces of the worship, *tanquam canis ad nilum*, and gone again; no rude disorderly departing the congregation, till the whole worship and service of God was over. And therefore when this warmth and vigour of the first ages was a little abated, the council of Orleans thought good to re-establish the primitive devotion by this canon, that when the people came together for the celebration of divine service, they should not depart till the whole solemnity was over, and the bishop or presbyter had given the blessing.²

¹ De Vit. Constant. lib. iv. c. 33, p. 542.

² Can. 22.

CHAPTER X.

Of Baptism, and the administration of it in the primitive Church.

OUR Lord having instituted baptism and the Lord's supper as the two great sacraments of the Christian law, they have accordingly been ever accounted principal parts of public worship in the Christian church. We shall treat first of baptism, as being the door by which persons enter in; the great and solemn rite of our initiation into the faith of Christ: concerning which, four circumstances are chiefly to be inquired into; the person by, and upon whom; the time when, the place where, the manner how, this sacrament was administered in the ancient church.

For the persons by whom this sacrament was administered, they were the ministers of the Gospel, the stewards of the mysteries of Christ; baptising and preaching the Gospel being joined together by our Saviour in the same commission.¹ Usually it was done by the bishop, the *προεστὸς* in Justin Martyr, the *antistes* in Tertullian, the president or chief minister of the congregation, the *summus sacerdos, qui est episcopus*, as he calls him, without whose leave and authority neither presbyters nor deacons might take upon them to baptize, as not only Ignatius but Tertullian expressly tells us: and if they did, it was only in case of necessity, as is affirmed by an ancient author

who lived in or near the time of Cyprian. The same St. Jerome assures us was the custom in his time, though otherwhiles we find the bishop to begin the action, and the presbyters to carry it on and finish it.¹ But as Christianity increased, this became a more familiar part of the presbyter's and the deacon's office, and doubtless had been more or less executed by them from the beginning, though out of reverence to the bishop, and to preserve the honour of the church, (as Tertullian gives the reason,) they did it not without his leave and deputation; and it is certain that Philip baptized the eunuch, who yet was of no higher order than that of deacon.² Nor was it accounted enough by some in those times, that baptism was conferred by a person called to the ministry, unless he was also orthodox in the faith. This became matter of great bustle in the church. Hence sprang that famous controversy between Cyprian and Stephen bishop of Rome, concerning the re-baptizing those that had been baptized by heretics; (of which there is so much in Cyprian's writings;) Cyprian asserting that they ought to be rebaptized, the other as stiffly maintaining it to be both against the doctrine and practice of the church. This begot great heats and feuds between those good men, and engaged a great part of the whole Christian church in the quarrel, Cyprian endeavouring to strengthen his cause not only by arguments from Scripture, but by calling a council at Carthage of eighty-seven African bishops, who all concluded for his opinion. How

¹ Epist. ad Smyrnæos, p. 6; De Baptism, c. 17, p. 220; De non rebaptiz. apud Cypr. p. 138; Dial. adv. Lucifer. p. 139; Ambr. de Sacram. lib. iii. c. 1.

² Acts, vi. 5; viii. 38.

truly Cyprian maintained this, I am not concerned to inquire; only I take notice of two things which he and his followers pleaded by way of abatement to the rigour of their opinion. First, that hereby they did not assert re-baptization to be lawful, this they expressly deny to receive any patronage from their practice, for they looked upon that baptism that had been conferred by heretics as null and invalid, (seeing heretics being out of the church could not give what they had not,) and therefore when any returned to the union of the church they could not properly be said to be re-baptized, seeing they did but receive what (lawfully) they had not before.¹ Secondly, that they did not promiscuously baptize all that came over from heretical churches, for where any had been lawfully baptized by orthodox ministers before their going over to them, these they received at their return without any other ceremony than imposition of hands; baptizing those only who never had any other baptism than that which heretics had conferred upon them.²

Cyprian being thus severe against baptism dispensed by heretical ministers, we may wonder what he thought of that which was administered by mere lay unordained persons, which yet was not uncommon in those times. That laymen (provided they were Christians and baptized themselves) might and did baptize others in cases of necessity, is so positively asserted by Tertullian, Jerome, and others,³ that no man can doubt of it:—

¹ Cypr. Ep. ad Quint. de Hæret. Bap. Ep. 71, p. 119, et Concil. Carth. apud Cypr. senten. 35, p. 286.

² Cypr. ibid. et Conc. Carthag. senten. 8, et Cyrill. Præf. Catech. ad Illumin. p. 9.

³ Locis antea citat.

a custom ratified by the Fathers of the Illiberine council; with this proviso, that if the persons so baptized lived, they should receive confirmation from the bishop.¹ This without question arose from an opinion they had of the absolute and indispensable necessity of baptism, without which they scarce thought a man's future condition could be safe, and that therefore it was better it should be had from any, than to depart this life without it; for excepting the case of martyrs (whom they thought sufficiently qualified for heaven by being baptized in their own blood, insisting upon a two-fold baptism, one of water in time of peace, another of blood in the time of persecution, answerable to the water and blood that flowed out of our Saviour's side: excepting these) they reckoned no man could be saved without being baptized, and cared not much in cases of necessity, so they had it, how they came by it.² But though this power in cases of necessity was allowed to men (who were capable of having the ministerial office conferred upon them) yet was it ever denied to women, whom the apostle has so expressly forbidden to exercise any ministry in the church of God, and accordingly censured in the apostolical constitutions, to be not only dangerous, but unlawful and impious. Indeed in the churches of the heretics women even in those times took upon them to baptize, but it was universally condemned and cried out against by the orthodox, and constantly affixed as a note of dishonour and reproach upon the heretical parties of those times, as

¹ Can. 38.

² Cyrill ad Illuminat. Cateche. 3, p. 61

abundantly appears from Tertullian, Epiphanius, and others, who record the heretical doctrines and practices of those first ages of the church.¹ However afterwards it crept in in some places, and is allowed and practised in the church of Rome at this day: where in cases of necessity they give leave that it may be administered by any, and in any language, whether the person administering be a clergyman or a layman (yea though under excommunication) whether he be a believer or an infidel, a Catholic or an heretic, a man or a woman; only taking care, that if it may be, a priest be preferred before a deacon, a deacon before a sub-deacon, a clergyman before a laic, and a man before a woman; together with some other cases which are there wisely provided for.

From the persons ministering we proceed to the persons upon whom it was conferred, and they were of two sorts, infants and adult persons. How far the baptizing of infants is included in our Saviour's institution is not my work to dispute; but certainly if in controverted cases the constant practice of the church, and those who immediately succeeded the apostles be (as no man can deny it is) the best interpreter of the laws of Christ, the dispute one would think should be at an end. For that it always was the custom to receive the children of Christian parents into the church by baptism, we have sufficient evidence from the greatest part of the most early writers, Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, &c. whose testimonies I do not produce,

¹ Tert. de Bap. c. 17; de Vel. Virg. c. 9; de Præscript. adv. Hæret. c. 41. Epiph. Hæres. 49, et 79. Ritual. Rom. de Sacram. Bapt. Rubric. de Ministr. Bapt. p. 9.

because I find them collected by others,¹ and the argument thence so forcible and conclusive, that the most zealous opposers of infant baptism know not how to evade it; the testimonies being so clear, and not the least shadow that I know of in those times of any thing to make against it. There was indeed in Cyprian's time a controversy about the baptizing of infants, not whether they ought to be baptized, (for of that there was no doubt,) but concerning the time when it was to be administered, whether on the second or third, or whether, as circumcision of old, to be deferred till the eighth day: for the determining of which, Cyprian sitting in council with sixty-six bishops, writes a synodical epistle to Fidus, to let him know, that it was not necessary to be deferred 'so long, and that it was their universal judgment and resolution, that the mercy and grace of God was not to be denied to any, though as soon as he was born: concluding, that it was the sentence of the council, that none ought to be forbidden baptism and the grace of God; which as it was to be observed and retained towards all men, so much more towards infants and new-born children.² That this sentence of theirs was no novel doctrine St. Augustine assures us, where, speaking concerning this synodical determination, he tells us, that in this "Cyprian did not make any new decree, but kept the faith of the church most firm and sure."³

¹ J. G. Voss. de Bapt. Disput. 14, p. 178, et seq. Forbes. Instruct. Hist. Theol. lib. x. c. 5, .sect. 14, et seq. Dr. Ham. Defen. of Infant Baptism, c. 4, sect. 2. [See more especially Wall's admirable work on Infant Baptism.—ED.]

² Epist. 60, p. 97.

³ Epist 28, ad Hieronym. tom. ii. col. 108.

This was the case of infants; but those who made up the main body of the baptized in those days, were adult persons, who, flocking over daily in great numbers to the faith of Christ, were received in at this door. Usually they were for some considerable time catechized, and trained up in the principles of the Christian faith, till having given testimony of their proficiency in knowledge (to the bishop or presbyter, who were appointed to take their examination, and to whom they were to give an account once a week of what they had learnt) and of a sober and regular conversation, they then became candidates for baptism, and were accordingly taken in, which brings me to the next circumstance considerable, concerning

The time when baptism was wont to be administered. At first all times were alike, and persons were baptized as opportunity and occasion served; but the discipline of the church being a little settled, it began to be restrained to two solemn and stated times of the year, viz. Easter and Whitsuntide.¹ At Easter in memory of Christ's death and resurrection, correspondent unto which are the two parts of the Christian life represented and shadowed out in baptism, dying unto sin, and rising again unto newness of life; in order to which, the parties to be baptized were to prepare themselves by a strict observation of Lent, disposing and fitting themselves for baptism by fasting and prayer.² In some places, particularly the churches of Thessaly, Easter was the only time for baptism (as Socrates tells us³) which was the reason why many amongst

¹ Tert. de Baptism, c. 19, p. 232.

² Cyrill. Præfat. Catech. ad Illuminat, p. 6

³ Hist. Eccles. lib. v. c. 22, p. 287.

them died unbaptized ; but this was an usage peculiar to them alone. The ancient custom of the church, (as Zonaras tells us) was for persons to be baptized especially upon the Saturday before Easter-day,¹ the reason whereof was, that this being the great or holy Sabbath, and the mid-time between the day whereon Christ was buried, and that whereon he rose again, did fittest correspond with the mystery of baptism, as it is the type and representation both of our Lord's burial and resurrection. At Whitsuntide ; in memory of the Holy Ghost's being shed upon the apostles, the same being in some measure represented and conveyed in baptism. When I say that these were the two fixed times of baptism, I do not strictly mean it of the precise days of Easter and Whitsuntide, but also of the whole intermediate space of fifty days that is between them, which was in a manner accounted festival, and baptism administered during the whole time, as I have formerly noted. Besides these, Nazianzen reckons the feast of Epiphany as an annual time of baptism,² probably in memory either of the birth or baptism of our Saviour, both which anciently went under that title. This might be the custom in some places ; but I question whether it was universal, besides that afterwards it was prohibited and laid aside. But though persons in health, and the space that was requisite for the instruction of the catechumens might well enough comport with these annual returns, yet if there was a necessity (as in case of sickness and danger of death) they might be bap-

¹ In Can. 45, Conc. Laod.

² Εἰς τὸ ἄγ. Βαπτ. Orat. 40, p. 654.

tized at any other time: for finding themselves at any time surprised with a dangerous or a mortal sickness, and not daring to pass into another world without this badge of their initiation into Christ, they presently signified their earnest desire to be baptized, which was accordingly done as well as the circumstances of a sick bed would permit. These were called *clinici* (of whom there is frequent mention in the ancient writers of the church) because ἐν τῇ κλίνῃ βαπτίζόμενοι, baptized as they lay along in their beds. This was accounted a less solemn and perfect kind of baptism, partly because it was done not by immersion, but by sprinkling; partly because persons were supposed at such a time to desire it, chiefly out of a fear of death, and many times when not thoroughly masters of their understandings. For which reason persons so baptized (if they recovered) are by the Fathers of the Neocæsarean council rendered ordinarily incapable of being admitted to the degree of presbyters in the church.¹ Indeed it was very usual in those times (notwithstanding that the Fathers did solemnly and smartly declaim against it) for persons to defer their being baptized till they were near their death; out of a kind of Novatian principle, that if they fell into sin after baptism, there would be no place for repentance; mistaking that place of the apostle, where it is said that ‘if they who have been once enlightened (ἀπαξ φωτισθέντας, which the ancients generally understand of baptism) fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance.’² For some such reason we may suppose it was that Constantine the Great deferred his bap-

¹ Can. 12.

² Heb. vi. 4—6.

tism till he lay a dying;¹ the same which Socrates relates of his son Constantius, baptized a little before his death:² and the like he reports of the emperor Theodosius; who, apprehending himself to be arrested with a mortal sickness, presently caused himself to be baptized, though he recovered afterwards.³ To this custom of clinic baptism some not improbably think the apostle has reference in that famous place, where he speaks of those that are ‘baptized for the dead,’ *ὑπὲρ νεκρῶν*,⁴ which they expound with reference to the state of the dead, and that it is meant of such who in danger of death would be baptized, that it might fare well with them after death.⁵

For the place where this solemn action was performed it was at first unlimited—any place where there was water, as Justin Martyr tells us; in ponds, or lakes, at springs, or rivers, as Tertullian speaks;⁶ but always as near as might be to the place of their public assemblies, for it was seldom done without the presence of the congregation;⁷ and that for very good reason, both as it is a principal act of religious worship, and as it is the initiating of persons into the church, which therefore ought to be as public as it could, that so the whole congregation might be spectators and witnesses of

¹ Euseb. de Vit. Const. lib. iv. c. 61, 62, p. 557.

² Hist. Eccl. lib. ii. c. 47, p. 161.

³ Lib. v. c. 6, p. 262.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 29. [There are various interpretations of this difficult text; of which the most probable is, that *ὑπὲρ νεκρῶν* is put elliptically for *ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀναστάσεως τῶν νεκρῶν*, in allusion to the profession made at baptism. of a belief in the resurrection.—F. D.

⁵ Vid. Voss. Thes. de Baptism. p. 161, et de Resur. Thes. 18.

⁶ Apol. 2, p. 93.

⁷ De Baptism. c. 4.

that profession and engagement which the person baptized then took upon him. This they so zealously kept to, that the Trullan council allows not baptism to be administered in a private chapel, but only in the public churches, punishing the persons offending, if clergy with deposition, if laity with excommunication; unless it be done with the leave and approbation of the bishop of the diocess.¹ For this reason they had afterwards their *baptisteria*, or as we call them fonts, built at first near the church; then in the church-porch, to represent baptism's being the entrance into the mystical church; afterwards they were placed in the church itself. They were usually very large and capacious, not only that they might comport with the general custom of those times, of persons baptized being immersed or put under water; but because the stated times of baptism returning so seldom, great multitudes were usually baptized at the same time. In the middle of the font there was a partition, the one part for men, the other for women, that to avoid offence and scandal they might be baptized asunder. Here it was that this great rite was commonly performed, though in cases of necessity they dispensed with private baptism, as in the case of those that were sick, or shut up in prison; of which there were frequent instances in times of persecution. Many there were in those days (such especially as lived in the parts near to it) whom nothing would serve, unless they might be baptized in Jordan, out of a reverence to that place where our Saviour himself had been baptized. This Constantine tells us he had a long time resolved upon, to be baptized

¹ Can. 59.

in Jordan, though God cut him short of his desire: ¹ and Eusebius elsewhere relates, that at Bethabara beyond Jordan where John baptized, there was a place whither very many even in his time used to resort, earnestly desiring to obtain their baptism in that place. ² This doubtless proceeded from a very devout and pious mind, though otherwise one place can contribute nothing more than another; nothing being truer than what Tertullian has observed in this case, “that it is no matter whether we be baptized amongst those whom John baptized in Jordan, or whom Peter baptized in Tyber.” ³

The last circumstance I propounded concerns the manner of the celebration of this sacrament; and for this we may observe, that in the apostle’s age baptism was administered with great nakedness and simplicity, probably without any more formality than a short prayer, and repeating the words of institution. Indeed it could not well be otherwise, considering the vast numbers that many times were then baptized at once. But after-ages added many rites, differing very often according to time and place. I shall not undertake to give an account of all, but only of the most remarkable, and such as did generally obtain in those times, keeping as near as I can to the order which they observed in the administration, which usually was thus:—

Persons having past through the state of the catechumens, and being now ripe for baptism, made it their request to the bishop that they might

¹ De Vit. Const. lib. iv. c. 62.

² Euseb. de loc. Hebr. in voce Βηθαβαρά. p. 59.

³ De Baptism. c. 4, p. 225.

be baptized ; whereupon at the solemn times they were brought to the entrance of the baptistry or font, and standing with their faces towards the west (which being directly opposite to the east, the place of light, did symbolically represent the prince of darkness whom they were to renounce and defy) were commanded to stretch out their hand, as it were in defiance of him.¹ In this posture they were interrogated by the bishop, concerning their breaking of all their former leagues and commerce with sin, and the powers of hell ; the bishop asking, “ Dost thou renounce the devil and all his works, powers, and service ?” to which the party answered, “ I do renounce them :” “ Dost thou renounce the world and all its pomp and pleasures ?” Answer, “ I do renounce them.”² This renunciation was made twice, once before the congregation, (probably at their obtaining leave to be baptized,) and presently after at the font or place of baptism, as Tertullian witnesses.³ Next they made an open confession of their faith, the bishop asking, “ Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, &c. ; in Jesus Christ his only Son, who, &c. ; dost thou believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic church, and in one baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and life everlasting ?” to all which the person answered, “ I do believe.”⁴ This form of interrogation seems to have been very ancient in the church, and the apostle is justly thought to refer to it, when he styles baptism ‘the answer of a good

¹ Cyrill. Hieros. Catech. Myst. 1, p. 506, et seq. vid. Dion. Areop. de Eccles. Hierarch. c. 2, p. 253.

² Ambros. de Sacram. lib. i. c. 2, tom. iv. p. 429.

³ De Coron. Mil. c. 3, p. 102 ; De Spect. c. 13, p. 79.

