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HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY,
THE QUEEN.

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VOL. XIII.

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M DCCCXXXV.

LONDON :
JOSEPH RICKERBY, PRINTER,
SHERBOURN LANE.



Engraved from

PAUL AND BARNABAS AT LYSTRA.

A. W. Waite, sculp.

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY ;

OR, THE RELIGION OF THE

ANCIENT CHRISTIANS

IN THE FIRST AGES OF THE GOSPEL.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF PAGANISM UNDER THE FIRST
CHRISTIAN EMPERORS ;
AND THE LIVES OF JUSTIN MARTYR AND ST. CYPRIAN.

BY WILLIAM CAVE, D.D.

IN TWO VOLS.

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

Just. Mart. Parænes. ad Græc. p. 31.

Nos non habitu Sapientiam, sed mente præferimus :
Non eloquimur magna, sed vivimus.

Minuc. Fel. Dial. pag. 31.

WITH AN
INTRODUCTORY ESSAY, AND NOTES,

BY THE

REV. WM. TROLLOPE, M.A.

VICAR OF GREAT WIGSTON, LEICESTERSHIRE ; AND LATE ONE OF THE CLASSICAL
MASTERS OF CHRIST'S HOSPITAL.

VOL. II.

LONDON :

John Hatchard and Son, Piccadilly ;

WHITTAKER & CO. AVE-MARIA LANE ; SIMPKIN & MARSHALL,

STATIONERS' COURT ; TALBOYS, OXFORD ; DEIGHTON,

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PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

PART II.

CONTINUED.

CHAPTER VI.

Of their Readiness and Constancy in professing their Religion.

WHEN our blessed Saviour sent out his disciples to preach the Gospel, he acquainted them with the difficulties that were like to attend their message, but withal bad them arm themselves with constancy and resolution, and not to regard the scoffs and reproaches, the miseries and sufferings that might fall upon them: 'not to fear them that could only kill the body,' but to make a free and bold confession of his name before the world, and cheerfully to 'take up their cross and follow him.'¹ St. Paul, though himself then in chains at Rome, exhorts the Christians to 'stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel, being in nothing terrified by their adversaries, it being given them on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake,'²

¹ Matt. x. 28, 38; xvi. 24; Luke, ix. 23; xii. 4.

² Phil. i. 27—29.

which made it very necessary for them to have their 'feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.'¹ And certainly, if ever true courage and greatness of mind appeared in any persons in the world, it was in the Christians of those times, who with such a generous and unterrified mind defied dangers and torments, owned and gloried in the profession of Christianity against all the threats, reproaches, and persecutions which the worst of their adversaries could make against them. We shall first see what account their Apologists give of it even before their enemies, and then how they made it good in their lives and actions.

Justin Martyr, speaking of the successful propagation of the Gospel, immediately upon Christ's resurrection and ascension into heaven, "The apostles of Christ (says he) going forth from Jerusalem, preached the powerful word in every place; although it were capital either to preach or to profess the name of Christ, which yet we do everywhere embrace and teach: which if you, as enemies, still go on to obstruct, the worst you can do, is but to kill us, whereby you will do us no great harm, but will purchase to yourselves, and to all those that unjustly persecute us, and persist impenitent in their proceedings, the vengeance of eternal flames."² When Trypho the Jew had charged Christianity for an idle story, and the Christians for no better than fools to quit all the conveniences of this life upon the account of it; the Martyr answers, "that this proceeded from his ignorance, and an implicit assent to the absurd and malicious insinuations of their rabbins, who understood very little of the

¹ Eph. vi. 15.

² Apol. 2. p. 83.

Scriptures; that would he but admit the true reasons of Christianity, he would quickly understand how far they were from being in an error, and how little reason they had to quit their profession, although men did sufficiently scorn and reproach them for it, and the powers of the world endeavour to force them to renounce and forsake it: notwithstanding all which, they chose rather to die, and cheerfully underwent it; being fully assured, that what God had promised through Christ he would infallibly make good to them.”¹ Discoursing afterwards of the same matter, “As for us (says he) that have entertained the religion of the holy Jesus, yourselves know very well, that there is none throughout the world that is able to subdue or affright us out of our profession; nothing being plainer, than that though our heads be exposed to swords and axes, our bodies fastened to the cross, though thrown to wild beasts, harassed out with chains, fire, and all other instruments of torment, yet do we not start from our profession; nay, the more these things happen to us, the faster others flock over to the name of Jesus, and become pious and devout followers of Christ; it being with us in this case, as with a vine, which being pruned and trimmed, and its luxurious excrescences pared off, brings forth more fruitful and flourishing branches.”² How little he valued any danger in competition with the truth, he tells his adversary he might know by this, that he would not stifle and conceal it, although they should immediately tear him in pieces for it; and therefore when he saw his countrymen the Samaritans seduced by the impostures

¹ Dial. cum Tryph p. 226, 323. D.

² Ib. p. 337.

of Simon Magus, whom they held to be a god above all principality and power, he could not but by an address make his complaint to Cæsar, not regarding the hazards and troubles that might ensue upon it.¹ Tertullian giving the heathens an account of that Christ whom they worshipped, tells them they might well believe it to be true, for that they stood to it with their last drop of blood. "We speak it (says he) and we speak it openly; yea while you are tearing our flesh, and shedding our blood, we cry aloud, that we worship God through Christ."² So fully were they satisfied in the truth of their religion, as to be ready rather a thousand times to die than to deny it.

Nor were these merely big words with which the Christians vapoured in the sight of their enemies, we shall find that they made them good by acting suitable to these professions and protestations. They did not then think it enough to espouse the faith of Christ, unless they publicly testified it to the world; whereof this instance amongst others. Victorinus a rhetorician of Rome, a man of so great note and fame, that he had obtained the honour of a public statue, but a zealous defender of paganism and idolatry, had read the holy Scriptures, by which being convinced, he came to Simplician, and privately told him that he was a Christian; which the other refused to believe unless he saw him testify it in the public church. To which Victorinus returned with a little scorn, "What, are they then the walls that make a Christian?" This answer he as oft returned as the other urged a public confession, for he was not willing to disoblige

¹ Dial. cum Tryph. p. 349.

² Apol. c. 21, p. 21.

his great friends, who he knew would fall foul upon him: till by reading and meditation he gathered courage, and fearing that Christ would 'deny him before the holy angels', if he should refuse to 'confess him before men,'¹ he became sensible of his fault, and was ashamed of his vanity and folly, and calling to Simplician, "Let us go (said he) into the church, I will now become a Christian." Which when he had done, and had been thoroughly instructed in the faith of Christ, he offered himself to baptism; and being to make the accustomed confession of his faith, the ministers of the church offered him the liberty of doing it in a more private way, (as they were wont to do for those who were of a fearful and bashful temper,) which he utterly refused, and openly made it before all the people; affirming it to be unreasonable that he should be ashamed to confess his hopes of salvation before the people, who while he taught rhetoric, (wherein he hoped for no such reward,) had publicly professed it every day:² an action that begat great wonder in Rome, as it was no less matter of rejoicing to the church. No dangers could then sway good men from doing their duty. Cyprian highly commends Cornelius for taking the bishopric of Rome upon him in so dangerous a time; for the greatness of his mind, and the unshaken firmness of his faith, and the undaunted managery of his place, at a time when Decius the Tyrant threatened such heavy severities to the ministers of Christianity, and would sooner endure a co-rival in the empire, than a bishop to sit at Rome.³ How freely, how

¹ Luke, xii. 8.

² August. Confes. lib. viii. c. 2, tom. i. col. 136, 137.

³ Ad Antonian. Epist. 52, p. 68.

impartially did they speak their minds, even to the face of their bitterest enemies! When Maris, bishop of Chalcedon, a man blind with age, met Julian the emperor, he boldly charged him with his atheism and apostacy from the Christian faith. Julian reproached him with his blindness, and told him his Galilean God would never cure him; to which the good old man presently answered, "I thank my God, who has taken away my sight, that I might not behold the face of one that has lapsed into so great impiety."¹

Were they at any time attempted by arts of flattery and enticement, the charms would not take place upon them. So when Julian, both by himself and the officers of his army, set upon the soldiers, and by fair promises of preferments and rewards sought to fetch them off from Christianity, though he prevailed upon some few weak and instable minds, yet the far greatest part stood off; yea, by many even of the meanest and most inconsiderable quality his temptations were as resolutely beaten back as the blow of an engine is by a wall of marble.² Nor were they any more shaken by storms and threatenings. When Modestus, the governor under Valens the Arian emperor, could not by any means bring over St. Basil to the party, he threatened him with severity: "Dost thou not fear this power that I have?" "Why should I fear," said Basil; "what canst thou do, or what can I suffer?" The other answered, "The loss of thy estate, banishment, torment, and death." "Threaten us with something else if thou canst," said Basil,

¹ Soer. Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. c. 12, p. 183.

² Nazian. Orat. in Jul. 1, p. 75.

“for none of these things can reach us. Confiscation of estate cannot hurt him that has nothing to lose, unless thou wantest these tattered and thread-bare garments, and a few books wherein all my estate lies. Nor can I be properly banished, who am not tied to any place: wherever I am it will be my country; the whole earth is God’s, in which I am but a pilgrim and a stranger. I fear no torments, my body not being able to hold out beyond the first stroke; and for death, it will be a kindness to me, for it will but so much the sooner send me unto God, for whose sake I live, and am indeed in a great measure already dead, towards which I have been a long time hastening. Reproach and threaten, and use your power to the utmost; yet let the emperor know, that you shall never be able to make us assent to your wicked doctrine, no, though you should threaten ten thousand times worse than all this.” The governor was strangely surprised with the spirit and resolution of the man, and went and told the emperor that one poor bishop was too hard for them all.¹ And indeed so big were their spirits with a desire to assert and propagate their religion, that they would not hide their heads to decline the greatest dangers.

When the officers were sent to apprehend St. Polycarp, and had with great industry and cruelty found out the place where he was, though he had timely notice to have escaped by going into another house, yet he refused, saying, “The will of the Lord be done;” and coming down out of his chamber, saluted the officers with a cheerful and a pleasant countenance. As they were carrying him

¹ Id. in laud. Basil. Orat. 20. p. 349, 350.

back, two persons of eminency and authority met him in the way, took him up into their chariot, laboured by all means to persuade him to do sacrifice; which when he absolutely refused after all their importunities, they turned their kindness into reproaches, and tumbled him with so much violence out of the chariot, that he was sorely bruised with the fall. Nothing daunted, as if he had received no harm, he cheerfully went on his way, a voice being heard as he went along, as it were from heaven, "Polycarp, be strong, and quit thyself like a man." When he came before the tribunal, the proconsul asked him whether he was Polycarp, which he presently confessed. Then he attempted by all arts of persuasion to urge him to deny Christ, or to do but something that might look like it; but all in vain. "These fourscore and six years," says he, "have I served Christ, and he never did me any harm, and how then can I blaspheme my master and my Saviour?" Being urged to swear by the emperor's genius, he replied, forasmuch as thou pressest me to do this, pretending thou knowest not who I am, know, I am a Christian. Then the proconsul told him he would throw him to the wild beasts, unless he altered his opinion. "Call for them," answered Polycarp, "for we have no mind to change from better to worse; as counting that change only to be honest and laudable, which is from vice to virtue." "But if thou makest so light of wild beasts," added the proconsul, "I'll have a fire that shall tame thee. To which the good old man returned, "You threaten, sir, a fire that will burn for an hour, and presently be extinguished; but know not that there is a fire of eternal damnation in the judgment to come, reserved for the pu-

nishment of all wicked men. But why delay you? Execute whatever you have a mind to." This, and much more to the same purpose be discoursed of, to the great admiration of the proconsul; being so far from being terrified with what was said to him, that he was filled with joy and cheerfulness, and a certain grace and loveliness overspread his face.¹

So likewise when Cyprian was brought before the proconsul; "Thou art," said he, "Thascius Cyprian, who hast been a ringleader to men of a wicked mind; the emperor commands thee to do sacrifice, and therefore consult thy welfare." To which he answered, "I am Cyprian, I am a Christian, and I cannot sacrifice to your gods; do therefore what you are commanded; as for me, in so just a cause there needs no consultation;" and when the sentence was pronounced against him, he cried out, "I heartily thank Almighty God, who is pleased to free me from the chains of this earthly carcass."² Had torments, and the very extremities of cruelty been able to sink their courage, it had soon been trodden under foot; but it was triumphant in the midst of torments, and lifted up its head higher, the greater the loads that were laid upon it; whereof there are instances enough in the histories of the church. Nay, in this triumph even the weaker sex bore no inconsiderable part. Eusebius tells us, among others that suffered in the French persecution under M. Aurelius, of one Blandina, a good woman, but of whom the church was afraid how she would hold out to make a resolute confession, by reason of the weakness of her

¹ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. c. 15, p. 130.

² Act. Passion. Cypr. in vit. ejus p. 17.

body, and the tenderness of her education, that when she came to it, she bore up with such invincible magnanimity, that her tormentors, though they took their turns from morning to night, and plied her with all kinds of racks and tortures, were yet forced to give over, and confess themselves overcome; wondering that a body so broken and mangled should yet be able to draw its breath. This noble athleta gained strength by suffering: she eased and refreshed herself, and mitigated the sense of present pain by repeating these words, "I am a Christian;" and, "No evil is done by us."¹

Nor did they only generously bear these things for the sake of their religion, when they were laid upon them, but many times freely offered themselves, confessing themselves to be Christians when they knew that their confession would cost their lives. So did those noble martyrs, whom Eusebius saw at Thebais; multitudes having been executed every day with all imaginable cruelties. Sentence was no sooner passed against one party of them, but others presented themselves before the tribunal, and confessed that they were Christians, receiving the fatal sentence with all possible expressions of cheerfulness and rejoicing.² The same he also reports of six young men that suffered in Palestine, spontaneously addressing themselves to the governor of the province, owning that they were Christians, and ready to undergo the severest punishments.³ In the acts of St. Cyprian's passion we are told, that the president having caused a mighty

¹ Hist. Eccl. lib. v. c. 1, p. 157.

² Lib. viii. c. 9, p. 301.

³ De Martyr. Palest. c. 3, p. 321.

furnace to be filled with burning lime, and fire with heaps of frankincense round about the brim of it, gave the Christians this choice, either to burn the frankincense in sacrifice to Jupiter, or to be thrown into the furnace. Whereupon three hundred men being¹ armed with an unconquerable faith, and confessing Christ to be the Son of God, leaped into the midst of the fiery furnace, with whose fumes and vapours they were immediately suffocated and swallowed up.¹

There wanted not some who in the hottest persecutions durst venture to undertake the cause of Christians, and to plead it before the face of their bitterest enemies. Thus did Vettius Epagathus a man full of zeal and piety, who seeing his fellow-Christians unjustly dragged before the judgment-seat, required leave of the president that he might plead his brethren's cause, and openly show that they were not guilty of the least wickedness and impiety. Not daring to grant him so reasonable a request, the judge took the advantage of asking him whether he was a Christian, which he publicly owning, was adjudged to the same martyrdom with the rest.² Of Origen we read that though then but eighteen years of age, yet he was wont not only to wait upon the martyrs in prison, but to attend upon them at their trials, and the times of their execution, kissing and embracing them, and boldly preaching and professing the faith of Christ, insomuch that had he not been many times almost miraculously preserved, the Gentiles had pelted him to death with stones, for they mortally

¹ Ubi supr. p. 16.

² Euseb. lib. vi. c. 5. p. 155.

hated him for his industrious and undaunted propagation of the faith. Nay, but when a boy, and his father Leontius was seized upon, he wrote to his father, most earnestly pressing him to persevere unto martyrdom, and not to concern himself what might become of his wife and children, nor for their sakes to decline that excellent cause he was engaged in.¹

By this free and cheerful undergoing the greatest miseries rather than deny or prejudice their religion, Christians evidently demonstrated the goodness of their principles, and showed they were no such persons as their enemies commonly looked upon them; that "a Christian," as Ignatius observes, "is not the child of fancy and persuasion, but of true gallantry and greatness of spirit, having so much hatred of the world to grapple and contend with."² "Those who are malefactors," as Tertullian argues, "desire to be concealed, and shun to appear; being apprehended, they tremble; being accused, they deny; being racked, do not easily nor always confess the truth. But what is there like this to be found in Christians? Amongst them no man is ashamed, none repents him of being a Christian, unless it be that he was no sooner so; if marked out, he glories; if accused, he stands not to defend himself; being interrogated, he confesses of his own accord; being condemned, he gives thanks. What evil then can there be in this, of which he that is guilty rejoices? of which to be accused, is their vote and desire; and for which to be punished is their happiness and felicity."³

¹ Euseb. lib. 6, c. 3, p. 204; Ib. cap. 2, p. 202.

² Epist. ad Roman. p. 57.

³ Apol. c. 1, p. 5.

This likewise Arnobius lays down as a grand evidence of the divinity of the Christian faith, that in so short a time it had conquered so much of the world, subdued men of the greatest parts and learning, made them willing to quit their beloved opinions, to forfeit their estates, to part with their ease and pleasures, and to submit to torments rather than violate the faith of Christ, or start from the station they had entered upon.¹ By this excellent temper and carriage they admirably triumphed over the best men amongst the Gentiles, none of whom durst engage so deep for the defence of their dearest sentiments as the Christians did for theirs. Witness Plato who set up the academy, and brought in an obscure and ambiguous way of delivering his opinions, lest by speaking out he should fall under the sentence and the fate of Socrates. Thus Origen puts Celsus in mind of Aristotle, who, understanding that the Athenians intended to call him to account for some of his opinions, immediately removed his school, saying to his friends, "Let us be gone from Athens, lest we give them an occasion of being guilty of a second wickedness, like to that which they committed against Socrates, and lest they again offend against the majesty of philosophy:"² it being, alas! not kindness to the Athenians, but cowardice and fear of punishment made him so hastily pack up, begone, and leave his opinions behind him to shift for themselves as well as they could. Indeed this piece of right is done them by Pliny himself, where speaking of some, who having been accused for Christians, to show

¹ Adv. gent. lib. ii. p. 21.

² Cont. Cels. lib. p. 51.

how far they were from it, readily blasphemed Christ and sacrificed to the gods ; he adds, “None of which it is said that they who are truly Christians can by any means be compelled to do.”¹ When Porphyry the great philosopher, and acute enemy of the Christians, enquired of Apollo’s oracle, what god he should make his address to for the recovery of his wife back from Christianity, this answer, (as himself reported it in his book *περὶ τῆς ἐκ λογίων φιλοσοφίας*) is said to have been returned : “That he might as well, and to better purpose attempt to write upon the surface of the water, or to fly like a bird in the air, than to reduce his wife from those wicked sentiments she had taken in.” And this was so common and notorious, that it became in a manner proverbial : whence Galen, when he would express how pertinaciously the philosophers adhered to those sentiments they had once drunk in, and how very hard and almost impossible it was to convince them ; “Sooner,” says he, “may a man undeceive a Jew or a Christian, and make them renounce the doctrines of Moses or of Christ, than philosophers and physicians that are once addicted to their several sects.”²

¹ Epist. 97, lib. 10.

² Galen. *Περὶ διαφ. σφυγμῶν* lib. 3, fol. 18, p. 2, tom. iii. *Θᾶττον γὰρ ἂν τις τῆς ἀπὸ Μωυσῆ ἢ Χριστῆ μεταδιᾶξεν, ἢ τῆς ταῖς αἰρέσεσι προσετηκότας ἰατροῦς τε ἢ φιλοσόφους.*

CHAPTER VII.

Of their exemplary Patience under sufferings.

THAT the Christian religion at its first appearing in the world was likely to engage its followers in misery and sufferings, could not be unknown to any that considered the nature of its doctrine, and the tendency of its design. The severity of its precepts, so directly opposite to the corrupt and vicious inclinations of men; the purity of its worship, so flatly contrary to the loose and obscene rites and solemnities of the heathens; its absolute inconsistency with those religions which had obtained for so many ages, which then had such firm possessions of the minds of men, and all the powers and policies of the world to secure and back them, could not prophesy to it any kind or welcome entertainment. This sect (for so they called it) was everywhere not only 'spoken,' but fought 'against;' for since men have a natural veneration for antiquity, and especially in matters of religion, they thought themselves concerned to defend that way that had been conveyed to them from their ancestors, and to set themselves with might and main against whatever might oppose it: especially the great ones of those times; and the Roman emperors made it their master-design to oppress and stifle this infant religion, and to banish it out of the world. Hence those imperial orders that were daily sent abroad into all parts of the empire, to command and empower their governors to ruin and destroy the Christians; of which, that we may

the better apprehend the form of them, it may not be amiss to set down one or two of them out of the acts of the martyrs. This following was agreed upon both by the emperors and the whole senate of Rome. “Decius and Valerian emperors, triumphers, conquerors, august, pious, together with the whole senate, have by common consent decreed thus:—Whereas we have received the gifts and blessings of the gods, by whom we enjoy victory over our enemies, as also temperate seasons and fruits in great plenty and abundance; and since we have found them our great benefactors, and to supply us with those things that are universally beneficial to all: we therefore unanimously decree, that all orders of men, as well children as servants, soldiers as private persons, shall offer sacrifices to the gods, doing reverence and supplication to them. And if any shall dare to violate our divine order thus unanimously agreed upon, we command, that he be cast into prison, and afterwards exposed to several kinds of torments. If by this means he be reclaimed, he may expect no mean honours from us: but if he shall persist contumacious, after many tortures let him be beheaded, or thrown into the sea, or cast out to be devoured by dogs and birds of prey: and especially if there be any found of the religion of the Christians. As for those that obey our decrees, they shall receive great honours and rewards from us. So happily fare ye well.”¹

To this we may add a short rescript of Valerian the emperor to the ministers and governors of provinces:—“We understand that the

¹ Metraphrast. in Martyr. S. Mercur. apud Sur. ad 24 Novemb. tom. vi.

precepts of the laws are violated by those who in these days call themselves Christians. Wherefore we will, that apprehending them, unless they sacrifice to our gods, you expose them to divers kinds of punishments; that so both justice may have place without delay, and vengeance in cutting off impieties, having attained its end, may proceed no further.¹

This course they prosecuted with so much vigour and fierceness, that some of them boasted, that they had absolutely effected their design. Witness those trophies and triumphant arches that were everywhere erected to perpetuate the memory of their conquest over Christianity: whereof these two inscriptions found at Clunia in Spain are a sufficient evidence.

DIOCLETIANUS. JOVIUS. ET. MAXIMIAN. HERCULEUS.
CÆS. AUGG.
AMPLIFICATO. PER. ORIENTEM. ET OCCIDENTEM.
IMP. ROM.
ET NOMINE. CHRISTIANORUM. DELETO. QUI. REMP.
EVERTEBEBANT.²

The other,

DIOCLETIAN. CÆS. AUG. GALERIO. IN. ORIENTE.
ADOPT. SUPERSTITIONE. CHRIST. UBIQ. DELETA.
ET. CULTU. DEOR. PROPAGATO.³

The meaning of both is to show, that Diocletian and his colleague Maximianus had everywhere extinguished the wicked superstition of Christ, so pernicious to the commonwealth, and had restored

¹ Act. Symphor. apud Sur. ad 22 Aug. tom. iv.

² Gruter. Inscript. p. 280, Num. 3.

³ Ibid, Numb. 4.

paganism and the worship of the gods. But long before them we find Nero (the first emperor that raised persecution against the Christians, as Tertullian notes) so active in the business, as to glory (or some flatterers in his behalf) that he had done the work. Witness an inscription found also in Spain:—

NERONI. CL. CAIS. AUG. PONT. MAX.
OB. PROVINC. LATRONIB. ET. HIS. QUI. NOVAM GENERI.
HUM. SUPERSTITION. INCULCAB. PURGATAM.¹

This inscription was set up in memory of his having purged the country of robbers, and such as had introduced and obtruded a new superstition upon mankind. The Christians it is true are not particularly named in it; probably the Gentiles so much detested the very name of Christian, that especially in public monuments they would not mention it: yet can it be meant of no other. For besides that this character of inculcating their superstition admirably agrees to Christians, who sought by all means to instil their principles into the minds of men; besides that superstition was the common title by which the Gentiles were wont to denote Christianity; besides this, there was not (as Baronius observes) any other new religion at that time, or long before or after, that appeared in the world, that could be the object of Nero's persecution.² And how he entertained this, Tertullian sufficiently intimates, bidding them search their own records, and they would find.³ And from this very inscription alone it is evident, they thought,

¹ Gruter. Inscript. p. 238, Numb. 9.

² Ad ann. Chr. 69.

³ Apol. c. 5, p. 6.

that (at least in that part of the world) they had wholly extirpated and rooted it out. By all which we may guess, what hot service the Christians had of it under those primitive persecutions. Indeed their sufferings were beyond all imagination great, which yet did but so much the more exercise and advance their patience, the bitterness of their sufferings making their patience more eminent and illustrious: of which that we may take the truer measures, it will be necessary to consider these two things, the greatness of those torments and sufferings which the Christians generally underwent; and then the manner of their carriage under them.

For the first, the greatness of those torments and sufferings which they underwent, they were as bad as the wit and malice of either men or devils could invent; in the consideration whereof we shall first take a view of those punishments which were more standing and ordinary, familiarly used amongst the Greeks and Romans, and then of such as were extraordinarily made use of towards the Christians. Amongst their ordinary methods of execution, these six were most eminent, the cross, the rack, the wheel, burning, wild beasts, condemning to mines.

I. *The cross* deserves the first place in our account, not only as having been one of the most ancient and universal way of punishment amongst the Gentiles, and from them brought in amongst the Jews, but as being the instrument by which our blessed Saviour himself was put to death. Omitting the various and different forms and kinds of it, which were all used towards the primitive Christians, I intend here only that which was most common; a

straight piece of wood fixed in the ground, having a transverse beam fastened near the top of it, not unlike the letter T, though probably it had also a piece of wood arising above the top of it. There were two things in this way of punishment which rendered it very severe, the pain and the ignominy of it: painful it must needs be, because the party suffering was fastened to it with nails driven through his hands and feet, which being the parts where the nerves and sinews terminate and meet together, must needs be most acutely sensible of wounds and violence: and because they were pierced only in these parts so far distant from the vitals, this made their death very lingering and tedious, doubled and trebled every pain upon them: insomuch that some out of a generous compassion have caused malefactors first to be strangled before they were crucified, as Julius Cæsar did towards the pirates whom he had sworn to execute upon the cross.¹ But no such favour was showed to Christians. They were suffered to remain in the midst of all those exquisite pangs, till mere hunger starved them, or the mercy of wild beasts, or birds of prey dispatched them.² Thus St. Andrew the apostle continued two whole days upon the cross, teaching the people all the while. Timotheus and his wife Maura, after many other torments, hung upon the cross nine days together before they completed their martyrdom.³ Nor was the shame of this way of suffering less than the pain of it; crucifixion being the peculiar

¹ Sueton. in vit. Cæs. c. 74, p. 76.

² Vid. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. viii. c. 8, p. 300.

³ Matyrol. Rom. ad diem 30 Novembr. p. 176; Ib. ad diem 3 Maii, p. 272.

punishment of slaves, traitors, and the vilest malefactors : insomuch, that for a freeman to die thus was accounted the highest accent of ignominy and reproach.¹ Therefore the Roman historian calls it *servile supplicium*, a punishment proper to slaves.² Sometimes they were crucified with their heads downwards. Thus St. Peter is said to have been crucified ; thus those Egyptian martyrs, who hung in this posture, till they were starved out of the world.³ But this punishment of the cross, soon after the world was become Christian, Constantine took away out of reverence to our Saviour, not being willing that that should be the punishment of the vilest malefactors, which had been the instrument whereupon the Son of God had purchased salvation for mankind.⁴

II. *The rack*, called in Latin *equuleus*, either from the situation of the offender's body upon the engine, resembling a man on horseback, or rather from the horsing or hoising of him up to it by ropes and screws. The first design of it was to torment the guilty, or the suspected person, to make him confess the truth.⁵ What the particular form of it was is not agreed amongst learned men ; but this we may probably conceive, that it was an engine framed of several pieces of timber joined together, upon the top whereof, upon a long

¹ Vul. Gallic. in Avid.

² Cass. c. 4, p. 248. Vid. Iact. de Ver. Sap. c. 26, p. 436. [Tacit. Hist. ii. 72, *Sumptum de eo supplicium in servilem modum*. iv. 11. *Malam potentiam servili supplicio expiavit*. ED.]

³ Euseb. lib. iii. c. 1 ; et lib. viii. ubi supr.

⁴ Sozom. lib. i. c. 8, p. 412.

⁵ Cicer. pro Deiotar. p. 579, tom. ii. Vid. Gallon. de cruciat. martyr. c. 3.

board, the suffering person being laid along upon his back and fastened to it by his hands and feet, the engine was so contrived with screws and pulleys, that all his members were distended with the utmost violence, even to a luxation of all the parts, and this more or less according to the tormentors' pleasures. Sometimes they were hung by the hands and feet under the top-board of the engine, and tormented in that posture. This rack was a punishment which the Christians were very frequently put to. Much of the same nature was that which they called the *catasta*, being a piece of wood raised up like a little scaffold, upon which Christians were set, that their torments might be more conspicuous. Thence that proverb in Cyprian, *ad pulpitum post catastam venire*,¹ speaking of Aurelius a confessor, who, having been publicly tormented upon this engine was after ordained a reader in the church, and promoted to read the Scriptures out of the pulpit, as he had lately confessed Christ upon the scaffold. In this, as in that of the rack, there were certain additional torments made by instruments called *ungulæ*, which were a kind of iron pincers, made with sharp iron teeth, with which the flesh was by piecemeal pulled and torn off their backs.

In the time of pope Paul the third, one of these *ungulæ*, as the author of the *Roma Subterranea* tells us, was amongst other things found in the Vatican cemetery amongst the monuments of the martyrs, and laid up amongst the other relics of that church as an inestimable treasure, and a worthy

¹ Epist. 33, p. 47.

object of religious worship; being there kept to be seen and adored by all Christian people.¹ This by the way seems to me a little strange, that it should be accounted an honour and a kindness done to the martyrs, to adore that which was the instrument of their torment. Might they not by the same reason as well worship their executioners, and pay a religious respect to the ashes of those who dragged them to the stake, tore off their flesh, and put them to death with all imaginable pain and torture.

III. *The wheel.* This was a round engine, to which the body of the condemned person being bound, was not only extremely distended, but whirled about with the most violent distortion; the pain whereof was inconceivable, especially as used towards the primitive Christians, the wheel to which they were bound naked being sometimes full of iron pricks, sometimes a board full of sharp-pointed iron pricks being placed under it; so that every time the body of the martyr came to it, they raked off the flesh with inexpressible torment. Thus were served those three martyrs, Felix the presbyter, Fortunatus and Achilleus the deacons at Valentia in France, and hundreds more in other places.²

IV. *Burning.* This was done sometimes by staking them down to a pile of wood, and setting it on fire. Thus suffered Julianus and others in the persecution at Alexandria. Sometimes by laying them to roast at a slow gentle fire, that they might

¹ Rom. subter. lib. ii. c. 4, num. 16, p. 149. "Hæc ungula in sacrarum Sanctuario reliquiarum ejusdem Basilicæ, religiose cultu, tanquam res omni pretiosior auro, dignissime asservatur; et Christianorum populo videnda ac veneranda proponitur."

² Martyr. Rom. ad diem April 23, p. 249.

die with the greater torment: otherwhiles they were hung up either by the neck, hands, or feet, and a fire made under them, either to burn or choke them; or burning torches held to several parts of their naked bodies: sometimes they were placed in an iron chair, or laid upon an iron grate, which was either made red hot, or had a fire continually burning under it: of all which ways of execution, and some other near akin to them, were it not too tedious I could easily give abundant instances.¹ This was accounted one of the prime ways of capital punishments, and none were adjudged to it but the greatest villains, the meanest and vilest persons.²

V. *Throwing to wild beasts.* This was a punishment very common amongst the Romans, to condemn a man to fight for his life with the most savage beasts, bears, leopards, lions, &c. and was usually the portion of the vilest and most despicable offenders.³ Under which notion, the Gentiles looking upon the Christians did most commonly condemn them to this kind of death; a thing so familiar, that it became in a manner proverbial, *Christianos ad leones*, "away with the Christians to the lions."⁴ That they might be devoured with the more ease, they were many times tied down to a stake; sometimes clothed in beasts' skins, the more eagerly to provoke the rage and fury of the wild beasts against them.

VI. *Condemning to the mines.* To this the

¹ Euseb. H. Eccl. lib. vi. c. 4, p. 238.

² Lib. xxviii. Præfat. et §. 11. ff. de pœnis.

³ Lib. iii. §. 5. ff. lib. xlvi. tit. 8. ad leg. Corn. de Sicar. et ven.

⁴ Tert. Apol. c. 40.

Romans adjudged their slaves, and the most infamous malefactors; and to this too the Christians were often sent. What their treatment was in those places, besides their continual toil and drudgery, Cyprian lets us know in a letter to Nemesian and the rest that laboured in the mines, viz. that they were cruelly beaten with clubs, bound with chains, forced to lie upon the hard, cold, damp ground, conflicted with hunger, nakedness, the deformity of their heads half shaved after the manner of slaves, and forced to live in the midst of filth and nastiness.¹ Besides which they were wont to be marked and branded in the face, to have their right eye pulled out, and their left foot disabled by cutting the nerves and sinews of it; not to say, that being once under this condemnation, all their estate was forfeit to the public treasury, and themselves for ever reduced into the condition of slaves.²

These were some of the more usual ways of punishment amongst the Romans, though exercised towards the Christians in their utmost rigour and severity. I omit to speak of Christians being scourged and whipped even to the tiring of their executioners, especially with rods called *plumbatæ*, (whereof there is frequent mention in the Theodosian code,) which were scourges made of cords or thongs with leaden bullets at the end of them; of their being stoned to death, their being beheaded, their being thrust into stinking and nasty prisons, where they were set in a kind of stocks with five

¹ Epist. 77, p. 155.

² Vid. lib. vii. §. 4. ff. qui Test. fac. possunt.

holes, their legs being stretched asunder to reach from one end to the other.

We shall now consider some few of those unusual torments and punishments which were inflicted only upon Christians, or, if upon any others, only in extraordinary cases. Such was their being tied to arms of trees bent by great force and strength by certain engines; which, being suddenly let go, did in a moment tear the martyr in pieces, in which way many were put to death in the persecution at Thebais. Sometimes they were clad with coats of paper, linen, or such-like, daubed in the inside with pitch and brimstone, which being set on fire, they were burnt alive. Otherwhiles they were shut into the belly of a brazen bull, and a fire being kindled under it, were consumed with a torment beyond imagination. Sometimes they were put into a great pot or caldron full of boiling pitch, oil, lead, or wax mixed together; or had these fatal liquors by holes made on purpose poured into their bowels. Some of them were hung up by one or both hands, with stones of great weight tied to their feet to augment their sufferings; others were anointed all over their bodies with honey, and at mid-day fastened to the top of a pole, that they might be a prey to flies, wasps, and such little cattle as might by degrees sting and torment them to death.¹ Thus, besides many others, it was with Marcus bishop of Arethusa, a venerable old man. who suffered under Julian the apostate.² After infinite other tortures they daubed him over with

¹ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. viii. c. 9, p. 300.

² Nazianz. Orat. 1, in Jul. p. 89.

honey and jellies, and in a basket fastened to the top of a pole, exposed him to the hottest beams of the sun, and to the fury of such little insects as would be sure to prey upon him. Sometimes they were put into a rotten ship, which being turned out to sea was set on fire. Thus they served an orthodox presbyter under Valens the Arian emperor; the same which Socrates reports of fourscore pious and devout men, who by the same emperor's command were thrust into a ship, which, being brought into open sea, was presently fired, that so by this means they might also want the honour of a burial.¹ Indeed the rage and cruelty of the Gentiles did not only reach the Christians while alive, but extended to them after death, denying them (what has been otherwise granted amongst the most barbarous people) the conveniency of burial, and exposing them to the ravage and fierceness of dogs and beasts of prey, a thing which we are told the primitive Christians reckoned as not the least aggravation of their sufferings.² Nay, where they had been quietly buried, they were not suffered many times (as Tertullian complains) to enjoy the asylum of the grave, but were plucked out, rent and torn in pieces.³

But to what purpose is it any longer to insist upon these things? Sooner may a man tell the stars, than reckon up all those methods of misery and suffering which the Christians endured. Eusebius, who himself was a sad spectator of some of the later persecutions, professes to give over the account, as a thing beyond all possibility of ex-

¹ Id. Orat. 20, p. 416, lib. iv. c. 16, p. 227.

² Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. c. 1, 165. et de Martyr. Pal. c. 9, p. 334.

³ Apol. c. 37, p. 30.

pression; the manner of their sufferings, and the persons that suffered, being hard, nay, impossible to be reckoned up.¹ The truth is, (as he there observes, and Cyprian plainly tells Demetrian of it,) their enemies did little else but set their wits upon the tenters to find out the most exquisite methods of torture and punishment.² They were not content with those old ways of torment which their forefathers had brought in, but by an ingenious cruelty daily invented new, striving to excel one another in this piece of hellish art, and accounting those the wittiest persons that could invent the bitterest and most barbarous engines of execution. In this they improved so much, that Ulpian, master of records to Alexander Severus the emperor, and the great oracle of those times for law, writing several books *de Officio Proconsulis*, (many parcels whereof are yet extant in the body of the civil law,) in the seventh book collected together the several bloody edicts which the emperors had put out against the Christians, that he might show by what ways and methods they ought to be punished and destroyed, as Lactantius tells us.³ But this book as to what concerned Christians is not now extant, the zeal and piety of the first Christian emperors having banished all books of that nature out of the world, as appears by a law of the emperor Theodosius, where he commands the writings of Porphyry, and all others that had written against the Christian religion, to be burned⁴—the reason why we have no more books of the heathens concerning the Christians extant at this day.

¹ Lib. viii. c. 12, p. 307. ² Cypr. ad Demetr. p. 200.

³ De justit. lib. v. c. 11, p. 491.

⁴ L. 3, C. de Sum. Trinit. sect. 1.

Having given this brief specimen of some few of those grievous torments to which the primitive Christians were exposed, we come next to consider what was their behaviour and carriage under them. This we shall find to have been most sedate and calm, most constant and resolute; they neither fainted nor fretted, neither railed at their enemies, nor sunk under their hands, but bore up under the heaviest torments, under the bitterest reproaches, with a meekness and patience that was invincible, and such as every way became the mild and yet generous spirit of the Gospel. So Justin Martyr tells the Jew: "We patiently bear," says he, "all the mischiefs which are brought upon us either by men or devils, even to the extremities of death and torments, praying for those that thus treat us, that they may find mercy, not desiring to hurt or revenge ourselves upon any that injures us, according as our great Lawgiver has commanded us."¹ Thus Eusebius, reporting the hard usage which the Christians met with during the times of persecution, tells us that, "they were betrayed and butchered by their own friends and brethren; but, as courageous champions of the true religion, accustomed to prefer an honourable death in defence of the truth before life itself, little regarded the cruel usage they met with in it: but rather as became true soldiers of God, armed with patience, they laughed at all methods of execution; fire and sword, and the piercings of nails, wild beasts, and the bottom of the sea, cutting and burning of limbs, putting out eyes, and mutilation of the whole body, hunger, and digging in mines,

¹ Dial. cum Tryph. p. 236.

chains and fetters; all which for the great love that they had to their Lord and Master they accounted sweeter than any happiness or pleasure whatsoever. Nay the very women in this case were as courageous as the men, many of whom undergoing the same conflicts, reaped the same rewards of their constancy and virtue.¹ But this will more distinctly appear in a few particular cases.

First, Whenever they were sought for in order to their being condemned and executed, they cared not to make use of opportunities to escape. Polycarp at his apprehension refused to fly, though going but into the next house might have saved his life. Cyprian it is true withdrew from Carthage when the officers were sent to take him and carry him to Utica, yet he did it (as he tells his people) by the advice of some friends but for this reason, that when he did suffer, he might suffer at Carthage whereof he was bishop, and that those truths which he had preached to them in this life, he might seal before them with his blood; a thing he earnestly and daily begged of God, and which was granted to him afterwards.² And if he did not run away from suffering, much less did they oppose it, and make tumults and parties to defend themselves; no, they were led as 'lambs to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so opened not they their mouth;' but 'committed their cause to him that judges righteously,' and who has said, 'vengeance is mine, and I will repay it.'³ "None of us," says Cyprian to the

¹ Orat. de laudib. Constant. c. vii. p. 622.

² Epist. 83, p. 161.

³ Isai. liii. 7; Acts, viii. 32; Rom. xiii. 36; xii. 19.

governor, "when apprehended makes resistance, nor revenges himself for that unjust violence, that you offer to us. We patiently acquiesce in the assurance of a future vengeance; knowing for certain that whatever we now suffer shall not remain unpunished; for never was any wicked attempt made against Christians, but a divine vengeance was soon at the heels of it."¹

But though they thus resolutely stood to it, when the honour of their religion lay at stake, yet it must not be denied that in some cases they held it lawful and convenient to fly in times of persecution. Tertullian indeed in a book purposely written on this subject maintains it to be simply and absolutely unlawful for Christians to fly at such a time: an assertion which, with all the subtleties of his wit, and the flourishes of his African eloquence he endeavours to render fair and plausible.² But, besides the strictness and rigid severity of the man at all times, this book was composed after his complying with the sect of the Montanists, whose peculiar humour it was to outdo the orthodox by overstraining the austerities of religion, as appears not only in this, but in the case of marriages, fasts, penances, and such-like. Otherwise before his espousing those opinions he seems elsewhere to speak more favourably of shunning persecution.³ But whatever he thought in the case, it is certain the generality of the Fathers were of another mind; that Christians might and ought to use prudence in this affair, and at sometimes withdraw to avoid the storm when it was coming, especially in these two cases:—

¹ Ad Demetrian. p. 202.

² Lib. de fug. in persecut.

³ De patient. c. xiii. p. 147.

I. When persons were of more than ordinary use and eminency, the saving of whom might be of great advantage to the church. Thus St. Paul was let down the wall in a basket, when the governor of Damascus sought his life.¹ Thus Cyprian withdrew from Carthage, and lay hid for two years together, during which time he gave secret orders for governing of the church. Thus Athanasius was, by the universal cry both of clergy and people, persuaded and in a manner forced to retire and save himself; and when the Arians charged him with fear and cowardice, he was forced to write an Apology for himself, wherein he learnedly and eloquently discourses the whole affair; justifying himself from the instances of the Old Testament, of Jacob, Moses, David, Elias, from the example of Christ himself and his apostles, from the plain and positive allowance of the Gospel, ‘when they persecute you in one city, flee into another,’ and that ‘when they should see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place (i. e. the miseries that were to come upon Jerusalem by the Roman army) they should fly unto the mountains, and if upon the house-top, or in the field, not turn back to fetch any thing that was left behind,’² that it was necessary for the apostles to shun the storm, because they were the instruments immediately deputed to propagate and convey the Gospel to the world; that they were herein imitated by the primitive saints and martyrs, who ‘wandered about in deserts and mountains and in dens and caves of the earth,’³

¹ Acts, ix. 25; 2 Cor. xi. 33. ² Matt. x. 23; xxiv. 15.

³ Heb. xi. 37, 38.

and, being equally careful to avoid the two extremes of rashness and cowardice, would neither thrust themselves upon danger, nor basely run from death, when called to it; like wise physicians reserving themselves for the use of those that needed their assistance. All which and a great deal more he rationally urges in that Apology.¹

II. Another case wherein they accounted it lawful for persons to retire under persecutions was, when being but new converts and as yet weak in the faith, they looked upon them as not likely to bear the shock and brunt of the persecution. In this case they thought it better for them to withdraw for the present, than to put them under a temptation of being drawn back to paganism and idolatry. Thus when Gregory, bishop of Neocæsarea saw the Decian persecution grow extreme hot and violent, considering the frailty and infirmity of human nature, and how few would be able to bear up under those fierce conflicts that must be undergone for the sake of religion, persuaded his church a little to decline that dreadful and terrible storm, telling them it was a great deal better to save their souls by flying, than by abiding those furious trials to run the hazard of falling from the faith: and that his council might make the deeper impression upon them, and he might convince them that in thus doing there was no danger or prejudice to their souls, he resolved to show them the way by his own example, and himself first retiring out of the reach of danger, retreated to the mountainous parts thereabouts that were freest from the rage and malice of the enemy.² Nor was this any

¹ Athan. Apol. de fug. sua, tom. i. p. 545.

² Nyssen. Orat. de vit. Greg. Thaum. p. 1001, tom. ii.

impeachment of their zeal and readiness for suffering, but only a prudent gaining a little respite for a time, that they might suffer with greater advantage afterwards.

Secondly, They were so far from declining suffering, and being terrified with those miseries which they saw others undergo, that they freely and in great multitudes offered themselves to the rage and fury of their enemies; embracing death as the greatest honour that could be done them. "They strove," as Sulpitius Severus observes, speaking of the ninth persecution, "which should rush first upon those glorious conflicts; men in those days much more greedily seeking martyrdom in the cause of Christ, than in after-times they did for bishoprics and the preferments of the church."¹ Lucian who certainly had very little love to Christians, yet gives this account of them: "The miserable wretches," says he, (*οἱ κακοδαίμονες*), "do verily persuade them, i. e. those of their own party, that they shall surely be immortal and live for ever; upon which account they despise death, and many of them voluntarily offer themselves to it. Indeed they did ambitiously contend who should be first crowned with martyrdom, and that in such multitudes, that their enemies knew not what to do with them, their very persecutors grew weary of their bloody offices."² Tiberianus the president of Palestine, in his relation to the emperor Trajan, (recorded by Joannes Malela, mentioned also by Suidas,) gives this account of his proceedings against them: "I am quite tired out in pu-

¹ Sac. Hist. lib. ii. p. 143.

² De mort. Peregr. tom. ii. p. 763.

nishing and destroying the Galileans (called here by the name of Christians) according to your commands; and yet they cease not to offer themselves to be slain. Nay, though I have laboured both by fair means and threatenings to make them conceal themselves from being known to be Christians, yet can I not stave them off from persecution."¹ So little regard had they to sufferings, nay, so impatient were they till they were in the midst of flames. This made Arrius Antoninus the proconsul of Asia, when at first he severely persecuted the Christians, whereupon all the Christians in that city like an army voluntarily presented themselves before his tribunal, to be surprised with wonder; and causing only some few of them to be executed, he cried out to the rest, "O unhappy people, if you have a mind to die, have you not halters, and precipices enough to end your lives with, but you must come hither for an execution."² Ignatius, though then in his journey to Rome in order to his execution, yet by the way as he went could not but vent his passionate desire of it: "O that I might come to those wild beasts, that are prepared for me; I am concerned for nothing either seen or unseen more than to enjoy Jesus Christ: let fire and the cross, and the rage of wild beasts; the breaking of bones, distortion of members, bruising of the whole body, yea all the punishments which the devil can invent, come upon me, so as I may but enjoy Christ."³ They even envied the mar-

¹ Apud Usser. Appen. Ignat. p. 9, ex Jo. Malel. Chron. lib. xi. Vid. Annot. in Ep. ad Philad. not. 82, in voc. *Ῥοιανός*.

² Tertul. ad Scap. c. iv. p. 71.

³ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. c. 35, p. 107.

tyrdom of others, and mourned that any went before, while they were left behind. When Laurentius the deacon espied Sixtus the bishop of Rome going to his martyrdom, he burst into tears, and passionately called out: "Whither, O my father, art thou going without thy son? Whither so fast, O holy bishop, without thy deacon? Never didst thou use to offer spiritual sacrifice without thy minister to attend thee: what have I done that might displease thee? Hast thou found me degenerate and fearful? Make trial at least, whether thou hast chosen a fit minister to wait upon thee."¹ To this and more to the same import, the good bishop replied, "Mistake not, my son, I do not leave thee nor forsake thee: greater trials belong to thee; I, like a weak old man, receive only the first skirmishes of the battle, but thou being youthful and valiant hast a more glorious triumph over the enemy reserved for thee: cease to weep, thy turn will be presently, for within three days thou shalt follow me." So pious a contention was there between these good men, which of them should first suffer for the name of Christ. It is memorable what we find concerning Origen though then but a youth, that when a great persecution was raised at Alexandria, wherein many suffered, he was so eagerly inflamed with a desire of martyrdom (especially after his father had been seized upon and cast into prison) that he exposed himself to all dangers, and courted torments to come upon him; and had certainly suffered, if his mother after all other entreaties and persuasions to no purpose,

¹ Ambr. offic. lib. i. c. 42, tom. i. p. 26.

had not stolen away his clothes by night, and for mere shame forced him to stay at home.¹

Thirdly, When they were condemned, though it was by a most unjust sentence, and to a most horrid death, they were so far from raging or repining, that instead of bitter and tart reflections, they gave thanks to their enemies for condemning them. "A Christian being condemned," says Tertullian, "thanks his judges : he takes it for a favour to die for so good a cause."² And Clemens of Alexandria tells us of St. Peter, that seeing his wife going towards martyrdom, he exceedingly rejoiced that she was called to so great an honour, and that she was now returning home ; encouraging and exhorting of her, and calling her by her name, bade her to be mindful of our Lord. "Such," says he, "was the wedlock of that blessed couple, and their perfect disposition and agreement in those things that were dearest to them."³

When Lucius one of the primitive martyrs was charged by Urbicius the Roman prefect for being a Christian, only because he offered to speak in behalf of one that had very hard measure, he immediately confessed it, and being forthwith condemned, he heartily thanked his judge for it, that by this means he should be delivered from such unrighteous governors, and be sooner sent home to his heavenly Father.⁴ No joyfuller message could be told them, than that they must die for the sake of Christ. When the heathens reproached them for dying such an infamous death as that of the cross, and in derision styled them *sarmenticii* and *semarii*

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

² Apol. c. 46, p. 36. Strom. lib. iv. p. 505.

³ Lib. vii. p. 736.

⁴ Just. Martyr. Apol. i. p. 43.

for being burnt upon a little stake to which they were bound with twigs; Tertullian answers for them, "This is the habit of our victory, this the embroidered garment of our conquest, this the triumphant chariot wherein we ride to heaven"¹ When in prison, they looked upon their chains as their ornaments, as adding a beauty and a lustre to them, with which they were adorned against the time of their sufferings, as the bride is with fringes of gold and variegated ornaments against the day of her espousals.² For this reason Babylas the martyr commanded that the chains which he had worn in prison should be buried with him, to show that those things which seem most ignominious, are for the sake of Christ most splendid and honourable;³ imitating therein the great apostle, who was so far from being ashamed of, that he took pleasure in bonds, chains, reproaches, persecutions, distresses for Christ's sake, professing to glory in nothing but the cross of Christ.

Fourthly, Whenever they were actually under the bitterest torments, they never discovered the least sign of a furious or impatient mind, but bore up with a quietness and composure which no sufferings could overcome. Cyprian exhorting the martyrs to courage and constancy, tells them this of those that had gone before them; that in the hottest conflict they never stirred, but maintained their ground with a free confession, an unshaken mind, a divine courage, destitute indeed of external weapons, but armed with the shield of faith.⁴

¹ Apol. c. 50, p. 39.

² Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. v. c. i. p. 160. C.

³ Chrysost. Leg. de S. Babyl. tom. i. p. 669.

⁴ Epist. viii. p. 19. Vide Epist. 57, p. 91.

When Simeon the second bishop of Jerusalem, and of our Saviour's kindred according to the flesh, had by the command of Atticus the governor of Syria been tortured with all the arts of cruelty for many days together, he bore it with such courage, that the proconsul himself, and all that were present, greatly wondered that a man of a hundred and twenty years of age should be able to undergo so many miseries and torments.¹ Of the martyrs that suffered together with St. Polycarp, the church of Smyrna gives this account, "That all that were present were astonished when they saw them whipped till the cords made way to the inmost veins and arteries, till the bowels and the most hidden parts of the body appeared. They were raked with shells of fishes, laid all along upon sharp-pointed stakes driven into the ground, exercised with all sorts of torments, and at last thrown to be devoured of wild beasts; all which they bore with a mighty patience and constancy."² Nay, as we find it in the first part of that epistle, (contracted by Eusebius, but published at large by bishop Usher,) so great was their patience and magnanimity, that in all these sufferings not any of them gave a sigh or a groan. "The holy martyrs of Christ," says the epistle, "evidently show us, that during this sad hour of suffering they were strangers to their own bodies, or rather that our Lord himself stood by them, and familiarly conversed with them, and that, being partaker of his grace, they made light of these temporal torments, and by one short hour delivered themselves from eternal miseries. The fire which

¹ Euseb. lib. iii. c. 32, p. 104.

² Ad. lib. iv. c. 15, p. 129.

their tormentors put to them seemed to them but cool and little, while they had it in their thoughts to avoid the everlasting and inextinguishable flames of another world ; their eyes being fixed upon those rewards which are prepared for them ‘that endure to the end,’¹ such ‘as neither ear hath heard, nor eye hath seen, nor hath it entered into the heart of man,’² but which were shown to them by our Lord, as being now ready to go off from mortality, and to enter upon the state of angels.”³

Thus reasoned those forty martyrs in St. Basil, that suffered at Sebastia in Armenia, in the reign of Licinius, when the governor, to contrive a new method of torment, had commanded them to stand naked all night in cold frosty weather (which in those more northerly countries is extremely sharp and bitter, it being then the depth of winter, and the north wind blowing very fierce) in a pond of water. They first gave thanks to God that they put off their clothes and their sins together, and then comforted one another by balancing their present hardships with their future hopes. “Is the weather sharp? (said they) but paradise is comfortable and delightful. Is the frost cold and bitter? the rest that remains is sweet and pleasant. Let us but hold out a little, and Abraham’s bosom will refresh us; we shall change this one night for an eternal age of happiness. It is but the flesh that suffers, let us not spare it; since we must die, let us die that we may live.”⁴ Thus generously did they bear up under this uncomfortable state; their ardent

¹ Matt. x. 22.

² 1 Cor. ii. 9.

³ *Apud* Ignatian. Part ii. p. 14.

⁴ *Encom.* in 40 Martyr. *append. ad oper. Greg. Thaum.* p. 35.

desires of heaven from within, extinguishing all sense of cold and hardship from without. Nay, when a little before their commander had set upon them both with threatenings and promises, assuring them, that if they would but deny Christ, they should make their own terms for riches and honour, they told him, "that he laid his snares at a wrong door; that he could not give them, what he endeavoured to take from them; nor could they close with his offers, without being infinitely losers by the bargain; that they were ambitious of no gift, but the crown of righteousness, nor sought after any other glory but what was heavenly; that they feared no torments, but those of hell; and that fire that was truly terrible; as for that punishment they inflicted, the longer it was endured, the more way it made for a brighter crown."¹ Such was the temper, such the support of these Christian soldiers, these true champions of the Christian faith.

Indeed this consideration was one of the greatest cordials that kept up their spirits under the saddest sufferings, that they were assured of a reward in heaven. "Amongst us," says Cyprian, "there flourishes strength of hope, firmness of faith, a mind erect amongst the ruins of a tottering age, an immovable virtue, a patience serene and cheerful, and a soul always secure and certain of its God. As for want or danger, what are these to Christians, to the servants of God, whom paradise invites, and the favour and plenty of the heavenly kingdom ex-

¹ Encom. in 40 Martyr. Append. ad Oper. Greg. Thaum. p. 81.

pects and waits for? They are always glad, and rejoice in God, and resolutely bear the evils and miseries of the world, while they look for the rewards and prosperities of another life.”¹ The great philosophers (as Eusebius observes) as much as they talked of immortality, yet by their carriage they showed that they looked upon it but as a trifling and childish fable; whereas (says he) “amongst us even girls and children, the most unlearned and (measured by the eye) the meanest and most despicable persons, being assisted by the help and strength of our blessed Saviour, do rather by their actions than their words demonstrate and make good this doctrine of the immortality of the soul.”² This Julian confesses of the Christians, though according to his custom he gives them bad words, calls them atheists and irreligious persons, that being acted by some evil spirits they persuade themselves, that death is by all means to be desired, and that they shall immediately fly to heaven, as soon as their souls are freed from the fetters of the body.³ Hence it was, that in those times Christians were wont to sing hymns and psalms at the funerals of the dead, to signify that they had attained their rest, the end of their labours, the retribution of their troubles, the reward and the crown of their conflicts and sufferings, as Chrysostom tells us; part of which psalms he elsewhere tells us were: ‘Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee;’ and, ‘I will fear no evil, because thou art with me;’ and again, ‘Thou art my refuge from

¹ Ad Demetrian. p. 202.

² Præparat. Evang. lib. i. c. 4, p. 13.

³ Fragm. Ep. Oper. Part 1, p. 528.

the trouble that compasses me about.'¹ For the same reason, as being a sign of joy and cheerfulness, he there tells us that they carried lights burning before the corps: by all which he tells us they signified, that they carried forth Christians as champions to the grave, glorifying God, and giving thanks to him that he had crowned the deceased person, that he had delivered him from his labours, that he had taken him to himself, and set him beyond the reach of storms and fears.²

But to return. There was scarce any one instance of religion wherein primitive Christianity did more openly approve itself to the world, and more evidently insult over paganism, than the generous courage and patience of its professors. By this they commended both the truth and excellency of their religion, and conquered their very enemies into an embracing of it. Hear how Lactantius pleads the argument, and triumphs in the goodness of his cause. "By reason," says he, "of our strange and wonderful courage and strength new additions are made to us; for when the people see men torn in pieces with infinite variety of torments, and yet maintain a patience unconquerable, and able to tire out its tormentors; they begin to think (what the truth is) that the consent of so many, and the perseverance of dying persons cannot be in vain; nor that patience itself, were it not from God, could hold out under such racks and tortures. Thieves and men of a robust body are not able to bear such tearing in pieces; they groan and cry out, and are overcome with pain, because not endued with a

¹ Hom. 51, de SS. Bern. et Prosd. tom. i. p. 563; Hom. 4, ad Hebr. p. 1785; Psal. cxvi.; xxiv. 4.

² Ib. p. 1784.

divine patience ; but our very children and women (to say nothing of our men) do with silence conquer their tormentors, nor can the hottest fire force the least groan from them. Let the Romans go now and boast of their Mutius and Regulus, of the one for delivering himself up to his enemy to be put to death, because he was ashamed to live a prisoner ; of the other for burning his hand at the command of the enemy to save his life. Behold, with us the weaker sex, and the most tender age can suffer all parts of their body to be torn and burnt, not out of necessity, because they might not escape if they would, but out of choice, because they believe in God. This is that true virtue, which philosophers indeed vainly boast of, but never really possessed.”¹ This and more to the same purpose that eloquent Apologist there urges to the great honour of his religion. By the force of such arguments Justin Martyr confesses that he was brought over from being a Platonic philosopher to be a Christian : for when he saw the Christians whom he had so often heard accused and traduced, undauntedly going to die, and embracing the most terrible executions that were prepared for them ; “ I thought with myself,” says he, “ that it was not possible such persons should wallow in vice and luxury ; it being the interest of all wicked and voluptuous persons to shun death, to dissemble with princes and magistrates, and to do any thing to save their lives.”²

This certainly could not but be a huge satisfaction to all prudent and considerate men that the Christians were guided by better principles than

¹ De Justit. lib. v. c. 13, p. 495.

² Apol. i. p. 50.

ordinary, and that they were fully assured that theirs was the true religion, and that they taught nothing but what they firmly believed to be true. "For to maintain such patience and constancy even unto death," says Origen, speaking of the apostles' propagating the doctrine of Christ, "is not the fashion of those who feign things of their own heads; but is a manifest argument to all candid and ingenuous readers, that they knew what they wrote to be true, when they so cheerfully endured so many and such grievous things only for the sake of the Son of God, in whom they had believed."¹ No dangers could affright them, no threatenings or torments could baffle them out of their profession. Therefore when Celsus accused the Christians for a fearful sort of men, and such as loved their carcasses well; Origen answers, "No such matter, we can as cheerfully lay down our bodies to suffer for religion, as the hardest philosopher of you all can put off his coat."² And indeed the Gospel did mightily prosper and triumph in the midst of these dreadful sufferings; men rationally concluding that there must be something more than human in that doctrine, for which so many thus deeply ventured. So Tertullian tells Scapula in the conclusion of his book: "It is to no purpose to think this sect will fail, which you will see to be the more built up, the faster it is pulled down; for who is there, that beholding such eminent patience, cannot but have some scruples started in his mind, and be desirous to inquire into the cause of it, and when he once knows the truth, be himself moved to close with it and embrace

¹ Adv. Cels. lib. ii. p. 65.

² Lib. vii. p. 357.

it?"¹ Therefore Julian the Apostate out of a cursed policy refused many times openly to put Christians to death, partly because he envied them the honour of being martyrs, partly because he saw that they were like new-mown grass, the oftener it was cut down, the thicker it sprang up again.²

I shall add no more concerning this subject, but the testimony which the very enemies of Christians gave them in this case. Julian the emperor (whom we so lately mentioned, and who fought against Christians with their own weapons, making use of those Scriptures which he had studied while he was amongst them,) when the Christians complained to him of those oppressions and injuries which the governors of provinces laid upon them, made light of it, and dismissed them, with this virulent sarcasm, "Your Christ," says he, "has given you a law, that when you suffer unjustly, you should bear it resolutely, and when oppressed and injured should not answer again:"³ and so certainly they did, undergoing all kinds of miseries, and death itself with so unconcerned a mind, that elsewhere he censures them for this very reason to be acted by the spirit of the devil.⁴ Hence Porphyry in a book that he wrote against the Christians, calls their religion τὸ βάρβαρον τόλμημα, "a piece of barbarous boldness;"—barbarous, because so different from the way of worship amongst the Greeks, with whom every thing was barbarous that agreed not with their principles and institutions: boldness, because the Christians showed such an undaunted courage in bearing miseries and torments, choosing to die a

¹ C. i. p. 72.

² Naz. in Jul. Invect. i. p. 72.

³ Niceph. Eccl. Hist. lib. x. c. 24, tom. ii. p. 53.

⁴ Frag. Epist. loc. supr. laudat.

thousand times rather than to deny Christ, and sacrifice to the gods.¹ For this reason the heathen in M. Felix styles the Christians men of an undone, furious, and desperate party; respecting their fearless and resolute carriage under sufferings, for so he explains himself presently after: "Is it not a strange folly, and an incredible boldness? they despise torments that are present, and yet fear those that are future and uncertain; and while they fear to die after death, in the meantime they are not afraid to die. So sillily do they flatter themselves, and cajole their fears by a deceitful hope of some unknown comforts that shall arise to them."² This Arian, in his collection of Epictetus's Dissertations, confesses to be true of those whom, according to Julian's style, he calls the Galileans; that they underwent torments and death with a mighty courage, but which he makes to be the effect only of use and a customary bearing sufferings.³ The emperor M. Antoninus confesses also the matter of fact, that the Christians did thus readily and resolutely die; but ascribes it not to judgment and a rational consideration, but to mere stubbornness and obstinacy.⁴

¹ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. vi. c. 19, p. 220.

² M. Fel. p. 7.

³ Lib. iv. c. 7. p. 500.

⁴ *Τῶν εἰς ἑαυτὸν*, lib. ii. §. 3. p. 106.

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

PART III.

OF THEIR RELIGION AS RESPECTING OTHER
MEN.

CHAPTER I.

Of their Justice and Honesty.

HAVING given some account of the religion of the ancient Christians, both as it respected their piety towards God, and their sober and virtuous carriage towards themselves; we come, in the last place, to consider it in reference to their carriage towards others, which the apostle describes under the title of righteousness, under which he comprehends all that duty and respect wherein we stand obliged to others; whereof we shall consider these following instances:—their justice and integrity in matters of commerce and traffic; their mutual love and charity to one another; their unity and peaceableness; and their submission and subjection to civil government.

I begin with the first, their just and upright carriage in their outward dealings. One great design of the Christian law is to establish and ratify that great principle which is one of the prime and fun-

damental laws of nature, ‘to hurt no man,’ and ‘to render to every one his due;’ to teach us to carry ourselves as becomes us in our relations towards men. Next to our duty towards God, the Gospel obliges us to be righteous to men, sincere and upright in all our dealings, ‘not going beyond, nor defrauding one another in any matter, to put away lying, and to speak truth to each other as fellow-members’¹ of the same Christian brotherhood and society. It settles that golden rule as the fundamental law of all just and equitable commerce, ‘that all things whatsoever we would that men should do to us, we should even do so to them, this being the sum of the law and the prophets:’² than which as no rule could have been more equitable in itself, so none could possibly have been contrived more short and plain, and more accommodate to the common cases of human life. Upon the account of these, and such like excellent precepts, Alexander Severus the Roman emperor had so great an honour for our Saviour, that he was resolved to build a temple to him, and to receive him into the number of their gods:³ and though he was overruled in this by some who having consulted the oracle, told him, that if it were done, all men would become Christians, and the temples of the gods would be left naked and empty; yet in his most private chapel he had the image of Christ amongst those of many noble heroes and deified persons, to whom he paid religious adoration every morning;⁴ and particularly for this precept, that what we would not have done to ourselves, we

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 6. Eph. iv. 25.

² Matt. vii. 12.

³ Lamprid. in vit. Alex. Sev. c. 43, p. 568.

⁴ Ibid. c. 29, p. 540.

should not do to others.¹ His own historian confesses he learnt this either from the Jews or Christians,² but most certainly from the Christians, in whose mouths it so often was, and in whose Gospel it was so plainly written; and he so highly valued it, that in all public punishments he caused it to be proclaimed by a common crier; nay, was so hugely fond of it, that he caused it to be written upon the walls of his palace, and upon all his public buildings, that, if possible, every room in his court, and every place in the city, might be a silent chancery and court of equity.

So vast a reverence had the very enemies of Christianity for the Gospel upon this account—that it so admirably provides for the advance of civil righteousness and justice amongst men; which, however it has been slighted by some even amongst Christians, under the notion of moral principles, yet, without it, all other religion is but vain; it being a strange piece of folly for any to dream of being godly without being honest, or to think of being a disciple of the first, while a man is an enemy to the second table. Sure I am, the Christians of old looked upon honesty and an upright carriage as a considerable part of their religion; and, that to speak truth, to keep their words, to perform oaths and promises, to act sincerely in all their dealings, was as sacred and as dear to them as their lives and beings. Speech, being the great

¹ Lamprid. in vit. Alex. Sev. c. 51, p. 577.

² The Jews had the maxim, as expressed in Tobit. iv. 15, ὁ μισεῖς, μηδὲνὶ ποιήσῃς. Several heathen writers have also delivered it; and, among others, Seneca (Epist. 94.): *Ab altero expectes, alteri quod feceris*. As a Christian precept it rests upon holier motives; and is something more sacred than a mere principle of human ethics. ED.

instrument of mutual commerce and traffic, shall be the first instance of their integrity. They ever used the greatest candour and simplicity in expressing their mind to one another, not pretending what was false, nor concealing what was true: yea yea, and nay, nay,¹ was the usual measure of their transactions. A lie they abhorred as bad in all, as monstrous in a Christian, as directly opposite to that truth to which they had consigned and delivered up themselves in baptism, and therefore would not tell one, though it were to save their lives. When the heathens charged them with folly and madness that they would so resolutely suffer, when a parcel of fair words might make way for them to escape, telling them it was but doing or saying as they were bid; and that they might secure their consciences by mental reservations; Tertullian lets them know that they rejected the motion with the highest scorn, as the plain artifice and invention of the devil.² “When we are most severely examined,” says Justin Martyr, “we never deny ourselves, counting it impious in anything to dissemble or deny the truth, as we know the contrary is acceptable unto God:³ and though we could (as he told the emperors) when questioned, evade or deny it, yet we scorn to live upon any terms, by which we must be forced to maintain our lives by lies and falsehood.”⁴

This honest and ingenuous simplicity they practised to that exactness and accuracy, that for a Christian to be put to his oath was accounted a disparagement to his fidelity and truth. So Cle-

¹ Matt. v. 37; James, v. 12. ¶

² Tertul. Apol. c. 27. p. 26.

³ Apol. 1, p. 43.

⁴ Ib. Apol. 2. p. 57.

mens Alexandrinus tells us: "He that approves himself and is tried," says he, "in this [i. e. the Christian] way of piety and religion, is far from being forward either to lie or swear; for an oath is a determinative assertion, with a calling God to witness for the truth of it: but how shall any one that is faithful, so far render himself unfaithful or unworthy of belief, as to need an oath, and not rather make the course of his life a testimony to him as firm and positive as an oath, and demonstrate the truth of his assertion by the constant and immutable tenor of his words and actions." "It is enough therefore," as he presently after adds, "for every good man either by way of affirmation or denial to give this assurance, ἀληθῶς λέγω, 'I speak truly,' to satisfy any that apprehend not the certainty of what he says; for towards those that are without he ought to have such a conversation as is most worthy of belief; so as no oath should be required of him; and towards himself and those of his party to preserve such an even and equitable temper of mind, as is a piece of voluntary justice."¹ This and much more he discourses to the same purpose.

For this and some other reasons (but especially from some mistaken places of Scripture, where it is said, 'swear not at all'²) some of the ancient Fathers held all taking of an oath unlawful. But, besides that those few that did, were not herein constant to themselves, the far greatest part were of another mind, and understood the prohibition either of swearing by creatures³ (which was the

¹ Stromat. lib. vii. p. 728. ² Matt. v. 34; James, v. 12.

³ It was the doctrine of the rabbins that oaths were obligatory in different degrees; and in swearing by *creatures*, such as

case of the Jews, and which our Saviour and St. James principally aim at;) or of light, rash, and false swearing. For otherwise that the primitive Christians did not think it unlawful to take an oath in serious and necessary cases, is most evident. Athanasius speaking of his accusers, whom he desired might be put to their oath, tells us, that the best way to attest the truth of what is spoken is to call God to witness; and "this," says he, "is the form of swearing which we Christians are wont to use."¹ Indeed though we had no other argument, it would be plain enough from hence, that they served in the wars, and frequently bore arms even under the heathen emperors; which it is evident they could not do without first taking a military oath to be true to their general, and to die rather than desert their station. This, Vegetius an heathen author, though living in the time of the younger Valentinian, expressly reports of them, that when their names were entered upon the muster-roll, they were wont to take an oath, the particular form whereof he there sets down; viz. "That they swore by God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and the majesty of the emperor, which next to God is to be loved and honoured by mankind."²

the heavens, the earth, or the like, no great guilt was supposed to be attached to their violation. See Matt. xxiii. 16. To their lax opinion there is an evident allusion in Martial. Epigr. xi. 95. *Ecce negas, jurasque mihi per templa Touantis; Non credo: jura, Verpe, per Anchialum.* The name *Anchialus* involves the oath of the Almighty himself, 'As I live,' saith the Lord: 'As the Lord liveth,' was the most solemn oath a Jew could take. That oaths are lawful in matters of moment is evident from the examples of Christ himself and St. Paul. See Rom. i. 9; 2 Cor. xi. 31; Gal. i. 20; Phil. i. 8.—ED.

¹ Apol. ad Constantium Imper. tom. i. p. 14.

² De re militar. lib. i. c. 15, p. 33.

This agrees very well with that account which Tertullian had long before given of the Christians, when being accused by their enemies of high-treason, amongst other reasons, because they refused to swear by their emperors; he answers, that "though they would not swear by the emperor's genius, (their genii or tutelar deities being nothing else but devils,) yet they did swear by the emperor's safety, a thing more august and venerable than all the genii in the world. In the emperor's they own God's institution and authority, and would therefore have that to be safe, which he had appointed, and accordingly accounted it the matter of a lawful oath; but for the dæmons or genii," says he, "we use *adjurare*, to adjure them, so as to cast them out of men; *non dejerare*, not to swear by them, and thereby confer the honour of divinity upon them."¹ For the same reason they denied to swear by the fortune of the emperor, because amongst the heathens she was accounted a deity, and honoured with religious worship.

Thus we see that they refused not to ensure and ratify their faith by the formality of an oath; to which that they might add the greater reverence and solemnity, they were wont many time to take it at the receiving of the holy Sacrament.² St. Chrysostom (though himself no good friend to taking oaths) sufficiently assures us it was customary to come into the church and to swear upon the communion-table, taking the book of the holy Gospels into their hands.³ And as their caution was great

¹ Apol. c. 32, p. 28.

² See Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. vi. c. 43, p. 245.

³ Ad Pop. Antioch. Hom. 15, tom. i. p. 178, 179; see also

in taking of an oath, so their care was not less in making of it good. They knew that in this solemn transaction they did in a more peculiar manner call in God as a witness of what they said, and a revenger in case of falsehood and the violation of it. This made them greatly afraid of perjury, which they looked upon as a sin of a deeper and more than ordinary dye; and one reason I conceive why some of the ancients were against all swearing (and Clemens Alexandrinus confirms me in it) was, because they would not come so much as within the danger or possibility of perjury.¹ Such as have sworn rashly, or in unlawful cases, St. Basil earnestly exhorts to repentance, and that they would not persist in an obstinate defence of their impiety; and for such as are guilty of perjury he appointed that they should be suspended and banished the communion for eleven years together.²

The like severity, though not altogether so great, they used in case of bearing false witness. The truth is, they were exceeding tender of any man's reputation, readier to add to it, than to detract from it, or to fasten any undue imputation upon him. St. Basil, commanding Gregory Thaumaturgus, has this of him amongst the rest: "Out of regard," says he, "to the threatening of our Lord he durst never call his brother fool;³ no anger, wrath, or bitterness proceeded out of his mouth: slandering he hated as a quality greatly opposite

Greg. Nazianzen, Epist. 219, p. 903; Sozom. Hist. Eccl. lib. vi. c. 30, p. 686; vid. Annot. Hen. Vales. p. 145, Col. 2.

¹ Loc. supr. laudat. Ὁ μὲν ἐν μηδὲ ὀμνῶς, πολλὰ γε εἰ ἐπιπορήσει.

² Epist. Canon. ad. Amphil. Can. 29, p. 31, tom. iii. Can. 64, p. 36.

³ Matt. v. 22.

to a state of salvation: pride and envy were strangers to that innocent and guileless soul. He never approached the altar, till first reconciled to his brother.¹ All false and artificial speeches, and such as are cunningly contrived for the slander and detraction of others, he greatly abominated; well knowing, that every lie is the spawn and issue of the devil, and that God has threatened to destroy all those that speak lies."² And so indeed he oftentimes does even in this world, not respiting such persons to the tribunals of the other world: whereof we meet with this memorable example. Narcissus bishop of Jerusalem, a man of admirable piety and holiness of life, shined with so glorious a lustre in the place where he lived, that the brightness of his conversation offended the sore eyes of other men. Three more especially not able to bear the eminent strictness of his life, and being themselves guilty of very great enormities, thought to escape themselves by accusing him. Whereupon they laid a very heinous crime to his charge, and to beget the greater credit with them that heard it, solemnly ratified it with their oaths. The first imprecating upon himself that he might be burnt, if it were not true; the second, that his body might be consumed by some noisome and pestilent disease; the third, that he might lose his sight. The good man, though notwithstanding all this he stood right in the thoughts of all true Christians, who knew his life to be too clear and unblameable to be sullied with the breath of such vile fellows, yet not being able to bear it, withdrew himself to

¹ Matt. v. 23.

² Ad Cleric. Eccles. Neocæsar. Ep. 63, p. 95, tom. iii.

an eremit's life in the wilderness. But the restless eye of the divine vengeance quickly overtook these perjured wretches, and caught them in their own snares. The first by a little spark that casually, and whereof no account could be given, happened in his house, was in the night himself, family, and house universally burnt to ashes: the second was from head to foot overrun and consumed by such a disease as he had wished upon himself: the third that saw all this, and feared the righteous and inevitable vengeance of God upon himself, confessed the whole plot and combination, and testified his repentance with so deep a sorrow, that with the multitude of his tears he lost his sight.¹

We have seen how exact the Christians were about their words, that they should be harmless and inoffensive, and the true conveyances of their minds; nor were they less careful about the conduct of their actions, whether of distributive or commutative justice. For matters of distributive justice, so far as it concerns a fair hearing, and impartial determining of trials and causes, rewarding the good, and punishing the bad, they had little opportunity to show themselves; Christians in the first ages being seldom invested with any external authority and power, till the empire submitted to Christianity; and then we find them executing their places with the most unbiassed uprightness and integrity. St. Basil speaking of an excellent person (though he names him not) who was sent to be governor of Neocæsarea where he was bishop, but presently undermined and outed by the accusations of some that could not bear his

¹ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. vi. c. 9, p. 210.

free and impartial carriage, and his temper so extremely opposite to flattery, says this of him: "that he was a most rigid observer of justice, courteous and easy of access to them that were oppressed, but his presence severe and terrible to the injurious and transgressors of the law. He was the same to rich and poor, equally at leisure for both; of all men he exceedingly abhorred taking bribes, never favouring any beyond the equity of his cause; and, which was above all, he was one that designed to reduce Christianity to its ancient dignity and perfection."¹ The same Nazianzen reports of his own father; and reckons it one of the excellent properties for which he accounted him a Christian even before he embraced Christianity, that he so exactly observed justice himself, and so impartially administered it to others, that though he went through very great offices in the state, yet he made not one farthing's addition to his own revenue, though he saw some before his eyes, who, with Briareus' hands, laid hold upon the public treasures, and therewith filled their own coffers.²

In matters of commutative justice, and ordinary transaction between man and man they observed the rule, "to deal with others, as they would be dealt with themselves." They took no advantage of any man's ignorance or unskilfulness, so as to grasp that commodity at a far under rate, of which they knew the seller did not understand the true price and value, and that, if he did, he would not part with it at such a price. To this purpose St.

¹ Ad Sophron. Magist. Epist. 332, p. 325.

² In Laud. Patr. Orat. 19, p. 290.

Augustine tells us, he knew a man (probably he means himself, though out of modesty he conceals it) who, having a book offered him to be sold by one that understood not the price of it, at a very small under-rate, took the book, but gave him the full price according to its just rate and value, which was a great deal more than the seller asked for it.¹ And the truth is, in such cases advantage cannot be honestly taken of men's weakness or mistake, because no man if he understood the true worth and value of his commodity, can be supposed willing to part with it at a too under-rate. And if they were thus far from craftily overreaching, much more from secretly or openly invading of what was another's right and property. No cheating or cozenage, no acts of dishonesty and deceit were allowed or practised amongst them; or if any such were discovered they immediately protested against by the whole society of Christians. "As for us," says Tertullian, "we deny not any pledge that is left with us, we adulterate no man's marriage-bed, we piously educate and train up orphans, and relieve the necessities of the indigent, and render no man evil for evil. If there be any that dissemble our religion, let them look to it; we disown them for being of our party. Why should we be worse thought of for others' faults? or why should a Christian answer for any thing but what concerns his own religion, which no man in so long a time has proved to be cruel or incestuous? Nay, when we are burnt, and most severely dealt with, it is for the greatest innocency, honesty, justice,

¹ De Trinit. lib. xiii. c. 3, tom. iii col. 407.

modesty, for our truth and faithfulness, and our piety to the living God.”¹ And that these were not a parcel of good words which the Christians spoke in their own behalf, will appear, if we consider the testimony which Pliny (who was far from being partial to them) gives of them. Being commanded by the emperor Trajan to give him an account of the Christians, he tells him, that after the strictest examination which he could make even of those that had renounced Christianity, he found this to be the greatest fault that they were guilty of, that they used harmlessly to meet to worship Christ, and at those meetings to bind themselves by a sacrament [or an oath] that they would not do any wickedness, that they might be firmler obliged not to commit thefts, robberies, adulteries, not to falsify their words, or to deny any thing wherewith they were entrusted, when it was required of them.²

I should not in this place have taken any notice how far the ancient Christians were from murder, and offering violence to any man’s life, but that it was a common charge brought against them by the Gentiles, that they used to kill and devour an infant at their Christian meetings, especially when any was first to be initiated into their assemblies. The story is thus dressed up by the acute heathen in M. Felix: “An infant being covered all over with meal, (the better to deceive the unwary), is set before him that is to be initiated and taken in. He, ignorant of what it really is, is appointed to cut it up, which he effectually does by many secret and mortal wounds; whereupon they greedily lick

¹ Ad. Scap. c. 4, p. 71.

² Lib. x. Ep. 97, p. 290.

up the blood, and ravenously tear off and snatch away the several parts of it; and with this sacrifice their confederacy and combination is made, and by the conscience of so great a villany they are mutually obliged to silence. Such sacred rites as these being more horrid and barbarous, than the highest sacrileges in the world.”¹ To this monstrous and horrid charge, the Christians returned these answers;—that they appealed to the common faith of mankind, whether they could really believe them to be guilty of these things, so abhorrent to all the principles of human nature, and to the Christians’ known principles and practices in all other things; that they should measure the Christians by themselves, and if they themselves could not be guilty of such things, they should not suspect it by the Christians, who were endued with the same principles of humanity with other men;² that they were so far from being friends to murder or manslaughter, that they held it unlawful to be present at the gladiatory sports, where men’s lives were so wantonly sacrificed to the pleasure and curiosity of the people;³ that they accounted it murder for any woman by evil arts to procure abortion, to stifle the embryo, to kill a child in a manner before it be alive, it being much at one to hinder life, as to take it away, to kill a man, or destroy what would be one, seeing he truly destroys the fruit that kills it in the seed;⁴ that it was not likely they should delight in man’s blood, who never tasted any blood at all, ‘abstaining from

¹ Min. Fel. p. 8; vid. Tertull. Apol. c. 9, p. 9.

² Tert. Apol. c. 9, p. 8; Min. Fel. p. 25.

³ Athenag. Leg. pro Christian. p. 38, B. Min. Fel. *ibid.*

⁴ Athenag. *ib.* M. Fel. *ib.* Tert. *ib.* p. 9.

things strangled and from blood ;¹ that the very heathens themselves confessed this, when amongst the several arts they used to discover whether men were Christians, they used to offer them bladders full of blood, knowing that they held it unlawful to taste any ; and therefore it was mightily improbable they should thirst after human blood, who abhorred even the blood of beasts ;² that they heartily believed the resurrection of the dead, and therefore would not make themselves the sepulchres of those bodies which were to rise again, and feed upon them, as they did upon other bodies which were to have no resurrection ; that the truth was, if this charge was true of any, it was true only of the Gentiles themselves, amongst whom these things were daily allowed and practised : that Saturn, one of their chief deities, did not only expose, but eat his own children ; to him infants in Africa were offered in sacrifice by their own parents, a custom that openly continued till the proconsulship of Tiberius, which though he abolished it, yet it continued still in corners in Tertullian's days :³ to his son Jupiter they offered human sacrifices even in Rome itself,⁴ and that even to the time of M. Felix as he himself testifies ;⁵ which is no more than what Porphyry himself (after he had reckoned up in how many parts of the world human sacrifices were in use) confesses was done at Rome in the feast of Jupiter Latialis even in his time.⁶ Many other instances of such barbarous practices are there produced by those two Apologists, which they urge with great advantage upon their adversaries, whom

¹ Acts, xv. 29.² M. Fel. p. 26, Tertull. *ibid.* p. 10.³ Athenag. *ibid.*⁴ *Ibid.*⁵ *Ibid.*⁶ De Abstinent. lib. ii. §. 56, p. 95.

they challenged to make any such thing good against them.

And no sooner did discipline begin to be regularly settled, but their principles herein were everywhere confirmed by the canons of the church, either private or public.¹ By the law of the state, made by the emperor Valentinian, whosoever, whether man or woman, killed an infant, was to be subject to the same capital punishment as if he had killed an adult person; and he that was guilty of wilful murder was, by St. Basil's rule, to undergo a twenty years' penance before he was admitted to the sacrament.² Thus clear did the Christians all along stand from any just suspicion of that gross piece of inhumanity which their enemies so confidently charged upon them. As for the rise and occasion of this malicious charge, it was doubtless of the same growth with that of their incestuous mixtures (spoken of before) both springing from the abominable practices of some filthy heretics, who sheltered themselves under the name of Christians. Epiphanius, particularly reporting of the Gnostics, what the heathens generally charged upon the Christians, tells us of them, that at their meetings they were wont to take an infant begotten in their promiscuous mixtures, and beating it in a mortar, to season it with honey and pepper, and some other spices and perfumes, to make it palatable, and then like swine or dogs to devour it; and then to conclude all with prayer; and this they accounted their perfect passover.³ Who-

¹ Basil. Ep. Can. Con. 2, p. 22; Ib. Can. 33, p. 32; Cod. Theod. lib. 9, tit. 14. l. 1.

² Can. 56, p. 36.

³ Hæres. 26 p. 43, vid. de Phryg. seu Quintilian. Hæres. 48,

ever reads Irenæus, in whose times these heresies were most rife and predominant, and considers the account that he gives of them, which he mainly received from persons of their own party after they were returned back to the church, will see little reason either to think any wickedness too great for them to boggle at, or to doubt of the truth of what he reports concerning them.

CHAPTER II.

Of their admirable Love and Charity.

THAT the Christian religion was immediately designed to improve and perfect the principles of human nature, appears, as from many other instances of it, so especially from this; that it so strictly enjoins, cherishes, and promotes that natural kindness and compassion, which is one of the prime and essential inclinations of mankind. Wherever the Gospel is cordially complied with, it begets such a sweet and gracious temper of mind as makes us humble, affable, courteous, and charitable, ready and disposed to every good work, prompt to all offices of humanity and kindness. It files off the ruggedness of men's natures, banishes a rude, churlish, and pharisaical temper, and infuses a more calm and treatable disposition. It

p. 131 ; de Montanistis Zon. et Balsam, in Can. 7 ; Conc. Constant. Decid. Herald. Not. ad Min. Fel. p. 76.

commands us to live and ‘love as brethren, to love without hypocrisy, to have fervent charity amongst ourselves, and to be kindly-affectioned one towards another.’¹ It lays the sum of our duty towards others in this, ‘to love our neighbour as ourselves.’² This our Saviour seems to own as his proper and peculiar law, and has ratified it with his own solemn sanction, ‘A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another;’ and then makes this the great visible badge of all those who are truly Christians, ‘By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.’³

And so indeed it was in those first and best ages of religion, for no sooner did the Gospel fly abroad into the world, but the love and charity of Christians became notorious even to a proverb, the heathens taking notice of the Christians of those times with this particular remark, “See how these Christians love one another!”⁴ They were then united in the most happy fraternity (a word much used by Christians in those days, and objected against them by the heathens;) they lived as brethren, and accounted themselves such, not only as being sprung from one common parent (for in this respect that they had nature for their common mother, they acknowledged the very heathens to be brethren,⁵ though otherwise little deserving the name of men,) but upon much higher accounts, viz. that they had one and the same

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 6; iv. 8. Rom. xii. 9, 10.

² Matt. v. 43; xix. 19, et alibi.

³ John, xiii. 34, 35.

⁴ Tertul. Ap. c. 39, p. 31.

⁵ Ib. ibid. M. Fel. p. 26.

God for their Father, drank all of the same spirit of holiness, were brought out of the same womb of darkness and ignorance into the same light of truth, that they were partakers of the same faith, and co-heirs of the same hope. This Lucian himself confesses of them, and that it was one of the great principles that their Master instilled into them, that they should all become brethren, after once they had thrown off the religion of the Gentiles, and had embraced the worship of their great crucified Master, and given up themselves to live according to his laws.¹ They never met, but they embraced one another with all the demonstrations of a hearty and sincere affection, saluting each other with a holy kiss, not only in their own houses, but at their religious assemblies, as a badge and bond of that Christian fellowship and communion that was maintained amongst them.

But the love and kindness of those Christians of old did not lie only in a smooth complimentary carriage, or in a parcel of good words, 'depart in peace, be you warmed or filled,'² but in the real exercises of charity and mercy. Now because the two great objects of charity are, the good of men's souls, and their outward and bodily welfare and happiness, we shall find that the primitive Christians were highly eminent and exemplary for both these. The soul being of a much higher and nobler nature, and consequently infinitely more precious and valuable than the body, they were accordingly infinitely careful and solicitous to save men's souls, to recover them out of

¹ De mort. Peregrin. p. 764, tom. ii.

² See James, ii. 16.

the snare of the devil, and the paths of ruin, by making them Christians, and bringing them over to the knowledge of the truth. For this they prayed daily and earnestly. "We Christians," says Cyprian to the proconsul, "serve the one and true God that made heaven and earth, and pray to him night and day, not only for ourselves, but for all men, and for the safety of the emperors themselves."¹ From this no injuries or unkindnesses could discourage them. Justin Martyr tells the Jew, that they prayed for them, and all others that unjustly were their enemies, "that repenting of their wickednesses, and ceasing to blaspheme Christ Jesus, who by the greatness of his works, the uncontrolableness of the miracles performed in his name, the excellency of his doctrines, and the clearness of the prophecies fulfilled in him, appeared to be altogether innocent and unblamable, and that rather believing in him, they might together with Christians be saved by him at his second glorious coming, and not be condemned by him to everlasting flames."² "We pray for you," says he, "that Christ would have mercy upon you, for he has taught us to pray for our enemies, to love them and be merciful to them."³ The Gnostics were the greatest scandal that ever was to Christianity, and the occasion of many of those persecutions, and most of those horrible calumnies which the heathens brought upon the Christians; and yet see how Irenæus treats them. "We pray for them," says he, "and beg of them not to continue in the pit which they

¹ Passio Cyprian. vit. ejus annexa, p. 17.

² Dial. cum Tryph. p. 254.

³ Ib. p. 323.

have digged to themselves, but to depart from their sottish and idle vanities, to turn to the church of God, that Christ may be formed in them, and that they may know the only true God, the Creator of the world: this we beg of them, loving them to better purpose, than they think they love themselves."¹

In pursuance of this design they spared neither pains nor cost, that they might instruct men in the way to heaven. It is said of Pamphilus the Martyr, that amongst other instances of his charity, he used freely and readily to bestow Bibles upon all that were willing to read; for which purpose he had always great numbers of those holy volumes by him, that as occasion served, he might distribute and bestow them:² by this means mercifully furnishing those with these divine treasures, whose purses could not otherwise reach to the price of the Scriptures, far dearer in those days, than they are since printing came into the world. We find St. Chrysostom so zealous for converting the Gentiles to Christianity, that for this very end he maintained many presbyters and monks in Phœnicia partly at his own charge, and partly by the assistance of pious and well-disposed persons, whose only work it was to catechise and instruct the heathens in the principles of the Christian faith;³ and that the business might succeed more effectually, he procured a law from the emperor Arcadius, (yet extant in the Theodosian Code,) directed to Eutychian, Prefect of the East, that the pagan temples should

¹ Adv. Hæres. lib. iii. c. 46, p. 314. Vid. Orig. c. Cels. lib. ii. p. 110; Cypr. ad Demetr. p. 204.

² Hier. adv. Ruffin. tom. ii. p. 199, ex Euseb.

³ Theodoret. H. Eccl. lib. v. c. 29, p. 129.

be orderly taken down, that so they being destroyed, the whole matter of the Gentile superstition might be abolished.¹

Nor did they in those times regard ease or safety any more than they did cost and charges in this matter, exposing themselves to any dangers that they might do good to the souls of men. I might easily show that this consideration had a great influence upon the sufferings of the primitive martyrs, willingly running any hazards, cheerfully enduring any miseries, that they might gain others to the faith, and prevent their eternal ruin. But that famous story of St. John the apostle shall serve instead of many, the sum of which is this: Coming to a place near Ephesus in his visitation of the churches he espied a youth of a comely shape and pregnant parts, and taking hold of him delivered him to the bishop of the place with this charge, (which he repeated once and again;) "I commend this person to thee to be looked to with all care and diligence, and that in the presence of Christ and the church." The bishop undertook the charge, received the young man into his house, instructed him, and at last baptized him. Which being done, he thought he might remit a little of the strictness of his care; but the young man making an ill use of his liberty, fell into bad company, by whose arts and snares he was seduced into ways of riot and wickedness; till despairing of all hope of pardon from God, he let loose the reins to all manner of exorbitancy, and agreeing with his confederates they combined themselves into a society of highwaymen, and made him their captain, who

¹ Lib. xvi. tit. 10, de Pag. Sacrif. et Temp. lib. xvii.

quickly became as far beyond the rest in fierceness and cruelty, as he was in power and authority. St. John, upon occasion returning some while after to the same place, after he had dispatched his other business, required from the bishop the pledge he had left with him; who wondering and not knowing what he meant, "I mean (said St. John) the young man; it is the soul of my brother that I require." The old man with a dejected look and tears in his eyes, answered, "He is dead;" and, being demanded by what kind of death, answered, "He is dead to God; for, alas! he is become a villain, and, instead of the church, is fled with his companions to the mountains, to be a thief and a robber." The apostle rending his clothes, and bewailing that he had so ill betruſted his brother's soul, immediately called for a horse and a guide, and made haste to the mountains; where being taken by those that stood sentinel, he begged to be brought before their captain, who stood ready armed some way off; but as soon as he perceived it was St. John that was coming towards him, he began to be ashamed and to run as fast as he could. The apostle not regarding his own age and weakness, following after with all his might; and when his legs could not overtake him, he sent these passionate exclamations after him: "Why, O my son, dost thou fly from thy aged and unarmed father? take pity of me, and fear not, there is yet hope of salvation for thee. I will undertake with Christ for thee; if need be, I will freely undergo death for thee, as our Lord did for us, and lay down my own life to ransom thine; only stay and believe me, for I am sent by Christ." With that he stayed, and with a dejected look throwing away his arms, he

trembled, and dissolved into tears. He embraced the aged apostle with all possible expressions of sorrow and lamentation, as if again baptized with his own tears. St. John assured him he had obtained his pardon of Christ, and having fasted and prayed with him and for him, and with all the arts of consolation refreshed his shattered and disconsolate mind, brought him into, and restored him to the church.¹

This story² though somewhat long, I was the willing to produce, both because so remarkable in itself, and so great a testimony of that mighty tenderness and compassion which they had for the souls of men; for whose sake they thought they could never do, never venture, far enough. St. Augustine tells us what infinite pains his mother Monica took about the conversion of her husband Patricius;³ nor was her care and solicitude less for himself. Discoursing with her alone some few days before her death concerning the state of the blessed and the joys of heaven, she at last broke off with this farewell: "For my part, son, I have now no further hopes or pleasures in this world; there was but one thing for which I desired to live, that I might see thee a catholic Christian before I died: this my good God has abundantly blessed me with, having let me see thee despising the felicities of this life, and entered into his family and

¹ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iii c. 23, p. 92.

² If the reader is unacquainted with a poem of very high merit, founded upon this apocryphal incident in the life of the beloved disciple, he will be gratified in having his attention called to it. The poem is entitled "The Outlaw of Taurus;" and is from the pen of my highly-gifted and valued friend, the Rev. T. Dale.—ED.

³ Confess. lib. ix. c. 9, p. 155, tom. i.

service ; so that what do I make any longer here ?”¹ Nay, so great a zeal had they for the good of souls in those days, that many did not stick to engage themselves in temporal slavery for no other end but to deliver others from spiritual bondage. Thus Serapion called Sindonites, (because he never wore more than one poor linen garment,) one of the primitive ascetics, sold himself to a Gentile player that served the theatre ; with whom he lived and underwent the meanest offices, till he had converted him, his wife and whole family to Christianity : who, upon their baptism restored him to his liberty, whereupon he freely returned them back the money which he had received as the price of his servitude, which by mutual consent was given to the poor.² This was the good spirit and genius of those days, they entirely studied and designed the happiness of men, were willing and desirous freely to impart the treasures of the Gospel, and wished that in that respect all mankind were as rich and happy as themselves. So far were they from that malicious imputation which Celsus fastened upon them, that if all men would become Christians, they would not admit it ; to which Origen flatly returns the lie ; and tells him the falseness of it might appear from this, “ that Christians, as much as in them lay, were not backward to propagate their doctrine through the whole world ; that some of them had peculiarly undertaken to go up and down not only in cities, but in towns and villages, to bring over others to the true religion : and that they did not this out of any de-

¹ Confess. lib. ix. c. 3, p. 10.

² Pallad. *Histor. Laus.* c. 83, in vit. Serap. p. 182.

signs of gain or interest to themselves was plain, because they often refused to receive necessary accommodations from others; or if they did, they were such only as were barely and absolutely necessary for the present turn, when as far greater liberalities have been offered to them.”¹ Nay, some of the ancient canons expressly require, that no man, who has either heretics or infidels in his family, shall be admitted to the order either of bishop, presbyter, or deacon, who has not first converted those persons to the true Christian faith.²

Having seen what kindness and charity they expressed to men’s souls, we come next to that which respected their bodies, and the necessities of the outward life. This they showed in several instances: we shall consider some of the most material. In the first place they took special care to provide for the poor, and such as were unable to help themselves. This Cyprian in his retirement gave especially in charge to the presbyters and deacons of his church, that by all means they should mind the poor, and furnish them with whatever was necessary for them.³ Dionysius bishop of Corinth testifies of the church of Rome that they did not only eminently provide for their own poor, but with great liberality administer to the necessities of other churches, plentifully relieving whatever indigent brethren came to them, or wherever they were, though at the greatest distance from them;⁴ and of the church of Antioch Chrysostom tells us, that in his time, though the revenues of it

¹ Orig. cont. Cels. lib. iii. p. 116.

² Concil. Carth. 3. Can. 18. ³ Epist. 5, p. 13.

⁴ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. c. 23, p. 145.

were but small, yet besides its clergy, besides strangers, lepers, and such as were in bonds, it daily maintained above three thousand widows and maids.¹ Indeed the bounty of those times was almost incredible. St. Cyprian, upon his turning Christian, sold his estate to relieve the wants of others, and could not be restrained from it either by the persuasions of others, or the considerations of what he might be reduced to himself. After his entrance upon the ministry his doors were open to all that came, from which no widow ever returned empty: to any that were blind, he would be their guide to direct them; them that were lame, he was ready to lend his assistance to support them; none were oppressed by might, but he was ready to defend them.² Cæsarius, St. Basil's brother, made only this short will when he died, "I will that all my estate be given to the poor."³ Nazianzen reports of his father, that he was so kind to the poor, that he did not only bestow the surplusage of his estate upon them, but even part of what was reserved for necessary uses; of his mother, that an ocean of wealth would not have filled her unsatisfied desire of doing good; and of his sister Gorgonia, that she was immensely liberal, Job-like her gate was open to every stranger, she was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and a mother to orphans; her estate was as common to the poor, and as much at their need, as every one's is to himself, dispersing and scattering abroad, and according to the coun-

¹ Homil. 67, in Matth. p. 585.

² Vit. ejus per Paul. Diac. p. 11, 12.

³ Basil. ad Sophron. Ep. 84, p. 156, tom. iii.

sel of our Saviour, laying up her treasure in heaven.¹

They gave not only according to, but beyond their ability ; trusting to the goodness and fidelity of heaven to supply what wanted, which many times made the return with overplus by ways uncommon and extraordinary. Sozomen relates of Epiphanius bishop of Salamine in Cyprus, that having spent all his own estate in pious and charitable uses, in relieving the needy, and such as were by shipwreck and the mercy of the sea cast upon the coast, he freely dispensed and distributed the goods and treasures of his church ; and that with so liberal a hand, that the steward or guardian of the church finding its stock begin to grow very low, with some resentment told him of it, charging him as too profuse and open-handed. All which notwithstanding he remitted nothing of his accustomed bounty to the poor. At length all being spent, a stranger on a sudden comes into the steward's lodgings, and delivers into his hand a great purse of gold, without any discovery either who it was that brought it, or who it was that sent it.² And indeed so vast and universal was the charity of this good man, that it sometimes made him liable to be imposed upon by crafty and designing persons, whereof the historian in the same place gives a remarkable instance. But this only upon occasion of that great charity which they then upon all occasions extended to the poor. The truth is, they then looked upon the poor as the treasure and ornament of the church, by whom

¹ Orat. 19, p. 298, 299 ; Matt. vi. 20.

² Hist. Eccl. lib. vii. c. 27, p. 749.

as by bills of exchange they returned their estates into the other world. When Decius the emperor demanded of Laurentius the deacon of the church of Rome the churches' treasures, he promised after three days to produce them; in which time having gathered together the blind and the lame, the infirm and the maim, at the time appointed he brought them into the palace, and when the emperor asked for the treasures he had promised to bring with him, he shows him his company. Behold (said he) these are the treasures of the church, those eternal treasures, which are never diminished, but increase; which are dispersed to every one, and yet found in all!¹

This passage brings to my mind (though it more properly belongs to the next instance of charity) what Palladius relates of Macarius, a presbyter and governor of the hospital at Alexandria. There was a virgin in that city very rich, but infinitely covetous and uncharitable. He comes to her, and tells her that a parcel of jewels, emeralds and jacinths, of inestimable value, were lodged at his house, but which the owner was willing to part with for five hundred pieces of money, and advises her to buy them: she, catching at the offer, as hoping to gain considerably by the bargain, delivered him the money, and entreated him to buy them for her, knowing him to be a person of great piety and integrity. But hearing nothing from him a long time after, till meeting him in the church, she asked him what were become of the jewels. He told her he had laid out the money upon them, (for

¹ Act. Laurent. apud. Sur. ad diem 10. Aug. tom. iv. vid. Ambr. Offic. lib. ii. c. 28, tom. i.

he had expended it upon the uses of the hospital,) and desired her to come and see them, and if the purchase did not please her, she might refuse it. She readily came along with him to the hospital, in the upper rooms whereof the women were lodged; in the lower the men. He asked her which she would see first, the jacinths, or the emeralds; which she leaving to him, he brought her first into the upper part, where the lame, blind, and cripple-women were disposed, and "See," said he, "the jacinths that I spoke of." Then carrying her down into the lower rooms, he showed her the men in the like condition, and told her, "These are the emeralds that I promised, and jewels more precious than these I think are not to be found; and now," said he, "if you like not your bargain, take your money back again." The woman blushed, and was troubled to think she should be haled to that which she ought to have done freely for the love of God. Afterwards she heartily thanked Macarius, and betook herself to a more charitable and Christian course of life.¹

Next to this, their charity appeared in visiting and assisting of the sick; contributing to their necessities, refreshing their tired bodies, curing their wounds or sores with their own hands. "The sick (says the ancient author of the epistle in Justin Martyr, if it be not Justin himself) are not to be neglected; nor is it enough for any to say, I have never learnt to serve and give attendance: for he that shall make his delicacy or tenderness unaccustomed to any hardness to be an excuse in this case, let him know it may soon be his own; and then

¹ Hist. Laus. c. 6, p. 22.

he will quickly discern the unreasonableness of his own judgment, when the same shall happen to him, that he himself has done to others.”¹ But there were no such nice and squeamish stomachs in the good Christians of those times. St. Jerome tells us of Fabiola, a Roman lady, a woman of considerable birth and fortunes, that she sold her estate, and dedicated the money to the uses of the poor; she built an hospital (and was the first that did so) wherein she maintained and cured the infirm and miserable, or any sick that she met withal in the streets. Here was a whole rendezvous of cripples, hundreds of diseases and distempers here met together, and herself at hand to attend them: sometimes carrying the diseased in her arms, or bearing them on her shoulders; sometimes washing and dressing those filthy and noisome sores, from which another would have turned his eyes with contempt and horror; otherwhiles preparing them food, or giving them physic with her own hand.² The like we read of Placilla the empress, wife to the younger Theodosius.³ Thus also the historian reports of Deogratias, the aged bishop of Carthage under the Vandalic persecution, that having sold all the plate belonging to the church to ransom the captive Christians, and wanting places conveniently to bestow them, he lodged them in two large churches, provided for the needy, took care of the sick, himself every hour visiting them both by day and night, with physicians attending him to superintend their cure, and diet suitable to their several cases, going

¹ Epist. ad Zen. et Seren. p. 514.

