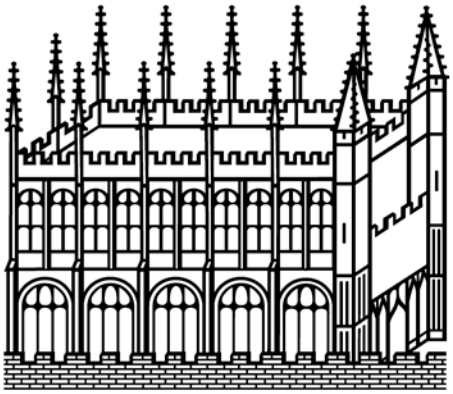

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# EARLY
# CHURCH HISTORY.

PRINTED BY BARCLAY AND FRY,
QUEEN STREET, LONDON, E.C.

Mosaic of Perpetua in the Archbishop's Palace, Ravenna.

*Copied from the original by Edward Backhouse.*

# EARLY

# CHURCH HISTORY

## TO THE DEATH OF CONSTANTINE.

*COMPILED BY THE LATE*

EDWARD BACKHOUSE.

*EDITED AND ENLARGED BY*

CHARLES TYLOR.

LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS & Co.

PHILADELPHIA: J. B. LIPPINCOTT & Co.

1884.

110. e. 4.

Christus Veritatem se non Consuetudinem cognominavit.—TERTULLIAN.

Consuetudo sine veritate vetustas erroris est.—CYPRIAN.

It may be that suspense of judgment and exercise of charity were safer and seemlier for Christian men, than the hot pursuit of controversies, wherein they that are most fervent to dispute be not always the most able to determine. But who are on his side, and who against Him, our Lord in his good time shall reveal.--HOOKER.

EDWARD BACKHOUSE

Ætat. 68.

# BIOGRAPHICAL PREFACE.

As the following work may come into the hands of some who were not personally acquainted with its Author, it is necessary to devote a few pages to a sketch of his life and character. Those who knew EDWARD BACKHOUSE of Sunderland, will never forget either the man or that fresh and vigorous Christianity which was the key-note of his life. But for the sake of others an attempt must be made to give an outline, however imperfectly, of the manner in which he "served his own generation by the will of God before he fell asleep and was laid with his fathers."

He was the son of Edward and Mary Backhouse, and was born at Darlington in 1808. A resident from early boyhood at Sunderland, of which place he became one of the foremost citizens, he was thoroughly identified in his interests with the busy, stirring life of the North of England. He was not himself, however, actively engaged in commerce. Although a partner in collieries, and in the extensive banking business with which the name of his

family has been so long connected, he took little, if any share in the practical management of these businesses, having desired from the time of his early manhood to keep his hands free for philanthropic and religious work. He was an eager and diligent student of natural history, a frequent traveller, and a landscape painter of considerable merit. Though not cultivating the graces of a professed orator, he could always be relied on to make a plain, vigorous, straight-forward speech, with a heartiness which never failed to win the ear of a popular assembly. He was a rather keen, but not bitter politician, on the Liberal side, but never sought a seat in Parliament, whither he could certainly have gone as representative of Sunderland if he had desired to do so.

His whole life was coloured by his enthusiastic adoption of the principles of that portion of the Christian Church to which his ancestors for many generations had belonged; the Society of Friends. During a considerable part of his life he occupied a conspicuous position as a minister among them. It is generally known that in their body there are no paid religious ministers, but the work of preaching and of pastoral visitation is discharged by such

members of the society as may feel themselves commissioned by the Unseen Head of the Church to undertake it. After one of these volunteers has preached in the "meetings for worship" for a while, if his services meet with the approval of the congregation, it is the custom to "acknowledge" him. Ministers thus acknowledged acquire a certain official position, but still are in no sense a clergy distinct from the laity around them, but only members of the body, whose gift happens to be of a kind which brings them into somewhat greater prominence than their brethren.

Edward Backhouse used to refer his own conversion to the thirtieth year of his age. His life had been always pure and unblameable according to man's judgment. After this time it became more conspicuously devoted to the service of Christ; yet it was not till fourteen years after this time that he commenced work as a minister. In the interval his religious labours were chiefly of the kind which Friends call "eldership," and which consists in accompanying the ministers on their missionary journeys, advising them as to their spiritual course, and discriminating between the ministers whose gifts claim encouragement and

eventual recognition, and those who seem to have mistaken their vocation.

It was during this period of his life that he was in a remarkable manner preserved from death by shipwreck. In 1842 he had arranged to accompany his uncle, William Backhouse, on a visit to the little congregations of Friends in Norway. A few days before the time fixed for their departure, William Backhouse stood up to preach in the meeting-house at Darlington; before he had uttered a word he fell back senseless, and expired upon the spot. The event was of course felt as a great shock by all his relatives, including his nephew and intended companion; but when tidings came that the steamer in which they were to have sailed, and which started on her voyage on the very day of his uncle's funeral, had foundered at sea, and that all on board had perished, he saw that his own life had been as it were given back to him in the course of God's Providence, and felt himself more than ever bound to use it in the service of Christ.

In 1852 he began to preach in the assemblies of Friends, and after two years' probation was "recognised" as a minister, which position he occupied for the remaining twenty-five years of his life. His

preaching was very characteristic of the man, with no elaborate oratory, but a fine natural flow of language and a certain character of manly strength and earnestness in every discourse. His favourite topic of exhortation, especially in later years, was, "Press on, do not be satisfied with infancy or childhood in the Christian life. It is time now that you were full grown men and women in Christ Jesus, with all the power to overcome which this maturer life should bring to you." The *happiness* of the Christian believer was another favourite theme, both in his conversation and his sermons. In speaking of his life after his conversion he says, "The more closely I kept to my faithful Guide, the more I understood the beauty of holiness, the glory of the Lord's delightsome land, the sweetness, the safety and the rest of abiding in Jesus." Those words, "the Lord's delightsome land," are very characteristic both of his life and ministry, and in writing them one seems to hear again the fine tones of that strong and hearty voice impressing them on his hearers.

He married in middle life, Katharine, daughter of Thomas and Mary Mounsey, of Sunderland. He had no children of his own, but always surrounded himself as much as possible with young

people, his nephews and nieces, or the children of his old friends, and often seemed himself the youngest of the party. He associated them with himself in his rambles in search of health, in his yachting excursions in Norway, or his sketching tours in Switzerland; and his own keen love of nature, and observant eye for her varying moods, made him a delightful companion on such occasions. It is difficult to describe this part of his character without conveying the impression that his was a self-indulgent life; but this was far from being the case. The sorrows and the sins of great cities, and especially of the great seaport near to which he himself lived, claimed a very large share of his time and thought, and he spent not only money, but health and energy freely in the endeavour to alleviate and reform them. He erected a large mission-hall in one of the poorest districts of Sunderland, which became the resort of a large congregation, and was the centre of a great Christianizing and civilizing work in a district which had much need of such assistance. In the various operations connected with this place, both on Sundays and week-days, he took a large personal share.

It remains only to say a few words as to his

object in commencing the compilation which is now offered to the reader. It will be well first to quote his own words written only a few months before his death, viz., on the 2nd of March, 1879. "In Second month 1874, or about that period, I was standing painting in my own room, when an impression was made upon my mind which I believed to be from the Lord, that I ought to devote my leisure in my latter days to writing a portion of Church History; especially with the view of exhibiting to the Christian world, in a popular manner, the principles and practices of the Society of Friends. So I forthwith began to explore Church History generally, because the history of Friends was quite familiar to me; and ultimately, as I saw that I greatly differed from many excellent historians in the inferences I drew from many events in the history of the Church, I was induced to attempt *myself* to write a history of Christianity which I thought might prove useful to some as exhibiting the principles and practices of the Churches, viewed from a Quaker standpoint, and compared as nearly as I could with apostolic precedent."

In pursuance of this design he read through the

twenty-three volumes of the Ante-Nicene Christian Library. (Not having kept up his knowledge of the classics he was necessarily dependent on some form of translation). In some instances he did not perhaps read every page, but in very many his marks and notes run through the whole volume. In the same way he read the ecclesiastical histories of Eusebius, Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomen and Theodoret; and among modern compilations made frequent use of Du Pin, Mosheim, Neander, Burton's Church History, and some others.

It should be mentioned here that the Editor has carefully gone through the MSS., verifying quotations, and in many instances comparing them with the original, and has also expanded many parts which appeared to be rather meagrely treated, and touched on some points which had been altogether omitted. It need scarcely be said that his views and convictions are closely in unison with those of the author, and that he has taken up the work as a labour of love.*

Edward Backhouse's work at this history occu-

* It has not seemed necessary to trouble the reader with typographical distinctions between the portions contributed by the two writers, but it may be stated that the Editor is responsible for fully one half of the matter of this volume, and for the form of the whole of it.

pied the last few years of his life, filling them (perhaps too full for his bodily strength) with interesting employment. He carried his usual energy of character, his almost boyish enthusiasm into his new pursuit, and pushed with untiring zeal through the thick jungle of heresies and councils. Nevertheless it may be permitted to an observer to regret that his thoroughness and determination to get to the bottom of things should have led him to begin his studies at so early a point in the history of the Church. He knew the local history of the North of England well; the history of the Society of Friends perfectly; and if he had confined his labours to these subjects he would probably have produced a work which would have been accepted as an authority in that more limited field. For the present work of course it would be vain to expect such a position. It proposes to be but a compilation, but it is believed that it will be found an honest and accurate one.

Further, owing to the late period of life at which the author commenced his studies, it was scarcely possible for him quite to carry into effect his own purpose, even for the period covered by this volume. That purpose was to write the history of the Church from the point of view of the Society of Friends, a

body which the great mass of ecclesiastical writers consider heretical. His desire, perhaps not fully allowed to himself, was to find out with what early teachers stigmatized as heretics he himself could in any way sympathise; what protests against priestly assumptions and ritualistic corruptions had been made in the early ages of the Church. This enquiry, so interesting if it be not impossible, still remains to be prosecuted, and would require the best years of a scholar's life. With very few exceptions, Church history has been written by authors claiming the magic title Catholic. The heretics are like the partizans of a fallen dynasty; they have failed, and therefore they must be in the wrong.

Under that one wide tombstone on which is inscribed the word heresy, slumber in all probability the representatives of the most divergent schools of thought—wild and licentious anti-nomians—Judaical reactionaries—logical philosophers, oppressed (as the men of our day are oppressed) by the feeling of waste in the natural world, and longing to bring its laws into harmony with the revelation which God has given of Himself in Christ,—and side by side with these some honest assertors of the freedom and spirituality of the Gospel against the innova-

tions which were turning the servants of the Church into a pretentious priesthood and the services of the Church into a tawdry pageant. There they all slumber together. Who shall find in obscure allusions in forgotten folios the clue to their dark abode, who shall make the dry bones rise again a mighty army, part them under their several standards, separate the precious from the vile, find out the true forerunners of the free Christian thought which since the sixteenth century has renovated the world, and separate them from those mere teachers of license and traders in immorality who follow in the wake of every great religious movement?

As has been already hinted our friend was not able to put the finishing touches even to this the first portion of his work. His health failed perceptibly after he had passed the threescore years and ten, but he was still able to engage in his ordinary pursuits. In the hope of profiting by a southern climate, he went to Hastings, but was there seized with a more serious malady, and after an illness of only four days, passed peacefully away on the 22nd of May, 1879.

THOMAS HODGKIN.

The Editor has much pleasure in tendering his warm thanks to those friends who have, in various ways, aided him in his work, amongst whom he would name William Beck and Thomas Hodgkin. He has also received valuable literary aid throughout from R. Hingston Fox.

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The Photographs are taken, by the generous permission of John Henry Parker, C.B., from his rich and beautiful collection of Photographs of Roman Antiquities (numbering 3,300), and have been reproduced by the Woodbury process.

The Etchings, by W. Bell Scott, were engraved at Edward Backhouse's desire expressly for this work. The Sarcophagus of the Empress Helena, now in the Hall of the Greek Cross in the Vatican, is of red Egyptian porphyry, and is, with that of Constantia in the same museum, the largest extant in that material. The high reliefs with which it is covered represent a battle with the capture of prisoners, and portraits of the Empress and Constantine.

# PART I.

TO A.D. 200.

# CHAPTER I.

## Promulgation of the Gospel—The New Society—Picture of Heathenism.

At the very time when, in fulfilment of ancient prophecy, the Jewish people were in expectation of the advent of the Messiah, the Gentile nations, awaking to the consciousness that their idols were no gods and their philosophy vain, were panting for something higher and more satisfying.

It was at this epoch that "the Christ" was born in Bethlehem; when, amid the darkness, the heavenly glory shone round about the shepherds, and the angel said to them, Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord. As he spoke, the angel was joined by a multitude of the heavenly host, singing, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased.[1] Thus, at the time appointed by the Father, the Lord came down from heaven and blessed our world with the light of his glorious gospel.

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[1] Luke ii. 8-14.

Part I. Chap. 1.

But when the desire of all nations, the long expected Messiah, came, the rulers of the Jews rejected Him because He came not with worldly pomp and power, to overthrow the dominion of imperial Rome and restore the kingdom to Israel. Though He came to his own, his own received Him not.[1] They were insensible to his miracles, resisted his life-giving words, and refused to have Him to rule over them, crying aloud to the Roman Governor, Crucify Him, crucify Him! And Pilate crucified the Son of God. But God raised Him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.[2] Then was fulfilled the prophecy of David, so rich in blessing, Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive; Thou hast received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.[3]

At this time the greater part of the known world was subject to Rome, and, excepting the Jewish religion, Paganism was universal. The chief cities were adorned with magnificent temples, erected in honour of "those which are no gods," and embellished with "graven images" of marvellous beauty, the work of Phidias, Praxiteles, and a host of sculptors of undying fame. Judaism also had its grand ecclesiastical buildings. Besides the temple at Jerusalem, stately synagogues, having

[1] John i. 11. [2] Acts ii. 24. [3] Ps. lxviii. 18.

massive pillars and cornices richly sculptured, had risen up in many towns.[1] These places of meeting were very numerous, for wherever ten persons were found who desired it, a synagogue was opened. There were said to be 480 in Jerusalem alone; whilst at Alexandria, Rome, Babylon, and by many a river side in Asia Minor, Greece or Italy, such a house for the mingled worship and business of every Jewish community was to be found.[2]

The Jewish mind, as has been said, was filled with expectation, and the Gentiles were craving for food to satisfy their starving souls, when, through the establishment of a New Covenant, the spiritual needs of all, Jews and Gentiles, were fully met by the Gospel. Free and perfect redemption through Jesus Christ was first proclaimed to the Jews in Jerusalem. On the day of Pentecost there were added to the disciples about three thousand souls; and shortly afterwards the number of the men who believed was about five thousand; while a little later we are told that the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly, and a great company of the priests

---

[1] So far as this relates to Palestine it may be doubted if the architectural fragments which have given rise to the supposition are really the remains of synagogues.

[2] Stanley's *Jewish Church*, pt. iii., pp. 463-5. The synagogue (meeting-house) was also known by another Greek name of similar meaning, *ecclesia*, afterwards appropriated to Christian congregations and to the places where they met.

Part I. Chap. 1.

were obedient to the faith.[1] And when the gospel had been proclaimed throughout Judea, the Apostle Peter was constrained by a heavenly vision to accompany the messengers of Cornelius, and to preach the same good news to the Roman Centurion and his household.[2] Thus the Gentile was admitted to the same privilege as the Jew, and the promise of our Lord to Peter was fulfilled, I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.[3] Peter used the keys to unlock the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles; and they also became heirs of God, and from being afar off were thenceforth made nigh by the blood of Christ.[4]

The Church of Christ thus founded was the pillar and ground of the truth,[5] the kingdom of heaven amongst men. It was not merely a professing but a spiritual Church, the family of God on earth, which is one with His household and family in heaven. This is the only universal or Catholic Church. The Church of Rome may call herself catholic, but she has no right to the title. All who have been baptized with the Holy Spirit, under whatever name they may be known, belong to the Catholic Church, and all who are in their natural state, unconverted and strangers to this spiritual baptism, whatever may be their name or profession, are outside the Catholic Church, for they are not members of the body of Christ.

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[1] Acts ii. 41; iv. 4; vi. 7. [2] Acts x. [3] Matt. xvi. 19.
[4] Ephes. ii. 13. [5] 1 Tim. iii. 15.

A year had not passed from the Ascension of our Lord before persecution commenced in Jerusalem against His followers. The saintly Stephen was the first to suffer death at the hands of the unbelieving Jews, while Saul was standing by consenting, and kept the raiment of those who slew him.[1] But the persecutor found it hard to kick against the goad,[2] and, transformed by grace, became in course of time Paul the great Apostle of the Gentiles, mighty in word and deed.

Ten years after the martyrdom of Stephen, Herod Agrippa put to death James the brother of John. Nevertheless, the new faith spread, and the word of God grew and multiplied.[3] The apostles and evangelists setting forth in various directions, travelled throughout the known world, proclaiming the glad tidings. Early tradition informs us that John resided in Asia Minor; that Thomas preached the gospel in Parthia, Andrew in Scythia, and Bartholomew in India;[4] and that Mark was the founder of the church in Alexandria.[5] Thus they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following.[6] As it was with their blessed Master, so it was with them, their word was with power.[7] Everywhere men were turned

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[1] Acts xxii. 20. [2] Acts xxvi. 14. [3] Acts xii. 24.

[4] Probably Yemen in Arabia. Later accounts make Thomas go to India.

[5] Gieseler's *Ecclesiastical History*, Clark, i. 79.

[6] Mark xvi. 20. [7] Luke iv. 32.

Part I. Chap. 1.

from darkness to light,[1] and, putting off the old man with his deeds, put on the new man, and were created again in the image of God.[2]

In this manner, in the midst of the great Roman world, festering with corruption but still intent upon its schemes of grandeur and conquest, there grew up a new society, animated by another and a far loftier spirit. All unobserved, a leaven had begun to work which was to spread and prevail, producing everywhere new institutions, new hopes, and a new and better life. Then was to be seen in one city after another the realization of the golden visions of prophecy;—

> Assemblies such as Earth
> Saw never, such as Heaven stoops down to see.

Such, for example, was the company which, about the year 58, met regularly in Corinth in the house of Justus,[3] or some other convenient dwelling. Here, the partition wall which had separated them for 2,000 years being broken down, Jew and Gentile were seen to enter at the same door, embrace one another with a fraternal kiss, recline round the same table, break bread, and dip together in the same dish. Hither came the Chief Ruler of the Synagogue and the Greek Chamberlain of the City, with others of all ranks and various nations.[4] Now woman was restored to her rightful place and

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[1] Acts xxvi. 18. [2] Col. iii. 9, 10. [3] Acts xviii. 7.
[4] Acts xviii. 8; Rom. xvi. 21-23.

honour; and the slave, a class which composed one half of the population, found a refuge, and was welcomed as a brother in the Lord. In these meetings holy truths undreamt of by the world were the subjects of conversation, and bold plans of spiritual conquest were discussed and organized;[1] and then all would unite together in invoking upon the cause which they loved so dearly, a blessing from their common Father in heaven in the name of their invisible but present Lord. I. Cent.

It is not easy for us who have grown up in the midst of a Christian commonwealth to comprehend the darkness of heathenism out of which the believers were brought. It is not, alas! that the reign of night is yet over. Far from it. But the blessed light has happily chased into holes and caverns some of the more loathsome forms of evil. Let one who was well acquainted with the heathen world, and had reached mature age before he embraced the truth, draw aside for us the veil, so far at least as we are able to bear it.

"Fancy thyself," he says in writing to a friend, "transported to a lofty peak of some inaccessible mountain, and thence gaze on the world below. Thou wilt behold the roads beset with robbers and the seas with pirates; wars raging in every land, and the whole earth wet with blood. Murder, which in the case of one man is called a crime, thou wilt

[1] See Cooper's *Free Church of Ancient Christendom*, 2nd ed. p. 174.

Part I. Chap. 1.

hear lauded as a virtue because it is committed wholesale.

"If thou turn thy eyes to the cities, thou wilt see assemblies of men and women more dreadful to behold than any desert, for they are met to satiate themselves with cruelty and blood. The bodies of the gladiators are fed up with stronger food, and the vigorous mass of limbs is enriched with brawn and muscle, that the wretch may die a harder death. Skill in slaughter is an art; training is undergone to acquire the power to murder, and the achievement of murder is glory. Fathers look on their sons; a brother is in the arena, and his sister is among the spectators; and, even though a grander display should increase the price of admission, the mother—O depth of shame—pays it that she may witness the dying agonies of her own child.