⁴ Vide Constit. Apost. lib. vii. c. 42, p. 993.

conscience towards God,'¹ which can reasonably refer to nothing so well as that common custom of answering in baptism. These answers and actions in the adult were done by the persons themselves; in children by their sponsors, as Tertullian calls them, their sureties and undertakers;² for that both infants and adult persons had those that undertook for them at their baptism, is so notoriously known, that it were impertinent to insist upon it. After this there was a kind of exorcism, and an insufflation or breathing in the face of the person baptized, (which St. Augustine calls a most ancient tradition of the church,³) by which they signified the expelling of the evil spirit, and the breathing in the good Spirit of God: not that they thought that every one before baptism was possessed by the devil, but only that we are by nature children of wrath, enemies to God, and slaves to Satan. Nor did they lay any stress upon the bare usage of those symbolic rites, but wholly upon the church's prayers, which at the same time were made, that God would deliver those persons from the power of Satan, and by his Spirit unite them to the church. This being done, they were brought to the font, and were first stripped of their garments; (intimating thereby their 'putting off the old man which is corrupt with his deceitful lusts;') and that all occasions of scandal and immodesty might be prevented in so sacred an action, the men and women (as I observed before) were baptized in their distinct apartments, the women having deaconesses to attend them, to undress and dress them, to stand

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 21.

² De Baptism. c. 18, p. 231.

³ De Nupt. et Concup. lib. ii. c. 29, tom. vii. col. 856.

about and overshadow them, that nothing of indecency might appear.¹ Then followed the unction, a ceremony of early date, by which (says St. Cyril) they signified that they were now cut off from the wild olive, and were engrafted into Christ, the true olive-tree, and made partakers of his fruits and benefits; or else to show that now they were become champions for Christ, and had entered upon a state of conflict, wherein they must strive and contend with all the snares and allurements of the world, as the *athletæ* of old were anointed against their solemn games, that they might be more expedite, and that their antagonists might take less hold upon them: or rather, probably, to denote their being admitted to the great privileges of Christianity, 'a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation' (as the apostle styles Christians²): offices of which anointing was an ancient symbol, both of being designed to them, and invested in them.³ This account Tertullian favours, where speaking of this unction in baptism, he tells us it is derived from the ancient, i. e. Jewish discipline, where the priests were wont to be anointed for the priesthood.⁴ For some such purpose they thought it fit that a Christian (who carries unction in his very name) should be anointed as a spiritual king and priest, and that no time was more proper for it, than at his baptism, when the name of Christian was conferred upon him. Together with this we

¹ *Constit. Apost. lib. iii. c. 15, p. 899; Epiphan. Hæres. 79, p. 447; Ib. lib. vii. c. 23, p. 379, Catech. 2, p. 518.*

² *1 Pet. ii. 9.*

³ *Ambros. de Sacram. lib. i. c. 2, tom. iv. p. 429. Vid. Dion. Areop. de Eccles. Hierarch. c. 2, p. 279.*

⁴ *De Baptis. c. 7, p. 226.*

may suppose it was, that the sign of the cross was made upon the forehead of the party baptized. When this ceremony first began to be used in baptism, I find not. St. Basil reckons it (and he puts it too in the first place) amongst those ancient customs of the church that had been derived from the times of the Apostles. That it was generally in use in the times of Tertullian and Cyprian, we have sufficient evidence from their writings, and indeed cannot reasonably suppose they should omit it in this solemn action (where it is so proper) when they used it in the commonest actions of their lives.¹ Tertullian expressly assures us, that upon every motion, at their going out and coming in, at their going to bath, or to bed, or to meals, or whatever their employment or occasions called them to, they were wont *frontem signaculo terere*, to make the sign of the cross upon their forehead; and this they did (as he there tells us) not that it was imposed upon them by any law of Christ, but brought in by a pious custom, as that which did very much tend to strengthen and increase their faith.² By this they showed, that they 'were not ashamed of the cross of Christ,' nor unwilling to engage in the service of a crucified Master, which yet was so great a scandal to the heathen world, and therefore so often triumphed in this symbol and representation of it. Thus St. Jerome, though he lived in a time when Christianity had almost

¹ De Spirit. Sanct. c. 27, tom. ii. p. 351. Vid. Tert. adv. Marcion. lib. iii. p. 226; Cyprian. de Laps. p. 169, Frons cum Signo, &c. de Unit. Eccles. p. 185; Ea parte Corpor. &c. adv. Demet. p. 203; Renati et signo Christi signati, &c.

² De Coron. Milit. c. 3, p. 102. Vid. Cyril. ad Illum. Catech. 4, p. 81.

quite prevailed over all other religions in the world, yet counted this the great matter of his glory, 'that I am (says he) a Christian, that I was born of Christian parents, and do carry in my forehead the banner of the cross.'¹ And indeed so great a respect did they bear to this representation of our Saviour's death, that (though they did not worship the cross, yet) they took care that it should not be put to any mean and trivial uses, be painted or made upon the ground, or engraven upon marble pavements, or any thing where it might be trampled upon, as is expressly provided by a law of Theodosius and Valentinian.²

The action having proceeded thus far, the party to be baptized was wholly immersed or put under water; which was the almost constant and universal custom of those times, whereby they did more notably and significantly express the three great ends and effects of baptism. For as in immersion there are in a manner three several acts, the putting the person into water, his abiding there for a little time, and his rising up again; so by these were represented Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and in conformity thereunto our dying unto sin, the destruction of its power, and our resurrection to a new course of life. By the person's being put into water was lively represented the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, and being washed from the filth and pollution of them; by his abode under it, which was a kind of burial unto water, his entering into a state of death or mortification, like as Christ remained for some time under the

¹ Præfat. in Job. tom. iii. p. 24.

² Lib. i. C. Justin. tit 8, L. unic.

state or power of death. Therefore as many as are baptized into Christ, are said to be 'baptized into his death, and to be buried with him by baptism into death, that the old man being crucified with him, the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth he might not serve sin, for that he that is dead is freed from sin,' as the apostle clearly explains the meaning of this rite. Then by his emersion, or rising up out of the water, was signified his entering upon a new course of life, differing from that which he lived before, that 'like as Christ was raised up from the dead to the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.'¹ But though by reason of the more eminent significancy of these things, immersion was the common practice in those days, and therefore they earnestly urged it and pleaded for it, yet did they not hold sprinkling to be unlawful, especially in cases of necessity, as of weakness, danger of death, or where conveniency of immerging could not be had. In these and such like cases Cyprian does not only allow, but plead for it, and that in a discourse on purpose, when the question concerning it was put to him.² Upon this account it is that immersion is now generally disused in these parts of the world, and sprinkling succeeded in its room, because the tender bodies of most infants (the only persons now baptized) could not be put under water in these cold northern climates without apparent prejudice to their health, if not their lives; and therefore in this as in other cases, God requires mercy rather than sacrifice, especially considering that the main ends of baptism are attained this

¹ Rom. vi. 3, 6.

² Ep. 76, ad Magn. p. 153.

way, and the mystical effects of it as truly, though not so plainly and significantly represented, by sprinkling, as by putting the body under water.

This immersion was performed thrice, the person baptized being three several times put under water, a custom which Basil and Sozomon will have derived from the apostles. It is certain that it was very early in the church, being twice mentioned by Tertullian as the common practice. By this trine immersion they signified (say some) their distinct adoring the three persons in the blessed Trinity; and therefore the custom was, in repeating the words of institution, at the naming of every person, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to plunge the party under water, as Tertullian tells us, and St. Ambrose more expressly.¹ It was done (say others) to represent the death, burial, and resurrection of our Saviour, together with his three days' continuance in the grave: St. Augustine joins both these together as the double mystery of this ancient rite, as he is cited by Gratian to this purpose.² It cannot be denied but that the ceremony is very significant and expressive, and accordingly the ancients laid great weight upon it. But though in a manner universal, yet in some places (in after times especially) they were content to immerge but once; and when differences and controversies did still remain about it, the fourth council of Toledo, out

¹ Ubi supra. Hist. Eccl. lib. vi. c. 26, p. 673; Adv. Prax. c. 26, p. 443; De Cor. Mil. c. 3, p. 460; Dion. Areop. Eccles. Hierarch. c. 2, p. 254; Ibid. de Sacram. lib. ii. c. 7, p. 424.

² Athanas. in Dict. et Interp. Sap. Quest. 93; Cyrill. Catech. Myst. 2, p. 518; Greg. Nyss. Orat. Catech. c. 35, tom. ii. p. 530, De Consecrat. Distinct. 4, c. 78.

of a letter of Gregory the Great, thus determined the case;—that they should still use their single immersion, and that this would sufficiently express the mysteries of baptism; the diving under water would denote Christ's death and descending into hell, the coming out his resurrection: the single immersion would express the unity of the God-head; while the trinity of persons would be sufficiently denoted by the persons being baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.¹

The person baptized being come out of the water was anointed a second time, as St. Cyril tells us; and indeed whatever becomes of the unction that was before, it is certain that that which Tertullian speaks of as a part of the ancient discipline, was after the person was baptized. This being done, he had a white garment put upon him, to denote his having put off the lusts of the flesh, his being washed from the filth and defilement of his former sins, and his resolution to maintain a life of unspotted innocence and purity, according to that solemn and strict engagement which in baptism he had taken upon him.² In this they alluded to that of the apostle, 'that as many as are baptized into Christ, have put on Christ,'³ i. e. have engaged in that strict and holy course of life, which he both by his doctrine and example has left to the world. Accordingly persons baptized are both by the apostle, and by the Greek Fathers frequently called *φωτιζόμενοι* or the enlightened,

¹ Can. 5.

² De Baptism. c. 7, p. 226; Cyrill. Catech. 4, p. 533; Jobius apud Phot. Cod. 222, c. 18, col. 597; Ambros. de iis qui Myster. initiant. c. 7, tom. iv. p. 125.

³ Gal. iii. 27.

because they now professed they were become the children of the light and of the day, and would not return to works of darkness any more; and this as they expected mercy from Christ at the great day. Therefore the white garment was wont to be delivered to them with such a charge as this: "Receive the white and immaculate garment, and bring it forth without spot before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayst have eternal life. Amen."¹ From the wearing of these white vestments (as we have observed before) Pentecost (which was one of the two annual times for baptism) came to be called Whitesunday, as also the Sunday after Easter (which was the other time) *Dominica in albis*, because then they laid this white robe aside; for it was the custom for persons baptized to wear this garment for a whole week after they were baptized, and then to put it off, and lay it up in the church, that it might be kept as an evidence against them, if they violated or denied that faith which they had owned in baptism.²

These were the main and most considerable circumstances wherewith baptism was administered in the primitive church; some whereof were by degrees antiquated and disused. Other rites there were that belonged only to particular churches, and which, as they were suddenly taken up, so were as quickly laid aside: others were added in after-times, till they increased so fast, that the usage and the number of them became absurd and

¹ Gregor. Sacramentar. inter Liturgic. Latinor. tom. ii. p. 269; vid. Eucholog. Græc. in Offic. S. Baptism. p. 357.

² Victor. Utic. de Persecut. Vand. c. iii. fol. 43.

burdensome, as may appear by the office for baptism in the Romish ritual at this day.

As a conclusion to this chapter, I had once thought to have treated concerning Confirmation, which ever was a constant appendage to baptism, and had noted some things to that purpose; but shall supersede that labour, finding it so often, and so fully done by others in just discourses, that nothing considerable can be added to them.¹ Only I shall give this brief and general account of it. All persons baptized in the ancient church (according to their age and capacity, persons adult, some little time after baptism, children; when arrived to years of competent ripeness and maturity) were brought to the bishop, there further to confirm and ratify that compact which they had made with God in baptism, and by some solemn acts of his ministry to be themselves confirmed and strengthened, by having the grace and blessing of God conferred upon them, to enable them to discharge that great promise and engagement which they had made to God. This was usually performed with the ceremony of unction, the person confirmed being anointed by the bishop, or in his absence by an inferior minister. That confirmation, however, was often administered without this unction, no man can doubt that knows the state of those times; being done only by solemn imposition of the bishop's hands, and by devout and pious prayers, that the persons confirmed might 'grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ,' and be enabled to perform those vows and purposes,

¹ Bp. Taylor, Dr. Hammond, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Hanmer, Mr. Daillé.

and that profession of faith which they had before embraced in baptism, and then again owned before the whole congregation. Till this was done, they were not accounted complete Christians, nor admitted to the holy communion; nor could challenge any actual right to those great privileges of Christianity; whence it is that the ancients so often speak of confirmation as that which did perfect and consummate Christians, as being a means to confer greater measures of that grace that was but begun in baptism. Upon all which accounts, and almost exactly according to the primitive usage, it is still retained and practised in our own church at this day: and happy were it for us, were it kept up in its due power and vigour. Sure I am, it is too plain that many of our unhappy breaches and controversies in religion do (if not wholly, in a great measure) owe their birth and rise to the neglect and contempt of this excellent usage of the church.

CHAPTER XI.

Of the Lord's Supper, and the administration of it, in the ancient Church.

THE holy Eucharist, or Supper of our Lord, being a rite so solemnly instituted, and of such great importance in the Christian religion, had place accordingly amongst the ancients in their public offices and devotions:—in speaking to which I

shall observe much the same method I did in treating concerning baptism; considering the persons, the time, the place, and the manner of its celebration.

The persons administering were the ordinary pastors and governors of the church, those who were set apart for the ministration of holy offices. The institution was begun by our Lord himself, and the administration of it by him committed to his apóstles and to their ordinary successors, to the end of the world. We find in Tertullian, that they never received it from any but the hand of the president;¹ which must either be meant of the particular custom of that church where he lived; or of consecration only. Otherwise the custom was, when the bishop or president had, by solemn prayers and blessings, consecrated the sacramental elements, for the deacons to distribute them to the people, as well to those that were absent as to them that were present; as Justin Martyr expressly affirms,² and as the custom generally was afterwards.

For the persons communicating at this sacrament, at first the whole church, or body of Christians, within such a space, that had embraced the doctrine of the Gospel, and been baptized into the faith of Christ, used constantly to meet together at the Lord's table. As Christians multiplied, and a more exact discipline became necessary, none were admitted to this ordinance till they had arrived at the degree of the faithful. Whoever were in the state of the catechumens, i. e. under instruction in order to their baptism, or by reason of any heinous

¹ De Cor. Mil. c. 3, p. 102.

² Apol. 2, p. 97.

crime under the censures and suspension of the church, and not yet passed through the several stages of the penitents, might not communicate, and were therefore commanded to depart the church, when the rest went to the celebration of the sacrament: for looking upon the Lord's supper as the highest and most solemn act of religion, they thought they could never take care enough in the dispensing of it. Accordingly whoever was found guilty of any scandalous fault, was, according to the nature of the offence, debarred the communion a shorter or a longer time, and sometimes all their life, not to be reconciled and taken into the communion of the church, till they had continued their repentance to their death-bed. As for those persons that could not be present, either through distance of place, sickness, or any other just cause, the eucharist was wont to be sent home to them. Some little pieces of the consecrated bread dipped in the sacramental cup, which were usually carried by the deacon or some inferior officer of the church, or in cases of necessity by any other person; as in the case of Serapion, of whom Dionysius of Alexandria relates, that having been all his life a good man, at last lapsed in a time of persecution, and though he oft desired reconciliation, yet none would communicate with him; not long after he was seized upon by a mortal sickness, and deprived of the use of his speech and senses, but coming to himself after four days, he sends his nephew, a little boy, late at night for one of the presbyters to come to him. The minister was at that time sick, but considering the exigence of the case, gives the boy a little piece of the eucharist, bids him to moisten it with a little water, and so

give it him in his mouth, which he did, and immediately the old man cheerfully departed this life.¹ For the better understanding of which, we are to observe, that those who had lapsed into idolatry, were to undergo a very long time of penance, and were not many times admitted to the communion, till they were near their death; and because it sometimes happened that they were overtaken with sudden death, before the sacrament could be administered to them, thence a custom sprung up to give it them after they were dead; which they did doubtless upon this ground, that they might give some kind of evidence, that those persons died in the peace and communion of the church, though this usage was afterwards by many councils abrogated and laid aside.²

I take no notice in this place of their giving the eucharist to new baptized infants, the case being so commonly known and obvious. In those early times nothing was more common than for Christians either to carry, or to have sent to them some parts of the eucharist, which they kept in some decent place in their houses against all emergent occasions, especially to fortify and strengthen their faith in times of persecution, and to increase kindness and amity with one another. Hence one that was well versed in church-antiquities, conjectures that whenever they entertained friends or strangers, they used before every meal first to give them some parts of the holy eucharist, as being the greatest badge, the strongest band of true love and friendship in the world.³ Besides these parcels of the sacra-

¹ Apud Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. vi. c. 44, p. 246.

² Vid. Conc. 3, Carth. Can. 6; Conc. 6. in Trull. Can. 83.

³ Joa. Front. Epist. de φιλοτησίαις Veter. p. 6.

mental elements, there were wont at the celebration of the communion to be pieces of bread (which remained of the offerings of the people) which being solemnly blessed by the bishop, might be given to those who had no right to be at the Lord's table, as to the catechumens, and such like, and were to them instead of the sacrament. These pieces were properly called *eulogiæ*, because set apart by solemn benediction, and were sent up and down the towns and villages round about, to testify and represent their mutual union and fellowship with one another; nay and sometimes from churches in one country to those that were in another; which was also done by the eucharist itself. So Irenæus in a letter to pope Victor tells us, that the ministers of churches, though differing in some little circumstances, did yet use to send the eucharist to one another.' Which custom is also taken notice of by Zonaras; but because the carrying the sacramental elements up and down the world, was thought not so well to consist with the reverence and veneration that is due to this solemn ordinance, therefore it was abolished by the Laodicean synod, and these *eulogiæ* or pieces of bread appointed at Easter to be sent up and down in their room.²

For the time, the next circumstance:—When they met together for this solemn action, it was in general at their public assemblies, on the Lord's-day always, or the first day of the week, as we find it in the history of the Apostles' Acts, besides other days, and especially Saturday, on which day all the churches in the world (those of Rome only and Alexandria excepted) used to celebrate this sacra-

Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. v. c. 23, p. 193.