² Epitaph. Fabiolæ ad Ocean. p. 199, tom. i.

³ Theodor. Hist. Eccl. lib. v. c. 18, p. 160.

from bed to bed to know what every one stood in need of.¹ Nay, how often did they venture to relieve their brethren when labouring under such distempers as seemed immediately to breathe death in their faces.² Thus in that sad and terrible plague at Alexandria, which though it principally raged amongst the Gentiles, yet seized also upon the Christians, "Many of the brethren," says the historian, "out of the excessive abundance of their kindness and charity, without any regard to their own health and life, boldly ventured into the thickest dangers, daily visiting, attending, instructing, and comforting their sick and infected brethren, till themselves expired and died with them. Nay, many of them whom they thus attended recovered and lived, while they who had looked to them died themselves; as if by a strange and prodigious charity they had willingly taken their diseases upon them, and died themselves to save them from death." Thus it was with the Christians, while the Gentiles in the meantime put off all sense of humanity; when any began to fall sick amongst them, they presently cast them out, shunned their dearest friends and relations, left them half dead in the high-ways, and took no care of them either alive or dead.

And that this work of charity might be the better managed amongst Christians, they had in many places (and particularly in this of Alexandria) certain persons whose proper office it was to attend and administer to the sick. They were called *parabolani*; because especially in pestilential and infec-

¹ Vict. Utic. de persec. Vandal. lib. i. fol. 5, p. 2.

² Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. vii. c. 22, p. 269.

tious distempers they did (*παραβάλλεσθαι*) cast themselves into an immediate hazard of their lives, and were peculiarly deputed *ad curanda debilium ægra corpora*, (as the law of the younger Theodosius expresses it,) to attend and cure the bodies of the infirm and sick.¹ The truth is, these *parabolani* were a kind of clergy-physicians, for that they were under an ecclesiastical cognizance is plain, being reckoned up with the clergy, and accordingly by the latter constitution of Theodosius are appointed to be chosen by, and to be immediately subject to the bishop of the place.

A third instance of their love and charity, and which St. Ambrose calls the highest piece of liberality, was their care of those that were in captivity, groaning under the merciless tyranny and oppression of their enemies, to relieve them under and to redeem them out of their bondage and slavery.² Cyprian in a letter to the bishops of Numidia about this very thing, the redemption of those Christians amongst them that had been taken captive by the barbarians, elegantly bewails their misery, and earnestly presses their redemption,³ and as a help towards it sent them *sestertium centum millia nummûm*; (which Rigaltius computes to twenty-five thousand pounds French,⁴ though others more truly reduce it to a much lower sum, viz. seven thousand five hundred, or two thousand five hundred crowns;⁵) which he and his people had liberally contributed to it. Of Acacius bishop of Amida we read in Socrates,⁶

¹ Cod. Theod. lib. xvi. tit. ii. de Episcopis, etc. lib. 42, 43.

² Offic. lib. ii. c. 15, p. 42.

³ Epist. ix. p. 96.

⁴ Rigalt. in loc.

⁵ Gronov. de pecun. vet. lib. ii. c. 2, p. 131.

⁶ Hist. Eccl. lib. vii. c. 21, p. 360.

and the like St. Ambrose relates of himself, that he caused the communion-plate of his church to be broken in pieces to redeem Christians taken captive by the enemy; for which though he was blamed by the Arian party, yet he elegantly defends the fact, as not only a justifiable, but a proper and eminent act of charity.¹ And indeed it is the only case wherein the imperial constitutions make it lawful to sell or pawn the plate and gifts belonging to the church, it being otherwise made sacrilege to receive them, and the things absolutely forfeited by those that bought them.² This was very great, but yet we meet with a stranger charity than this in the primitive church, some that have parted with their own liberty to purchase freedom unto others. So St. Clemens assures us in his famous epistle to the Corinthians: "We have known many amongst ourselves," says he, "who have delivered themselves into bonds and slavery, that they might restore others to their liberty; many who have hired out themselves servants unto others, that by their wages they might feed and sustain them that wanted."³

A fourth instance of primitive charity, was the great care they took about the bodies of the dead, in giving them decent, and where they could, honourable burial. All men naturally have a kindness for their bodies, and therefore desire, that what has so long been the mansion of an immortal

¹ Hist. Eccl. lib. vii. c. 28, p. 50.

² Phot. Nomocan. Τίτ. β. περ. ἐκκλησι. ἢ σκευῶν, &c. κεφ. β. p. 43.

³ Phot. Nomocan. p. 70. See an instance in Greg. Mag. dial. lib. iii. c. 1, tom. iii.

tenant, may upon its dislodging be orderly taken down, and the ruins of it laid up with honour and safety. Man's body, besides that it is the cabinet of an invaluable jewel, is a curious piece of artifice, 'fearfully and wonderfully made,'¹ the excellent contrivance of the divine omniscience, and in that respect challenges not to be carelessly thrown aside, or rudely trampled in the dirt. This seems to be the common sense of mankind, it being the care and practice of almost all nations in the world religiously to enshrine the remains of their deceased friends, in tombs and sepulchres; thinking it but reasonable to testify so much kindness to their departed friends, as to honour their memories, and to secure from rude barbarous violence what they left behind them when they put off mortality. Sure I am this was eminently the care of Christians; no dangers or threatenings could affright them from doing this last office to their deceased brethren, especially such as had been martyrs and champions for the truth. The Roman clergy, in an epistle to them of Carthage, reckons it as one of the greatest instances of charity, above that of relieving the poor, ministering to the sick, or the rest which they there enumerate and reckon up; tells them that it could not be neglected without great danger, and that fidelity in this matter would be highly acceptable to God, and rewarded by him.² Dionysius bishop of Alexandria, speaking of the plague that raged there, (which we mentioned but now,) commends the Christians for assisting their sick dying brethren, that they closed their eyes, laid them out, washed their bodies, dressed and adorned

¹ Psalm cxxxix. 13.

² Epist. ii. inter Ep. Cyp. p. 9.

them up for burial, and carried them out upon their own shoulders, which they cheerfully did, notwithstanding the imminent danger that attended it, and that it was not long before others were called to do the same offices for them.¹ Their bodies they decently committed to the ground, for they abhorred the custom, so common amongst the Gentiles, of burning the bodies of the dead ; which they did, not (as the heathens objected) because they thought that their bodies once burnt to ashes would be difficultly brought to a resurrection, (a doctrine which they strenuously asserted, and held fast as the main pillar of their comfort and confidence,) but because they looked upon it as inhuman and barbarous, and contrary to the more ancient and better usage of mankind in this matter.² Tertullian calls this way of burial by inhumation a piece of piety, and tells us they abstained from burning the corps, not as some did, because they thought that some part of the soul remained in the body after death, but because it savoured of savageness and cruelty.³ Therefore their enemies to do them the greater spite, did not only put them to death, but very often burn their dead bodies, and sprinkle their ashes into the sea, partly to hinder them from a decent burial, and partly (as in that tumult at Alexandria under Julian) that nothing might be left of them to be honoured as the remains of martyrs.⁴ As Christianity got ground, this more civil way of inhumation did not only take place, but rooted out the contrary custom even amongst the Gentiles

¹ Epist. ii. inter Ep. Cyp. p. 9, ubi supr.

² Min. Fel. p. 9—23.

³ De Anim. c. 51, p. 301.

⁴ Amm. Marcellin. lib. xxii. p. 1627.

themselves. For though the emperor Theodosius the Great gives some intimation of it as remaining in his time, yet not long after it wholly ceased, as is expressly acknowledged by Macrobius, who lived in the time of the younger Theodosius.¹

Nor did they ordinarily content themselves with a bare interment, but prepared the body for its funeral with costly spices, and rich odours and perfumes, not sparing the best drugs and ointments which the Sabeans could afford, as Tertullian plainly testifies.² This cost the Christians doubtless bestowed upon the bodies of their dead, because they looked upon death as the entrance into a better life, and laid up the body as the candidate and expectant of a joyful and happy resurrection. Besides, hereby they gave some encouragement to suffering, when men saw how much care was taken to honour and secure the relics of their mortality, and that their bodies should not be persecuted after death. This their enemies knew very well, and therefore many times denied them the civility and humanity of burial, to strike the greater dread into them. Thus Maximus the president threatened Tharacus the martyr, that although he bore up his head so high upon the confidence, that after his death his body should be wound up and embalmed with ointments and odoriferous spices, yet he would defeat his hopes by causing his body to be burnt, and sprinkling his ashes before the wind.³ Thus after they had put Polycarp to death, they burnt

¹ C. Theod. lib. vi. Tit. 17, de Sep. viol. lib. ix. Saturnal. lib. vii. c. 7, p. 514.

² Apol. lib. xlii. p. 34.

³ Act. SS. Tharac. Prob. et Andron. apud Baron. ad An. 299, tom. ii.

his body out of spite to the Christians, who had begged it of the proconsul, only to give it a solemn interment; whereupon gathering his bones which the mercy of the fire had spared, they decently committed them to the earth, and there used to meet to celebrate the memory of that pious and holy man.¹

During those times of persecution they were very careful to bury the bodies of the martyrs, some making it their particular business by stealth to inter those in the night who had suffered in the day. This they did with great hazard and danger, many of them (as appears from the ancient martyrologies) suffering martyrdom upon this very account. Afterwards when the church was settled, there was a particular order of men called *copiatæ*, (either ἀπὸ τῆ κοπιᾶσθαι, from the pains they took, or else ἀπὸ τῆ κοπάζειν, because they committed the bodies of the dead to the grave, the place of ease and rest,) appointed for this purpose, about the time of Constantine, or to be sure his son Constantius, in two of whose laws they are expressly mentioned, and in the latter said to be lately instituted.² Their office (as Epiphanius tells us) was to wrap up and bury the bodies of the dead, to prepare their graves, and to inter them: and because inhumation and giving burial to the dead was ever accounted in a more peculiar manner, a work of piety and religion, therefore these persons were reckoned if not strictly clergymen, at least in a clergy-relation, being in both laws of Constantius enumerated with, and invested in the same immunities with the clergy. By the au-

¹ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. c. 15, p. 135.

² Cod. Theod. lib. xiii. tit. 1, de Lustr. Con. l. 1. Lib. xvi. tit. 2, de Episc. leg. 15, λόγ. σύντεμος περ. πίς. p. 465.

thor in St. Jerome they are styled *fossarii*, grave-makers; and by him placed in the first and lowest order of the *clerici*, and exhorted to be like good old Tobit in faith, holiness, knowledge, and virtue.¹ In the great church of Constantinople they were called *decani*, or deans; but quite distinct from the palatin deans spoken of in the Theodosian code,² and frequently elsewhere; who were a military order, and chiefly belonged to the emperor's palace. They were one of the *collegia* or corporations of the city. Their number was very great: Constantine is said to have appointed no less than eleven hundred of them; but by a law of Honorius and Theodosius they were reduced to nine hundred and fifty; till afterwards Anastasius brought them back to their former number,³ which was also ratified and confirmed by Justinian; their particular duties and offices, both as relating to the dead, and all other things are largely described in two novel constitutions of his to that purpose.⁴

Nor did they only take care that the body might be prepared for its funeral, but to provide it with a decent and convenient sepulchre, wherein it might be honourably and securely laid up; a thing which had been always practised by the more sober and civilized part of mankind. Their burying-places (called *polyandria*, *cryptæ*, *arenariæ*, but commonly *cæmiteria*, or dormitories, because according to the notion which the Scripture gives us of the death of the righteous, Christians are not so properly said to die as to sleep in the Lord, and their bodies to rest

¹ De Sept. Ordin. Ecc. tom. iv. p. 81.

² Lib. vi. tit. de Decanis, l. 1.

³ Lib. i. C. tit. 2, de SS. Eccles. l. 4.

⁴ Novel. Justin. 43, p. 114, et 59, p. 134.

in the grave in expectation of a joyful resurrection) were generally in the fields or gardens; it being prohibited by the Roman laws, and especially an ancient law of the twelve tables, to bury within the city walls.¹ This held for some centuries after Christianity appeared in the world, and longer it was before they buried within churches; within the out-parts whereof to be interred, was a privilege at first granted only to princes and persons of the greatest rank and quality. Chrysostom assures us that Constantius the emperor reckoned he did his father Constantine the Great a peculiar honour, when he obtained to have him buried in the porch of the church which he had built at Constantinople to the memory of the apostles,² and wherein he had earnestly desired to be buried, as Eusebius tells us.³ In the same many of his successors were interred; it not being in use then, nor some hundreds of years after, for persons to be buried in the body of the church, as appears from the Capitula of Charles the great, where burying in the church, which then it seems had crept into some places, is strictly forbidden.⁴

During the first ages of Christianity, while the malice of their enemies persecuted them both alive and dead, their *cæmeteria* were ordinarily underground, imitating herein the custom of the Jews, whose sepulchres were in caverns and holes of rocks. Doubtless the Christians did it to avoid the rage and fury of their enemies; not so much upon the account of secrecy; for their frequent retiring

¹ Apud. Ciccr. de leg. lib. ii. p. 288, vol. iv.

² Hom. 26, in Cap. 12, 2 ad Cor. p. 929.

³ De Vit. Const. lib. iv. c. 71, p. 562.

⁴ Lib. i. cap. 159, fol. 27, p. 1.

to those places was so notorious, as could not escape the observation of their enemies, and therefore we sometimes find the emperor's officers readily coming thither; but it was upon the account of that sacredness and religion that was reckoned to be due to places of this nature, it being accounted by all nations a piece of great impiety, *manes temerare sepultos*, to disturb and violate the ashes of the dead. They were large vaults, dug in dry sandy places, and arched over, and separated into many little apartments, wherein on either side the bodies of the martyrs lay in distinct cells, each having an inscription upon marble, whereon his name, quality, and probably the time and manner of his death were engraven.¹ In the heats of persecution they were forced to bury great numbers together in one common grave; (sixty Prudentius tells us he observed;) and then not the names, but only the number of the interred was written upon the tomb. Indeed the multitudes of martyrs that then suffered required very large conveniences of interment. And so they had, insomuch that the last publisher of the *Roma Subterranea* assures us, that though those *cæmeteria* were underground, yet were they many times double and sometimes treble, two or three stories, one still under another.²

By reason whereof they must needs be very dark, having no light from without, but what peeped in from a few little crannies, which filled the place with a kind of sacred horror, as St. Jerome informs us, who while a youth, when he went to

¹ Prudent. Peri. Steph. Pass. Hippol. Mart. Hym. 11, p. 139.

² Lib. i. c. 2, num. 9, p. 4.

school at Rome, used upon the Lord's-day to visit these solemn places.¹ Built they were by pious and charitable persons, (thence called after their names,) for the interment of martyrs, and other uses of the church; for² in these places Christians in times of persecution were wont to hide themselves; and to hold their religious assemblies, when banished from their public churches, as I have formerly noted. Of these about Rome only Baronius out of the records in the Vatican reckons up forty-three,² and others to the number of three score. We may take an estimate of the rest by the account which Baronius gives of one, called the *cemiterie* of Priscilla, discovered in his time, an. 1578, in the *Via Salaria* about three miles from Rome, which he often viewed and searched. "It is," says he "strange to report, the place by reason of its vastness and variety of apartments appearing like a city under ground. At the entrance into it there was a principal way or street much larger than the rest, which on either hand opened into diverse other ways, and those again divided into many lesser ways and turnings, like lanes and alleys within one another. And as in cities there are void open places for the markets; so here, there were some larger spaces for the holding (as occasion was) of their religious meetings, wherein were placed the effigies and representations of martyrs, with places in the top to let in light, long since stopped up. The discovery of this place caused great wonder in Rome, being the most exact and perfect *cemiterie* that had been yet found

¹ Comment. in c. 40, Ezeziel. tom. v. p. 521.

² Ad An. 226, tom. ii.

out.”¹ Thus much I thought good to add upon occasion of that singular care, which Christians then took about the bodies of their dead. If any desire to know more of these venerable antiquities, they may consult *Onuphius de Cæmeteriis*, and especially the Latin edition of the *Roma Subterranea*, where their largest curiosity may be fully satisfied in these things.²

Many other instances of their charity might be mentioned; their ready entertaining strangers, providing for those that laboured in the mines, marrying poor virgins, and the like, of which to treat particularly would be too vast and tedious. To enable them to do these charitable offices, they had not only the extraordinary contributions of particular persons, but a common stock and treasury of the church. At the first going abroad of the Gospel into the world, so great was the piety and charity of the Christians, that ‘the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul, neither said any of them, that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common; neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet, and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.’³ But this community of goods lasted not long in the church. We find St. Paul giving order to the churches of Galatia and Corinth

¹ Ad. an. 130, vid. ad. an. 57, tom. i. num. 112.

² Edit. à Paul. Aringhio. Rom. 1651, et Col. 1659.

³ Acts, iv. 32, 34, 35.

for weekly offerings for the saints, that upon the first day of the week (when they never failed to receive the sacrament) they should every one of them lay by him in store according as God had prospered him.¹ This custom Justin Martyr assures us still continued in his time, for describing the manner of their assemblies on the Lord's-day, he tells us that those who were able and willing contributed what they saw good; and the collection was lodged in the hands of the bishop or president, and by him distributed for the relief of widows and orphans, the sick or indigent, the imprisoned or strangers, or any that were in need.² In the next age they were reduced to monthly offerings, as appears from Tertullian, who gives us this account of them in his time, "That at their religious assemblies upon a monthly day (or oftener if a man will, and be able) every one according to his ability laid by somewhat for charitable uses. They put it into a kind of poor man's box called *arca*,³ that stood in the church. This they did freely, no man being forced or compelled to it.⁴ This was the fruit of primitive devotion.

Now that this account that we have given of the admirable bounty and charity of the ancient Christians is not precarious, and merely what the Christians tell us of themselves, we have the testimony of two open enemies of Christianity, Ju-

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

² Apol. 2. p. 98, 99.

³ This was the origin of the alms'-box, which was formerly in general use in our churches, though now seldom seen in them.—ED.

⁴ Apol. c. 39, p. 31.

lian and Lucian, both bitter enemies to Christians, and the fiercer, because both, as it is supposed, apostates from them. Their testimony is considerable upon a double account, partly because having lived amongst the Christians they exactly knew their ways and manners; and partly because being enemies to them they would be sure to speak no more in their commendation than what was true. Julian speaking of the Galileans, tells us that by their charity to the poor they begot πολὺ τῆς ἀξέοτης θαῦμα, the greatest admiration of their religion in the minds of men.¹ This as at once it shows his venom and malice according to the humour of the man, so it openly bears witness out of the mouth of an enemy to the most excellent and generous spirit of the Gospel.

The other testimony is that of Lucian, who, bringing in his philosopher Peregrinus amongst other sects, joining himself to the Christians, tells us what care they took of him, when cast into prison:² after which he tells us of them in general, that "they equally contemn all the advantages of this life, and account them common, foolishly taking up their principles about these things without any accurate search into them; insomuch that if any subtle and crafty fellow, that knows how to improve his advantage, come amongst them, he grows very rich in a little time, by making a prey of that simple and credulous people."³

There is one circumstance yet behind, concerning the love and charity of those times, very worthy to

¹ Misapog. p. 99. Vide etiam Epist. 49, ad Arsac. p. 203; et Fragm. Epist. p. 557.

² De mort. Peregrin. p. 762, 763, tom. ii.

³ Ibid. p. 764.

be taken notice of, and that is the universal extent of it. They did good to all, though more especially to them of the household of faith,¹ i. e. to Christians. They did not confine their bounty merely within the narrow limits of a party, this or that sect of men; but embraced an object of love and pity wherever they met it. They were kind to all men, yea to their bitterest enemies, and that with a charity as large as the circles of the sun, that visits all parts of the world, and shines as well upon a stinking dunghill, as upon a pleasant garden. It is certainly the strange and supernatural doctrine of our Saviour, 'You have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.'² This indeed is the proper goodness and excellency of Christianity, as Tertullian observes, it being common to all men to love their friends, but peculiar only to Christians to love their enemies.³ And Athenagoras, I remember, principally makes use of this argument to prove the divinity of the Christian religion, and challenges all the great masters of reason and learning amongst the heathens to produce any, either of themselves or their disciples, of so pure and refined a temper, as could instead of hating, love their enemies, bear curses and revilings with an undisturbed mind, and instead of reviling again, to bless and speak well of them, and to pray for them who lay in wait to take away their lives.⁴ And yet

¹ Gal. vi. 10.

² Matt. v. 43, 44.

³ Ad Scap. c. i p. 69.

⁴ Legat. pro Christian. p. 11.

this did Christians, they embraced their enemies, pardoned and prayed for them; according to the apostles' rule, when their enemy hungered they fed him, when he thirsted they gave him drink, and would not be overcome of evil, but overcame evil with good.¹ When Nazianzen (then bishop of Constantinople) lay sick, a young man came to his bed's feet, and taking hold of his feet, with tears and great lamentation passionately begged pardon of him for his wickedness. The bishop asking what he meant by it, he was told that this was the person that had been suborned by a wicked party to have murdered him; and now being stricken with the conscience of so great a wickedness, came to bewail his sin. The good man immediately prayed to Christ to forgive him, desiring no other satisfaction from him, than that henceforth he would forsake that heretical party, and sincerely serve God as became a Christian. Thus when Paul the martyr was hastening to his execution, he only begged so much respite, till he might pray (which accordingly he did) not only for the peace and happiness of Christians, but for the conversion of Jews and Samaritans, for the Gentiles that they might be brought out of error and ignorance to the knowledge of God and the true religion. He prayed for the people that attended his execution; nay, (such his vast goodness and charity) for the very judge that condemned him; for the emperors, and the very executioner that stood ready to cut off his head, earnestly begging of God not to lay that

¹ Rom. xii. 20, 21.

² Vit. ejus per Greg. Presbyt.

great wickedness to their charge.¹ Nay, they did not think it enough not to return evil for evil, or barely to forgive their enemies, unless they did them all the kindness that lay in their power. Polycarp plentifully feasted the very officers, that were sent to apprehend him;² the same which St. Mamas the martyr is also said to have done, treating the soldiers with the best supper he had, when sent by Alexander the cruel president of Cappadocia to seize upon him.³ And we read of one Pachomius an heathen soldier in the first times of Constantine, that the army being well near starved for want of necessary provisions, and coming to a city that was most inhabited by Christians, they freely and speedily gave them whatever they wanted for the accommodation of the army. Amazed with this strange and unwonted charity, and being told that the people that had done it were Christians whom they generally preyed upon, and whose profession it was to hurt no man, and to do good to every man, he threw away his arms, became an anchorite, and gave up himself to the strictest severities of religion.⁴ This also Julian the emperor plainly confesses.⁵ So prevalent is truth as to extort a confession from its most bitter and virulent opposers.

I shall sum up what hath been said upon this argument in that elegant discourse which Lactantius has concerning works of mercy and charity. "Since human nature," says he, "is weaker than

¹ Euseb. de Martyr. Palestin. c. 8, p. 332.

² Euseb. lib. iv. c. 15, p. 130.

³ Martyr. ejus apud Sur. ad 17 Aug. tom. iv. ex S. Metraph.

⁴ Metaphrast. in vit. Pachomii, apud Sur. ad diem 14 Maii, tom. iii.

⁵ Ubi prius.

that of other creatures, who come into the world armed with offensive and defensive powers, therefore our wise Creator has given us a tender and merciful disposition, that we might place the safeguard of our lives in the mutual assistances of one another. For being all created by one God, and sprung from one common parent, we should reckon ourselves akin, and obliged to love all mankind; and (that our innocency may be perfect) not only not to do an injury to another, but not to revenge one when done to ourselves; for which reason also we are commanded to pray for our very enemies. We ought therefore to be kind and sociable, that we may help and assist each other. For being ourselves obnoxious to misery, we may the more comfortably hope for that help, in case we need it, which ourselves have given unto others. And what can more effectually induce us to relieve the indigent, than to put ourselves into their stead, who beg help from us? If any be hungry, let us feed him; is he naked, let us clothe him; if wronged by a powerful oppressor, let us rescue and receive him. Let our doors be open to strangers, and such who have not where to lay their head. Let not our assistance be wanting to widows and orphans: and (which is a mighty instance of charity) let us redeem the captived, visit and assist the sick, who are able to take no care of themselves; and for strangers and the poor (in case they die) let us not suffer them to want the conveniency of a grave. These are the offices and the works of mercy, which whoever does, offers up a true and grateful sacrifice to God; who is not pleased with the blood of beasts, but the charity of men; whom therefore he treats upon their own terms, has mercy

on them whom he sees merciful, and is inexorable to those who shut up their bowels against them that ask them. In order therefore to our thus pleasing God, let us make light of money, and transmit it into the heavenly treasures, 'where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal,'¹ nor tyrants are able to seize and take it from us, but where it shall be kept to our eternal advantage under the custody of God himself."²

CHAPTER III.

Of their Unity and Peaceableness.

THE primitive Christians being of such a meek, compassionate and benevolent temper as we have represented them, it cannot be thought but that they were of a very quiet disposition and peaceable conversation; and the having been so large in that, will excuse me for being shorter in this. When our blessed Saviour came to establish his religion in the world, he gave a law suitable to his nature, and to the design of his coming into the world, and to the exercise of his government as he is 'Prince of peace,'³ a law of mildness and gentleness, of submission and forbearance towards one another. We are commanded 'to follow peace with all men, to follow after the things that make for peace,

¹ Matt. vi. 20. ² Lact. Epitom. c. 7, p. 746. ³ Isai. ix. 6.

as much as in us lies to live peaceably with all men :'¹ we are forbidden all feuds and quarrels, enjoined 'not to revenge ourselves, but to give place unto wrath, to let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from us, with all malice, to be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake forgives us.'²

These are the laws of Christianity, which whenever they are duly entertained produce the most gentle and good-natured principles, the most innocent and quiet carriage. This eminently appeared in the life of our blessed Saviour, who was the most incomparable instance of kindness and civility, of peace and quietness. We never find him all his life treating any with sharpness and severity but the scribes and Pharisees, who were a pack of surly, malicious, ill-natured fellows, and could be wrought upon by no other methods. Otherwise his mildness and humility, the affability and obligingness of his conversation, and his remarkable kindness to his greatest enemies were sufficiently obvious both in his life and death ; and such was the temper of his disciples and followers, this excellent spirit like leaven spreading itself over the whole mass of Christians, turning the briar into a myrtle-tree, and the vulture into a dove. See the account which Justin the martyr gives of them. " We who formerly valued our money and estates before all things else, do now put them into a common stock, and distribute them to those that are in need. We who once hated each other and delighted in mutual

¹ Rom. xiv. 19.

² Rom. xii. 19 ; Eph. iv. 31, 32.

quarrels and slaughters, and according to the custom refused to sit at the same fire with those who were not of our own tribe and party; now, since the appearance of Christ in the world, live familiarly with them, pray for our enemies, and endeavour to persuade those that unjustly hate us to order their lives according to the excellent precepts of Christ, that so they may have good hope to obtain the same rewards with us from the great Lord and Judge of all things.”¹

But for the better understanding of this it may be useful to observe, what a remarkable alteration in this respect the Christian religion made in the world. Before Christ's coming the world was generally overrun with feuds and quarrels, mighty and almost implacable animosities and divisions reigning amongst Jews and Gentiles. The Jews looked upon the Gentiles as dogs and outcasts, refused all dealings with them, even to the denial of courtesies of common charity and civility, such as to tell a man the way or to give him a draught of water.² They reproached them as the vilest and most profligate part of mankind,³ ‘sinners of the Gentiles,’⁴ as the apostle calls them according to the usual style and title. Nor did the Gentiles less scorn and deride the Jews, as a pitiful and contemptible generation, stopping their noses, and abhorring the very sight of them if by chance they met with them. They looked upon them as an unsociable people, as enemies of all nations, that did not so much as wish well to any; nay, as haters

¹ Apol. ii. p. 61.

² Juvenal. Satyr. xiv. p. 439.

³ John, iv. 9.

⁴ Gal. ii. 15.

even of mankind, as Tacitus and their enemies in Josephus represent them.¹ The effect of all which was, that they oppressed and persecuted them in every place, trod them as dirt under their feet, till at last the Romans came and finally 'took away both their place and nation.'² Thus stood the case between them till the arrival of 'the Prince of peace;' who partly by his death, whereby he 'broke down the partition-wall'³ between Jew and Gentile, partly by the healing nature and tendency of his doctrine, partly by the quiet and peaceable carriage of his followers, did quickly extirpate and remove those mutual feuds and animosities, and silence those passionate and quarrelsome divisions, that were amongst men.

This argument Eusebius particularly prosecutes, and shows that while the nations were under paganism and idolatry, they were filled with wars and troubles, and all the effects of barbarous rage and fury; but that after the divine and peaceable doctrine of our Saviour came abroad, those differences and calamities began to cease, according to the predictions that were of him, that 'there should be righteousness and abundance of peace in his days; that men should beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; that nation should not lift up sword against nation, nor learn war any more;'⁴ that this must needs be in some measure the effect of his appearance, his

¹ Histor. lib. v. c. 4, 5, p. 535. Jos. Antiquit. Judaic. lib. xi. c. 6. Ἐξος ἄμικτον, ἀσύμφυλον, ἕτε θεησκειαν την αυτην τοῖς ἄλλοις ἔχον, ἕτε νόμοις χρώμενον ὁμοις, ἐχθρόν δε ἐ τοῖς ἔθεσι, ἐ τοῖς ἑπιτηδεύμασι τῷ σῶ λαῶ ἐ ἄ πασιν ἀνθρώποις δυσμενές ἔθνος, ἐ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀλλόκοτον. Vid. Esther, iii. 8; Vid. Cic. pro. Flac. p. 368, tom. ii.

² John, xi. 48.

³ Eph. ii. 14.

⁴ Isaiah, ii. 4.

doctrine being so fitly calculated to soften the rough and brutish manners of men, and to train them up in milder and more humane institutions. And a little after he makes it an uncontrollable argument of the truth and excellency of the Christian doctrine, that it teaches men to bear the reproaches and provocations of enemies with a generous and unshaken mind, and to be able not to revenge ourselves, by falling foul upon them with the like indignities and affronts; to be above anger and passion, and every inordinate and unruly appetite; to administer to the wants and necessities of the helpless, and to embrace every man as our kindred and countryman, and, though reputed a stranger to us, yet to own him as if by the law of nature he were our nearest friend and brother.¹ How much their religion contributed to the public tranquillity by forbidding pride, passion, covetousness, and such sins as are the great springs of confusion and disturbance, Justin Martyr tells the emperors: "As for peace," says he, "we above all men in the world promote and further it, forasmuch as we teach that no wicked man, no covetous or treacherous person, no good or virtuous man can lie hid from the eye of God, but that every man is travelling either towards an eternal happiness or misery according to the desert and nature of his works. The truth is, our blessed Lord came not to inspire men with principles of revenge and passion, to teach them to return evil for evil, but to encourage love and gentleness, to teach men to overcome by suffering, and to obtain the reward by meekness and patience."²

¹ Præparat. Evangel. lib. i. c. 4, p. 10, 11. Vid. Athenas. de Verb. Incarnat. p. 78, tom. i.

² Apol. ii. p. 59.

Such was the temper, such the carriage of Christians towards their enemies, and them that were without: within themselves they maintained the most admirable peace and harmony, and were in a manner 'of one heart and soul.' They lived in the strictest amity, and abhorred all division as a plague and a firebrand. But because men's understandings not being all of one size, nor all truths alike plain and evident, differences in men's judgments and opinions must needs arise; yet no schism ever arose in the church about any of the more considerable principles of religion, but it was presently bewailed with universal resentment of all pious and good men, and the breach endeavoured to be made up; no ways left unattempted, no methods of persuasion omitted that might contribute to it. When Novatian had made some disturbance in the church of Rome concerning the receiving the lapsed into communion, Dionysius the good bishop of Alexandria writes to him to extinguish the schism, and tells him "it is better to suffer any thing than that the church of God should be rent in pieces:"¹ and Cyprian positively asserts (according to the apostle's resolution of the case) that without this unity and charity 'a man cannot enter into heaven;' for he that rents the church, destroys the faith, disturbs the peace, dissolves charity, and profanes the holy sacrament."⁵ How severely they branded all schism and division in the church, how industriously they laboured to take up all controversies amongst Christians, and to reconcile dissenting brethren, to maintain concord and agreement amongst themselves, and to prevent all occasions of

¹ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. vi. c. 45, p. 247.

² De Unit. Eccl. p. 184.

quarrel and dissension, might be easily made to appear out of the writers of those times. Hence those canonical epistles (as they call them) wherewith persons were wont to be furnished when going from one place to another; of which there were especially three sorts: first, *Συστατικά*,¹ or commendatory epistles, mentioned by St. Paul,² and were in use amongst the heathens. They were granted to clergymen going into another diocess by the bishop that ordained them, testifying their ordination, their soundness and orthodoxy in the faith, the innocency and unblamableness of their lives: to those that had been under, or had been suspected of excommunication, declaring their absolution, and recommending them to be received in the number of the faithful: and to all, whether clergy or laity, that were to travel, as tickets of hospitality, that wherever they came, upon the producing these letters they might be known to be catholic and orthodox, and as such received and entertained by them. The second sort were *Ἀπολυτικά*, letters dimissory,³ whereby leave was given to persons going into another diocess, either to be ordained by the bishop of that place, or if ordained already, to be admitted and incorporated into the clergy of that church. Upon which account the ancient councils every where provide that no stranger shall either receive ordination at the hands of another bishop, or exer-

¹ Arrian, Pliny, and the later writers, frequently mention these *γράμματα συστατικά*. They were somewhat similar to the *tesseix hospitalitis* of the ancients; from which perhaps they derived their origin among the Jews, Greeks, and Romans.—ED.

² 2 Cor. iii. 1.

³ Hence the *letters dimissory* of bishops at the present day.—ED.

cise any ministerial act in another diocess, without the consent and dimissory letters of the bishop of that place from whence he comes. The third were *Εἰρηνικαὶ*, letters of peace, granted by the bishop to the poor that were oppressed, and such as fled to the church for its protection and assistance: but especially to such of the clergy as were to go out of one diocess into another, it being directed to the bishop of that diocess, that he would receive him, that so he might take no offence, but that peaceable concord and agreement might be maintained between them. By these arts the prudence of those times sought to secure the peace of the church, and as much as might be, prevent all dissensions that might arise. And where matters of any greater moment fell out, how quickly did they flock together to compose and heal them?

Hence those many synods and councils that were convened to umpire differences, to explain or define articles of faith, to condemn and suppress the disturbers of the church, and innovators in religion. What infinite care did the good emperor Constantine take for composing the Arian controversies which then began first to infect and overrun the world! How much his heart was set upon it, his solicitous thoughts taken up about it, how many troublesome days and restless nights it cost him, with what strong and nervous arguments, what affectionate entreaties he presses it, may be seen in that excellent letter (yet extant in his life) which he wrote to the authors of those impious and unhappy controversies.¹ But when this would not do, he summoned the great council of Nice, consisting of

¹ De Vit. Constant. lib. ii. c. 64, et seqq. p. 473.

three hundred and eighteen bishops, and in his speech at the opening of that council conjured them by all that was dear and sacred to agree, and to compose those dissensions which were risen in the church, which he seriously protested he looked upon as more grievous and dangerous than any war whatsoever, and that they created greater trouble and inquietude to his mind, than all the other affairs of his empire.¹ And when several of the bishops then in council had preferred libels and accusations one against another, without ever reading them, he bundled and sealed them all up together, and having reconciled and made them friends, produced the papers, and immediately threw them into the fire before their faces.² So passionately desirous was that good prince to extinguish the flames, and to redeem the peace of the church at any rate.

Nor did there want meek and peaceable-minded men who valued the public welfare before any private and personal advantage, and could make their own particular concerns strike sail, when the peace and interest of the church called for it. When great contests and confusions were raised by some perverse and unquiet persons about the see of Constantinople, (then possessed by Gregory Nazianzen,) he himself stood up in the midst of the assembly and told the bishops, how unfit it was that they who were preachers of peace to others, should fall out amongst themselves; begged of them even by the sacred Trinity to manage their affairs calmly and peaceably; and, "If I," says he, "be the Jonas

¹ De Vit. Constant. lib. iii. c. 12, p. 489.

² Theod. Hist. Eccl. lib. i. c. 11, p. 25.

that raises the storm, throw me into the sea, and let these storms and tempests cease." ¹ Therewith he freely resigned his bishopric, though legally settled in it by the express command and warrant of the emperor, and the universal desires and acclamations of the people. The same excellent temper ruled in St. Chrysostom, ² one of his successors in that see. And this was the brave and noble disposition of mind, to which St. Clement sought to reduce the Corinthians, after they had fallen into a little schism and disorder: "Who is there among you," says he, "of that generous temper, that compassionate and charitable disposition? Let him say, if this sedition, these schisms and contentions have arisen through my means, or upon my account, I will depart and be gone whithersoever you please, and will do what the people shall command; only let Christ's sheep-fold, together with the elders that are placed over it, be kept in peace." ³

Nay, when good men were most zealous about the main and foundation articles of faith, so as sometimes rather to hazard peace, than to betray the truth, yet in matters of indifferency, and such as only concerned the rituals of religion, they mutually bore with one another, without any violation of that charity which is the great law of Christianity. Thus in that famous controversy about the keeping of Easter, so much agitated between the eastern and western churches, Irenæus in a letter to Pope Victor, (who of all that ever sat in that chair had raised the greatest stirs about it,) tells him that

¹ Vit. Greg. Naz. per Gregor. Presbyt.

² Homil. 11, in Ep. ad Ephes. p. 1110.

³ Epist. ad Cor. p. 69.

“Bishops in former times, however they differed about the observation of it, yet always maintained an entire concord and fellowship with one another; the churches being careful to maintain a peaceable communion, though differing in some particular rites and ceremonies, yea even when their rites and customs seemed to clash, by meeting together at the same place.”¹ Thus when Polycarp came to Rome from the churches of the east, to treat with pope Anicetus about this and some other affairs, though they could not satisfy each other to yield the controversy, yet they kissed and embraced one another with mutual endearments, received the holy communion together; and Anicetus, to do the greater honour to Polycarp, gave him leave to celebrate and consecrate the eucharist in his church, and at last they parted in great peace and friendship. The difference of the observation not at all hindered the agreement and harmony of the churches; it being agreed amongst them by common consent (says Sozomen speaking of this passage) that in keeping this festival they should each follow their own custom, but by no means break the peace and communion that was between them. “They reckoned it,” says he, “a very foolish and unreasonable thing, that they should fall out for a few rites and customs, who agreed in the main principles of religion.”²

The Christians of those times had too deeply imbibed that precept of our Saviour, ‘love one another, as I have loved you,’³ to fall out about every nice and trifling circumstance. When highest

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

² Hist. Eccl. lib. vii. c. 19, p. 734.

³ John, xv. 12.

provoked and affronted they could forbear and forgive their enemies, much more their brethren, and were not like the waspish philosophers amongst the heathens, who were ready to fall foul upon one another for every petty and inconsiderable difference of opinion that was amongst them. So Origen tells Celsus: "Both amongst your philosophers and physicians," says he, "there are sects that have perpetual feuds and quarrels with each other, whereas we who have entertained the laws of the blessed Jesus, and have learnt both to speak and to do according to his doctrine, 'bless them that revile us; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat.'¹ Nor do we speak dire and dreadful things against those that differ from us in opinion, and do not presently embrace those things which we have entertained: but as much as in us lies we leave nothing unattempted that may persuade them to change for the better, and to give up themselves only to the service of the great Creator, and to do all things as those that must give an account of their actions."² In short, Christians were careful not to offend either God or men, but to keep and maintain peace with both. Thence that excellent saying of Ephræm Syrus the famous deacon of Edessa when he came to die; "In my whole life," said he, "I never reproached my Lord and Master, nor suffered any foolish talk to come out of my lips, nor did I ever curse or revile any man, or maintain the least difference or controversy with any Christian in all my life."³

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 12.

² Lib. v. p. 273.

³ Vit. Ephræm Syr. per Gregor. Nyss. tom. ii. p. 1033.

CHAPTER IV.

Of their Obedience and Subjection to Civil Government.

How much Christian religion transcribed into the lives of its professors contributes to the happiness of men, not only in their single and private capacities, but as to the public welfare of human societies, and to the common interests and conveniences of mankind, we have already discovered in several instances. Now because magistracy and civil government is the great support and instrument of external peace and happiness, we shall in the last place consider how eminent the first Christians were for their submission and subjection to civil government. And certainly there is scarce any particular instance wherein primitive Christianity did more triumph in the world, than in their exemplary obedience to the powers and magistrates, under which they lived; honouring their persons, revering their power, paying their tribute, obeying their laws, where they were not evidently contrary to the laws of Christ, and where they were, submitting to the most cruel penalties they laid upon them with the greatest calmness and serenity of soul. The truth is, one great design of the Christian law is to secure the interests of civil authority. Our Saviour has expressly taught us, 'that we are to give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, as well as unto God the things that are God's:'¹ and his apostles

¹ Matt. xxii. 21; Mark. xiii. 17; Luke, xx. 25.

spoke as plainly as words could speak it: 'Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God: whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation: wherefore you must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience-sake; for, for this cause pay you tribute also, for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing: render therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.'¹ Here we may take notice both of the strictness and universality of the charge; and (what is mainly material to observe) this charge given the Romans at that time when Nero was their emperor, who was not only an heathen magistrate, but the first persecutor of Christians, a man so prodigiously brutish and tyrannical, that the world scarce ever brought forth such another monster. The same apostle amongst other directions given to Titus for the discharge of his office, bids him 'put the people in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates.'² St. Peter delivers the same doctrine to a tittle: 'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well; for so is the will of God, that with well-doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.'³

¹ Rom. xiii. 1—7.

² Tit. iii. 1.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 13—15.

Such are the commands, and such was the practice of Christ and his apostles. When a tax was demanded of him, though he was the Son of God, he refused not to pay tribute unto Cæsar,¹ even when it put him to the expense and charges of a miracle. When arraigned for his life at Pilate's bar, he freely owned his authority, and cheerfully submitted to that wicked and unrighteous sentence, though able to command more than twelve legions of angels for his rescue and deliverance.² The apostles, though unjustly scourged before the council, yet made no tart reflections, but 'went away rejoicing.' When Herod had cut off St. James's head, and consigned Peter in prison to the same butchery and execution, what arms did the Christians use? rise up and put him out of the throne, scatter libels, raise tumults or factions in the city? Oh no, the church's weapons were prayers and tears, their only refuge in those evil times.

Nor did this excellent spirit die with the apostles. We find the same temper ruling in the succeeding ages of Christianity. "The Christians," says one of the ancients, "obey the laws that are made, and by the exactness of their lives go beyond that accuracy which the law requires of them; they love all men though all men study to afflict and persecute them."² "Are there any," as Athenagoras concludes his address to the emperors, "more devoted to you than we? who pray for the happiness of your government, that according to right and equity the son may succeed his father in the

¹ Matt. xvii. 27.

² Matt. xxvi. 53.

³ Justin Martyr, Epist. ad Diogn. p. 497.

empire, that your dominions may be enlarged, and that all things may prosper that you take in hand: and this we do, as that which turns both to yours and our own advantage, that so ‘under you leading a quiet and peaceable life,’¹ we may cheerfully obey all those commands which you lay upon us.”² St. Polycarp, a little before his martyrdom, wrote to the Christians at Philippi, earnestly exhorting them all “to obey their rulers, and to exercise all patience and long-suffering towards them;”³ and, when he stood before the proconsul, he told him, that “this was the great law of Christianity, that we are commanded by God to give all due honour and obedience to princes and potentates, such as is not prejudicial to us;”⁴ i. e. (for so doubtless he means) such as is not contrary to the principles of our religion. Tertullian tells us it was a solemn part of the church-service in his time, to pray for the happiness and prosperity of the princes under whom they lived.⁵ Thus, when Celsus seemed to object as if the Christians refused to help the emperors in their wars,⁶ Origen answers, that “they did really assist and help him, and that rather with divine than human weapons, according to the command of the apostle; ‘I exhort that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all that are in authority.’”⁷

For all customs and tributes none ever paid them more freely than they. “For your taxes and

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 2.

² Leg. pro Christian. p. 39.

³ Apud Euseb. lib. iii. c. 36, p. 108.

⁴ Ibid. lib. iv. c. 15, p. 132.

⁵ Apol. c. 39, p. 31.

⁶ Lib. viii. p. 426.

⁷ 1 Tim. ii. 1.

tributes," says Justin Martyr to the emperors, "we are above all other men everywhere ready to bring them in to your collectors and officers, being taught so to do by our great Master, who bade those that asked the question whether they might pay tribute unto Cæsar, to 'give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.'¹ For which reason we worship none but God; and as for you in all other things we cheerfully serve you, acknowledging you to be emperors and governors of men, and praying, that together with your imperial power, you may have a wise and discerning judgment and understanding."² "If the emperor command me to pay tribute," says another of their Apologists, "I am ready to do it; if my Lord command me to serve and obey him, I confess my obligation to it. Man is to be served with that respect that is due to man; but God only who is invisible and incomprehensible is to be religiously feared and honoured: if commanded to deny him, I must disobey, and die rather than be found perfidious and ungrateful to him."³ So Tertullian tells them, that although they refused to pay the taxes rated upon them for maintenance of the heathen temples, yet their denial to pay that one tax was abundantly compensated and made up in their honest payment of all the rest.⁴ The truth is, they were admirably exact and conscientious, as in all their actions, so especially those that related to the public, and concerned their duty and obedience to their rulers and governors.

Nor were they thus only in prosperous times,

¹ Matt. xxii. 21.

² Apol. ii. p. 61.

³ Tatian. Orat. contr. Græc. p. 144.

⁴ Apol. c. 42. p. 34.

but under the heaviest persecutions, as indeed the rod was seldom off their backs. The last mentioned Apologist bids their judges go on to butcher them, and tells them, "they did but force those souls out of their bodies, which were praying to God for the emperor's happiness, even while their officers were doing of it."¹ And Cyprian tells the proconsul, that "as badly as they were used, yet they ceased not to pray for the overthrow and expulsion of the common enemies, for seasonable showers, and either for the removing or mitigating public evils, begging of God day and night with the greatest instance and importunity for the peace and safety of their persecutors, endeavouring to pacify and propitiate God who was angry with the iniquities of the age."² Nor were they thus kind and good natured, thus submissive and patient for want of power, and because they knew not how to help it. Tertullian answers in this case, that if they thought it lawful to return evil for evil they could plentifully revenge themselves; that they were no small and inconsiderable party; that though but of yesterday's standing, yet they had filled all places, all offices of the empire; that should they but agree together to leave the Roman empire, the loss of so many members would utterly ruin it, and they would stand amazed and affrighted at that solitude and desolation that would ensue upon it, and have more enemies than loyal subjects left amongst them; whereas now they had the fewer enemies for having so many Christians."³

The Christians then opposed not their enemies

¹ Cap. 30, p. 27.

² Ad Demetrian. p. 202.

³ Apol. c. 37, p. 30.

with the points of their swords, but with solid arguments, and mild entreaties. Thus when Julian the emperor urged his army, which was almost wholly made up of Christians, to wicked counsels, and the practices of idolatry, they withstood him only with prayers and tears, "accounting this," says my author, "to be the only remedy against persecution."¹ So far were they from resisting or rebelling, that they could quietly die at the emperor's command, even when they had power lying at their foot. I cannot in this place omit the memorable instance of the Thebæan legion, being so exceedingly apposite and pertinent to my purpose, and so remarkable as no age can furnish out such another instance. I shall set down the story entirely out of the author himself; the account of their martyrdom written by Eucherius bishop of Lyons, who assures us he received the relation from very credible hands; and it is thus:—

"Maximianus Cæsar, (whom Dioclesian had lately taken to be his colleague in the empire,) a bad man, and a bitter persecutor of the Christians, was sent into France to suppress a mutiny and rebellion risen there. To strengthen his army there was added to it a band of Christians called the Thebæan legion, consisting, according to the manner of the Romans, of six thousand six hundred sixty-six faithful, expert and resolute soldiers. Coming to Octodurus, (a place in Savoy,) and being ready to offer sacrifice to the gods, he causes his army to come together, and commands them under a great penalty to swear by the altars of their gods, that they would unanimously fight

¹ Naz. *invect.* i. in Julian. p. 94.

against their enemies, and persecute the Christians as enemies to the gods: which the Thebæan legion no sooner understood, but they presently withdrew: to avoid, if it might be, the wicked and sacrilegious command, and to refresh themselves, tired with so long a march. But the emperor, taking notice of the army as they came to swear, quickly missed the legion, and being angry, sent officers to them to require them forthwith to do it; who, inquiring what it was that they were commanded to do, were told by the messengers, that all the soldiers had offered sacrifices, and had taken the forementioned oath, and that Cæsar commanded them to return presently and do the like. To whom the heads of the legion mildly answered; ‘That for this reason they left Octodurus, because they had heard they should be forced to sacrifice; that being Christians, and that they might not be defiled with the altars of devils, they thought themselves obliged to worship the living Gød, and to keep that religion which they had entertained in the east, to the last hour of their life: that as they were a legion they were ready to any service of the war; but to return to him to commit sacrilege as he commanded, they could not yield.’

“With this answer the messengers returned, and told the emperor, that they were resolved not to obey his commands, who being transported with anger, began thus to vent his passion: ‘Do my soldiers think thus to slight my royal orders, and the holy rites of my religion? Had they only despised the imperial majesty, it would have called for public vengeance, but together with the contempt of me, an affront is offered to heaven, and the Roman religion is as much despised as I am.