"Nor less deplorable is another kind of spectacle, the theatre, where the ancient horrors of parricide and incest are unfolded in action expressive of the very image of the deed, as if on purpose that the wickedness of former ages may never be forgotten. In the mimes[1] again are taught all licentiousness and all infamies: the actors are praised in proportion as they are effeminated and degraded; and if perchance any woman should go to see them modest, she returns corrupted. Nor do they fail to adduce in recommendation of their enticing

[1] Mimic plays or farces.

abominations, the example of the gods, whose horrid crimes indeed are the very religion of the people. I. Cent.

"Or if from thy lofty watch tower thou could look down into the private houses, if thou could open the closed doors of the chambers, thou would see what even to see is a crime. . . . And as if this were not enough, those who are criminals in secret are accusers in public, denouncing abroad in others what they themselves commit at home.

"Possibly thou mayst suppose that the forum at least is free from vice, that it is neither exposed to exasperating wrongs nor polluted by the association of criminals. Turn thy gaze in that direction; thou wilt discover things more odious than before. Though the laws stand there graven on twelve tables, and the statutes are publicly exhibited, yet wrong is done in the midst of the laws themselves, wickedness is committed in the very face of the statutes. The rancour of the disputants rages; the forum echoes with the madness of strife. The sword is close at hand; and the tormentor also, with the claw that tears, the rack that stretches, the fire that burns up,—more tortures for the poor human body than it has limbs. And who is there to help? The patron? He prevaricates and abandons you. The judge? He sells his sentence. One man forges a will; another makes a false deposition; children are cheated of their inheritance. Amongst the guilty it is a crime even to be innocent.

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"But lest we should seem to be picking out extreme cases only, let us turn now to such things as the world in its ignorance counts good. Beneath its varnish, wickedness and mischief lie hid; just as some poison, whose flavour is craftily concealed by sweet medicaments, passes for an ordinary drink, but when it is taken produces death. See that man strutting in his purple; with what baseness has he purchased his glitter. At what haughty thresholds, and on how many scornful footsteps of arrogant great men, has he waited, that by and by a similar procession might attend him, a train drawn together, not by his person but by his power, not for his character but for his *fasces*. Watch and thou wilt see the degrading end, when the time-serving sycophants have deserted him, and the favour of the populace is lost, for which the family estate was squandered. Others thrusting away the poor from their vicinity, add forest to forest and field to field, or store up gold in countless heaps. Such are torn by endless fears lest the robber should spoil or some envious neighbour harass with malicious lawsuits. The rich man sighs in the midst of the banquet, whilst he quaffs the jewelled goblet; and when his luxurious bed has enfolded in its yielding bosom his body languid with feasting, he lies wakeful in the midst of the down. Oh senseless greed, to cling so obstinately to the tormenting hoards! From him no liberality flows to his dependents,

no charity to the poor. Marvellous perversion of names, to call those things *goods* which are put only to *evil* uses."[1]

This gloomy picture of Cyprian's, which is in fact only an expansion of the Apostle's indictment of the pagan world in the Epistle to the Romans,[2] is confirmed by the heathens themselves. "The world is filled," says a celebrated philosopher, "with crimes and vices. Things are too far gone to be healed by any regimen. Men are battling for the palm of reprobate manners. Each day lust waxes and shame wanes. Trampling down all that is good and sacred, lust hies it whithersoever it will. Vices no longer shun the light. So barefaced is wickedness become, and so wildly does it blaze up in all bosoms, that innocence is not to say rare, but is nowhere to be found."[3] These scorching words of Seneca's were written about the very time when Peter was announcing to the Gentile Cornelius the only remedy for sin and evil, the gospel of Christ.[4]

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[1] Cyprian, Epistle i., c. 6-12, Ante-Nicene Christian Library. Some of the darkest spots are not included in the above catalogue, as the frequent suicides, the treatment of slaves, divorce, infanticide. For the last, see Tertullian, *Apology*, c. 9, and *To the Nations*, b. i., c. 15. Juvenal says the Roman ladies counted more divorces than married years.—*Satire* 6. On the subject of slavery, see below, c. 18.

[2] Chap. i., 18-32.

[3] Seneca *On Anger*, quoted in Cooper's *Free Church*, p. 32.

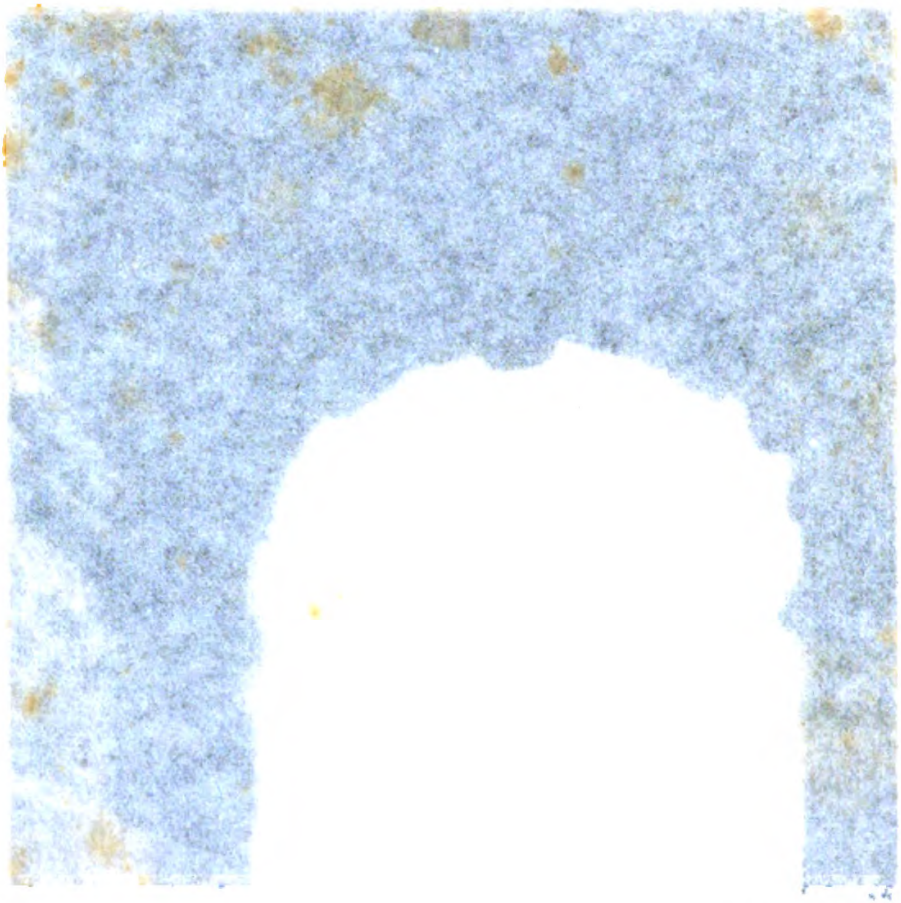
[4] Michaud, *Biographie Universelle*, Art. Seneca, says, "This Treatise is supposed to have been written during the reign of Caligula, A.D. 37-41." Peter was at Cæsarea in the year 39.

Part I. Chap. 1.

At the root of all this evil lay idolatry, alike the classic worship of Greece and Rome, and the sanguinary rites of Phœnicia or the reptile-adoration of Egypt. Whatever of wisdom or beauty is to be found in the fables of Olympus, how completely soever poetry and art may have woven their magic spell round the mythology of Greece, heathenism ever was and ever must be essentially corrupt. "It is absolutely impossible," says a recent author, "to write in detail of the shocking depravities of the old heathen world. The very rottenness of its sepulchre will ever most surely guard its own dreadful mystery. The reader need not be told how heavily charged with all kinds of moral death a religion must have been whose divinities were [what these were]; and the less scandalous alone of whose temples could be tolerated within the walls of cities. There is not one of the odious vices for which the unclean Canaanites were doomed to extirpation, and the cities of the plain weltered in the fiery storm, which does not soil the portrait handed down by history, of full many a ruler, statesman, poet and philosopher of classic Greece and Rome."[1]

[1] Cooper's *Free Church*, p. 31.

The Arch of Titus. On the left pier is seen the Emperor in his triumphal car drawn by four horses. On the right, here scarcely distinguishable, are carved the Golden Table and Candlestick and the Silver Trumpets. The Coliseum and Arch of Constantine in the background.



## CHAPTER II.

### Nero's Persecution—Destruction of Jerusalem—Jewish-Christian Church.

The infant Church was not long to be exempt from internal trouble and dissension. The Hebrew converts at Jerusalem were all zealous for the law,[1] and could not rest satisfied without seeking to impose the Mosaic yoke on their Gentile brethren.[2] Although their efforts were in the main unsuccessful, some of the Churches were severely tried by Judaizing teachers. Very slow were the Galatians, for example, to understand that they were no longer servants, but were now called to be sons; that they were no longer even children, for the law had been only as a schoolmaster; in fine, that the whole ceremonial of the Mosaic ritual was, in Christ Jesus, at once and for ever abolished. Grieved with the childish affection which they manifested for outward observances, the Apostle exclaims, Now that ye have come to know God, or rather to be known of God, how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again?

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[1] Acts xxi. 20. [2] Acts xv.

Part I. Chap. 2.

Ye observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labour upon you in vain. Are ye so foolish; having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?[1]

In A.D. 64 the first historical persecution of the Christians by the Pagans took place at Rome, by order of Nero. To escape the odium of the common report that he was the author of a conflagration which destroyed two-thirds of the city, this infamous Emperor accused the Christians of being the incendiaries. The inhabitants of the great metropolis had not yet become acquainted with the true character of the Christians (whom they confounded with the Jews), and all classes, philosophers as well as the common people, regarded them with blind hatred and contempt. The historian Tacitus, to whom we owe the account of the persecution, calls them "a people hated for their crimes." As this is the first distinct notice of Christianity in any heathen writer, we give the passage entire. "Christ," he says, "the founder of the sect, was put to death in the reign of Tiberius by the Procurator Pontius Pilate. But the pestilent superstition, repressed for a time, burst forth again, not only throughout Judea, the birthplace of the mischief, but in Rome also, whither all things base and atrocious flow together and find favour. To

[1] Gal. iv. 9-11; iii. 3.

put a stop to the popular clamour, Nero falsely accused this people of the conflagration, and subjected them to the most barbarous treatment. Those who were first seized confessed;[1] then a vast multitude, detected by their means, were convicted, not so much of the crime of burning the city, as of hatred to mankind. Insult was added to their torments; for being clad in the skins of wild beasts, they were torn to pieces by dogs; or they were affixed to crosses to be burned, and used as lights to dispel the darkness of night when the day was gone. Nero devoted his gardens to the show, and held games, in which in the dress of a charioteer he mingled with the rabble or drove round the circus. So that although the guilty suffered, compassion was excited, because they were put to death, not so much for the public good, as to satiate the ferocity of one man."[2] A.D. 64.

Nero's circus adjoined his gardens. The site is now occupied by the great Cathedral Church of St. Peter's; and the famous obelisk of red granite, brought from Heliopolis by Caligula and now a central object in the Piazza, then stood on the spine or barrier of the circus. The torture of the burning shirt to which the Christians were subjected is referred to by several classic writers.

[1] He no doubt means that they confessed themselves to be Christians.

[2] *Annals*, b. xv., c. xliv. Tacitus was a child of about six years when the persecution took place. His statement is confirmed by his contemporary Suetonius, *Life of Nero*, c. xvi.

Seneca says it was "besmeared and interwoven with combustible materials;"[1] and Juvenal speaks of the wretches "who stand burning in their own flame and smoke, their head propped up by a stake fixed under the chin, till they make a broad stream (of blood and running pitch or sulphur) on the sand."[2] The Church, which has preserved so little authentic tradition of her earliest days, even of the journeyings and death of the apostles themselves, has no record of her children's sufferings in this fiery trial. But though we seek in vain for their names on any earthly roll, they are not therefore lost; their faith and patience, and every pang they endured of body or spirit, are all registered on high.

The persecution continued more or less to the end of Nero's reign; and tradition says that about the year 67 the Apostle Paul was beheaded, and Peter crucified, at or near Rome. Of the accuracy of the former statement little doubt is entertained, but the latter rests on less conclusive testimony. We possess contemporary evidence of the martyrdom of both, but it is not so certain that Peter's took place at Rome. Clement of Rome says, "Peter sustained numerous labours, and at length suffered martyrdom. . . Paul after having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to

[1] Epist. xiv.

[2] *Satires*, i. 155-157. The readings are various, and the passage is somewhat obscure.

the extreme limit of the West, suffered martyr- A.D. 70.
dom under the prefects."[1] "Christian tradition," observes Canon Farrar, in allusion to Peter, "acquiring definiteness in proportion as it is removed from the period of which it speaks, has provided us with many details which form the biography of the apostle as it is ordinarily accepted by the Romanists. . . All that we can really learn about his closing years may be summed up in the few words, that in all probability he was martyred at Rome."[2]

The hour at length arrived when, in fulfilment of our Lord's prediction, Jerusalem was to be compassed about with armies.[3] On the advance of Titus and his legions, the Christian Jews, remembering the warning given them by their Lord,[4] forsook their once holy city, and passing in large numbers across the Jordan, found refuge in Pella and the neighbouring villages.[5]

Josephus tells us that the siege of Jerusalem took place when the city was filled with Jews from all quarters, gathered there to celebrate the Passover. The crowding together of such vast multitudes pro-

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[1] Epist. c. v.

[2] *The Early Days of Christianity*, i., pp. 113, 119; and Excursus, ii. See also Neander's *Planting of the Christian Church*, for a full examination of the question, vol. i., pp. 377-383.

[3] Luke xxi. 20. [4] v. 21.

[5] Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, Crusé, b. iii., c. v. Pella was the chief of the ten cities of the Peræa, known as the Decapolis, and was distant sixty or seventy miles north-east from Jerusalem.

Part I. Chap. 2.

duced first pestilence and then famine, which added greatly to the horrors of the siege.[1] "This mighty concourse of people," says Josephus, "were cooped up in the city as in a prison, and the slaughter made of them exceeded all the destructions that men or God ever brought upon the world." The number of those who perished during the siege is stated by him at one million one hundred thousand, and the prisoners taken during the whole war at ninety-seven thousand. The tallest and most comely of the young men were reserved by Titus for his triumph; a large number of the captives were distributed amongst the Roman provinces, to be butchered as gladiators; those who were under seventeen were sold into slavery; the rest were put in chains and sent to work in the Egyptian mines.[2]

On the return of Titus to Rome, the Senate decreed to him, and to his father Vespasian by whom the war had been begun, an extraordinary triumph. Josephus was present, and is not ashamed to employ his pen in describing in glowing language the pageant which proclaimed the humiliation and ruin of his country. Gold, silver and ivory streamed through the show like a river. Purple hangings,

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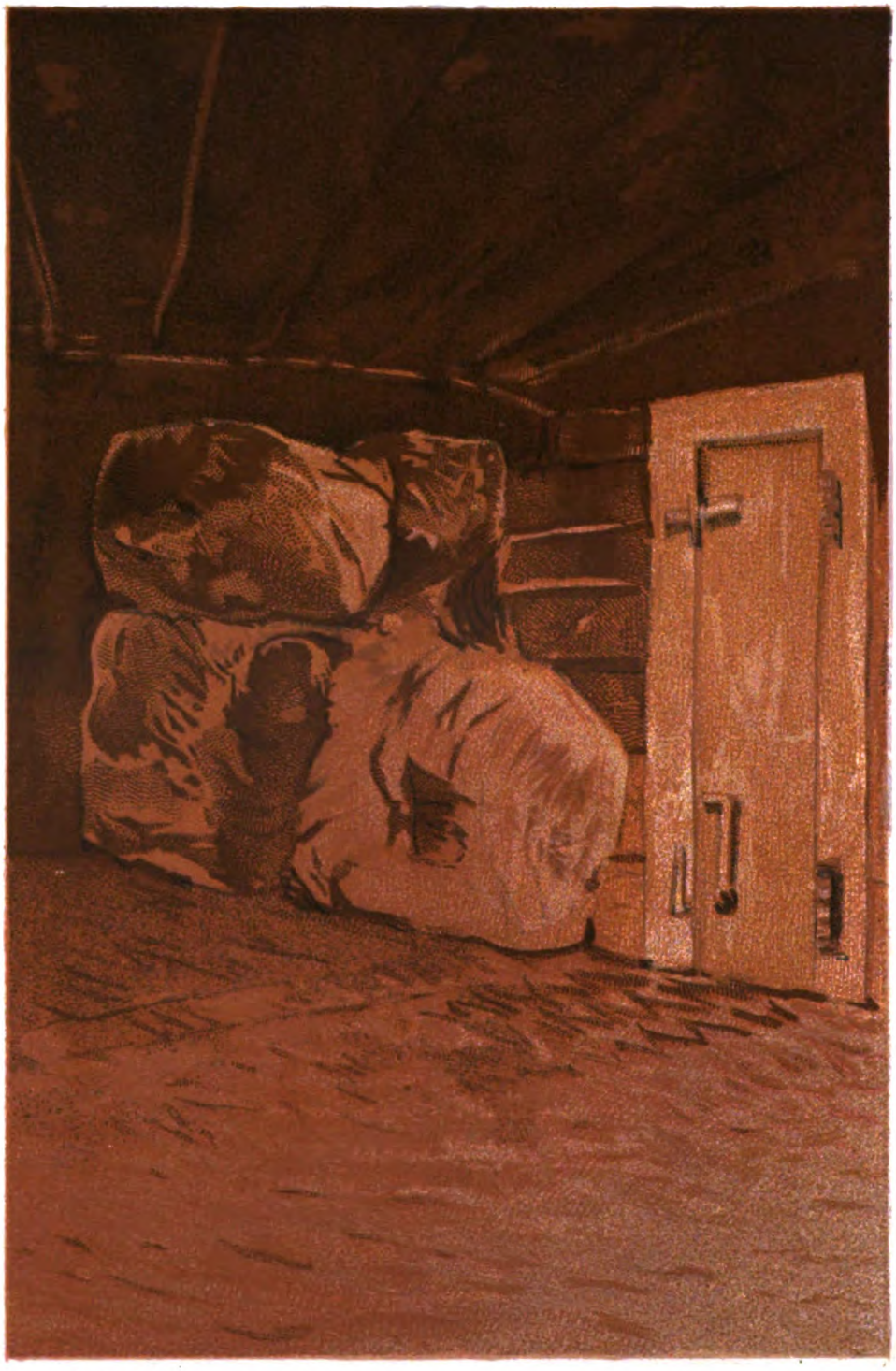
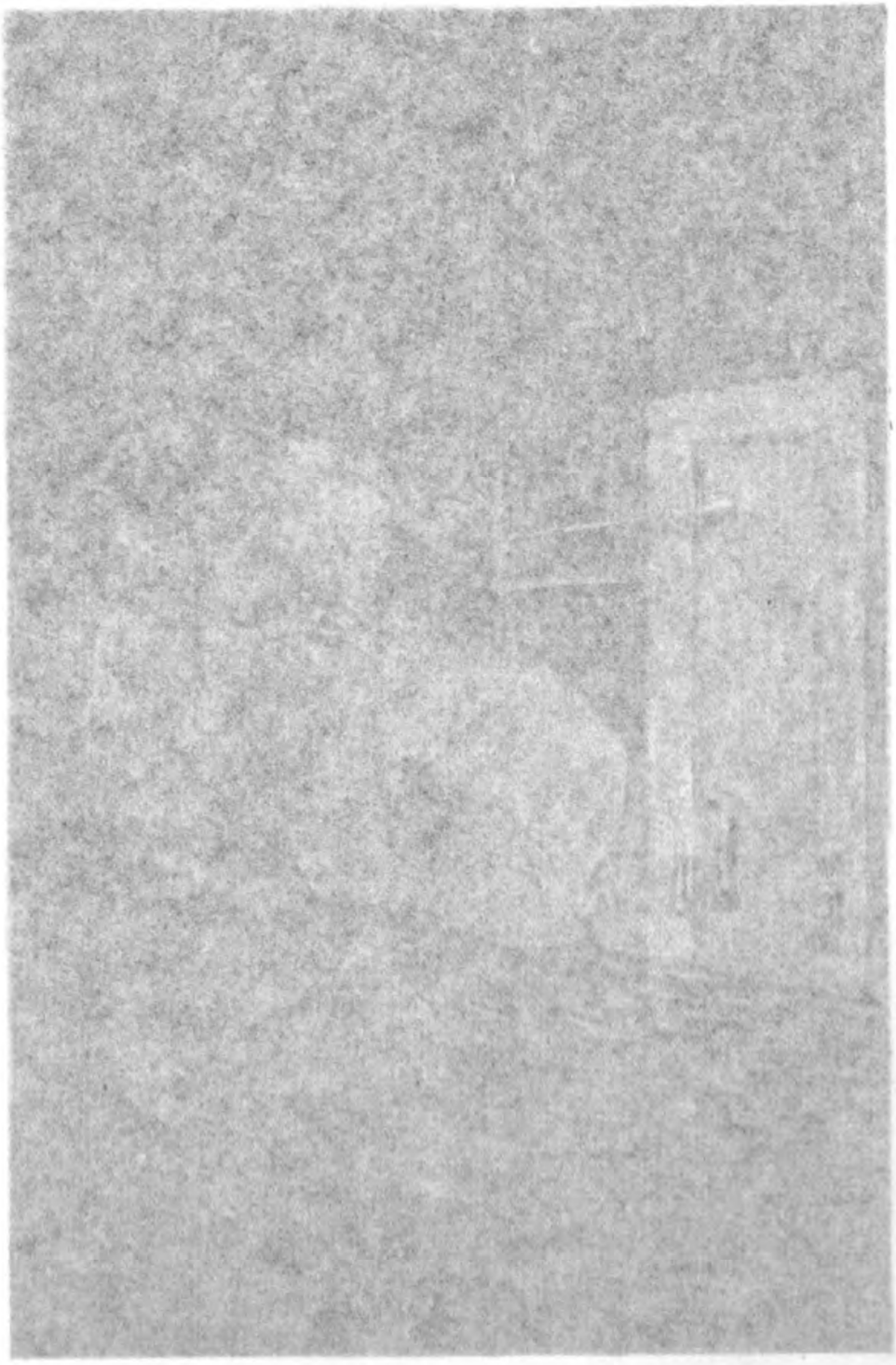
[1] *Wars of the Jews*, b. vi., c. ix. § 3, 4; and Notes by Whiston, who estimates that the number of Jews assembled at the Passover, including the proselytes, could not be fewer than three millions. This calculation is based on Josephus' enumeration of the Passover lambs slain (256,500), and on his statement that not fewer than ten and as many as twenty persons might form a company.