² Can. 14.

ment, as the historian informs us.¹ What time of the day they took to do it, is not altogether so certain. Our blessed Saviour and his apostles celebrated it at night at the time of the Jewish pass-over; but whether the apostles and their immediate successors punctually observed this circumstance may be doubted. It is improbable that the holy eucharist, which St. Paul speaks of in the church of Corinth² was solemnized in the morning, the apostles calling it a supper (as Chrysostom thinks) not because it was done in the evening, but the more effectually to put them in mind of the time when our Lord did institute those holy mysteries.³ Tertullian assures us in his time it was done *in tempore victus*, about supper-time (as all understand him) and very often in the morning before day, when they held their religious assemblies,⁴ of which Pliny also takes notice in his letter to the emperor.⁵ For in those times of persecution, when they were hunted out by the inquisitive malice of their enemies, they were glad of the remotest corners, the most unseasonable hours, when they could meet to perform the joint offices of religion. But this communicating at evening or at night either lasted only during the extreme heats of persecution, or at least wore off apace; for Cyprian expressly pleads against it, affirming that it ought to be in the morning,⁶ and so indeed in a short time it prevailed over most parts of the world, except in some places of Egypt, near Alexandria, of which Socrates tells us, that after they had sufficiently

¹ Socrat. lib. v. c. 22, p. 286.

² 1 Cor. xi. 21.

³ In I. oc.

⁴ De Cor. Mil. c. 3, p. 102.

⁵ Lib. x. Ep. 97.

⁶ Ad Cæcil. Epist. 63, p. 104.

feasted themselves in the evening, they were wont to receive the sacrament.¹

Under this circumstance of time, we may take occasion to consider, how oft in those days they usually met at this table. And at first (while the spirit of Christianity was yet warm and vigorous, and the hearts of men passionately inflamed with the love of Christ) it is more than probable they communicated every day; or as oft as they came together for public worship; insomuch that the canons apostolical and the synod of Antioch threaten every one of the faithful with excommunication, who come to church to hear the holy Scriptures, but stay not to participate of the Lord's supper.² The eye of their minds was then almost wholly fixed upon the memory of their crucified Saviour, and the oftener they fed at his table, the stronger and healthier they found themselves, and the more able to encounter with those fierce oppositions that were made against them.³ This custom of receiving the sacrament every day continued some considerable time in the church, though in some places longer than in others, especially in the western churches. From Cyprian we are fully assured it was so in his time: "We receive the eucharist every day," says he, "as the food that nourishes us to salvation."⁴ The like St. Ambrose reports of Milan, whereof he was bishop; nay and after him St. Jerome tells us, it was the custom of the church of Rome,⁵ and St. Augustine seems pretty clearly to intimate, that it was not unusual in

¹ Ut supr. p. 287.

² Can. 9, Concil. Antioch. Can. 2.

³ Vid. Ep. Cypr. ad Thalonit. Ep. 56, circa init. p. 87.

⁴ De Orat. Domin. p. 192.

⁵ Ad Jovinian. p. 108, tom. ii.

his time.¹ In the churches of the east this custom wore off sooner, though more or less according as the primitive zeal did abate and decay; St. Basil telling us, that in his time they communicated four times a week, on the Lord's-day, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, yea and upon other days too, if the memory or festival of any martyr fell upon them.² Afterwards, as the power of religion began more sensibly to decline, and the commonness of the thing begat some contempt (manna itself was slighted, after once it was rained down every day) this sacrament was more rarely frequented, and from once a day it came to once or twice a week, and then fell to once a month, and after for the most part to thrice a year at the three great solemnities, of Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide; to so great a coldness and indifferency did the piety and devotion of Christians grow, after once the true primitive temper and spirit of the Gospel had left the world.

Concerning the third circumstance, the place where this holy supper was kept, much need not be said, it being a main part of their public worship always performed in the place of their religious assemblies. It was instituted by our Saviour in a private house,³ because of its analogy to the Jewish passover, and because the necessity of that time would not otherwise admit. By the apostles and Christians with them it was celebrated in the houses of believers, generally in an upper room, set apart by the bounty of some Christian for the

¹ De Serm. Dom. in Mont. lib. ii. tom. iv. col. 1147, et Ep. 118, ad Januar. c. 3, col. 557.

² Bas. Ep. 289, ad Cæsariam. Patrit. tom. iii. p. 279.

³ Matt. xxvi. 18.

uses of the church, and which (as I have formerly proved¹) was the constant separate place of religious worship for all the Christians that dwelt thereabouts. Under the severities of great persecutions they were forced to fly to the mountains, or to their cryptæ or vaults under ground, and to celebrate this sacrament at the tombs of martyrs, and over the ashes of the dead. Churches growing up into some beauty and regularity, the several parts of the divine offices began to have several places assigned to them; the communion-service being removed to the upper or east end of the church, and there performed upon a table of wood, which afterwards was changed into one of stone, and both of them not uncommonly, though metaphorically, by the Fathers styled altars, and the eucharist itself, in later times especially, the sacrament of the altar. This place was called *θυσιαστήριον*, and was fenced in with rails, within which the clergy received the sacrament, as the laity did without. Here it was that they all used to meet at this heavenly banquet; for out of this place they allowed not the celebration of the sacrament, (a thing expressly forbidden by the Laodicean council,) unless in cases of great necessity;² and therefore it was one of the principal articles for which the synod of Gangra deposed Eustathius from his bishopric, that he kept private meetings; persuading some that were averse to the public assemblies of the church, that they might communicate and receive the sacrament at home.³

We come last to consider the manner how the

¹ See p. 92.

² Can. 58.

³ Socrat. lib. ii. c. 43, p. 156, et Concil. Gangr. Can. 5, 6.

eucharist was celebrated in the ancient church. But before we describe that, we are to take notice, that after the service of the catechumens, and before the beginning of that of the faithful, at which the eucharist was administered, the custom was to present their offerings, every one according to his ability bringing some gift as the first-fruits of his increase, which was by the minister laid upon the altar or communion-table, none of them then thinking it fit to appear before the Lord empty.¹ Therefore St. Cyprian severely chides a rich widow of his time, who came without giving any thing to the poor man's box, and did partake of their offerings, without bringing any offering of her own.² Those oblations were designed to the uses of the church, for the maintenance of the ministry, and the relief of the poor. Especially out of them were taken the bread and the wine for sacramental elements; the bread being no other than common bread, such as served for their ordinary uses, there being then no notice taken of what was for so many hundred years, and still is to this day fiercely disputed between the Greek and the Latin church, whether it ought to be leavened or unleavened bread. Out of these oblations also it is probable they took (at least sent provisions extraordinary) to furnish the common feast, which in those days they constantly had at the celebration of the sacrament, where the rich and poor feasted together at the same table. These were called *agapæ*, or love-feasts, (mentioned by St. Jude, and plainly enough intimated by St. Paul,) because hereat they testified and con-

¹ Irenæus adv. Hær. lib. iv. c. 34, et 362; J. Martyr. Ap. 2, p. 98.

² De Oper. et Eleemosyn. p. 218.

firmed their mutual love and kindness; a thing never more proper than at the celebration of the Lord's supper, which is not only a seal of our peace with God, but a sign and a pledge of our communion and fellowship with one another. Whether this banquet was before or after the celebration of the eucharist is not easy to determine. It is probable, that in the apostles' time, and the age after them, it was before it, in imitation of our Saviour's institution, who celebrated the sacrament after supper; and St. Paul, taxing the abuses of the church of Corinth, reproves them, that 'when they came together for the Lord's supper, they did not one tarry for another, but every one took his own supper,'¹ i. e. that provision which he had brought from home for the common feast, which was devoured with great irregularity and excess, some eating and drinking all they brought, others (the poor especially that came late) having nothing left, one being hungry and another drunken. All this, it is plain, was done before the celebration of the eucharist, which was never administered till the whole church met together. That therefore which the apostle reproves and corrects, is their indecency and intemperance, commanding both rich and poor to wait for one another, and to eat this common meal together, that they might the more orderly and unanimously pass to the celebration of the Lord's supper. In after ages this feast was not till the communion was over, when the congregation feasted together, and so departed. So Chrysostom expressly tells us it was in his days.² Besides, nothing is more obvious, than that it was customary

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 20, 21.

² Homil. 27, in 1, ad Corinth. p. 559.

in those times for persons to fast, till they had received the communion.¹ I know, a very learned man is of opinion, that these love-feasts were not kept at the same time with the celebration of the eucharist;² but, besides that his arguments are not conclusive, the whole stream of learned writers runs full against him. These feasts continued for some ages, till great inconveniences being found in them, they were prohibited to be kept in churches by the Laodicean synod,³ and after that by the council of Carthage; which, though but provincial or national councils, yet the decrees were afterwards ratified by the sixth Trullan council,⁴ and the custom in a short time dwindled into nothing.

These things being premised, the sacramental elements prepared, and all things ready, they proceeded to the action itself; which (following for the main the account that is given us by St. Cyril of Jerusalem,⁵ and taking in what we find in others) was usually managed after this manner. First, the deacon brought water to the bishop and the presbyters that stood round about the table to wash their hands;⁶ signifying the purity that ought to be in those that draw nigh to God, according to that of the Psalmist, ‘I will wash my hands in innocency, and so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.’⁷ Then the deacon cried out aloud, “Mutually embrace and kiss one another.”⁸ This holy kiss was very ancient, commonly used in the

¹ It was decreed in the council of Carthage, A. D. 252, that the Lord's supper should be received fasting, except at Easter. See Bingham's *Eccl. Antiq.* xv. 77.—ED.

² *Albas. de Rit. Eccles. obs.* 18, p. 135.

³ *Can.* 28.

⁴ *Can.* 74.

⁵ *Catech. Myst.* 5, *Cyrl. ib.* p. 534.

⁶ *Constit. Apost. lib. viii. c.* 11, p. 1013. ⁷ *Psalm xxvi.* 6.

⁸ *Just. Mart. Apol.* 2, p. 97.

apostles' times, and in the succeeding ages of the church, but especially at the sacrament, as a sign of the unfeigned reconciliation of their minds, and that all injuries and offences were blotted out, according to our Lord's command, 'When thou bringest thy gift to the altar, and rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.'¹ This being done, they fell to prayer, the whole congregation praying together with the minister (which therefore Justin Martyr calls the common prayer,² the form whereof in the apostolical constitutions is described at large³) for the universal peace and welfare of the church, for the tranquillity and quietness of the world, for the prosperity of the age, for wholesome weather, and fruitful seasons, for all sorts of persons, for kings and emperors and all in authority, for soldiers and armies, for believers and unbelievers, for friends and companions, for the sick and distressed, and in short for all that stood in need of help.⁴ This general prayer is frequently mentioned by the ancient Fathers, as that which was at the beginning of the communion-service;⁵ though St. Cyril places it a little later, as doubtless it was in his time.⁶ After this followed the mutual salutation of the minister and people; the minister saying, "The Lord be with you;" to whom the people answered, "And with thy spirit." The minister cried, "Lift up your hearts;" (nothing being more suitable, says

¹ Matt. v. 24.

² Just. Mart. Apol. 2, p. 97.

³ Lib. viii. c. 10, p. 1011.

⁴ Tert. Apol. c. 39; August. Epist. 118; Constit. Apostol. lib. ii. c. 57, p. 881.

⁵ Ib. p. 538.

⁶ Cyrill. p. 537.

St. Cyril, at this time, than that we should shake off all worldly cares and exalt our hearts to God in heaven;) the people truly assenting and yielding to it, answered, "We lift them up unto the Lord." The minister proceeded, "Let us give thanks unto the Lord," (for what more fit than thankfulness to God, and a high resentment of such favours and blessings?) To this the people returned, "It is meet and just so to do."¹ Whereupon the minister proceeded to the prayer of consecration, (the form whereof we have in the apostolical constitutions,²) wherein he expressed huge thankfulness to God for the death, resurrection, and ascension of his Son, for the shedding of his blood for us, and the celebration of it in this sacrament; for condescending to admit them to such mighty benefits, and praying for a closer unity to one another in the same mystical body,³ concluding usually with the Lord's prayer, and the hearty and universal acclamation of "Amen," by all that were present.⁴ This done, the minister cried out *Tá ἅγια τοῖς ἁγίοις*, "Holy things belong to holy persons;" the people answering, "There is one holy, one Lord Jesus Christ." Then he exhorted them to a due participation of the holy mysteries, which Cyril tells us was done by way of a divine hymn, singing; "Come taste and see that the Lord is good."⁵

After this the bishop or presbyter took the sacramental elements, and sanctified them by a solemn benediction. The form of consecration we have in

¹ Chrysost. in c. ix. 1 ad Cor. Hom. 36, p. 652; ad 2 Cor. c. viii. Hom. 18, p. 873; Cyprian. de Orat. Dom. p. 195.

² Lib. vii. c. 26, p. 979.

³ J. Mart. ib. p. 98; Cyrill. p. 541.

⁴ Constit. Apost. lib. viii. c. 13, p. 1022.

⁵ Ib. p. 545.

St. Ambrose:—"Lord, make this oblation now prepared for us, to become a reasonable and acceptable sacrifice; this which is the figure of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ: who the day before he suffered took the bread in his sacred hands, looked up to heaven, giving thanks to thee, O holy Father, almighty and everlasting God; blessed it, and having broken it gave it to his apostles and disciples, saying, 'Take, eat all of it, for this is my body which is broken for many:' likewise also after supper he took the cup, that very day before he suffered, looked up to heaven, giving thanks to thee, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God; and having blessed it, gave it to his apostles and disciples, saying, 'Take and drink ye all of it, for this is my blood.'"¹ After this he first brake the bread; and, delivering it to the deacon, he distributed it to the communicants; and after that the cup, which was likewise delivered to them,² for the custom of communicating under one kind only, as is used in the church of Rome, was then unknown to the world; nay and for above a thousand years after Christ. In some cases, it is true, they dipped the bread in the wine, as in the case of baptized infants, to whom they administered the eucharist in those primitive times; and to very weak dying persons, who could not otherwise have swallowed the bread; and that by this means they might keep the sacrament at home against all emergent occasions; and this probably might in time make the way easier for introducing the sacrament under the kind of bread only. Their sacramental wine was generally di-

¹ De Sacrament. lib. iv. c. 5, p. 439.

² J. Mart. ubi supr.

luted and mixed with water, as is evident from Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Cyprian, and others.¹ Cyprian in a long epistle expressly pleads for it, as the only true and warrantable tradition, derived from Christ and his apostles, and endeavours to find out many mystical significations intended by it, and seems to intimate as if he had been peculiarly warned of God to observe it according to that manner;² an argument which that good man often produces as his warrant to knock down a controversy, when other arguments were too weak to do it. But although it should be granted that our Saviour did so use it in the institution of the supper, (the wines of those eastern countries being very strong and generous, and that our Saviour, as all sober and temperate persons, might probably abate its strength with water, of which nevertheless the history of the Gospel is wholly silent,) yet this being a thing in itself indifferent and accidental, and no way necessary to the sacrament, could not be obligatory to the church, but might either be done or let alone.

The posture wherein they received it was not always the same. The apostles, at the institution

¹ Ut supr. Iren. lib. iv. c. 57, lib. v. c. 2.

² Ad. Cæcil. Ep. 63, p. 100. Ib. p. 105. [It should seem, however, that Cyprian's argument is mainly directed against certain heretics, called *Encratitæ* by Epiphanius, (Hær. 46,) and *Aquarii* by Augustin, (Hær. 64,) who followed Julian in the use of water only in the celebration of the eucharist. In the first Common-Prayer book of Edward VI. the Rubric directs the chalice to contain "a little pure and clear water:" and though certainly not essential to the sacrament, the mixture of water is not prohibited in our present Rubric. For further information on this subject, see Wheatly on the Common Prayer, and Bingham's Eccl. Ant. xv. 2, 7. —ED.]

of it by our Saviour, received it (according to the custom of the Jews at meals at that time) lying along on their sides upon beds round about the table. How long this way of receiving lasted, I find not. In the time of Dionysius Alexandrinus the custom was to stand at the Lord's table, as he intimates in a letter to pope Xystus;¹ other gestures being taken in as the prudence and piety of the governors of the church judged most decent and comely for such a solemn action. The bread and wine were delivered into the hands of those that communicated, and not as the superstition of after-ages brought in, injected or thrown into their mouths. Cyril tells us that in his time they used to stretch out their right hand, putting their left hand under it,² either to prevent any of the sacramental bread from falling down, or as some would have it, hereby to shadow out a kind of figure of a cross.³

During the time of administration, which in populous congregations was no little time, they sung hymns and psalms, (the compiler of the apostolical constitutions particularly mentions the 33rd psalm⁴): which being done, the whole action was solemnly concluded with prayer and thanksgiving, the form whereof is likewise set down by the author of the apostolical constitutions,⁵) that God had thought them worthy to participate of such sacred mysteries. The people being then blessed by the bishop or the minister of the assembly, and having again saluted

¹ Apud. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. vii. c. 9, p. 258.

² Page 545.

³ Vid. Conc. 6, in Trull. Can. 101.

⁴ Lib. viii. c. 13, p. 1023.

⁵ Videsis Dion. Areop. de Eccl. Hierarch. c. 3, p. 234; lib. vii. c. 27, p. 980, et lib. viii. c. 15. Cyr. p. 546.

each other with a kiss of peace, as a testimony of their hearty love and kindness, (whence Tertullian calls this kiss *signaculum orationis*, the "seal of prayer,"¹) the assembly broke up, and they returned to their own houses.

This for the main was the order wherein the first Christians celebrated this holy sacrament; for though I do not pretend to set down every thing in that precise and punctual order wherein they were always done (and how should I, when they often varied according to time and place?) yet I doubt not but whoever examines the usages of those times, will find that it is done as near as the nature of the thing would bear.

¹ De Orat. c. 14.

END OF PART I.

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

PART II.

THE RELIGION OF THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS,
AS TO THOSE VIRTUES THAT RESPECT
THEMSELVES.

CHAPTER I.

Of their Humility.

NEXT to piety towards God, succeeds that part of religion that immediately respects ourselves, expressed by the apostle under the general name of sobriety,¹ or the keeping ourselves within those bounds and measures which God has set us; virtues, for which the primitive Christians were no less renowned than for the other. Amongst them I shall take notice of their humility, their contempt of the world, their temperance and sobriety, their courage and constancy, and their exemplary patience under sufferings. To begin with the first:

Humility is a virtue that seems more proper to the Gospel; for though philosophers now and then spake a few good words concerning it; yet it found no real entertainment in their lives, being generally

¹ Tim. ii. 15; Tit. ii. 12.

animalia gloriæ, creatures puffed up with wind and emptiness, and that sacrificed only to their own praise and honour: whereas the doctrines of the Gospel immediately tend to level all proud and swelling apprehensions, to plant the world with mildness and modesty, and 'to clothe men with humility, and the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit.'¹ By these we are taught to dwell at home, and to converse more familiarly with ourselves, to be acquainted with our own deficiencies and imperfections, and rather to admire others than to advance ourselves: for the proper notion of humility lies in a low and mean estimation of ourselves, and an answerable carriage towards others, 'not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think,'² nor being unwilling that other men should value us at the same rate. Now that this was the excellent spirit of primitive Christianity will appear, if we consider how earnestly they protested against all ambitious and vain-glorious designs, how cheerfully they condescended to the meanest offices and employments, how studiously they declined all advantages of applause and credit, how ready they were rather to give praise to others than to take it to themselves, 'in honour preferring one another.'³ St. Clemens highly commends his Corinthians, that they all of them were of an humble temper, in nothing given to vain-glory, subject unto others rather than subjecting others to themselves, ready to give rather than receive.⁴ Accordingly, he exhorts them (especially after they were fallen into a little faction and disorder) still to be humble-

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 4; v. 5.