Let the obstinate soldiers know, that I am not only able to vindicate myself, but to revenge the quarrel of my gods. Let my faithful servants make haste, and dispatch every tenth man according as the fatal lot shall fall upon him: by this equal death let those whose lot it shall be to die first, know, how able Maximian is severely to revenge both himself and his gods.' With that the command is given, the executioners sent, the emperor's pleasure made known, and every tenth man is put to death; who cheerfully offered their necks to the executioners, and the only contention amongst them was, who should first undergo that glorious death. This done, the legion is commanded to return to the rest of the army. Whereupon at the instigation of Mauritius the general of the legion, they unanimously returned this answer to the emperor: 'We acknowledge, Cæsar, that we are your soldiers, and took up arms for defence of the empire; nor did we ever basely betray our trust, or forsake our station, or deserved that the brand either of fear or cowardice should be set upon us; nor should we stick now to obey your commands, did not the laws of Christianity, wherein we have been instructed, forbid us to worship devils, and to approach the polluted altars of the gods. We understand you are resolved either to defile us with sacrilegious worship, or to terrify us with a decimation: spare any further search concerning us; know we are all Christians, our bodies we yield subject to your power, but our souls we reserve entire for Christ the Author and the Saviour of them.'

—“The emperor, exasperated with such a generous resolution, commanded a second decimation,

which was immediately executed, and the rest, as before, commanded to return to Octodurus. Hereupon Exuperius the ensign catching up his colours, thus addressed himself to them; ‘ You see me, most excellent fellow-soldiers, holding these ensigns of secular warfare; but these are not the arms that must make our way into the heavenly kingdom. We stand in need of an undaunted mind, an invincible defence, a maintaining the faith which we have given to God, to the very last.—Let the dismal executioner go and carry this message to his bloody master, and tell him thus: We are, O emperor, your soldiers, but withal (which we freely confess) the servants of God; to you we owe military service, to him innocency; we cannot obey the emperor, so as to deny God, the author of our lives, yea and of yours too, whether you will or no. If you have a mind to appoint us to any greater and severer torments, we are ready for them. You must needs acknowledge the unconquerable courage of this legion: we throw down our arms; your officers will find our right hands naked, but our breast armed with a true catholic faith. Kill us, and trample on us, we undauntedly yield our necks to the executioner’s sword. These things are the more pleasant to us, while setting light by your sacrilegious attempts, we hasten apace to the heavenly crown.’

“ Maximianus being told this, and despairing now to break their constancy, commands his whole army to fall upon them and cut them off, which they did accordingly, without any difference of age or person, mangling their bodies, and then taking the spoils; the emperor having so appointed, that whoever killed any of the legion, should have the

spoils of him whom he killed. And thus they died with their swords in their hands, when they might have preserved their lives (especially in a place so advantageous) by force of arms, or to be sure have sold them at the dearest rate."¹ This story I have been willing to set down the more at large, because so remarkable in all its circumstances, and containing the most unparalleled instance of Christian piety and submission (next to that of our blessed Saviour) that I think was ever known to the world.

By what has been said we may see the injustice of that charge which the heathens sometimes laid upon the Christians, that they were disturbers of the peace, and enemies to civil government; an indictment purely false, and without any shadow of a real pretence to cover it. But however, as groundless as it was, they were frequently charged with it. Sometimes they were accused of disloyalty and treason, either because they would not swear by the emperor's genius, or not sacrifice for his safety, or not worship the emperors as *divi*, or gods, or not celebrate their festivals in the same way with others. For the first, their refusing to swear by the emperor's genius, we have heard before what Tertullian answers to it, that it was in effect to give divine honour to devils. To the second, their not sacrificing for the emperor's safety, he answers, that none sacrificed to so good purpose as they, for that they offered up prayers to the true, living and eternal God for the safety of the emperors.² For

¹ Martyr. SS. Mauricii et socior. ab Eucher. Lugdunens. conscript. apud Surium ad diem 22 Sept. p. 220. &c. Edit. Colon. 1618.

² Apol. c. 30, p. 27.

the third, their refusing to own the emperors for gods, he tells them, they could not do it, partly because they would not lie in saying so, partly because they durst not by doing it mock and deride the emperor.¹ For the last, their not observing the solemn festivals of the emperors, for which they were accounted enemies to the public, they pleaded that their religion and their conscience could not comply with that vanity, that luxury, and debauchery, and all manner of excess and wickedness that was committed at those times.²

Otherwhiles they were accused of sedition, and holding unlawful combinations, which arose upon the account of their religious assemblies, which their enemies beheld as societies erected contrary to the Roman laws.

To this the Christians answered, that their meetings could not be accounted amongst unlawful factions, having nothing common with them; that indeed the wisdom and providence of the state had justly prohibited seditious meetings; but no such thing could be suspected of the Christian assemblies, who were frozen as to any ambitious designs of honour or dignity, strangers to nothing more than public affairs, and had renounced all pretences to external pomps and pleasures.³ That if the Christian assemblies were like others, there would be some reason to condemn them under the notion of factions; "but to whose prejudice," say they, "did we ever meet together? We are the same when together, that we are when asunder; the same united, as is every single person, hurting

¹ Ibid. c. 33, p. 28. Vid. Theoph. Antioch. lib. i. p. 76.

² Ibid. c. 35, p. 28. ³ Tertull. Apol. c. 38, p. 30.

no man, grieving no man; and therefore that when such honest, good, pious, and chaste men met together, it was rather to be called a council than a faction."¹ Origen bids Celsus or any of his party show any thing that was seditious amongst the Christians. That their religion arose not at first (as he falsely charged it) out of sedition, might appear in that their legislator had so severely forbidden killing and murder, and that the Christians would never have entertained such mild laws, as gave their enemies opportunity to kill them like sheep delivered to the slaughter without making the least resistance."² Julian the emperor, though no good friend to Christians, yet thus far does them right, that if they see any one mutinying against his prince, they presently punish him with great severities.³

And here we may with just reason reflect upon the iniquity of the church of Rome, which in this instance of religion has so abominably debauched the purity and simplicity of the Christian faith. For they not only exempt the clergy, where they can, from the authority and judgment of the secular powers, whereby horrible enormities do arise; but generally teach, that a prince once excommunicate, his subjects are absolved from all fealty and allegiance, and he may with impunity be deposed or made away. Cardinal Bellarmine (whose wit and learning were employed to uphold a tottering cause) maintains it stiffly, and in express terms,

¹ Tertull. Apol. c. 39, p. 32.

² Contr. Cels. lib. iii. p. 115.

³ Julian. Fragm. Epist. Oper. c. 1, p. 528.—Πλὴν εἴ τις εἰς τὸν βασιλέα ἐπίδοιεν ἀτακτῆντας ἀντίκα μάλα κολάζουσιν.

that if a king be an heretic or an infidel, (and we know what they mean by that, nay he particularly names the reformed princes of England amongst his instances,) and seeks to draw his dominions unto his sect; it is not only lawful, but necessary to deprive him of his kingdom. And although he knew that the whole course of antiquity would fly in the face of so bold an assertion, yet he goes on to assert, that the reason why the primitive Christians did not attempt this upon Nero, Dioclesian, Julian the Apostate, and the like, was not out of conscience, or that they boggled out of a sense of duty, but because they wanted means and power to effect it.¹ A bold piece of falsehood this, and how contrary to the plain and positive laws of Christ, to the meek and primitive spirit of the Gospel! Had St. Paul been of their mind, he would have told the Christian Romans quite another story, and instead of bidding them be subject unto Nero 'not only for wrath, but for conscience sake,'² would have instructed them to take all opportunities to have murdered or deposed him. But I shall not reckon up the villanies they have been guilty of in this kind, nor pursue the odious and pernicious consequences of their doctrine and practice. Thus much I could not but take notice of, being so immediately opposite to the whole tenor of the Gospel, and so great a scandal to Christianity. And I verily believe that had the primitive Christians been no better subjects, than their emperors were princes; had they practised upon them those bloody artifices which have been common amongst those

¹ De Rom. Pontif. lib. v. c. 7, col. 891.

² Rom. xiii. 5.

that call themselves the only Catholics; that barbarous dealing would have been a greater curb to the flourishing of the Gospel, than all the ten persecutions. For how could an impartial heathen ever have believed their doctrine to have been of God, had their actions been so contrary to all principles of natural divinity? Sure I am, pagan Rome was in this case more orthodox, and their pontifices far better doctors of divinity. Their *Lex Julia* (as *Ulpian* their great lawyer tells us) allotted the same penalty to sacrilege and treason; placing the one the very next step to the other; thereby teaching us that they looked upon treason against the prince as an affront next to that which was immediately done against the Majesty of Heaven.¹ And *Marcellus*, the great statesman in *Tacitus*, lays it down for a maxim, that subjects may wish for good princes, but ought to bear with any.² And shame it is that any should call themselves Christians, and yet be found worse than they, their principles and practices more opposite to the known laws of God and nature, more destructive to the peace and welfare of mankind.

¹ *Lib. vii. de Offic. Procons. in l. 1, ff. ad leg. Jul. Maj.*

² *Histor. lib. iv. c. 8, p. 489.*

CHAPTER V.

Of their Penance, and the Discipline of the ancient Church.

HAVING travelled through the several stages of the subject I had undertaken; I should here have ended my journey, but that one thing remains, which was not properly reducible under any particular head, being of a general relation to the whole; and that is, to consider what discipline was used towards offenders in the ancient church; only premising this, that the Christian church, being founded and established by Christ as a society and corporation distinct from that of the commonwealth, is by the very nature of its constitution (besides what positive ground and warrant there may be for it in Scripture) invested with an inherent power (besides what is borrowed from the civil magistrate) of censuring and punishing its members that offend against the laws of it, and this in order to the maintaining its peace and purity. For without such a fundamental power as this, it is impossible that as a society it should be able to subsist, the very nature of a community necessarily implying such a right inherent in it. Now for the better understanding what this power was, and how exercised in the first ages of the church, we shall consider these four things:—what were the usual crimes that came under the discipline of the ancient church; what penalties were inflicted upon delinquent persons; in what manner offenders were dealt

with; and by whom this discipline was administered.

First, What the usual crimes and offences were which came under the discipline of the ancient church. In the general, they were any offences against the Christian law, any vice or immorality that was either public in itself, or made known and made good to the church. For the holy and good Christians of those times were infinitely careful to keep the honour of their religion unspotted, to stifle every sin in its birth, and by bringing offenders to public shame and penalty, to keep them from propagating the malignant influence of a bad example. For this reason they watched over one another, told them privately of their faults and failures, and when that would not do, brought them before the cognizance of the church. It is needless to reckon up particular crimes, when none were spared. Only because in those days, by reason of the violent heats of persecution, the great temptation which the weaker and more unsettled Christians were exposed to, was to deny their profession, and to offer sacrifice to the heathen gods; therefore lapsing into idolatry was the most common sin that came before them, and of this they had very frequent instances; it being that which for some ages mainly exercised the discipline of the church. This sin of idolatry or denying Christ in those times was usually committed these three ways. Sometimes by exposing the Scriptures to the rage and malice of their enemies, which was accounted a virtual renouncing Christianity. This was especially remarkable under the Diocletian persecution in the African churches; for Dioclesian had put forth an edict, that Christians should deliver up their Scrip-

tures and the writings of the church to be burnt. This command was prosecuted with great rigour and fierceness, and many Christians to avoid the storm delivered up their Bibles to the scorn and fury of their enemies. Hence they were styled *traditores*; (of whom there is frequent mention in Optatus and St. Augustine.) Otherwhiles Christians became guilty of idolatry by actual sacrificing, or worshipping idols. These were called *thurificati*, from their burning incense upon the altars of the heathen deities, and were the grossest and vilest sort of idolaters. Others again fell into this sin by basely corrupting the heathen magistrate, and purchasing a warrant of security from him to exempt them from the penalty of the law, and the necessity of sacrificing and denying Christ. These were called *libellatici*, of whom we shall speak more afterwards.

Secondly, What penalties and punishments were inflicted upon delinquent persons; and they could be no other than such as were agreeable to the nature and constitution of the church, which, as it transacts only in spiritual matters, so it could inflict no other than spiritual censures and chastisements. It is true indeed that in the first age especially, the apostles had a power to inflict bodily punishments upon offenders, which they sometimes made use of upon great occasions: as St. Peter did towards Ananias and Sapphira, striking them dead upon the place for their notorious cozenage and gross hypocrisy;¹ and St. Paul punished Elymas with blindness for his perverse and malicious opposition of the Gospel.² This doubtless he pri-

¹ Acts, v. 5, 10.

² Ib. xiii. 11.

marily intends by his delivering over persons unto satan; and questionless the main design of the divine providence in affording this extraordinary gift was to supply the defect of civil and co-active power, of which the church was then wholly destitute. How long this miraculous power lasted in the church I know not, or whether at all beyond the apostles' age. The common and standing penalty they made use of was excommunication or suspension from communion with the church; the cutting off and casting out an offending person as a rotten and infected member, till by repentance and wholesome discipline he was cured and restored, and then he was re-admitted into church-society, and to a participation of the ordinances and privileges of Christianity.

This way of punishing by excommunication was not originally instituted by our Lord or his apostles, but had been anciently practised both amongst Jews and Gentiles. It was commonly practised by the Druids, (as Cæsar who lived amongst them informs us,) who, when any of the people became irregular and disorderly, presently suspended them from their sacrifices; and the persons thus suspended were accounted in the number of the most impious and execrable persons. All men stood off from them, shunned their company and converse as an infection and a plague: they had no benefit of law, nor any honour or respect shown to them; and of all punishments this they accounted most extreme and severe.¹ So far he; giving an account of this discipline amongst the ancient Gauls. In the Jewish church nothing was more familiar; their

¹ De Bell. Gall. lib. vi. p. 135.

three famous degrees of excommunication נִדְּוּי *niddui*, חֶרֶם *cherem*, שְׁמַתָּה *shammatha*, are so commonly known, that it were impertinent to insist upon them. From the usage of the Jewish it was amongst other rites adopted into the Christian church, practised by the apostles, and the churches founded by them, (whereof we have instances in the New Testament,) but brought to greater perfection in succeeding times. It is variously expressed by the ancient writers, though much to the same purpose. Such persons are said *abstineri*, to be kept back, a word much used by Cyprian, and the synod of Illiberis; ἀφορίζεσθαι, to be separated, or be separated from the body of Christ, as St. Augustin oft expresses it; ἐκκόπτεσθαι τῆς κοινωνίας παντάπασιν, to be wholly cut off from communion, as it is in the apostolic canons;¹ and sometimes ρίπτεσθαι ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, as the Laodicean synod calls it,² to be thrown out of the church; to be anathematized, and without the communion and pale of the church, as the Fathers of the council of Gangra have it.³

This suspension and the penance that accompanied it was greater or less, longer or shorter, according to the nature of the crime; sometimes two, three, ten, fifteen, twenty or thirty years, and sometimes for the whole life; nay, in some cases it was not taken off at death, but persons were left to the judgment of God, without any testimony of their reconciliation to the church. Herein the severity was mitigated, not only by private bishops, but by the great council of Nice, which ordained

¹ Can. 23.

² Ib.

³ Epist. ad Armen. Episc. præfix. Conc. Gangr.

that penitent persons should not be denied the communion at the hour of death. If the person offending happened to be in orders, he forfeited his ministry; and though upon his repentance he was restored to communion, yet it was only as a lay-person, never recovering the honour and dignity of his office. This St. Basil¹ tells us was an ancient canon and practice of the church, and accordingly ordains, that a deacon guilty of fornication should be deposed from his office, and being thrust down into the rank of the laity, should in that quality be admitted to communion.

Indeed they strove by all ways imaginable to discourage sin, never thinking the curb strong enough, so they might but keep persons within the bounds of order and regularity; insomuch that by some the string was stretched too far, and all pardon denied to them that had sinned. This uncomfortable doctrine was if not first coined, yet mainly vended by the Novatian party. For Novatus, St. Cyprian's presbyter, being suspended by him for his vile enormities fled over to Rome, and there joined himself to Novatian, a presbyter of that church, (these two names are frequently confounded by the Greek writers,) who ambitiously sought to make himself bishop, and to thrust out Cornelius newly elected into that see. Not being able to compass his design, between them they started this amongst other heretical opinions, that the lapsed, who through fear of suffering had fallen in the time of persecution, were not to be admitted to repentance; and that though they

¹ Epist. Can. ad Amphil. Can. iii. p. 22. Vid. Zonar. et Balsam. in Can. x. Conc. Nicen.; Cyprian. Epist. 52 and 68; Euseb. Hist. Eccl. vi. 43.

should never so oft confess their sins, and never so sincerely forsake them, yet there was no hope of salvation for them; at leastwise (for so I incline to understand them) that it was not in the power of the church to absolve or give them any hopes of pardon, leaving them to the judgment of God: styling themselves (and not only as Balsamon affirms, ironically styled by others) by the name of *cathari*, the pure and undefiled party.¹ But they were herein presently condemned by a synod of sixty bishops, and more than as many presbyters and deacons gathered at Rome; and the decree consented to and published by the rest of the bishops in their several provinces; concluding that Novatus and his party, and all that had subscribed to his most inhuman and merciless opinion, should be cast out of the church; and that the brethren who in this sad calamity had fallen from their profession, should be healed and restored by the arts and methods of repentance.² Which brings us to consider,

Thirdly, How and in what manner offenders were dealt with, both as to their suspension and penance, and as to their absolution. This affair was usually managed after this order;—at their public assemblies (as we find in Tertullian,) amongst other parts, of their holy exercises, there were exhortations, reproofs, and a divine censure; for the judgment is given with great weight, as amongst those that are sure that God beholds what they do; and this is one of the highest *præludiums* and forerunners of the judgment to come, when the delinquent

¹ Euseb. ubi supr. p. 242; Epiphani. Hæres. 59, contr. Catharos. p. 214.

² In Can. 8, Conc. Nicen.

person is banished from the communion of prayers, assemblies, and all holy commerce.¹ By this passage we clearly see, that the first thing in this solemn action was to make reproofs and exhortations, thereby to bring the offender to the sight and acknowledgment of his faults; then the sentence or censure was passed upon him, whereby he was suspended, not only from the communion of the holy eucharist, but from all holy commerce in any (especially public) duty of religion. We cannot imagine, that in every person that stood under this capacity, a formal sentence was always denounced against him, it being many times sufficient that the fact he had done was evident and notorious, as in the case of the lapsed that had offered sacrifice, for in this case the offender was looked upon as *ipso facto* excommunicate, and all religious commerce forbore towards him. It is true, that in some cases the martyrs (as we shall see more anon) finding such lapsed persons truly penitent, did receive them into private communion. So did those martyrs Dionysius Alexandrinus speaks of in his letter to Fabius bishop of Antioch. They took the penitents that had fallen into idolatry into their company, and communicated with them both at prayers and meals; but to public communion they were never admitted till they had exactly fulfilled the discipline of the church, which principally consisted in many severe acts of repentance and mortification, more or less according to the nature of the offence.²

During this space of penance they appeared in all the formalities of sorrow and mourning, in a

¹ Apol. c. 39, p. 31.

² Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. vi. c. 42, p. 241.

sordid and squalid habit, with a sad countenance, and a head hung down, with tears in their eyes, standing without at the church-doors, (for they were not suffered to enter in,) falling down upon their knees to the ministers as they went in, and begging the prayers of all good Christians for themselves, with all the expressions and demonstrations of a sorrowful and dejected mind; reckoning the lower they lay in repentance, the higher it would exalt them; the more sordid they appeared, the more they should be cleansed and purified; the less they spared themselves, the more God would spare them.¹ At these times also they made open confession of their faults; this being accounted the very spring of repentance, and without which they concluded it could not be real. "Out of confession," says Tertullian, "is born repentance, and by repentance God is pacified;"² and therefore without this neither riches nor honour would procure any admission into the church. Theodosius the Great, for his bloody and barbarous slaughter of the Thessalonians was by St. Ambrose bishop of Millain suspended, brought to public confession, and forced to undergo a severe course of penance for eight months together; when after great demonstrations of a hearty sorrow, and sincere repentance, not more rigidly imposed upon him, than readily and willingly received by him, he was absolved, and restored to communion with the church; of which passage they who would know more, may find the story largely related by Theodoret.³

¹ Tert. de pœnitent. c. 9, p. 127. Vid. Euseb. lib. v. c. 23, p. 197.

² Ibid.

³ Hist. Eccl. lib. v. c. 15.

This severity was used towards offenders, partly to make them more sensible of their sins, partly to affright and deter others, but principally to give satisfaction both to God and his church concerning the reality and sincerity of their repentance. Hence it is that these penances, in the writings of those times, are so often called satisfactions. Thus Cyprian, speaking of the state of impenitent sinners, aggravates it by this, that “they do *peccare, nec satisfacere*, sin, but make no satisfaction;”¹ i. e. (as in the very next words he explains it,) “they do not *peccata deflere*, confess and bewail their sins.” So that the satisfaction, which they reckoned they made to God, consisted in seeking to avert his displeasure, and to regain his forfeited favour, by a deep contrition and sorrow for sin, by a real acknowledgment and forsaking of their faults, and by an humble giving to God the glory both of his mercy and his justice. Thence confession is called by Tertullian “the counsel or intendment of satisfaction:” and a little after he describes it thus: “Confession,” says he, “is that whereby we acknowledge our offence to God, not as if he were ignorant of it, but inasmuch as by confession satisfaction is forwarded, by confession repentance is produced, and by repentance God is appeased.”² The same both he, Cyprian, and others, frequently use in the same sense; which I note the rather, because of that absurd and impious doctrine, so current amongst the Papists, and which they pretend to derive from these very Fathers, that by works of penance compensation is made to God for the debt of punishment that was contracted, whereby at

¹ De Laps. p. 177.

² Tert. de pœnitent. c. 8, p. 126, 127.

least the temporal penalties due to sin are meritoriously expiated and done away. But this, besides that it is flatly repugnant to the doctrine of antiquity, how much it is derogatory to the honour of divine grace, and the infinite satisfaction of the Son of God, I shall not now stand to dispute. To return therefore ;—this term of penance was usually exacted with great rigour, and seldom dispensed with, no indulgence or admission being granted till the full time was completed. Therefore Cyprian smartly chides with some presbyters who had taken upon them to absolve the lapsed before their time; and that, whereas in lesser offences men were obliged to the just time of penance, and to observe the order of discipline, they in a crime of so heinous a nature had hand over head admitted them to communion before they had gone through their penance and confession, and fulfilled the regular customs and orders of the church.¹

The time of penance being ended, they addressed themselves to the governors of the church for absolution. Hereupon their repentance was taken into examination, and being found to be sincere and real, they were openly readmitted into the church by the imposition of the hands of the clergy; the party to be absolved kneeling down between the knees of the bishop, or in his absence of the presbyter, who laying his hand upon his head solemnly blessed and absolved him.² Hence doubtless sprang that absurd and senseless calumny which the heathens laid upon the Christians, that they were wont *sacerdotis colere genitalia*; so forward were they to catch at any reproach which the most crooked and

¹ Epist. 9, p. 21.

² Cypr. Epist. xi. p. 24.

malicious invention could insinuate and suggest. The penitent being absolved, was received with the universal joy and acclamation of the people, as one returned from the state of the dead; (for such it is plain they accounted them while under a state of guilt, especially the lapsed, as Cyprian positively affirms them to be;) being embraced by his brethren, who blessed God for his return, and many times wept for the joy of his recovery. Upon his absolution he was now restored to a participation of the Lord's supper, and to all other acts of church-communion, which by his crimes he had forfeited, and from which he had been suspended, till he had given satisfactory evidence of his repentance, and purpose to persevere under the exact discipline of Christianity.¹ This was the ordinary way wherein they treated criminals in the primitive church; but in cases of necessity (such as that of danger of death) they did not rigidly exact the set time of penance, but absolved the person, that so he might die in the peace and communion of the church.

The truth is, the time of these penitentiary humiliations often varied according to the circumstances of the case; it being much in the power of the bishops and governors of the church to shorten the time, and sooner to absolve and take them into communion: the medicinal virtue of repentance lying not in the duration, but the manner of it,² as St. Basil speaks in this very case. A learned man has observed to my hand four particular cases wherein they were wont to anticipate the usual

¹ Id. Epist. xxvii. p. 39. Vid. Epist. xlvi. p. 60.

² Can. ii. ad Amphil.

time of absolution.¹ The first was (what I observed but now) when persons were in danger of death. This was agreed to by Cyprian, and the martyrs, and the Roman clergy.² This also was provided for by the great council of Nice, "That as for those that were at the point of death, the ancient and canonical rule should be observed still, that when any were at the point of death they should by no means be deprived of the last and necessary *viaticum*,³ i. e. the holy sacrament, which was their great symbol of communion. And here for the better understanding some passages it may not be unuseful once for all to add this note, that whereas many of the ancient canons (of the Illiberine council especially) positively deny communion to some sorts of penitents even at the hour of death, they are not to be understood, as if the church mercilessly denied all indulgence and absolution to any penitent at such a time, but only that it was thought fit to deny them the use of the eucharist, which was the great pledge and testimony of their communion with the church.

The second case was in time of eminent persecution, conceiving it but fit at such times to dispense with the rigour of the discipline, that so penitents being received to the grace of Christ, and to the communion of the church, might be the better armed and enabled 'to contend earnestly for the faith.'⁴ This was resolved and agreed upon by Cyprian, and a whole council of African bishops, whereof they give an account to Cornelius bishop of Rome, that in regard persecution was drawing on, they held it convenient and necessary, that

¹ Forbes, instruct. Hist. Th. lib. xii. c. 7, p. 674.

² Epist. lii. ad Antonian, p. 67. ³ Can. 13. ⁴ Jude, iii.

communion and reconciliation should be granted to the lapsed, not only to those that were a dying, but even to the living, that they might not be left naked and unarmed in the time of battle, but be able to defend themselves with the shield of Christ's body and blood. "For how," say they, "shall we teach and persuade them to shed their blood in the cause of Christ, if we deny them the benefit of his blood? How shall we make them fit to drink the cup of martyrdom, unless we first admit them in the church to a right of communication to drink of the cup of the blood of Christ?"¹

A third case wherein they relaxed the severity of this discipline was, when great multitudes were concerned, or such persons as were likely to draw great numbers after them. In this case they thought it prudent and reasonable to deal with persons by somewhat milder and gentler methods, lest by holding them to terms of rigour and austerity, they should provoke them to fly off either to heathens or to heretics. This course Cyprian tells us he took. "He complied with the necessity of the times, and like a wise physician yielded a little to the humour of the patient, to provide for his health, and to cure his wounds."²

Lastly, In absolving penitents, and mitigating the rigours of their repentance, they used to have respect to the person of the penitent, to his dignity, or age, or infirmity, or the course of his past life; sometimes to the greatness of his humility, and the impression which his present condition made upon him. Thus the Ancyran council empowers bishops to examine the manner of men's conversion and

¹ Epist. liv. p. 76.

² Epist. lii. ubi prius.

repentance, and accordingly either to moderate, or enlarge their time of penance ; but especially that regard be had to their conversation both before and since their offence, that so clemency and indulgence may be extended to them.¹ So for the case of persons of more than ordinary rank and dignity, or of a more tender and delicate constitution, Chrysostom determines, that in chastising and punishing their offences they be dealt withal in a more peculiar manner than other men, lest by holding them under over-rigorous penalties they should be tempted to fly out into despair, and so throwing off the reins of modesty, and the care of their own happiness and salvation, should run headlong into all manner of vice and wickedness.² So wisely did the prudence and piety of those times deal with offenders, neither letting the reins so loose as to patronise presumption, or encourage any man to sin, nor yet holding them so strait, as to drive men into despair.

The fourth and last circumstance concerns the persons by whom this discipline was administered. Now, though it is true that this affair was managed in the public congregation, and seldom or never done without the consent and approbation of the people, (as Cyprian more than once and again expressly tells us,) yet was it ever accounted a ministerial act, and properly belonged to them. Tertulian, speaking of church-censures, adds, that “the elders that are approved, and have attained that honour, not by purchase but testimony, preside therein ;”³ and Firmilian, bishop of Cæsarea Cap-

¹ Can. v. vid. Conc. Nicen. Can. xii.

² De Sacerdot. lib. ii. c. 4, p. 18, tom. iv.

³ Apol. c. 39.

padocia, in a letter to St. Cyprian, speaking of the *majores natu*, the seniors that preside in the church, tells us, "that to them belongs the power of baptizing, imposing hands, (viz. in penance,) and ordination." By the bishop it was primarily and usually administered; the determining the time and manner of repentance, and the conferring pardon upon the penitent sinner, being acts of the highest power and jurisdiction, and therefore reckoned to appertain to the highest order in the church. Therefore it is provided for by the Illiberine council, that penance shall be prescribed by none but the bishop; only in case of necessity, such as sickness, and danger of death, by leave and command from the bishop, the presbyter or deacon might impose penance and absolve.¹ Accordingly we find Cyprian, amongst other directions to his clergy how to carry themselves towards the lapsed, giving them this, that if any were overtaken with sickness, or present danger, they should not stay for his coming, but the sick person should make confession of his sins to the next presbyter, or if a presbyter could not be met with, to a deacon, that so laying hands upon him he might depart in the peace of the church.²

But though while the number of Christians was small, and the bounds of particular churches little, bishops were able to manage these and other parts of their office in their own persons, yet soon after the task began to grow too great for them. Therefore about the time of the Decian persecution, when Christians were very much multiplied, and the

¹ Can. 32, p. 40.

² Epist. 12, p. 25; Vid. Conc. 2, Carthag. Can. 4.

number of the lapsed great, it seemed good to the prudence of the church, partly for the ease of the bishop, and partly to provide for the modesty of persons in being brought before the whole church to confess every crime, to appoint a public penitentiary, (some holy, grave, and prudent presbyter,) whose office it was to take the confession of those sins which persons had committed after baptism, and by prayers, fastings, and other exercises of mortification to prepare them for absolution. He was a kind of *ensor morum*, to inquire into the lives of Christians, to take an account of their failures, and to direct and dispose them to repentance. This office continued for some hundreds of years, till it was abrogated by Nectarius, (St. Chrysostom's predecessor in the see of Constantinople,) upon the occasion of a notorious scandal that rose about it.¹

But besides the ordinary and standing office of the clergy, we find even some of the laity, the martyrs and confessors, that had a considerable hand in absolving penitents, and restoring them to the communion of the church. For the understanding of which we are to know, that as the Christians of those times had a mighty reverence for martyrs and confessors, as the great champions of religion; so the martyrs took upon them to dispense in extraordinary cases: for it was very customary in times of persecution for those, who, through fear of suffering, had lapsed into idolatry, to make their address to the martyrs in prison, and to beg peace of them, that they might be restored to the church; who

¹ Socrat. Hist. Eccl. lib. v. c. 19, p. 278; Confer Sozom. lib. vii. c. 16, p. 726.

considering their petitions, and weighing the circumstances of their case, did frequently grant their requests, mitigate their penance, and by a note signed under their hands signify what they had done to the bishop; who, taking an account of their condition, absolved and admitted them to communion. Of these *libelli*, or books granted by the martyrs to the lapsed, there is mention in Cyprian at every turn, who complains they were come to that excessive number, that thousands were granted almost every day.¹ This many of them took upon them to do with great smartness and authority, and without that respect that was due to the bishops, as appears from the note written to Cyprian by Lucian in the name of the confessors; which because it is but short, and withal shows the form and manners of those pacific libels, it may not be amiss to set it down. And thus it runs: "All the confessors to Cyprian the bishop, greeting: Know that we have granted peace to all those, of whom you have had an account what they have done, how they have behaved themselves since the commission of their crimes; and we would that these presents should by you be imparted to the rest of the bishops. We wish you to maintain peace with the holy martyrs. Written by Lucian of the clergy, the exorcist and reader being present."² This was looked upon as very peremptory and magisterial, and therefore of this confidence and presumption, and carelessness in promiscuously granting these letters of peace, Cyprian not without reason complains in an epistle to the clergy of Rome.³

¹ Epist. 10, 11, 12, et alibi; Epist. 14, p. 27.

² Epist. 16, p. 29.

³ Epist. 22, p. 34.

Besides these libels granted by the martyrs, there were other *libelli* granted by heathen magistrates, (of which it may not be impertinent to speak a little,) whence the lapsed that had had them were commonly called *libellatici*. They were of several sorts; some writing their names *in libellis* in books, and professing themselves to worship Jupiter, Mars, and the rest of the heathen gods, presented them to the magistrate; and these did really sacrifice, and pollute not their souls only but their hands and their lips with unlawful sacrifices, as the clergy of Rome expresses it in a letter to St. Cyprian. These were called *thurificati*, and *sacrificati*, from their having offered incense and sacrifices.¹ Somewhat of this nature was that libel that Pliny speaks of in his epistle to the emperor Trajan, presented to him while he was proconsul of Bithynia, containing a catalogue of the names of many, some whereof had been accused to be Christians and denied it, others confessed they had been so some years since but had renounced it; all of them adoring the images of the gods, and the emperor's statue; offering sacrifice, and blaspheming Christ; and were accordingly dismissed and released by him.² Others there were who did not themselves sign or present any such libels, but some heathen friends for them, (and sometimes out of kindness they were encouraged to it by the magistrates themselves,) and were hereupon released out of prison, and had the favour not to be urged to sacrifice.³ Nay, Dionysius of Alexandria speaks of some masters, who to escape themselves, compelled

¹ Epist. 31, p. 44; Ad Antonian. Epist. 52, p. 66, 67.

² Epist. 97, lib. x.

³ Epist. 31, p. 44.

their servants to do sacrifice for them, to whom he appoints a three years' penance for that sinful compliance and dissimulation.¹ A third sort there was, who finding the edge and keenness of their judges was to be taken off with a sum of money, freely confessed to them that they were Christians and could not sacrifice, prayed them to give them a libel of dismissal, for which they would give them a suitable reward. These were most properly called *libellatici* and *libellati*. Cyprian acquaints us with the manner of their address to the heathen magistrate, bringing in such a person thus speaking for himself: "I had both read and learnt from the sermons of the bishop, that the servant of God is not to sacrifice to idols, nor to worship images; wherefore that I might not do what was unlawful, having an opportunity of getting a libel offered, (which yet I would not have accepted had it not offered itself) I went to the magistrate, or caused another to go in my name and tell him, that I was a Christian, and that it was not lawful for me to sacrifice, nor to approach the altars of the devils, that therefore I would give him a reward to excuse me, that I might not be urged to what was unlawful."² These, though not altogether so bad as the *sacrificati*, yet Cyprian charges as guilty of implicit idolatry, having defiled their consciences with the purchase of these books, and done that by consent, which others had actually done.

I know Baronius will needs have it (and he boasts that all that had written before him were mistaken in the case) that these *libellatici* were not

¹ Cat. 7, Synodic. tom. ii. pa. 1, p. 12.

² Epist. 52, p. 70.

exempted from denying Christ, nor gave money to that end; that they only requested of the magistrate, that they might not be compelled to offer sacrifice, that they were ready to deny Christ, and were willing to give him a reward to dispense with them only so far, and to furnish them with a libel of security, and that they did really deny him before they obtained their libel.¹ But nothing can be more plain, both from this and several other passages in Cyprian, than that they did not either publicly or privately sacrifice to idols, or actually deny Christ; and therefore bribed the magistrate, that they might not be forced to do what was unlawful. And hence Cyprian argues them as guilty by their wills and consent, and that they had implicitly denied Christ. How? By actually doing it? No, but by pretending they had done what others were really guilty of.² Certainly the cardinal's mistake arose from a not right understanding the several sorts of the *libellatici*, the first whereof (as we have shown) did actually sacrifice and deny Christ.

And now having taken this view of the severity of discipline in the ancient church, nothing remains but to admire and imitate their piety and integrity, their infinite hatred of sin, their care and zeal to keep up that strictness and purity of manners that had rendered their religion so renowned and triumphant in the world. A discipline, which how happy were it for the Christian world, were it again resettled in its due power and vigour, which particularly is the judgment and desire of our own

¹ Annal. Eccl. ad Ann. 253. Num. 20, et seqq. tom. ii.

² De Lapsis, p. 176.

church concerning the solemn *quadregesimal* penances and humiliations. "In the primitive church," says the preface to the Communion, "there was a godly discipline, that at the beginning of Lent, such persons as stood convicted of notorious sin were put to open penance, and punished in this world, that their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord; and that others, admonished by their example, might be the more afraid to offend." Which said discipline it is much to be wished might be restored again.

AN
HISTORICAL ACCOUNT
OF THE
STATE OF PAGANISM
UNDER THE
FIRST CHRISTIAN EMPERORS.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

As an appropriate appendage to "Cave's Primitive Christianity," the reader is presented, in the following pages from the same Author, with a condensed account of the gradual triumph of the Gospel over the expiring efforts of Polytheism, from the accession of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, to the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the empire, under Theodosius the Great. It will readily be admitted, that the measures adopted for the propagation of the faith, were by no means free from that persecuting spirit, which was characteristic of the times, and that many of the erroneous principles and corrupt practices which prevail at the present day originated at this period. Many of the heathens, for instance, were easily led to identify the veneration of believers for their early martyrs, with their own deification of departed heroes; and a compromise was soon effected in favour of the church, which naturally ended in that idolatrous worship of saints and angels still subsisting in the church of Rome. Obscured, however, as was the brightness of the Gospel light by the corruptions thus early introduced, still its benign influence, during the dark ages which succeeded, cannot fail to be recognized amidst the clouds of falsehood and superstition which overspread the world. Gibbon himself, with all his hostility to the religion of the Cross, has been compelled, however reluctantly, to acknowledge the powerful effect which it produced in mitigating the horrors of war, in preventing the total extinction of learning and civilization, and in

protecting the defenceless and the oppressed from cruelty and violence.* At the Reformation, the smothered flame was again rekindled, and the enlightened believer bows in humble adoration of that gracious Being, who has stamped the Christian Revelation as divine, by the otherwise unaccountable success of its first propagation, by its signal preservation amid the gloom of barbarous ignorance, and by its emergence in all the brightness of its pristine purity from the dark mist of idolatry and superstition in which it was involved.

* Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, chap. xvi.

AN

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT, &c.

SECTION I.

The state of Paganism under the reign of Constantine the Great.

By what means and methods the Christian religion made its own way into the world, and, unassisted by any secular power or interest, triumphed over all the opposition that was made against it, has been considered in another place. The subject of this discourse will be to observe by what degrees paganism, that part of it especially that was the public and standing religion of the Roman empire, a religion that for so many ages had influenced the minds of men, and seemed firmly rooted by custom, laws, and an inveterate prescription, was driven into corners, and in effect banished out of the world. The account whereof we shall briefly deduce from the time that the empire became Christian.

Constantine the Great was born in Britain, as all impartial writers, not biassed either by envy at ours, or by a concernment for the honour of their

own country, are willing to allow:—a thing owned by some, not contradicted by any writer of that age, asserted by the very orator in the congratulatory oration that he made to him.¹ His father Constantius, a wise, merciful, and virtuous prince, died at York on the 25th of July, ann. Chr. 306. Constantine arrived at York four days before his father died; upon whose decease, and by whose last will he succeeded in the western empire, unanimously saluted by the joyful acclamations of the army, and readily submitted to by the western provinces. Constantine, having solemnized his father's funerals, and settled his affairs in Britain, passed over with his army into Gaul, where he resided the six first years of his reign, all which time he continued in the Gentile religion; but that, as Zonarus adds,² he should, at the solicitation of his wife Fausta, daughter of the emperor Maximian, who stirred him up to a zealous vindication of pagan idolatry, persecute the Christians, is, I believe, merely a conjecture of his own, unwarranted by the authority of any ancient writer. He contented himself as yet with the name of Cæsar, not presently assuming the title of Augustus or emperor, expecting the senior emperor should have sent him that title; but in vain: for no sooner was his image, wreathed with the imperial laurel, presented to Galerius, but he was resolved to have thrown both it and the messenger into the fire, had not his friends, upon wise considerations, overruled his anger.³ That therefore he might seem

¹ Paneg. Maxim. et. Constant. dict. p. 3.

² Annal. tom. iii. p. 3.

³ Panegy. ubi. supr. Lact. ibid. c. 25, p. 49.

to do voluntarily what he could not help, he sent him the purple, but withal made Severus emperor, and gave him only the title of Cæsar. But Constantine stood in no need of his approbation to confirm his title; his Father's declared will for his succession, and the universal consent, both of the army, and the whole west, put his right beyond dispute.¹ Here Constantine governed with great success, till hearing from all hands of the intolerable outrages and insolencies committed by Maxentius at Rome, and solicited by an embassy sent to him for that purpose from the senate and people of that city, he took up a resolution worthy of so great a mind, to march against him, and free the city from the tyranny and extravagancies of that usurper.² No sooner was he engaged in this expedition, but like a prudent and good man he began to think of some assistance beyond the mere strength and courage of his army, and knowing there was great variety of deities at that time worshipped in the world, his first care was, which of these to pitch upon, and implore as his protector and tutelar guardian. He observed the fatal miscarriages of his predecessors, that had stickled hard for a multiplicity of gods, had reposed entire confidence in their assistance, and courted their favour by all the formal and fond rites of worship; notwithstanding all which, their wars had been generally prosperous, and they themselves brought to unfortunate and untimely ends. On the contrary, his father had acknowledged and adored one only God, and

¹ Vid. Eumen. Paneg. Constant. dict. p. m. 94.

² Euseb. de vit. Const. lib. i. c. 26, 27, &c. p. 420, &c.; Zonar. ibid.

him the supreme Governor of the world, who had strangely succeeded his undertakings, and given him many illustrious instances of a divine power and goodness through the whole series of his life. Thereupon he grew to this resolution, to lay aside the vulgar deities, who it is plain did but pretend to divinity, and cheat the world, and to adhere only to the God of his father; to whom therefore he addressed himself, beseeching him to make himself known to him, and effectually to assist him in this expedition. And heaven heard his prayer, and answered it in a most miraculous manner; so wonderful, that Eusebius, who reports it, grants, it would not have been credible, if he had not had it from Constantine's own mouth, who solemnly ratified the truth of it with his oath.

The army was upon their march, and the emperor taken up with these devout ejaculations, when the sun declining, (about three of the clock, as it is probable, in the afternoon,) there suddenly appeared a pillar of light in the heavens in the fashion of a cross; whereon was this inscription, expressed in letters formed by a configuration of stars, (if what Philostorgius, and some others report, be true) :—TOYΤΩ NIKΑ, 'in this overcome.' Constantine was not a little startled at this sight, and so was the whole army that beheld it; and it is plain, the commanders and officers, prompted by their *aruspices*, looked upon it as an inauspicious omen, portending a very unfortunate expedition.¹ The emperor himself knew not what to make of it, musing upon it all that evening. At night our Lord appeared to him in a dream with the cross in

¹ Hist. Eccl. lib. i. c. 6, p. 469. Zonar. loc. cit.

his hand, which he had showed him the day before, commanding him to make a royal standard like that which he had seen in the heavens, and cause it to be borne before him in his wars as an ensign of victory and safety.¹ Early the next morning he got up, and told his friends what had happened, and sending immediately for workmen, sat down by them, and described to them the form of the thing, which he commanded them to make with the most exquisite artifice and magnificence. They made it accordingly after this manner:—A long spear plated over with gold, with a traverse piece at the top a little oblique, in the fashion of a cross; to this cross-piece was fastened a four-square curtain of purple, embroidered and beset with gold and precious stones, which reflected a most amazing lustre, and towards the top of it were pictured the emperor in the midst of his sons. On the top of the shaft above the cross stood a crown overlaid with gold and jewels, within which were placed the sacred symbol, viz. the two first letters of Christ's name in Greek, X and P, the one being struck through the other. This device he afterwards wore in his shields, as not only Eusebius tells us, but is evident by some of his coins extant at this day. This imperial standard in all his wars was carried before him; and my author assures us, he had often seen it. In imitation of this he caused banners (which they called *labara*) to be made for the rest of the army, continued by his Christian successors, though not always keeping exactly to the same form. It is true, the Gentile

¹ Vid. etiam Lactant. *ibid.* c. 44, p. 79.

writers make no express mention of this apparition of the cross, nor is it reasonable to expect they should: but this they confess, which they say was a current and uncontradicted report in the mouth of all, that before this engagement an army in the air was seen to come down from heaven, persons of great strength and stature, with vigorous and cheerful looks, and bright flaming armour, who were heard to say, "We seek for Constantine, we are come to assist him;" as the heathen orator tells us in that very oration, wherein he congratulated the victory.¹

Constantine had a mighty curiosity to be further instructed in these divine significations, and therefore calling for some Christian bishops, asked them, who this God was, and what he meant by this sign. They told him, the person that had done this was the only-begotten Son of the one only God; the sign that had appeared to him was the symbol of immortality, and the trophy of that victory, which this God, while he was upon earth, had gained over death. They explained to him the reasons of his coming down from heaven, and the state of his incarnation, and undertaking the cause of mankind. He heard their discourses with great pleasure and satisfaction, but kept himself upon the reserve, like a wary and prudent man, not giving too much way at first. He oft compared the heavenly vision with what they had discoursed to him upon that argument, and the more he did so, the more he was satisfied, not doubting but that in due time God would more perfectly discover these things to him; in order whereunto

¹ Nazar. Paneg. Constant. dict. p. 71.

he resolved at leisure hours to peruse the holy Scriptures. But herein he kept his thoughts to himself, nor indeed for the present was it safe for him to declare them. However, assured in his own mind, he marched through Italy, against all opposition almost to the very walls of Rome,¹ encamping his army (consisting, says Zosimus, of ninety thousand foot, and eight thousand horse²) in a large plain before the city.

Maxentius was a man that wholly gave up himself to ease and luxury, dividing his time between pleasure and superstition. He never went out of the city, and seldom out of the palace; so intolerably idle, that to remove into the Sallustian gardens (though to enjoy a fresh scene of pleasure) was accounted a journey, and an expedition, as the orator justly jeers him.³ But Constantine now approaching, he saw he must leave the city, and therefore plied the altars with numerous sacrifices, and commanded the Sibylline books to be searched, and the answer brought him was, "That that day the great enemy of Rome should perish." This he understood of Constantine, and applied the success to himself, and the rather it is like, because it was then his birth-day. So having put all things into the best posture he could, he quitted the city, and came out against Constantine with far more numerous forces, his infantry consisting of an hundred and seventy thousand foot, and his cavalry of eigh-

¹ Euseb. de Vit. Const. lib. i. c. 37, 38, p. 426. Vid. Liban. Or. iii. p. 105.

² Lib. ii. p. 676.

³ Vid. Paneg. II. Constant. p. 42, &c. Zozim. lib. ii. p. 676; Lactant. loc. supr. citat. A. Vict. c. 40, p. 313.

teen thousand horse; a great part whereof being Romans and Italians, and having smarted so much under his insolent tyranny, desired nothing more than to see him fall at the enemy's foot. The engagement was fierce and bloody, until victory having hovered a while, rested on Constantine's side, for the enemy's cavalry being routed, the whole army fled, and thinking to escape the nearest way by a bridge of boats, which Maxentius had built over the Tiber, and had contrived with secret springs and engines on purpose to drown Constantine if he passed that way, were caught in their own trap, and fell into the pit which they had digged for others. For the engines giving way, the boats parted, and overpressed with the weight of the company sunk to the bottom of the river, and Maxentius himself along with them, whose body being found, his head was stricken off, and carried upon a pole before the army.

An entire victory thus obtained, Constantine made a triumphant entry into the city, being met by the senate, nobility, and infinite crowds of people, whose cheerful faces, and loud acclamations, sufficiently testified the sense they had of their deliverance, publicly styling him their saviour, their redeemer, and the author of their happiness. The first thing he did was to set up a standing monument of his gratitude to that God, by whose assistance he had gained the victory; which he did, or rather the senate by his direction, by erecting a statue to him in the most eminent part of the city, holding in his hand a long spear in form of a cross, with an inscription on the basis of it to this effect:—

HOC SALUTARI SIGNO, QUOD VERÆ
VIRTUTIS ARGUMENTUM EST, VESTRAM URBEM
TYRANNICÆ DOMINATIONIS JUGO LIBERATAM SERVAVI
SENATUI POPULOQ. ROMANO IN LIBERTATEM ASSERTO,
PRISTINUM DECUS NOBILITATIS
SPLENDOREMQ. RESTITUI.¹

Intimating, that under the influence of that victorious cross, he had delivered their city from the yoke of tyrannical power, and had restored to the senate and people of Rome their ancient glory and splendour. Several other monuments with inscriptions they set up for him, remains whereof are still to be found among the antiquities of Rome.

Having settled affairs at Rome, and endeared himself to all sorts of persons, he began by little and little more openly to declare himself in favour of the Christians, though so as not to fall presently upon the Gentiles. But that he himself was now fully settled in the Christian faith, is evident, not only from several laws which he published in favour of the clergy, and about the affairs of Christians not long after his victory over Maxentius,² (obtained about the midst of November, ann. Chr. 312,) but also from the answer which the next year he gave to the Donatists, who petitioned him to assign them judges in France, to adjust the controversies between them and the Catholics. “You desire judgment from me,” said he,

¹ Hanc Inscriptionem Latino Sermonem factam, Græcè exhibet Eusebius Hist. Eccl. lib. ix. c. 9, p. 359, his verbis.—
Τέτρω τῷ σωτηριώδει σημείῳ, τῷ ἀληθινῷ ἐλέγχῳ τῆς ἀνδρίας, πῆν πόλιν ὑμῶν ἀπὸ ζυγῶ τῆ τυράννε ἐλασθεῖσαν ἤλεν θέρωσα· ἐτί μὴν ἐς τὴν σύγκλητον ἐ τὸν δῆμον Ρωμαίων, τῇ ἀρχαίᾳ ἐπιφανείᾳ ἐ τῇ λαμπρότητι, ἐλεν θερώσας ἀποκατέστησα.

² Vid. C. Th. lib. xvi. Tit. ii. lib. i. not. Gothofred. ibid.

“ here below, when I myself expect the judgment of Christ.”¹ The first edict (now extant, for in it they refer to a former) that opened the way, was that published at Milan, ann. 313, by himself and his brother-in-law Licinius, who had some time since been created Cæsar, whereby they granted a general toleration to all religions, more especially to the Christians, that none should disturb them in their profession, or their way of worship, nor hinder any that had a mind to embrace Christianity, and that their churches and places of assembly, and all the incomes and revenues belonging to them that had been confiscated and taken from them, should forthwith be freely and entirely restored to them, and the present purchasers or possessors be repaired out of the exchequer.² A copy of this edict they sent to Maximinus, who governed in the eastern parts, requesting him to do the like. He was an obstinate and sturdy pagan, and being neither willing to grant, nor yet daring to deny their desires, suppressed their edict, and directed a rescript to Sabinus, that the governors of the provinces should use no severity against the Christians, but treat them with all mildness and moderation, and rather try by clemency and kind persuasions to reduce them to the worship of the gods, which if any of them would hearken to, they should most readily receive them; but if they had rather persist in their own religion they should be left to the freedom of their own choice.³ This rescript as it was extorted, so was it so straitened, as it did little good. The Christians knew the man

¹ Ap. Optat. de Schism. Donat. lib. i. p. 27.

² Ext. ap. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. x. c. v. p. 388.