[2] Idem. § 2, 3. See Deut. xxviii. 68.



End of the lower Mamertine Prison, with the Tarpeian Rock. The door leads to other and extensive dungeons.

*From an original drawing by Edward Backhouse.*



End of the lower Mamertine Prison, with the Tarpeian Rock. The door leads to other and extensive dungeons.

*From an original drawing by Edward Backhouse.*

embroidery, precious stones, and rare animals succeeded one another. Colossal statues of the Roman gods, borne by men in the richest attire, were followed by long files of dejected captives. Then came magnificent trophies, three or four stories high, representing the battles and sieges of the campaign,—wasted plains, blazing cities, the slain and suppliant enemy, and rivers running through a land devoured by fire and slaughter. But the rarest trophy of all was the spoil of the Temple at Jerusalem,—the golden table, the seven-branched candlestick, and the sacred roll of the law. Lastly rode Vespasian, accompanied by Titus and Domitian, "making a glorious appearance." When the conquerors came to the ascent from the Forum to the Capitol they stood still, and waited until news was brought that the chief general of the enemy, Simon Bar-Gioras, who had been taken out of the procession and dragged down into the horrid dungeon of the Mamertine, had been slain. Then they pursued their march up to the great national Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, to offer prayers and sacrifices of milk-white oxen to that divinity, and to deposit their golden crowns in the lap of his image. This triumph is commemorated on the well-known Arch of Titus, on which are sculptured the golden table, the silver trumpets, and the candlestick. These and the rest of the sacred instruments and vessels were deposited in a magnificent Temple to Peace which Vespasian

A.D. 70.

erected; whilst the copy of the law and the purple veils of the Holy Place were ordered to be laid up in the imperial palace.[1]

Neither the destruction of Jerusalem, nor the consequent cessation of the temple-worship, could shake the faith of the Jewish nation in the perpetual obligation of the law, nor even detach from its observance a large part of those who had embraced Christianity. When the war was over, many of the exiles in Pella and the Peræa returned to the ruined city, and the Church in Jerusalem remained until the time of Hadrian (A.D. 136), wholly composed of Christians of Jewish descent, who were distinguished from the Gentile Churches by the observance, as far as it was possible, of the Mosaic ritual. But many continued to reside in the cities of Decapolis, and survived as a separate Church, even down to the fifth century.[2] We cannot be altogether surprised at the exceeding tenacity with which these Hebrews, although sincere believers in Christ, clung to the ancient ceremonies in which they and their fathers had been educated. But neither can we be insensible to the adverse influence which Jewish ritualism exercised over the whole Church, early dimming its brightness, and in later times, when mingled with ideas and practices derived from heathen worship, endangering its very life.

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[1] Josephus' *Wars*, b. vii., c. v.; Adam's *Roman Antiquities*.

[2] Neander's *Church History*, Torrey, i., p. 476.

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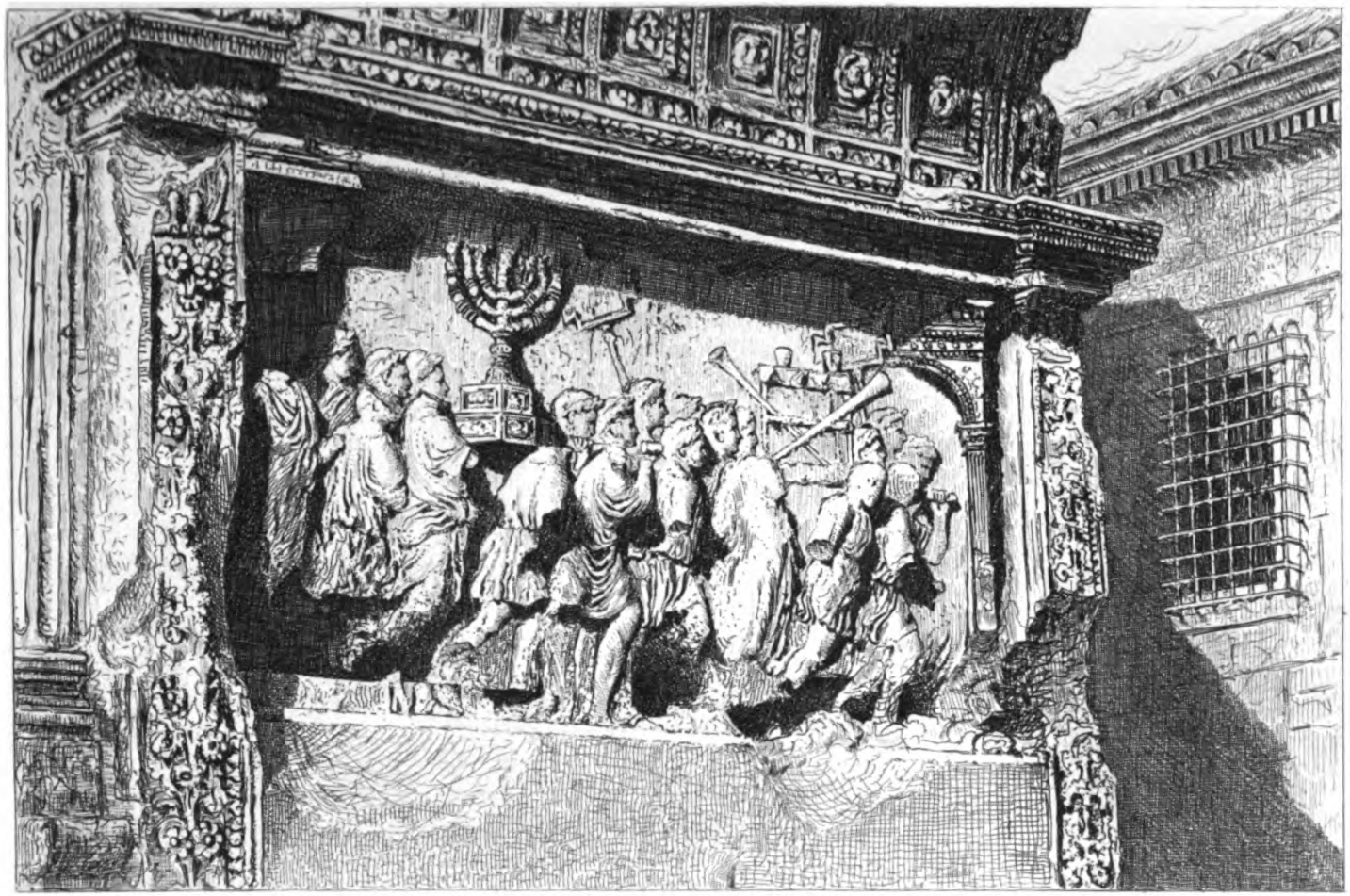

**The Golden Candlestick, Table of Shew Bread and Silver Trumpets, on the Arch of Titus.**

*Etched from a photograph, by W. Bell Scott.*

## CHAPTER III.

### Domitian and Nerva—The Apostle John—Epistle of Clement of Rome and Letter to Diognetus.

During the reigns of Vespasian and Titus (A.D. 69-81), we have no record of any persecution of the Christians. But it was otherwise under Domitian (A.D. 81-96), although the hostility which he manifested towards them seems to have been the result of a cruel and jealous nature rather than of any systematic attempt to crush the new religion. Some were put to death, amongst whom was Flavius Clemens, nephew to the Emperor. Domitilla, the wife of Flavius, herself also a relation of Domitian, with many others, were banished. The Apostle John's exile to Patmos is also generally said to have taken place under Domitian.[1] A.D. 81-96.

Apprehensive of an outbreak among the Jews if one of royal lineage should present himself as their leader, the tyrant ordered search to be made for the descendants of David.[2] Being informed by his spies that there were then living two grandsons

[1] Eusebius' *Eccles. Hist.*, b. iii., c. xviii. The conflicting evidence as to the date of John's exile is examined in Neander, *Planting of the Church*, and in Farrar's *Early Days of Christianity*.

[2] Vespasian shared in the same fear. Eusebius, b. iii., c. xii.

of Jude (known as the Lord's brother), he caused them to be brought before him. He asked them whether they were of the lineage of David; and when they confessed they were, he inquired what property they possessed. They replied that they had no money, but that they owned between them a piece of land containing thirty-nine plethra (about nine acres), by which they supported themselves and paid the taxes. At the same time they showed him their hands, which were horny with constant work. The Emperor then inquiring as to the nature of the Kingdom of Christ, and when and where it was to appear, they answered that it was not a temporal or earthly kingdom, but celestial and angelic; and that it would appear at the end of the world, when, coming in glory, Christ would judge the quick and dead, and render to every one according to his works. Upon which Domitian, despising the men as beneath his notice, dismissed them, and ordered the persecution to cease.[1]

The Emperor Nerva, who succeeded (A.D. 96), maintained in his conduct towards the Christians the same character of justice and clemency which he showed in his general administration. Those who had been banished were recalled, and their goods restored; and it was enacted that the evidence of a slave against his owner should be inadmissible,

[1] Hegesippus, *Fragments from Comment. on the Acts*, Ante-Nicene Library. See also Eusebius, b. iii., c. xx.

and that all slaves and freedmen who had betrayed their masters for becoming Christians should be put to death.[1] But as Christianity was not a *religio licita* (*i.e.* not recognised by Roman law), the respite was only temporary.

All the Apostles were now dead except John, who is believed to have survived until the beginning of the reign of Trajan, dying at Ephesus about the year 99. Two anecdotes of a very pleasing character have been preserved of him, resting on more or less probable testimony.

The first comes to us through Clement of Alexandria, who wrote about a century after John's death. "Listen," he says, "to a tale, which is not a tale, but a true history handed down by memory, respecting the Apostle John. When, on the death of Domitian, John returned from Patmos to Ephesus, he made circuits through the surrounding regions, here to appoint overseers, there to set Churches in order, there again to ordain such as were signified to him by the Spirit. Coming on one occasion to a city [supposed to be Smyrna], he saw a young man, strong, and of a pleasing and earnest countenance, and turning to the overseer said, 'I solemnly commit this youth to thee in the presence of the Church and of Christ.' When the Apostle had departed, the overseer took the young man home with him, watched over, instructed, and

[1] Neander, *Church Hist.* i., pp. 133, 134.

Part I. Chap. 3.

in time baptized him. But when this was done, imagining that the divine seal which had now been set upon him would be a complete protection, he relaxed in his care and guardianship. Having thus obtained premature liberty, the young man fell into the company of some idle and dissolute youths of his own age. They first enticed him with luxurious entertainments, and at last prevailed on him to accompany them in the nightly depredations by which they were accustomed to supply themselves with money. By degrees he became as daring as any of them, and having once turned aside from the right path, and like a hard-mouthed and powerful horse taken the bit between his teeth, he rushed headlong to destruction. Possessed of a commanding spirit, and foremost in every bold and dangerous enterprise, he was at length chosen captain of the band. After some time the Church in the city, needing assistance, sent again for the Apostle. When he had settled the matters on account of which he came, he said to the overseer, 'Come now, give up the charge which the Saviour and I committed to thee in the presence of the Church.' The overseer was at first confused, not understanding what John meant; but when the Apostle told him that he spoke of the young brother whom he had committed to his care, he groaned, and bursting into tears answered, 'He is dead.' 'Dead,' exclaimed the Apostle, 'and how did he die?' 'He is dead to God,' was the reply; 'he fell

into bad company and became a robber, and has now with his followers taken possession of yonder mountain which is to be seen from the church.' On hearing this the Apostle rent his clothes and said, 'It was a strange way of keeping guard over a brother's soul whom I left under thy care: but let a horse be brought and some one be my guide.' Without a moment's delay he rode off just as he was. On coming to the mountain he was arrested by the outpost of the band. 'Lead me to your captain,' said the Apostle. The sentinel did as he was directed. The captain, who was on the watch, saw the Apostle coming and recognized him. Overcome with shame he turned and fled. The good old man, forgetting his years, followed with all his strength, crying, 'My son, why dost thou flee from me, thy father, old and unarmed? fear not, there is still hope for thee. I will account to Christ for thee. If need be, I will willingly endure death for thee, as the Lord did for us. Stand; believe that Christ has sent me.' At these moving words the robber stood still with downcast eyes, and then trembling threw down his arms and began to weep bitterly. The Apostle coming up embraced him, and with many compassionate words led him away and took him back to the city; nor did he depart until he had restored him to the Church."[1]

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[1] Clement's tract, *Who is the rich man who shall be saved?* c. xlii. A. N. L.

The other tradition rests upon an authority further removed from the time: it is from Jerome, who wrote in the fourth century.[1] When the Apostle could no longer walk to the meetings of the Church, but was borne thither by his disciples, he always uttered the same words. Reminding his hearers of that commandment which he had received from Christ Himself, as comprising all the rest, and forming the distinctive character of the New Covenant, "Little children," he used to say, "love one another!" And when asked why he always repeated the same thing, he replied that "if this one thing were attained, it would be enough."[2]

It is evident from the New Testament that even in the first generation of Christians "false brethren" had made their way into the churches. Some of these, as has been already said, sought to spy out the liberty of the believers and to bring them again into bondage to the law. Others are described as actuated by an utterly deceitful and licentious spirit.[3] Later in the century we find the poisonous leaven of this heretical teaching actively at work amongst the churches of Proconsular Asia, drawing down on them the heavy sentence, that

[1] It does not follow that a tradition preserved by a later hand is altogether of inferior authority to one found in an earlier writer; but other evidence being equal, the remoteness of the record diminishes the credibility of the fact.

[2] *Comment. on Epist. to the Galatians*, c. vi.

[3] 2 Cor. xi. 13. Jude v. 4.

unless they repented, their candlestick should be removed out of its place and their light be altogether extinguished.[1] But notwithstanding dark spots and shades, the Church at the close of the first century must have been in a singularly vigorous state, abounding in love, and waging a perpetual and victorious warfare against sin and evil. "The bright prospect," says Cooper, "which opened up on the day of Pentecost, of the rallying of redeemed mankind around the Son of Man, and of their awakening to a common consciousness of their brotherly relationship to each other in Him, was realized in the bosom of the two or three hundred apostolic Churches (which had then been gathered), in some cases four thousand miles apart, and built up of men of every variety of rank, culture, colour, clime, language, and previous religious training, as it has never been since."[2]

Few authentic works of Christian writers have come down to us from the sub-apostolic age. "To believe, to suffer, to love," says Milner, "not to write," was the characteristic of the primitive Christians.[3] And Mosheim remarks, "The writers of this first age possessed little learning, genius or eloquence; and this is honourable, rather than reproachful to the Christian cause. For that a large portion of the human race should have been

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[1] Rev. ii., iii.

[2] *Free Church*, p. 128. [3] *Church History*, i., p. 107, ed. 1847.

Part I. Chap. 3.

converted to Christ by illiterate men, shows that the propagation of Christianity must be ascribed, not to human abilities and eloquence, but to a divine power." [1]

Nothing is more striking in entering on the study of Church History, than the transition, in authority and unction, from the New Testament to the writings which immediately follow. In one respect this contrast is a cause for gratitude, inasmuch as it confirms our faith in that unseen Providence by which the volume of inspiration was made up and hedged off in so silent yet emphatic a manner.

Of the writings which are supposed to belong to the end of the first or beginning of the second century, two deserve particular notice. They are the Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, and the Letter of an anonymous author to Diognetus.[2]

The Epistle of Clement is written in the name of the Christians of Rome to their brethren at Corinth. The occasion which called it forth was the outburst of a violent party-spirit in the latter city, which led to the displacement of some of their presbyters.

In this Letter, written some forty years after Paul's two Epistles to the same Church, the

[1] *Ecclesiastical History*, Soames, i., p. 91.

[2] Nothing is known of this person but his name.

Roman overseer commences with reminding his readers of the faith, knowledge, and humility for which they had been distinguished; and then proceeds to deplore in the strongest terms the change which had come over them. He refers them to the Epistles of Paul, who had to complain in his day of the party-spirit to which they were addicted, and declares that the state into which they had now fallen was far worse. "It is, beloved," he writes, "exceedingly disgraceful that such a thing should be heard of, as that the most stedfast and ancient Church of the Corinthians should, on account of one or two persons, engage in sedition against its presbyters." I. Cent.

This Epistle, which was held in very high estimation by the early Christians, abounds in gospel exhortation. "Let us look stedfastly to the blood of Christ, and see how precious that blood is to God, which having been shed for our salvation has set the grace of repentance before the whole world. . We are not justified by ourselves, by our own wisdom or understanding or godliness or works which we have wrought in holiness of heart, but by faith through which from the beginning Almighty God has justified all men. Shall we then become slothful in well-doing, and cease from the practice of love? Rather let us hasten with all energy and readiness of mind to perform every good work. . . Let every one be subject to his neighbour according to the special gift bestowed upon him. Let the

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strong not neglect the weak, and let the weak show respect to the strong. Let the rich man provide for the wants of the poor, and let the poor man bless God because He has given him one by whom his need may be supplied. Let the wise man display his wisdom, not by words but through good deeds. Let the lowly not bear testimony to himself, but leave witness to be borne to him by another."[1]

Clement's Epistle was addressed to a Christian Church, for whose edification only it was written; the Letter to Diognetus was written for the outside world, and is a vindication of the superiority of Christianity over Paganism—the earliest treatise of the kind which has come down to us.[2]

The Letter thus commences: "Since I perceive, most excellent Diognetus, that thou art uncommonly anxious to be informed respecting the religion of the Christians; what God they put their trust in, and how they worship; how it is they all look down upon the world, and despise death, and neither make any account of those that are legally recognised as gods by the Greeks, nor observe the Jewish superstition; and what the affec-

[1] Chaps. vii., xxxii., xxxiii., xxxviii.

[2] Many writers refer this Letter to a later period, but it bears internal marks of having been written very soon after the promulgation of the gospel. (Note especially the phrase "new sort of men," in chap. i.) Chapter xi., in which the writer affects to speak as an immediate disciple of the apostles, is judged to be spurious. Ante-Nicene Lib., vol. i., pp. 301-2. Our translation is from Cooper's *Free Church*, appendix A.

tion means which they cherish for one another; and why it is that this new sort of men, or mode of living, has entered into the course of the world now, and not before;—I am heartily pleased with thee for this forwardness, and I ask of God, who prepares us for both speaking and hearing, that it may be given to me so to speak that thou mayest hear to thy greatest possible improvement, and to thee so to hear that he who speaks may have no reason to repent it." I. Cent.