³ Rom. xii. 10.

² Rom. xii. 3.

⁴ Epist. ad Corinth, § 2.

mind, to lay aside all haughtiness and pride, foolishness and anger; and not to glory in wisdom, strength or riches,¹ but 'let him that glories, glory in the Lord ;'² and to follow the example of our Lord, the scepter of the majesty of God; who came not in the vain-boasting of arrogancy and pride, although able to do whatsoever he pleased, but in great meekness and humility of mind, appearing in the world without any 'form or comeliness, or any beauty that he should be desired,' suffering himself 'to be despised and rejected of men, who esteemed him not, and hid as it were their faces from him; who counted himself a worm and no man, and was accordingly made a reproach of men, and the derision of the people; all they that saw him, laughing him to scorn, shooting out the lip and shaking the head at him.'³ Now if our Lord himself was so humble-minded, what should we be, who are come under the yoke of his grace? This and much more to the same purpose, has that venerable and apostolical man in that admirable epistle, wherein he does lively describe, and recommend the meek and excellent spirit of the Gospel.⁴

Justin the Martyr treads in the very same steps. He tells us, "that we are to shun all sinister suspicions of others, and to be very careful what opinion we entertain of them; that we are to be of a meek and unpassionate mind, not envying the good esteem and respect which others have, nor ambitiously affecting, or putting ourselves forwards upon any service or employment: that we are humbly

¹ Jerem. ix. 23.

² 1 Cor. i. 31.

³ Isai. liii.

⁴ Clem. Epist. ad Cor. § 13, 16.

to submit ourselves, not in words only, but in all our actions, so as that we may appear to be not impostors and dissemblers, but mild and undesigning persons; for whoever would govern his life aright must be modest and unpragmatical, not angry and contentious, but silently consider with himself what is best and fittest to be done: that we are to account others wise and prudent, and not to think ourselves the only discreet and understanding persons: that we must not despise their admonitions, but hearken to their counsels whenever they are just and true.”¹ When some in St. Cyprian’s time had made a noble and resolute confession of Christ in the face of the greatest danger, ‘lest they should be exalted above measure’ in their own thoughts, he bids them remember, “according to the discipline of the Gospel, to be humble, and modest and quiet, that they might preserve the honour of their name, and be as glorious in their actions as they had been in their words and confessions of Christ; that they should imitate their Lord, who was not more proud, but more humble at the time of his passion, washing his apostles’ feet; and follow the counsel and pattern of St. Paul, who in his greatest sufferings continued meek and humble, and did not arrogate any thing to himself, no, not after he had been honoured with a translation into paradise and the third heavens.”² And great reason he had to press this with all possible vehemency at that time, lest Christians by their turbulent and unquiet carriage should provoke the heathen magistrates to greater severity

¹ Epist. ad Zen. et Seren. p. 505, 508, 509.

² Epist. 5, Presb. et Diacon. p. 13.

against them: and indeed who could better do it than he, who was himself so eminent for humility? And how far the good man was from any designs of greatness and domination appeared in this, that when the people had universally chosen him to be bishop, he privately withdrew and retired himself, reckoning himself unworthy of so great and honourable an office, and giving way to others, whose age and experience rendered them (as he thought) much fitter for it: but the importunity of the people being heightened into a greater impatience, and having found where he was, they beset the house, and blocked up all passages of escape, till they had found him, and forced it upon him.¹ And with no less humility did he behave himself in the discharge of it. When consulted by some of his clergy what they should do in the case of the lapsed, he answers, that being now alone he could say nothing to it, for that he had determined from his first entering upon his bishopric not to adjudge any thing by his own private order without the counsel of the clergy and the consent of the people. So meanly did that wise and excellent man think of himself, and so much did he attribute to the judgment and concurrence of those that were below him.

Nazianzen reports of his father (a bishop too) that amongst other virtues he was peculiarly remarkable for humility; which he did not express, philosopher-like, in little acts of external modes and carriage, putting on a feigned behaviour, like women who having no natural beauty of their own fly to the additional of dresses and paintings, *δι' ἐυσχημοσύνην ἀσχήμονες*, becoming more deformed

¹ Pontius Diac. in Vit. Cyprian. p. 12.

by their ascetic beauty. His humility consisted not in his dress, but in the constancy of his mind; not in the hanging down of his head, or the softness of his tone, or the demureness of his look, or the gravity of his beard, or the shaving of his head, or the manner of his gait; but in the frame and temper of his soul, being as humble in his mind, as he was sublime and excellent in his life; and when no man could arrive at the perfection of his virtues, yet every one was admitted to a freedom of converse with him. Both in his garb and diet he equally avoided pomp and sordidness; and though a great restrainer of his appetite, would yet seem not to do it, lest he should be thought plainly to design glory to himself by being needlessly singular above other men.¹

How industriously do we find them many times disowning that deserved praise and commendation that was due to them? How modestly does Justin Martyr decline his adversary's commendation of the acuteness and elegance of his reasonings? resolving all into the grace of God, that enabled him to understand and expound the Scriptures, of which grace he there persuades all men freely and fully to become partakers with him.² Of the confessors in the time of the persecution under M. Aurelius, Eusebius out of the relation which the churches of Vienna and Lyons in France sent to the churches in Asia, tells us, that although they had often borne witness to the truth at the dearest rate of any thing on this side death, though they had been frequently thrown to wild beasts, exposed

¹ Orat. 19, in Laud. Patr. p. 300.

² Dialog. cum Tryph. p. 280.

to the fire, and the remains of wounds and violence were visible in all parts of their bodies; yet in imitation of the great humility of the Son of God, they would not after all this (which yet was not uncommon in those times) either call themselves martyrs, or suffer others to call them so: but if any of the brethren either by letter or discourse had saluted them by that title, they would severely reprove and check them for it; acknowledging themselves at best but vile and despicable confessors, and with tears begging of the brethren to be instant with God by prayer, that they might perfect all by a real martyrdom.¹ Hence it was, that when Julian the Apostate refused to proceed against the Christians by open persecution, as his predecessors had done, because he envied them the honour of being martyrs, Nazianzen answers, that he was greatly mistaken if he supposed they suffered all this, rather out of a desire of glory, than a love of truth: such a foolish and vain-glorious humour might indeed be found amongst his philosophers, and the best of his party, many of whom have put themselves upon strange attempts merely to gain the honour of a name, and the reputation of divinity; but for Christians, they had rather die in the cause of religion, although no man should ever know of it, than to live and flourish amongst others with the greatest honour and esteem; it being our great solicitude not to please men, but only to obtain honour from God: nay, some of us^s (says he) arrive to that heroic pitch, as to desire an intimate union unto God, merely for himself, and not for the honours and rewards

¹ Hist. Eccl. lib. v. c. 2, p. 166.

that are laid up for us in the other world.¹ Memorable the humility of the great Constantine, that when all men's mouths were filled with the honourable mention of his virtues, and one took upon him to praise him to his face, telling him how happy he was whom God had thought worthy of so great an empire in this world, and for whom he reserved a much better kingdom in the next; he was highly offended with the address, and advised the man that he should not presume to talk so any more; but rather turn his praises of him, into prayers to God for him, that both here and hereafter he might be thought worthy to be numbered amongst the servants of God.²

I shall give but one instance more of the humility of those times, and that is their ready condescending to any office or employment, though never so mean, about the poorest Christian. They thought it not below them to cook and provide victuals for them, to visit the imprisoned, to kiss their chains, to dress their wounds, to wash their feet. And in this our Lord himself went before them, when a little before his death he rose from table, girt himself, washed and wiped his disciples' feet, and then told them what influence this ought to have upon them;—'If their Lord and Master had washed their feet, they ought also to wash one another's feet, for that he had given them an example, that they should do as he had done to them;' and good reason, 'the servant not being greater than his lord, neither he that is sent, greater than he that sent him.'³ Accordingly we find this particular act of

¹ Orat. 3, in Julian. i. p. 73.

² De Vit. Constant. lib. iv. cap. 48, p. 551.

³ John, xiii. 14—16.

Christian condescension frequently used in the primitive church. St. Paul expressly requires it as a qualification in a widow that was to be taken in as a deaconess into the church, that she be one that has used to lodge strangers, and to wash the saints' feet.¹ Tertullian assures us it was usually done by Christians in his time, to go into the prisons to kiss and embrace the martyrs' chains, to harbour and provide for indigent brethren, and to bring water to wash the saints' feet:² no office so low, which they were not content to stoop to.

When Placilla the empress was checked by some of the court for her mighty condescension in visiting the hospitals, and curing the lame and the sick with her own hands, preparing and giving them their provisions, as a thing too much below her state and grandeur; she answered, that to distribute gold became the emperor; but for her part she thought herself obliged to do this for God, who had advanced her to that honour and dignity: often instilling this pious counsel into her husband; "It becomes you, sir, always to remember, what you once were, and what you now are: by which means you will show yourself not to be ungrateful to your great Benefactor, and will govern the empire committed to you justly and lawfully, and to the honour of him that gave it."³

St. Jerome reckoning up the virtues of Paula, a lady of the greatest descent and nobility in Rome, but devoting herself afterwards to the solitudes of a religious life, tells us of her, that for humility (the prime and chief virtue of Christians) she car-

¹ 1 Tim. v. 10.

² Ad Uxor. lib. ii. c. 4, p. 168.

³ Theodoret, Hist. Eccl. lib. v. c. 18, p. 161.

ried herself with so much lowliness, that whoever had seen and not known her, could not but have mistaken her for the meanest of the maids that waited on her. Whenever she appeared in the midst of those devout and pious virgins that dwelt with her, she always seemed both in clothes and voice, and garb, and gait, the least and most contemptible of all the rest.¹ So studious was the piety of those days to keep the lustre of their own perfections from sparkling in their eyes, and not fondly to admire the glimmerings of their own light; being so far from falsely arrogating to themselves those excellencies which they had not, that they idustriously concealed those excellent perfections which they had.

I cannot better conclude this chapter, than with the excellent reasonings of St. Gregory of Nyssa against priding a man's self in any external ornaments or advantages, where he thus entertains the proud man: "He that looks to himself, and not to the things that are about him, will see little reason to be proud. For what is man? Say the best of him, and that which may add the greatest honour and veneration to him, that he is born of nobles, and yet he that adorns his descent, and speaks highliest of the splendour and nobility of his house, does but derive his pedigree from the dirt. And dost thou not blush, thou statue of earth, who art shortly to be crumbled into dust, who bubble-like containest within thee a short-lived humour; dost thou not blush to swell with pride and arrogance, and to have thy mind stuffed with vain idle thoughts? Hast thou no regard to

¹ Epitaph. Paulæ ad Eustoch. Filiam. tom. i. p. 175.

the double term of man's life, how it begun, and where it will end? Thou pridest thyself in thy juvenile age, and flatterest thyself in the flower, the beauty and sprightliness of thy youth, that thy hands are ready for action, and thy feet apt to dance in nimble measures; that thy locks are waved by the wanton motions of the wind, and a soft down overgrows thy cheeks, that thy purple robes put the very roses to the blush, and thy silken vestures are variegated with rich embroidery of battles, huntings, or pieces of ancient history; or brought down to the feet, artificially set off with black, and curiously made fast with strings and buttons. These are the things thou lookest at, without any regard to thyself. But let me a little as in a glass show thee thy own face, who and what thou art. Hast thou not seen in a public charnel-house the unveiled mysteries of human nature; bones rudely thrown upon heaps; naked skulls with hollow eye-holes, yielding a dreadful and deformed spectacle? If thou hast beheld such sights as those, in them thou hast seen thyself. Where then will be the signs of thy present beauty, that good complexion that adorns thy cheeks, the colour of thy lips, the supercilious loftiness in thine eyes, and all the rest of those things that now add fuel to thy pride? Tell me, where then will those things be, upon the account whereof thou dost now so much boast and bear up thyself? What shadow was ever so thin, so incapable of being grasped within the hollow of the hand, as this dream of youth, which at once appears, and immediately vanishes away?"¹ Thus

¹ De Beatitudinib. Orat. 1, tom. i. p. 768.

the holy man treats the young vapouring gallant, and levels his pride with the sober considerations of mortality. In his following discourse he deals with persons of riper years, and such as are in places of authority and power, and shows how absurd and uncomely pride is in them: which it might not be impertinent to represent, but fearing to be tedious, I forbear.

CHAPTER II.

Of their Heavenly-mindedness, and Contempt of the World.

THE soul of man being heaven-born cannot but partake of the nature and disposition of that country, and have a native inclination to that place from whence it borrows its original. And though it is true, in this corrupt and degenerate state, it is deeply sunk into matter, clogged and overborne with the earthly and sensual propensions of the lower appetites, the desires and designs of men creeping up and down like shadows upon the surface of the earth; yet does it often, especially when assisted with the aids of religion, attempt its own rescue and release. The mind of a good man is acted by manly and generous impulses; it dwells in the contemplations of the upper region, tramples upon those little projects of profit or pleasure which ensnare and enslave other men, and makes all its designs subservient to the interests of a bet-

ter country. A temper of mind never more triumphant in any than in the Christians of old, whose ‘conversations were in heaven,’¹ and whose spirits breathed in too free an air to be caught with the charms of the best enjoyments this world could afford. They looked upon the delights and advantages of this life as things not worthy to arrest their affections in their journey to a better. Justin Martyr, discoursing with Trypho the Jew,² tells him, that “they were careful with all fear to converse with men according to the Scriptures, not greedily desiring to gain riches, or glory, or pleasure to themselves, concerning any of which no man could lay any thing to their charge; and that they did not live like the great men of his people, of whom God himself has left this reproachful character, that their ‘princes were companions of thieves, every one loving gifts, and following after rewards.’”

Nay, Trypho himself bears them this testimony, though doubtless he intended it as a reproach to them, that having from a vain report chosen Christ to be their master, they did for his sake foolishly undervalue and throw away all the enjoyments and advantages of this world.⁴ “Amongst us,” says Tatian, “there is no affectation of vain-glory, no diversity of sentiments and opinions, but separating ourselves from all vulgar and earthly thoughts and discourses, and having given up ourselves to the commands of God to be governed by his law, we abandon whatever seems but akin to human glory.”⁵ They never met with opportunities to have advantaged and enriched themselves, but they

¹ Phil. iii. 20. ² Dial. cum Tryph. p. 308. ³ Is. i. 23.

⁴ Dial. cum Tryph. p. 226. ⁵ Orat. cont. Gra. p. 167.

declined and turned them off with a noble scorn. When Abgarus the Toparch of Edessa offered Thaddæus (one of the seventy disciples) great sums of gold and silver for the pains he had taken, and the great things he had done amongst them, he refused them with this answer, "To what purpose should we receive good things from others, who have freely forsaken and renounced our own?"¹ As indeed in those times friends and relations, houses and lands were cheerfully parted with, when they stood in competition with Christ; they could content themselves with the most naked poverty, so it might but consist with the profession of the Gospel.

When Quintianus the president under Decius the emperor asked Agatha, the virgin martyr, why, being descended of such rich and illustrious parents, she would stoop to such low and mean offices as she took upon her; she presently answered him, "Our glory and nobility lies in this, that we are the servants of Christ."² To the same purpose was the answer of Quintinus the martyr under the Dioclesian persecution, when the president asked him how it came about, that he, being a Roman citizen, and the son of a senator, would truckle under such a superstition, and worship him for a God, whom the Jews had crucified? The martyr told him, that "it was the highest honour and nobility to know and serve God; that the Christian religion, which he called superstition, ought not to be traduced with so base a name, seeing it immediately guided its followers to the highest degrees of

¹ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. i. c. 15, p. 35.

² Martyr. ejus apud Sur. ad diem 5 Feb. tom. i. ex S. Metaph.

happiness; for herein it is that the omnipotent God is revealed, the great Creator of heaven and earth, and his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom all things were made, and who is in all things equal to his Father.”¹

The simplicity of Christians then kept them from aspiring after honour and greatness, and if at any time advanced to it, their great care was to keep themselves unspotted from the world. Thus Nazianzen reports of his brother Cæsarius, chief physician to the emperor Constantius, that though he was very dear to him (as he was to the whole court) and advanced by him every day to greater honours and dignities; yet “this,” says he, “was the chief of all, that he suffered not the nobility of his soul to be corrupted by that glory, and those delights that were round about him: but accounted this his chiefest honour that he was a Christian; in comparison of which all things else were to him but as a sport and pageantry. He looked upon other things but as comic scenes, soon up and soon over; but upon piety as the most safe and permanent good, and which we can properly call our own, regarding that piety especially which is most inward and unseen to the world.”² The like he relates of his sister Gorgonia, as the perfection of her excellent temper, that she did not more seem to be good, than she did really strive to be so; being peculiarly conversant in those secret acts of piety, which are visible only to him, who sees what is hidden and secret; to the prince of this world she left nothing, transferring all into those safe and celestial treasu-

¹ Apud Sur. ad 31 Octo. tom. v.