³ Ext. ib. lib. ix. c. 9, p. 360.

too well, and the zeal and fierceness of his temper, to trust him. No provision being made in it for their churches, but only a general indemnity from trouble, they durst neither build churches, nor keep their public assemblies, nor for the present so much as openly profess themselves Christians, but kept upon their guard, waiting a more fit and favourable season.

Constantine in the meantime went on in his kindness to them. Their bishops he received with all due honour and respect, taking them along with him in all his journeys, and oft entertaining them at his own table. By several constitutions he exempted the clergy from all civil and secular offices and employments, with which hitherto they had been sorely vexed; received their appeals; appointed commissioners to umpire and end the controversies that arose amongst them;¹ and (which was a kindness beyond that of his successors) freed the churches from the taxes and tributes ordinarily assessed upon all other persons and societies.² If the commentator upon the Theodosian code hit it right, (which yet methinks is not very clear from the laws themselves,) he took away about this time the punishment by crucifixion,³ the most slavish and ignominious method of execution: which the very heathen historian remarks in him, as an argument of a noble and generous mind,⁴ though he did it chiefly out of reverence to our

¹ Euseb. de vit. Const. lib. i. c. 42, p. 429; Hist. Eccl. lib. x. c. 5, 6, 7, p. 390, &c. Vid. l. i. C. Th. tit. ii. l. i. et seqq.

² C. Th. lib. xi. tit. i. l. i. p. 6.

³ Vid. Gothofred. in lib. ix. tit. v. l. unic. tit. xviii. l. unic. tit. xl. l. ii.

⁴ A. Vict. c. 41. Eo pius, ut etiam vetus veterrimumque (f.

Saviour's passion. He might have added, and out of honour to that heavenly vision of the cross that had so lately appeared to him, as the forerunner of a happy victory.

All this the Gentiles beheld with an envious and malicious eye, as what certainly prophesied the fatal declension, if not final overthrow of their religion; and were more confirmed in these suspicions, when they saw the emperor neglected the celebration of the *ludi sæculares*, or solemn games, that were holden but once every hundred years;¹ whence the crier that proclaimed them used to do it in this form, "Come hither and behold those sports, which no man alive ever saw before, or shall see again." The period of the last century was now run out, and fell in with ann. Chr. 313. But the emperor took no notice of them, for which the Gentiles severely censured him, not only looking upon it as an argument of his aversion to their religion, but crying out against it as pernicious to the state, and that which drew down the vengeance of the gods upon it. And it added not a little to their trouble, when they found that Maximinus himself, upon whom they relied so much, began to turn upon them;² and published an edict in behalf of the Christians, wherein he confirmed the rescript which he had sent to Sabinus the year before, and supplied now what was defective in it, viz. the restitution of their churches, with all those revenues and possessions which had been seized into the exchequer, and either sold, or bestowed upon any

teterrimum) supplicium patibulorum et cruribus suffringendis primus removerit : hinc pro conditore, seu Deo habitus.

¹ Zosim. lib. ii. p. 671.

² Euseb. Hist. Eccl. ix. c. 10, p. 363.

public corporations, or private persons.¹ Not long after, he was struck with infinite pains and torments all over his body, and died at Tarsus, confessing upon his death-bed, that all this was but a just punishment upon him for his spiteful and virulent proceedings against Christ, and his religion. The churches hereupon in those parts began exceedingly to flourish, and the Christians for the present enjoyed a very serene and prosperous season.

But alas! this peace and security lasted not long; for Licinius, who had hitherto dissembled with Constantine and the world, having now the whole eastern empire at his command, began to show himself in his own colours. He heartily espoused the cause of the Gentiles, which he sought everywhere to relieve and support, and by a law expressly forbid the Christian bishops to go to the houses of the Gentiles, lest by their intimate converse with them they might have an opportunity of propagating Christianity among them.² Not content with this, he took all occasions of venting his spleen and malice, raising one of the hottest persecutions against the Christians, whom he everywhere pursued with all possible cruelties; so that (as Eusebius observes) "the east and the west seemed like night and day; a dreadful darkness overspread all the eastern parts, while the west sat under the warm and benign sunshine of prosperity and peace."³ In compassion to their deplorable case, and to chastise this man's monstrous inconstancy and ingratitude, (whom no ties

¹ Ext. ap. Euseb. loc. cit.

² Socr. lib. i. c. 3, p. 8.

³ De vit. Const. lib. i. c. 49, &c. p. 432, &c. lib. ii. c. 1, 2, &c. p. 433, usque ad c. 19, p. 452. Vid. Zosim, lib. ii. p. 78, &c.

of blood, friendship, or interest, could oblige) and his horrible perfidiousness and hypocrisy, Constantine resolved upon an expedition against him. The armies first met at Cybalis in Pannonia, where Licinius was worsted; but afterwards, collecting his forces, engaged again in Thrace, at what time Constantine, in the midst of his bishops and chaplains, was earnestly engaging Heaven by prayer to be on his side, while Licinius on the other hand laughed at him, and calling for his priests and fortune-tellers, his *aruspices* or diviners, who unanimously agreed, that success would wait upon him. The armies now faced each other, and Constantine having piously recommended his cause to God, gave the signal, the imperial standard of the cross was borne before him, fifty men being peculiarly deputed to guard it, and to carry it by turns. Which way soever it turned, the enemy fled, so that when the emperor saw any part of the army pressed hard upon, he called for the cross to that place, and it turned the scale. The engagement was renewed in several encounters, until the enemy's forces being wholly broken, the greatest part threw down their arms, and yielded, and Licinius himself fled the field; who finding his affairs desperate, betook himself to his old arts of treachery and dissimulation, begging peace with Constantine, who readily accepted the motion, the other ratifying it with his oath. But what obligations can hold a bad man? All is soon forgotten, and Licinius raises another army, but charges his soldiers to offer no violence to the standard of the cross, nor to engage near it. The battle, though bloody, went against him, who fled thereupon to Nicomedia, whither Constantine followed, and besieged

him. But he surrendered himself upon condition of life, which he promised to lead private and obscure, and which some say Constantine granted, and confirmed with his oath. However that was, he sent him to Thessalonica, and there, upon his attempting new seditions, put him to death.

By the death of Licinius the whole government of the empire devolved upon Constantine, who immediately restored peace and tranquillity to the Christians, and directed several orders to the provincial governors, whereby they recalled the banished, released those that had been put upon offices, restored estates to those that had lost them, set at liberty the imprisoned, and those who had been condemned to the mines; and for them that had suffered martyrdom, he commanded their goods and lands to be restored to them that were next akin, or where they had no relations, to be appropriated to the uses of the church.¹ Of all which his prolix edict sent to the provincial governors of Palestine (and the same no doubt to other places) is a sufficient evidence.² Great encouragement the Gentiles, even in the western parts, had taken from the patronage of Licinius, whom they hoped to see the prevailing conqueror, and perhaps might by some secret and mystic rites of their religion endeavour to promote his success; so that even during those wars, Constantine was forced to lay some check upon them. By two laws, ann. 319, the one directed to Maximus provost of the city, the other to the people of Rome, he forbad the *aruspices* or soothsayers, and all the

¹ Euseb. de vit. C. lib. ii. c. 19, &c. p. 452.

² Ext. ib. c. 24, et seqq. p. 455.

rest of that divining tribe, to exercise their skill within any private house under any pretence whatsoever,¹ and he subsequently provided, that slaves (heretofore emancipated in the pagan temples) might be made free in the Christian churches in the presence of the bishop; and that clergymen might do it alone, and by word of mouth, without any formal writing.² This solemnity might be performed upon a Sunday, though all contentions, controversies, and law-suits, were utterly forbid upon that day.³ Indeed this good emperor took all imaginable care to secure the honour and observation of the Lord's-day. He commanded it to be set apart for prayer and holy exercises, that priests and deacons should constantly attend upon them, that all persons should, as far as might be, be drawn to it, and that his great officers and commanders should set them a good example, and accompany the emperor in his devotions on that day. And that none might be then unemployed, he took care that his pagan army should be busied in prayer to Heaven, as the only giver of all victory, and upon every Lord's-day should go out in the open fields, and there, upon a signal given, fall down, and offer up their requests in a form of prayer, which himself composed, and commanded them to learn by heart, in these words:—"We do acknowledge thee to be the only God, we confess thee to be king, upon thee do we call for help. By thee it is, that we have at any time got the victory, and subdued our enemies. To thee we

¹ C. Th. lib. ix. tit. xvi. l. i. et ii. p. 114.

² Ib. lib. iv. tit. vii. leg. unic.

³ Ib. lib. ii. tit. viii. l. i.

thankfully ascribe all our past blessings, and from thee we expect all for the time to come. We beseech thee to preserve to us our emperor Constantine, together with his hopeful progeny, with long life, health, and victory." The like proportionable care he took for Friday, both as to the cessation from courts of judicature, and other civil affairs, in memory of our Saviour's passion, as he had done for the other in honour of his resurrection.¹

The Gentiles vexed at this prosperity of the Christians, omitted no opportunity of venting their spleen against them. In many places, and at Rome especially, they forced them to join in the celebration of their *lustra*; and their solemn processions, attended with sacrifices, hymns, and festival entertainments. But this was complained of to Constantine, who by a law, bearing date May 30, ann. 323, expressly forbade any such compulsion to be used towards Christians, under the penalty of being publicly beaten with clubs, if the person offending was of plebian rank, but if of better quality, of being severely fined. And in this edict, as he styles Christianity the most holy law, so he calls Gentilism *alienam superstitionem*, a strange superstition.² Next he took care, that none should be governors or presidents, but who were Christians; or if Gentiles, that they should not offer sacrifices. He published a law likewise, which he sent to the governors of provinces, for the erecting, enlarging, and beautifying the Christians' churches at his own charge; notice whereof

¹ Euseb. de vit. C. lib. iv. c. 18, 19, 20, p. 534; Sozom. lib. i. c. 8, p. 412.

² C. Th. lib. xvi. tit. 11, l. v. p. 27.

he gave by letters to the bishops of the several churches. That to Eusebius, being the first that was written, is still extant, written ann. 324.¹ Besides this, he wrote a large exhortatory epistle to the provincial governors of the east, wherein with great wisdom and piety he persuades all his subjects to embrace Christianity; but though he endeavoured both by prayers and arguments to bring them over to the truth, yet he still left them to the freedom of their own choice.

Constantine, having now restored perfect peace and tranquillity to the Roman world, took up a resolution of transferring the seat of the empire to some other place. Whatever the occasion was, it was certainly a policy very fatal and unfortunate to the empire. After many designments he pitched upon Byzantium, a city of Thrace, situate upon the Isthmus, or neck of the Hellespont, a place which nature seemed to have formed, on purpose to command the world. He re-edified and enlarged it, beautified it with the most stately and magnificent buildings, and all the ornaments which art could contrive, or wealth could purchase, or any curious pieces of antiquity, which Rome or any other parts could furnish it with. He endowed it with vast privileges and immunities, peopled it with the best families he could draw from Rome, or other places, and by a law (engraven upon a stone pillar, and placed in the *strategium*, near the emperor's statue on horseback) commanded, it should be called New Rome, though in despite of his edict it retained the honour of his name, and keeps it to

¹ Euseb. de vit. C. lib. ii. c. 44, 45, et seq. p. 464, &c.

this day. He laid the foundations November 26, ann. 328, finished and dedicated it about two years after. But what is most proper to be here observed is, that he built many noble churches and oratories both in the city and suburbs, wherein he suffered no Gentile altars or images to be placed, nor any pagan festivities to be solemnized; nay, suffered the follies, imposture, and vanities of them to be exposed in the open streets.¹ I know Zosimus tells another story, that Constantine set up the statues of the heathen deities in several public places of the city, and that at one end of the four-square portico that encompassed the forum, he erected two chapels on purpose, in one whereof he placed the image of Rhea, the mother of the Gods; in the other that of the genius or fortune of Rome.² But his known partiality in matters of this nature abates his credit, especially when set against the express testimony of those who lived at that time, and saw what was done: and probable it is, that to make the best of a bad cause, he laid hold of any twig which he could bend the contrary way, and represented that as done in honour of their gods, which was done only by way of derision and contempt.

But though Constantine thus routed the monuments of pagan idolatry, yet did he not demolish or deface the temples, some of which were here standing till the times of Theodosius.³ However, he took away their sacred treasures, and seized the rents and revenues belonging to them, which he

¹ Euseb. *ib. lib. iii. c. 48*, p. 507; Socr. *lib. i. c. 16*, p. 45.

² *Ibid.* p. 687.

³ Liban. *Orat. de Templ.* p. 9.

employed in building those noble and magnificent structures, wherewith he adorned that imperial city.¹ Nor did the barbarous countries go without their share in these happy influences of Christianity. The Indians were brought over to the Christian faith by the ministry of Frumentius, who had been brought up the greatest part of his time there, and whom Athanasius having ordained bishop, was sent again amongst them.² The Iberi, since called Georgians, a people near the Caspian sea, were converted by means of a woman-slave, who being a Christian, was become famous among them for the incomparable strictness and piety of her life, and her miraculous cures.³ The like success the Christian religion had in other countries,⁴ for by reason of the frequent wars which the Romans had with the barbarians, many Christian priests were taken captive, who employed all their time and pains to subdue those countries to the faith of Christ. And by this means were the inhabitants of the Rhine, the Celtæ, and the remotest parts of Gaul, the Goths, and those who dwelt upon the Danow, brought to embrace and entertain the Gospel.

The emperor had hitherto tried by patience and persuasion, and by all the arts of lenity and gentleness to reclaim the Gentile world : but finding the greatest part perverse and obstinate, he proceeded to rout idolatry by rougher methods. To which purpose he gave out dispatches, which the Christians that were about the court greedily caught,

¹ Id. *ibid.* et p. 22. ct. Orat. xxvi. p. 591.

² Rufin. lib. i. c. 9, p. 225 ; Socr. lib. i. c. 19, p. 45 ; Soz. lib. ii. c. 24, p. 477.

³ Rufin. c. 10 ; Socr. c. 19 ; Soz. *ib.* c. 7, p. 451.

⁴ Soz. *ib.* c. 6, p. 450.

and readily transmitted into the several countries, and put them into present execution.¹ The commissioners entered everywhere into the temples, and threw open the doors of their most secret re-vestries, so that those mysteries, which before-time none but the priests might behold, were now publicly exposed to the eyes of the people, and many of the temples untiled, and laid open to all storms and weather. The common people were afraid, and durst make no resistance, and the priests and flamens being left alone, quietly submitted, and did themselves bring forth their most venerable deities, which, being stripped of their external pagantry and ornament, were shown in their own colours to every vulgar eye. The statues of gold, and like precious materials, were melted down, and coined into money; the best of those that were curiously wrought in brass were brought up to Constantinople, where they were drawn with ropes up and down the streets, and set up for the people to behold and laugh at. Here might you have seen the Pythian, there the Sminthian Apollo; in the circus were placed the famous Tripodes brought from Delphos, in the palace the muses of Helicon, in another place the great god Pan, so solemnly and universally worshipped in Greece; planted there as standing monuments to posterity of the folly and madness of pagan superstition. Abraham's oak at Mamre, which for so many ages had been annually defiled with Jewish and heathenish solemnities, he removed, and erected a Christian church there. He demolished the celebrated temple of Æsculapius at

¹ Euseb. de vit. C. lib. iii. c. 54, &c. p. 510; Soz. lib. ii. c. 5, p. 449.

Ægæ in Cilicia, where that pretended god was worshipped for his eminent cures, and frequent appearances in dreams to his votaries. At Alexandria he dispersed and banished the Androgyni, or priests of Nile, who used to perform ridiculous ceremonies to that river, accounted by them a deity, and caused the *nilometrium*, or famous cubit, wherewith they went every year to measure the height of the river, to be removed out of the temple of Serapis (where it was religiously kept) into the Christian church at Alexandria. When the people cried out hereupon, that the goddess would be angry, and the Nile no longer overflow its banks, the event showed the prediction to be false and foolish, the river overflowing the country the next year in larger measures and proportions than it had done before.¹ In short, by several laws he forbad to offer sacrifices, or to erect any images to the gods, or to consult their priests and oracles, or to exercise any of their mysterious rites.

By these smart and vigorous proceedings against the idolatry and impieties of the heathen world, Satan every day visibly fell as lightning from heaven, and the great dragon, that old serpent, which had so long deceived the world, fled before, and fell under the power of the cross. In memory whereof, this good emperor caused some of his coins, still extant, to be stamped on the reverse with the figure of a serpent bowing under, and struck through with the banner of the cross. And in the portico before his palace he caused his picture to be drawn at full length with the cross over his head, and a dragon under his feet struck

¹ Euseb. ib. lib. iv. c. 25, p. 537 ; Socr. lib. i. c. 13, p. 48.

through with darts, and thrown into the sea, to denote by what assistance he had routed and ruined the old enemy of mankind, and had cast him down to hell.¹ All which, my author says, was foretold by that of the prophet, ‘That the Lord with his sore, and great, and strong sword, should punish leviathan, that crooked serpent, and slay the dragon that is in the sea.’²

And now God, having brought about so great a change and reformation, and advanced Christianity, which had lately been so much despised and trampled on, to be the religion of the empire, took this excellent prince into a better world. He died at Nicomedia, May the 22nd, ann. 337, to the irreparable loss of the church, and the grief of all good men. I shall conclude his reign with the comparison, which Eusebius, in an oration delivered at the solemnization of his *tricennalia*, about a year before his death, makes between this and the preceding times, the sum of whose discourse upon that argument we shall here represent. “The former emperors,” says he, “were passionate admirers of their gods, and the people everywhere honoured them with statues and images, which they erected to them in fields and houses, yea in their very butteries and bed-chambers: chapels and porticos, groves and temples were with infinite pains and charge set apart for their worship, and enriched with the most costly ornaments and oblations. The fruit of all which devotion was nothing else but war and fighting, mutinies and seditions, which filled the world with blood and slaughters: their gods by their feigned answers and oracles

¹ Euseb. de Vit. C. lib. iii. c. 3, p. 484. ² Is. xxvii. 1.

vainly flattering them into hopes of prosperity and success, when, alas! they could not foresee that sad fate that did attend themselves. Encouraged with this assurance, and carrying the statues of their fond and senseless deities at the head of their army, they marched into the field: whereas Constantine, armed with no other breast-plate but that of piety, nor carrying any other banner than that of the cross, at once triumphed both over his enemies, and their gods. In a grateful sense of so signal a mercy he openly owned the power of that triumphal sign, a monument whereof he set up in the midst of Rome, and commanded that all should look upon it as the tutelar and guardian power of the Roman empire. He taught the mystery of it to all, and especially his soldiers, and trained them up both in the principles and practice of true prayer, and holy adoration, and that they must not depend upon the strength of their arms, the greatness of their courage, the multitude of their number, but look up to God as the only fountain of all power and victory, and observe the Lord's-day as most proper for their devotions. His own vacant time he spent in prayer, reading the Scriptures, and other divine exercises and employments, and he formed his whole court after his example. He paid a just reverence to the victorious Cross, and erected triumphal arches to it in every place, and with a noble and magnificent bounty commanded churches and oratories to be built, and those to be re-edified which had been demolished by the rage and madness of his predecessors, who taking upon them to fight against God, had all come to untimely ends, and both they and their families been swept away as in a moment. While this emperor, guarded by

the salutary standard, carried victory about him, and had founded newer and more stately churches, and rebuilt the old ones into greater magnificence than before; conspicuous instances whereof were to be seen at Constantinople, Nicomedia, Antioch, and in Palestine, where, at Jerusalem, he raised an immense and admirable structure over the place of our Saviour's sepulchre, which he enriched and adorned with the most exquisite artifice. Three other incomparable churches he built, the one over the place of our Lord's birth, another at the place of his ascension, and a third at the place of his passion. So illustrious a piety God was pleased to reward with the enlargement of his empire, and the prosperity and security of his family, besides those eminent blessings which were reserved for his posterity. A signal evidence of that divine power that superintended the happiness of the empire, that could so equally distribute recompences suitable to each party; for all those that had ruined and laid waste the churches, had quickly reaped the wages of their impiety, and had been swept away without leaving either house or posterity behind them. But this good emperor having endeared himself to heaven by an unusual piety and bounty, had accordingly engaged God to be the saviour and protector of his empire, his family, and his posterity."¹

¹ Orat. de Laud. Const. c. 9, p. 628.

SECTION II.

The Condition of the Gentiles under the reign of Constantine Junior, Constantius, and Constans.

CONSTANTINE upon his death-bed divided the empire among his three sons. To Constantine, his eldest, he assigned Britain, Spain, Gaul, and part of Proconsular Africa; to Constans, the youngest, Italy, Illyricum, Macedonia, Greece, the parts that border upon the Euxine, and the remainder of Africa; to Constantius, the middle son, Mysia, Thrace, Asia, the East, and Egypt. The first of these princes lived but a little while, and the reigns of the two other were so taken up with the Arian and other controversies, which unhappily divided the Christian world, and distracted the state as well as the church, that we meet not with much relating to the Gentiles within this period. Sozomen in the general gives us this account of the state of things; that the emperors trod in their father's steps in their care of, and kindness to the church, investing the clergy, their children, and servants, with many peculiar privileges and immunities. They not only confirmed their father's laws, but enacted new ones, prohibiting any either to offer sacrifices, or to pay any adoration to the images of the gods, or to exercise any part of pagan superstition. The temples that stood either in the cities or fields, they commanded to be shut up, or bestowed them upon churches, where they wanted either room or materials to build with; for it was their great care either to repair ruined churches, or to erect new ones

more splendid and magnificent.¹ Constantine had reigned scarce three years, when quarrelling with his brother Constans about the division of the empire, he marched with his army as far as Aquileia to encounter him, where he was slain about the latter end of April, ann. 340; but whether by treachery (as some report) or in open fight, is not easy to determine. His death is no less passionately than elegantly bewailed by a Grecian sophist of that time, in a funeral oration, still extant.²

The emperor Constans being now at peace, resumed his zeal against the Gentiles, whose follies he restrained by this following law, the inscription whereof we have duly rectified:—

“The emperor Constantius and Constans, the august, to Madalian, vice-prætorian prefect.—Let superstition cease, let the madness of sacrificing be abolished: for whoever shall presume contrary to the constitution of our father, a prince of blessed memory, and contrary to this command of our clemency, to offer sacrifices, let a proper and convenient punishment be inflicted, and execution presently done upon him.” Received, Marcellinus and Probinus being consuls:³ that is, ann. 341.

This was followed by another, concerning the temples at Rome, that, although all idolatrous superstition should be rooted up, yet it was his majesty’s pleasure, that the temples that stood in the fields and highways (for of those within the walls there seems to have been no question, they being spared as highly conducing to the splendour and ornament of the city,) should not be pulled down

¹ Lib. iii. c. 17, p. 529.

² *Μονω. εἰς Κωνσταντίν.* Gr. L. a Fr. Morell. edit. 1616.

³ Th. lib. xvi. tit. 10, l. ii. p. 261.

or defaced, many of the solemn sports and games, wherewith the people were wont to be entertained, depending upon, and having taken their rise and original from these temples.¹ So the structures were left standing either for delight or ornament, only the abuse and idolatry of them was quite removed. Encouraged with these laws, Julius Firmicus Maternus wrote about this time his book *De Errore profanarum Religionum*, which he dedicated to the two brother-emperors; wherein after he had run down and exposed the notorious follies and absurdities of paganism, he addresses to those emperors, that they would go on to make a perfect reformation, and by very severe laws cut off what did yet remain, that the Roman world might be no longer infected with such pernicious errors and impieties, and wickedness gain ground by custom and connivance.² Constantius being about this time informed, that many Gentile masters, to put the greater affront and dishonour upon the Christian profession, used to sell their female slaves that were Christians to be prostituted, restrained it, ordering that none but Christians should have leave to buy them, and that they might pay their ransom, and set them free.³

Ann. 350, Magnentius, a great commander in the army, having treacherously murdered the emperor Constans, usurped the empire, as upon notice of his death, Vetrannio also did in Pannonia, and Nepotian, nephew to Constantine the Great, at Rome. But these two were soon cut off, the former by Constantius, the latter by Anicetus, whom

¹ Th. lib. iii. vid. Gothofr. in loc.

² De Error prof. Relig. p. 11.

³ C. Th. lib. xv. tit. viii. l. i. p. 379.

Magnentius had constituted prefect of Rome. Magnentius himself made shift to hold out a few years, and like a prosperous usurper went on without control, raising taxes at pleasure, proscribing, nay, killing any that stood in his way, and confiscating and seizing their estates. Where it made for his interest, he connived at the Gentiles, and persecuted the Christians, many of whom he caused to be put to death. But after three years and six month's tyranny, he was finally routed by Constantius, and equally despairing of pardon and success, ran himself through, and died. Constantius reversed the proceedings which he or his judges had illegally acted, and restored persons to their just rights and possessions;¹ and for the better quieting men's minds, published a general act of indemnity and oblivion, excepting only five of the greater and more capital crimes, which he left to the ordinary procedure of the law.² And whereas Magnentius, to curry favour with the Gentiles at Rome, had given them leave to celebrate their sacrifices in the night, Constantius immediately abolished those nocturnal sacrifices, and took away the license that had been granted them.³ Nay, by another law, he expressly forbid all manner of sacrifices, and commanded that everywhere, both in city and country, especially within the præfecture of Italy, (for which the edict seems more immediately calculated,) the temples should be shut up, and none suffered to go into them;⁴ (agreeable to what is related by other writers of this time;⁵)

¹ C. Th lib. xv. tit. xiv. l. 5. ² Ibid. lib. ix. tit. xxxviii. l. 2.

³ Ibid. lib. xvi. tit. x. l. 5. ⁴ Ibid. l. 4.

⁵ Sozom. lib. iii. c. 17, p. 529; Liban. Orat. fun. in Julian. p. 253.

that the person offending should lose his head, and forfeit his estate to the exchequer, and the governors of provinces be punished, if they neglected the execution of this law. A like command to this he issued out three years after, making it capital for any to offer sacrifice, or adore the images;¹ these vigorous proceedings did, it seems, strike a terror into the greatest, even into Julian himself, so that about this time he was wont to rise at midnight, and in the most secret manner pay his devotions to Mercury.²

Constantius was an utter enemy to magic, and all curious and unlawful arts, than which nothing more common among the Gentiles, and indeed they were the very life and spirit of their declining superstition. And therefore the next year, ann. 357, he put out a law against all curiosity in this kind, that no man, under the penalty of his head, should dare to consult any of these masters of divination,³ who in the body of the rescript are reckoned up by their several titles: *haruspices*, who made a judgment concerning future events from sacrifices, and inspecting the entrails of beasts slain to that purpose; *mathematici*, who judged of things by the course and position of the stars; *harioli*, who attended the altars, offered up sacrifices and supplications to the deity, and received the answer the demon returned; *augures*, who divined by the flight or chattering of birds; *vates*, who were more immediate chaplains to the deity, and being filled, as they gave out, with an enthusiastic inspiration, gave out oracles to the votaries that required them:

¹ Sozom. lib. vi.

² Am. Marcel. lib. xvi. p. 1468.

³ C. Th. lib. ix. tit. xvi. l. 4, ubi vid. comment. Gothofr.

chaldeans, or fortune-tellers, were much the same with the *mathematici*, who read men's doom by calculating their nativities, and finding what constellations governed at the time of their birth; *magi* were properly such as dealt in charms and conjurations, framed into odd and uncouth schemes of words; *malefici*, in a strict sense, were those that traded in necromancy, but are here used in a more general way, as comprehending all the other professors of these diabolic arts. This was at the beginning, and about the end of the same year out comes another law against them that exercised arts of magic, by which they undertook to disorder the course of nature, and do mischief to the lives of innocent persons, and by peculiar charms to disquiet and conjure up spirits, and the souls of the departed, that they might become instruments of revenge upon their enemies. Such persons, as being contrary to nature, he commands to be destroyed *ferali peste*,¹ that is, as some think, by being burnt alive, the ordinary punishment of magicians among the Romans, or as others more probably, by being thrown to wild beasts. Either of them severe enough, and yet not exceeding the merits of such enormous villanies.

About the end of April this year Constantius came to Rome, where he took care to regulate several things that were amiss there. And now probably it was, that he took away the famous altar, and image of victory, which being placed upon a triumphal chariot stood in the entrance or portico of the capitol. It was the only idol left there, for, though it had been removed by Constans, yet was

¹ C. Th. 1. 5.

it again restored by Magnentius, and now taken away a second time, to the infinite grief and resentment of the Gentiles, who heavily complained of it, especially Symmachus, who raised no little stir and bustle about it afterwards.¹ After a month's stay at Rome, the emperor returned back to Milan, where finding that notwithstanding all the provision he could make, the trade of divination still went on, and crept into his very court, to the hazard of his person and government, he published a most severe law the year following against this sort of men, setting forth, that although in any part of the world they were to be accounted enemies of mankind, yet when they presumed to intrude into his court or presence they offered a more immediate violence to majesty. If therefore any magician or diviner, or any practising that way, should be found either in his court, or in that of Cæsar, be he of what rank or condition soever, he should not escape being tortured, though in other cases the law exempted persons of honour and dignity from that penalty.² And indeed it was but time for Constantius to look about him, both with respect to himself and Julian. As to himself, he had a fresh instance at hand. Barbatio, general of the foot, had a swarm of bees settled in his house; the man was infinitely concerned at the accident, and presently went to consult the soothsayers, who told him, it portended some extraordinary events, and gave him intimation of an advancement to the empire. This the man kept secret, and marched out with the army; but his wife, jealous of her own interest,

¹ Vid. Symmach. Relat. lib. x. Ep. 54, p. 538.

² Lib. ix. C. Th. tit. xvi. l. 6, p. 124.

wrote to him, to beg, that after Constantius's death, which was then at hand, and himself, according to his expectations, advanced to the empire, he would not despise her, nor prefer Eusebia, the queen-dowager that was to be, a woman of exquisite beauty, before her. A copy of this letter her maid carried privily to court, whereby the whole design came to light, for which both Barbatio and his wife died, and several others were racked as accomplices in the treason.¹ And then for Julian, Constantius had for some time suspected him of hatching ill designs, and knew that his chief converse was with this sort of men, who, by all the little insinuations of their art, endeavoured to push forward his youthful ambition. He always kept a company of magicians about him, who went in the habit, and under the notion, of philosophers, and sent for a famous pagan priest out of Greece, with whom alone he used to spend some time, and transact some affairs in private, just before he broke out into an open rebellion against Constantius. These things every day more and more alarmed the emperor's suspicions, and awakened his severity against these men; especially after he understood that there was a mighty concourse to Abydus,² a town in Thebais, famous for a temple of Bera, the topical God of that country, and much celebrated for his oracles; and those who could not come themselves, sent their questions in writing. This was represented to the emperor as a thing of dangerous consequence, who immediately dispatched away Paulus and some others into the east to examine the matter, and call persons to account. Among others, Simplicius

¹ Am. Marcell. lib. xviii. p. 1522. ² Ibid. lib. xix. p. 1555.

was accused for having put questions to the oracle about his obtaining the empire, and though commanded to be tortured, was only banished; many more were banished, or racked, or tormented, and their estates confiscated. And so rigorous were the proceedings, (if my author say true,) that if a man wore but an amulet about his neck for the cure of a quartan ague, or any other distemper, or walked but at night among the tombs and monuments, he was forthwith challenged for a conjuror, and as a person trading in necromancy, and was put to death as guilty of high-treason.

The last thing considerable that Constantius did, was a law (if not the last, the last of this nature) he made to exempt the clergy in every place, whether in city or country, from all civil offices, which he did the rather, he says, "because he rejoiced and gloried in nothing more, than in his munificence to the church, well knowing, that the empire was better preserved and kept in order by religion, than by any external offices, or corporal labours whatsoever."¹ This law bears date March the 17th, ann. 361, at Antioch, whither he had retired from the Persian expedition for his winter-quarters, and whence he set out to go against Julian, but died in his march at Mopsucrenæ, October the 5th, others say November the 3d, partly wearied out with troubles, partly heart-broken with the ingratitude and rebellion of his cousin Julian, wherein, now it was too late, he was sufficiently sensible of his error, it being one of the three things he solemnly repented of upon his death-bed, that he had taken him into a partnership of the empire.

¹ C. Th. lib. xvi. tit. ii. l. 16, p. 44.

SECTION III.

The State of Paganism under the reign of Julian.

JULIAN was the youngest of the three sons of Constantius, brother by the father's side to Constantine the Great. He was born at Constantinople, ann. 331. His mother Basilina died soon after, and his father was taken off in the first of Constantius. At seven years of age he was committed to the tutorage of Mardonius the eunuch, who read to him, and formed his tender years to a strict course of virtue;¹ and therefore it is a great mistake in Baronius, when, from Julian's account of his education under this man, he make him to have instilled into him the first principles of paganism.² Libanius puts the case past adventure, when he tells us, this eunuch was an excellent guardian of temperance and sobriety, but withal, a bitter and open enemy to the gods.³ Under the conduct of this Mardonius he attended some other masters, famous professors at that time: Nicocles the Lacedonian for grammar, and for rhetoric Ecebolius the sophist. But Constantius thought it not safe to continue him in the imperial city, and therefore sent him and his brother Gallus to Macellus, a manor belonging to the crown, at the foot of the mountain Argæus, not far from Cæsarea in Cappa-

¹ Jul. Misop. p. 78, &c. Socr. lib. ii. c. 1, p. 165; Sozom. lib. v. c. 2, p. 593.

² Ad Ann. 337, N. lvii.

³ Epitaph. in Jul. nec. p. 262, 263.

docia, where there was a magnificent palace, pleasant gardens, adorned with baths and fountains, and other noble entertainments. Julian himself seems to speak of it under a worse character, and looked upon their confinement there as a better sort of imprisonment, not being allowed to go thence upon any occasion, and being restrained from all other company but that of their own servants.¹ Six years they remained in this place, during which time they were educated in all arts and exercises suitable to their age and birth. After which, Gallus being called to court, Julian was suffered to return to Constantinople, where he frequented the schools of the most celebrated professors, and became so famous for his proficiency in learning, his plain garb, and familiar carriage, that he began to be talked of as a person fit to succeed in the empire. To silence the spreading of such rumours, Constantius removed him to Nicomedia, and recommended him to the care and superintendency of Eusebius, bishop of that place, who by the mother's side was somewhat of kin to him. The emperor began to suspect his inclinations, and therefore gave particular charge, that he should hold no correspondence with Libanius, a famous orator, but a professed zealous pagan, who having been forced to quit Constantinople, had opened a school at Nicomedia.² But it is hard to chain up natural inclinations. Though the emperor had commanded, and his tutor Mardonius had engaged him by oaths to have nothing to do with Libanius, he could not wholly contain himself. He did not

¹ Epist. ad Athien. Oper. part. i. p. 499.

² Liban. Paneg. ad Jul. p. 175, in Jul. nec. p. 263; Socr. loc. cit. Vid. Am. Marc. lib. xxii. p. 1622.

indeed personally converse with him, but a way was found out, whereby his orations and speeches were by a secret messenger conveyed to him every day, which he read with infinite greediness and delight, and laid before him as a copy for his imitation. The news of his coming to Nicomedia brought thither Maximus, one of the greatest philosophers of that age, who, under pretence of teaching him philosophy, confirmed him in his love of paganism, and his spleen against Christianity: and being a man famous for magic, blew him up into a belief of the common report, that he should one day be emperor, which so endeared the man to him, that he took him into his most intimate friendship, and accounted him one of the most valuable blessings of his life.

All this he managed with great artifice and subtlety. Knowing how jealous his cousin Constantius was of his affection towards the heathen religion, he professed himself a zealous Christian, and to cast the greater blind upon it, he took upon him the tonsure, entered into a monastic life, and suffered himself to be ordained reader of that church, where he read the Scriptures in the public congregation. Nay, so far did his disguised zeal extend, that he pretended a passionate honour and reverence for the martyrs, and joined with his brother Gallus to erect a stately oratory to the memory of St. Mamas the martyr, the one undertaking one part of the work, and the other the other. But God disdained that either himself or his servants should be honoured with such thick and damnable hypocrisy, and accordingly gave testimony from heaven against it. When that part of the church which Gallus had undertaken went up apace and prospered, that

of Julian could take no effect; in some places the foundations could not be laid, the earth throwing up the stones again; in others, where it was built up to any height, it was immediately shattered, and tumbled to the ground: an accident that administered great variety of discourse, and made many presage what would be the event and issue of things.¹ However, he kept himself upon his guard, though he could not forbear, where he knew his company, to open and disclose the secrets of his mind; and many times in discourse with his brother Gallus, he would take upon him very eagerly to defend the cause of suppressed paganism, wherein, though he pretended to manage the cause only by way of disputation, yet the warmth of his temper, and the strength and seriousness of his arguments, sufficiently showed he did it *ex animo*, what colour soever he otherwise put upon it. And his practice was accordingly; for whatever he made the world believe, he equally divided his time between study and idolatry, studying all day, and sacrificing at night.² And the thing is confessed by one of his dearest friends, than whom none knew him better, that it being dangerous for him to appear in his own colours, “he seemed to be another man than what he really was, and in public hid himself under another dress: he was not the ass in the lion’s skin, but a lion clad with the skin of an ass, (as my author expresses it, scoffingly reflecting upon his Christian profession.) He well understood the best way, ἐδοκει δε τὰ ἀσφαλέστερα, but he thought good to dissemble, and for the present to steer the safest

¹ Sozom. ubi supr. Nazianz. Orat. i. in Jul. p. 58; Theod. lib. iii. c. 2. p. 125.

² Naz. ibid. p. 61.

course; while in truth it almost broke his heart to see the temples desolate, the sacrifices forbidden and neglected, the altars and victims taken away, the priests banished, and the revenues of the temples shared among the impure and profane." ¹ And, if we may believe Libanius, it was not pleasure or power, grandeur and dominion, made him affect the empire, but only to have an opportunity to restore the worship of the gods. But this, as yet, he kept to himself, waiting a more favourable season wherein to declare himself. This hypocritical garb he wore about him till he was twenty years old, when he put it off by degrees.

His brother Gallus, who had been some years Cæsar, was now for some treasonable innovations deposed, and put to death. But things going to rack in Gaul and Germany, Constantius was necessitated to think of another partner, and none could be thought of so proper as Julian; the empress Eusebia whispering it into Constantius's ears, that "he was a young man, of a simple undesigning temper, wholly addicted to his books, and unacquainted with the tricks of ambition, and the intrigues of government. If success attended his enterprizes, the glory of them would redound to the emperor; if he miscarried, and was cut off, they should be rid of him, and there would be none left of the royal family to hatch any dangerous designs against the empire." ² Hereupon he was sent for to court. Before he left Athens, with prayers and tears he solemnly recommended himself to the care and protection of Minerva, the tutelar goddess of

¹ Liban. Epitaph. in Jul. Nec. p. 265, 266.

² Zozim. lib. iii. p. 702.

that place. He pretends he went to court upon this errand with a mighty reluctancy, and when he came to Milan, drew up a letter to the empress to be excused from it, which the gods, he tells us, whom he consulted upon this occasion, did by a vision at night forbid him to send upon pain of death. So he was invested with the title and ornaments of Cæsar, and sent into Gaul.¹ Five or six years he managed this province with admirable success, all which time he publicly professed himself a Christian, and would sometimes, especially upon the feast of the Epiphany, go to church, and offer up his prayers to God.² What he did otherwise was by stealth, rising at midnight, and doing his devotions to Mercury.³ And finding now by auguries and divinations that Constantius was not like to live long, designs were set on foot with all speed to advance him to the empire.⁴ He had long since among his confidants abjured Christianity, but his army being most made up of Christians, he durst not yet publicly renounce it, and therefore came into the church upon Christmas-day, and did his devotions among the rest.⁵ But the more he secured his interest in the soldiery, the more he opened his inclinations to paganism every day. He wrote to most of the great cities, accommodating himself to their several humours or interests. That to the senate and people of Athens is still extant, wherein he gives them a large and accurate account of his affairs, what designs he

¹ Epist. ad Athen. p. 505; vid. Liban. Epitaph. in Jul. nec. p. 268.

² Id. lib. xxi. p. 1584.

³ Id. lib. xvi. p. 1468.

⁴ Id. lib. xxi. p. 1582.

⁵ Zonar. Annal. tom. iii. p. 19.

had on foot, what injuries and provocations had been offered him by Constantinus, and how the army had forced him, contrary to his inclinations, to take the empire upon him.¹ In his letters to his private friends he dealt more openly: in that to Maximus, he tells him among other things, he would acquaint him with what he knew he would be right glad to hear, that they publicly worshipped and sacrificed to the gods, and that the whole army was of his religion, and that in gratitude to the gods several hecatombs had been already offered up.² And indeed knowing his mind, they began in several places, and particularly in Greece, to open their temples, and to beautify and trim them up, and to introduce sacrifices; all which he encouraged by his counsel, direction, and example:³ nay, no sooner did the first news of his assuming the empire arrive at Constantinople, but some, forward enough to adore the rising sun, set up his statue in the porch of Constantine's palace in that city; and Demophilus, commander of the soldiers, a bigoted Gentile, erected a porphyry pillar to him, with this inscription, ΜΕΓΑΣ ΘΕΟΣΕΒΗΣ ΥΠΑΡΧΩΝ ΙΟΥΛΙΑΝΟΣ, 'the great and the religious Julian.'⁴

On the death of Constantine, he marched with all speed to Constantinople, which he entered December 11, ann. 361, and having solemnized the funerals of Constantius, began to let the world see, what religion he intended to espouse. He ordered

¹ Lib. Panegy. Jul. p. 242; Or. pro Aristoph. p. 217; vid. Zos. ib. p. 712; Mamert. Paneg. Jul. p. 53.

² Ep xxxviii. p. 182.

³ Liban. Epitaph. in Jul nec. p. 288.

⁴ Demonstr. Chronol. Gr. et Lat. à Combes. edit. lib. Orig. C. P. p. 25.

the temples to be set open, those that were decayed, to be repaired, and where new ones were wanting, to be built: where any temples had been demolished, and the materials converted to private uses, he fined the persons that had made use of them in a certain sum of money, which he commanded should go towards the building new ones. Altars were everywhere set up, and the whole train of Gentile rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices, brought again into use. So that, as Libanius tells us, you could go nowhere, but you might behold altars and fires, blood, perfumes, and smoke, and priests attending their sacrifices without fear or interruption; the tops of hills had their oblations, and sacrificial feasts, and the imperial palace its temple and sacred furniture.¹ The emperor assumed the title and office of Pontifex Maximus, and valued it as equal to that of emperor; he renounced his baptism, and profaned it by polluting himself with their bloody rites, which he opposed to the Christian method of initiation.² The first thing he did every morning as soon as out of his bed, was to sacrifice to the gods. He went up and down in person, and was both present, and assisted at public sacrifices, and gave encouragement to all that did so, writing to those cities which he knew most devoted to Gentilism, and promising to grant whatsoever they should ask. The warrant of so great an example made the Gentiles unmeasurably insolent in every place, so that not content with leave to celebrate their impious mysteries, they began in their

¹ Liban. Epitaph. in nec. Jul. p. 291. de Vit. sua, p. 41; Sozom. ib. c. 3, p. 596; Naz. ubi supr. p. 70; Am. Marcell. lib. xxii. p. 1612.

² Liban. Orat. viii. p. 245.

wild cursitations up and down the streets to scoff and deride the Christians, and by all imaginable ways of scorn and reproach to expose them and their religion. And when with much greater advantage the Christians paid them home in their own kind, they burst out into a rage, and with blows and wounds fell foul upon them, the emperor in the meantime conniving at what was done.¹ In short, he recalled the laws lately made against pagan superstition, and confirmed the ancient edicts of his predecessors that had been made in favour of them. And here perhaps it will be no unacceptable entertainment to the reader, to present him with some of the principal methods Julian made use of for the supporting paganism, and the suppressing Christianity.

And first, he set himself to reform paganism, and the professors of it, from the more gross corruptions, and to introduce many wise and excellent institutions, which he observed among the Christians. The faults and follies of the Gentile world were so conspicuous in themselves, and had been so often exposed by Christians, that they lay open to every eye; and he had no way to recover his religion into any credit, but by retrenching what was so very scandalous and offensive, and planting what was more useful and excellent in the room of it. In an excellent discourse, (part of which is now extant,) he lays down rules for this purpose, by which he sought to bring paganism as near as might be to those admirable methods and forms of discipline, by which he saw Christianity had mainly prevailed in the world. In imitation whereof, he

¹ Theod. lib. iii. c. 6, p. 129.

designed and endeavoured to introduce schools for the education of youth in every city, churches and altars of different degrees and privileges, lectures both of moral and speculative theology, stated times, and forms of alternate prayer, the use of anathematism and penance, monasteries for devout and philosophic persons of either sex, alms-houses and hospitals for the poor and cripple, and the reception of strangers, and what he most admired, the commendatory ecclesiastic epistles, or letters testimonial, from the bishop or governor of the church, whereby persons travelling from one country to another were upon the producing these letters sure to meet, wherever they came, with a very kind and ready entertainment.¹ All which he heartily recommends in his letter to Arsacius, which, because so express to the case in hand, we shall here insert.

“To Arsacius chief-priest of Galatia:—That the Gentile religion does not as yet go on according to our desire and expectation, is the fault of those that do profess it: for what has been done in reference to the gods is splendid and magnificent, and great beyond either our desires or hopes. For (with reverence to the justice of the divine Providence be it spoken) to bring about such and so great a change in so short a time, was more than any man a little while since durst so much as wish for. What then? Shall we acquiesce here, and think these things enough, and not rather cast our eyes upon those things that have advanced the impious religion of the Christians? I mean their kindness and compassion to strangers, their diligent care in

¹ Naz. Orat. i. in Jul. p. 101 ; Soz. lib. v. c. 16, p. 617.

burying the dead, and that feigned seriousness and gravity that appears in their whole carriage; all which, I am opinion, we ought really to put in practice. Nor is it enough that you alone are thus qualified, but all the priests in Galatia ought to be altogether such: and to that purpose either shame or persuade them into it, or remove them from their sacerdotal function, unless, together with their wives, children, and servants, they studiously apply themselves to the worship of the gods, not suffering their servants, children, or wives to be Galileans, who are despisers of the gods, and prefer impiety before religion. Moreover, warn every priest that he go not to the theatre, nor sit drinking in taverns, nor apply himself to any mean sordid trade. Those that comply, give them honour and respect; those that continue obstinate, turn them out. Appoint several hospitals for poor travellers in every city, that indigent strangers, not of ours only, but of any other way, may enjoy the benefit of our grace and charity. For the defraying which expenses, I have now made provision; for I have ordered thirty thousand *modii* (or bushels) of wheat to be yearly distributed throughout Galatia, and sixty thousand quarts of wine: a fifth part whereof I will have allowed to the poor officers that wait upon the priests, the remainder you shall distribute among the poor and strangers: for it were a great shame, that when none of the Jews go a begging, and when the wretched Galileans relieve not only their own, but ours too, that our poor only should be deserted by us, and left naked and helpless. Wherefore admonish and instruct the Gentiles, that they contribute liberally to these services, and that every village dedicate

their first fruits to the gods. Accustom them to this kind of benevolence, and show them that this has of old been practised among us. For so Homer brings in Eumæus speaking thus :"¹

Ξεῖν' ἔ μοι θεῖμις ἔς', οὐτ' εἰ κακίων σέθεν ἔλθοι,
 Ξεῖνον ἀτιμᾶσθαι· πρὸς γάρ Διὸς εἰσὶν ἅπαντες
 Ξεῖνοί τε πτωχοί τε· ἴσοσις δ' ὀλίγη τε φίλη τέ.

Welcome, kind stranger, 'tis not just with me
 Strangers to slight, though meaner far than thee :
 Strangers and beggars are alike from Jove ;
 Mean is thy treatment, yet a feast of love.

“ Let us not then suffer others, who emulate our pious usages, to carry away the glory from us, while by our carelessness and negligence we disgrace ourselves, and seem rather to betray and forfeit our piety to the gods. If I hear you shall bring these things about, I shall rejoice exceedingly. Go but seldom to the governors' houses, but write often to them. When they make their entrance into any city, let no priest go out to meet them ; if they come to the temples, let him only meet them in the porch ; and when they enter in, let no officer go before them, but as many as will may follow after, for no sooner does any one set his foot over the threshold of that place, but he becomes a private man, equal with the rest. For yourself, you know, are sole commander there, according to divine constitutions. Such only as are obedient, are the true worshippers of God, they that stand upon pomp and grandeur, are proud and vain-glorious. For my part, I am ready to afford relief to them of Pessinus, provided they atone

¹ Hom. Od. Ξ. 27.

and propitiate the mother of the gods; but if they shall slight her, they shall not only be not blameless, but, which I am loath to tell them, incur our heavy indignation :

Οὐ γὰρ μοι θέμις ἐπὶ κομίζεμεν, ἢ ἐλεάριεν
 Ἀνδρας, οἳ ἐξ θεοῖσιν ἀπέχθωντ' ἀθανάτοισιν.¹

'Tis impious to be kind to them,
 Who do the immortal gods contemn.

“ Persuade them therefore, if they desire I should take any care of them, universally to make their public supplications to the mother of the gods.”²

By this designed reformation, and which, had he lived, he would no doubt in a great measure have accomplished, he hoped to render his religion so amiable in the eyes of Christians, as easily to bring them over to it, at least he should throw out of the way those popular objections that were commonly made against it.

Secondly, he took all occasions of exposing Christians, and making them and their religion appear ridiculous to the world. He was a man of great wit, and his wit particularly set to a sharp and sarcastic edge, and he principally turned it this way. He read the Scriptures for no other end but to cavil or confute them; to pick out, as he thought, the most obnoxious passages, which he first dressed up according to his own humour, and then derided them, and set them up for others to laugh at. If he met with a seeming contradiction, he made it real; if with an hyperbolical expression, he im-

¹ The passage is cited *memoriter* from Hom. Od. K. 73.—ED.

² Jul. Epist. xlix. p. 202, et ap. Sœz. ib. p. 619.

proved it into blasphemy, and would run it down as inconsistent with the dictates of Infinite Wisdom. He scorned the simplicity of the apostles and prophets, whom he represented as a pack of ignorant and illiterate fellows, that had no breeding and education, and understood little beyond the shop, or a trade. He carped at them almost in every epistle, and in his Persian expedition wrote seven whole books in confutation of Christianity, which were afterwards solidly and fully answered by St. Cyril of Alexandria. When he spake at any time of our Saviour, he would give him no other title than the son of Mary, or the Galilean; and by a particular law commanded, that the followers of our Lord should not be called Christians, but Galileans,¹ foolishly thinking to render them odious to the world by clapping an infamous name upon them. The imperial standard of the cross, which his uncle had made with so pious an intention, and with such exquisite artifice, he took down, and in the room of it put up another, in all his pictures and statues representing Jupiter near him as coming down from heaven, and delivering him a crown and the purple, the two insignia of the empire. Sometimes he had Mars and Mercury looking upon him, and seeming to give testimony, one to his valour, the other to his eloquence.² Because he knew how just a reverence the Christians paid to the memory of the great Constantine for being the first open patron of Christianity, he traduced him at every turn; and, in the conclusion of his Cæsars, represents him as a person

¹ Naz. *ibid.* p. 81.