After eloquently demonstrating the vanity of the heathen idols, and the superstitious practices of the Jews, he continues: "The Christians are not separated from other men by earthly abode, by language or by custom. Nowhere do they dwell in cities by themselves. They do not use a different speech, or affect a life of singularity. They dwell in the cities of the Greeks and of the barbarians, each as his lot has been cast; and while they conform to the usages of the country in respect to dress, food and other things pertaining to the outward life, they yet show a peculiarity of conduct wondrous to all. They inhabit their native country but as strangers. They take their share of all burdens as citizens, and yet endure all kinds of wrong as though they were foreigners. Every strange soil is their fatherland, and every one's fatherland a strange soil to them. They are in the flesh, but they live not after the flesh. They tarry on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey

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the laws, and they conquer the laws by their lives. They love all, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and yet are condemned; they are killed, and made alive. They are poor, and make many rich. They are blasphemed and justified. They are reviled, and they bless. . . What the soul is in the body, that Christians are in the world. The soul dwells in the body and yet is not of the body; and Christians dwell in the world but are not of the world."

Again, on the source from whence they derived their religion: "It was not delivered to them as any earthly invention, nor have they been entrusted with the stewardship of any human mysteries. But the almighty and allcreating and invisible God, Himself from Heaven, inaugurated amongst men the truth and the holy and inconceivable Word, and fixed it firmly in their hearts; not sending to men, as one might fancy He would do, some subordinate, either an angel or a prince, but the framer and architect of all things Himself. . . If so, it must have been, as one of the sons of men would argue, to tyrannise, to affright, to strike down with dread. Not so, but in gentleness, in meekness; as one who saves He sent Him; as persuading, not as compelling, for there is no compulsion with God. He sent Him as loving, not as judging; but He will one day send Him to be our Judge, and who may abide his coming?"

The question why the Son of God was sent so

late into the world, is thus answered: "Till the old time ended God suffered us to be carried away, as we were bent on being, by our lusts; not that He had pleasure in that season of unrighteousness, but that He was creating the present season of righteousness, in order that, being proved by our own works incapable of life in that age, we might now be capacitated for it by the clemency of God." I. Cent.

In conclusion, with a heart overflowing with love to God for the unspeakable gift of his Son, the writer says: "He Himself gave away his own Son as a ransom for us, the holy for the lawless, the harmless for the evil, the just for the unjust. For what else could veil our sins save his righteousness? In whom was it possible that we, the lawless and impious, could be justified, save in the Son of God alone? O sweet exchange! O work past finding out! O benefits beyond expectation! that the lawlessness of many should be hidden in one righteous person, and that the righteousness of one should justify many lawless."

## CHAPTER IV.

### Trajan and Pliny—Martyrdom of Ignatius—His Epistles.

The records of the Church from the close of the Book of Acts to the end of the first century are, as already remarked, exceedingly scanty. Every well-authenticated fact of her history during this period of about a generation, as well as the greater part of that which enables us to depict her character, has been noticed in the foregoing chapters; and it is a little remarkable that the event which stands out in the highest relief—the persecution under Nero—has reached us through a Pagan, not a Christian, channel.[1] A similar dearth of record distinguishes the early years of the second century, during which also we are indebted to a classical source for the only description of Christian worship which we possess, brief as it is, previous to the time of Justin Martyr.

Under Trajan, who, on the death of Nerva, succeeded to the imperial dignity (A.D. 98), the

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[1] See ante, p. 16. Tertullian (*Apology*, c. v), Eusebius (*E. H.*, b. ii., c. xxv.), and Lactantius (*On the Death of the Persecutors*, c. ii.) all mention the Neronian persecution, but, besides being much later, they give no details.

refusal of the Christians to unite in acts of idolatrous honour, either to the heathen gods or to the Emperor, began to attract the serious notice of the government. No little difficulty however was experienced by the governors of provinces in dealing with this new sort of offenders. A.D. Cir. 110.

This was the case in Bithynia and Pontus, whither the younger Pliny was sent as Proconsul, A.D. 103.[1] After he had been there some years he found that very many persons were brought before his tribunal on the charge of being Christians; and as such informations were altogether new to him, as there was no definite law on the matter, and especially as the number of the accused was large, he found himself in great perplexity how to act, and accordingly wrote to the Emperor for instructions. "Many," he says, "of every age and rank, and of both sexes, are involved in the danger, for the contagion of this superstition has seized not only cities, but villages in the open country." He speaks of the temples as having been almost deserted, the ordinary rites of worship for a long

[1] The character of the younger Pliny gave lustre to his age. Instead of the gladiatorial shows which were expected from him as Governor, he invested £4,000 for the support and education of deserving youths, and exhorted his friends to do the same. In this act he imitated the example of the Emperor Trajan, who seems to have been the first imperial founder of benevolent institutions. It was the same Pliny who, in two letters to Tacitus, described the first historical eruption of Vesuvius (A.D. 79). His uncle, Pliny the Naturalist, venturing too near, was suffocated by the shower of ashes. Pliny's *Letters*, i. 8, vii. 18, vi. 16, 20.

time intermitted, and victims for sacrifice rarely purchased. More just than his friend Tacitus, he would not allow himself to be biassed by vague reports and prejudices, but took pains to obtain accurate information as to the character of the Christian sect. He interrogated some who said they had once belonged to the community; and following the cruel custom of Roman justice, "which," as Neander observes, "knew nothing of man's universal rights," he applied the torture to two female slaves, who were said to occupy offices in the Church, for the purpose of extorting from them the truth. All that he could learn was, that the Christians were accustomed to meet before daylight on a certain day of the week, and sing a hymn in praise of their God Christ; and that they solemnly bound themselves, not to the commission of crimes, but to abstain from theft and adultery, never to break their word, and to withhold no property entrusted to their keeping; that after this they separated, and reassembled to partake together of a simple and innocent meal. Pliny's method of proceeding with respect to those who were brought before him, was to ask them whether they were Christians. If they confessed, he interrogated them a second and a third time, with a menace of capital punishment. "In case of obstinate perseverance," he continues, "I ordered them to be executed; for of this I had no doubt, whatever was the nature of their religion,

that stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy ought to be punished." "Many," he adds, "repeated after me an invocation to the gods, and offered worship with wine and frankincense to your image (which for this purpose I had ordered to be brought with the images of the divinities), and also reviled the name of Christ,—none of which things, I am told, a real Christian can ever be induced to do." A.D. Cir. 110.

The Emperor, in his reply, approved of Pliny's conduct, and directed that the Christians were not to be sought after by the police, but if information should be lodged against any, and the crime should be proved, they were to be punished, unless they should recant and do sacrifice to the gods.[1]

We see from Pliny's letter that many who had embraced Christianity in her time of peace and prosperity, were not thoroughly established in the faith, and at once yielded unconditional submission. The effect of the Proconsul's severe measures, as he further tells us, was soon apparent; the temples began again to be frequented, the demand for victims revived, and the festivals were thronged as before.

In this persecution, which was not confined to Pontus and Bithynia, the aged Symeon ("brother of our Lord," and bishop of Jerusalem), suffered martyrdom. He was one hundred and twenty years old. Being denounced to Atticus, the Governor of

[1] Pliny's *Letters*, x. 97, 98. Neander's *Church History*, i. 134-138.

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Syria, as a dangerous person because of his descent from King David,[1] he was subjected for many days to extreme torture, which he bore with so much firmness that all the beholders were amazed. At last he was put to death by crucifixion.[2]

But now Trajan himself was to be brought face to face with the Christians. Shortly after his correspondence with Pliny, the Emperor came to Antioch. This city, the capital of Syria, was one of the largest in the empire, and the disciples, who there first received the name of Christians, were very numerous. Their bishop was the aged Ignatius, a disciple of the Apostle John. The Emperor, elated with his recent victories (so the ancient document recording the martyrdom of Ignatius informs us), considered his triumph incomplete so long as the Christians refused to worship the gods, and he threatened them with death if they persisted in their refusal. The venerable bishop, in the hope of averting the storm from his people, was at his own desire brought into the presence of the Emperor. When he was set before him, Trajan asked: Who art thou, who, possessed with an impious spirit, art so eager to transgress our commands, and persuadest others to do the like, to their own destruction?

Ignatius replied: Theophorus [that is, he who carries God within him] ought not to be called impious, for all evil spirits are departed from the

[1] See ante, p. 23. [2] Eusebius, b. iii., c. xxxii.

servants of God. But if thou callest me impious because I am against evil spirits, I own the charge, for I destroy all their wiles through Christ my heavenly King. A.D. 116.

*Trajan.* Who is Theophorus?

*Ignatius.* He who has Christ within his breast.

*Trajan.* And dost thou not think we too have the gods within us, who assist us in fighting against our enemies?

*Ignatius.* Thou art mistaken in calling the demons of the nations by the name of gods; for there is only one God, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that is therein, and one Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, whose kingdom be my portion!

*Trajan.* Dost thou mean him who was crucified under Pontius Pilate?

*Ignatius.* Yes; I mean Him who crucified my sin, and who has cast all the deceit and malice of the devil under the feet of those who carry Him in their hearts.

*Trajan.* Dost thou then carry within thee him who was crucified?

*Ignatius.* I do; for it is written, I will dwell in them and walk in them.

At the end of the examination Trajan pronounced this sentence: "We command that Ignatius, who affirms that he carries within him Him who was crucified, be put in chains and taken by soldiers to great Rome, there to be devoured by the beasts for

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the gratification of the people." When he heard the sentence Ignatius cried out with joy, "I thank thee O Lord, that thou hast vouchsafed to honour me with a perfect love towards thee, and hast made me to be bound with iron chains like thy Apostle Paul." Being placed under a guard of ten soldiers, he was taken to Seleucia, and thence by ship to Smyrna, where he was allowed to see his friend Polycarp, bishop of the church in that place, who also had been one of the Apostle John's disciples. Thither also came deputies from the surrounding churches, bishops, presbyters and deacons, to greet him and receive his blessing. From Smyrna he was taken along the coast to Troas, and thence to Neapolis, and across Macedonia on foot to the Adriatic coast, whence they sailed round Italy to the port of Rome.

When Ignatius was come into the city and had saluted the brethren, who rejoiced to see him, but sorrowed because one so venerated was about to be put to death, he knelt down in the midst of them and prayed to the Son of God that the persecution might be stayed, and that mutual love might continue among the brethren. He was then hurried away to the Flavian amphitheatre, for the games were just about to close. This immense building, now so well known as the Coliseum, contained seats for 80,000 spectators, and would probably be crowded to the utmost, when the venerable chief of the Asiatic Christians was to be brought out

like Samson to make sport. Alone in the midst of that vast multitude, tier above tier, women and men, slaves and senators, he met the death his ardent spirit panted for; the savage beasts were his grave. How great a translation—from the stained arena, and the lions' jaws, and myriads of cruel eyes strained to catch sight of his blood—to the Garden of Paradise and the holy presence of God! The few bones which remained were gathered up by the brethren and carried to Antioch, where they were wrapped in linen and reverently buried.[1] A.D. 116.

While on his journey to Rome, Ignatius wrote Epistles to several of the churches and to Polycarp.[2] In that written to the Romans he

[1] *Martyrdom of Ignatius.* A. N. L. The date of Ignatius' martyrdom has been much disputed; some writers placing it in the year 107, others in 115 or 116.

[2] Fifteen Epistles bearing the name of Ignatius are extant. Eight of these have been universally condemned as spurious. Of the seven which remain, being those which are mentioned by Eusebius, two recensions (different readings) exist in the Greek language, a longer and a shorter. In both a strong hierarchical tendency is manifest; an extravagant, not to say idolatrous, veneration for the Episcopal office is inculcated. The shorter reading in some of the Epistles is less open to these charges than the longer. Ever since critical editions of the Epistles began to be issued, a keen controversy has been maintained amongst church historians and theologians as to which form should be regarded as the more authentic. The general opinion has been in favour of the shorter. Many able critics however have suspected that even in this form the Epistles had been interpolated.* About forty years ago, Archdeacon

* Cooper, premising that Tertullian is the earliest writer who shows traces of the *sacerdotal* theory, and that these Epistles, "though saturated through and through with the *prelatical* element, are entirely free from the *sacerdotal*," concludes that the spurious additions were made before Tertullian wrote, and draws the inference "that the entire series belongs to the age of Pope Victor" (A.D. 192-201). "Like the movement," he says, "which originated with Victor, they are intensely both anti-Jewish and hierarchical." pp. 262, 263.

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exhibits his burning desire for martyrdom. "Ye cannot," he says, "give me anything more precious than this—that I should be sacrificed to God while the altar is ready. It is good that I should set from the world in God, that I may rise in Him to life. Only pray for strength to be given to me from within and from without, that I may not only speak, but also may be willing, and that I may not merely be called a Christian, but also may be found to be one. . . Leave me to become the prey of the beasts, that by their means I may be accounted worthy of God. I am the wheat of God, and by the teeth of the beasts I shall be ground, that I may be found the pure bread of God. Provoke ye greatly the wild beasts, that they may be for me a grave, and may leave nothing of my body, in order that when I have fallen asleep I may not be a burden upon any one. Then shall I be in truth a disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world sees not even my body. . From Syria, and even unto Rome, I am cast among wild beasts, by sea and by land, by night and by day, being bound between ten leopards,

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Tattam brought from a monastery in the Desert of Nitria, in Lower Egypt, a large number of ancient manuscripts in the Syriac language, and amongst them a version of three of the Epistles of Ignatius. These were published by the late Dr. Cureton, who regarded them as the only genuine letters of the martyr which have come down to our time. They are very brief, and entirely free from the hierarchical animus which pervades the Greek copies. It is from them only that the following extracts are taken. See the Epistles in all the three forms, translated, in the Ante-Nicene Library, with the Introductory Notice. Vol. i., pp. 139-144.

which are the band of soldiers, who even when I do good to them, all the more do evil to me. . . . My love is crucified, and there is no fire in me for another love. I seek the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, and I seek His blood, a drink which is love incorruptible."[1] A.D. 116.

The following choice sentences are from the Epistles to Polycarp and to the Ephesians. To the former he writes: "Be studious of unity, than which nothing is more precious. Bear with all men, even as our Lord beareth with thee. Draw out thy spirit to all men in love, as indeed thou doest. Be constant in prayer. Ask for more understanding than thou already hast. Be watchful as possessing a spirit which sleeps not. Speak with every man according to the will of God. If thou lovest the good disciples only, thou hast no grace; seek to overcome those that are evil by gentleness. All wounds are not healed by the same medicine. Mitigate the pain of cutting by tenderness. We ought to bear everything for the sake of God, that He also may bear us. Be discerning of the times. Look for Him who is

[1] Chaps. ii.-vii. This panting for martyrdom was not approved by all the "Fathers." Clement of Alexandria says, "The Lord does not will that we should be the authors or abettors of evil to any one, either to ourselves or the persecutor. He bids us take care of ourselves, and he who disobeys is foolhardy. He who does not avoid persecution, but rashly offers himself for capture, becomes an accomplice in the crime of the persecutor, and if he provokes and challenges the wild beast he is certainly guilty." Stromata (*Miscellanies*), iv., c. x.

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above the times, who is invisible, who for our sakes became visible, Him who endured everything in every form for our sakes. . . Let there be frequent (or regular) assemblies; ask every man to them by name. Despise not slaves; but neither let these be contemptuous, but labour more diligently as for the glory of God, that they may be counted worthy of a more precious freedom which is of God."[1]

To the Ephesians he says: "Ye are prepared for the building of God the Father; ye are raised up on high by the instrument of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, and ye are drawn by the rope, which is the Holy Spirit; your pulley is your faith, and your love is the way which leads up to God. Pray for all men, for there is hope of repentance that they may be counted worthy of God. Especially let them be instructed by your works. Conciliate their harsh words by meekness and gentleness; give yourselves to prayer against their blasphemies, and be armed with faith against their error."[2]

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[1] Chaps. i. iv. [2] Chaps. ix. x.

## CHAPTER V.

### HADRIAN—INSURRECTION OF THE JEWS—MARCUS AURELIUS—PERSECUTION AND CALUMNIES.

THE Emperor Trajan dying (A.D. 117), Hadrian succeeded to the throne.[1] Under the new monarch, who was strongly attached to Paganism, the course taken by his predecessor[2] produced still more disastrous consequences to the Christians. The profession of Christianity, which had before been simply unrecognized, was now expressly condemned, and an impulse was given to that religious hatred which exercises so mighty a power over the minds of men. Besides this, there were governors of provinces who, for the sake of ingratiating themselves with the Emperor, or of gaining popularity, or because they shared the fanaticism of the multitude, looked with indifference on the scenes of riot and blood-

A.D. 117-138.

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[1] Instead of foreign conquest this politic Prince devoted himself to the consolidation of his vast dominions, to civilization, commerce, and the arts. He made the circuit of the provinces, including Britain; and there are extant medals of twenty-five countries through which he travelled. His curiosity was worthy of the present age. He looked into the crater of Etna,—saw the sun rise from Mount Casius,—ascended to the cataracts of the Nile,—heard the statue of Memnon,—and imported the choice exotics of the East. At Athens he was initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries; in Asia he became a devotee of magic and astrology. Milman's *Hist. of Christianity*, 1863, ii., pp. 104-106.

[2] See ante, p. 39.

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shed which in many places ensued. But these excesses did not long continue, being brought to an end, partly, as it would appear, in consequence of *Apologies*, which two learned Christians of Athens, Quadratus and Aristides, presented to the Emperor when he passed through Greece; but still more by the representations of the Proconsul of Asia Minor, who complained of the misconduct of the populace. Hadrian accordingly issued an imperial order, forbidding under severe penalties all such illegal and tumultuous proceedings.[1]

The fragments which remain of the Apology of Quadratus contain the following passage. Speaking of our Lord's miracles, he says: "Our Saviour's works were real. The sick whom He healed, the dead whom He raised, were constantly to be seen, not only during his sojourn on earth, but long after his departure, so that some of them have survived, even down to our times."[2]

In the latter part of this reign the Jews, who continued to cherish the most violent resentment against the Roman Government, together with expectations of the advent of a temporal deliverer, broke out into a desperate rebellion. Fifteen years before, on the occasion of Trajan's absence in Parthia, they had made a general insurrection. From Africa to Mesopotamia they rose as one

[1] Neander, i. pp. 138-140.

[2] Eusebius, b. iv., c. vi. The whole of Aristides' *Apology* is lost.

man, put to death more than half a million of their Gentile fellow subjects, and glutted their revenge with acts of the most barbarous cruelty. This insurrection was suppressed by Hadrian, then a Roman general, with a still more wholesale slaughter; and the victorious commander, coming to the purple the next year, determined utterly to crush this turbulent nation. For this purpose he prohibited circumcision, the observance of the Sabbath and the reading of the law, and threatened to convert Jerusalem into a Roman colony. A.D. 131.

The Jews endured this tyranny for a number of years, but it was deeply rooted in the heart of the nation that in its darkest hour the Messiah would suddenly appear. They fondly deemed their hopes fulfilled when, in the year 131, a pretender named Bar Cochebas presented himself as their deliverer. This man assumed his name (which means the son of a star) from the prophecy of Balaam,[1] and his pretensions were supported by the most popular and learned Rabbi of the day. The Jews who had not embraced Christianity flocked to him; the Galileans and Samaritans joined them; and Palestine was filled with violence and bloodshed. But the insurgents could not stand against the Roman legions; the false Messiah was slain in battle, and the Rabbi was flayed alive, whilst the city of Jerusalem itself was once more laid in ruins.

[1] Numbers xxiv. 17.

The Emperor carried into effect the threat which he had uttered fifteen years before; he settled a colony in the city under the name of Ælia Capitolina, and erected a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus on the site of the Holy Place. The Jews were forbidden under pain of death to enter the new city, and the more effectually to deter them, the figure of a swine in marble was set over the gate leading to Bethlehem. By the estimate of the conquerors, five hundred and eighty thousand Jews fell in the carnage.[1]

This terrible insurrection turned ultimately to the advantage of the Church. From the beginning of the war, the Christians, whether Jewish or Gentile, refused to countenance the cause of Bar Cochebas, and although in consequence they suffered untold barbarities from his followers, they became in the eyes of the world thoroughly separated from the unbelieving Jews. The Gentile Church also was relieved from the weight of Jewish authority, which till then had rested heavily upon it. The line of Hebrew presbyters and bishops (or overseers), which had existed from the time of James, came to an end, and was replaced by a Gentile succession; and most of the Jewish Christians, coerced by the measures of Hadrian, abandoned the Mosaic usages. Those who still adhered to the ceremonial law withdrew again beyond the Jordan to join the Church of Pella,

[1] Milman's *Hist. of the Jews*, 4th ed., vol. ii., pp. 419-438.

and from this union sprang two sects often met with in the early annals of the Church, the Nazarenes and the Ebionites. The former was a term of reproach, at first given by the Jews to all the believers in Christ, but afterwards confined to Judaizing Christians. The Ebionites (the word signifies *the poor*) engrafted philosophical speculations on the Christian faith, and may be defined as Jewish Gnostics. They were distinguished by the strictness of their moral practice.[1] II. Cent.