² In Laud. Cæsar. Frat. Orat. 10, p. 166.

ries that are above ; she left nothing to the earth but her body, changing all things for the hopes of a better life, bequeathing no other riches to her children but an excellent pattern, and a desire to follow her example.¹ The truth is, as to estate, they were not concerned for more than what would supply the necessities of nature, or the wants of others, not solicitous to get or possess such revenues as might make them the objects either of men's envy or their fear ; as may appear amongst others by this instance :—

Domitian the emperor being informed that there were yet remaining some of Christ's kindred according to the flesh (the nephews of Judas the brother of our Lord, of the race and posterity of David, which the emperor sought utterly to extirpate) he sent for them, and inquired of them whether they were of the line of David? They answered they were. He asked what possessions and estate they had? They told him they had between them thirty-nine acres of land (to the value of about nine thousand pence) out of the fruits whereof they both paid him tribute, and maintained themselves with their own hard labour, whereto the hardness and callousness of their hands (which they then showed him) bore witness. He then asked them concerning Christ and the state of his kingdom ; to which they answered, that his empire was not of this world, but heavenly and angelical, and which should finally take place in the end of the world, when he should ' come with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, and to reward men according to their works.' Which when he heard, de-

¹ In Laud. Gorgon. Orat. 11, p. 183.

spising the men upon the account of their meanness, he let them go without any severity against them.¹

Of Origen we read, that he was so great a despiser of the world, that when he might have lived upon the maintenance of others, he would not, but parted with his library of books to one that was to allow him only four oboli a day. The day he spent in laborious tasks and exercises, and the greatest part of the night in study. He always remembered that precept of our Saviour, not to have two coats, not to wear shoes, not anxiously to take care for to-morrow;² nor would he accept the kindness of others, when they would freely have given him some part of their estate to live on.³ Not that the Christians of those times thought it unlawful to possess estates, or to use the blessings of divine Providence; for though in those times of persecution they were often forced to quit their estates and habitations, yet did they preserve their proprieties entire, and industriously mind the necessary conveniences of this life, so far as was consistent with their care of a better. There were indeed a sort of Christians called *apostolici*, who in a fond imitation of the apostles, left all they had, and gave up themselves to a voluntary poverty, holding it not lawful to possess any thing. Hence they were also called *apotactici*, or renouncers, because they quitted and renounced whatsoever they had; but they were ever accounted infamous heretics. They were, as Epiphanius tells us, the descendants of Tatian, part of the old

¹ Euseb. lib. iii. c. 20, p. 89.

² Matt. vi. 34; x. 10.

³ Euseb. lib. vi, c. 3, p. 205.

Cathari and Encratitæ :¹ together with whom they are put in a law of the emperor Theodosius, and reckoned amongst the vilest of the Manichæan heretics :² they are mentioned also by Julian the Apostate as a branch of the Galilæans, as he calls the Christians, by him compared to the cynic philosophers amongst the heathens, for the neglecting of their country, the abandoning of their estates and goods, and their loose and rambling course of life ; only herein different, that they did not as those Galilæan *apotactistæ* run up and down under a pretence of poverty to beg alms.³ The truth is, by the account which both he and Epiphanius give of them, they seem to have been the very patriarchs and primitive founders of those mendicant orders, and professors of vowed poverty which swarm so much in the church of Rome at this day.

But to return. The Christians of those days did not study those arts of splendour and gallantry which have since overrun the world—stately palaces, costly furniture, rich hangings, free tables, curious bed, vessels of gold and silver ; “ the very possession of which (as Clemens Alexandrinus speaks) creates envy. They are rare to get, hard to keep, and it may be not so accommodate to use.”⁴

Nor were they more studious of pleasures and recreations abroad, than they were of fineness and bravery at home. They went not to public feasts, nor frequented the shows that were made for the

¹ Cont. Apostolic. Hæres. 61, p. 220.

² Cod. Theod. lib. xvi. tit. 5, de Hæreticis lib. vii.

³ De Cynic. Sect. Orat. 7, p. 417.

⁴ Pædag. lib. ii. c. 3, p. 160, 161.

disport and entertainment of the people: and this was so notorious, that the heathens charged it upon them as a part of their crime.¹ Octavius the Christian, in Minucius Felix, grants it to be true, and tells him there was very good reason why they should abstain from their shows, pomps and divertisements, at which they could not be present without great sin and shame, without affronting their modesty, and offering a distaste and horror to their minds;² and indeed they reckoned themselves particularly obliged to this by what they had vowed and undertaken at their baptism, when they solemnly engaged to renounce the devil and all his works, pomps, and pleasures, i. e. (says St. Cyril) the sights and sports of the theatre, and such-like vanities. The truth is, they looked upon the public sports and pastimes of those days as the scenes, not only of folly and lewdness, but of great impiety and idolatry.³ Tertullian tells us of a Christian woman who going to the theatre, was there possessed by the devil; and when the evil spirit at his casting out was asked, how he durst set upon a Christian; he presently answered, "I did but what was fit and just, for I found her upon my own ground."⁴

Being thus affected towards the world, they could very willingly part with any thing that was dearest to them, friends, estate, liberty, or life itself. "We are not moved (says one of their apologists⁵) with the loss of our estates, which our enemies wrest from us, nor with the violence that is offered to our credit and reputation, or if there be

¹ Minut. F. p. 10; vid. Constit. Apostol. lib ii. c. 62, p. 366.

² Page 30.

³ Catech. Myst. i. p. 510.

⁴ De Spect. c. 26, p. 83.

⁵ Athen. leg pro Christ. p. 2.

any thing of greater concernment than these; for although these things are mightily prized and valued amongst men, yet can we despise and slight them: nay, we cannot only when beaten, refrain from striking again, and make no resistance against those that invade and spoil us; but to them that smite one cheek, we can turn the other, and to them that take away the coat, we can let them take the cloak also.”¹ The greatest endearment of this life is relations, and yet these too they could quietly resign when God called for them. Memorable it is what St. Jerome reports of Melania,² a lady of great piety in his time, in whose commendation Paulinus bishop of Nosa spends a very large epistle, especially commending her for her generous and heroic mind, *tam viriliter Christiana*, that she was something above a woman, and had the masculine spirit of a Christian.³ Of this lady St. Jerome tells us, that her husband lying dead by her, she lost two of her sons at the same time; and when every one expected that she should break out into a violent passion, tear her hair, rend her garments, and burst into tears; she stood still, and at last falling down as it were at the feet of Christ, broke out into this pious and Christian resentment, “Lord, I shall serve thee more nimbly and readily, by being eased of the weight thou hast taken from me.” Nay, so little kindness had they for this world, that they cared not how little they stayed in it, and therefore readily offered themselves to martyrdom at every turn. Tertullian tells his adversaries that “all those plagues which

¹ Matt. v. 39, 40.

² Ad Paul. tom. i. p. 160.
Epist. lib. ii. Epist. 2.

God sent upon the world, what damage soever they might do their enemies, could not hurt them, because they had no other concernment in this world, than as soon as they could to get out of it.”¹ “Being inflamed (says Justin Martyr) with the desire of a pure and an eternal life, we breathe after an intimate converse with God the great Parent and Creator of the world, and make haste to seal our confession with our blood; being certainly persuaded that they shall attain to this state, who by their actions study to approve themselves to God, that they follow after him, and are heartily desirous of communion with him in that life, where no malice or wickedness shall take place.”² This was the mighty support they leaned upon, the great cordial with which they kept up their spirits in those sad times of suffering and persecution, the firm belief and expectation which they had of enjoying God in a better life. They knew, that the more haste their enemies made to break open the cage of their bodies, the sooner their souls would be at liberty to fly to the regions of blessedness and immortality. And indeed so much were their thoughts fixed upon this, so oft did they use to comfort one another by discoursing of that kingdom which they expected hereafter, that some of their enemies over-hearing and mistaking them, accused them as treasonable affectors of the empire. “Alas! (as Justin Martyr assures the emperors) they meant nothing less; which they might know by this, that being brought to trial, they freely confessed themselves to be Christians, though they certainly knew they must die for it: whereas (says

¹ Apol. c. 41, p. 33.

² Apol. 2, p. 57.

he) did we expect a human kingdom, we would dissemble and deny it, to avoid death, and so expect a more convenient season to accomplish our designs; but since our hopes are not placed in any thing in this world, we regard not those that take away our lives, well knowing they take nothing from us, but what we must needs lay down ourselves."¹ It was their care then continually to keep company with dying thoughts, and to dwell within the prospect of eternity; it being generally true of all what St. Jerome particularly reports of Marcella, that she lived so, as always believing that she should immediately die, and never put on her garments, but it put her in mind of her grave, and of the sheet that should wrap her up in the house of silence.²

But besides the influence which the expectation of their particular dissolutions had upon them, there was one thing which I doubt not did mightily contribute to their being weaned from the world, and did strongly animate them to a quick and speedy diligence about the affairs of the other life; and that was, the opinion they generally had of the day of judgment being near at hand:—an opinion started early, as appears by that caution which St. Paul gives the Thessalonians about it;³ and it lasted for some ages after, as is evident from several passages in Tertullian,⁴ who always improves it to this purpose, that men should not unnecessarily encounter themselves with the affairs of this life, but carry themselves as those that were immediately passing hence. I conclude with that

¹ Apol. 2. p. 58. ² Epitaph. Marcell. ad Princip. p. 119.

³ 2 Thes. ii. 3, 4.

⁴ Vid. de Cult. Fœmin. lib. ii. c. 9; ad Uxor. lib. i. c. 5.

of Justin Martyr; "Christians (says he) dwell in their own countries, but as inmates and foreigners; they have all things common with other men as fellow-citizens, and yet suffer all things as strangers and foreigners: every foreign region is their country, and every country is foreign to them: they marry like other men, and beget children, but do not expose or neglect their offspring; they feast in common, but do not exceed like other men; they are in the flesh, but do not live after the flesh; dwell upon earth, but their conversation is in heaven."¹ Therefore he compares Christians in this world to the soul in the body, as for other reasons, so especially for this, that as the soul lives in the body, but is not of the body, so Christians dwell in the world, but are not of the world: an immortal spirit dwells in a mortal tabernacle, and Christians, while they sojourn in these corruptible mansions, expect and look for an incorruptible state in heaven.

CHAPTER III.

Of their Sobriety, in respect of their Garb and Apparel.

THE primitive Christians being thus eminent for their contempt of the world, it is easy to imagine that they were very temperate and abstemious in

¹ Epist. ad Diognet. p. 497.

the use of all the pleasures and conveniences of human life, which we shall more particularly consider in these three instances; their sobriety in respect of garb and apparel; their temperance in regard of food and diet; and their continence or chastity.

For the first, the care about our garb and dress, it is one of those instances of sobriety which are to be conducted by the rules of religion and reason, and which very much discover a virtuous or a vicious temper. "There are three," as the son of Sirach well observes, "that show a man what he is, his attire, excessive laughter, and his gait."¹ There is not certainly a more open evidence of a vain mind, than a vain garb and habit. St. Basil discoursing what habit does best beseem a Christian, tells us in general, that it ought to be such as most lively expresses the meekness and humility of the mind; that good men of old were so attired; and, that we are commanded, 'having food and raiment to be there with content;'² not studying variety, and, which most commonly follows it, softness and elegance, which are but instruments to minister to excess and luxury, introduced into human life through the idle and unnecessary arts of looseness and effeminacy.³ "It is not enough," says Tertullian, "that a Christian be chaste and modest, but he must appear to be so;—a virtue, of which he should have so great a store and treasure, that it should flow from his mind upon his habit, and break from the retirements of his conscience into the superficies of his life:"⁴ as he there expresses it. More particularly St. Basil tells us, that "the

¹ Ecclus. xix. 30.

² 1 Tim. vi. 8.

³ Reg. Fus. Disput. Interrog. 22, p. 566, tom. ii.

⁴ De Cultu Fœmin. lib. ii. c. 13, p. 160.

habit of a Christian ought to be suitable to the two great ends of clothing instituted by God, viz. honesty and necessity; honesty, to hide the less comely parts of the body, and to cover that shame which sin has brought upon mankind; for in paradise innocency was man's only robe; and necessity, to keep the body in convenient warmth, and to defend it from those injuries and extremities of the air and weather, which would otherwise soon rot down this house of clay.¹ "Now to both these ends," he tells us, "we ought to accommodate our garments, not striving for variety, having some for uses at home, others for ostentation when we go abroad, but that whatever attains these ends is enough."² But besides these, there is a third use and end of clothes, noted by Clemens Alexandrinus, and that is for distinction, not only of sexes, but of different ranks and degrees of men, such as agree best to men's age, persons, shape, nature, or their several states and employments.³

Now that the ancient Christians governed themselves by these rules in this affair is plain, in that they avoided both singularity on the one hand, and excess on the other; generally conforming themselves to the decent and orderly customs and fashions of the times and places where they lived. Justin Martyr, giving his friend an account of the Christians, tells him, that "they differed not from other men either in their country, or speech, or the usages of the civil life; they dwell in their own cities, use the same language with other men, nor have they any singular and extraordinary way of

¹ De Cultu Fœmin. lib. ii. c. 13, p. 567.

² Vid. Cyril. ad Illuminat. Catec. 4, p. 94.

³ Pædag. lib. iii. c. 11, p. 245.

life; they are not in any thing affected or fantastic; but inhabiting partly amongst Greeks, partly in barbarous cities, as every one's lot is fallen, they follow the customs of their country; and both in clothes and diet, and all other affairs of outward life, show the excellent and admirable constitution of their discipline and conversation."¹ I am not ignorant of what some learned men would have us to believe, that in those times, when any turned from paganism to Christianity, they were wont to change their habit, to leave off the toga or gown (the common habit almost in all parts of the Roman empire) and to take up the pallium or cloak. This they think sufficiently countenanced by the instance of Tertullian, who, laying aside the gown, and putting on the cloak, was accused of lightness and inconstancy by the people of Carthage, and bitterly persecuted with the common sarcasm, *à toga ad pallium*, as one who had wantonly skipped from the gown to the cloak, i. e. from one profession to another; insomuch that he was forced to write an apology for himself, which he did in his book *de Pallio*, where with a great deal of satirical and sarcastic wit he retorts upon them, and vindicates himself from their charge and cavils. But that there was any such change of habit at persons' first coming over to Christianity, I can see no reason to believe. The case of Tertullian makes nothing to the purpose, unless it could be proved that he left off the gown at his first entrance upon the Christian religion, which will be hard to make out; for I am clearly of the mind of the learned Salmasius, that he altered his habit, and assumed the cloak

¹ Epist. ad Diogn. p. 496.

not when he first became Christian, but when he was made presbyter of the church of Carthage. Hence it is called by him, according to his dialect, *sacerdos habitus*, (for so it is in all ancient manuscripts, and in the first edition of *B. Rhenanus*, and not *sacer habitus*, as later editions have it,) the priests' habit; because the Christian priests usually wore it after their entrance upon holy orders.¹ For the better understanding of which, we are to consider a little, that amongst the Greeks the pallium or cloak was not commonly worn, but was the proper habit of philosophers, who professed a more severe and accurate course of life. Accordingly amongst the Christians, those who professed themselves to be ἀσκηταί, the more strict and exact observers of the Christian discipline, whether they were laity or clergy, assumed this habit to themselves; and because the clergy in those times generally took upon them this austere and philosophic way of life, this garb was most peculiar to them. This probably they did the rather, not only because this was the most plain and simple garment in itself, but because they supposed the apostles (whom they strove to imitate) wore this habit; as is plain they did as from other passages in the New Testament, so from St. Paul's sending for the cloak which he left at Troas.² As plenty and prosperity began to flow in upon the church, this simple and modest

¹ Præfat. in Comment. Tertul. de Pallio; Tertul. de Pall. c. 4. Vid. Tertul. ex edit. B. Rhenani, p. 620; vid. etiam Salm. in loc.

² 2 Tim. iv. 13. The cloak which St. Paul had left at Troas is called φαινόλης, which was probably the same as the Latin *panula*. It seems to have been a sort of *wrapper*, intended to keep out the cold in winter. Consequently the inference which Cave draws from the passage is wholly out of place.—ED.

garment was laid aside, and the clergy took upon them a more rich and splendid garb; insomuch that when Eustathius bishop of Sebastia took upon him to wear the philosophic cloak, and persuaded his followers also to use it, he was for this very reason deposed by his own father Eulalius, bishop of Cesarea, because wearing a habit unsuitable to the ministerial order; which sentence was not long after ratified by the synod of Gangra, and a canon made against it.¹

From what has been said it may appear, that although the clergy, and such as entered upon a more strict and ascetic course of life, had a habit peculiar to themselves, yet the generality of Christians differed not from the common garb. They were indeed exceeding careful to avoid all such as savoured of costliness and finery, choosing such as expressed the greatest lowliness and innocency. "The garment that we should wear," says Clemens of Alexandria, "ought to be mean and frugal, not curiously wrought with divers colours, (the emblem of craftiness and deceit,) but white, to denote our embracing and professing simplicity and truth; our outward clothing is an indication of the temper of our manners: that is true simplicity of habit, which takes away what is vain and superfluous; that the best and most solid garment, which is furthest from art and curiosity, and most apt to preserve and keep warm the body."² St. Cyprian ever observed a due decorum in his garb as well as his countenance;³ and Chrysostom, amongst other things especially commends Olympias (a woman

¹ Socrat. Hist. Eccl. lib. ii. c. 43, p. 156; vid. Concil. Gangr. Can. 12.

² Ib. ubi sup. p. 244.

³ Pont. Diac. in Vit. Cypr. p. 12.

of great birth and estate, and of no less piety,) for the incredible modesty of her attire, not much better than that of the poorest beggar; having nothing in her garb or gait that was feigned or gaudy, nothing elaborate or artificial; "which things," says he, "were the colours, the bright and beautiful representations of her virtue, whereby that wisdom and divine philosophy that lay hidden in her mind, was externally painted and shadowed out."¹ So far were they then from the vanity and affectation of pomp and bravery, of dazzling the eye with rich costly ornaments, that they thought they could never seem mean enough, and this they looked upon themselves as especially bound to by the promise which they had made at baptism, when they renounced the devil, and his whole pomp and service, as the same Father elsewhere informs us.²

It cannot be denied, but that the Fathers frequently complain of, and smartly declaim against the vanity and folly of some in those times (women especially, by the weakness of their sex more propense to the excesses of pride and superfluity) who gave up themselves to all the arts of fineness and gallantry; and out of an emulation to the ladies amongst the heathens, amongst whom they lived, affected all manner of pomp and elegance, striving to be as rich and gaudy, not as they ought, but as they could make themselves.³ Excessive prodigality Tertullian does thus no less elegantly than sarcastically describe: "A great estate," says he "is drawn out of a little pocket; it is no-

¹ Ad Olymp. Ep. 2, tom. iv. p. 617, 623.

² Hom. 21, ad Pop. Antioch. tom. i. p. 244.