² *Id ib.* p. 75; Soz. *ubi. supr.* p. 621.

notoriously guilty of the most scandalous effeminacy and debauchery, with other vices as falsely as spitefully charged upon him. In the same place he proclaims the Christian religion to be little else but a receptacle and sanctuary for rogues and villains, where the vilest of men might shelter themselves, and, though guilty of the most enormous crimes, might, upon a little trifling penance, be *toties quoties*, in a moment, made pure and clean. This he thought must needs render it cheap and ridiculous to all wise and considering men, and if he did not laugh Christians out of their religion, he should however confirm the Gentiles in his own.

Thirdly, he sought by all ways to bring Christians low, and to weaken and destroy their power and interest. To this end, first, he banished them out of all places of honour and authority, reducing them to this dilemma, either to do sacrifice, or to quit their employment, and become incapable of all civil offices.¹ If they complied with the first, he had his ends, and they fell under the reproachful character of persons, who loved their places better than their consciences, and preferred an empty honour before their religion; if they laid them down, he was rid of so many potent and dangerous enemies, who might head a party to oppose his designs, or at least encourage the common sort of Christians to stand to their religion with a firmer constancy and resolution. Thus among others, Valentinian, who was afterwards emperor, generously threw up his place of colonel of one part of

¹ Sozom. lib. v. c. 18, p. 623. Chrysost. ; Hom. in Juvent. et Max. T. i. p. 486.

the guards of the palace, and submitted to the sentence of banishment, rather than he would come under the least shadow of an idolatrous compliance, whereof more in its proper place. Not content with this, where any had been employed in the reigns of the preceding emperors, in demolishing pagan altars, pulling down temples, taking away their ornaments, or the like, he not only stripped them of their honours and privileges, but suffered them to be indicted, condemned, and executed, where a bare accusation was many times proof enough. Secondly, he exacted unreasonable sums of money from them on all occasions, that being impoverished, they might either lie under a strong temptation to apostacy, or be secured from attempting any thing against the civil state. Hence the fines, penalties, and confiscations, that filled his reign, any pretence serving to start a title to their estates. If a man was but suspected to have enriched himself by any revenues formerly belonging to heathen temples, he was presently brought into the exchequer, and right or wrong forced to refund. But nothing served him to better purpose than his war against Persia, under pretence whereof he amassed infinite treasures, imposing a heavy pecuniary mulct upon the heads of all those that refused to offer sacrifice to the gods.¹ The edict was executed with merciless severity, even upon those who had nothing to pay: nay, the commanders and officers stretched it beyond its natural intention, extorting greater sums than the edict had imposed, beating and abusing them that refused to pay. And when the Christians complained to him of the oppressions

¹ Niceph. lib. x. c. 24, p. 53.

and injuries which in this case the governors of provinces put upon them, all the redress they could get, was a sarcasm tart enough : “ Your Christ,” said he, “ has given you a law, that when you suffer unjustly, you should bear it resolutely ; and when oppressed and injured, should not answer again.” Thirdly, he studied to set them a clashing and quarrelling with one another, that he might do his work with their hands. The politic prince remembered the old maxim, “ divide, and govern :” it was but setting them together by the ears, and they would ruin themselves. He was not ignorant what powerful factions there were among them, what implacable feuds and animosities had been exercised between several parties in the times of his predecessors ; he knew these bitter contentions were not forgotten, and that they would return to them with fresh, and perhaps more eager appetites. To which end he no sooner came to the crown, but he recalled the banished bishops, whom he gave leave to return to their sees, possessed by those, who he knew would not easily part with them.¹ And though to gain himself the reputation of a wise and merciful prince, he sent for the bishops and their people to court, and pressed them to concord, and that every one would peaceably enjoy the freedom of his own way, yet the design at the bottom was plainly this, that he might set them a wrangling more effectually, and that the liberty he gave them might widen and increase their dissensions, that so they might be incapable of confederating into any dangerous and formidable combinations, as is confessed by his own historian. An arti-

¹ Sozom. lib. v. c. 5, p. 611. Philost. lib. vii. c. 4, p. 504.

fice he was sure would take effect, having by experience found, says mine author, with reproach enough if it was true, “that no kind of wild beasts were so outrageous to mankind, as some Christians were to one another.”¹ At the same time, and for the same purpose, he gave the like indulgence to all sorts of heretics; and commanded Eleusius, bishop of that place, to rebuild the church of the Novatians, which he had formerly pulled down, at his own charge, placing a heavy fine upon his head, if he did not within two months set upon it.² He published likewise an edict in favour of the Donatists, a sect of men peculiarly disposed to quarrels and contentions, whom he restored to their liberties, revenues, and the possession of their churches.³ What fatal and mischievous effects this licentious toleration produced in the Christian world, they who have read the church history of that time, need not be told.

Fourthly, though he himself abstained from open persecution, yet he connived at those that did persecute the Christians. He passionately affected the character of justice and clemency, and knew no readier way to do it, than by treating his declared adversaries with some kind of gentleness and lenity. Hence he glories once and again, how kind he had been to the Galileans, beyond the rate of that usage they had met with in the time of his predecessors. “Instead of banishment, they had been sent for home; instead of a prison, they enjoyed liberty; instead of being plundered, their confiscated goods had been by edict restored to

¹ Am. Marcell. lib. xxii. p. 1612.

² Socr. lib. iii. c. 11, p. 183.

³ Vid. C. Th. l. xvi. lib. xxxviii. et Gothofr. Comment.

them; that he had commanded none of them to be beaten, abused, or put to death without law, and beyond the rules of justice. And notwithstanding their madness and folly had almost ruined all, yet the worst he had done them was, that in his esteem and choice of persons, he had preferred pious and good men before them.”¹ One of his greatest advocates triumphs in this, that “he did not prosecute the untrue religion (meaning the Christian) with fire and sword, nor drive men over by cruelty and torment;”² which yet must be understood of his general carriage, and what he did above-board, and of negative rather than of positive favours. Besides, he considered, that all the methods of rage and fierceness would never compass or attain his ends. He had observed the unhappy miscarriages of his pagan predecessors, who by sanguinary laws, and rigorous proceedings, had been so far from extinguishing Christianity, that they had spread it through the world, and that the church’s field was never more fruitful, than when watered with the blood of martyrs, who grew up thicker the faster they were mowed down.³ Great and generous minds are not easily daunted with opposition, but grow up thereby into a more manly courage and resolution. In the midst of all their spite and cruelty Christians could court the stake and the flames, the sword and the rack, and their persecutors sometimes had enough to do to keep them from pressing on to an execution, and people could not but enquire into, admire, and embrace that religion,

¹ Epist. vii. p. 120, lib. ii. p. 212.

² Liban. Epitaph. Jul. p. 290.

³ Chrys. loc. supr. citat. Sozom. ib. c. 4, p. 599. Naz. ubi supr. p. 72.

which supported and invigorated the minds of its professors, and made them triumph in the midst of those sufferings, which were beyond all the powers of human nature to bear up under. The same spirit he saw continued still; Christians were as ready as their enemies, and to use his own expression, "Give them but occasion, and they will crowd as fast to martyrdom, as bees swarm to their hives." But he would not gratify them in that, though it had been so dearly to their cost; he envied them the honour of martyrdom, a thing he found they so eagerly desired, and valued beyond all the conveniences of life, or the enjoyments and advantages of this world. If any died in defence of their religion, he commanded they should not be accounted martyrs, and that they should be thought to die for any crimes, rather than upon the account of religion. For these reasons he laid aside all thoughts of a public and general persecution, which would have made him and his party so much the more odious, and them more great and venerable. But, though no public warrants were issued out, he left his commanders and governors to use their discretion, especially in those places that were far from court, who were not backward to improve their authority and power. They well understood their master's mind, and from one instance among others might take measures from all the rest. When upon occasion of a complaint made to him of a miserable outrage the Gentiles had committed upon the Christians at Cæsarea, he replied, "What great matter is it, if one Gentile hand dispatch ten Galileans."¹ This made it a

¹ Naz. ubi supr. p. 92.

hot season, especially in some parts, where the governors proceeded with all the cruelty which men's bodies or estates were capable of, and with all manner of violence against their churches, and the rites of their religion. Some few of the most considerable Theodoret has brought together, where the reader may find them.¹ Nay, not content to abuse the living, their rage extended to the dead. Among others, they dug up the bones of the prophet Elisha, and John the Baptist, (both buried at Samaria,) which having mixed with the bones of beasts, they burnt to ashes, and then scattered the ashes before the wind.²

Fifthly, he endeavoured especially to discourage and weary out their bishops and clergy. This had been an old trick, and vigorously attempted in all ages by the great enemy of mankind. It was but for the wolf to persuade the flock they had no need of a shepherd, and his work was done. The clergy have always been the great eye-sore to men of pernicious and atheistical principles, whose desperate designs they have strenuously opposed and countermined, and could never be brought to be content that the world should be overrun with atheism and impiety, and the people moulded into any shape, and thereby betray the souls committed to their charge. This, whatever may be pretended, is the true source and original of all that spite and malice they are encountered with by men of bad minds, and of all those hard names and characters of reproach to this day fixed upon them by an ungrateful and degenerate world. Julian pretended

¹ Lib. iii. c. 7, p. 129, 130, vid. c. 16, 17, 18, 19.

² Philost. lib. vii. c. 4, p. 503. Niceph. lib. x. c. 13, p. 32. Rufin. lib. ii. c. 28, p. 258.

the reason of his hard usage of them was, lest they should stir up the people to sedition; but in truth it was to be rid of them, that by their absence the people might be destitute of all means of instruction and information, and the divine efficacy and obligation of the sacraments, and be by degrees brought into ignorance of, or an unconcernedness for their own religion, and then they were fit to receive any impression.¹ Take but away the candle, and darkness will ensue; 'if the shepherd be smitten, the sheep will be scattered.'² To compass this more effectually, he first seized their incomes, and took away their allowances of corn; next, he abrogated their immunities; and whereas by the favour of former princes they had been exempt from being of the *curiales*, he repealed these laws, and made them liable to the burdens and offices of the civil courts, especially where any of them had been ordained out of that body. When this would not do, he endeavoured to remove and drive them away by fraud or force. At Antioch the churches were shut up, the plate and treasures seized into the exchequer, and the clergy forced to fly. So it was at Cyzicum, where there was not the least shadow of sedition.² At Bostra he threatened Titus the bishop, that if any mutiny happened, he would lay all the blame upon him and his clergy; and when the bishop to clear himself sent his apology to court, to assure him, that though the Christians were the far greater number, yet they lived peaceably under

¹ Soz. lib. v. c. 15, p. 616; Jul. Ep. L. ii. p. 252.

² Zech. xiii. 7; Matt. xxvi. 31.

³ Soz. lib. v. c. 5, p. 600; Philost. lib. vii. c. 4. Vid. C. Th. lib. xii. tit. i. l. 50, lib. xiii. tit. i. l. 4.

his conduct, the emperor wrote back to the city, making a spiteful and disingenuous representation of the bishop's letter, as if it had contained nothing but malicious and scurrilous reflections upon them, exciting the commonalty to expel him as a common enemy and calumniator out of the city.¹ In some places he proceeded to that extremity, as to cast them into prison, and expose them to great pains and tortures.²

Sixthly, he gave all manner of assistance and encouragement to the Jews, merely in spite and opposition to the Christians: and herein we have a notorious instance how far malice will stoop to serve its ends. Julian hated the Jews almost equally with the Christians, and yet when he found they were likely to be proper instruments to his purpose, he spake tenderly of them, pitied their miserable and afflicted state, desired their prayers in his Persian wars, released the tribute put upon them, and pressed them to the rebuilding their temple, re-edifying their altar, and restoring their sacrifices, and the solemnities of their worship. In order whereunto he sent them a commission, allowed the charges of the work out of his own exchequer, and appointed officers to superintend it, and that the governor of the province should aid and assist them in it. Two things especially he propounded to himself in this: first, that by thus obliging the Jews, he should be the better able to bring them over to his own religion; or however that went, should thrust an incurable thorn into the sides of Christians. He was not to be told what an in-

¹ Soz. lib. v. p. 616, et Jul. Epist. cit.

² Soz. lib. v. p. 600.

veterate and implacable enmity the Jews bare to Christians, and that being now backed with the royal authority, they would not only reproach and bespatter, but oppress and trample upon them, and pursue them with the utmost violence of a fierce and ungovernable zeal. Secondly, he hoped by restoring the temple and legal worship, to evidence to the world, that our Saviour was an impostor and false prophet, who had so expressly foretold the final and irrevocable dissolution of that church and state. So the work was carried on with all possible briskness and activity, and nothing was thought of but feasts and triumphs, when heaven on a sudden baffled the whole enterprize, and many illustrious and miraculous appearances of the divine vengeance forced the workmen to sit down, and give over in despair; and what the emperor designed as a way to suppress, became a means to advance Christianity, no inconsiderable number being hereby brought over to the Christian faith.

Seventhly, he endeavoured to suppress and extinguish all human learning amongst the Christians, well knowing how naturally ignorance opens the way to barbarism and impiety. To bring this about, he published a law, that no professor of any art or science should set up in any place, until by long exercise he was fitted for it, and after mature deliberation, had gained the approbation and decree of the court of that city, with the consent of the *optimates*, and that this decree should be sent first to him for his allowance.¹ Next he forbad Christian schoolmasters to teach any Gentile learning, to instruct and educate children in their arts, or to

¹ C. Th. lib. xiii. tit. iii. l. 5, p. 30.

read their books to them ;¹ which his own historian more than once censures as a churlish and cruel edict, worthy to be covered with eternal silence.² By this means he designed to let in rudeness and ignorance among the Christians, and thereby dispose them to any impressions he might make upon them ; to prevent the youths being perverted by going to the Christian schools ; to render them of his own party more able to dispute with and baffle Christians, at least that Christians might be less able to encounter them, and to discern their sophistical reasonings, their false and fallacious insinuations ; “ lest otherwise,” said he, “ we be shot through with our own arrows, and they being furnished with our armour, make war upon us with our own weapons.”³ He challenged the learning and writings of the Gentiles as their own proper goods, who alone embraced the religion, and worshipped the gods, which they treated of ; that these were unnecessary to Christians, who were trained up to an illiterate clownishness, and the sum of whose doctrine lay in τὸ πίστευσον, “ Believe, and it is enough :” and that by this prohibition he did but retrieve stolen goods, and restore them to their right owners.⁴ But besides the folly of the attempt itself, seeing, though he might hinder them from speaking elegantly and genteelly, he could not hinder them from speaking truth, which was mighty, and would prevail and make its way, notwithstanding all their plots and devices to the contrary.

¹ Naz. Orat. i. in Jul. p. 51 ; Soz. ib. p. 623 , Theod. lib. iii. c. 8. p. 131.

² Am. Marcell. lib. xxi. p. 1626 ; lib. xxv. p. 1696.

³ Ap. Theod. loc. cit. Socr. lib. iii. c. 12, p. 184.

⁴ Naz. ib. et p. 97.

Eighthly, above all men he highly honoured, embraced, and rewarded philosophers, and those who were likely most vigorously to oppose and refute Christianity. It grieved him to see the Christian faith so largely spread, so firmly rooted, and so many excellent books written, either in defence or explication of it; and he sticks not to tell us, he heartily wished all writings that concerned the doctrine of the wicked Galileans, were quite banished out of the world.¹ But because there were no hopes of that, he encouraged all the sophists, philosophers, and orators, that he could meet with, to bend their wits and studies this way; whom he resettled in their own countries and possessions, allowed them pensions, and peculiar privileges, and indeed whatever they could reasonably desire or expect from him. This filled all schools and colleges, all courts and corners with lectures, invectives, and declamations against Christians. This made the philosophising trade go on apace, every one desiring to comply with the emperor's humour, though a great part of them had little more of the philosopher in them, besides the habit and the cloak.² This brought so many of them to court, that the palace seemed a kind of academy, where all places were crowded with philosophers, aruspices, and magicians; Jamblicus, Libanius, Maximus, Ecebolius, Oribasius, and great numbers more; whom he took into his bosom, and made privy to his greatest intrigues, steered affairs by their counsels, and in their company spent his leisure hours, and indeed was impatient at any time when they were wanting. These

¹ Epist. ix. p. 122.

² Vid. Socr. lib. iii. c. 1, p. 169.

being the men that were generally intrusted with the education of youth, and who governed and directed the minds and consciences of the people, he was sure of so many sworn enemies to Christianity, who would not fail to lay out all their talents and abilities that way: and the truth is, if wit, or learning, or eloquence could have done it, he had certainly driven it out of the world. But 'the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and his weakness stronger than men,' who baffled all their tricks of artifice and subtlety, and 'made foolish the wisdom of this world.'

Ninthly, he tried by several secret and subtle artifices to ensnare unwary Christians into compliance with pagan superstitions, that having once drawn them in, he might either wholly bring them over, or, by the reflection upon what they had done, disquiet their consciences, as the very report of it might undermine their reputations. Of this, a few instances shall suffice. He used to place the images of the heathen gods next to, or behind his own statues, that when the people came according to custom to do obeisance to the one, they might do it also to the other. Those that did it, he persuaded to venture a little further; those that discovered the cheat, and refused, he charged with treason, and proceeded against them as delinquents against the laws and customs of the empire. When the soldiers came at the solemn times to receive their donative, the ancient usage was at the same time to throw a piece of frankincense into the fire in honour of the gods, which, though the Christians generally detested, yet some few, surprised thereinto by an inveterate custom, did it. But being minded afterwards of what they had done,

such an horror seized upon their consciences, that they ran up and down like madmen, went to the emperor, and threw back their donatives, publicly professing themselves Christians, and desiring they might die to give testimony to their religion.

Having thus viewed the methods by which Julian sought to extirpate Christianity, we proceed to the historical remainder of his reign. Seven or eight (Zosimus by mistake makes it ten) months he staid at Constantinople, when having settled affairs there, he conceived it high time to take care of the eastern borders of the empire. In order whereunto he crossed the Hellespont, and passing through Bythinia, came to Pessinus, a city of Galatia, situate in the confines of the greater Phrygia, where stood a very ancient temple dedicated to Rhea or Ceres, the mother of all heathen deities. The worship hereof he restored, and created Callixenes priest,¹ and having paid his devotions to the goddess, published an elegant oration (the work but of one night) in honour of the mother of the gods.² Thence he passed the Pylæ, and through Cilicia, and came to Antioch, where he arrived about the latter end of July, ann. 362. He found the city almost wholly Christian, and the pagan rites generally neglected. He went into the famous temple of Apollo in the Daphne, on its great annual festival, where instead of great crowds and magnificent oblations, which he expected, he found neither the one nor the other, whereat he was highly offended, and expostulated sharply with the senate, that in such a city there should be found so

¹ Liban. in Jul. nec. p. 254.

² Id. Epitaph. in Jul. nec. p. 300.

much irreverence to the gods.¹ He intended it seems to consult this oracle about the success of his affairs, but, by its own confession, found it was tongue-tied in those matters by Babyla's grave that was near it, and who had sometime been bishop of that place. He caused the Christians therefore to remove his bones, which they did in a triumphant manner, and soon after, (viz. October 22,) that famous temple was burnt to the ground.² Though it was highly probable it was fired by lightning, yet must it be charged upon the Christians; many of whom were put to the rack, and the great church at Antioch commanded to be shut up.

Winter being over, he departed with his army from Antioch the 1st of March, and at his going out, to let them understand how much he resented certain affronts they had put upon him, told them, by a fatal prognostication, that he would never see them more. And the story is commonly known, that when Julian marched out with a great pomp and train, and had spoken big words of what he would do to the Christians at his return, Libanius, to add the greater scorn and reproach to them, asked a Christian schoolman of his acquaintance at Antioch, "What the carpenter's son was now doing?" meaning our ever blessed Saviour. The man replied with tartness enough, "He is making a coffin for your master, Julian."³ But to proceed. The emperor marching on passed by Edessa, which he would not enter, because so populously inha-

¹ Jul. Misopog. p. 96, &c.

² Soer. lib. iii. c. 18, p. 191; Soz. lib. vi. c. 19, 20. p. 626; Amm. Marc. lib. xxii. p. 1629.

³ Theod. lib. iii. c. 23, p. 145.

bited by Christians; and on the 18th of April came to Carræ, a city of Mesopotamia, where he entered into a pagan temple, and performed many secret and execrable rites.¹

It was about the midst of summer when they came within sight of the Persian army. After several skirmishes he was within a hopeful prospect of a final victory, when venturing too far in the pursuit, he was on a sudden struck with a horseman's lance, which grazing upon his arm, passed in at his side, and went to the very lower lap or fillet of the liver, with which as being two-eged he cut his fingers while he strove to pull it out, and fainting with loss of spirits sunk down upon his horse's neck.² There went a report, that finding himself mortally wounded, he took a handful of his blood, and throwing it up into the air, cried out, "Galilean, thou hast got the better!"³ Others conceived he did it in contempt of the sun, for having assisted the Persians more than him. We are told by an author of good credit, that being laid down for awhile upon the bank of a river, he had persuaded some of his most inward confidants secretly to convey him into, and drown him in the river, that so the suddenness of his disappearing might take off the ignominy of his death, and give him (as it had done some others in the like cases) the reputation of a deity. And the plot had been accomplished, had not some of the imperial eunuchs discovered and prevented it.⁴ But of this there are no intimations in any other writer.

¹ Theod. lib. iii. c. 26, 27, p. 147.

² Am. Marc. lib. xxv. p. 1691.

³ Theod. *ibid.* c. 25, p. 147; Sozom. lib. vi. c. ii. p. 638.

⁴ Naz. Orat. ii. in Jul. p. 117.

However it is certain some designs were laid that way, to create in the people's minds a belief of his divinity. For Libanius tells us, that the messengers that brought the first news of his being slain, were almost stoned to death, for bringing up a slanderous and lying report concerning a person who was supposed to be a god, and consequently immortal.¹ His wounds being perceived to be dangerous, he was laid upon a target, and carried into his tent, where he died at midnight. Various were the reports that went about how he came by his death's-wound. Some say, it was given by an angel; Callistus, an officer of his guards, and who wrote his acts in an heroic poem, that it was done by a dæmon: some say it was a revolted Persian that did it; others, a Saracen; others, a jester, that used to go freely up and down the army; and some, that it was one of his own soldiers, out of revenge, that he had unadvisedly brought the army into so great distress and danger.² Libanius does not only affirm, that he was killed by fraud and treachery,³ but without any other warrant than his own presumption, confidently charges it upon the Christians, "who took this opportunity (he says) to be revenged of him, and to rid him out of the world;" and supports his conjecture with no wiser and stronger a probability, than that none of the Persians would confess who did it, though the king proclaimed a great reward to the person who should appear to demand and challenge it.⁴ But

¹ Ubi. supr. p. 330.

² Naz. ib. p. 116; Socr. lib. iii. c. 21, p. 195; Sozom. ib. c. i. p. 636; Theod. ib. p. 146.

³ Or. de Templ. p. 24.

⁴ Orat. Epitaph. in nec. Jul. p. 324. Vid. Soz. loc. cit.

Ammianus Marcellinus, a more grave and sober writer, and present at the fight says, it was uncertain who did it;¹ and Eutropius, a pagan too, and at that time upon the spot, that it was done *hostili manu*, by the hand of the enemy.²

Among the various extraordinary passages relating to his death, that reported by Sozomen must not be omitted; who tells us, that a certain intimate acquaintance of Julian's following after him in his Persian expedition, came to a place, where finding no convenient inn to entertain him, he lodged that night in the church, and in his sleep he had a vision, wherein he beheld several apostles and prophets, who assembling themselves into one company, began to complain of the extreme injuries the emperor did to the church, and to advise what was to be done in that case. The consult was long, and when they could come to no conclusion, two of the company rose up, and bade the rest be of good cheer, and, as resolving to put a sudden period to Julian's life and reign, immediately departed the assembly. The man hereupon was afraid, and resolved to go no further, but there to await the issue of things. The next night taking his rest in the same place, he beheld the very same convention, whereinto the two persons, who the night before had gone out against Julian, suddenly returned from their expedition, and gave an account to the company of his being slain.³ The very same day his death was proclaimed by horsemen in the air to Didymus at Alexandria. Let me add what Zonaras relates on this occasion, that a

¹ Ubi supra.

² Lib. x. p. 133.

³ Ib. vi. c. 2. p. 637.

certain judge at Antioch, and he too a Gentile, watching all night at the Prætorium, saw an unusual constellation in the heavens, the stars forming themselves into these words, *Σήμερον ἐν Περσίῳ Ἰουλιανὸς ἀναίρειται*, 'This day is Julian slain in Persia.' Which accordingly proved true, and became the means of the man's conversion to the Christian faith.¹ He died June 26, ann. 363, in the thirty-second year of his age, when he had reigned not full two years. He was a prince truly of great virtues, prudent, considerative, impartial, strictly just, chaste, and temperate, patient of hardship, unwearied in his labours, valorous in his attempts, even to rashness and precipitancy. He had a quick wit, but too much inclined to satirism, a nimble apprehension, and learning beyond most princes; but withal, was a passionate affecter of praise and popularity, one that loved to talk much, and not seldom vain-gloriously enough, in his own commendation. He was, even in the character of his own writers, superstitious rather than religious, an immoderate lover of the rites, ceremonies, and usages of paganism, which he revived, and defended both with his sword and pen, and in the exercise whereof he spent no inconsiderable portions of his time, and professed himself an hearty enemy to all that opposed them. In short, to give him his due, had not his memory been stained with an apostacy from the best religion that ever was, and so bitter and incurable a spleen against the Christians, he might have passed for one of the best princes that ever managed the Roman empire.

But his death happened opportunely to the poor

¹ Annal. tom. iii. p. 24.

Christians. It was *πληγὴ καιρία ὄντως, ἐ παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ σωτήριος*, "a truly seasonable wound," says Nazianzen, "that restored health and safety to the Christian world," who otherwise were sure to have felt (and it was but what he had threatened) the utmost effects of his severity and displeasure, had he returned victorious from the Persian expedition.¹ The truth is, had his reign been extended any great number of years, he would have mightily distressed Christianity, and have reduced it perhaps to a lower ebb, than ever it had been at in the times of any of his most fierce and violent predecessors. Nobody therefore can blame them, if they entertained the news of his death with joy and triumph. The churches were filled with hymns and thanksgivings, their houses with feasts and merriments, and the very theatres chanted out the glories of the cross, and derided the vanity of the heathen oracles.² I conclude this short, but famous period, with the words of Nazianzen, in his second invective again Julian, published not long after his death. "Where are now," says he, "your sacrifices, your rites and mysteries? where are your public and your secret victims? where are your arts of inspecting entrails, so much talked of? your prognostic divinations, and spirits that gave answers out of the belly? what is become of the great Babylon you spake so much of, and the whole world, which by the promise of a few execrable sacrificial divinations, you had devoured and conquered? where are the Persians and the Medes, which you had already in your hands? where are those gods that led you on, and yet were forced to be carried before you, that fought both before, and together with you? where are the oracles, that

¹ *Loc. supra laudat.*

² *Theod. ibid. c. 28, p. 147.*

denounced such heavy things against the Christians, and fixed the time of our utter destruction, even to the rooting our very name out of the world? They are all vanished, and are proved to be lies and falsehoods; and the boasts and vauntings of the ungodly are fled, and have disappeared like the shadow of a dream.”¹

SECTION IV.

In what case Gentilism stood under the reigns of Jovian, Valentinian, and Valens.

UPON Julian's death, Jovian (or, as some call him, Jovinian) was by the suffrage of the army saluted emperor. He was a firm and resolved Christian, in-somuch that, when Julian published an edict that the army should either sacrifice or disband, he presently offered to lay down his arms; but the emperor knew him to be too considerable a person, to be easily parted with, and therefore continued him in his command. Upon the shouts and acclamations of the soldiers he bluntly told them, that he for his part was a Christian, and could not take upon him the command of those men, or the conduct of that army, that had been trained up in the impious principles of the deceased emperor; nor could he expect any success from their arms, who being destitute of the divine blessing and protection, must needs become a prey and derision to their enemies. To this they

¹ Theod. p. 122.

almost unanimously replied, "Make no scruple, sire, to venture upon the empire, nor let the impiety of our principles be an argument with you to decline it: for you will reign over Christians, men instructed in the laws of piety. Those of us that are eldest, were brought up under the institution and discipline of Constantine; those that are next, under the instructions of Constantius; and for the late emperor, his reign was so short, that it was not capable of making any deep impression upon the minds of men." Upon this assurance, he took the government upon him, and made peace with the Persians upon the best terms that those evil circumstances they were under could admit.¹ The trouble which the Gentiles conceived for the death of Julian was doubled upon them by the election of Jovian, whose zeal for Christianity they were too well assured of; and therefore in all places they traduced and exposed him by lampoons and pasquils, especially at Antioch, where they scattered libels in the streets, and affixed them at every corner. The very old women broke scurrilous jests upon him; and the rather perhaps to cry quits with the Christians, who had not long before dealt so by Julian; as indeed petulancy and a sarcastic wit were the peculiar humour of that place.²

He began his reign, as became a wise and good prince, with the care of religion. Warned with the unhappy fate of his predecessor, he wrote immediately to the governors of provinces to open the churches, and diligently attend the solemnities of

¹ Socr. lib. iii. c. 22, p. 195; Soz. lib. vi. c. 3, p. 639; Theod. lib. iv. c. 1, p. 151.

² Suid. in V. Ἰοβιανός, ubi plura exempla dantur.

divine worship, and let the subjects know, that the Christian religion was the only true way of worship. He restored to the several churches the gifts and revenues, and to the clergy, and those who lived within the verge of it, the privileges and immunities which Julian had taken from them: particularly he restored the corn-canon, (as they called it,) the yearly allowance of corn, which Constantine the Great had settled upon the church, and which the late emperor had abolished. But because a great dearth raged at that time, he was forced for the present to cut off two-thirds of that tribute, promising to restore it entire as soon as the famine was over; and would no doubt have made good his word, had God spared his life. He also recalled all those, both ecclesiastic and secular persons, that in the late times had been banished for their religion. The pagan temples he commanded to be shut up, and the public sacrifices to be taken away; whereupon the priests crept into corners, and the very philosophers were so frightened that they laid aside the *pallium*, and habited themselves according to the common garb.¹ But this I conceive they did more out of fear of the Christians upon this great turn of affairs, than any positive constitution of the emperor to that purpose. For wherever he came, he kindly received, and honourably entertained the philosophers, and by an edict gave every man leave to serve God in his own way, which I understand not of the public but private exercise of religion.² By this time he was entered upon his consulship, and being arrived at Ancyra in Galatia, was met by Themistius the philosopher, with some

¹ Soz. ib. Theod. ib. c. 4; Philost. lib. viii. c. 5, p. 512.

² Vid. Themist. Orat. xii. p. 278.

others of the senatorian order, where Themistius in an elegant oration congratulated him for his new honour and dignity, and at large gives him his just commendation, especially for his compassion to the afflicted and banished, and his admirable care of religion, his great indulgence towards all, in leaving every one to the freedom of his own choice, and herein imitating God, who, having planted in men's minds a natural inclination to religion, has left every man free to choose that way and means wherein he may best express it. 'Princes might compel to the outward act, but the mind was above all warrants or threatenings; force may make men hypocrites, but not religious; and to worship the imperial purple, not the deity.'¹ This was an argument the Gentiles much insisted on in those days.² They were under hatches, and now all the cry is for gentleness and moderation, and leaving men to the dictates of their own consciences, which might be persuaded, but could never be compelled. But whatever might be said for the thing itself, they forgot when this would not pass with themselves for current doctrine, and how miserably in former times they had treated the poor Christians, whom they had only tempted to apostacy by promises and persuasions, but had endeavoured to force them to abandon their religion by all the methods of the most barbarous and merciless severities. Jovian died at Dadastana, a village in the confines of Galatia and Bithynia, of poisonous mushrooms, whereof some say he had plentifully supped; more probably he was choked with the smoke of coals;

¹ Orat. supr. cit.

² Vid. etiam Liban. Orat. de Templ. p. 18; Or. in Julian. nec. p. 290.

or, as others, with the damp of a new-plastered chamber; and perhaps both concurred to give him his death. However it was, he was found dead in his bed, after he had reigned not full eight months. He was a valuable prince; whose reign it is like, had it been longer, would have rendered the condition both of church and state very happy and prosperous.

The army marched to Nice, where a council of officers being called, in order to the election of a new emperor, they unanimously pitched upon Valentinian, whom they had left behind them at Ancyra.¹ A man he was of great spirit and courage, and had suffered deep for his religion. Being under Julian, he was bound by virtue of his place to attend the emperor when he went to offer sacrifice in the temple, where the priests stood ready at the door, with branches in their hands (as the custom was) to sprinkle holy-water upon those that entered in. Some few drops fell upon Valentinian, who (vexed to be defiled with their idolatrous rites) struck the priest a box on the ear in the emperor's presence, and tearing off that part of his garment whereon the water had fallen, threw it away with scorn and indignation. Julian was enraged to see his religion affronted to his face, but dissembled his passion, and not willing to give him the honour of martyrdom, found fault with him for negligence in his office, and turned him out, and banished him; some say to Melitina, a desolate town in Armenia; or, as others affirm, to Thebais in Egypt, whence he returned in the beginning of Jovian's

¹ Socr. lib. iv. c. 1, p. 210; Soz. lib. vi. c. 6, p. 644; Theod. lib. iv. c. 6, p. 156; Philost. ib. c. 8.

reign. Messengers were immediately dispatched to Ancyra, to carry him the welcome news, and conduct him to Nice, where the soldiers setting him upon a shield, showed him openly, and proclaimed him emperor, but withal required that he would take to him a partner in the empire. The noise was loud and clamorous, whereupon beckoning with his hand to make silence, he replied, with a resolution that became a prince, "It was in your power to make me emperor, but being so, it is not yours, but my part, to command. Submission is your duty as subjects; mine as emperor, to take care of the commonwealth."¹ An answer, that struck them dumb; however within a month he assumed his brother Valens to be his colleague in the empire, to whom he allotted the eastern parts, having reserved the western to himself.

To render their government, at their first setting out, more grateful and acceptable to the people, they endeavoured to oblige all parties by a general toleration, enacting, that every one might worship God according to the rites of that religion wherein he had been educated; that no man should be compelled to this or that way of worship, nor subjects be forced to profess the same religion with their prince, but all be left to a free and unconstrained choice.² An act, for which they are sufficiently cried up by pagan writers. The heathens were not to be taught what use to make of this indulgence, which they wound up to the highest peg, so that not content with the private exercise of their superstition, in many places they set it up

¹ Soz. ubi supr. Theod. lib. iii. c. 16, p. 138.

² C. Th. lib. ix. tit. xvi. l. 9; Amm. Marcel. lib. xxx. p. 1832; Symmach. lib. x. Ep. 54, p. 537, 539, 543.

publicly, solemnized their accustomed festivals, celebrated their impious mysteries, and made their wild and extravagant processions through the open streets.¹ This general liberty the emperors by degrees began to restrain. By a law, published this first year of their reign, they seized the farms and revenues belonging to the heathen temples, taken away by Constantine and his sons, and either given or sold to private persons, but resumed and restored by Julian, which they now annexed as an additional revenue to their own private patrimony.² By another, they forbid all night-sacrifices, charms, and magic-divinations, these being accounted most malignant and dangerous, and the night fittest to cover such black and hellish rites.³ By these proceedings the Gentiles perceived the vanity of their own predictions. Finding that Christianity had gained ground under the fiercest persecutions, and that their own religion sunk and declined apace, to keep up the spirits of their party, they produced a prophecy, pretended to have been dictated by one of the oracles of Greece, wherein they declared, that though Christ himself was no magician, yet that St. Peter had procured by art magic, that the Christian religion should last three hundred and sixty-five years, and then immediately vanish out of the world. This period was now run out, and St. Augustin, who wrote several years after, does sufficiently deride and expose their folly, the event having so palpably confuted their prediction.⁴

¹ Theod. lib. iv. c. 24, p. 187.

² C. Th. lib. x. tit. 1, l. 3, p. 384.

³ Ib. lib. ix. tit. xvi. l. 7. Zos. lib. iv. p. 735.

⁴ Aug. de Civit. Dei, lib. xviii c. 53, col. 1130. vid. c. seq.

But the insolent carriage of the Gentiles was not easily taken down; and Valens was forced to make it capital for any, either in public or private, either by night or day, to exercise any art of divination, or to consult them that did so. The occasion of this law was this: several of the most eminent philosophers of that time were inwardly grieved at the flourishing state of Christianity, grew weary of Valens's government, and longed for another emperor of their own religion. That this design might have both greater encouragement and reputation, they secretly confederated with some great persons at court, and officers in the army, and tried by all methods of divination, to know who was likely to succeed Valens in the empire. At last a tripas, consecrated with certain magic charms and invocations, was placed in the middle of a room upon a charger, which had upon its utmost brim the twenty-four letters of the alphabet. Then a person shook a magical ring, which pointed out in this case the four letters, Θ. Ε. Ο. Δ. (THEOD;) whereupon one that stood by presently cried out, that the oracle plainly intended Theodorus, who was indeed a man of birth and quality, and famous for his learning, wisdom, modesty, and humanity, but a Gentile, and one who they all passionately desired might be promoted to the empire. But it was not long before the whole conspiracy was discovered to the emperor; who, divided between astonishment and anger, commanded the business to be brought under a thorough scrutiny and examination. Theodorus was beheaded, the maker of the tripas burnt alive, and all the rest that were any ways concerned in the fatal consult exquisitely tortured, and then put to death, whose arraignments, racks, and severe

usages, may be read at large in Ammianus Marcellinus. Above all others, the emperor's fury raged against those whose names began with those four letters, whether Theodorus, Theodotus, Theodosius, Theodulus, or the like, whom he put to death wherever he found them, by the same bloody policy wherewith Herod once butchered the infants at Bethlehem, hoping that in the number he should make away the new-born Messiah, and king of the Jews. This he prosecuted with so much rigour, that many, to avoid the danger, changed their names, as not being willing to lose their lives for a malignant name. Yet God, who delights many times to defeat men's malicious curiosity, suffered the Great Theodosius to escape, and in despite of all his care and cruelty, to succeed him in the eastern empire; and it is said, that his parents were particularly warned in a dream to give him that name, as an omen it seems of his after greatness.¹ Nor did Valens persecute men only, but books upon this occasion, commanding a search to be made for all books of magic, or any other curious or unlawful art, which being piled upon heaps were publicly burnt. And at this time it was, that Chrysostom, then a youth, was in some danger. As he was going one day to church, he took up a book, which a suspected person had thrown into the river, and upon perusal found it a book of magic. He was espied by a soldier that passed by, and saw him and his companion take it up. They knew not well what to do with it, it

¹ Sozom. lib. vi. c. 35, p. 693; Socr. lib. iv. c. 19, p. 229; Philost. lib. ix. c. 15, p. 520; Amm. Marcel. lib. xxix. p. 1784, &c. Zosim. lib. iv. p. 743, videsis Zonaram, sed hanc rem paulo aliter narrantem. Annal. tom. iii. p. 28.

being almost equally dangerous to keep or part with it; but they threw it away, and escaped the danger.¹

In the west, things were carried towards the Gentiles with a more easy hand. Among other enactments, Valentinian granted to the provincial priests (they were those that superintended a whole province, and were usually chosen out of the body of the *curiales*: their business was to take care of the temples and sacred rites, the pomps and processions upon festivals; and at their own charge to provide for and manage the public shows and spectacles; to these he granted) that they should be free from the burden of all civil offices, and enjoy the same privilege with persons of honour and quality; not to be racked and tortured, and have the *comitative* honour, or the same place and dignity which the *comites* who had well discharged their trust, had conferred upon them as the reward of their pains and care.² At this time also he took order about the players who acted at the public sports and theatres, (a trade expressly forbidden by the canons of the church,) that in case of imminent danger of death, they might, upon their repentance and earnest desire, be admitted to the sacraments, that is, both baptism and the eucharist; provided it was done with the allowance of the bishop, and the inspection of the civil magistrate: and that if such persons should recover, they should be no longer forced to attend the service of the theatre.³

It was now about the year 372, when Mavia, queen of the Saracens, a people inhabiting the

¹ Hom. xxxviii. in Act. p. 340.

² Sozom. lib. xii. tit. 1, l. 75, p. 425.

³ Ibid. lib. xv. tit. vii. l. 1, p. 361.

parts of Arabia that lay next to Egypt, sent Moses (who lived a monastic life in the neighbouring wilderness, a man no less famous for his miracles than his piety) to Alexandria to be ordained bishop; who, refusing to be consecrated by Lucius, whom the Arians had thrust up into that see, newly vacant by the death of Athanasius, betook himself to the Catholic bishops that lived in exile, and having from their hands received his ordination, returned back into his own country, the greatest part whereof he converted to the Christian faith.¹ Christianity likewise made a further progress among the northern nations, especially the Goths that dwelt upon the Danow:² for Phritigernus, one of the princes of that nation, having by the assistance which Valens had lent him, gained a considerable victory against Athanaricus, another of those princes, did in gratitude to the emperor, and as a firm assurance of his friendship, entertain the Christian religion into his country, and the Arians being at this time the only powerful faction at court, took this opportunity to introduce Arianism among the Goths, though it had taken root there some time before by means of Ulphilas their bishop; who, coming on an embassy in the reign of Constantius, (Philostorgius places it in the time of Constantine,³) had fallen in with Eudoxius, Acacius, and others of that party, by whom he was perverted to their pernicious principles, which he carried back with him, and strenuously propagated in his own country. He was the first that found out the Gothic letters, and having done

¹ Socr. lib. iv. c. 36, p. 253; Sozom. lib. vi. c. 38, p. 699; Theod. lib. iv. c. 23, p. 186; Rufin. lib. ii. c. 6, p. 216.

² Socr. ib. c. 33; Soz. c. 37.

³ Lib. ii. cap. 5, p. 471.

so, translated the Bible into their native language, which mightily conduced to the further speedy success of Christianity in those parts. One thing especially is memorable in this case, that in this translation he omitted the books of Kings, (which took in also those of Samuel and the Chronicles,) because these, containing little but an account of wars, would be apt to inflame the minds of that people, who, being naturally a fierce warlike nation, needed rather a bridle, than a spur to quicken them to martial undertakings.

Valens in the meanwhile miserably harassed the poor Catholics, whom he pursued with that rage and violence, that Themistius, the philosopher, undertook their cause, which he pleaded in a set oration before the emperor, showing him, that "it was no wonder if there was such difference of opinions amongst them, which was yet but inconsiderable, if compared with those numerous and vastly distant opinions that were among the Greeks, which must necessarily breed some disgust and disagreement; and that perhaps God was delighted with this variety of sentiments, seeing it tended to beget in men's minds a profounder reverence towards the divine Majesty, when they found the knowledge of him so deep, that no human capacity could fathom or comprehend it."¹ Thus while he pleaded for the Catholics, he cunningly insinuated the cause of the Gentiles, which elsewhere he defends upon the same grounds. This oration, translated by Dudithius, is still extant in Latin; which Petavius, to supply the defect, has turned into Greek, but denies (though upon very weak reasons) that it was the same pro-

¹ Socr. lib. iv. c. 32, p. 250; Soz. c. 36, p. 695.

nounced by that orator upon this occasion; not to say, that the passages cited out of it by Socrates and Sozomen are exactly to be found in it: and it seems an argument he much delighted in, this being muchwhat the same both for words and matter, with that consular oration, which he delivered before Jovian, at his entrance upon the consulship. Little else is memorable in the time of these emperors. Valentinian died the 17th of November, ann. 375, whom Valens survived scarce three years. His reign in the general was more indulgent to pagans, and more severe to catholic Christians, than that of any Christian emperor, either before or since.

SECTION V.

The State of Religion under the reigns of Gratian, Theodosius the Great, and his Successors.

THE imperial brothers dying, the government rested in the hands of the two sons of Valentinian; Gratian, who had already reigned twelve, and Valentinian junior, who had already reigned three years. Gratian found work enough on all hands, the empire labouring under great incumbrances; and having little assistance from his brother, who was but young, was necessitated to take in a partner for the eastern empire, to defend those parts, at this time miserably infested by the Goths. The person he pitched on was beyond all exception, Theodosius, a Spaniard, who from the renown of his actions deservedly bears

the surname of Great. The Gentiles for the main had enjoyed the peaceable exercise of their religion for many years, having met with little or not interruption in it since the times of Constantius. And for the first two years of Theodosius, almost wholly taken up with wars, their temples were open, and they had the freedom of their old rites and ceremonies;¹ so that many began to look kindly upon their former superstitions, and others, meeting with such cruel usage in the reign of Valens, (when the persecution was carried on by a joint concurrence of Arians, Jews, and Gentiles,) took shelter in the old religion. Insomuch that the emperor found it necessary to restrain it by a law dated April 26, ann. 381; "that they who apostatized from Christianity to paganism should lose all power of making a will, (ever accounted the great birth-right and privilege of a Roman,) so that none of his friends or kindred should be the better for any estate which he left behind him."² About the end of the same year he forbad, under pain of proscription, all divinary sacrifices, either by day or night, or that any should approach the temples for any such purpose; adding, that "God is to be worshipped with pure and chaste prayers, not with execrable charms and conjurations."³

In the western parts Gratian kept somewhat a severe hand upon the pagans. He had given them a taste of what they might expect from him, when he refused the sacerdotal robe.⁴ The Roman emperors had all along borne the office and title of *ponti-*

¹ Vid. Zosim. lib. iv. p. 755.

² C. Th. lib. xvi. tit. viii. l. 1. vid. l. 2, 3, 4.

³ Ib. tit. x. l. 7, p. 266.

⁴ Zosim. lib. iv. p. 761.

fex maximus, or chief head of the pontifical college. Nay, none of the Christian emperors had hitherto scrupled to accept of it as an honorary title. But when the priests came to confer it upon Gratian, and offered him the pontifical robe, he plainly refused it, accounting it unlawful for him who was a Christian to wear that habit. The *stole* being delivered back to the priests, the chief of their company cried out, "If the emperor will not be styled *pontifex maximus*, it will not be long before Maximus be *pontifex*;" reflecting upon Maximus, who was then ready to invade the empire, and who shortly after treacherously murdered Gratian, and became a great friend and patron to the Gentiles. But saving the authority of Zosimus, who reports it, plain it is, both from some ancient inscriptions,¹ and from the testimony of Ausonius, Gratian's tutor, that this title was frequently conferred upon him, though perhaps it might be only by connivance, and not by the allowance of the emperor. But whatever intimations of dislike Gratian might make, the Gentiles were not discouraged from attempting something in the cause of their religion; for finding the public affairs embroiled, they began to take heart, at Rome especially, where a small part of the senate took upon themselves, in the name of the whole, to send an address to the emperor Valentinian, to beg favour in behalf of their religion, but were countermined and quashed by pope Damasus and St. Ambrose. And when a great famine soon after raged at Rome, it was said

¹ IMP. CÆS. GRATIANUS PIUS. FELIX. — PONT. MAX. reliqua vid. ap. Collectores Inscript. Unus in ore omnium Gratianus, potestate imperator — Pontifex religionis. Auson. Grat. Action. ad Imp. Gratian. p. 716.

to proceed from the displeasure of the gods, for the neglect and suppression of their religious rites, and that the punishment had a visible signature of the sin upon it, it being but just that they should want bread themselves, who had taken away from the priests and vestal virgins that little maintenance which the munificence of former times had bestowed upon them. The following year Symmachus was made provost of Rome, who immediately drew up a large address to the emperor, wherein with all the subtleties of wit and eloquence he pleaded the cause of his religion; but was happily encountered, answered, and baffled by the great and learned bishop of Milan.¹

The Gentiles in the east, notwithstanding the provision that had been made against it four years since, could not be taken off from tampering with *aruspices*, *augures*, magicians, and the rest of that tribe, which forced Theodosius to quicken the execution of those laws, making it capital for any, either upon any present emergency, or for the knowing any future event, to consult divinatory sacrifices. This rescript is directed to Cynegius, the prætorian præfect of the east, a person honourable both for his greatness and his piety, and employed by the emperor upon the most important services: to him he committed the care of reforming paganism in the eastern parts, especially in Egypt, whither he sent him, ann. 387, empowering him to shut up or demolish the Gentile temples, and extirpate their superstitions.² Upon his arrival at Alexandria, informers accused several of the senate, and brought both their persons and estates

¹ St. Ambrose.

² Sosim. lib. iv. p. 762.

in danger, upon pretence, it is like, that they were church-lands, revenues belonging to the pagan temples. Cynegius upon examination punished the informers, and freed their estates, whose judgment herein, upon their petition at court, the emperor himself confirmed.¹ But, alas! Cynegius left the main work imperfect, dying the next year, and was honourably buried at Constantinople. The work went on however, Theophilus bishop of Alexandria being zealous in it. 'The first attempt in it was thus:—There was at Alexandria an ancient and famous temple, dedicated to Serapis, described by Rufinus,² and affirmed by a geographer of that age, to have been a piece of exquisite artifice, and for the stateliness of the building, contrivance of the structure, and solemnity of the worship, to have carried away the glory from all other places, and to have been the almost only admirable spectacle in the whole world. This place Theophilus had begged of the emperor, designing to enlarge it into a church. Workmen were set on to clear the rubbish, who found many dark vaults and cellars, the secret receptacles of the pagans' most hidden rites and mysteries, out of which they brought many detestable and obscene images and utensils, which they publicly exposed to the scorn and derision of the people. This provoked the Gentiles beyond measure, who immediately gathered into a body, and though the far lesser number, yet being armed with rage and fury, broke in upon the Christians, wounded many of them, others they killed outright, and flying to the temple, en-

¹ C. Th. lib. x. tit. v. l. 19, p. 444.

² Descript. Orb. Gr. L. Gothofr. p. 18.

garrisoned themselves in it. Some Christians they had taken prisoners, and brought along with them, whom they forced to do sacrifice, or upon their refusal, put to death with the most exquisite and unheard-of tortures. The party was headed by one Olympus, a philosopher, who persuaded them not to desert the religion of their country, but if need was, valiantly to die for it. Several essays were made by the magistrates to bring them to reason, and make them give account of what they had done; but in vain. They despised all arguments and threatenings, whereupon the magistrates were forced to send and acquaint the emperor with what had happened; who, according to the sweetness of his nature, replied, that, "for the Christians that had been slain, they were happy, having been honoured with the crown of martyrdom; and for their murderers, he resolved to pardon them, in hopes that so much grace and clemency might become an effectual argument for their conversion: but that the temples, that had been the cause of all this, should be pulled down to the ground."¹ The letter was no sooner read, but the Christians entertained it with infinite acclamations, and the Gentiles dispersed and fled; which done, the temple itself was wholly demolished, in the walls whereof they found stones with hieroglyphics engraven upon them, resembling a cross, which the Christians interpreted of the honourable ensign of their religion; and were therein the more confirmed, when one skilled in those mystic letters, and lately turned Christian, assured them, those hieroglyphic

¹ Rufin. lib. ii. c. 22, p. 253, c. 23, p. 254; Socr. lib. v. c. 16, 17, p. 274; Sozom. lib. vii. c. 15, p. 723.

notes signified the life to come, and that others of those hieroglyphics did impart, that the temple of Serapis should have an end, when those notes were brought to light.¹ Within the circumference of this great building stood a chapel, supported by rich marble pillars, the walls overlaid with gold, and that covered as a shield with silver, and that defended by a cover of brass. In this stood the image of Serapis, so large, that with one hand he touched one side, and with the other the other side of the temple; with many quaint devices to abuse and delude the people. They had a tradition, that if any man did but touch this image, the earth would immediately open, the heavens be dissolved, and all things run into a chaos and confusion. A Christian soldier that stood by, animated thereto by Theophilus the bishop, was resolved to make the experiment. Taking a bill in his hand, he cleft him down the jaws, and finding no other dreadful effects ensue, but an army of mice, which fled out at the breach he had made, they cut him limb from limb; his head, feet, and the rest of his parts, were fastened to ropes, and, having been dragged up and down the streets, were burnt in several places of the city, the trunk or body of the image being reserved for a more solemn fire in the amphitheatre.² The utter ruin of this temple was, it seems, foretold by Antonius the philosopher, who assured his scholars, it would happen soon after his death;³ nay, we are told, that Olympus himself, while he kept his garrison in it, the very night before the emperor's order did arrive, it being a very

¹ Socr. et Sozom. loc. cit. Rufin. ib. c. 29, p. 258.