It was about this time that the Gospels, Epistles, and other inspired writings of the Apostles, began to be collected into a volume. "The Apostolic Epistles," says Gieseler, "had always been read in the places to which they were addressed, and in the neighbouring congregations; but there was no universally received collection of the evangelical narratives, and the existing ones served in their spheres only for private use. After the Churches had now come into closer connection, they communicated to one another, in their common interest against heretics, the genuine apostolic writings; and thus the canon began to be formed in the first half of the second century, although in the different congregations there continued to be other writings which were valued almost, if not altogether, as much

[1] Robertson's *Hist. of the Church*, 2nd ed. i., p. 21. Eusebius, b. iv., c. v. Kurtz, *Hist. of the Church*, Clark, p. 99. Neander, i., p. 475, &c.

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as those which were universally received."[1] In this manner, in the all-wise providence of God, was formed, as in the case of the Jewish Scriptures, that priceless treasure of the Church, its rule of faith and life for all ages, the New Testament.

With the two Antonines who succeeded Hadrian, philosophy mounted the throne; and it has been conjectured that Antoninus Pius (138-161), who founded and endowed professorships of all the schools of philosophy in the chief provincial cities, may have intended this measure as a check to Christianity.[2] But Antoninus was too humane and philanthropic a prince to leave one section of his subjects a prey to the fury of the rest; and when, on the occasion of successive public calamities, the populace in the Grecian States began to hunt down the Christians, he issued rescripts to repress these outrages.[3]

Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161-180), the son-in-law of Antoninus Pius, went beyond his father in his zeal to maintain the ancient religion. In Asia Minor the Christians were treated with such severity that Melito, Bishop of Sardis, who appeared as their advocate before the Emperor, declares: "The worshippers of God in this country are, in

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[1] *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 161. For example, the Epistle of Clement of Rome, and the *Shepherd* of Hermas, were thus in use.

[2] There were seven such professorships in Athens. The salaries were equivalent to from £400 to £600. Cooper's *Free Church*, p. 178.

[3] Neander, i., p. 143.

consequence of the new edicts, persecuted as they never were before. Shameless informers, greedy of others' possessions, taking occasion by these edicts, plunder their innocent victims day and night. If these things are done by your order, let it be so; we will cheerfully bear the honourable lot of such a death. But we crave this one thing, that you will inform yourself respecting these plotters of mischief, and impartially decide whether the Christians are worthy of punishment and death, or of protection and peace. But if this new edict, which would be intolerable even against barbarous enemies, does not emanate from yourself, the more do we pray you not to abandon us to such lawless robbery."[1] A.D. 161-180

The name of Marcus Aurelius is associated with all that is pious and enlightened in classic heathenism, and the habit of self-examination which he cultivated might be proposed for imitation to many who profess a purer faith; but being ignorant of the gospel, or accounting himself too wise to accept it, he allowed himself to be numbered among its persecutors. What he thought of its professors may be seen from his *Meditations*. "The soul," he says, "should be ready when the time has come for it to depart from the body, either to be extinguished, or to be dissolved, or else to subsist a while longer with the body. But this readiness must proceed from its own free choice

[1] Eusebius, *E. H.*, b. iv., c. xxvi. Neander i. 144.

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and not from mere obstinacy, as is the case with the Christians."[1]

The Church now found herself in a very hard case. All the forces of the world were united against her. The imperial displeasure was powerfully supported by the philosophy of the day, in whose name Lucian and Celsus made violent attacks on Christianity, and promulgated malicious calumnies against its adherents. The heathen priesthood, every day more alive to the irreconcilable nature of the new principle which had risen in their midst, began to see that unless Christianity could be crushed out, their own credit and gains, and the prestige of their senseless idols would be lost. The ignorant populace were always ready to lay hold of any pretence for molesting the Christians, whose manner of life was a perpetual rebuke to their own; and the frequent misfortunes which continued to befall the empire, were made the occasion of outbursts of fury against them as the reputed cause of these calamities.[2]

The charges most usually brought against the Christians were, that they were atheists,—that they were the devourers of their own children,—and addicted to incest and every kind of licentiousness. It is not difficult to suggest some

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B. xi. § 3.

[2] Gieseler, i., p. 131. Milman, ii., pp. 131-134. The year 166 was so replete with national disasters as to be called "annus calamitosus."

explanation of reports such as these. The first charge probably arose from the simplicity of their worship, without either sacrifice, altar or temple; the others may have originated from the communion of the bread and wine, to which none but believers were admitted, and which the heathen would hear spoken of as the body and blood of the Lord, and from the admission of the two sexes on equal terms to their meetings, held often with closed doors, and commenced with the fraternal kiss. Whatever may have been their origin, these calumnious stories were very widely circulated, and continued to be repeated for several generations.

A.D. 161-180.

## CHAPTER VI.

### Justin Martyr.

One of the most illustrious of the cloud of witnesses who in the reign of Marcus Aurelius sealed their testimony with their blood, was Justin, surnamed the Martyr.[1] His father and grandfather were probably of Roman birth: he himself was born at Neapolis (now Nablous), the ancient Shechem. He early addicted himself to the study of philosophy. Looking round on the various schools to which the young men of the day resorted,[2] the Stoics, whom we may remember Paul encountered at Athens some eighty years before, appeared to him the most promising. He accordingly joined himself to one of their preceptors; but when after some time he found he made no progress in that branch of science which he most ardently desired, the knowledge of God, and that his instructor declared such knowledge to be unnecessary, he left him and betook himself to the Peripatetics, the

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[1] Before this time all who suffered for the testimony of Jesus, whether unto death or not, were called martyrs; the title now began to be restricted to those who actually suffered death, the rest being called confessors.

[2] This was probably at Alexandria, "the brain of the ancient world."

followers of Aristotle. But the teacher to whom he applied was so anxious about his fees, that Justin was convinced truth did not dwell with him. "My soul being eager," he says, "to learn the peculiar and choice philosophy, I came next to a Pythagorean, a man of great reputation, who asked me, 'Are you acquainted with music, astronomy and geometry?' and when I confessed that I was ignorant of these sciences, he dismissed me, telling me that before I could understand the things which conduce to a happy life, I must first become acquainted with the learning which weans the soul from sensible objects, and fits it to contemplate what is essentially good. I took this rebuff," he continues, "rather impatiently, and in my forlorn state I turned to the celebrated school of the Platonists. Having found a teacher, I spent as much of my time as possible with him, and made rapid progress. The perception of immaterial things quite overpowered me, and the contemplation of ideas furnished my mind with wings, so that in a little while I supposed I had become wise; and such was my stupidity, I expected presently to see God, for this is the end of Plato's philosophy.

"While I was in this state, wishing to be filled with quietness and to shun the paths of men, I used to walk by myself in a field near the sea. One day an old man of a gentle and venerable appearance followed me at a little distance. I

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stopped, and turning round fixed my eyes keenly on him.

'Do you know me?' he asked.

'No.'

'Why then do you look so intently at me?'

'Because,' I said, 'I had not expected to see any man here.'

'But why are you here?' he rejoined.

'Because,' I answered, 'I love to be where I can converse with myself uninterrupted.'

'Do you pretend to be a philosopher,' said he, 'and do you not love works and truth?'

'What work can be greater,' I asked, 'than to possess the reason that governs all, and from that height to look down on the errors and pursuits of others? Every man should esteem philosophy as the greatest and most honourable work.'

'Does philosophy then produce happiness?' asked the old man.

'Assuredly, and it alone.'

'But what then is philosophy, and what is happiness?'

'Philosophy,' I replied, 'is the knowledge of what really exists, and a clear perception of the truth; and happiness is the reward of such knowledge and wisdom.'"

This led to a long conversation between them on the nature of God and of the soul, and resulted in the inquiry on the part of Justin how, if the ancient philosophers were so ignorant as the old

man made out, the truth was to be learned. Upon this his new teacher referred him to certain men who lived before Pythagoras and Plato, righteous men and beloved by God, who spoke by the Divine Spirit and foretold future events. "Their writings," he said, "are still extant, and very helpful in the knowledge of the beginning and end of things. They did not use demonstration in their treatises, seeing they were witnesses to the truth above all demonstration. They glorified the Creator, the God and Father of all things, and proclaimed his Son, the Christ whom He has sent. Pray therefore that the gates of light may be opened to you, for these things cannot be perceived or understood by all, but only by him to whom God and his Christ have imparted wisdom." When he had thus spoken he went away, "and," adds Justin, "I have not seen him since. But straightway a flame was kindled in my soul, and a love of the prophets and of the friends of Christ took possession of me; and revolving his words in my mind I found this philosophy alone to be sound and profitable."[1]

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[1] Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, chaps. ii.-viii., A. N. L. Justin's quest after truth reminds us of the soul's search for Christ, in Quarles' *Emblems*.

"I search'd this glorious city; he's not here:
I sought the country; she stands empty-handed:
I search'd the court; he is a stranger there:
I asked the land; he's ship'd: the sea; he's landed.
I climbed the air; my thoughts began t'aspire;
But ah! the wings of my too bold desire,
Soaring too near the sun, were sing'd with sacred fire.

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This conversation with the sage was not however the only means of attracting Justin to the Gospel. He was captivated by the demeanour of the Christians, especially by their extraordinary fearlessness in the presence of death. "When," he says in his *Second Apology*, "I was delighting in the doctrines of Plato, I used to hear the Christians slandered, but when I saw them fearless of death and of all else which is accounted terrible, I perceived that it was impossible they should be living in pleasure and wickedness."

Justin settled in Rome as a Christian teacher; but he continued to wear the philosopher's mantle, which, as he tells us, occasioned him to be surrounded, and saluted in the public walk with "Good day, philosopher." He often fell into disputation with the heathen dialecticians, one of

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"I moved the merchant's ear; alas! but he
Knew neither what I said, nor what to say:
I ask'd the lawyer; he demands a fee,
And then demurs me with a vain delay:
I ask'd the schoolman; his advice was free,
But scor'd me out too intricate a way:
I ask'd the watchman (best of all the four),
Whose gentle answer could resolve no more,
But that he lately left him at the temple door.

"Thus having sought and made my great inquest
In every place, and search'd in every ear,
I threw me on my bed; but ah! my rest
Was poisoned with the extremes of grief and fear:
When, looking down into my troubling breast,
The magazine of wounds, I found him there."

B. iv., Emblem 11.

whom, Crescens, a Cynic, he is said to have several times refuted in the presence of many hearers. He foresaw the consequences which must one day result from these victories and writes, "I expect to be waylaid by some one of them and sent to the stake, probably by Crescens himself, that unphilosophical and vain-glorious opponent, who disregards that most admirable saying of Socrates, 'No man's opinion must ever be preferred before the truth.'"[1] A.D. 165.

Whether on the information of Crescens or of some other enemy to the Gospel,[2] Justin was apprehended on the charge of being a Christian; and, together with six of his friends, one of them a woman, was brought before Rusticus, the Prefect of the city, formerly the Emperor's preceptor in the Stoic philosophy.

"What kind of doctrines do you profess?" asked the Prefect.

*Justin.* I have endeavoured to learn all doctrines; but I have settled at last in the true doctrine, that of the Christians.

*Rusticus.* Are those the doctrines that please you, miserable man? Where do you Christians assemble?

*Justin.* Where everyone chooses and is able. Do you suppose we all meet in the same place? Not so.

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[1] *Second Apology*, c. iii. A. N. L.

[2] There is no record of any general persecution in Rome at this time.

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The God of the Christians is not circumscribed by place; being invisible He fills heaven and earth, and is everywhere worshipped and glorified by the faithful.

*Rusticus.* Tell me in what place you collect your followers.

*Justin.* I live above one Martin, at the Baths of Timotheus; and if any one wishes to come to me I communicate to him the doctrines of truth.

His fellow prisoners declaring that they also were Christians, the Prefect threatened them with death, and asked Justin whether, if he were scourged and beheaded, he supposed he would ascend to heaven, there to receive a recompense? Justin replied, "I do not *suppose* it, I *know* and am *fully persuaded* of it." The Prefect then, addressing himself to all the accused, said, "Offer sacrifice to the gods."

*Justin.* No right-minded person falls away from piety to impiety.

*The Prefect.* Unless you obey you shall be punished without mercy.

Upon which all the prisoners, full of faith and of the spirit of their crucified Master, cried out, "Do what you will; we are Christians, and cannot sacrifice to idols."

Upon this the Prefect pronounced sentence. "Let those who have refused to sacrifice to the gods and to obey the command of the Emperor, be scourged and led away to suffer the punishment of decapitation, pursuant to the laws." Accordingly,

after being beaten, they were taken to the place of execution, where they died glorifying God; and their bodies being secretly removed by the faithful were decently interred.[1] Their martyrdom took place about A.D. 165. A.D. 165.

Justin has left three treatises—two Apologies, and the Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew. The first Apology is addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, with the senate and the people of Rome; the second to the Roman Senate in the time of Marcus Aurelius. In the former he appeals "on behalf of those of all nations who are unjustly hated and wantonly abused, himself being one of them," and he calls upon those whom he addressed, since they "style themselves pious and philosophers, guardians of justice and lovers of learning, to give good heed to his words." "We are not come," he writes, "to flatter you, but to beseech you searchingly and impartially to inquire, and righteously to decide. We demand that the charges against the Christians be investigated, and if they can be substantiated, punishment be awarded; but if no one can convict us of any crime, true reason forbids you, on account of a wicked rumour, to wrong blameless men, or rather to wrong yourselves, which you will do if you decide not by judgment but by passion." And in his conclusion he says boldly: "If these

[1] *The Martyrdom of the Holy Martyr Justin* [*and others*], *who suffered at Rome.* A. N. L.

things seem to you to be reasonable and true, honour them; but if nonsensical, despise them as nonsense; only do not decree death against those who have done no wrong. For we forewarn you that if you continue in the course of injustice you cannot escape the impending judgment of God."[1]

We shall have frequent occasion, in the chapters which follow, to refer to Justin Martyr's valuable writings. One peculiarity may be here mentioned. He was an Oriental, and indulged, after the manner of the East, in the symbolical interpretation of Scripture. When Trypho asks him why Christ died on the tree—a death cursed by the law—Justin replies that Moses at the first gave the sign of this seeming curse when he stretched out his hands on the day that Israel fought with Amalek. "The people prevailed," he says, "by the cross; for it was not because Moses so prayed that the people were stronger, but because one who bore the name of Jesus (Joshua) being in the forefront of the battle, Moses himself made the sign of the cross." Still more fanciful, even to absurdity, is his discovery of the same type in the horns of a unicorn.[2]

This fondness for symbolism runs through the

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[1] *First Apology*, chaps. i.-iii. and lxviii. A. N. L.

[2] *Dialogue with Trypho*, chaps. xc. xci. One of his resemblances is much more to the purpose, that in which he likens the paschal lamb, spitted and trussed for roasting, to Christ extended upon the cross: "One spit is driven through the body of the lamb from the lower parts to the head, the other is carried across the back, the legs of the lamb being attached to it." C. xl.

early literature of the Church, which for several generations was almost wholly Eastern. To give another example. One of the most popular books in the library of the early Christians was the Epistle of Barnabas, the work of an unknown author, written probably before the end of the first century.[1] It is a treatise of little value, and abounds in allegorical interpretations of the Old Testament, more ingenious than rational. In the prohibition against eating certain animals as unclean,[2] the writer detects a command not to associate with men who resemble such animals. "The swine," he says, "are emblematical of men who live in pleasure and forget their Lord, but when they come to want, acknowledge Him. The eagle, hawk, kite and raven, signify such men as know not how to procure food for themselves by labour and sweat, but wickedly seize on that of others, and though wearing an air of simplicity, are ever on the watch for plunder. The fishes that have not fins and scales, not swimming on the surface but making their abode in mud at the bottom of the water, are the types of those who continue ungodly to the end, and are already condemned to death."[3]

Nothing is more valuable in the remains of the early Church writers than the narratives of their own conversion. One of Justin's disciples, named

[1] Gieseler, i., p. 110, note 1. [2] Levit. xi. [3] Chap. x.

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Tatian, tells us how he became disgusted with the idolatry in which he had been brought up, and how he was enlightened by reading the Old Testament. He was a native of Mesopotamia, and one among many who, in that inquisitive age, travelled from country to country, enquiring into the various systems of philosophy and forms of religious belief. After speaking of the abominations practised by the Romans, he writes "Having seen these things, and been admitted to the mysteries, and having examined the religious ceremonies of the effeminate, and found amongst the gods of Rome Jupiter and Diana regaling themselves with the blood of slaughtered men, and one demon here and another there instigating to evil,—retiring by myself I sought how I might discover the truth. Whilst I was giving my most earnest attention to the matter, I happened to meet with certain barbaric[1] writings, too ancient to be placed side by side with the systems of the Greeks, and too divine to be compared with their errors. The simplicity of the language, the inartificial character of the writers, the foreknowledge displayed of future events, the excellence of the precepts, and the declaration of the government of the universe as centred in one being, won my confidence. My soul being taught of God, I saw that the writings of the Greek philosophers lead to condemnation, but these writings make an end of

[1] That is, not Greek or Roman.

the slavery that is in the world, and rescue us from ten thousand tyrants, while they give us, not indeed what we had not before received, but what because of error we were unable to keep."[1]

After the death of Justin, Tatian was unhappily led away by Gnostic influences. He went to Antioch and founded an ascetic sect, which from the rigid principles it professed bore the name of the Encratites (*i.e.* self-controlled or masters of themselves). He died a few years later.

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[1] Tatian's *Address to the Greeks*, c. xxix.

## CHAPTER VII.

### The *Octavius* of Minucius Felix—Martyrdom of Polycarp.

Before we proceed further with the sufferings and constancy of those who endured martyrdom during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, let us speak of another apologist for the Christian faith, a contemporary of Justin's.[1]

Minucius Felix, a distinguished advocate of Rome, was the author of a work entitled *Octavius*, which from its vigour of reasoning and elegance of style occupies a high place in the early literature of the Church. It is in the form of a dialogue between two lawyers, Octavius a Christian and Cæcilius a heathen, in the presence of Minucius Felix as umpire. Octavius had been staying with Minucius at Rome, and they and Cæcilius adjourned, during the vacation time of the law courts, to "that very pleasant city," Ostia, for sea-air and sea-bathing.[2]

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[1] The older critics assigned a later date to Minucius Felix, placing him between Tertullian and Cyprian. For the authorities in favour of the earlier date, see Gieseler, vol. i., p. 155, note 12.

[2] Ostia, at the mouth of the Tiber, on the left branch, was once the port of Rome, but about the Christian era it became choked with the sand and mud deposited by the river. The Emperor Claudius constructed a new harbour on the other branch of the river, round which there grew up the flourishing town of Portus. Portus has long since shared the fate of Ostia, and both are now at a considerable distance inland.

II. Cent.

It was in the early morning, as they were sauntering along the shore, drinking in the refreshment of the mild autumn air, and "with excessive pleasure letting their easy footsteps sink into the yielding sand," when Cæcilius, observing an image of the Egyptian god Serapis, kissed his hand in token of adoration.[1] Octavius who noticed it, rebuked Minucius for suffering a familiar friend like Cæcilius to adore in broad daylight images of stone. Neither he nor Cæcilius made any reply at the time; but all three continued their walk along the open shore, where "the gently rippling water was smoothing the sands as if it would level them for a promenade, and came up on the beach with crisp and curling waves." They approached nearer till the little waves by turns broke over their feet, and, retiring, were sucked back into themselves; and as they tracked the winding coast, Octavius beguiled the way with stories of the sea. Retracing their steps, they came upon "some boys eagerly gesticulating as they played at throwing shells into the water. Taking hold of the smooth shell in a horizontal position, they whirled it as low down as possible upon the waves, to make it skim along, or spring up with repeated bounds."

But while Octavius and Minucius were enjoying the sight, Cæcilius stood apart, silent and uneasy. On being asked what vexed him, he confessed it

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[1] Compare Job xxxi. 26, 27.

Part I. Chap. 7.

was the reproof of Octavius regarding the adoration of the statue, and proposed that they should enter on an impartial examination of the rival claims of Christianity and heathenism. They accordingly all sat down on the mole of the beach, built out to protect the baths, and Cæcilius began the argument.