³ De Cult. Fœm. lib. i. c. 8, p. 153.

thing to expend many thousand pounds¹ upon one string of pearls, a weak tender neck can make a shift to carry about whole woods and lordships : vast sums of money borrowed of the banker, and noted in his account book to be repayed every month with interest, are weighed at the beam of a thin slender ear : so great is the strength of pride and ambition, that even the weak feeble body of one woman shall be able to carry the weight and substance of so many pounds taken up at usury." This was looked upon as a very great sin. Clemens Alexandrinus censures it very deep.² But that which the Fathers do most severely censure and cry out against, is not only the expense and costliness of their clothes and jewels, but the arts which they used to add greater beauty and handsomeness to themselves, than God and nature had bestowed upon them. This it seems the pride and folly of some Christian women had arrived to, which the zeal and piety of those times did vehemently condemn and protest against.

It may not be amiss to consider, what the gallants of those times pleaded for themselves, and what was returned in answer to them. Sometimes they pleaded they were rich, and had great estates, and ought therefore to live like themselves, and to make use of the estates that God had given them. To this Cyprian answers, that they only are truly rich, that are rich in and towards God ; that the world ought to be despised, the pomps and delights whereof we then renounced, when we happily turned to God, with the love of whom all that

¹ In the Lat. *decies sestertiûm* ; which in our money is seventy-eight thousand one hundred and twelve pounds, ten shillings

² *Pædog. lib. iii. c. 2, p. 219.*

is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life is not consistent;¹ that the use of riches in this case is to be governed by just and moderate measures: the apostle commanding all women how rich soever, to 'adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with broidered hair, or gold or pearls or costly array; but (which becomes women professing godliness) with good works;'² and St. Peter also requiring of them not the outward adorning of gold or fine apparel, but the hidden ornament of the heart;³ that though they were rich, yet they were to consult the honour and modesty of their profession, and might not go to the utmost bounds of what was lawful, some things being lawful, which were not expedient, especially when by their wanton and lascivious dress they might be a means to kindle in the breasts of others the flames of an unchaste and unlawful passion, and so prove the occasion of their ruin; that, if they thought themselves bound to use the estate that God had given them, God had shown them a more excellent way, to relieve the hungry, and feed the poor members of Christ, which was the best art of improving riches, and the way to lay them up in safe and unfailing treasuries, where we may be sure to reap the fruit of them another day, and not to throw them away upon arts of beauty, upon vain and phantastic dresses. This is the sum of that good man's reasonings in the case.⁴

Sometimes they pleaded, that they might beau-

¹ 1 John, ii. 16. ² 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. ³ 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4.

⁴ De Discipl. et Habit. Virgin. p. 164. Vid. Constit. Apost. lib. i. c. 3, p. 304.

tify and honour the body without any danger of violating their chastity, or setting open the case-ment for luxury to fly in upon them. Tertullian answers, "Let them, that had a mind to it, glory in the flesh; but it is much better for us who follow spiritual things to please ourselves in the excellencies of the spirit than in those of the flesh; and seek glory from those things, from which we hope for salvation. A Christian may indeed glory in the flesh, but it is when for the sake of Christ it is torn in pieces, that the spirit may be crowned; when it is tormented for confessing the Christian name; when a woman is found stronger than the men that torment her; when she suffers fires, or crosses, or swords, or wild-beasts, that she may receive the crown."¹ "These," says Cyprian, "are the precious jewels of the flesh, these the much better ornaments of the body."²

Sometimes again they pretended, they did it only to please their husbands, and that they might appear more lovely and acceptable to them: to which plea, as being most specious and plausible, I observe especially three things returned by way of answer:—First, That to design the pleasing of their husbands by such arts as these, was altogether needless, seeing every wise and good man cannot but like his wife best without them.³ Secondly, That these loose delicate arts came too near the practice of lewd wanton prostitutes, who made use of these ways and tricks for no other end but to enveigle men into their embraces.⁴ Thirdly, They mainly in-

¹ De Cult. Fœmin. lib. ii. c. 3, p. 155.

² Ut supr. p, 163.

³ Tertul. de Cult. Fœm. lib. ii. c. 4.

⁴ Cyprian. ubi supra. p. 165; vid. Tert. de Cult. Fœmin. lib. i. c. 4; Clem. Alex. Pædog. lib. iii. c. 2, p. 220.

sisted upon this, that these arts were injurious to God, and a disparagement to his workmanship. "We are not," says Tertullian, "to seek after neatness and finery beyond what is simple and sufficient, and what pleases God; against whom they offend, who are not satisfied with his workmanship:"¹ an argument which he there prosecutes with great severity. St. Cyprian treads in his master's steps, amongst other things he tells us, that these additional arts are a bold and sacrilegious attempt, and an high contempt of God; that it is to reform what God has formed, to alter and change his work, and as much as they can to disfigure that person, which God has made after his own image and likeness; that such a one has cause to fear, lest when the day of resurrection comes, he that made them should not know them, nor receive them when they come for the promised rewards.² "And are not these," says he, "things fit to be thought of by the servants of God, and to be daily objects of their care and fear?"

I cannot but in this place set down a passage which Theodoret reports of his own mother, that in her younger years having a distemper in one of her eyes, which had baffled all the arts of physic, she was at length persuaded to make her address to one Peter, famous for the gift of miracles; who lived, near Antioch, a very severe and ascetic course, of life: and to render herself (as she thought) the more considerable in his eye, she put on all her bravery, her richest robes, her pendants, and chains

¹ De Cult. Fæmin. lib. 2, c. 5, p. 156; vid. Constit. Ap. lib. i. c. 8, p. 823; Cl. Alex. Pædog. lib. iii. c. 11. p. 249.

² De Discipl. et Hab. Virg. p. 166.

of pearl, and whatever could render her fine and splendid. No sooner was she come to him, but the severe and uncomplimental man at first sight bluntly entertained her with this discourse: "Tell me, daughter; suppose an excellent artist having drawn a picture according to all the laws and rules of art, should expose and hang it forth to view, and another rude and unskilful bungler coming by should find fault with this excellent piece, and attempt to amend it, draw the eye-brows to a greater length, make the complexion whiter, or add more colour to the cheeks; would not the true author be justly angry, that his art was disparaged and undervalued, and needless additions made to the piece by an unskilful hand? And so it is here: can we think that the great Artificer of the world, the Maker and Former of our nature, is not, and that justly, angry, when you accuse his incomprehensible wisdom and perfection, of unskilfulness, and want of knowledge? For you would not add your reds, whites, or blacks, did you not think your bodies needed these additions; and while you think so, you condemn your Creator for weakness and ignorance. But know, that he has power answerable to his will, and as the Psalmist tells us, 'the Lord has done all things as he pleased:'¹ and he that takes care of what is good for all, would not give what is evil and hurtful unto any. Corrupt not therefore the image of God, nor attempt to add what he in his infinite wisdom thought not fit to give: study not to invent this adulterate beauty, which even to chaste persons oft proves a cause of ruin, by becoming a snare to them that look upon

¹ Ps. cxv. 3; cxxxv. 6.

it." The holy man said no more, and the young lady presently found herself wounded with the force of his reasonings, but would not leave him till she had obtained the end of her errand, which he granted not without great importunity, and an humble and modest referring all to the grace of God; and so sent her home with a double cure; her body cured of its distemper, and her mind of its pride and vanity; and she ever after led a most humble, sober, and pious life.

But it were to transcribe whole books, to tell you what the Fathers (these three that I have so oft mentioned especially) have said in this case, the cause being not more copiously than elegantly managed by them; and thither I refer the capable reader, who has any further curiosity for these things. The true beauty of a Christian in those days lay not in external and adventitious ornaments, but in the goodness and purity of the mind. "The beauty of the body (says Clemens of Alexandria) consist in a good complexion, and in apt symmetry, and proportion of its parts; but the greatest beauty in the world is that of the soul, when it is adorned with the holy Spirit, and the excellent graces of it, justice, prudence, fortitude, temperance, the love of goodness and modesty, which is the brightest and most lovely ornament that the eye of man can behold.² It is not (says he) the exterior aspect of the man that is to be regarded, but the mind that is to be furnished and adorned with goodness and virtue."³

I conclude this with the account which St.

¹ Hist. Religios. c. 9, in Vit. Petr. p. 343.

² Pædag. lib. iii. c. 11, p. 248.

³ Ibid. c. 2, p. 216.

Gregory gives of his sister Gorgonia. "She used no gold to make her fine, no yellow hair, ordered into knots and curls, nor any other tricks to make her head a scene and pageantry; no loose and transparent garments, no lustre of stones and jewels, enlightening the air round about, and reflecting splendour upon them that wear them; no devices and arts of painting, no affectation of beauty that may be easily bought, no counter-working God's creation, dishonouring, reproaching, covering his workmanship with false and deceitful colours, suffering a spurious and supposititious beauty to steal away that natural image, which ought to be kept entire to God and the future state. All this was far from her; and though she very well understood the several modes and garbs of bravery amongst women, yet she thought none so honourable as the manner of her life, and that inward brightness that was lodged in her mind."¹ To which I add that of Tertullian, who, after he had condemned and confuted the arts of unlawful beauty, the vanity of going in too curious, costly, and excessive dresses, concludes with this counsel to the women of his time;—to clothe themselves with the silks of honesty, the fine vestures of piety, the purple of modesty; and, being thus beautified and adorned, (says he,) God himself will be your lover.

¹ Nazian. in Laud. Gor. Or. 11, p. 181.

² De Cult. Fœmin. lib. ii. c. 13, ad fin.

CHAPTER IV.

Of their great Temperance and Abstinence.

AMONGST the many temptations that besiege the life of man, there is scarce any into which we are more easily betrayed, than into a vicious curiosity about meats and drinks, and the excesses of an unruly appetite. Therefore it is, that the Christian religion does so frequently inculcate upon us the precepts of sobriety and temperance; to be 'temperate in all things, to watch and be sober, to cast off the works of darkness, to walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in excess of wine, revellings, and banquetings; to take heed that our hearts be not any time overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and that we be not as the men of the old world, brutishly taken up with eating and drinking when the flood came and swept all away!'' The law of Christ commands us to fast often, to keep under the body, and to make no provision for the flesh.² If nature regularly governed be content with little, religion will teach us to be content with less. These rules the first Christians exactly transcribed into their lives, being the greatest instances of real abstinence and mortification, which they both practised themselves, and pressed upon others. They knew very well that God had given men a charter of freedom indifferently to use the creatures, and

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 25; 1 Thess. v. 6; Rom. xiii. 12, 13; Luke, xxi. 34.

² 1 Cor. vii. 5; ix. 27; Rom. xiii. 14.

to enjoy them in some degree, not only for necessity but delight; but yet were afraid to go so far as they might, or to do any thing that might look towards excess, or argue an irregular and unsober mind. They contented themselves with such provisions as were conducive to health and strength, without any studied seeking after those that were more luscious and delightful. It is very true what St. Basil observes, that by reason of men's different ages and course of life, their different tempers and constitutions of body, and other circumstances, no one fixed and certain rule can be prescribed in this case; but yet our food and diet ought for the main to be regulated by the general end of it, which is not wantonly to please the palate, but to minister to health, and to repair the weakness and decays of nature.¹ "Many (says Clemens Alexandrinus) like brute beasts live only that they may eat; but for us we are commanded to eat that we may live. Food and pleasure is not the work and design for which we live in the world, our residence here being in order to an incorruptible life; and therefore our nourishment ought to be easy and simple, and such as is subservient to the two main ends of life, health and strength."² We ought to choose such food (as Justin Martyr tells his friends) not as may gratify our ease and delicacy, but make our lives useful and serviceable; and if at any time overtaken with want, we should quietly acquiesce in that state."³ Therefore a little after he smartly declaims against all excess. "Wine (says he) is neither to be drunk daily to excess, nor to be used

¹ Reg. fus. Disput. Interrog, 19, tom. ii. p. 560.

² Pædag. lib. ii. c. 1, p. 139.

³ Epist. ad Zen. et Seren. p. 506.

as commonly as water. Both indeed are God's creatures; but water necessary, wine given only to help and relieve the body; but he that drinks it to excess, as a man that takes overmuch of medicine, like a dog or a swine betrays his own shame. Above all men in the world it least becomes us Christians, as if we were votaries to luxury, to abuse the creatures of God, and to make use of thirst as a pretence to drunkenness; seeing we ought to drink no more than what will serve to quench our thirst; not like those who swallowing down wine, as men do drink in a burning fever, quickly make an end of themselves through their intemperance. Nor are we less to take heed of gluttony, contenting ourselves with a spare diet, and such only as is necessary; not giving way to the infinite and unsatisfied cravings of a nice and intemperate appetite, which will have a thousand pretences to defend itself; but ruling ourselves according to the wise sentence of him who said, *τροφᾶϊς ἄρα χρησέον, ἵνα τὸ μὴ πεινῆν,* that we are to eat only to satisfy our hunger."¹

Thus that ancient Father. To this purpose also Clemens Alexandrinus discourses at large, respecting the great evils and inconveniences of gluttony and excess; "that it wastes the estate, ruins the body by impairing its health, and sowing the seeds of all diseases; that it dulls the mind, and renders it inept and sluggish, and prepares it for the entertainment of any vice or wickedness; that, although it is true, all things were especially made for man's sake, yet it is not convenient to make use of all, and at some time less than at others; respect being

¹ Epist. ad Zen. et Seren. p. 511

to be had, not only to the thing in itself, but to the time, occasion, and manner of it: that therefore our meals for the main should be light and easy, not mixed with a variety of dainties, but such as may prepare for fasting, and the exercises of religion."¹ Upon this account St. Cyprian in an epistle, wherein he gives directions about prayers, advises them (and to make the counsel more effectual, tells them he was warned of it by immediate revelation from God) "to eat and drink soberly and sparingly, that outward snares might not enfeeble that heavenly vigour and sprightliness that was in their breasts, lest their minds, being over-charged with too plentiful meals, might be less watchful unto prayer."² The same counsel St. Jerome gives to Læta about the education of her daughter, that her diet should be thin and mean, and that she should never eat more, than she might arise with some appetite, so as that after meals she might be presently fit either to read or sing psalms.³

When at any time invited to public solemnities, as marriages, and the like, the prudence of the church thought fit to lay restraints upon them, and to forbid them light and ludicrous actions, as leaping or dancing, but that they should dine and sup gravely and modestly as becomes Christians.⁴

The chief care of Christians then was to become partakers *τῆς ἄνω τροφῆς τῆς θεῖας* as Clemens Alexandrinus styles it, of that divine food that is from above,⁵ and that only is capable to give real satisfaction, little regarding what provisions they had

¹ Ut supr. Capp. 1, 2, per tot.

² Ad Presbyt. et Diac. Ep. 7, p. 18.

³ Ad Læt. tom. i. p. 57.

⁴ Conc. Laod. Can. 53.

⁵ Ibid. p. 144.

(so they had but any) for that part that dwelt here below. When Julian, the emperor, to raise money for his wars, began to squeeze and oppress the Christians, he sent amongst others to St. Basil (who had formerly been his fellow-student at Athens) for one thousand pounds. The answer he sends him was, that it could not be expected there, where "he had not so much provision beforehand as would serve for one day."¹ Chrysostom commends Olympias not more for the modesty of her garb, than the meanness and sobriety of her diet, to which she had so used herself that she had got the perfect mastery over all undue appetites and inclinations, and had not only bridled the horse, but tamed and reduced him into an entire subjection, and taught her stomach to receive only so much meat and drink as was enough to keep her alive and in health.² This indeed was the great end of their signal abstinence in those days, that by subduing the flesh they might keep the stricter hand over the inordinate motion of corrupt nature.

From the whole of what has been said it is very evident, what little reason the heathens had to accuse the Christians (in their *agapæ* or love-feasts especially) of excess and prodigality; for that they did, Tertullian expressly affirms. "Our little suppers," says he, "besides as being guilty of other wickedness, they traduce as prodigal; saying of us, as Diogenes did of the people of Megara, that they supped as if they meant to die to-morrow: nay, what were infinitely horrid and barbarous, they commonly charged them with *Thyestean* sup-

¹ Basil. Epist. 208, tom. iii. p. 226; Confer Socrat. lib. iii. c. 13, p. 185.

² Ep. 2, ad Olymp. tom. iv. p. 616.

pers, and eating man's flesh.¹ To the first part of the charge, concerning their prodigality, Tertullian answers, that "they could easilier see a mote in another's eye, than a beam in their own." If they looked home they would find that it was their own tribes and precincts, wherein the very air was corrupted with the unsavoury fumes of their loaded tables, and over-charged stomachs: and yet all this was passed by, and only the poor Christians' *triclinium* called in question. If they had any feast it was a love-feast, and whatever cost was laid out upon it, was expended not for vain-glory, but upon the accounts of piety and religion; not to nourish parasites and flatterers, but to refresh the poor; that the order of the feast was as sober and regular as the cause was honest, going no further than modesty would admit: they prayed to God before they ventured upon his creatures, ate but what sufficed hunger, drank no more than consisted with sober and honest men, and fed so as remembering that they were to rise at night to worship God. When they had done they sung psalms, either of their own composure, or out of the holy volumes; and as they began, so they ended their feast with prayer, and then departed with the same care to preserve their modesty and chastity; so that they appeared not so much to have feasted at supper, as to have fed upon discipline and order."²

So he. For the other part of the charge, their feeding upon man's flesh at this common supper, it was a suggestion so savage and barbarous, as could

¹ Apol. c. 39, p. 32; Athenag. Legat. pro Christian. p. 37.

² Ibid.

have found belief with nothing but the very spirit of malice. We shall again meet with this objection in another place,¹ and shall therefore here only note out of their apologist, that it was a charge never offered to be made good against them, nor proved in any of those thousand trials which the Christians had had in all parts of the empire; that it was very unlikely they should be guilty of eating human flesh, who did not think it lawful to be present at the gladiatory sports where men were slain, or so much as to taste any blood at all.² So Biblias the martyr told her enemies, when, being reproached with this in the midst of her torments, she cried out: "How is it possible that we should devour infants, as you charge us, who think it not lawful so much as to taste the blood of any creature."³ For even till then, and a long time after they observed that canon of the first apostolic council, to abstain from things strangled and from blood.⁴ So far were they from being either barbarous or luxurious. "No, our feasts," as he says in Minutius Felix, "are not only chaste, but sober; we indulge not ourselves in banquets, nor make our feasts with wine, but temper our cheerfulness with gravity and seriousness."⁵ And indeed their often watchings and fastings, and their constant observance of the strictest parts of devotion, sufficiently showed how little they pampered or indulged the flesh, the signs whereof they every where carried in their very faces; and this was so notorious, that their very enemies reproached them with

¹ Part. III. c. 1.—Ed.