² Rufin. ibid. c. 23; Theod. lib. v. c. 22, p. 229.

³ Eunap. in vit. Ædes. p. 60, 63.

dark and tempestuous night, heard a voice in the temple, singing Hallelujah. He was not a little surprised, knowing the doors were fast shut, and all the company fast asleep, and seeing nobody, and plainly and distinctly hearing the voice, and the musical note, began to suspect what it portended, and departing privately out of the temple, took ship immediately, and went for Italy.¹

The mother-temple and patron-deity being thus rid out of the way, the rest followed with an easier hand, all the pagan temples and images in that city being overturned, the follies and impieties whereof were laid open before the people.² These ruined temples were generally turned into churches. But of that of Serapis was built on the one side a *martyrium*, wherein were reposed the remains of John the Baptist; on the other, a church called after the name of Arcadius the emperor.³ It happened upon this revolution, that the river Nile did not so plentifully overflow as it was wont to do. The people hereupon began to mutiny, and said, it was because they were not suffered, according to their ancient usage, to do sacrifice to the river. The governor was troubled, and fearing an open sedition, sent to acquaint the emperor, who returned this answer, "That it was better to preserve our duty to God, than to prefer the streams of Nile; or the plenty of the country before piety and religion. Let the river," said he, "never flow again, if it must be drawn out with charms, appeased with sacrifices, and its waters defiled with blood." But the controversy was soon ended, for

¹ Sczom. lib. vii. c. 15, p. 725.

² Rufin. ib. c. 24.

³ Ib. c. 27, et Soz. loc. cit

the river turned to its ancient course, and rising above the highest mark (which yet it seldom or never reached) put them into a quite contrary passion, fearing it would inevitably drown the country. And now the pagans changed their tune, and turned the scene into droll and ridicule; while others made a more grave and serious use of it, being thereby convinced of the vanity of their native superstition, and going over to Christianity. Indeed, throughout the whole progress of these affairs, incredible numbers were gained over to the Christian faith.¹

These proceedings alarmed the Gentiles in other parts, in Arabia, Palestine, Phœnicia, &c. where they stood upon their guard, and hired countrymen to come in and defend their temples. At Apamea stood a celebrated temple, dedicated to Jupiter, a vast and strongly-compacted structure. This Marcellus, bishop of that place, resolved to pull down, but could get no man to undertake it, so difficult a thing was it looked upon to demolish it.² And indeed so strongly were the pagan temples generally built, and the stones so fast cramped together with irons, that Libanius tells us, it cost the Christians no less pains to take them down, than it had done the Gentiles at first to build them up. At length comes a common labourer who ventured upon it, and undermining the foundation of the porticos that upheld it, put fire to them; but a demon appearing in a black dress, drove away the fire. After several attempts to no purpose, Marcellus took a pot of water, which he carried

¹ Sozom. lib. vii. c. 20, p. 736; Rufin. ib. c. 30, p. 259.

² Ib. c. 15, p. 725; Theod. lib. v. c. 21, p. 227.

into the church, and falling down before the holy table, heartily recommended the cause to God. Then he delivered the pot to Equitius his deacon, who went and threw it upon the fire, which, like so much oil, immediately blew up the flames, which spread without control, so that within a few hours, to the admiration of all that saw it, that strong and stately building lay level with the ground.¹ But the good bishop sped not so well in all his attempts; for going to do the like execution upon a great temple at Aulon, a city in that country, while his company were busy about the work, certain pagans came behind him, and catching him up, threw him into the fire, and burnt him to death; and when afterwards, upon the discovery of the murder, his sons would have prosecuted and revenged his death, the provincial synod would not suffer it, affirming, that both he and they, and all his friends, had cause rather to bless God, who had counted him worthy to die in so good a cause.²

This great and general waste, committed upon paganism in the eastern parts, made the Gentiles look about them; insomuch, that their great advocate Libanius, one in so great favour with the emperor, that he made him prætorian præfect, about this time published an oration *pro templis*, presented to Theodosius, wherein he boldly pleads the cause of their temples. However it did them little good, the process against them went on still, and the total ruin both of their temples and worship followed not long after; which so far enraged

¹ Orat. de templ. p. 23.

² Sozom. loc. supr. citat.

that party, that they made several attempts against the life of that great prince. Particularly Lucius, commander of the forces at Constantinople, came into the presence, and thrice endeavoured to draw out his sword, with an intent to dispatch the emperor, but espying on a sudden (as he thought) a woman of a mighty stature, and a terrible aspect standing behind and guarding the emperor, he departed in a great fright. The next that undertook it was the general of the forces in the east, who riding upon this errand, fell from his horse and broke his thigh, and died: being succeeded in the like conspiracy by Severian, Marsus, Illus, and many more. All which is confessed by Damascius the philosopher, a bitter enemy to Christians.¹

While these things were transacted in the east, zeal against paganism did not freeze in the western parts, where (if we may take measures of what was done in other places, from what we find done by St. Martin bishop of Tours) the Gentile temples, with all their pomp and retinue, went down the wind apace, and Christianity reaped a very plentiful harvest.² Theodosius was now in these parts, and having routed Maximus, came with his son Honorius to Rome, where he summoned the senate, whom in a set oration he persuaded to renounce their ancient errors, and to embrace the Christian faith, as the only religion that held forth the true method of pardon and expiation of sin, of purity and holiness of life. But the Gentile part of them were stiff and intractable, affirming, they would not prefer a senseless and unreasonable be-

¹ In Vit. Isidor. ap. Phot. Cod. ccxlii. col. 1072.

² Sulp. Sever. de vit. Martin. c. 10, &c. p. 196, et seqq.

lief before an old warranted way of worship, and that under the influences of this religion their city had prospered for near twelve hundred years together, and if they should now change it for any other, they knew not what fate might ensue upon it. Theodosius replied, that if they were thus obstinate, he knew no reason why he should be at the charge to maintain them in it, and would therefore withdraw the public allowances made out of the exchequer, nay, would abolish the things themselves which he utterly disliked, and the charges whereof he thought it much more reasonable should be translated to increase the pay and salary of the army.¹ The next year the senate at Rome petitioned the emperor Valentinian for the liberty of their religion, but were denied. Valentinian was then in Gaul, where he was murdered by the treachery of Arbogastes, general of the army, who thereupon advanced Eugenius, a mean schoolmaster, to be emperor, who was courted by the Gentiles on all hands, and flattered by their auguries and divinations into a confidence of success and stability in his usurpation. Upon which account he was prevailed with to grant them the famous altar of victory, so much, and so often contended for, and public allowances out of the exchequer to defray the charges of its solemnities. Theodosius was at this time at Constantinople, and resented the murder of Valentinian with that indignation that became a generous prince; and to let the Gentiles feel the effects of his displeasure, he forbade the whole exercise of their religion, temples, sacrifices, and all the particular train of their

¹ Zosim. lib. iv. p. 779.

rites and ceremonies. Which being the last law he made, that is extant of this nature, we shall here insert it:—

“Emperors, Theodosius, Arcadius, and Honorius, the august, to Rufinus the prætorian præfect.—Let no man, of what order, rank, or quality soever, whether he be honourable by birth, or eminent for dignity, or of mean birth, breeding, and fortune, let no man presume in any place, or in any city, either to offer, though but an harmless sacrifice to senseless images, or in any more secret way of expiation to worship his chimney-deity with fire, or his genius with wine, or his paternal household-gods with fumes and smoke, or pay adoration by setting up lights, burning frankincense, or hanging up garlands to them. And if any man shall dare to offer sacrifice, or to consult the reeking entrails, let it be lawful for any one to accuse him; and being found guilty, let him receive sentence accordingly, as in cases of high-treason, although it should appear, that he did not herein consult anything against the life of his prince, or ask any question at all about it: for it is enough to aggravate the greatness of his crime, that he would rescind the very laws of nature, search into things unlawful, disclose what is hidden and secret, attempt what is prohibited, enquire into another’s fate, and give hopes of his death or ruin. But if any man shall burn incense to a corruptible image, a piece of human artifice, and by a ridiculous example honour that which himself but just now framed, and shall by crowning the stock with garlands, or by erecting an altar of turfs, do what he can, though but in a mean way, yet a way highly injurious to religion, to pay worship and reverence

to a fond statue, let him, as a person guilty of the violation of religion, be punished with the loss of that house or field wherein he ministered to such pagan superstition. For it is our judgment, that all places wherein it shall appear that incense has been burnt, (provided they be legally proved to belong to the persons that did so) ought to be confiscated to our exchequer. But if it shall so happen, that the place where such person shall offer any sacrifice, be a public temple, or a consecrated chapel, or another man's house or ground, if it appear that he did it without the knowledge of the owner, let him be fined in the sum of twenty-five pounds of gold,¹ and let him that connives at, or conceals the fact, be fined the same sum with him who sacrifices. This, our pleasure is, shall be so observed by the judges, *defensors*, and *curiales* of every city, that the officers having discovered any such matter, shall immediately bring it before the judges, and they forthwith to see to the execution of the penalty. But if the *defensors* and *curiales* shall conceal any thing, either for favour, or through carelessness, they shall be punished by the judges; and if the judges, upon information of these officers, shall take no notice of it, but defer punishment, they themselves shall be fined thirty pounds of gold, and their officers be liable to the same penalty.

¹ The ordinary proportion of gold to silver being that of one to twelve, a pound of gold amounts to £36 of our English money. And much at the same rate it was at this time, for the elder Valentinian by a law dated ann. 367, (vid. lib. xii. C. Th. tit. vi. l. 13,) appointed, that every pound of gold should be in value 72 *solidi*; every *solidus aureus* of that, as generally of all succeeding emperors, weighing four scruples, or 10s. According to which account, twenty-five pounds of gold amounts to the sum of £900.

Given at Constantinople Nov. the 8th. Arcadius the second time, and Rufinus being consuls:”¹ that is, ann. 392.

This law struck down paganism root and branch, so that it never recovered itself into any tolerable degree of life and power. They were now restrained not only from the grosser kinds of sacrifice, but from what had hitherto been permitted, as Libanius tells us, the very burning incense, and perfuming their temples and altars.² Theodosius lived about two years after this, and having routed and killed the tyrant Eugenius near Aquileia, died at Milan February the 24th, ann. 395, leaving the empire to his two sons, Arcadius and Honorius, the former at seventeen years of age succeeding in the east, the other at eleven in the west.

Together with the death of this great prince I might have shut up this *seculum*, and indeed put a period to the whole Discourse, but that upon his death the Gentiles seem to have resumed new hopes; whom therefore Arcadius, about six months after, debarred all use of temples or sacrifices, in any place, or at any time whatsoever, reviving all former penalties made against them, and making it capital for the officers to neglect their duties in this matter.³ And now temples, the nests of idolatry and superstition, went down apace in all places of the east, the materials whereof Arcadius the year following gave towards repairing the highways, bridges, aqueducts, and public walls and buildings. In the west Honorius forbad all sacrifices, but commanded all ornaments of public buildings, such as statues

¹ C. Th. lib. xvi. tit. x. l. 12, p. 273.

² De Templ. p. 10.

³ C. Th. ibid. l. xiii.

and images, to be preserved, and this, all laws made, or pretended to be made, to the contrary in any wise notwithstanding.¹ About this time the council of Carthage petitioned Honorius, that all remainders of idolatry in Africa might be utterly abolished; that the temples that stood in the fields, and in obscure private corners, where they could not be pretended to be for any public ornament, might be pulled down; that the Gentile feasts and entertainments, attended with profane and scandalous dancings, and whereat they sometimes constrained Christians to be present, and that upon the solemnities of the martyrs, might be prohibited; that their sports and shows, exhibited in their theatres, might not be on the Lord's-day, or on any Christian solemnity, and that no Christian might be compelled to be there.² In answer hereunto, the emperor enacted, by orders sent to Apollodorus, proconsul of Africa, that as for temples, if not used to any unlawful purposes, they should stand entire; but if any man should do sacrifice in them, he should be punished according to law; that all idols that were abused to vain and foolish superstition, should by public officers be taken down;³ that as to their public feasts and meetings, the law had already forbidden all profane rites, but that their common meetings, their shows and entertainments of the people, should, according to ancient custom, be still suffered; provided it was done without sacrifices, or any damnable superstition, as the words of the law are.⁴

¹ C. Th. l. xv.

² Cod. Canon. Eccles. Afric. Can. lviii. lx. lxi. Conc. tit. ii. col. 1085.

³ Ubi supr. l. 18.

⁴ Ibid. l. 17.

Here the fourth century expires, beyond which as there is no great occasion, so I shall not search far. Ann. 401, Honourius granted the ground and buildings heretofore belonging to temples, and which served to no more public use or ornament of the city, to the *curiales* and corporations, under several clauses and conditions.¹ Seven years after he ordered, that the corn usually paid to temples, should be taken away, and be bestowed upon the soldiery; that if any images were left in temples, groves, or any other places, they should be removed; that the temples themselves, whether in cities, villages, or in the open fields, be converted to public uses; those that stood within the emperor's patrimony, should be put to some convenient use; those within the possessions of private persons, to be destroyed; altars to be everywhere demolished; all pagan feasts, sports, and solemnities to be put down: that the bishops of the several places should have power to see this done, and a severe fine is set upon the head of all judges and officers that neglected the execution of it;² and that none that were enemies to the Catholic church should bear arms in any of the palatine offices, nor be nearly employed under the prince, who refused to be of the same faith and religion with him:³ a law that equally struck at heathens and heretics. The next year he banished all *haruspices*, magicians, &c. out of Rome, and all other cities, unless they would bring the books of their curious arts, and burn them in the presence of the bishop of that

¹ Ubi supr. lib. xv. tit. i. l. 41.

² Ib. lib. xvi. tit. x. l. 19.

³ Ib. tit. v. l. 42. Vid. Zosim. lib. v. p. 820.

place, and engage never to return to their old errors again.¹

Theodosius the younger, who succeeded his father in the eastern empire, ann. 416, made Gentiles incapable of bearing arms, or being admitted to places of honour and authority;² and seven years after he speaks of Pagans, as if there were none left; (*pagani qui supersunt, quanquam jam nullos esse credamus, &c.*) and that if there were, the former laws should be revived against them.³ Ann. 426, he once more forbad all pagan oblations, sacrifices, with all their rites and mysteries, and if any of their temples, chapels, or consecrated places were yet standing, the magistrate should take care to strip them of their superstitious use, and expiate them by placing a cross, the venerable ensign of the Christian religion in them; and that if any were proved guilty of having thus sacrificed, before a competent judge, he should forfeit his life.⁴ This it seems was a parting blow, nor do we meet with any thing further concerning these matters in the imperial laws of these times, nor indeed is any thing considerable to be found in history. Partly by the clear light and conviction of the Christian doctrine, everywhere plainly and constantly preached, partly by the force and severity of the laws of the empire, heathenism dwindled into nothing, and that little that was left crept into holes and corners to hide its head, according to the prediction long since of the prophet Isaiah, that ‘the idols should utterly be abolished, and should go into the holes of the

¹ Ubi supr. lib. ix. tit. xvi. l. 12.

² Ib. lib. xvi. tit. x. l. 21.

³ Ib. l. 22, 23.

⁴ Ib. l. 25.

rocks, and into the caves of the earth, and that men should cast their idols of silver and of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats.'¹ fit company for such blind idolaters.

Thus we have seen how paganism ebbed and flowed in the reigns of the several princes, after Christianity became the religion of the empire, until it was quite beaten out of doors. The effects of which whole account, I shall sum up in the words of Theodoret: "Constantine the Great," says he, "a prince worthy of all honourable commendation, and who first adorned the imperial throne with piety, when he saw the world running mad after idolatry, expressly forbad that any should sacrifice to demons. Their temples indeed he did not pull down, but only commanded them to be shut up. His sons came after, and trod in their father's steps; but Julian revived paganism, and added new fuel to old errors and impieties. To him succeeded Jovian, who again prohibited the worship of idols. The elder Valentinian governed the west, according to the same rules and measures; while Valens in the east permitted indeed all others to worship and adore what they had a mind to, but constantly persecuted those (and those only) who held to the catholic and apostolic doctrine. All this time the altars smoked with incense, and the Gentiles undisturbedly brought their sacrifices and drink-offerings to their images, and kept their public feasts in the open market-place. The priests and votaries of Bacchus, clad in goats' skins, ran up and down, tearing dogs in pieces, howling and making dread-

¹ Is. ii. 20.

ful noises, and behaving themselves in the most wild and frantic manner, with the rest of those mad ceremonies, wherewith they were wont to celebrate the festival of their deity. All which, the most religious prince Theodosius, when he came to the empire, did utterly extirpate and abolish, and drove them into an eternal silence.”¹

¹ Lib. v. c. 21, p. 226.

LIVES
OF
ST. JUSTIN THE MARTYR,
AND
ST. CYPRIAN.

NOTE.

As a further illustration of the characters and sufferings of the primitive professors of Christianity, it has been judged desirable to close the present volume with a selection from the learned Author's elaborate work entitled "Apostolici, or History of the Lives, &c. of those who were contemporary with, or immediately succeeded the Apostles, as also of the most eminent Fathers, for the first three hundred Years."

ST. JUSTIN THE MARTYR.

JUSTIN the Martyr was one, as of the most learned, so of the most early writers of the eastern church, not long after the apostles, as Eusebius says of him; ¹ near to them χρόνῳ καὶ ἀρετῇ, says Methodius, bishop of Tyre, both in time and virtue. ² And near indeed, if we strictly understand what he says of himself, that he was a disciple of the apostles; ³ which surely is meant either of the apostles at large, as comprehending their immediate successors, or probably not of the persons, but doctrine and writings of the apostles, by which he was instructed in the knowledge of Christianity. He was born at Neapolis; a noted city of Palestine, within the province of Samaria, anciently called Sichem. ⁴ His father was Priscus, the son of Bacchius, a Gentile, and (as Scaliger probably thinks ⁵) one of those Greeks which were in that colony transplanted

¹ Hist. Eccl. ii. c. 13, p. 50.

² Ap. Phot. Cod. ccxxxiv. col. 921.

³ Epist. ad Diognet. p. 501. Ἀποστόλων γινόμενος μαθητῆς γίνομαι διδάσκαλος ἔθνων.

⁴ Apol. ii. p. 53.

⁵ Animadv. ad Eus. Chron. N. MMCLVII. 219.

thither, who took care together with religion to have him educated in all the learning and philosophy of the Gentile world. And indeed how great and exact a master he was in all their arts and learning, how thoroughly he had digested the best and most useful notions which their institutions of philosophy could afford, his writings at this day are an abundant evidence.

In his younger years, and, as is probable, before his conversion to Christianity, he travelled into foreign parts for the accomplishment of his studies, and particularly into Egypt, the staple place of all the more mysterious and recondite parts of learning and religion, and therefore constantly visited by all the more grave and sage philosophers among the heathens. Among the several sects of philosophers, after he had run through and surveyed all the forms, he pitched his tent among the Platonists,¹ whose notions were most agreeable to the natural sentiments of his mind, and which no doubt particularly disposed him for the entertainment of Christianity; himself telling us, that the principles of that philosophy, though not in all things alike, were not yet alien or contrary to the doctrines of the Christian faith.² But alas, he found no satisfaction to his mind either in this, or any other, till he arrived at a full persuasion of the truth and divinity of that religion which was so much despised by the wise and the learned, so much opposed and trampled on by the grandees and powers of the world. Whereof, and of the manner of his conversion to the Christian religion, he has given us a very large and punctual account in his discourse with Trypho.

¹ Apol. i. (revera ii.) p. 50.

² Ib. p. 51.

I know this account is suspected by some to be only a *prosopopæia*, to represent the grounds of his becoming a Christian after the Platonic mode, by way of dialogue, a way familiar with the philosophers of that sect. But however it may be granted that some few circumstances might be added to make up the decorum of the conference, yet I see no reason (nor is any thing offered to the contrary besides a bare conjecture) to question the foundation of the story, whereof the sum is briefly this :—

Being from his youth acted by an inquisitive philosophic genius to make researches and enquiries after truth, he first betook himself to the Stoics, but not satisfied with his master, he left him, and went to a Peripatetic tutor, whose sordid covetousness soon made him conclude that truth could not dwell with him. Accordingly he turned himself over to a Pythagorean, who requiring the preparatory knowledge of music, astronomy, and geometry, him he quickly deserted, and last of all delivered himself over to the institution of an eminent Platonist, lately come to reside at Neapolis; with whose intellectual notions he was greatly taken, and resolved for some time to give up himself to solitude and contemplation. Walking out therefore into a solitary place by the sea-side, there met him a grave ancient man, of a venerable aspect, who fell into discourse with him. The dispute between them was concerning the excellency of philosophy in general, and of Platonism in particular; which Justin asserted to be the only true way to happiness, and of knowing and seeing God. This the grave person refutes at large, and at last comes to show him, who were the most likely persons to set him in

the right way. He tells him that there were, long before his reputed philosophers, certain blessed and holy men, lovers of God, and divinely inspired, called prophets, who foretold things which have since come to pass; who alone understood the truth, and undesignedly declared it to the world, whose books yet extant would instruct a man in what most became a philosopher to know; the accomplishment of whose predictions did sufficiently attest their faithfulness and integrity, and the mighty miracles which they wrought set the truth of what they said beyond all exception; that they magnified God the great Creator of the world, and published his Son Christ to the world: concluding his discourse with this advice, "But as for thyself, above all things pray that the gates of light may be set open to thee; for these are not things discerned and understood by all, unless God and Christ grant to a man the knowledge of them." Which discourse being ended, he immediately departed from him.¹

The wise discourse of this venerable man made a deep impression upon the martyr's mind, kindled in his soul a divine flame, and begot in him a sincere love of the prophets, and those excellent men that were friends to Christ: and now he began seriously to enquire into, and examine the Christian religion, which he confesses he found *μόνην φιλοσοφίαν ἀσφαλῆ τε καὶ συμφερόν*, the only certain and profitable philosophy, and which he could not but commend as containing a certain majesty and dread in it, and admirably adapted to terrify and persuade those who were out of the right way, and to

¹ Dial. cum Tryph. p. 218, &c.

beget the sweetest serenity and peace in the minds of those who are conversant in it. Nor was it the least inducement to turn the scale with him, when he beheld the innocency of the Christians' lives, and the constancy of their death, with what fearless and undaunted resolutions they courted torments, and encountered death in its blackest shape. This very account he gives of it to the Roman emperor. "For my own part," says he, "being yet detained under the Platonic institutions, when I heard the Christians traduced and reproached, and yet saw them fearlessly rushing upon death, and venturing upon all those things that are accounted most dreadful and amazing to human nature, I concluded with myself, it was impossible that those men should wallow in vice, and be carried away with the love of lust and pleasure. For what man that is a slave to pleasure and intemperance, can cheerfully bid death welcome, which he knows must put a period to all his pleasures and delights; and would not rather by all means endeavour to prolong his life as much as is possible, and to delude his adversaries, and conceal himself from the notice of the magistrate, rather than voluntarily betray and offer himself to a present execution?"¹ And certainly the Martyr's reasonings were unanswerable; seeing there could not be a more effectual proof of their innocency, than their laying down their lives to attest it. Zeno was wont to say, he had rather see one Indian burnt alive, than hear a hundred arguments about enduring labour and suffering. Whence Clemens Alexandrinus

¹ Apol. I. p. 50.

infers the great advantages of Christianity, wherein there were daily fountains of martyrs springing up, who before their eyes were roasted, tormented, and beheaded, every day, whom regard to the law of their Master had taught and obliged, τὸ ἐνλαβὲς δι' αἱμάτων ἐνδείκνυσθαι, to demonstrate the truth and excellency of their religion, by sealing it with their blood.¹

We cannot exactly fix the date of his conversion, yet may we, I think, make a very near conjecture. Eusebius tells us, that at the time when Adrian consecrated Antinous, Justin did yet adhere to the studies and religion of the Greeks.² Now for this we are to know that Adrian coming into Egypt, lost there his beloved Antinous, whose death he so resented, that he advanced him into the reputation of a deity. It is very evident that Adrian had not been in Egypt, till about the time of Servianus or Severianus's being consul, (as appears from that emperor's letters to him,³) whose consulship fell in with ann. Chr. 132, Traj. 16. So that this of Antinous must be done either that, or, at most, the foregoing year; and accordingly about this time (as Eusebius intimates) Justin deserted the Greeks, and came over to the Christians. Whence, in his first Apology presented not many years after to Antoninus Pius, Adrian's successor, he speaks of Antinous τῷ τῶν γεγεννημένῳ, who very lately lived and was consecrated, and of the Jewish war, headed by Barchochab, as but lately passed, which we

¹ Stromat. lib. ii. p. 414.

² Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. c. 8, p. 122.

³ Ext. ap. Vopisc. in vit. Saturn. p. 959.

know was concurrent with the death and apotheosis of Antinous.¹

The wiser and more considerate part of the Gentiles were not a little troubled at the loss of so useful and eminent a person, and wondered what should cause so sudden a change. For whose satisfaction and conversion, as well as his own vindication, he thought good particularly to write a discourse to them, in the very first words whereof he thus bespeaks them: "Think not, O ye Greeks, that I have rashly, and without any judgment or deliberation, departed from the rites of your religion. For I could find nothing in it really sacred, and worthy of the divine acceptance. The matters among you, as your poets have ordered them, are monuments of nothing but madness and intemperance: and a man can no sooner apply himself even to the most learned among you for instruction, but he shall be entangled in a thousand difficulties, and become the most confused man in the world." And then proceeds with a great deal of wit and eloquence to expose the folly and absurdness of the main foundations of the pagan creed, concluding his address with these exhortations: "Come hither, O ye Greeks, and partake of a most incomparable wisdom, and be instructed in a divine religion, and acquaint yourselves with an immortal King. Become as I am, for I sometime was as you are." These are the arguments that prevailed with me, this the efficacy and divinity of the doctrine, which like a skilful charm expels all corrupt and poisonous affections out of the soul, and banishes that lust that is the fountain of all evil,

¹ Apol. II. (revera 1,) p. 72.

whence enmities, strifes, envy, emulations, anger, and such like mischievous passions do proceed: which being once driven out, the soul presently enjoys a pleasant calmness and tranquillity. And being delivered from that yoke of evils, that before lay upon its neck, it aspires and mounts up to its Creator; it being but suitable that it should return to that place, from whence it borrowed its original."¹

But though he laid aside his former profession, he still retained his ancient garb, as Eusebius,² and after him St. Jerome reports,³ preaching and defending the Christian religion under his old philosophic habit, which was the *pallium* or cloak, the usual badge of the Greek philosophers, (different from that which was worn by the ordinary Greeks,) and which those Christians still kept to, who before their conversion had been professed philosophers. This custom continued long in the Christian church, that those who did ἀκριβῶς χριστιανίζειν, (as Socrates speaks) enter upon an *ascetic* course of life, and a more severe profession of religion, always wore the philosopher's cloak; and he tells us of Sylvanus the rhetorician, that when he became Christian, and professed this *ascetic* life, he was the first that laid aside the cloak, and contrary to custom put on the common garb.⁴

He came to Rome (upon what occasion is uncertain) probably about the beginning of Antoninus Pius's reign, where he fixed his habitation, dwelling, as appears from the acts of his martyrdom, about the Timothine Baths, which were upon the

¹ Orat. ad Græc. p. 37, &c.

² Lib. iv. c. 11, p. 125.

³ De script. in Justin.

⁴ Hist. Eccl. lib. vii. c. 37.

Viminal Mount. He here strenuously employed himself to defend and promote the cause of Christianity, and particularly to confute and beat down the heresies that then mainly infested and disturbed the church, writing a book against all sorts of heresies, but more especially opposed himself to Marcion, who was the son of a bishop, born in Pontus, and for his deflouring a virgin had been cast out of the church, whereupon he fled to Rome, where he broached many damnable errors. Among the rest, he taught that there were two gods, one the creator of the world, whom he made to be the god of the Old Testament, and the author of evil; the other a more sovereign and supreme being, creator of more excellent things, the father of Christ, whom he sent into the world to dissolve the law and the prophets, and to destroy the works of the other deity, whom he styled the God of the Jews.¹ With him Justin encountered both by word and writing, particularly publishing a book which he had composed against him and his pernicious principles.

About the year of our Lord 160, the Christians seem to have been more severely dealt with; for though Antoninus the emperor was a mild and excellent prince, and who put out no edicts, that we know of, to the prejudice of Christianity, yet the Christians being generally traduced and defamed as a wicked and barbarous generation, had a hard hand borne upon them in all places, and were persecuted by virtue of the particular edicts of former emperors, and the general standing laws of the Roman empire. To vindicate them from the asper-

¹ Apol. II. p. 70.

sions cast upon them, and to mitigate the severities used towards them, Justin about this time published his first Apology, (for though in all editions it be set in the second place, it was unquestionably the first,) presenting it (as appears from the inscription) to Antoninus Pius the emperor, and to his two sons Verus and Lucius, to the senate, and by them to the whole people of Rome, wherein with great strength and evidence of reason he defends the Christians from the common objections of their enemies, proves the divinity of the Christian faith, and shows how unjust and unreasonable it was to proceed against them without due conviction and form of law, acquaints them with the innocent rites and usages of the Christian assemblies, and lastly puts the emperor in mind of the course which Adrian's predecessor had taken in this matter; who had commanded that Christians should not be needlessly and unjustly vexed, but that their cause should be traversed and determined in open judicatures; annexing to his Apology a copy of the rescript which Adrian had sent to Minucius Fundanus to that purpose.¹

His address wanted not it seems its desired success.² For the emperor, in his own nature of a merciful and generous disposition, being moved partly by this Apology, partly by the notices he had received from other parts of the empire, gave order that Christians henceforward should be treated in more gentle and regular ways, as appears among others by his letter to the commonalty of Asia, yet extant, which I shall here insert.

¹ Vid. Euseb. lib. iv. c. 18, p. 139.

² Oros. Hist. lib. vii. c. 14, fol. 305.

“Emperor Cæsar Titus, Ælius Adrian Antoninus, Augustus, Pius, high-priest, the fifteenth time tribune, thrice consul, father of the country, to the common assembly of Asia, greeting. I am very well assured, that the gods themselves will take care, that this kind of men shall not escape, it being much more their concern, than it can be yours, to punish those that refuse to worship them; whom you do but the stronglier confirm in their own sentiments and opinions, while you vex and oppress them, accuse them for atheists, and charge other things upon them, which you are not able to make good: nor can a more acceptable kindness be done them, than that being accused they may seem to choose to die rather than live, for the sake of that God whom they worship. By which means they get the better, being ready to lay down their lives, rather than be persuaded to comply with your commands. As for the earthquakes that have been, or that do yet happen, it may not be amiss to advertise you, whose minds are ready to despond under any such accidents, to compare your case with theirs. They at such a time are much more secure and confident in their God, whereas you seeming to disown God all the while, neglect both the rites of other gods, and the religion of that immortal Deity, nay, banish and persecute to death the Christians that worship him. Concerning these men several governors of provinces have heretofore written to my father of sacred memory: to whom he returned this answer, that they should be no way molested, unless it appeared that they attempted something against the state of the Roman empire. Yea, and I myself have received many notices of this nature, to which I answered

according to the tenor of my father's constitution. After all which, if any shall still go on to create them trouble merely because they are Christians, let him that is indicted be discharged, although it appear that he be a Christian, and let the informer himself undergo the punishment.

“Published at Ephesus in the place of the common assembly of Asia.”

I am not ignorant that some learned men would have this imperial edict to be the decree of Marcus Aurelius, son of Antoninus. Indeed in the inscription of it, as it is extant in Eusebius, it is Marcus Aurelius Antoninus: but then nothing can be more evident, than that that part of it is corrupted, as is plain, both because Eusebius himself a few lines before expressly ascribes it to Antoninus Pius, and because in the original inscription in Justin's own Apology (from whence Eusebius transcribed his) it is Titus Ælius Antoninus Pius. And besides that nothing else of moment is offered to make good the conjecture, the whole consent of antiquity, and the tenor of the epistle itself clearly adjudging it to the elder Antoninus; and Melito bishop of Sardis, who presented an Apology to his son and successor, tells him of the letters which his father at the time when he was his partner in the empire, wrote to the cities that they should not raise any new troubles against the Christians.²

Not long after his first Apology, Justin seems to have revisited the eastern parts: for besides what

¹ Ad. J. Mart. ad calc. Apol. II. p. 100, et ap Euseb. lib. iv. c. 13, p. 126, et Chron. Alex. ann. 2, Olymp. ccxxxvii. Ind. vii. p. 603.

² Ap. Euseb. lib. iv. c. 26, p. 148; Vid. c. 13, p. 127.

he says in the acts of his martyrdom, that he was twice at Rome, Eusebius expressly affirms, that he was at Ephesus, where he had his discourse with Trypho,¹ which it is plain was after the presenting his first Apology to the emperor.² And it is no ways improbable but that he went to Ephesus in company with those who carried the emperor's edict to the common-council of Asia, then assembled in that city, where he fell into acquaintance with Trypho the Jew, a man of great note and eminency, who had fled his country in the late war, wherein Barchochab had excited and headed the Jews to a rebellion against the Romans; since which time he had lived in Greece, and especially at Corinth, and had mightily improved himself by converse with the philosophers of those countries. With him Justin enters the lists in a two day's dispute, the account whereof he has given us in his dialogue with that subtle man, wherein he so admirably defends and makes good the truth of the Christian religion, cuts the very sinews of the Jewish cause, dissolves all their pleas and pretences against Christianity, and discovers their implacable spite and malice.³ The issue of the conference was, that the Jew acknowledged himself highly pleased with his discourse, professing he found more in it, than he thought could have been expected from it, wishing he might enjoy it oftener, as what would greatly conduce to the true understanding of the Scripture, and begging his friendship in what part of the world soever he was.

In the conclusion of this discourse with Trypho, he tells us, he was ready to set sail, and depart

¹ Lib. iv. c. 17, p. 140.

² Vid. Dialog. cum Tryph. p. 349.

³ Ib. p. 217.

from Ephesus, but whether in order to his return to Rome, or some other place, is not known. That he returned thither at last, is unquestionable, the thing being evident, though the time uncertain; whether it was while Antoninus was yet alive, or in the beginning of his successor's reign, I will not venture to determine. At his coming he had among others, frequent contests with Crescens the philosopher, a man of some note at that time in Rome. He was a cynic, and according to the genius of that sect, proud and conceited, surly and ill-natured, a philosopher in appearance, but a notorious slave to all vice and wickedness.¹ This was his adversary, *Φιλόψοφος ἢ Φιλόσοφος*, as he calls him,² a lover of popular applause, not of true wisdom and philosophy, and who by all the base arts of insinuation endeavoured to traduce the Christians, and to represent their religion under the most infamous character. But in all his disputes the martyr found him wretchedly ignorant of the affairs of Christians, and strongly biassed by malice and envy, which he offered to make good (if it might be admitted) in a public disputation with him before the emperor and the senate: which free and impartial censure did but more exasperate the man, the sooner to hasten and promote his ruin.

In the meantime Justin presented his second Apology to M. Antoninus (his colleague L. Verus being then, probably, absent from the city) and the senate; for that it was not addressed to the senate alone, is evident from several passages in

¹ Vid. Hieron. de Script. in Justin.

² Apol. I. (verius ii.) p. 46.

the Apology itself. There are, that will have this as well as the former to have been presented to Antoninus Pius,] but certainly without any just ground of evidence, besides that Eusebius and the ancients expressly ascribe it to Marcus Aurelius, his son and successor. And were the inscription and beginning of it, which are now wanting, extant, they would quickly determine and resolve the doubt. The occasion of it was this. A woman at Rome had together with her husband lived in all manner of wantonness and debauchery, but being converted to Christianity, she sought by all arguments and persuasions to reclaim him from his loose and vicious course. But the man was obstinate, and deaf to all reason and importunity: however, by the advice of her friends, she still continued with him, hoping in time she might reduce him; till finding him to grow intolerable, she procured a bill of divorce from him. The man was so far from being cured, that he was more enraged by his wife's departure, and accused her to the emperor for being a Christian; she also put in her petition, to obtain leave to answer for herself. Whereupon he deserted the prosecution of his wife, and fell upon one Ptolomeus, by whom she had been converted to the Christian faith, whom he procured to be cast into prison, and there a long time tortured, merely upon his confessing himself a Christian. At last being brought before Urbicius, præfect of the city, he was condemned to death. Whereat Lucius, a Christian that stood by, could not forbear to tell the judge, it was very hard that an innocent and virtuous man, charged with no crime, should be adjudged to die, merely for bearing the name of a Christian,

a thing no way creditable to the government of such emperors as they had, and of the august senate at Rome. Which he had no sooner said, but he was, together with a third person, sentenced to the same fate. The severity of these proceedings awakened Justin's solicitude and care for the rest of his brethren, who immediately drew up an Apology for them, wherein he lays down a true and naked relation of the case, complains of the injustice and cruelty of such procedures, to punish men merely for the name of Christians, without ever accusing them of any material crimes, answers the objections usually urged against them, and desires no more favour, than that what determination soever they should make of it, his Apology might be put before it, that so the whole world might judge of them, when they had been once truly acquainted with their case.¹

The martyr's activity and zeal in the cause of Christianity did but set the keener edge upon Crescens's malice and rage against him. The philosopher could not confute him by force of argument, and therefore resolved to attack him with clancular and ignoble arts; and could think of no surer way to oppress him, than by engaging the secular powers against him. Marcus Antoninus the emperor was a great philosopher, but withal zealous of pagan rites to the highest degree of superstition; he had from his youth been educated in the Salian College, all the offices whereof he had gone through in his own person, affecting an imitation of Numa Pompilius, the first master of religious ceremonies among the Romans, from

¹ Apol. I. p. 41.

whom he pretended to derive his pedigree and original: ¹ may so very strict in his way of religion (says Dion) that even upon the *dies nefasti*, the unlucky and inauspicious days, when all public sacrifices were prohibited, he would privately offer sacrifices at home. ² What apprehensions he had of the Christians is evident from hence, that he ascribes their ready and resolute undergoing death, not to a judicious and deliberate consideration, but to a ψιλὴ παράταξις, a mere stubbornness and obstinacy; ³ which he being so eminent and professed a stoic, had of all men in the world the least reason to charge them with. With him it was no hard matter for Crescens to insinuate himself, and to procure his particular disfavour towards Justin, a man so able, and so active to promote the interest of the Christian religion. Indeed Justin himself had publicly told the emperor what he expected should be his own fate, that he looked that Crescens or some of their titular philosophers, should lay snares to undermine, torment, or crucify him. ⁴ Nor was he at all mistaken, the envious man procuring him to be cast in prison, where if the Greeks say true, he was exercised with many preparatory tortures in order to his martyrdom. ⁵ Eusebius gives us no particular account of his death, but the Acts of his martyrdom are still extant, ⁶ and (as there is reason to believe) genuine and uncorrupt, the shortness of them being not

¹ J. Capitol. in Vit. M. Anton. c. 4, p. 156.

² Excerpt. Dion. p. 721.

³ Τῶν εἰς ἑαυτ' οὐ, lib. xi. Sect. iii. p. 106.

⁴ Apolog. i. p. 46.

⁵ Men. Græc. τῆ ἀ, τῆ β 181.

⁶ Apud. Sar. ad xii. Jun. p. 382; et Baron. ad Ann. 165, n. 2, et. seq.

the least argument that they are the sincere transcripts of the primitive records, and that they have for the main, escaped the interpolations of later ages, which most others have been obnoxious to. I know it is doubted by one, whether these Acts contain the martyrdom of ours, or another Justin:¹ but whoever considers the particulars of them, most agreeable to our Justin, and especially their fixing his death under the prefecture of Rusticus, which Epiphanius expressly affirms of our St. Justin, will see little reason to question, whether they belong to him. In them we have this following account.

Justin and six of his companions having been apprehended, were brought before Rusticus, prefect of the city. This Rusticus was Q. Junius Rusticus, a man famous both for court and camp, a wise statesman, and great philosopher, peculiarly addicted to the sect of the Stoics.² The martyr told him, that no man could be justly found fault with, or condemned, that obeyed the commands of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Then the governor enquired in what kind of learning and discipline he had been brought up: he told him, that he had endeavoured to understand all kinds of discipline, and tried all methods of learning, but had finally taken up his rest in the Christian discipline, how little soever it was esteemed by those who were led by error and false opinions. "Wretch that thou art, (said the governor,) art thou then taken with that discipline?" "I am," replied the Martyr, "for with right doctrine do I follow the Christians." And

¹ Sur. loc. citat.

² J. Capit. ubi. supr. c. 9, p. 154.

when asked what that doctrine was, he answered, "The right doctrine which we Christians piously profess, is this: we believe the one only God to be the creator of all things visible and invisible, and confess our Lord Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, foretold by the prophets of old, and who shall hereafter come to be the Judge of mankind, a Saviour, Preacher, and Master to all those who are duly instructed by him; that as for himself, he thought himself too mean to be able to say any thing becoming his infinite Deity; that this was the business of the prophets, who had many ages before foretold the coming of this Son of God into the world."

The præfect next inquired where the Christians were wont to assemble; and being told, that the God of the Christians was not confined to a particular place, he asked in what place Justin was wont to instruct his disciples, who gave him an account of the place where he dwelt, and told him that there he preached the Christian doctrine to all that resorted to him. Then having severally examined his companions, he again addressed himself to Justin in this manner. "Hear, thou that art noted for thy eloquence, and thinkest thou art in the truth; if I cause thee to be scourged from head to foot, thinkest thou thou shalt go to heaven?" He answered, that although he should suffer what the other had threatened, yet he hoped he should enjoy the portion of all true Christians. And when again asked, whether he thought he should go to heaven, and receive a reward; he replied, that he did not think it only, but knew, and was so certain of it, that there was no cause to doubt it. The governor seeing it was to no purpose to argue, came

closer to the matter in hand, and bade them go together, and unanimously sacrifice to the gods. "No man," replied the Martyr, "that is in his right mind, will desert true religion to fall into error and impiety." And when threatened that unless they complied, they should be tormented without mercy, "There is nothing," saith Justin, "which we more earnestly desire, than to endure torments for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved. For this is that which will promote our happiness, and procure us confidence before that dreadful tribunal of our Lord and Saviour, before which by the divine appointment, the whole world must appear." To which the rest assented, adding, "Dispatch quickly what thou hast a mind to, for we are Christians, and cannot sacrifice to idols." Whereupon the governor pronounced this sentence: "They who refuse to do sacrifice to the gods, and to obey the imperial edicts, let them be first scourged, and then beheaded according to the laws." The holy martyrs rejoiced and blessed God for the sentence passed upon them, and being led back to prison, were accordingly whipped, and afterwards beheaded. The Greeks in their rituals, though very briefly, give the same account, only they differ in the manner of the martyr's death, which they tell us was by a draught of poison, while the rest of his companions lost their heads.¹ Though there are that by that fatal potion understand no more than the poisonous malice and envy of Crescens the philosopher, by which Justin's death was procured. And in-

¹ Ἰουστινὸν κώνειον ἤρην εκ βίαι.

Ὡς εἶδε πρῶτον τοὺς πιεῖν ἄιδωκότας.

Πρώτη Ἰενίβ Ἰουστινὸν ἔλλεβορίζει.

Men. Græcor. Τῆ ἀ. τῆ ΙΒν.

deed, if literally taken, the account of the Greeks in that place will not be very consistent with itself. Their dead bodies the Christians took up and decently interred. This was done, as Baronius conjectures, ann. Chr. 165, with whom seems to concur the Alexandrine Chronicle, which says, that Justin having presented his second Apology to the emperor, was not long after crowned with martyrdom.¹ This is all the certainty that can be recovered concerning the time of his death, the date of it not being consigned by any other ancient writer.

Thus have we traced the Martyr through the several stages of his life, and brought him to his last fatal period. And now let us view him a little nearer. He was a man of a pious mind, and a very virtuous life; tenderly sensible of the honour of God, and the great interests of religion. He was not elated, nor valued himself upon the account of his great abilities, but upon every occasion entirely resolved the glory of all into the divine grace and goodness. He had a true love to all men, and a mighty concern for the good of souls, whose happiness he continually prayed for and promoted, yea, that of their fiercest enemies. From none did he and his religion receive more bitter affronts and oppositions than from the Jews; yet he tells Trypho that they heartily prayed for them, and all other persecutors, that they might repent, and ceasing to blaspheme Christ, might believe in him, and be saved from eternal vengeance at his glorious appearing:² that though they were wont solemnly to curse them in their synagogues, and to

¹ Ad An. 2, Olymp. 236, M. Aurel. et L. Ver. Imp. 6. Indict. 3, p. 606.

² Dial. cum Tryph. p. 354.

join with any that would persecute them to death, yet they returned no other answer than that—"You are our brethren, we beseech you own and embrace the truth of God."¹ And in his Apology to the emperor and the senate, he thus concludes: "I have no more to say, but that we shall endeavour what in us lies, and heartily pray, that all men in the world may be blessed with the knowledge and entertainment of the truth."² In the pursuit of this noble and generous design he feared no dangers, but delivered himself with the greatest freedom and impartiality. He acquaints the emperors, how much it was their duty to honour and esteem the truth, that he came not to smooth and flatter them, but to desire them to pass sentence according to the exactest rules of justice;³ that it was their place, and infinitely reasonable, when they had heard the cause to discharge the duty of righteous judges, which if they did not, they would at length be found inexcusable before God;⁴ nay, that if they went on to punish and persecute such innocent persons, he tells them beforehand, it was impossible they should escape the future judgment of God, while they persisted in this evil and unrighteous course.⁵ In this case he regarded not the persons of men, nor was scared with the dangers that attended it, and therefore in his conference with the Jew, tells him, that he regarded nothing but to speak the truth, not caring whom in this matter he disobliged, yea, though they should presently tear him all in pieces; neither fearing nor favouring his own countrymen the Samaritans, whom he had accused

¹ Dial. cum Tryph. p. 323.

³ Apol. II. p. 53.

⁵ Ib. p. 99.

² Apol. I. p. 52.

⁴ Ib. p. 54.

in his Apology to the emperor, for being so much bewitched and seduced with the impostures of Simon Magus, whom they cried up as a supreme deity, above all principality and power.¹

For his natural endowments, he was a man of acute parts, a smart and pleasant wit, a judgment able to weigh the differences of things, and to adapt and accommodate them to the most useful purposes; all which were mightily improved and accomplished by the advantages of foreign studies, being both in the Christian and ethnic philosophy, *εις ἄκρον ἀνηγμένος πολυμαθεία τε κ̅ ἱστοριῶν περιῤῥεόμενος πλάτῳ*, says Photius, "arrived at the very height, flowing with abundance of history and all sorts of learning."² In one thing indeed he seems to have come short, and wherein the first Fathers were generally defective, skill in the Hebrew and other eastern languages. His ignorance herein is the less to be wondered at, if we consider that his religion, as a Gentile born, his early and almost sole converse with the Greeks, his constant study of the writings of the Gentile philosophers, might well make him a stranger to that language, which had not much in it to tempt a mere philosopher to learn it. In all other parts of learning how great his abilities were, may be seen in his writings yet extant, (to say nothing of them that are lost,) *παιδευμένης διανοίας κ̅ περὶ τὰ θεία ἐσπυδακῦας ὑπόμνηματα πάσης ὠφελείας ἔμπλεα*, as Eusebius says of them, the monuments "of his singular parts, and of a mind studiously conversant about divine things, richly fraught with excellent and useful know-

¹ Dial. cum Tryph. p. 349.

² Cod. cxxv. col. 304.

ledge.”¹ They are all designed either in defence of the Christian religion, both against Jews and Gentiles, or in beating down that common religion, and those profane and ridiculous rites of worship which then governed the world, or in prescribing rules for the ordinary conduct of the Christian life, all which he has managed with an admirable acuteness and dexterity.

That which may seem most to impair the credit of this ancient and venerable man, is that he is commonly said to be guilty of some unorthodox sentiments and opinions, disagreeing with the received doctrines of the church. True it is, that he has some notions not warranted by general entertainment, or the sense of the church, especially in later ages, but yet scarce any but what were held by most of the Fathers in those early times, and which for the main are speculative and have no ill influence upon a good life; the most considerable whereof we shall here remark. First, he is charged with too much kindness and indulgence to the more eminent sort of heathens, and particularly toward Socrates, Heraclitus, and such like:² such indeed he seems to allow to have been in some sense Christians, and of Socrates particularly affirms, that Christ was ἀπὸ μέρους, “in part known to him,” and the like elsewhere more than once.³ The ground of all which was this, that such persons did μετὰ λόγου βίβν, “live according to the λόγος, the word

¹ Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. c. 18, p. 189.

² Τὸν Χριστὸν πρωτότοκον τῆ Θεῆ εἶναι ἐκιδάχθημεν, ἐ προεμηνύσαμεν λόγον ὄντα, ἢ πᾶν γένος ἀνθρώπων μετέσχε. Καὶ οἱ μετὰ λόγου βιώσαντες, Χριστιανοὶ εἰσι, κὰν ἄθεοι ἐνομίσθησαν οἶον ἐν Ἑλληνισμῷ Σωκράτης ἐ, Ἡράκλειτος, ἐ οἱ ὅμοιοι αὐτοῖς. Apol. II. page 83.

³ Apol. I. p. 48.

or reason," and that this naturally is in every man, and manifest to him, if he but govern himself according to it. For the clearer understanding whereof it may not be amiss briefly to inquire in what sense the primitive Fathers, and especially our Justin, use this word *λόγος*. And their notion was plainly this, that Christ was the eternal *λόγος* or Word of the Father, the sum and centre of all reason and wisdom, as the sun is the fountain of light; and that from him there was a *λόγος* or reason naturally derived into every man, as a beam and emanation of light from the sun; to which purpose they usually bring that of St. John, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: that was the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'¹ "God," says Justin, "first and before the production of any creatures begot of himself *δύναμιν τίνα λογικην*, a certain rational power, sometimes styled in Scripture the glory of God, the Son, Wisdom, an Angel, God, Lord, and Word; by all which names he is described both according to the economy of his Father's will, and according to his voluntary generation of him."² And elsewhere, "we love and worship the Word of the unbegotten and ineffable God, which (Word) for our sakes became man, that by partaking of our sufferings he might work out our cure."³ Hence Christ is called *τῷ πάντος λογος*, "the universal Word,"⁴ and with respect to him reason is styled

¹ Ὁ δὲ σωτὴρ ἐκλάμπων τοῖς λογικοῖς ἢ ἡγεμονικοῖς, ἵνα αὐτῶν ὁ νῦν τὰ ἴδια ὄρατα βλέπη, τοῦ νοητῆ κόσμου ἔστι φῶς· λέγω δὲ τῶν λογικῶν ψυχῶν τῶν ἐν τῷ αἰσθητερίῳ κοσμίῳ, &c. Orig. Com. in Joan. p. 25; vide etiam, p. 40.