He commences with premising that in the world nothing is known with certainty, and alleges that if there is any difference between the lot of good men and bad, it is in favour of the latter. "In this fortuitous state of human affairs," he argues, "it is the part of a wise man to worship the gods of his ancestors;" and he extols the far-seeing wisdom of the Romans who, as they conquered one nation after another, received its divinities into their Pantheon, and so laid the foundation of universal dominion. He expresses his astonishment, therefore, that a "mean and reprobate faction like the Christians, gathered from the dregs of the people, held together by nightly meetings, fastings and inhuman repasts, silent in public, but garrulous in their own retreats, should dare to rave against the gods. Wondrous folly and audacity," he exclaims; "despising present suffering, the Christians dread imaginary torments to come, and the fear of actual death is lost in the deceitful hope of a future return to life." Involuntarily, however, he bears witness to the virtues of the people whom he affects to despise. "They know one another," he says, "by secret signs, calling each other brother and

sister, and loving one another almost before they know one another. They have no altars," he continues, "temples or images, but they adore the head of an ass,[1] and worship a man who suffered death upon the cross, and even worship the cross itself." He then retails a disgusting story, long current among the heathen, of the initiation of novices by a trick through which they were made, unconsciously, to eat the flesh of a child. He ridicules the faith of the Christians in Divine Providence, and the doctrine of the resurrection. Lastly he appeals to their poverty and persecuted condition as a proof of the falsity of their religion; and regards it as a reproach to Christianity that it forbids their enjoyment of the amenities of life, the circus, the theatre, public banquets and sacred ceremonies, flower-wreaths for their heads, odours for their bodies, garlands to lay upon their graves.



[1] This strange story was first related concerning the Jews, and afterwards transferred to the Christians. No probable explanation of its origin has been given. Tertullian alludes to it in more than one of his treatises, and speaks of a caricature which was carried about Rome in his day, in which "the God of the Christians" was painted with the ears of an ass, a hoof on one foot, and a book in his hand, and wearing a toga. In 1856 there was discovered in one of the buried guard-chambers of the Imperial Palace on the Palatine, a caricature scratched on the wall. It represents a figure on a cross with a human body, but an ass's head; and beside it another figure lifting up his hand and head towards it. Across the picture is scrawled in Greek, "Alexamenos worships [his] God." From the form of the letters the drawing is referred to the end of the second century, about the very time when Tertullian wrote. Tertullian, *Apol.* xvi.; *To the Nations*, i. 14. *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, Asinarii.

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Octavius is ready with his reply. One by one he exposes the fallacy of Cæcilius' arguments. "The proofs of divine government lie all around; even the heathen poets speak of the one God, the Creator and Father of all. But the nations have obscured the pure knowledge of Him by their fables, and corrupted his worship with their abominable rites." He calls the gods of the pagan worship demons, and declares that they fled in terror, and their oracles were struck dumb at the name of Christ. He repudiates as absurd calumnies, the charges made against the Christians of cruelty and licentiousness. "The reason we love one another," he says, "is because we do not know how to hate. We call one another brethren, as being born of the same God and parent, and as companions in faith and fellow-heirs in hope. As for crosses, we neither worship nor wish for them." In answer to the reproach that the Christians had no temples or altars, he asks, "What image of God shall I make, since, if you think rightly, man himself is the image of God? What temple shall I build to Him whom the universe cannot contain? Whilst I—a man—dwell far and wide, shall I think to shut up the might of so great majesty within one little building? . . You say God is ignorant of man's doings. You greatly err; for from what place can He be afar off, when all things in earth and in heaven, and even beyond, are full of Him? Not only do we act, I had almost said, we live in Him." He then

demonstrates from the analogy of nature, the reasonableness of a final resurrection, when the righteous shall be rewarded with never-ending felicity, and the unrighteous doomed to eternal woe. To the reproach of a gloomy asceticism, he replies: "The Christians pluck the lily and the rose, scatter them freely, and hang them in garlands round their necks; but they must be pardoned if they do not use them as a crown, either for the dead or the living. The dead want no chaplet. If miserable, they can have no pleasure in it; if blest, they will have their brows encircled with a crown which will never fade, conferred by the all-bounteous hand of God himself." He sums up all with, "We do not *talk* great things; we *live* them." II. Cent.

Cæcilius is so convinced by the reasoning of Octavius that he is obliged to confess: "He has conquered me, and I have triumphed over my error. I yield myself to God and adopt the belief of the Christians as my own. But my mind is still unsatisfied on some points, not as resisting the truth, but as requiring more perfect instruction, which, as the sun is already sloping to its setting, we will leave till to-morrow."

The interview concludes with Minucius expressing his joy on behalf of all concerned; for Cæcilius that he had yielded to the truth, for himself that he was spared the invidious task of pronouncing judgment, and for Octavius that the victory was with him. "Not," he adds, "that I am going to

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flatter him for his words; for the testimony of any man or all men is only weak. He will have a glorious reward from God, through whose inspiration he has pleaded, and by whose help he has gained the victory."[1]

In no quarter did the persecution under Marcus Aurelius rage more violently than in Asia Minor,[2] where amongst a multitude of witnesses the admiration of posterity has centered upon the aged Polycarp. The story of his martyrdom has come to us through an encyclical letter written by the Church at Smyrna. We give it nearly entire.

The Christians of that district, as the Epistle informs us, had for some time been exposed to great suffering on account of their religion; and one of them, Germanicus, being cast to the wild beasts, encountered them as others had done, with courage and alacrity. But although the multitude marvelled at the nobleness of mind displayed "by the God-loving and God-fearing race of Christians," they were only the more incited by the devotion of Germanicus to clamour for fresh victims, and cried out, "Away with the atheists; let Polycarp be sought out."

Polycarp had resolved at first to remain at his post in the city, but in deference to the wishes of his friends he withdrew to a country house.

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[1] The *Octavius* of Minucius Felix, A. N. L. See Wordsworth's *Church Hist.*

[2] See ante, p. 52.

There, whilst praying, three days before he was taken, a vision presented itself to him; the pillow under his head appeared to be on fire. Turning to those who were with him, he said prophetically, "I must be burned alive." He was betrayed by one of his own servants, who had been seized and put to the torture; and though he might still have escaped, he refused, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." When he heard that his pursuers were come, he went down from the upper room where he was reposing, and ordered food to be set before them, whilst he begged to be allowed an hour for prayer undisturbed. This being granted, he stood and prayed for all whom he had ever known, both small and great, worthy and unworthy, and for the whole Church throughout the world; and his heart being filled with grace he continued in prayer for two hours, until some of those who had been sent to take him began to repent that they had come out against so godly and venerable a man. A.D. 166.

As soon as he had ceased praying, he was set upon an ass and conducted towards the city. Being met on the way by the chief magistrate and his father, they took him up into their chariot and endeavoured to shake his resolution, saying, "What harm is there in saying 'Lord Cæsar,' and in sacrificing?" At first he gave them no answer, but when they continued to urge him, he said, "I shall not do as you advise me." Enraged at his constancy, they changed their tone, reviled him, and

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threw him down out of the chariot, so that in falling he sprained his ankle. But he, as if nothing had happened, hastened eagerly forward, and was led into the stadium,[1] which was thronged with a tumultuous crowd of spectators, thirsting for his blood. As he was entering "we heard," write the brethren, "a voice from heaven saying, Be strong, O Polycarp, and show thyself a man." As soon as he appeared, a deafening roar burst from the multitude.

Being brought before the Proconsul, he was asked if he was Polycarp. He replied, "I am." "Then swear by the fortune of Cæsar; repent and say, 'Away with the atheists.'" Polycarp, gazing with a stern countenance on the dense crowds which encircled him, and waving his hand towards them, groaned, and looking up to heaven, said, "Away with the atheists." "Swear," urged the Proconsul; "revile Christ, and I will set thee at liberty."

*Polycarp.* Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any wrong; how then can I blaspheme my King, my Saviour? Since thou pretendest not to know who and what I am, hear me declare with boldness, I am a Christian. And if thou wishest to learn what the doctrines of Christianity are, appoint me a day and thou shalt hear them.

*The Proconsul.* Satisfy the people.

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[1] Circus or race-course, where the public games were exhibited on the numerous festival days of the ancient Romans.

*Polycarp.* To thee I have thought it right to proffer an account, for we are taught to show all honour to the powers and authorities which are ordained of God; but as for these, I do not deem them worthy to hear any defence from me. A.D. 166.

*The Proconsul.* I have wild beasts at hand; to them I will cast thee except thou repent.

*Polycarp.* Call them; repentance from things better to things worse is impossible to us.

*The Proconsul.* Seeing thou despisest the wild beasts, I will have thee consumed by fire, if thou wilt not repent.

*Polycarp.* Thou threatenest me with that fire which burns for an hour and then is extinguished, but art ignorant of the fire of the judgment to come, and of the eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly. But why dost thou tarry? Bring forth what thou wilt.

The Proconsul, seeing that nothing he could say was of any avail, ordered the herald to proclaim three times in the midst of the stadium:—"Polycarp has confessed himself a Christian." Then the whole multitude raised a shout of uncontrollable fury, "This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, and the overturner of our gods." So saying they called upon the Asiarch,[1] to let loose a lion on Polycarp. But the games

[1] President of the games. See Acts xix. 31; and Conybeare and Howson, *Life and Epistles of St. Paul.*

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being already over, the Asiarch refused, and the people with one accord cried out, "Let him be burned."

Immediately they dispersed themselves to the shops and baths to gather wood and faggots, the Jews being foremost. The pile was soon ready. Polycarp laid aside his outer garments and loosed his girdle; and when he was about to be fastened to the stake with nails, said, "Leave me as I am; He who gives me strength to endure the fire will enable me to remain at the pile without moving." His request was granted, and he was simply bound with cords. Looking up to heaven, he said, "O Lord God Almighty, the Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of Thee, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast counted me worthy of this day and this hour, that I should have a part in the number of Thy martyrs, in the cup of Thy Christ, unto the resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body, in the incorruption of the Holy Ghost. Among whom may I be admitted this day as an acceptable sacrifice, as Thou hast prepared and foreshown, and now hast accomplished, O true and faithful God. Wherefore I praise Thee for all things; I bless Thee; I glorify Thee, with the eternal and heavenly Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, to whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be glory now and for ever."

When the fire was kindled, the flame blazed forth with fury, but instead of consuming the body

of the martyr, it "formed an arch resembling the sail of a ship around him, so that he appeared in the midst of it like gold or silver glowing in a furnace, whilst a sweet odour arose from the pile, as if frankincense or some other precious spice was being consumed." It is to this that Southey, in his poem of *Thalaba*, refers, when he says: A.D. 166.

> "The waxen image
> Lay among the flames
> Like Polycarp of old,
> When, by the glories of the burning stake
> O'er-vaulted, his grey hairs
> Curled life-like to the fire
> That haloed round his saintly brow."

At length, seeing that he was not touched by the flames, one of the executioners plunged a dagger into his body, upon which "such a stream of blood gushed forth that the fire was extinguished." The disciples attempted to take up the corpse, but the Jews, who were on the watch, prevented them, and besought the governor not to deliver it up to them for burial, lest, "forsaking the Crucified One, they begin to worship this man." "Little thinking," say the brethren, "that it is not possible for us to forsake Christ, who suffered for the salvation of the whole world, or to worship any other. For Him indeed we adore; but the martyrs, as his disciples and followers, we worthily love." "After which," continues the Letter, "we took up his bones as being more precious than the most exquisite jewels, and more

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purified than gold, and deposited them in a fitting place, whither, being gathered as opportunity is allowed us, the Lord shall grant us with joy and rejoicing to celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom."[1]

Dean Milman's reflections on the foregoing history are too pertinent to be omitted. "The whole of this narrative has the genuine energy of truth. The prudent yet resolute conduct of the aged bishop; the calm and dignified expostulation of the governor; the wild fury of the populace; the Jews eagerly seizing the opportunity of renewing their unslaked hatred to the Christian name;—are described with the simplicity of nature. The supernatural part of the transaction is no more than may be ascribed to the high-wrought imagination of the Christian spectators, deepening every casual incident into a wonder: the voice from heaven, heard only by Christian ears; the flame from the hastily piled wood, arching over the unharmed body; the grateful odours, not impossibly from aromatic woods, which were used to warm the baths of the more luxurious, and which were collected for the sudden execution; the effusion

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[1] *The Encyclical Epistle of the Church at Smyrna, concerning the Martyrdom of the holy Polycarp.* This narrative is the earliest of the *Acts of the Martyrs* which have been preserved, and is generally accounted the most authentic.—A. N. L. Eusebius, in transferring it to his *Ecclesiastical History* (A.D. 324), has followed a text differing from the above in many verbal particulars. B. iv., c. xv.; Neander, i., pp. 152-154. The date assigned to the event is A.D. 165 or 166.

of blood, which might excite wonder, from the decrepit frame of a man at least a hundred years old. Even his vision was not unlikely to arise before his mind at that perilous crisis."[1]

An epistle of Polycarp's has been preserved, written to the Church at Philippi. In it he speaks of the Apostle Paul, "who when among you, faithfully and constantly taught the word of truth; and when absent wrote you a letter which, if you diligently study, you will find to be the means of building you up in faith, hope and love." Polycarp's epistle consists almost entirely of quotations from the Scriptures, in which he "trusts the Philippians are well versed," and chiefly from Paul's Epistles. It is written, not in his own name only, but in that of "the presbyters (or elders), who were with him."[2]

Polycarp's long life stretches, as a connecting link, from the apostolic age to the commencement of the third century: for one of his disciples was Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, a native of Asia Minor, who lived till the year 202. In a letter written in his old age, recalling his boyhood (of which he tells us he had a much more vivid recollection than of later events), Irenæus thus describes his revered teacher. "I could point out the very place where the blessed Polycarp was accustomed to sit and discourse; his gait, his form, his manner of life,

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[1] *Hist. of Christianity*, vol. ii., pp. 139, 140.

[2] Chaps. iii. and xii., and Salutation.

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his conversations, and what he was accustomed to relate of his familiar intercourse with John and others who had seen the Lord;—how he used to repeat their discourses and speak of the miracles of Christ, and of his doctrine, agreeably to the Holy Scriptures, as he had received them from the eye-witnesses. To these things, by the mercy of God, I listened attentively, noting them down, not on paper but in my heart, and by the grace of God I habitually recall them to my mind."[1]

[1] Eusebius, b. v., c. xx.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Martyrs of Lyons and Vienne.

The persecution of the Christians under Marcus Aurelius was not confined to the East. In the year 177 the storm broke over one of the most flourishing districts of Gaul, the cities of Lyons and Vienne, in which Asiatic colonies had settled themselves; and the account of the persecution has come down to us in a letter from the Churches of those cities to their "brethren in Asia and Phrygia." In reading this statement, as in the martyr narratives generally, the mind is amazed at the superhuman power of endurance attributed to the sufferers. As in the case of Polycarp, some allowance may have to be made for the overwrought feelings of the spectators, but this is quite insufficient to account for the marvel. May we not rather believe that the Lord, who, when Paul was left for dead at Lystra, raised him up that he might preach the gospel in other countries, was pleased thus to manifest to the heathen world what protracted torments his believing children were able to bear for his sake? A.D. 177.

The Epistle declares that the severity of the tribulation, the sufferings which the martyrs endured, and the mad fury of their enemies, were indescrib-

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able. The heathen excluded the disciples from the baths and markets, plundered them of their property, and assailed them with clamours, blows and all the other injuries which ignorant and savage people delight to inflict on those who are more enlightened than themselves. Some heathen slaves belonging to Christian families, under threats of torture, accused their masters of the offences usually laid at the door of the Christians—devouring their own children, incestuous marriages, and other abominable practices,[1]—"crimes so dark," say the writers of the Epistle, "that it is not lawful for us to speak, or even think of them."

The magistrates were infected with the frenzy of the multitude. When the Christians were brought before the Legate, or Governor, he commenced the examination with torture, not only for the purpose of compelling them to abjure, but also of wringing from them an admission of their guilt. A young man of rank, Vettius Epagathus, indignant at this flagrant violation of justice, boldly presented himself before the tribunal as a witness to their innocence. The Legate refused to hear him, only asking if he too were a Christian. On his declaring in a clear voice that he was so, he was transferred to the number of the confessors.

Most of those who were condemned endured their sufferings with constancy; but about ten

[1] See ante, pp. 54 and 71.

drew back,[1] and their weakness not only affected the faithful with excessive grief, but damped the ardour of those who had not yet been apprehended. Some, however, who through fear thus denied their Lord, on being a second time brought before the tribunal, withdrew their recantation, and being thrown to the wild beasts sealed at last their testimony with their blood. A.D. 177.

Neither age nor sex was regarded, nor the most refined and cruel tortures withheld. Sanctus, a deacon of Vienne, Maturus, Attalus, a native of Pergamos, and Blandina, a female slave, for whom her mistress (herself one of the confessors) trembled lest she should not be able to hold out on account of the weakness of her body, were conspicuous in their sufferings. Blandina was so filled with power that she endured every description of torture from morning until evening, so that the exhausted tormentors were astonished, declaring that one kind of infliction alone was sufficient to have deprived her of life. "But in the midst of all she recovered her strength," and her confession, "I am a Christian; no wickedness is carried on by us," is described as "yielding her refreshment and insensibility to suffering."

Sanctus, refusing to tell even his name or condition, and to all their questions only answering, "I

[1] Cooper reckons that about sixty were apprehended, and that this number included all the leading members of the two churches. *Free Church*, p. 214.

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am a Christian," the Legate and the executioners were the more fixed in their determination to subdue him. When every other means failed, they applied red-hot plates of metal to his body, until it was all wounds and wheals, and shrunk out of its proper shape. But he remained inflexible through all, being, as the Letter says, "bedewed and strengthened by the heavenly fountain of the water of life which flows from Christ, and furnishing a proof to the rest that there is nothing terrible where the Father's love is, and nothing painful where there is Christ's glory." So that when his tormentors, some days afterwards, renewed their tortures, expecting that he would speedily succumb, since his body could not bear to be touched, to their astonishment he stood erect, and "the second torture became, through the grace of Christ, not his torment, but his cure."

A woman named Biblias, of a frail and timid nature, was one of those who at first denied the faith; but being further tortured to make her accuse the Christians of cannibalism, she "awoke as out of a deep sleep; and the pain she then suffered bringing before her the more terrible torments of the wicked hereafter, she cried out, 'How can those devour children who consider it unlawful even to taste the blood of brute animals?'"[1]

[1] This has been thought to show that the church was partly composed of Jewish Christians. Such was probably the case; but the Gentiles in

Amongst those who were brought before the judgment-seat was the venerable Pothinus, Bishop of Lyons. He was upwards of ninety years of age, and very feeble. But "the eagerness of his spirit and his earnest desire to bear his testimony upheld him." When the Legate asked him "Who is the God of the Christians?" he answered, "If thou art worthy thou shalt know." Upon this he was dragged about and beaten. Breathing with difficulty he was cast into prison, and two days afterwards expired. A.D. 177.

As the number of the prisoners was considerable, and included several Roman citizens, who could not be tried in the province, the Legate wrote to the Emperor for further instructions. The imperial answer was that those who recanted should be set free, but the rest beheaded.

On a subsequent day, when the savage people were assembled in the amphitheatre to gloat as usual over the combats of men and beasts, Sanctus and the three who before had been tortured with him were again brought forth. Maturus and Sanctus, after being made to run the gauntlet between two rows of men with whips, were thrown to the wild animals, by whom they were torn and dragged about the arena. Still surviving, they

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some places continued long to observe the decree of the Council of Jerusalem against eating strangled animals and blood; Acts xv. See Origen *Contra Celsum*, b. viii., c. xxix. xxx.; Tertullian's *Apology*, c. ix.; Milman, ii., p. 144.

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were placed in the burning chair, the fumes of their own flesh rising to their nostrils. Blandina was fixed to a cross, and thus exposed as food to the beasts which were let loose against her; and "as she hung suspended, she seemed to afford a living representation of the crucified Saviour, thereby, as well as by her prayers, encouraging the others to steadfastness to the end." As none of the animals would touch her, she was taken down and conveyed back to prison.

Attalus, who was a man of mark, was vehemently demanded by the mob. "He entered the lists a ready combatant, being armed with a good conscience and well practised in the Christian discipline." He was led round the amphitheatre with a tablet inscribed, "This is Attalus the Christian;" but the Legate understanding that he was a Roman citizen ordered him back to prison.