² Athenag. Legat. pro Christian. p. 38.

³ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. ubi supr. p. 158, cap. 1.

⁴ Acts, xv. 20, 29.

⁵ Min. Fel. p. 26.

their trembling joints, and their pale ghastly looks.¹ Lucian, giving an account of the Christian assembly, into which he tells us Critias was brought to be made a proselyte, describes them to be "a company of persons with their heads hanging down, and pale faces, which certainly did not arise from their fear of suffering, (for no men in the world were ever so willing, nay so desirous of laying down their lives as they,) but from their frequent abstinence and fasting."² To which purpose St. Basil's comment is most apposite, (where commending temperance, or as he calls it continence, using the word in its largest sense.) "Other virtues (says he) being mainly exercised in secret, are not altogether so visible to the eyes of men; whereas continence, wherever it is, will at first sight betray itself; for as a good complexion, and an excellent constitution of body peculiarly design a man to be an athlete or champion; so leanness of body, and that paleness which is the fruit of continence, evidence a Christian to be a real champion for the commands of Christ, vanquishing his enemy in the weakness of his body, and shows how able he is to contend in the cause of piety and virtue."³

¹ Pallidi trepidi-apud eundem. p. 10.

² Philopatr. tom. ii. p. 1007.

³ Reg. Fus. Disput. Interrog. 17, p. 559.

CHAPTER V.

Of their singular Continence and Chastity.

A THIRD considerable instance of that sobriety and moderation for which the Christians were so renowned of old, was their continence, and abstaining from all manner of uncleanness, which is that virtue that we properly call chastity; a virtue for which how eminent they were (notwithstanding what their enemies heavily charged upon them to the contrary, of which afterwards) we shall take notice of in some few particulars.

First, the Christians of those times were so far from breaking in upon any unchaste embraces, that they frequently abstained even from lawful pleasures, and kept themselves even from the honourable and undefiled bed, never marrying all their life. "We are," says Octavius, "chaste in our speech, and chaster in our bodies, and very many of us, though we do not boast of it, do inviolably preserve a perpetual virginity."¹ Thus Justin Martyr tells the emperors, that amongst the Christians there were a great many of either sex, who had from their childhood been educated in the Christian discipline, who for sixty or seventy years had kept themselves single and uncorrupt, and he wished the like could be shown in all other sorts of men.² To the same purpose another apologist: "It is very easy," says he, "to find many amongst us, both men and women, who remain unmarried

¹ Minut. Fel. p. 26.

² Apol. 2. p. 62.

even in old age, conceiving that in this state they shall have fitter opportunities of drawing near to God.”¹ Not that they who persevered in this course of celibate did combine themselves into distinct societies, and bind themselves under an oath of perpetual virginity (as the humour was in after ages): for of this not the least shadow appears in any of the writings of those times. They applied themselves to the business of their place and station, and only lived single, that in those troublesome and hazardous times of persecution, they might be less ensnared with the entanglements of the world, and be more free for the exercises of religion.

Secondly, when they did marry, they generally professed they did it only to comply with the great end of the institution, viz. the propagation of mankind; not to gratify wanton and brutish desires, but to answer the great end of nature, that human society might not fail. “Either,” say they, “we marry not at all, but keep ourselves always continent; or if we do marry, it is for no other end but the bringing forth and the bringing up of children.”² Hence it was that they seldom married more than once. “We willingly contain ourselves,” as he speaks in *M. Felix*, “within the bond of single marriage, and either know but one woman (and that merely out of a desire of children) or none.”³ The first knot being loosed by death, they very rarely tied a second: which gained great honour and reputation both to them and to their religion with the Gentiles amongst whom they lived. Chrysostom tells us that a discourse hap-

¹ *Athenag. leg. pro Christian. p. 37.*

² *Justin Martyr, ibid. p. 71, Athenag. ibid.*

³ *Uhi supr.*

pening on a time between him and his master, who was a Gentile, concerning his mother, being told that she was a widow, and after inquiry concerning her age, being answered that she was forty years old, and that she had lived twenty years of the time a widow, the man was surprised with a strange admiration, and cried out before all the company, "Behold," saith he, "what brave women there are amongst the Christians."¹ The truth is, such was the heavenly zeal and temper of the first ages of Christianity, that they would have no more to do with the world than they needs must, but industriously shunned all its burdens and encumbrances, amongst which they especially reckoned marriage, a state not rashly to be engaged in; for once it was allowable, but for a second time inexcusable. And indeed it cannot be denied but that many of the ancient Fathers, Tertullian, Cyprian, Jerome, and others did inveigh against second marriages with too much bitterness and severity, violently pressing many passages in Scripture to serve the cause, straining the string many times till it cracked again; and not sticking to censure and condemn second marriages as little better than adultery. Hear what one of the Apologists says to it: "Amongst us every man either remains as he was born, or engages himself in one only marriage; for as for second marriages, they are but a more plausible and decorous kind of adultery."² Our Lord assures us, that whoever puts away his wife, and takes another, commits adultery;³ which place, as also another of like importance, how perversely he

¹ Ad Vid. junior. tom. iv. p. 458.

² Athenag. ut supr.

³ Matt. xix. 9.

interprets, and impertinently applies to his purpose, I am not willing to remember. Clemens Alexandrinus speaks in the case with much more modesty and moderation. "As for those to whom God has given the gift of absolute continence, we think them happy: we admire the gravity and stayedness of those that content themselves with a single marriage: but yet say withal that compassion ought to be had of others, and that 'we should bear one another's burdens,'¹ lest he who 'seems to stand fair, do fall himself:'² and as for second marriages that of the apostle is to take place, 'if they cannot contain, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn.'³ However, it is certain the Fathers of old generally did what they could to discourage second marriages.⁴ The ancient canons (as Zonaras tells us) suspended such persons from the communion for a whole year;⁵ and the council of Laodicea, though it determine not the time, yet it requires that they should spend some small time at least in penance, in fasting and prayer, before they be received to the communion.⁶ By the canons that are called apostolical, whoever after baptism has engaged in a second marriage is rendered incapable of any degree in the ministry.⁷ Accordingly Epiphanius reports of one Joseph, whom he knew, a converted Jew, and advanced to the dignity of a count by Constantine the Great, that when the Arians would have laid hands upon him to have made him bishop, he got off by this wile, by pre-

¹ Gal. vi. 2.² 1 Cor. x. 12.³ Ib. vii. 9.⁴ Stromat. lib. iii. p. 428; vid. Epiphani. Hæres. 48, p. 178; Cyrill. ad Illum. Catech. 4, p. 90.⁵ In Can. 7, Concil. Neocæsar.⁶ Can. 1.⁷ Can. 17.

tending himself to have been twice married. But though the Fathers and ancient councils were thus severe in this case, yet the rigour of their censure will be much abated, if what some tell us be true, that many of their passages are not levelled against successive marriages, but against having two wives at the same time. For as a learned man has observed, there were three sorts of digamy: the first, a man's having two wives at once, this was condemned by the Roman laws; the second, when the former wife being dead the man married a second time; a third, when for any slight cause a man put away his wife by a bill of divorce, and married another, which, though then frequently practised, and connived at (if not allowed) by the laws of those times, was yet prohibited by the decrees of the church, and of this last sort (says he) many of the ancient canons are to be understood.²

Thirdly, they were infinitely careful to shun all occasions and appearances of lightness and immodesty; whatever might tend to inveigle their senses, and to debauch their mind and manners; nay, whatever might but give a suspicion of wantonness and incontinence. They declined as much as might be going to all public meetings, such as feasts, plays, shows, &c. When afterwards the fervour of Christianity began to abate apace, and persons had in a great measure lost that huge reverence which former times had for continence and chastity, Theodosius, to restrain them a little within the bounds of decency, provided by a law that no woman, of what quality or rank soever, should

¹ Hæres. 30, p. 61.

² Justell. not. in Can. 1, Conc. Laod.

marry again within a year at least (i. e. within twelve full months, whereas under the old Roman laws, the time of mourning was but ten, as a learned interpreter of that law observes) after her husband's death; and this he ratified by a double penalty, a note of perpetual infamy to be set upon the offending person, and the loss of her whole dower and whatever estate her husband had bequeathed her, which was to go to the children she had by him, or if none, to his next of kin.¹ Photius and his commentator, Balsamon, tell us of a law of the emperor Justinian, making it a sufficient cause of divorce, and losing her dowry, for a woman either to feast or bathe in the company of other men without the leave and consent of her husband.² Indeed in the first and purer times they took all imaginable care, that unmarried persons, especially such as were of ecclesiastical cognizance, or had devoted themselves to a severer course of piety, should not commonly converse together. Cyprian, writing to Pomponius about the virgins that had taken profession of continence upon them, but lived too familiarly with some persons that belonged to the church, charges him that men and virgins should not only not sleep near one another, but not dwell together in the same house, lest the infirmity of their sex, and the slipperiness of their youth should betray them into the snare of the devil. Wherefore he commends Pomponius for having suspended the deacon and the rest that had kept such familiar correspondence with those virgins; and ordered that they should not be absolved, till

¹ Cod. Theod. lib. iii. tit. 8, l. 1; vid. Gothofred. in loc.

² Nomocan. τитλ. θ. κεφ. λά. p. 104.

they had sufficiently testified their repentance, and made it appear by satisfactory evidence that no unlawful familiarity had passed between them, and that if ever they returned to the like cohabitation, greater penalties should be inflicted upon them.¹ The foundation of which ill custom doubtless sprung or at least took encouragement from hence. In those first times of Christianity it was usual for clergymen, such especially as were sent up and down to preach the Gospel, to have some grave and sober woman along with them. These women in the writings of the church (wherein there is frequent mention of them) are called *ουνείσακται*, such as were brought in, taken into the house as domestic assistants to ecclesiastic persons. But this proving matter of scandal and inconvenience, was not only cried out against by private Fathers, but by public synods. The council of Antioch, held in the reign of Aurelian the emperor, anno 272, in a synodical epistle wherein they censure the doctrines and practices of Paulus Samosatenus, condemn this among the rest, that he and his presbyters and deacons kept these 'introduced' women, whereby horrible inconveniences did arise; for besides the snare and temptation of it, although they should keep themselves innocent, yet they could not avoid the suspicion and scandal that would arise, and the danger of drawing in others by their bad example.² For which reason St. Basil writes to an old presbyter in his diocess, to abstain from the company of a woman with whom he was wont to cohabit;³ not

¹ Epist. 62, . 98; videsis Conc. 1, Carthag. Can. 3, 4.

² Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. vii. c. 30, p. 281.

³ Epist. ad Paregor. Presbyt. Epist. 198, p. 216.

so much to avoid temptation to incontinence, (the man being then seventy years of age,) as that he might not lay a stumbling-stone, and occasion of offence in his brother's way.¹ The same was universally forbidden by the great council of Nice, and no man within the clergy allowed to have any woman near him, unless his mother, his sister, or his aunt, or such only of whom there could be no suspicion, as we find it in the third canon of that council; in the ancient version whereof these *mulieres ουνεῖσαι* are styled *extraneæ*, strangers;² by which name they are also called in a law of the emperor Honorius, prohibiting any clergyman whatsoever to keep company with these strange women, limiting their converse and cohabitation within the very same relations, to which they are restrained by the Nicene canon, which it is not to be doubted that emperor had in his eye when he made that constitution.³ And because bishops were the highest order in the church, therefore that their honour might be especially secured, care was taken that no bishop under penalty of being deposed should entertain or cohabit with any woman whatsoever, either relation or stranger, that so all pretence either of temptation or scandal might be cut off.⁴

For the same reason it was that they disallowed all clandestine marriages, which were not openly made in the face of the church, accounting them no better than a state of adultery or fornication.⁵ And as they were careful not to give offence to others, so they were not willing themselves to

¹ Rom. xiv. 13.

² Can. 3, ubi vid. Zonar.

³ C. Th. lib. xvi. tit. 2, de Episc. lib. lxiv.

⁴ Synops. Basil. lib. iii. tit. 1, c. 41, p. 29.

⁵ Tertull. de Pudicit. c. 4, p. 557.

come within the shadow of temptation. They stood at a distance from whatever was offensive either to their eyes or ears; their ears they stopped against all loose idle songs, all filthy and obscene discourses; their eyes they shut against all uncomely objects, all wanton and lascivious pictures, as Clemens Alexandrinus expressly tells us; not doing any thing that seemed but to carry an ill colour with it.¹ Nazianzen tells us of his sister Gorgonia, whose example we have often quoted, that for modesty and sobriety she went beyond all other women; that she reconciled the two opposite states of human life, celibate and marriage; the one more sublime and divine, but more dangerous and troublesome, the other more humble, but withal more safe; that she avoided the inconveniences of each, and chose what was most excellent out of both, the sublimity of the one, and the security of the other.

Fourthly, they valued their innocency and their honour above their lives, and therefore chose to undergo the greatest dangers, to die, yea, to kill themselves rather than any violence should be offered to their chastity. As the fairest promises could not tempt them, so neither could the fiercest torments affright them into any unchaste compliance. When Maximinus the emperor governed in the eastern parts, amongst other effects of his wild and brutish fury and extravagance, he filled all places where he came with adulteries and ravishments, abusing women, and deflouring virgins; "which succeeded well enough," says the historian,

¹ Admonit. ad Græc. p. 40; vid. Conc. 6, in Trull. Can. 100, Orat. 11, p. 180.

“with all others, except only Christians, who generously despising death, made light of the rage and fury of the tyrant. The men underwent all sorts of punishments which cruelty could invent; the women bore up with a courage no less manly and unconquerable, and rather submitted their lives to death, than their bodies to dishonour.”¹ Of these he tells us of one especially at Alexandria; a woman of great birth and fortunes, but much more famous for her virtues, especially her modesty and chastity, which she stoutly defended, and preferred before her nobility or her riches, her excellent parts, or any accomplishments whatsoever. The emperor had oft attempted her by all arts of solicitation, but all in vain; till at last, not being able to prevail, his affection somewhat attempering his fierceness and cruelty, he would not put her to death, which she was most ready to have undergone, but spoiled her of her estate, and then sent her into banishment; there being many hundreds of others at the same time, who not being able to bear the violation of their chastity, wherewith the governors and commanders threatened them, willingly subjected themselves to all kinds of racks and tortures, and the worst capital punishments which their enemies could inflict upon them. Nay, when the case so happened, that they were set upon, and all their resoluteness could not provoke the cruel kindness of their enemies to dispatch them, they would rather dispatch themselves, than fall into the rude hands of lust and wantonness. Thus did that famous woman and her two daughters, (mentioned by the same author, whose names, as Chrysostom in an oration

¹ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. viii. c. 14, p. 312.

on purpose in their commendation tells us, were Domnina the mother, Bernice and Prosdoce the daughters,) eminent as well for the outward beauty and features of their bodies, as for the inward virtues of their minds. Being sought for as a prey to lust under the Dioclesian persecution, they fled for it; but being found out by the soldiers that were sent to search for them, and knowing there was no other way to escape, they unanimously threw themselves into the river, and there perished in the waters.¹ The like he relates of a noble woman at Rome, wife to the prefect or chief governor of the city, (but a Christian,) that Maxentius the emperor being passionately inflamed with the love of her, sent officers to fetch her, who breaking into the house, to the great terror of her husband, would violently have seized on her; of whom she begged only so much time, as that she might a little dress and adorn herself; under which pretence, retiring into her chamber, she caught up a sword, and by a fatal stroke left the messengers nothing but a dismal spectacle of amazement and horror.² These instances (both of them highly applauded by Chrysostom and Eusebius) I quote not to justify a man's violent laying hands upon himself, as either lawful or laudable. Whether in some cases persons might not be acted by more divine motions, extraordinary and heroic impulses (the case of Sampson, &c.) as St. Augustine inclines to believe,³ it is not very pertinent for me to inquire; it being enough to my purpose to observe, that they

¹ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. viii. c. 12, p. 305; Hom. 51, de S. S. Domn. Ber. Prosdo. tom. i. p. 557.

² Ibid. c. 14, p. 313.

³ De Civ. D. lib. i. c. 26, Col. 75, ubi de hac ipsa re agit.

were great evidences how highly they prized chastity and integrity, which they were willing to secure at so dear a rate.

And in those cases wherein life was not concerned, they gave the greatest testimony how much they abhorred all uncleanness. None were ever more hearty enemies to idolatry, and yet Origen at Athens, when put to this unhappy choice, either to sacrifice or defile himself, chose rather to commit idolatry than fornication. Though even that too was rather his enemies' act than his own, they thrusting the frankincense into his hand, and haling him up to the altar.¹

Fifthly, whenever any was found guilty of the least uncleanness, it was looked upon and bewailed as a very heinous sin, and a great dishonour to the Christian name. "What is it that I hear?" says Cyprian. "How detestable should it be to you, what with the greatest grief and affliction of my mind I have understood, that there are some amongst you, who have defiled their bodies, the temples of God, even after they were sanctified by confession, and cleansed by baptism, with filthy and infamous embraces."² St. Basil writing to a monk, who had been overtaken with this fault, elegantly bewails the greatness of his sin, as "a dishonour to the strictness of his former profession; a reproach to those lips which had kissed the mouths of so many saints; to those hands which so many devout persons had embraced as pure and undefiled; to those knees before which so many servants of God had fallen down."³ In the next epistle he

¹ Epiphan. Hæres. 64, p. 228.

² Ad Rogat. et Confess. Ep. 6, p. 15.