² Dial cum Tryph. p. 234; 285, D.

³ Apol. I. p. 51.

⁴ Ibid. p. 46.

σπερματικὸς λόγος, "the seminal Word that is sown in our natures." τῷ σπερματικῷ θεῷ λόγῳ συγγενὲς, and ἡ ἐννοσὰ ἐμφύτη τῷ λόγῳ σπορῇ, "the internal semination of the implanted Word," which he there distinguishes from the αὐτὸ τὸ σπέρμα, "the primary and original seed itself, from which according to the measure of grace given by it, all participation and imitation does proceed.¹ This is that which he means by the σπέρματα ἀληθείας, "the seeds of truth," which he tells us seem to be in all men in the world; they are a derivation from Christ, who is the root, a kind of participation of a divine nature from him.² Clemens of Alexandria thus deduces the pedigree: "The image of God," says he, "is his Word, (for the divine Word, is the genuine offspring of the mind, the archetypal light of light,) and the image of the Word is man. The true mind that is in man, (said therefore to be made after the image and likeness of God,) as to the frame of the heart, is conformed to the divine Word, and by that means partakes of the Word or reason."³

The case then in short is this, every man naturally is endued with principles of reason, and lively notices of good and evil, as a light kindled from him who is the Word and wisdom of the Father, and may so far be said to partake of Christ, the primitive and original Word, and that more or less according to their improvement of them: so that whatever wise and excellent things either philosophers or poets have spoken, says Justin the Martyr, it was διὰ τὸ ἔμφυτον παντὶ γένει ἀνθρώπων ὁ σπέρμα τῷ λόγῳ, from that seed of the λόγος, the Word, or

¹ Apol. I. p. 51.

² Admonit. ad Gent. p. 62.

³ Apol. lib. ii. p. 82.

reason that is implanted in all mankind :¹ thus he says that Socrates exhorted the Greeks to the knowledge of the unknown God by the inquisition of the Word.² To conclude this, he nowhere affirms, that Gentiles might be saved without the entertainment of Christianity, nor that their knowledge was of itself sufficient to that end, (no man more strongly proves reason and natural philosophy to be of themselves insufficient to salvation,) but that so far as they improved their reason and internal word to the great and excellent purposes of religion, so far they were Christians, and akin to the eternal and original Word, and that whatever was rightly dictated or reformed by this inward Word, either by Socrates among the Greeks, or by others among the barbarians, was in effect done by Christ himself, “the Word made flesh.”³

Another opinion with which he was charged is *chiliasm*, or the reign of a thousand years. This indeed he expressly asserts, that after the resurrection of the dead is over, Jerusalem should be rebuilt, beautified and enlarged, where our Saviour with all the holy patriarchs and prophets, the saints and martyrs, should visibly reign a thousand years.⁴ He confesses indeed that there are many sincere and devout Christians that would not subscribe to this opinion; but withal affirms that there were abundance of the same mind with him. As indeed there were, Papias, bishop of Hierapolis,

¹ Apol. I. p. 46, vid. p. 48, C.

² Ibid. p. 48.

³ Ὁ μόνον Ἑλλησι διὰ Σωκράτους ὑπὸ λόγου ἠλέγχθη ταῦτα, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν βαρβάροις ὑπὸ αὐτοῦ τῆς λόγου μορφωθέντος καὶ ἀνθρώπων γινόμενος, καὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ κληθέντος. Just. Apol. ii. p. 56.

⁴ Dialog. cum Tryph. p. 306, 307, vid. p. 369.

Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, Nepos, Apollinaris, Tertullian, Victorinus, Laciadius, Severus Gallus, and many more.¹ The first that started this notion among the orthodox Christians of those early times seems to have been the fore-mentioned Papias, who (as Eusebius tells us) pretended it to be an apostolical tradition, misunderstanding the apostles' discourses, and too lightly running away with what they meant in a mystical and hidden sense.² For he was, though a good man, yet of no great depth of understanding, and so easily mistaken; and yet as he observes, his mistake imposed upon several ecclesiastical persons, the venerable antiquity of the man recommending the error to them with great advantage. Among which especially were our St. Justin and Irenæus, who held it in an innocent and harmless sense. It is true Cerinthus and his followers, mixing it with the Jewish dreams and fables, and pretending divine revelations to patronize and countenance it, improved it to brutish and sensual purposes, placing it in a state of eating and drinking, and all manner of bodily pleasures and delights.³ And what use heretics of latter times have made of it, and how much they have improved and enlarged it, is not my present business to inquire.

¹ Apud Iren. lib. v. c. 33, p. 498, vid. Euseb. lib. iii. c. ult. p. 112; loc. cit. et ap. Euseb. ubi supr.; ap. Euseb. l. vii. c. 24, p. 270; ap. Hieron. Comment. in Ezech. c. 36, tom. v. p. 507; adv. Marcion. lib. iii. c. 23, p. 411, de Resur. Carn. c. 25, p. 340; apud Hieron. loc. supr. cit.; De vit. beat. lib. vii. c. 24, p. 722, c. 26; 727, et seq.; ap. Hieron. ubi supr. vid. etiam de scrip. Eccl. in Papias.

² Lib. iii. c. 39, p. 112.

³ Cajus ap. Euseb. lib. iii. c. 28, p. 100; Dionys. Corinth. ibid. et lib. vii. c. 25, p. 273.

Concerning the state of the soul after this life, he affirms that the souls even of the prophets and righteous men fell under the power of demons, though how far that power should extend, he tells us not, grounding his assertion upon no other basis than the single instance of Samuel's being summoned up by the enchantments of the Pythoress.¹ Nor does he assert it to be necessarily so, seeing he grants that by our hearty endeavours and prayers to God, our souls at the hour of their departure may escape the seizure of those evil powers. To this we may add, what he seems to maintain, that the souls of good men are not received into heaven till the resurrection;² that when they depart the body, they remain *ἐν κρείττονι και χῶρῳ*, in a better state, where being gathered within itself, the soul perpetually enjoys what it loved; but that the souls of the unrighteous and the wicked are thrust into a worse condition, where they expect the judgment of the great day;³ and he reckons it among the errors of some pretended Christians, who denied the resurrection, and affirmed that their souls immediately after death were taken into heaven.⁴ Nor herein did he stand alone, but had the almost unanimous suffrage of primitive writers voting with him, Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, Hilary, Prudentius, Ambrose, Augustin, Anastasius Sinaita,⁵ and indeed who not, there being a

¹ Dial. cum Tryph. p. 333.

² Ibid. p. 223.

³ Ibid. p. 222, C.

⁴ Ibid. p. 307.

⁵ Adv. Hæres. lib. v. c. 31, p. 491; Apol. c. 47, p. 37; Περ ἀρχ. lib. ii. c. 12. fol. 136; lib. iv. c. 2, fol. 154; confer. Philoc. c. 1, p. 18, et Homil. vi. in Levit. fol. 71; Enarrat. in Psal. cxx. p. 532; Cathemer. Hymn x. p. 485; Ambros. de Cain et Ab. lib. ii. p. 131, tom. iv. de bon. Mort. c. 10, p. 240; Enchirid. c. 102, col. 190, tom. iii. in Psal. 36; Conc. 1, col. 281, tom. viii.; Quæst. 91.

general concurrence in this matter, that the souls of the righteous were not upon the dissolution presently translated into heaven, that is, not admitted to a full and perfect fruition of the divine presence, but determined to certain secret and unknown repositories, where they enjoyed a state of imperfect blessedness, waiting for the accomplishment of it at the general resurrection, which intermediate state they will have described under the notion of Paradise and Abraham's bosom, and which some of them make to be a subterranean region within the bowels of the earth.

I might here also insist upon, what some find so much fault with in our martyr, his magnifying the power of man's will, which is notoriously known to have been the current doctrine of the Fathers through all the first ages till the rise of the Pelagian controversies, though still they generally own *χάριν ἐξαίρετον*, a mighty assistance of divine grace to raise up and enable the soul for divine and spiritual things. Justin tells his adversary that it is in vain for a man to think rightly to understand the mind of the ancient prophets, unless he be assisted *μετὰ μεγάλης Χάριτος τῆς παρὰ Θεοῦ*, by a mighty grace derived from God.¹ "As well may the dry ground," says Irenæus, "produce fruit without rain to moisten it, as we who at first are like dried sticks, be fruitful unto a good life, without voluntary showers from above, that is, (as he adds,) the laver of the spirit."² Clemens of Alexandria affirms expressly, that as there is a free choice in us, so all is not placed in our own power, but that by grace

¹ Dialog. cum Tryph. p. 319.

² Adv. Hæres. lib. iii. c. 19, p. 280.

we are saved, though not without good works; and that to the doing of what is good *μάλις τῆς Θείας χρῆζομεν χάριτος*, “we especially need the grace of God,” a right institution, an honest temper of mind, and that the Father draws to him, and that the *τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν ἀντεξέσιον*, the powers of the will, are never able to wing the soul for a due flight for heaven, without a mighty portion of grace to assist it.¹ The mysteries of Christianity (as Origen discourses against Celsus) cannot be duly contemplated without a better *afflatus* and a more divine power; for as no man knows the things of a man save the spirit of a man that is in him, so no man knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God: it being all to no purpose (as he elsewhere observes) unless God by his grace does *φωτίζειν τὸ ἡγεμονικόν*, enlighten the understanding.² I add no more but that of Tertullian, who asserts, that there is a power of divine grace, stronger than nature, which has in subjection the power of our free will.³ So evident it is, that when the fathers talk highest of the *ἀντεξέσιον*, and the powers of nature, they never

¹ *Τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν ἀντεξέσιον εἰς γνῶσιν ἀφικόμενον ἀτγαθῶ, σκιρτᾷ τε καὶ πηδᾷ ὑπὲρ τὰ ἰσκαμμενα ἢ φάσιν οἱ γυμνασαί, πλὴν ἐ χάριτος ἀνευ τῆς ἐξαιρέτε πτερεῖται τε καὶ ἀνίσταται, καὶ ἄνω τῶν ὑπέρκειμένων αἴρεται ἢ ψυχῆ, πᾶν τὸ βρίθον ἀποτιθεμένη καὶ ἀποδιδῶσα τῷ συγγενεῖ.—Clem. Alexand. Stromat. lib. v. p. 588. Οὔτε γὰρ ἀνευ προαιρέσεως ψυχεῖν οἶόν τε· ἐ μὴν ἐδὲ τὸ πᾶν ἐπὶ τῇ γνῶμῃ τῇ ἡμετέρα κείται· οἶον τὸ ἀποθησόμενον. Χάριτι γὰρ σωζόμεθα, ἐκ ἀνευ μὲν τοι τῶν καλῶν ἔργων — δεῖ δὲ καὶ τὴν γνωμὴν ὑγιῆ κεκτῆσθαι, τὴν ἀμετανόητον πρὸς τὴν θῆραν τοῦ καλοῦ· πρὸς ὑπερ μάλις τῆς Θείας χρῆζομεν χάριτος, διδασκαλίας τε ὀρθῆς, καὶ εὐπαθείας ἀγνῆς, καὶ τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς πρὸς εὐτὸν ὀλκῆς.—Id. ib. p. 547.*

² *Lib. iv. p. 181; vid. etiam, ib. p. 227.*

³ *Hæc erit vis divinæ gratiæ, potentior utique natura, habens*

intended to exclude and banish the grace of God. Some other disputable or disallowed opinions may be probably met with in this good man's writings, but which are mostly nice and philosophical. And indeed having been brought up under so many several institutions of philosophy, and coming (as most of the first Fathers did) fresh out of the school of Plato, it is the less to be wondered at, if the notions which he had there imbibed stuck to him, and he endeavoured, as much as might be, to reconcile the Platonic principles with the dictates of Christianity.

His writings:—*Genuine*, “Parænesis ad Græcos.” “Elenchus, seu Oratio ad Græcos.” “Apologia pro Christianis prima.” “Apologia pro Christianis secunda.” “Liber de Monarchia Dei,” forsan in fine mutilus. “Dialogus cum Tryphone Judæo.” “Epistola ad Diognetum.”—*Not extant*, “Liber de Anima.” “Liber Psaltes dictus.” “Contra omnes Hæreses,” “Contra Marcionem.” “Commentarius in Hexameron (cujus meminit Anastasius Sinaita.)” “De Resurrectione Carnis, teste Damasceno.”—*Doubtful*, “Aristotelicorum quorundam Dogmatum eversio.” “Epistola ad Zenam et Serenum.”—*Supposititious*, “Quæstiones et Respons. ad Græcos.” “Quæstiones Græcanicæ, de incorporeo, &c. et ad easdem Christianæ Responsiones.” “Quæstionum cXLVI. Responsio ad Orthodoxos.” Vid. an hic liber sit idem (sed interpolatus) de quo Photius hoc titulo. “Dubitationum¹ adversus Religionem summariæ solutiones.” “Expositio Fidei de S. Trinitate.”

in nobis subjacentem sibi liberam arbitrii potestatem, quod ἀντὲξέσσιον dicitur.—Jertul. de Anim. c. 21, p. 279.

ST. CYPRIAN.

THASCIUS CÆCILIVS CYPRIAN was born at Carthage, in the declining part of the foregoing century, though the particular year cannot be ascertained. Who or what his parents were is unknown. Cardinal Baronius (not to mention others) makes him descended of a rich honourable family, and himself to have been one of the chief of the senatorian order;¹ and this upon the authority of Nazianzen, who indeed affirms it;² but then he certainly forgot that in very few lines before he had exploded as a fabulous mistake, the confounding our Cyprian with another of the same name, of whom Nazianzen unquestionably meant it. For besides our Carthaginian Cyprian, there was another born at Antioch, a person of great learning and eminency, who travelled through Greece, Phrygia, Egypt, India, Chaldea, &c. famous for the study and the arts of magic, by which he sought to compass the affections of Justina, a noble Chris-

¹ Ad Ann. 250, n. v. vid. not. ad. Martyrol. Rom. Sept. 26, p. 609.

² Orat. in laud. S. Cypr. p. 275.

tian virgin at Antioch. By her prayers and endeavours he was converted, baptized, made first sexton, then deacon of that church, was endued with miraculous powers, and afterwards consecrated bishop of that church, and at last having been miserably tormented at Antioch, was sent to Dioclesian himself then at Nicomedia, by whose command, together with Justina, sent thither, also at the same time from Damascus, he was beheaded. To prove that our Cyprian was not he described by Nazianzen, were a vain and needless attempt, the accounts concerning them being so vastly different, both as to their country, education, manner of life, episcopal charge, the time, place, and companions of their death, that it is plainly impossible to reconcile them. But of this enough.

St. Cyprian's education was ingenuous, polished by study and the liberal arts,¹ though principally he addicted himself to the study of oratory and eloquence, wherein he made such vast improvements, that publicly and with great applause he taught rhetoric at Carthage.² All which time he lived in great pomp and plenty, in honour and power, his garb splendid, his retinue stately; never going abroad (as himself tells us) but he was thronged with a crowd of clients and followers.³ The far greatest part of his life he passed among the errors of the Gentile religion, and was at least upon the borders of old age when he was rescued from the vassalage of inveterate customs, the darkness of idolatry, and the errors and vices of his past

¹ Pont. Diac. in Vit. Cypr. non longe ab init.

² Hier. descript. in Cypriano.

³ Ad Donat. Epist. i. p. 2.

life, as himself intimates in his epistle to Donatus.¹ He was converted to Christianity by the arguments and importunities of Cæcilius a presbyter of Carthage, a person whom ever after he loved as a friend, and revered as a father.² And so mutual an endearment was there between them, that Cyprian in honour to him assumed the title of Cæcilius; and the other at his death made him his executor, and committed his wife and children to his sole care and tutelage. Being yet a *catechumen* he gave early instances of a great and generous piety; professed a strict and severe temperance and sobriety, accounting it one of the best preparations for the entertainment of the truth, to subdue and tread down all irregular appetites and inclinations.³ His estate, at least the greatest part of it, he sold, and distributed among the necessities of the poor, at once triumphing over the love of the world, and exercising that great duty of mercy and charity, which God values above all the ritual devotions in the world. So that by the speedy progress of his piety (says Pontius his friend and deacon) he became almost a perfect Christian, before he had learned the rules of Christianity.

Being fully instructed in the rudiments of the Christian faith, he was baptized, when the mighty assistances which he received from above, perfectly dispelled all doubts, enlightened all obscurities, and enabled him with ease to do things, which before he looked upon as impossible to be discharged.⁴ Not long after, he was called to the inferior ecclesiastic offices, and then advanced to

¹ Ubi supra.² Pont. ib. p. 12.³ Id. ib. p. 11.⁴ Epist. i. p. 2, 3.

the degree of presbyter, wherein he so admirably behaved himself, that he was quickly summoned to the highest order and honour in the church. Donatus his immediate predecessor in the see of Carthage (as his own words seem to imply¹) being dead, the general vogue both of clergy and people (Felicissimus the presbyter and some very few of his party only dissenting²) was for Cyprian to succeed him. But the great modesty and humility of the man made him fly from the first approaches of the news:² he thought himself unfit for so weighty and honourable an employment, and therefore desired that a more worthy person, and some of his seniors in the faith might possess the place. His declining it did but set so much the keener an edge upon the desires and expectations of the people; his doors were immediately crowded, and all passages of escape blocked up; he would indeed have fled out at the window, but finding it in vain, he unwillingly yielded, the people in the meanwhile impatiently waiting, divided between hope and fear, till seeing him come forth, they received him with an universal joy and satisfaction. This charge he entered upon ann. 248, as himself plainly intimates, when in his letter to Cornelius he tells him he had been four years bishop of Carthage:⁴ which epistle was written not long after the beginning of Cornelius's pontificate, ann. 251.

The entrance upon his care and government was calm and peaceable, but he had not been long in it before a storm overtook him, and upon what occa-

¹ Epist. lv. p. 82.

³ P. Diac. p. 12.

² Ib. xl. p. 53.

⁴ Ep. lv. p. 80.

sion I know not, he was publicly proscribed by the name of Cæcilius Cyprian, bishop of the Christians, and every man commanded not to hide or conceal his goods. And not satisfied with this, they frequently called out, that he might be thrown to the lions.¹ So that being warned by a divine admonition and command from God, (as he pleads for himself,²) and lest by his resolute defiance of the public sentence he should provoke his adversaries to fall more severely upon the whole church, he thought good at present to withdraw himself, hoping that malice would cool and die, and the fire go out when the fuel that kindled it was taken away.³ During this recess, though absent in body, yet was he present in spirit, supplying the want of his presence by letters, (whereof he wrote no less than thirty-eight,) by pious counsels, grave admonitions, frequent reproofs, earnest exhortations, and especially by hearty prayers to heaven for the welfare and prosperity of the church.⁴ That which created him the greatest trouble, was the case of the lapsed, whom some presbyters, without the knowledge and consent of the bishop, rashly admitted to the communion of the church upon very easy terms. Cyprian, a stiff asserter of ecclesiastic discipline, and the rights of his place, would not brook this, but by several letters not only complained of it, but endeavoured to reform it, not sparing the martyrs themselves, who presuming upon their great merits in the cause of religion, took upon them to give libels of peace to the

¹ Epist. lxi. p. 117; Ep. lv. p. 80. Vid. Pont. de vit. Cypr. p. 12.

² Epist. ix. p. 22.

³ Ep. xiv. p. 27.

⁴ Loc. citat.

lapsed, whereby they were again taken into communion, sooner than the rules of the church did allow.

This remissness of discipline, and easy admission of penitents, gave occasion to Novatus, one of the presbyters of Carthage to start aside, and draw a faction after him, denying any place to the lapsed, though penitent, in the peace and communion of the church; not that they absolutely excluded them the mercy and pardon of God, (for they left them to the sentence of the divine tribunal,) but maintained that the church had no power to absolve them that once lapsed after baptism, and to receive them again into communion. Having sufficiently embroiled the church at home, (where he was in danger to be excommunicated by Cyprian for his scandalous, irregular, and unpeaceable practices,) over he goes with some of his party to Rome, where by a pretence of uncommon sanctity and severity, besides some confessors lately delivered out of prison, he seduced Novatianus, (who by the Greek Fathers is almost perpetually confounded with Novatus,) a presbyter of the Roman church, a man of an insolent and ambitious temper, and who had attempted to thrust himself into that chair. Him the party procures by clancular arts and uncanonical means to be consecrated bishop, and then set him up against Cornelius, lately ordained bishop of that see, whom they peculiarly charged with holding a communion with Trophimus and some others of the *thurificati*, who had done sacrifice in the late persecution.¹ Which though plausibly pretended, was yet a false allega-

¹ Vid. Ep. 55, ad Antonian. p. 66.

tion; Trophimus and his party not being taken in, till by great humility and a public penance they had given satisfaction to the church, nor he then suffered to communicate any otherwise than in a lay capacity.¹ Being disappointed in their designs, they now openly show themselves in their own colours, separate from the church, which they charge with looseness and licentiousness in admitting scandalous offenders, and by way of distinction, styling themselves Cathari, the pure undefiled party, those who kept themselves from all society with the lapsed, or them that communicated with them. Hereupon they were on all hands opposed by private persons, and condemned by public synods, and cried down by the common vote of the church; probably not so much upon the account of their different sentiments and opinions in point of pardon of sin, and ecclesiastical penance, (wherein they stood not at so wide a distance from the doctrine and practice of the early ages of the church,) as for their insolent and domineering temper, their proud and surly carriage, their rigorous and imperious imposing their way upon other churches, their taking upon them by their own private authority to judge, censure and condemn those that joined not with them, or opposed them, their bold divesting the governors of the church of that great power lodged in them, of remitting crimes upon repentance, which seem to have been the very soul and spirit of the Novatian sect.

In the meanwhile the persecution under Decius raged with an uncontrolled fury over the African provinces, and especially at Carthage, concerning

¹ Vid. Ep. 55, ad Antonian. p. 69.

which Cyprian everywhere gives large and sad accounts, whereof this the sum :—They were scourged, and beaten, and racked, and roasted, and their flesh pulled off with burning pincers, beheaded with swords, and run through with spears, more instruments of torment being many times employed about the man at once, than there were limbs and members of his body: they were spoiled and plundered, chained and imprisoned, thrown to wild beasts, and burnt at the stake. And when they had run over all their old methods of execution, they studied for more, *excogitat novas pœnas ingeniosa crudelitas*, as he complains. Nor did they only vary, but repeat the torments, and where one ended, another began; they tortured them without hopes of dying, and added this cruelty to all the rest, to stop them in their journey to heaven; many who were importunately desirous of death, were so tortured, that they might not die; they were purposely kept upon the rack, that they might die by piecemeal, that their pains might be lingering, and their sense of them without intermission, they gave them no intervals, or times of respite, unless any of them chanced to give them the slip and expire in the midst of torments. All which did but render their faith and patience more illustrious; and make them more earnestly long for heaven. They tired out their tormentors, and overcame the sharpest engines of execution, and smiled at the busy officers that were raking in their wounds, and when their flesh was wearied, their faith was unconquerable. The multitude beheld with admiration these heavenly conflicts, and stood astonished to hear the servants of Christ in the midst of all this, with an unshaken mind, making a free and bold confession

of him, destitute of any external succour, but armed with a divine power, and defending themselves with the shield of faith.¹

Two full years St. Cyprian had remained in his retirement, when the persecution being somewhat abated by the death of Decius, he returned to Carthage, ann. 251, where he set himself to reform disorders, and to compose the differences that disturbed his church. For which purpose he convened a synod of his neighbour bishops, to consult about the cause of the lapsed; who were no sooner met, but there arrived messengers with letters from Novatian, signifying his ordination to the see of Rome, and bringing an accusation and charge against Cornelius. But the men no sooner appeared, but they were disowned, and rejected from communion, especially after that Pompeius and Stephanus were arrived from Rome, and had brought a true account and relation of the case. The synod therefore advised and charged them to desist from their turbulent and schismatical proceedings, not to rend the church by propagating a pernicious faction; that it was their best way and the safest counsel they could take to show themselves true Christians, by returning back to the peace of the church.² As for the lapsed, having discussed their case according to the rules of the holy Scripture, they concluded upon this wise and moderate expedient, that neither all hopes of peace and communion should be denied them, lest looking upon themselves as in a desperate case, they should start back into a total apostacy from the

¹ Ep. liii. p. 75; Epist. vii. p. 16; Epist. viii. p. 19; lib. ad Demetr. p. 200.

² Ad Cornel. Epist. xli. p. 55.

faith, nor yet the censures of the church be so far relaxed as rashly to admit them to communion: but that the causes being examined, and regard being had to the will of the delinquents, and the aggravations of particular cases, their time of penance should be accordingly prolonged, and the divine clemency be obtained by acts of a great sorrow and repentance.¹ Their meaning is, that the lapsed being of several sorts, should be treated according to the nature of their crimes; the *libellatici*, who had only purchased libels of security and dismissal from the heathen magistrate to excuse them from doing sacrifice in time of persecution, should have a shorter time of penance assigned them; the *sacrificati*, who had actually sacrificed to idols, should not be taken in till they had expiated their offence by a very long penance, and (as they sometimes call it) satisfaction. This synodical determination was presently sent to Rome, and ratified by Cornelius and a council of sixty bishops, and above as many presbyters and deacons, concluding (and the decree examined, assented to, and published by the bishops in their several provinces) that Novatus and his insolent party, and all that adhered to his inhuman and merciless opinion, should be excluded the communion of the church; but that the brethren who had fallen into that calamity, should be gently dealt with, and restored by methods of repentance.²

The next year, May 15, ann. 252, began another council at Carthage about this matter, and wherein they steered the same course they had done before,

¹ Ad Anton. Epist. lii. p. 67.

² Id. ibid. Euseb. lib. vi. c. 43, p. 242.

being rather swayed to moderate counsels herein, because frequently admonished by divine revelations of an approaching persecution, and therefore did not think it prudent and reasonable, that men should be left naked and unarmed in the day of battle, but that they might be able to defend themselves with the shield of Christ's body and blood. For how should they ever hope to persuade them to shed their own blood in the cause of Christ, if they denied them the benefit of his blood? how could it be expected they should be ready to drink of the cup of martyrdom, whom the church debarred the privilege to drink of the cup of Christ? While peace and tranquillity smiled upon the church, they protracted the time of penance, and allowed not the *sacrificati* to be readmitted, but at the hour of death. But that now the enemy was breaking in upon them, and Christians were to be prepared and heartened on for suffering, and encouragement to be given to those, who by the sincerity of their repentance had showed themselves ready to resist unto blood, and to contend earnestly for the faith. This they did not to patronize the lazy, but excite the diligent, the church's peace being granted not in order to ease and softness, but to conflict and contention. And if any improved the indulgence to worse purposes, they did but cheat themselves, and such they remitted to the divine tribunal.¹

About this time happened that miserable plague, that so much afflicted the Roman world, wherein Carthage had a very deep share. Vast multitudes were swept away every day, the fatal messenger knocking as he went along at every door. The

¹ Epist. Synod. ad Cornel. Ep. 54. p. 76, et Ep. 55, p. 82.

streets were filled with the carcasses of the dead, which seemed to implore the assistance of the living, and to challenge it as a right by the laws of nature and humanity, as that which shortly themselves might stand in need of. But, alas! all in vain: every one trembled, and fled and shifted for himself, deserted their dearest friends and nearest relations; none considered what might be his own case, nor how reasonable it was that he should do for another, what he would another should do for him, and if any staid behind, it was only to make a prey. In this calamitous and tragic scene, St. Cyprian calls the Christians together, instructs them in the duties of mercy and charity, and from the precepts and examples of the holy Scripture shows them what a mighty influence they have to oblige God to us; that it was no wonder if their charity extended only to their own party, the way to be perfect, and to be Christians indeed, was to do something more than heathens and publicans, to overcome evil with good, and in imitation of the divine benignity to love our enemies, and according to our Lord's advice, to pray for the happiness of them that persecute us; that God constantly makes his sun to rise, and his rain to fall upon the seeds and plants, not only for the advantage of his own children, but of all other men; that therefore they should act as became the nobility of their new birth, and imitate the example of such a Father, who professed themselves to be his children. Persuaded by this and much more that he discoursed to the same effect, enough to convince the very Gentiles themselves, they presently divided their help according to each one's rank and quality. Those who by reason of poverty could contribute

nothing to the charge, did what was infinitely more, personally laboured in the common calamity, an assistance infinitely beyond all other contributions. And by this large and abundant charity great advantage redounded not to themselves only, who were of the household of faith, but universally to all. And that he might not be wanting to any, he penned at this time his excellent discourse concerning mortality, wherein he so eloquently teaches a Christian to triumph over the fears of death, and shows how little reason there is excessively to mourn for those friends and relations that are taken from us.¹

This horrible pestilence, together with the wars which of late had, and even then did, overrun the empire, the Gentiles generally charged upon the Christian religion, as that for which the gods were implacably angry with the world. To vindicate it from this common objection, Cyprian addresses himself in a discourse to Demetrian the proconsul, wherein he proves that these evils that came upon the world, could not be laid at the door of Christianity, assigning other reasons of them, and among the rest their wild and brutish rage against the Christians, which had provoked the Deity to bring these calamities upon them, as a just punishment of their folly and madness in persecuting a religion, so innocent and dear to heaven.² The persecution being over, a controversy arose concerning the time

¹ Pont. Diac. in Vit. Cypr. p. 13.

² Exoritur ultio violati nominis Christiani, et usquequo ad profligandas ecclesias edicta Decii cucurrerunt, eatenus incredibilium morborum pestis extenditur. Nulla fere provincia Romana, nulla civitas, nulla domus fuit, quæ non illa generali pestilentia correpta atque vastata sit. P. Orosius Hist. adv. Pagan. lib. vii. c. 21, fol. 310, p. 2.

of baptizing infants, started especially by Fidus an African bishop, who asserted that baptism was not to be administered on the third or fourth, but as circumcision under the Jewish state, to be deferred till the eighth day.¹ St. Cyprian in a synod of sixty-six bishops determined this question, that it was not necessary to be deferred so long, nor the grace and mercy of God to be denied to any as soon as born into the world; that it was their universal sentence and resolution, that none ought to be prohibited baptism and the grace of God; which as it was to be observed and retained towards all, so much more towards infants and new born children. Not long after which, another council was held by Cyprian, (importuned thereunto by the bishops of Spain,) to consult concerning the case of Basilides bishop of Asturica, and Martial of Emerita in Spain, who had lapsed into the most horrible idolatry in the late persecution, and yet still retained their places in the church. The synod resolved, that they were fallen from their episcopal order, and the very lowest degree of the ministry, and that upon their repentance they were to be restored to no more than the capacity of laics in the communion of the church.²

In this synod, or another called not long after, the famous contest about re-baptizing those who had been baptized by heretics, received its first approbation. It had been some time since by occasion of the Montanists and Novatians canvassed in the eastern parts, thence it flew over to Numidia, by the bishops whereof it had been brought before Cyprian, and the council at Carthage, who deter-

¹ Vid. Epist. Synod. ad Fid. Ep. 59, p. 94.

² Epist. 68, p. 112, et seq.

mined that the thing was necessary to be observed, and that this was no novel sentence, but had been so decreed by his predecessors, and the thing constantly practised and observed among them, as he assures them in the synodical epistle about this matter.¹ Stephen bishop of Rome, (with whom stood a great part of the church) liked not their proceedings; whereupon a more general council was summoned, where no less than eighty-seven bishops from all parts of the African churches met together, who unanimously ratified the former sentence, whose names and particular votes are extant in the acts of that council.² But numbers made the cause never the better resented at Rome, and indeed the controversy arose to that height between these two good men, that Stephen gave Cyprian very rude and unchristian language, stiling him "false Christ, false apostle, deceitful worker," and such like:³ while on the other hand Cyprian treated him with more than ordinary sharpness and severity, charging him with pride and impertinence, and self-contradiction, with ignorance and indiscretion, with childishness and obstinancy, and other expressions, far enough from that reverence and regard, which Stephen's successors claim at this day.⁴ And no better usage did he find from Firmilian bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, as may be seen in his letter to Cyprian.⁵ A great instance how far passion and prejudice may transport wise and good men beyond the merits of the cause, and what the laws of kindness and charity do allow. I

¹ Epist. 69, p. 117.

² Apud Cypr. p. 181, et Concil. tom. i. col. 786, edit. noviss.

³ Firmil. Epist. ad Cypr. p. 150.

⁴ Ad Pompei. Epist. 74, p. 129. ⁵ Apud. Cypr. p. 143.

note no more concerning this, than that Cyprian and his party expressly disowned anabaptism or rebaptization; they freely confessed that there was but one baptism, and that those who came over from heretical churches, where they had had their baptism, were not rebaptized, but baptized, their former baptism being *ipso facto* null and invalid, and they did then receive, what (lawfully) they had not before.¹

It was now the year 257, when Aspasius Pater-nus the proconsul of Africa sent for Cyprian to appear before him, telling him, that he had lately received orders from the emperors (Valerian and Gallienus) commanding that all that were of a foreign religion should worship the gods according to the Roman rites, desiring to know what was his resolution? Cyprian answered, "I am a Christian and a bishop; I acknowledge no other gods, but one only true God, who made heaven and earth, and all that therein is. This is he whom we Christians serve, to whom we pray day and night, for ourselves and for all men, and for the happiness and prosperity of the emperors." "And is this then thy resolution?" said the proconsul. "That resolution" replied the martyr, "which is founded in God, cannot be altered." Then he told him, that he was to search out the presbyters as well as bishops, requiring him to discover them. To which Cyprian gave no other answer, than that according to their own laws, they were not bound to be informers. The proconsul then acquainted him, that he was commanded to prohibit all private assemblies, and to proceed with capital severity

¹ Ad Quint. Epist. 71, p. 119.

against them that frequented them. Whereat the good man told him, that his best way was to do as he was commanded.¹ The proconsul finding it was in vain to treat with him, commanded him to be banished, and accordingly he was transported to Curubius, a little city standing in a peninsula within the Libyan Sea, not far from Pentapolis, a place pleasant and delightful enough, and where he met with a kind and a courteous usage, was frequently visited by the brethren, and furnished with all conveniences necessary for him.²

But the greatest entertainment in this retirement, were those divine and heavenly visions with which God was pleased to honour him, by one whereof, the very first day of his coming thither, he was particularly forewarned of his approaching martyrdom, whereof Pontius the deacon, who accompanied him in his banishment, gives us this account from the Martyr's own mouth. There appeared to him as he was going to rest, a young man of a prodigious stature, who seemed to lead him to the *Prætorium*, and to present him to the proconsul then sitting upon the bench: who looking upon him, began to write something in a book, which the young man who looked over his shoulder, read, but not daring to speak, intimated by signs what it was: for extending one of his hands at length, he made a cross stroke over it with the other, by which Cyprian presently guessed the manner of his death. Whereupon he importunately begged of the proconsul but one day's respite to dispose his affairs, and partly by the pleasingness of the

¹ Act. Pass. S. Cypriani. ap. Cypr. p. 16, 17, 24.

² P. Diac. in Nit. Cypr. p. 14.

judge's countenance, partly by the signs which the young man made of what the proconsul was noting in his book, he immediately gathered that his request was granted.¹ And just so it accordingly came to pass, both as to the time and manner of his martyrdom, that very day twelvemonth, whereon he had this vision, proving the period of his life.

How active and diligent he was to improve his opportunities to the best advantage, appears from the several letters he wrote during his confinement, especially to the martyrs in prison, whose spirits he refreshed by proper consolations, and pressed them to persevere unto the crown. While he was here he had news brought him of the daily increase of the persecution, the emperor Valerian having sent a rescript to the senate, that bishops, presbyters, and deacons should be put to death without delay; that senators, and persons of rank and quality should lose their honours and preferments, forfeit their estates, and if still they continued Christians, lose their heads; and that matrons having had their goods confiscated, should be banished: that Xystus and Quartus had already suffered in the *cemetery*, where their solemn assemblies were held; and that the governors of the city carried on the persecution with might and main, spoiling and putting to death all that they could meet with.² This sad news gave the good man just reason to expect and provide for his own fate, which he waited and wished for every day. Indeed some persons of the highest rank and quality, his ancient friends came to him, and persuaded

¹ Loc. citat.

² Ad Success. Epist. 82, p. 160.

him for the present to withdraw, offering to provide a secure place for his retreat. But the desire of that crown which he had in his eye, had set him above the world, and made him deaf to their kind offers and entreaties.¹ True it is that when news was brought that the officers were coming for him, to carry him to Utica to suffer there, by the advice of his friends he stepped aside, being unwilling to suffer anywhere but at Carthage, in the eye of the people, where he had so long, and so successfully preached the Christian faith, the truth whereof he was desirous to seal with his blood; it being very fit and congruous, that a bishop should suffer for our Lord in that place where he had governed his church, and by that eminent confession edify and encourage the flock committed to him, as he tells the people of his charge in the last letter that ever he wrote.² As for themselves, he advised them to peace and unity, not to create trouble to one another, not to offer themselves to the Gentiles, but if any was apprehended, to stand to it, and freely confess, as God should enable him to declare himself.

Gallerius Maximus the new proconsul being returned to Carthage, Cyprian (who resolved but till then to conceal himself) came home, and took up his residence in his own gardens; where officers were presently sent to apprehend him, who putting him into a chariot, carried him to the place where the proconsul was retired for his health, who commanded him to be kept till the next day, which was done in the house of one of the officers

¹ P. Diac. ubi supr. p. 15.

² Epist. lxxxii. p. 161.

that secured him, the people alarmed with the news of his return and apprehension, flocking to the doors, and watching there all night. The next morning being September 14, ann. Chr. 258, he was led to the proconsul's palace, who not being yet come forth, he was carried aside into a by-place, where he rested himself upon a seat, which by chance was covered with a linen cloth, that so (says my author) even in the hour of his passion he might enjoy some part of episcopal honour. By this time the proconsul was come out, who looking upon him, said, "Art thou Thascius Cyprian, who hast been bishop and father to men of an impious mind? The sacred emperor commands thee to do sacrifice. Be well advised, and do not throw away thy life." The holy martyr replied, "I am Cyprian, I am a Christian, and I cannot sacrifice to the gods; do as thou art commanded; as for me, in so just a cause there needs no consultation." The proconsul was angry at his resolute constancy, and told him, that he had been a long time of this sacrilegious humour, had seduced abundance into the same wicked conspiracy with himself, and shown himself an enemy to the gods and religion of the Roman empire, one whom the pious and religious emperors could never reduce to the observance of their holy rites: that therefore being found to be the author and ringleader of so heinous a crime, he should be made an example to those whom he had seduced into so great a wickedness, and that discipline and severity should be established in his blood. Whereupon he read his sentence out of a table-book, "I will that Thascius Cyprian be beheaded." To which the martyr only

answered, "I heartily thank Almighty God, who is pleased to set me free from the chains of the body."¹

Sentence being passed, he was led away from the tribunal with a strong guard of soldiers, infinite numbers of people crowding after; the Christians weeping and mourning, and crying out, "Let us also be beheaded with him." The place of execution was Sextus's field, a large circuit of ground, where the trees (whereof the place was full) were loaded with persons to behold the spectacle. The martyr presently began to strip himself, first putting off his cloak, which he folded up, and laid at his feet, and falling down upon his knees, recommended his soul to God in prayer; after which he put off his *dalmatic*, or under-coat which he delivered to the deacons, and so standing in nothing but a linen vestment, expected the headsman, to whom he commanded the sum of about six pounds to be given, the brethren spreading linen cloths about him to preserve his blood from being spilt upon the ground, his shirt sleeves being tied by Julian (or as one of the acts call him, Tullian) the presbyter, and Julian the sub-deacon, he covered his eyes with his own hand, and the executioner did his office. His body was by the Christians deposited not far off; but at night, for fear of the Gentiles, removed, and with abundance of lights and torches solemnly interred in the cemetery of Macrobius Candidus, a procurator, near the fish-ponds in the Mappalian Way. This was done ann. 258, *Valeriani et Gallien. V.* Thus died this good man, the first bishop of his see that suf-

¹ Pont. Epist. lxxxii. p. 15; Act. Passion, ib. p. 16, 18, 19, 24.

ferred martyrdom, as Pontius his deacon informs us,¹ who was a true lover of him, and followed him to the last; and professes himself not to rejoice so much at the glory and triumph of his master, as to mourn that he himself was left behind.

St. Cyprian, though starting late, ran apace in the Christian race. He had a soul inflamed with a mighty love and zeal for God, whose honour he studied by all ways to promote. A wise and prudent governor, a great asserter of the church's rights, a resolute patron and defender of the truth, a faithful and vigilant overseer of his flock, powerful and diligent in preaching, prudent in his determinations, moderate in his counsels, grave and severe in his admonitions, pathological and affectionate in his persuasives, indulgent to the penitent, but inflexible to the obstinate and contumacious.² Infinite pains he took to reclaim the lapsed, and to restore them to the church by methods of penance and due humiliation: he invited them kindly, treated them tenderly; if their minds were honest, and their desires sincere, he would not rigorously examine their crimes by over-nice weights and measures; and so prone to pity and compassion, that he was afraid lest he himself offended in remitting other men's offences.³ He valued the good of souls above the love of his own life, constant in the profession of religion, from which neither by hopes nor fears could he be drawn aside. How strictly chaste and continent he was, even in his first entrance upon Christianity, we have noted in the beginning of his life. His humility emi-

¹ Pont. Epist. lxxxii. p. 16.

² Nemes. &c. Martyr. Epist. ad Cypr. p. 157.

³ Vid. ad Cornel. Epist. lv. p. 85.

nently appeared in his declining the honour of the episcopal order, and desiring that it might be conferred upon a more deserving person; and when some factious and schismatical persons traduced him as taking too much upon him, because he controlled their wild and licentious courses, he vindicates his humility at large in a letter to Pupianus,¹ who had made himself head of the party that appeared against him. So modest, that in all great transactions concerning the church, he always consulted both his colleagues and his flock, himself assuring us, that from the very entrance upon his bishopric he determined not to adjudge any thing by his own private order, without the counsel of the clergy and the consent of the people.² His behaviour was composed and sober, his countenance grave, yet cheerful, neither guilty of a frowning severity, nor an over-pleasant mirth, but an equal decorum and temperament of both, it being hard to say, whether he more deserved to be loved or feared, but that he equally deserved both. And the very same he was in his garb, sober and moderate, observing a just distance both from slovenliness and superfluity, such as neither argued him to be swelled with pride and vanity, nor infected with a sordid and penurious mind. But that which set the crown upon the head of all his other virtues, was his admirable and exemplary charity, he was of a kind and compassionate temper, and he gave it vent.³ Upon his first embracing the Christian religion he sold his estate, (which was not mean and inconsiderable,) and gave almost all of it to the

¹ Epist. lxi. p. 116. ² Ad. Presb. et Diac. Epist. v. p. 14.

³ P. Diac. in Vit. Cypr. p. 12.

poor, from which he suffered no considerations to restrain him. His hand, and tongue, and heart, were open upon all occasions; we find him at one time not only earnestly pressing others to contribute towards the redemption of Christians taken captive by the barbarians, but himself sending a collection of a great many thousand crowns.¹ Nor was this a single act done once in his life, but his ordinary practice; his doors were open to all that came, the widow never returned empty from him; to any that were blind, he would be their guide to direct them; those that were lame, he was ready to lend his assistance to support them; if any were oppressed by might, he was at hand to rescue and protect them. Which things, he was wont to say, they ought to do, who desired to render themselves truly acceptable and dear to God.²

His natural parts seem to have been ready and acute enough, which how far he improved by secular and Gentile learning, is unknown. He seems to have laid no deep foundations in the study of philosophy, whereof few or no footsteps are to be seen in any of his writings: his main excellency was eloquence, rhetoric being his proper profession before his conversion to Christianity; wherein he attained to so great a pitch, that Erasmus, a competent judge of these matters, sticks not to affirm, that among all the ecclesiastics he is the only African writer that attained the native purity of the Latin tongue.³ Tertullian is difficult and obscure, St. Augustin strangely perplexed and dry, but Cyprian, (as St. Jerome long since truly censured,⁴)

¹ Ad Episc. Numid. Epist. lx. p. 97.

² Pont. ubi. supr.

³ Præf. in Cypr. inter Erasm. Ep. l. 28. Epist. vi. col. 1616.

⁴ Epist. ad Paulin. p. 104. tom. i.

like a pure fountain, is smooth and sweet. And Lactantius long before him passed this judgment, that Cyprian alone was the chief and famous writer, eminent for his teaching oratory, and writing books admirable in their kind.¹ His style is very natural and easy, nothing elaborate or affected in it, or which savours of craft and ostentation, but such every where the tenor of his language, (I speak Erasmus's sense as well as my own,²) that you will think you hear a truly Christian bishop, and one designed for martyrdom speaking to you. His mind was inflamed with piety, and his speech was answerable to his mind: he spake elegantly, and yet things more powerful than elegant; nor did he speak powerful things so much as live them. After his coming over to the church, he made such quick and vast proficiencies in Christian theology, that Baronius thinks it not improbable to suppose either that before his conversion he had been conversant in books of Christians, or that he was miraculously instructed from above.³ It is certain that afterwards he kept close to Tertullian's writings,

¹ De Justit. lib. v. c. 1, p. 459.

“ Incubat in Lybia sanguis, sed ubique lingua pollet:
Sola superstes agit de corpore, sola obire nescit
Dum genus esse hominum Christus sinet et vigere mundum.
Dum liber ullus erit, dum scrinia sacra literarum,
Te leget omnis amans Christum, tua, Cypriane, discet.
Spiritus ille, Dei, qui fluxerat auctor in prophetas,
Fontibus eloquii te cœlitis actus irrigavit.
O nive candidius lingua genus! O novum saporem!
Ut liquor ambrosius, cor mitigat, imbuit palatum,
Sedem animæ penetrat, mentem fovet, et pererrat artus:
Sic Deus interius sentitur, et inditur medullis.

Prudent. *Περὶ Στεφῶν*. Hymn. xii. in Passion.
Cypr. Martyris. et Episc. Carthag.

² Loc citat.

³ Ad. Ann. 250, n. xi.

without which he scarce ever passed one day, often saying to his notary, "Reach hither my master," meaning Tertullian. And certainly it sounds not a little to the commendation of his judgment, that he could drink so freely at that great man's fountain, and suck in none of his odd and uncouth opinions, that he could pick the flowers, and pass by the useless or noxious weeds; as a wise man many times is so far from being corrupted, that he is the more warned and confirmed in the right by another man's errors and mistakes. As for his writings, St. Jerome passes them over with this character, that it was superfluous to reckon them up, being clearer and more obvious than the sun.¹ Many of them are undoubtedly lost, the greater part of what remain are epistles, and all of them such as admirably tend to promote the peace and order of the church, and advance piety and a godly life. A great number of tracts, either dubious or evidently supposititious, are laid at his door, some of them very ancient, and most of them useful, it being his happiness above all other writers of the church, says Erasmus, that nothing is fathered upon him but what is learned, and what was the issue of some considerable pen.²

He was highly honoured while he lived, not only by men, consulted and appealed to in all weighty cases by foreign churches, but by frequent visions and divine condescensions, (as he was wont to call them,) whereby he was immediately warned and directed in all important affairs and exigences of the church. After his death his memory was had in great veneration, the people of Carthage

¹ Ad. Ann. 250, n. xi. in Cypr.

² Ubi. supr.

erecting two eminent churches to it, one in the place of his martyrdom, the other in the Mappalian Way, where he was buried. The former was styled *Mensa Cypriani*, "Cyprian's Table," because there he had been offered up a sacrifice acceptable unto God. And here they had their anniversary commemorations of him.¹ Whether this was the church mentioned by Procopius I cannot tell, who informs us, that the Carthagenians above all people in the world honoured St. Cyprian, building a magnificent church to his memory without the city walls near the sea-side, and besides other expressions of honour done to him, they kept a yearly festival, which they called Cypriana. This church Honoricus, king of the Vandals, afterwards took from the Catholics, casting out the orthodox clergy with disgrace and contempt, and bestowed it upon the Arians, which ninety-five years after was recovered by the emperor Justinian under the conduct of Belisarius, who besieged and took Carthage, and drove the Vandals out of all those parts.²

His writings:—*Genuine*, "Epistola ad Donatum statim à Baptismo conscripta." "Epistolæ in Secessu toto biennio conscriptæ XXXVIII." "Epistolæ sub Pontificatu Cornelii et Lucii XVIII." "Epistolæ Miscellanæ in pace variis temporibus conscriptæ VIII." "Epistolæ sub Pontificatu Stephani, et de rebaptizandis Hæreticis X." "Epistolæ in exilio scriptæ sub finem vitæ VII." "De disciplina et habitu Virginum." "De Lapsis." "De Unitate Ecclesiæ Catholicæ." "De Oratione Dominica." "Ad Demetrianum." "De Idolorum vani-

¹ Vict. de Persec. Vandal. lib. i. inter. Orthod. PP. p. 801, tom. ii.

² De Bell. Vandal. lib. i. vid. Niceph. lib. xvii. c. 12, p. 751.

tate." "De Mortalitate." "De Opere et Eleemosynis." "De Bono Patientiæ." "De Zelo et Livore." "De exhortatione Martyrii ad Fortunatum." "Testimoniorum adversus Judæos Lib. III." "Concilium Carthaginense, de baptizandis Hæreticis."—*Suppositious*, "De Spectaculis." "De Disciplina et bono pudicitia." "De Laude Martyrii ad Mosen, &c." "Ad Novatianum, quod Lapsis spes veniæ non sit deneganda." "De Cardinalibus Christi operibus." "De Nativitate Christi." "De Ratione Circumcisionis." "De Stella et Magis, ac innocentium nece." "De Baptismo Christi, et manifestatione Trinitatis." "De jejunio et tentationibus Christi." "De Cœna Domini." "De Ablutione pedum." "De unctione Chrismatis, et aliis Sacramentis." "De Passione Christi." "De Resurrectione Christi." "De Ascensione Christi." "De Spiritu Sancto." "De Aleatoribus." "De montibus Sina et Sion contr. Judæos." "Carmen, Genesi." "Carmen, Sodoma." "Carmen, ad Senatorem Apostatam." "Hymnus de Pascha Domini." "Oratio pro Martyribus." "Oratio in die Passionis suæ." "De singularitate Clericorum." "In Symbolum Apostolorum Expositio." "De Judaica incredulitate." "Adv. Judæos, qui Christum insecuti sunt." "De revelatione Capitis B. Joan. Baptistæ." "De duplici Martyrio, ad Fortunatum." "De XII. Abusionibus Sæculi." "Dispositio Cœnæ."

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