In the interval a great fair was held in the city, to which a vast multitude of people flocked from various countries. The Legate, regardless of every semblance of law and right, caused the Christian prisoners to be publicly exhibited as in a theatrical show. At the same time he again examined them, and condemning to be beheaded those who possessed the right of Roman citizenship, ordered the rest to be thrown to the wild beasts. But being willing to gratify the base passions of the multitude, he reserved Attalus also, though a Roman, for the arena. Attalus, in company with a Phrygian phy-

sician named Alexander (described in the letter as "not without a share of apostolic grace"), was subjected to every variety of torture. Alexander expired "without a groan or murmur, conversing in his heart with God;" but Attalus, being placed in the iron chair, and the smoke going up from his burning body, cried out to the spectators, "It is you who eat men; as for us we neither practice this nor any other wickedness." A.D. 177.

On the last day of the games Blandina was again brought in, with Ponticus, a boy of fifteen. These two had been taken daily to the amphitheatre that they might witness the sufferings of their companions; and the multitude, when they saw that they still remained immovable, were furious, and demanded that every terror and every torture should be employed to compel them to swear. But Ponticus, encouraged by his fellow-confessor, endured all his torments to the end without flinching; and Blandina, again surviving tortures almost unheard of, was at last enclosed in a net and cast before a bull, and after being repeatedly tossed, was despatched with the sword.

The brethren were greatly distressed because they were unable to commit the bodies of the martyrs to the earth. The mangled remains were maliciously kept beyond their reach, and after being abused in every way, and exposed for six days, were burned to ashes and cast into the Rhone, that not a vestige of them might remain

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on the earth; the blinded Pagans imagining that they could in this way as it were "overcome God and deprive the martyrs of their hope in the resurrection."[1]

At some distance to the north of Lyons is the town of Autun, where the Christians were few in number and little known. Here one of them, by his fidelity to his conscience, drew upon himself public attention and a crown of martyrdom. The noisy multitude were celebrating with great display a festival in honour of the Asiatic goddess, Cybele, carrying her image round the city in the sacred car. All fell on their knees except Symphorian, a young man of respectable family. He was observed, and being seized as a sacrilegious person and a disturber of the public peace, was conducted before Heraclius the Governor, who demanded, "Art thou a Christian?" "I am a Christian," he replied; "I worship the true God who reigns in heaven; but your idol I cannot worship; nay, if permitted, I am ready to dash it in pieces." On this the Governor declared him to be guilty of a double crime, against the religion and against the laws of the Empire, and sentenced him to be beheaded.

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[1] Eusebius, b. v., c. i. Tradition points to an island formed by the confluence of the Rhone and the Saone as the place where Pothinus lived and where he dug himself an oratory. The Church of St. Nizière stands on the site. The prisons of the martyrs, the forum where they were examined, and the amphitheatre, are all placed by the same tradition on or near the hill of Fourvières. *Mémoire statisque pour servir a l'histoire de l'établissement du Christianisme à Lyon*, 1829.

As he was being led to execution, his mother cried out, "My son, my son, keep the living God in thy heart. Be steadfast; there is nothing fearful in that death which so surely conducts thee to life."[1] A.D. 177.

[1] Neander, i., pp. 158-159.

## CHAPTER IX.

### Irenæus—Gnosticism—The Montanists—Attitude of the Church towards Dissenters.

Marcus Aurelius was succeeded by his son, the contemptible Commodus. During this emperor's reign (180-192), through the influence of his concubine Marcia, who for some unknown reason was friendly to the Christians, they enjoyed a season of favour.[1] Partaking, as Irenæus tells us, of all the privileges of the Commonwealth, they were permitted to go unmolested by land or sea wherever they chose, and were even found in the Imperial Palace.[2] In Asia Minor, however, they suffered from the cruelty of hostile Governors; and during the political disorders which followed the assassination of Commodus, and the civil wars which terminated in the sovereignty of Septimius Severus, the Churches were harassed in some other quarters. Clement of Alexandria writes

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[1] Hippolytus relates that Marcia sent for Victor, Bishop of Rome, to inquire what confessors were then in the Sardinian mines, the usual place of exile for the Christians of the city, and chosen for that purpose on account of its unhealthiness. On his supplying her with their names, she obtained an order for their release from the Emperor, and sent it by a presbyter to the Governor of the island, who delivered up the prisoners. *Refutation of all Heresies*, b. ix., c. vii.

[2] *Against Heresies*, b. iv., c. xxx. § 1, 3.

at this time: "Many martyrs are daily burned, crucified, or beheaded before our eyes."[1] II. Cent.

Irenæus succeeded Pothinus as Bishop of Lyons (A.D. 177), and died in 202. At the time of his election he was on his return journey from Rome, whither he had been sent by the Lyonnese Church with letters to the Bishop, Eleutherus, concerning the new sect of the Montanists.[2] Irenæus is the author of numerous treatises, the most important of which is his book against heresies.

In those early days the Church was exceedingly vexed with philosophical speculations and extravagant doctrines, known generally under the name of Gnosticism. Almost all the Christian authors employed their pens in opposition to these errors; and it is against them, in an earlier stage, under the designation of Nicolaitanes, that the Apostle John testifies in the Revelation, as already at work among the Churches of Asia. Spreading rapidly through that country and Syria, and in the schools of Alexandria, these speculations became developed in the second century into the most monstrous systems of philosophy so-called which the human brain has ever conceived. The term Gnostic (the man of knowledge) had been previously used in the classic schools to denote such as were initiated into a higher and secret science unknown to the vulgar. As now employed,

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[1] Neander, i., p. 165.

[2] Du Pin's *History of Ecclesiastical Writers*, ed. 1693, i., p. 59.

it was designed to express superiority to the pagan and Jewish religions, and the popular views of Christianity. In these strange systems the gospel is interwoven with elements drawn from the Platonic philosophy, Jewish theology, Parseeism, Brahminism and Buddhism.[1] Occupying themselves with abstract and barren speculations, rather than with the cross of Christ, the Gnostics vainly sought to fathom the old abyss in which heathen philosophy had lost itself. "'Whence comes evil? Why is it permitted? What is the origin of man? Whence comes God?' These are the questions," says Tertullian, "which they propound. Away," he adds, in his vehement and uncompromising style, "away with all attempts to produce a motley Christianity, compounded of Stoicism, Platonism and dialectics. Possessing Christ Jesus, we want no curious disputations; we want no philosophical inquiries, after once enjoying the gospel."[2]

Cooper, in his treatise on the *Free Church of Ancient Christendom*, calls Gnosticism "that yeasty product, thrown up by the working of the gospel leaven upon the dead mass of heathenism, which it was evermore powerfully striving to penetrate and quicken."[3] Hatch describes its dreamlike teaching in eloquent language. After presenting the symbol-

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[1] Gieseler, i., pp. 135-144.

[2] *On Prescription against Heretics*, c. vii.

[3] p. 187.

ism of Philo, in which the Old Testament history is reduced to a fantastic allegory, he says, "To those who thought thus, the records of the gospels were so much new matter for similar interpretation. To the lower intelligence, to the eye of sense, Christ was a person who had lived and died and ascended, and the Christian communities were the visible assemblies of his followers, and the Christian virtues were certain habits of mind which showed themselves in deeds. But to the spiritual mind, to the eye of reason, all these things were like the phantasmagoria of the mysteries. The recorded deeds of Christ were the clash and play of mighty spiritual forces; the Christian Church was an emanation from God; the Christian virtues were phases of intellectual enlightenment, which had but slender, if any, links with deeds done in the flesh. Before long the circle widened. Abstract conceptions seemed to take bodily shape, and to pass in and out of one another like the dissolving scenery of a dream. There grew up a new mythology, in which Zeus and Aphrodite, Isis and Osiris, were replaced by depth and silence, wisdom and power. Christianity ceased to be a religion and became a theosophy. It ceased to be a doctrine and became a Platonic poem. It ceased to be a rule of life and became a system of the universe."[1] II. Cent.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude

[1] *Organization of the Early Christian Churches.* Lect. iv., p. 91.

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that all the Gnostics were mere visionaries. The name covered a wide range, both of doctrine and practice. Whilst some laid themselves open to the charge of blasphemy, or crept into families and subverted the faith of the unwary, or abandoned themselves to licentiousness on the one hand,[1] or on the other were noted for their extreme asceticism,[2] there were some under this name whose zeal and manner of life were worthy of the imitation of the orthodox. On the whole, however, the place the Gnostics occupied in Christendom was that which lay nearest to the world. "They were," says Gibbon, "the most polite, the most learned, and the most wealthy of the Christian name."[3] At a time when the orthodox writers were very few they displayed a prodigious literary activity.[4] "Secure," says Milman, "in their own intellectual or spiritual purity, they scrupled not at a contemptuous conformity with the established worship, and partook of meats offered in sacrifice."[5]

But all the teaching which was branded by the Church "fathers" as heretical, was not equally deserving of condemnation. Montanism was a very different thing from Gnosticism; it was rather a reaction and protest against that delusion.[6] Its author

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[1] Irenæus, Tertullian, &c., frequent.

[2] Ante, p. 67.

[3] *Decline and Fall*, c. xv.

[4] Cooper's *Free Church*, p. 210, note.

[5] *History of Christianity*, ii. 85.

[6] Neander, *Church History*, ii. p. 199; *Antignostikus*, ii. 200.

was a native of Phrygia. The doctrines which he promulgated became widely diffused through the West as well as the East, and were even embraced by one of the most gifted exponents of Christianity in that age, Tertullian of Carthage. Unscriptural and extravagant tenets are attributed to this sect, and fanatical conduct is imputed to some of its followers; but these charges have come down to us through their enemies, and may be in part due to the more sound and simple views which they held on the constitution of the Church, and the operation of the Holy Spirit. They asserted the priestly dignity of all Christians, and, consequently, that the gifts of the Spirit are not confined to one order in the Church, or even to one sex; and they would not allow that the gift of prophecy had been superseded by learning and an enlightened intellect. In opposition to the notion that the bishops were the sole successors of the Apostles, they denied that any who have not received the spirit of prophecy from the Holy Ghost himself can be the successors of the Apostles, or heirs to their spiritual power;[1] and they repudiated the false idea that holiness of life is to be looked for in the clergy in another manner or in a higher degree than in the laity. They made a

[1] Tertullian says: "The Church, it is true, will forgive sins, but it must be the Church of the spirit, by means of a spiritual man; not the Church which consists of a number of bishops. The Paraclete must (after Christ) be the only one to be called and revered as Master. He is the only Prelate, because he alone succeeds Christ. *On Modesty*, c. xxi. *On the Veiling of Virgins*, c. i.

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vigorous stand also against the spirit of accommodation to the world, which was creeping over the Church; and notwithstanding the laws against private assemblies, in their meetings for fasting and prayer they disregarded such prudential measures as might avert the suspicion of the authorities. They even went so far as to condemn all usages of civil and social life which could in any way be traced to a heathen origin. But though the Montanists saw clearly whither worldly policy was leading the Church, they were slow to separate themselves from its communion; nor did they leave it until they were thrust out by the Bishop of Rome (about A.D. 192).[1]

The attitude taken by the church towards heretics was not indeed always marked by wisdom, or consonant with the precepts of charity. The zeal with which she strove to clear herself of erroneous doctrine was worthy and honourable, but her treat-

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[1] Neander, ii., pp. 200-214.; Gieseler, i., pp. 211-215. Burton takes a different view; *History of the Christian Church*, 5th ed. p. 308. Whether this bishop was Eleutherus or Victor is uncertain. The above estimate of the place occupied in the Church by the Montanists is confirmed by Hatch.

Against the growing tendency towards that state of things which afterwards firmly established itself, and which ever since has been the normal state of almost all Christian Churches, they raised a vigorous, and for a time a successful protest. They reasserted the place of spiritual gifts as contrasted with official rule. They maintained that the revelation of Christ through the Spirit was not a temporary phenomenon of apostolic days, but a constant fact of Christian life. They combined with this the preaching of a higher morality than that which was tending to become current. They were supported in all this by the greatest theologian of his time, and it is to the writings of that theologian, rather than to the vituperative statements of later writers, that we must look for a true idea of their purpose." *Early Christian Churches*. Lect. v., pp. 120, 121.

ment of individuals and communities deemed to be heretical, was too often injurious to the cause of truth. Marcion was one of the latest and most evangelical of the Gnostic teachers. In his youth he had probably enjoyed the friendship of Polycarp. Being in Rome when that bishop came there on a visit to Bishop Anicetus, and meeting him again after many years, he accosted him, and asked, "Dost thou remember me, Polycarp?" The old man is said to have replied, "Yes, I remember thee; thou art the firstborn of Satan."[1] Although Marcion in his system obscured the gospel by abstract speculations, yet he both preached and lived the true faith in Christ. His earnestness and the practical tendency of his teaching drew around him a great crowd of adherents, and the sect of the Marcionites continued much longer than any other of the Gnostics.[2] The conduct of Polycarp on this occasion represents but too exactly the temper of the early Church; and the chord of exclusiveness and uncharitableness which was then struck has unhappily continued to vibrate down to our own time. Whilst the first part of Paul's injunction

[1] Neander, ii., pp. 138, 139.

[2] Idem, pp. 129-150. Marcion's bitter opponent, Tertullian, tells us that when, having been excommunicated by his father, Bishop of Sinope, he went to Rome and joined the Church there, he gave his fortune (nearly £1,600) to the common fund. To the honour of the age, it is added, that when he was again expelled on account of his unscriptural doctrines, the money was returned to him. Tertullian, *On Prescription against Heretics*, c. xxx. Cooper's *Free Church*, p. 176.

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has been abundantly observed, the latter part has been too often disregarded: "If any man obey not our word, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed; yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."[1]

The dogmas of apostolical succession and of the outward unity of the Catholic Church, which now began to take possession of the minds of the clergy, added bitterness to their action against the heretics. The good Irenæus was a great stickler on both these points. He boasts of "putting to confusion all who in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, or vainglory, or by a blind and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings;" and he relies upon "the tradition handed down from the Apostles, of the very great, very ancient, and universally known church, founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul, and the faith which comes down to our time by means of the succession of the bishops." In what he further adds, we may discover the germ of that error by which, in course of time, tradition came to be made equal or even superior to Holy Scripture. "It is not necessary to seek among others the truth which it is easy to obtain from the Church; seeing that the Apostles, like a rich man depositing his money in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth; so that

[1] 2 Thess. iii. 14, 15.

whosoever will can draw from her the water of life; for she is the entrance to life; all others are thieves and robbers."[1]

In like manner we find Tertullian pressing hard upon those whom he styles heretics. "How vain, how worldly, how merely human, how without authority or discipline, is their conduct. It is doubtful who among them is a catechumen and who a believer; for all have access alike; all pray alike, even heathen, if they should happen to come among them. They make simplicity to consist in the overthrow of discipline, attention to which on our part they call meretricious allurement. . . The very women are so bold as to teach, dispute, exorcise, undertake cures, and it may be even to baptize. Their ordinations are carelessly administered, capricious, changeable. At one time they put novices in office, at another those who have apostatized from us. Even on laymen they impose the functions of the priesthood. . . The majority of them have not even churches. Motherless, houseless, creedless, outcasts, they wander about in their own essential worthlessness."[2]

In this passage, Tertullian brings against the dissenters no charge either as to faith or life. If in their Church government or their worship the

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[1] Irenæus, *Against Heresies*, A. N. L., b. iii., c. iii. § 2, c. iv. § 1.

[2] *On Prescription against Heretics*, c. xli., xlii. The especial objects of his attacks are the Marcionites, and another Gnostic sect, the Valentinians.

divine law of order was disregarded, it was a grievous error, and called for severe remonstrance. But the testimony of an opponent, especially of one so hasty as Tertullian (who confesses that impatience was his peculiar besetment),[1] is to be received only with a large measure of allowance; and the fact may be that the so-called Orthodox Church might have learnt some good lessons from the heretics.

We will conclude this chapter with the luminous remarks of Dean Milman on the organization and internal life of the Church at this period. "Universally disseminated, it had its own laws and judges; its own financial regulations and usages. A close and intimate correspondence connected this new moral republic. An impulse, an opinion, a feeling which originated in Egypt or Syria, was propagated with electric rapidity to the remotest frontier of the West. Irenæus in Gaul enters into a controversy with the speculative teachers of Antioch, Edessa or Alexandria; while Tertullian, in his rude African Latin, denounces or advocates opinions which sprang up in Pontus or in Phrygia. A new kind of literature had arisen, propagated with the utmost zeal of proselytism, among a numerous class of readers, who began to close their ears against the profane fables and the unsatisfactory philosophical systems of paganism." "For a considerable part of the first three centuries," he says elsewhere, "the

[1] See his tract *On Patience*, c. i.

Church of Rome, and most, if not all the Churches of the West were, if we may so speak, Greek religious colonies. Their language was Greek, their organization Greek, their writers Greek, their Scriptures Greek; and many vestiges and traditions show that their ritual, their liturgy, was Greek. The *Octavius* of Minucius Felix and the treatise of Novatian on the Trinity, are the earliest known works of Latin Christian literature which came from Rome. Africa, not Rome, gave birth to Latin Christianity."[1]

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[1] Milman's *History of Christianity*, ii. 113, 114; and *History of Latin Christianity*, i. 27-29.

## CHAPTER X.

### Worship in the Early Church—The Agape or Lord's Supper.

Having thus traced in outline the history of the primitive Christians during the first two centuries, let us inquire what was the character of their worship and government.

To begin with the manner of worship.

"When the members of a synagogue were convinced that Jesus was the Christ, there was nothing to interrupt the current of their former life; . . the old form of worship could still go on. The weekly commemoration of the resurrection supplemented, but did not supersede, the ancient Sabbath. The reading of the life of Christ and of the letters of the Apostles supplemented, but did not supersede, the ancient lessons from the Prophets and the ancient singing of the Psalms."[1] These last were varied by Christian hymns composed for the purpose. Nor would any change be needed when Gentile converts were added to the community. It was of the utmost importance that these should become

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[1] Hatch, *Organization of the Early Christian Churches.* Lect. iii. pp. 59, 60.

acquainted with the revelation of God in the Old Dispensation, as well as that all, Jews and Gentiles, should be fully instructed in the doctrine of Christ in the New Covenant; whilst from the rarity and costliness of manuscripts, and the poverty of the great majority of Christians, and because, moreover, all could not read, the frequent hearing of the sacred writings was to the many the only means of acquaintance with them. Written translations into Latin made their appearance at a very early date; and in places where neither this language nor Greek was understood, as in many cities in Egypt and Syria, the Churches appointed interpreters, like those in the Jewish synagogues, who, on the spot, rendered what had been read into the vernacular tongue.[1]

The reading was followed by exposition and exhortation of a very simple character, those who ministered being mindful to speak as "oracles of God," "in the strength" supplied from Him.[2] It was the same with prayer. What was offered was from the heart, under the sense of the present need. No such thing as a form of prayer is to be met with in the worship of the primitive Church. "We lift up our eyes towards heaven and spread out our hands because we are innocent; we uncover our heads because we have nothing to be ashamed of;

[1] Neander, i., p. 419.

[2] 1 Peter iv. 11.

we pray without a monitor because we pray from our heart."[1] So far as can be known, not even the Lord's Prayer was used as a customary part of worship. The New Testament is silent on the subject; and the earliest Church writers, until we come to Tertullian, give no intimation of its being so used.[2]

The ministry was not confined to one reader or one expositor, or even to the presbyters, the appointed teachers of the Church. When the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost, descended on the disciples —women as well as men—and they began to speak with other tongues, Peter declared that what was then happening was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel regarding the spiritual gifts of the New Dispensation.[3] The free exercise of these gifts, thus predicted and thus inaugurated, continued for some time to adorn the worship of the Church; as we find in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, when the congregation came together, one had a psalm, another a teaching, another a revelation or prophecy, another a tongue, another an interpretation. Nor were the women excluded. The Apostle indeed forbids them to "speak" (which may mean to put questions, or perhaps to teach), but he unmistakeably sanctions their praying and prophesying, by directing that they should not minister with their heads uncovered.[4]

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[1] Tertullian, *Apology*, c. xxx.

[2] Lyman Coleman, *Christian Antiquities*, c. x. § 9, and note.

[3] Acts i. 14., ii. 1-18. Joel ii. 28, 29. [4] 1 Cor. xiv.; xi. 5-16.