³ Ad Monac. Laps. tom. iii. p. 11.

deals with the woman, and treats her with the same elegant severity, though in both he so aggravates the case, as to excite them to repentance, and to a speedy recovery of themselves out of the snare of the devil. But because good words and persuasions were not cords strong enough to restrain some men's irregular lusts and passions, they twisted with them the discipline of the church: and therefore,

Sixthly, they were wont to punish the breach of chastity by inflicting severe penalties upon incontinent persons. Amongst all the sins that were most sharply punished in the ancient church, adultery was one of the chief. Whoever was convicted of it was immediately cast out of the church, and disowned as a rotten member. This Tertullian tells us, first made Marcion turn heretic; for being found guilty of lying with a virgin, and for that thrown out of the communion of the church, he betook himself to one Cerdon, a master heretic, and espoused his doctrines and opinions.¹ The truth is, in those first times the punishment of adultery was very great; perpetual penance all a man's life, and scarce being admitted into communion at the very hour of death; till Pope Zephyrinus about the year two hundred and sixteen, considering the great inconveniences of so much severity, persons hereby being oft driven into despair, and others discouraged from coming over to the Christian faith, ordered that penance in this case should be limited to a shorter time, which being ended, such persons might be received again into the bosom of the church. This decree gave great offence to

¹ Vid. Tert. de Pudicit. c. 7, p. 560; de Hæres. p. 120.

the African churches, most whereof stood up for the strictness of the ancient discipline. Tertullian more especially inveighs against it with much bitterness and animosity, as a thing unfit in itself, and an innovation in the church.¹ The same, Cyprian also plainly intimates, though he himself was for the more mild opinion. By the Ancyran council, held in the year three hundred and fifteen, it was decreed, that whoever was guilty of adultery, should be punished with a seven years' penance before they were admitted to the communion.² By the synod of Illiberis, if a man after having done his penance for the first fault, fell afterwards into the same sin again, he was not to be taken into communion, no not at the hour of death.³ St. Basil, writing to Amphitatrius rules for the conduct of discipline and the measures of repentance, sets adultery at fifteen years' penance, fornication at seven, and then to be admitted to the holy sacrament.⁴ His brother Gregory, bishop of Nyssa, treating about the same affairs, appoints fornication to be punished with no less than nine years' penance and suspension from the sacrament, and adultery, and all other species of uncleanness with double that time; though allowing a liberty to the spiritual guide to contract this time, as the circumstances of the case or person might require.⁵ But both these last mentioned being but private bishops, their canons could be no further obligatory than to those particular diocesses, that were under their charge: and indeed the censures of the church in this case

¹ Lib. de Pudicit. c. 1, p. 555; Ad Antonian. Ep. 52, p. 71. 72.

² Can. 20.

³ Can. 7, p. 13.

⁴ Epist. Can. 58, 59, tom. iii. p. 36.

⁵ Ep. Canon. ad Letoi. Can. 4, tom. i. p. 951.

did much vary according to time and place, in some more rigid and severe, in others more lax and favourable, though in all, such as did abundantly show what hearty enemies they were to all filthiness and impurity whatsoever.

What has been hitherto said of the modesty, the chaste and sober carriage of the primitive Christians, will receive further light, if we consider how clearly they vindicated themselves from that malicious charge of incest and adultery, which the heathens commonly charged upon them; so commonly, that we scarce find any of the ancient apologists but takes notice of it and confutes it. The sum of the charge, as it is more formally drawn up by the heathen in M. Felix, take thus; "That the Christians knew one another by certain privy marks and signs, and were wont to be in love with, almost before they knew one another; that they exercised lust and filthiness under a pretence of religion, promiscuously calling themselves brothers and sisters, that by the help of so sacred a name their common adulteries might become incestuous; that upon a solemn day they meet together at a feast [he means their love-feasts,] with their wives, children, sisters, mothers, persons of every age and sex, where after they have well eaten and drunk, and begin to be warm and merry, heated with the excess of wine, a piece of meat is thrown for the dogs, who being tied to the candlesticks, begin to leap and frisk about till they have run away with, and put out the lights, and then nothing being left but darkness, the fit cover and shadow for impudence and villany, they promiscuously run amongst one another into filthy and incestuous embraces; and if they be not all alike guilty of incest, it is not

the fault of their will, but the good fortune of their chance, seeing what actually happens to one, is intentionally the lot of all."¹ This is the tale; which however absurd and incredible, yet strangely found belief, or at least was pretended to be believed, amongst the enemies of Christianity. Now, though it be sufficiently refuted by what has been already said, yet we may observe the Christians of those times further pleading these four things in their own vindication :—

First, If this charge had been true, yet the heathens had little reason to object it to the Christians, being themselves so notoriously guilty in this kind.² For adultery, nothing more common amongst them, and for incest it was a general indictment of whole nations, the Persians usually lying with their own mothers; the Macedonians and Egyptians marrying with their own sisters, and this done even at Athens itself. Their histories full of them, their plays and tragedies which they frequented every day with great applause, represented them as lawful and commendable. Socrates himself, the great glory of the heathen world, was condemned at Athens amongst other things for sodomy, and the corrupting of youth; and some of Plato's school have perished in the very act of adultery.³ Nay, their very gods themselves whom they worshipped and adored were highly guilty in this kind. "They feign those things of us," says Athenagoras, "which they themselves report of their own gods; whose lusts and wantonnesses it is no wonder if they style mysteries."⁴ Clemens Alexandrinus tells them,

¹ Page 7, 8.

² Tert. Apol. c. 9, p. 10, c. 39, p. 31; Min. Fel. p. 26.

³ Tert. ib. c. 46, p. 36.

⁴ Legat. pro Christian. p. 35.

“These are the original patterns of your soft effeminacy; this your beastly and shameful divinity; these the doctrines of your gods, co-partners with you in your uncleanness and adultery.”¹ And whereas they might pretend, that these stories of their gods were only the extravagant inventions of their poets, who took a liberty to say any thing to gratify the people; Athanasius answers, that “hereby they shook the very foundation of their gods, having no other authority for their existence, than what account their poets gave them; so that if they feigned their actions, they might with equal reason be supposed to feign their very names and persons; there being the same ground of belief for the one as for the other.”² This propagated looseness and uncleanness to them under a kind of notion and shadow of religion; such as the gods are, such warrantably may be their worshippers. “Wherever you are,” says Tertullian, “at home or abroad, or beyond the seas, lust is your companion, which often stumbles upon incest; whereas chastity diligently and faithfully preserved keeps us from any such event.”³ “And yet though we are thus,” says another apologist, “yet there want not those who object these things to us, and as it is in the proverb, ἡ πόρνη τὴν σώφρονα, the strumpet reproaches the honest woman.”⁴ Adulterers as they are, they charge us who are either always continent, or never marry more than once, with crimes, which we could not believe that there should be such in the world, were not themselves instances of

¹ Admonit. ad Græc. p. 39, 401. Videsis Jul. Firm de Err. Pros. Relig. p. 8.

² Orat. contr. Gent. p. 14, tom. i. ³ Ibid. c. 9, p. 10.

⁴ Athenag. ut supr. p. 37.

them.”¹ This consideration made Justin Martyr thus freely and passionately bespeak the senate: “It were to be wished that somebody getting up into a high place, should with a loud voice cry out, Be afraid, be afraid to charge those things, of which you yourselves are openly guilty, upon the innocent and undeserving; to attribute what belongs only to yourselves and to your gods, to those, with whom there is not so much as the shadow of any such thing to be found: learn to be more wise and sober, and repent of such injustice.”²

Secondly, That the heathens themselves did tacitly confess Christians to be innocent in this case, when their great care was how they might debauch them; it was a part of their severest punishment to be prostituted, and exposed to rudeness and violence; a penalty which they would never have inflicted upon them, had they really been such lewd profligate persons as their enemies endeavoured to represent them. This plea Tertullian urges in the close of his Apology: “Condemn,” says he, “crucify, and torment us; your cruelty and injustice is the evidence of our innocency, and therefore God suffers it to come upon us: for while you choose rather to condemn a woman that is a Christian to the stews than to the lions,² you plainly confess that the violation of chastity is accounted by us a heavier penalty than any punishment or kind of death which you can inflict upon us.”

Thirdly, they confidently assured them that

¹ Mim. Fel. p. 24. B.

² Apol. 1, p. 51.

³ Tertul. Apol. c. 50. In the original there is a play upon the words which is powerfully sarcastic: “*Ad Lenonem damnando Christianum potius quam ad leonem.*” The cry of *Christianos ad leones* had previously been the wonted signal for their destruction. See vol. ii. chap. vii.—ED.

amongst Christians it was not only unlawful to be actually unclean, but to look after a woman with wanton and unchaste desires. "Our Lord," says Justin Martyr, "has told us that whosoever looks after a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart; and that if our right eye offend us we must pluck it out."¹ As therefore human laws condemn two wives: so by the laws of our Master they are sinners, who look upon a woman with unfit desires after her; for not only he that really commits adultery is rejected by him, but even he that has a mind to it; not only our actions, but our very thoughts being open unto God.² So Athenagoras. "So far are we from any promiscuous embraces, that we are not permitted the freedom of an unchaste look; for whoever (says our Lord) 'looks after a woman to desire her, has played the adulterer with her in his heart.' We are not therefore allowed to use our eyes to any other purposes, than those for which God created them, viz. to be lights to the body. To abuse them to wantonness, is to be guilty of adultery, forasmuch as they know they were made for other ends, and cannot but be conscious to themselves of their own thoughts. And how is it possible for men under such limitations to be otherwise than chaste and sober? for we have not to deal with human laws, under which a man may be wicked, and yet escape; but our discipline was delivered by God himself; we have a law which makes ourselves the rule and measure of righteousness towards others. According therefore to the difference of age we account some as

¹ Matt. v. 28, 29.

² Apol. 2, p. 61, 62.

sons and daughters, others as brethren and sisters : the more aged we honour in the place of parents ; those therefore whom we account as sisters, or as allied to us in any other relation, we reckon it a matter of great concernment that they should be chaste and incorrupt.”¹

Fourthly, They pleaded, that this objection would easily vanish, if they would but consider what a strange change and alteration was in this very case wrought upon persons at their first conversion to Christianity ; immediately becoming quite of another spirit and temper from what they were before. “ We who before time (says Justin Martyr, speaking of the converting power of the Christian doctrine) did please ourselves in fornications and uncleanness, do now solely embrace temperance and chastity. What an innumerable company could I name of those who have left their luxury and intemperance, and come over to this kind of life ; for Christ ‘came not to call the chaste and righteous [they needed it not] but the wicked, the incontinent, and the unrighteous to repentance.’ ”² And in his other Apology he gives an instance of a woman, who having together with her husband lived a very vicious and debauched course of life, after her conversion to Christianity became strictly chaste and sober ; and not content with this, she urged her husband also to do the like, laying before him the doctrines of Christianity, and persuading him both by the rewards and punishments of another world : but he obstinately refusing, it begot a quarrel between them, which still ripened into a wider breach, till

¹ Ut supr. p. 36.

² Matt. ix. 13. Apol. 2, p. 61, 62.

³ Apol. i. p. 41.

it became matter of public cognizance, and was an occasion for Justin Martyr to write that excellent Apology for the Christians.¹ Upon this account Tertullian justly condemns the madness of the heathens, and their unreasonable prejudice against Christianity that they would hate their nearest relations merely for being Christians, though they saw how much they were every way bettered by it in their lives and manners: the father disinheriting his son, of whom now he had no cause left to complain, but that he was a Christian: the master imprisoning his servant, though now he had found him useful and necessary to him. "So obstinately," says he, "do men stand in their own light, and contend against those advantages which they might reap by Christianity."² This argument from the powerful and successful influence of the Christian faith, Origen frequently makes use of. "They must needs," says he, "confess the excellency and divinity of Christ's doctrine, whoever do but look into the lives of those that adhere to it, comparing their former course of life with that which they now lead, and considering in what impurities, lusts and wickednesses, every one of them wallowed before they embraced this doctrine; but since that they entertained it, how much more grave, moderate and constant are they become, insomuch that some of them out of a desire of a more transcendent purity, and that they may worship God with a chaster mind, deny themselves even the pleasures of a lawful bed."³ This also Tertullian observes as the incomparable excellency

¹ Apol. i. p. 41.

² Ad Nation. lib. i. c. 4, p. 43.

³ Adv. Cels. lib. i. p. 21; vid. lib. vii. p. 365.

of the Christian doctrine above that of the best philosophers, that "whereas Democritus was forced to put out his eyes, because not able to defend himself from the charms of beauty; a Christian could look upon a woman with chaste unsexed eyes, being at the same time inwardly blind as to any temptation from his lust."¹ With such a mighty force did the Gospel come, and captivate men's hearts into the obedience of the truth. Thence Lactantius makes this triumphant challenge, where, discoursing of the prevalency which the commands of God had upon the minds of men, a daily experience did demonstrate; "Give me," says he, "a man that is angry, furious, and passionate; and with a few words from God, I will render him as meek and quiet as a lamb: give me one that is lustful, filthy, and vicious, and you shall see him sober, chaste, and continent." The same he instances in most other vices. "So great," says he, "is the power of the divine wisdom, that being infused into the breast of a man, it will soon expel that folly which is the grand parent of all vice and wickedness."²

The innocency of Christians standing thus clear from this wicked imputation, it may not be amiss before we conclude to inquire a little into the rise and original of this absurd and malicious charge. Origen fathers it upon the Jews, as they had falsely and spitefully invented it (as they did other things) to disgrace and prejudice Christianity, and he tells us that in some measure it succeeded accordingly, keeping many at a distance

¹ Apol. c. 46, p. 36.

² Lib. iii. de Fals. Sapient. c. 26, p. 328.

from the Christian religion; and that even in his time there were some who for this very reason would have no discourse or commerce with a Christian.¹ But though both Jew and Gentile had malice and spite enough against the Christians, yet I can hardly think that it was a purely invented falsehood, but that it had some ground of pretence, though ill applied. And so we shall find it had; for which we are to know that in the most early times of Christianity there were several sorts of heretics, (who though they had their particular names, yet all called themselves Christians, accounting that hereby they graced and honoured their party, as Epiphanius tells us,) the followers of Simon Magus, Menander, Marcion, Marcus, Basilides, &c. who all went under the general name of Gnostics, and were, under the pretence of religion, guilty of the most prodigious villanies, and particularly those we are speaking of.² Irenæus reports of them that they gave up themselves to all filthiness and bestiality, not only privately corrupting the women whom they had inveigled into their sect, (as some of them returning after to the church confessed with shame and sorrow,) but openly and with bare face marrying the women whom they had seduced from their husbands: committing the most execrable wickednesses, and laughing at the pious and orthodox Christians, whom the fear of God restrained from sin either in word or thought, as a company of ignorant and silly fellows; magnifying themselves, styling themselves perfect and the seeds of election: and much more in other places to the same purpose; where

¹ Contr. Cels. lib. vi. p. 293, 294. ² Hæres. 29, p. 58.

he gives account of the profane and hellish rites of their assemblies.¹ Of the Carpocratians, another gang of those brutish heretics, Clemens Alexandrinus relates the same both as to their doctrines and practices, reporting the matter almost in the very same circumstances wherein it is charged upon the Christians by the heathen in Min. Felix.² And of the Gnostics, Epiphanius tells us, that they had their wives in common, and if any stranger of their party came to them, both men and women had a mark and sign to know one another by. This agrees exactly with the charge of the heathens, that they knew one another at the first sight by privy marks and signs; and having thus owned and received each other, they went to their luxurious feasts, and to those horrid brutishnesses that followed after.

Now this being the case with these abominable wretches, who yet had the face to call themselves Christians, it is no wonder if Jews and Gentiles, who were greedy of any occasion to bespatter and reproach Christians, and rather than not find an occasion would make one, charged it upon all Christians, either not knowing it to be otherwise or if they did, not willing to distinguish between true and false. And that this was the true and only rise and ground of the charge, besides some intimations of it in Justin Martyr, we have it expressly asserted by Eusebius, as that which gave oeing to that absurd and impious opinion, which spread so fast amongst the heathens, of the Christians being guilty of promiscuous mixtures, to the

¹ Adv. Hæres. lib. i c. 1, p. 23; vid. etiam, c. 9, p. 70, et c. 32, p. 132.

² Stromat. lib. iii. p. 430.

great reproach and infamy of the Christian name.¹ I do not deny but this malicious report might receive strength and encouragement from the servants of some Christians, who being racked by the heathens, might confess what they put into their mouths, and this charge amongst the rest. This the same historian relates out of the letters of the churches in France. Certain Gentiles who were servants to some Christians being apprehended, and having seen the exquisite torments which the Christians were put to, for fear of the like, did at the instance of the soldiers who urged them to it, confess, that the Christians had amongst them incestuous mixtures, and suppers furnished with man's flesh, laying such things to their charge as they held unlawful to speak or think of, or could believe were ever done by men: which being once

¹ Apol. 2, p. 56, 70; Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. c. 7, p. 120.—With reference to this charge Justin Martyr observes that “the name of Christian being applied to every sect professing Christianity, in the same manner as the disciples of the several systems of philosophy are indifferently called philosophers, the evil practices of heretics are no more to be charged upon Christians generally, than those of one sect of philosophers upon another. The same answer applies to the existence of heresy in the church, which had been alleged as an argument against the truth of the Gospel; for the various absurdities which had been preached by the early sects, could no more be referred to Christianity, than the numerous errors of philosophers to philosophy. On the contrary, the heretics themselves bear testimony to the Christian cause, each of them endeavouring to support their respective tenets by an appeal to the Gospel. Irenæus, after stating that there were four Gospels, and *four only*, generally received by Christians, observes, (Adv. Hær. iii. 11.): “Tanta est autem circa hæc Evangelia firmitas, ut et ipsi hæretici testimonium reddant eis, et, ex ipsis egrediens, unusquisque eorum conetur suam confirmare doctrinam.” To this may be added the evidence which they afford to the divine inspiration of the New Testament, which abounds with predictions of heretical corruptions of the true faith. See 2 Pet. ii. 1; 1 Tim. iv. 1.—ED.

divulged, they everywhere fell upon the Christians with the greatest rage and fierceness.¹ So in the persecution under Maximinus, one of the commanders that then resided at Damascus, laid hold of a few light inconsiderable women in the market, and threatening them with the rack, forced the wretches publicly to confess that they had formerly been Christians, and that they knew all their villainies, that in their religious meetings they committed the most beastly actions; and indeed, whatever else he would have them say that might disgrace Christianity. This confession of theirs he caused to be entered into the public records, and then transmitted it to the emperor, by whose command it was immediately published in all cities and places of the empire.² So industriously did the malice of men and devils bend all the nerves of their power and subtlety (though in vain) either wholly to suppress, or at least to dishearten and baffle out the Christians.

¹ Lib. v. c. i. p. 156.

² Ib. lib. ix. c. 5, p. 350.

THE END OF VOL. I.





323214

R.H
C

Author ..Cave, William

Title ..Primitive Christianity. New ed. Vol.1.

**University of Toronto
Library**

**DO NOT
REMOVE
THE
CARD
FROM
THIS
POCKET**

Acme Library Card Pocket
LOWE-MARTIN CO. LIMITED