How large a part women had in the work of the Church during its early days of vigour and simplicity, may be seen from the sixteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. About one-third of those to whom the Apostle sends his Christian salutation are women,[1] and five or six of these are distinguished for their place in the Church, or their abounding labour in Christ. Of one it is said, "Unto whom not only I give thanks but also all the Churches of the Gentiles." Of four others that they "laboured," or "laboured much in the Lord." This enumeration does not include Phœbe, the wise and diligent "deaconess," who herself carried the epistle, and who had the Apostle's testimony that she had been "a succourer of many and of himself also." I. Cent.

The only limitation which Paul sets to the free exercise of spiritual gifts in the congregation, is the necessary observance of order and mutual subjection.[2]

But this was not all. There remains still a prominent feature in the social-religious life of the primitive Christians; namely, the common meal or supper which came afterwards to be known as the Eucharist.

When our Lord sat down to his last Passover, He "took bread and blessed and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, 'Take, eat, this is my

[1] They are: Prisca, Mary, Junia (?), Tryphæna, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus' mother, Julia, and Nereus' sister.

[2] 1 Cor. xiv. 29-33.

body;' and He took a cup and gave thanks, and gave to them saying, 'Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the [new] covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins.'"[1] To which, as Luke relates, He added, "This do in remembrance of me;"[2] and Paul, "This do as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."[3] Our Lord and his disciples were partaking of that solemn meal which was instituted to commemorate the deliverance of the Israelites, when the Lord smote the firstborn of the Egyptians. What they were doing was being done at the same hour in every household in Jerusalem. But there was this difference, that in the upper chamber where the Apostles were assembled, the Lord announced to them that the feast which they had so long kept was only a typical observance, and that it was about to be fulfilled in Himself, the great anti-type of this, as of all the Mosaic ordinances. The shadow was past, the substance was now come. Instead of the paschal lamb slain and eaten, and its blood sprinkled on the lintel, Christ, the Lamb of God, the true Passover, was about to be sacrificed, that mankind might be delivered from sin and death, through the shedding of his blood and the spiritual partaking of his body.

There is nothing to show that what the Lord then commanded was the institution of a new ceremonial

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[1] Matt. xxvi. 26-28. [2] Luke xxii. 19.

[3] 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25. Matthew and Mark record nothing regarding a continuance of the meal, and in John's Gospel it is not even mentioned.

observance, of perpetual obligation to the Church. The spirit of the gospel is adverse to such a conclusion. He was establishing the new covenant spoken of by the Prophet Jeremiah,[1] not according to the former covenant made with Israel when they were brought out of Egypt, but a spiritual covenant, sealed with the blood of the true paschal lamb—a covenant under which the Lord's people should have his law written on their hearts, and their sins should be no more remembered. Moreover, our Lord's language is not at all that of the institution of a new rite. No directions are given as to the manner of the observance, nor is anything said which should make us infer that He had in view any more frequent commemoration of the occasion than the regular recurrence of the Passover, namely, once in the year. Further, the words "as oft as ye drink it," suggest the thought that He might be looking forward to the destruction of Jerusalem as the end of the time when the feast should be kept. That the Jewish Christian Church at Jerusalem did continue to keep the Passover till the destruction of the city, we know,[2] and in doing so they would assuredly not fail to give the observance its full gospel significance.

I. Cent.

But, as has been said, the Passover occurred only once in the year. Some other motive or custom

[1] Jer. xxxi. 31-34; Heb. viii. 6-13. This passage in Jeremiah is the only place in the Old Testament where the term "a new covenant" is to be found.

[2] See ante, p. 22.

Part I. Chap. 1

must be sought for to explain the frequent breaking of bread together in the primitive Church. Accordingly we find that a thanksgiving or blessing was customary with the Jews at their daily meals. The same is observed to this day. It was, and is, the business of the head of every family to take the bread and say, "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who givest us the fruit of the earth," and when he has divided it among the company, to take the cup, saying, "Blessed art thou O Lord, who givest us the fruit of the vine."[1] With this custom ready to their hands, the Apostles would seem to have blended our Lord's memorable application of the Passover to Himself. If we look forward a few weeks, viz., to the time which immediately followed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, we find that "all who believed were together, and had all things common," and that "day by day they continued stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home."[2] Not only had they a common stock, but they were accustomed to partake together of a daily meal. The experiment of a common stock, which seems never to have been

[1] The Council of Trent in 1551 laid it down that during the captivity of Babylon a post-cœnam (after-supper) of bread and wine was instituted by the Jews in place of the lamb, which could only be sacrificed in the Temple at Jerusalem. Sarpi, *History of the Council of Trent*, translated by Sir N. Brent, London, 1676, p. 336. But on this it may be observed that from its first ordination, bread had been a part of the meal, and the wine (as said above) was not peculiar to this festival.

[2] *i.e.*, Not in the temple. Acts ii. 46, iv. 32.

tried elsewhere than at Jerusalem, was given up; but the common meal survived, for a while as a *daily*, afterwards as a *weekly* observance. The Jewish usage would naturally find its way into Churches which, like the Corinthian, consisted of both Jews and Gentiles. Not only so; but such as were composed wholly of Gentiles were prepared by practices to which they themselves were already accustomed to adopt such a usage. "In almost all parts of the empire," says Hatch, "there were then, as now, societies or clubs for trade, mutual help and pastime, the members of which in many cases, if not universally, shared in a common meal."[1] The result to the Churches, whether Jewish or Gentile, was a periodical repast, partly social, partly religious, to which the whole congregation was invited. It was called the Lord's Supper, the Supper of Love, the Love Feast, or Agape. The food partaken of was provided by such as were of ability, and what remained over was distributed amongst those who were in need. I. Cent.

During the twenty-five years which followed the day of Pentecost, we find no mention of the Passover (except as an indication of time),[2] nor any further notice of the daily (or less frequent) breaking of bread together.[3] But about the year 58 we come upon the practice in full activity in the Corin-

[1] *Organization of the Early Christian Churches.* Lect. ii., pp. 26-31.
[2] Acts xii. 4.
[3] The instance recorded in Acts xx. occurred later.

Part I. Chap. 10.

thian Church. The object of the Apostle, in taking notice of it, is to correct certain grave abuses which had crept into the observance; those who met on these occasions no longer remembering the dying of their Lord, but everyone serving himself before the others, and some even eating and drinking to excess. As a means of guarding them against these errors, the Apostle recommends a self-examination in connection with this solemn eating and drinking together, that they might not do it unworthily, and thus bring condemnation on themselves.[1]

It was only the brethren, the "faithful," who were admitted to this feast of Christian fellowship. Persecution made the Churches still more circumspect and exclusive; the doors being locked and watched lest unbelievers or spies should intrude.[2] For some time the repast retained its genuine character, that of a social meal. No priest was needed to consecrate what was eaten, for all were priests to God, and the Great High Priest himself presided. Very precious must have been these occasions, when the Gospel history, still fresh in traditional memory, would be the theme of converse. In times of tribulation especially, when vacant seats told of brethren taken away to prison or to death, how would the little band of survivors be driven near to

[1] 1 Cor. x., xi. See *The Lord's Supper, a Scriptural argument.* By Isaac Brown.

[2] Lyman Coleman, c. xvi. § 4.

one another, and become as one bread and one body, being all partakers together of Christ, the bread of life.

From this simple meal, by the gradual addition of one observance after another, and the working of the sacerdotal element, grew up the "ordinance" of the Eucharist, or "sacrament" of the Lord's Supper. In the course of its development, the ideas of the social and the spiritual communion became separated. "Gradually," says Dean Stanley, "the repast was parted from the religious act. The repast became more and more secular, the religious act more and more sacred. From century to century the breach widened. The two remained for a time together, but distinct, the meal immediately preceding or succeeding the Sacrament. Then the ministers alone, instead of the congregation, took the charge of distributing the elements. Then, by the second century, the daily administration ceased,[1] and was confined to Sundays and festivals. Then the meal came to be known by the distinct name of *Agape*. Even the apostolical description of the Lord's Supper was regarded as belonging to a meal altogether distinct from the Sacrament. Finally, the meal itself fell under suspicion. Augustine and Ambrose condemned it, and in the fifth century that

[1] Not at Carthage; for Cyprian (middle of the third century), says: "We *daily* receive the Eucharist for the food of Salvation." *On the Lord's Prayer*, c. xviii. And see the passage from Tertullian quoted on p. 121.

which had been the original form of the Eucharist was forbidden as profane by the councils of Carthage and Laodicea."[1]

A point of minor importance must not be omitted; the kiss of charity, or kiss of peace, which was offered at the meetings for worship.[2] The practice, however, soon began to be abused. Besides the "unholy kiss," Clement of Alexandria rebukes the kiss of ostentation. "Love," he says, "is not tested by a kiss, but by kindly feeling; there are those who make the Church re-echo with their kiss, but there is no love underneath."[3] It was early found needful to limit this custom, but it was retained, under certain regulations, in the Western Church until the thirteenth century, and it is observed in most of the Eastern Churches to this day.[4]

Thus far concerning the manner of worship in the apostolic age. During the hundred years which followed, the notices which have come down to us on this subject are extremely scanty. It is somewhat remarkable that neither Clement of Rome, Barnabas, Polycarp, nor the author of the Letter to Diognetus,[5] makes any allusion to the Lord's Supper, and that Ignatius (taking the Syriac recension as our guide), says nothing respecting the

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*Christian Institutes*, pp. 41-43.

[2] See Romans xvi. 16. 1 Cor. xvi. 20. Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, c. lxv.

[3] *Instructor*, b. iii. § 11. Athenagoras, *Plea for the Christians*, c. xxxii.

[4] Ante-Nicene Library, vol. ii., p. 63, note 3; *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*

[5] The same may be said of the early *Apologists*, Minucius Felix, Athenagoras, Tatian and Theophilus of Antioch. L. Coleman, c. xvi. § 4.

outward observance, but pours out his soul for the spiritual communion. "I seek the bread of God which is Jesus Christ, and I seek his blood which is love incorruptible."[1]

The earliest allusion to the Supper, or even to worship in any way, is the statement we have already had before us, made to Pliny in Bithynia, namely, that "the disciples held their meetings on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, and sang praises to Christ, and that after this they met again to partake together of a simple and innocent meal."[2]

Justin Martyr, in his *First Apology*, presented to Antoninus Pius about A.D. 138, is the earliest writer who particularly describes the worship of the Christians. The reading and exposition of Scripture remained, and the extempore prayer and the hymn, with much of the simplicity of the primitive mode; but the free exercise of gifts on the part of the congregation, so important to the healthy, vigorous life of the Church was gone; almost the entire service, didactic and administrative, had become concentrated in one man. "On the day called Sunday," says Justin, "all who live in cities or in the country assemble in one place, and the memoirs of the Apostles, or the writings of the Prophets, are read as long as time permits; and when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs and exhorts

[1] See ante, p. 45. [2] Ante, p. 38.

Part I. Chap. 10.

to the imitation of these good things.[1] Then we all rise together and pray, and when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen: and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given; and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. They who are well-to-do and willing give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who sends assistance to the orphans, and widows, and the sick, and those who are in bonds, and strangers,—in a word to all who are in need."[2]

In another chapter he gives a more particular description of the manner of celebrating the Eucharist. The words he uses may perhaps be understood to imply his belief in consubstantiation. The occasion is the reception of a newly-baptized convert. "We offer," he writes, "hearty prayers for him and for ourselves, which being ended we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the presiding brother, bread and a cup of wine mixed with water, which taking, he gives glory to the Father of the

[1] Sometimes other Church writings were used. Dionysius Bishop of Corinth, writing about the same time to the Roman Church, says, "We have passed the Lord's holy day, and have read your Epistle, in reading which we shall always have our minds stored with admonition, as we shall also from the Epistle written to us in former days by Clement." Eusebius, b. iv., c. xxiii. See ante, p. 30.

[2] Chap. lxvii.

universe, in the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at his hands; and when he has concluded, all the people present express their assent by saying, Amen. This done, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present of the bread and the wine mixed with water, over which the thanksgiving was pronounced; and to those who are absent they carry away a portion. This food is called by us the Eucharist [thanksgiving], of which no one is allowed to partake but he who believes that the things we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is living as Christ has commanded. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but as Jesus Christ our Saviour, being made flesh by the word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of his word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh."[1]

In his *Dialogue with Trypho* he goes a step further, and calls the bread and wine a *sacrifice*, deducing it, after his allegorical manner, from the meat offerings of the law. "The offering of fine flour," he

[1] Idem. c. lxv., lxvi.

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says, "which was presented for those purified from leprosy,[1] was a type of the bread of the Eucharist. God speaks by the mouth of Malachi, 'From the rising of the sun till the going down of the same; in every place incense is offered unto my name and a pure offering; for my name is great among the Gentiles,'[2] namely, amongst us who in every place offer sacrifices to Him, the bread of the Eucharist and the cup of the Eucharist."[3]

Sixty years later we meet with a beautiful picture of the religious practices of the Christians, in the writings of Tertullian. "We are," he says in his *Apology* addressed to the rulers of the Empire, "a community bound together by the same religious profession, by the divine authority of our discipline, and by a common hope. We come together as a congregation to offer with our united force our prayers to God, to whom such wrestling is acceptable. We pray for the emperors, for their ministers, and for all in authority; for the welfare of the world, for the prevalence of peace, for the delay of the final consummation. We meet to read our sacred writings, if the state of the times makes either forewarning or retrospection needful. With the sacred words we nourish our faith, we animate our hope, we strengthen our confidence; no less do we, by the inculcation of God's precepts, confirm good habits. Exhortations are given and rebukes and

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[1] Lev. xiv. 10. [2] Mal. i. 11. [3] *Dialogue with Trypho*, c. xli.

sacred censures administered. The work of judgment proceeds with the gravity which befits those who feel they are in the sight of God; and the most notable example of the judgment to come is given when anyone has sinned so grievously, as to require his separation from us in prayer and the assembly and all sacred intercourse.

"The tried men of our elders preside over us, who have obtained that honour, not by purchase, but by character. There is no buying and selling in the things of God.[1] Though we have our treasure chest, it is not filled by purchase-money, as of a venal religion. On the monthly collection-day each as he chooses puts in a small donation; but only if it be his pleasure, and if he is able: for there is no compulsion, all is voluntary.[2] These gifts are piety's deposit fund; they are not spent on feasts and drinking bouts, but to support and bury the destitute, to bring up poor orphan boys and girls, to maintain superannuated servants, and such as have suffered shipwreck; and if there happen to be any in the mines, or exiled, or in prison, for their fidelity to the Church of God, to minister to them. But it is chiefly for these very deeds of love that some persons brand us. 'See,' they say, 'how these Christians love one another;' for they themselves are animated by mutual hatred:—'How they

[1] Neque enim pretio ulla res Dei constat.

[2] Nam nemo compellitur, sed sponte confert.

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are ready to die for one another;' for they themselves will sooner put one another to death. . . How fittingly are those called and counted brothers who have been led to the knowledge of God as their common Father, who have drunk in the same spirit of holiness, and who from the womb of a common ignorance have been born into the same light of truth!

"You abuse our humble feasts as extravagant and wicked. Our feast is a modest supper; it explains itself by its name. The Greeks call it 'Love.' Whatever it costs, the outlay is gain; since with the good things of the feast we succour the needy. As it is an act of religious service, it permits no vileness or immodesty. The participants before reclining for meat taste first of prayer to God. As much is eaten as satisfies the cravings of hunger; as much is drunk as befits those who remember that during the night they will be occupied in worshipping God. We talk together as those who know that the Lord is one of our hearers. After the washing of hands and the bringing in of lights, each is asked to stand forth and sing, as he is able, a hymn to God, either from the Holy Scriptures, or of his own composing. As the feast commenced with prayer, so with prayer it is closed."[1]

By Tertullian's time the substitution of one man, the presiding presbyter, as the distributor of the

[1] Chap. xxxix.

bread and wine, in place of a mutual participation round a social table, had become a rule in the Church. He writes, "The Lord commanded it to be eaten at meal-times and to be taken by all. We receive it at our meetings before day-break, and from no other hands but those of the presidents."[1] He appears to have been the first to give to the Supper the name of *Sacrament*.[2]

Irenæus, who was contemporary with Tertullian, repeats Justin's mystical words in still stronger language, and like him, calls the bread and wine a sacrifice, "the oblation of the Church which the Lord commanded to be offered throughout all the world . . which none of the conventicles of the heretics can offer. . . As," he says, "the bread which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but becomes the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, but have the hope of the resurrection to eternity."[3]

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[1] *The Soldier's Chaplet*, c. iii.

[2] Idem. In classical Latin, *sacramentum*, at first a juridical term, was afterwards used to signify the soldier's oath of allegiance to the Emperor. In the ancient Latin versions of the New Testament, it was frequently employed as an equivalent for the Greek word *μυστήριον*, mystery, as in Ephes. i. 9; Rom. xvi. 25; 1 Cor. xiii. 2, &c. *Dict. of Christ. Antiq.* art. Sacraments.

[3] *Against Heresies*, b. v., c. xviii. §§ 1, 4, 5.

## CHAPTER XI.

### Baptism—Infant Baptism.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."[1] It is taken for granted by the great majority of Christians that water-baptism is here spoken of, although few would venture to assert that such a rite is essential to salvation. But if water baptism is really a Christian ordinance, it is strange that John, of whose ministry it was the especial characteristic, and who was thence called the Baptist, should draw so strong and broad a contrast between his own baptism and that of Christ: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire;"[2] and that our Lord himself, after his resurrection, should enforce the same grand distinction: "John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."[3] Not less worthy of notice is it that Peter, in his apology before the Church at Jerusalem for eating with Cornelius, tells his fellow-apostles and the brethren, that when he saw the Holy Spirit descend on the Gentiles, as it had done on those of the circumcision, he called to mind the same words:

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[1] Mark xvi. 16. [2] Matt. iii. 11. [3] Acts i. 5.

"I remembered the word of the Lord, how that He said, 'John, indeed, baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.'"[1] And although Peter put the question, "Can any man forbid the water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" yet it is plain that he regarded the outward purification as of secondary importance. Cornelius and his household had undergone the inward change; they had received the divine gift; they were become new creatures in Christ Jesus. Anything more, anything external, must have seemed to Peter merely a matter of expediency, a sign to those round about.[2] For in his first Epistle, speaking of Noah and his family as saved by water, he makes use of water as a figure only of the spiritual deliverance, and declares that the baptism "which now saves" is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation [or appeal] of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."[3] In like manner Paul treats the baptism in which the believer is buried with Christ entirely as a spiritual work, coupling it with "the circumcision not made with hands."[4] And with

[1] Acts xi. 16.

[2] Water-baptism was a Jewish rite at the admission of converts, and as such would maintain its hold upon Jewish Christians, as did many other practices which were discontinued in course of time.

[3] 1 Peter iii. 21.

[4] Col. ii. 11, 12. See also Ephes. v. 26. It is often supposed that Christ's words to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and

Part I, Chap. 11.

regard to the great commission given by our Lord to the Apostles,—"Go ye and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,"[1]—whatever meaning any may attach to these words, assuredly they are always to be read in connection with our Lord's emphatic language, both in the passage quoted above and elsewhere,[2] as to the spiritual character of his baptism.

That the Apostles generally made use of water-baptism cannot, however, be doubted; although Paul's thanksgiving for having himself baptized so few of the Corinthian converts is significant.[3]

At first the act was of the simplest kind and might be performed by any one.[4] How soon a superstitious value began to be attached to it we have seen in the story of the Apostle John and the robber.[5] The earliest description of the rite to be found in any Christian author is contained (as in the case of worship), in Justin Martyr's first *Apology* (A.D. 138). Probably by that time the new converts were re-

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the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," support the position that water-baptism is a Christian ordinance; but it is evident that our Lord makes no more reference here to elementary water than did John to material fire when he spoke of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire, for he adds, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John iii. 1-6.

[1] Matt. xxviii. 19. [2] Matt. xx. 23; Luke xii. 50. [3] 1 Cor. i. 13-17.

[4] "Even laymen have the right, for what is equally received can be equally given." Tertullian, *On Baptism*, c. xvii.; Mosheim, i., p. 104.

[5] Ante, pp. 25, 26.

quired to pass through a course of religious instruction in preparation for it, whence they were called *catechumens*, *i.e.* persons under oral instruction. We have seen in the last chapter how great progress ritualistic ideas had made in Justin's time, in regard to the bread and wine. The same is apparent in his manner of treating baptism. II. Cent.

"As many as believe that what we teach is true, and undertake to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting for the remission of their past sins; we praying and fasting with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner as we were ourselves regenerated.[1] For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, 'Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' And how those who have sinned and repent shall escape their sins is declared by Isaiah the prophet: 'Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from your souls; learn to do well. Though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them white like wool, and though they be as crimson, I will make them white as snow.'"[2]

But Justin could show, on occasion, that he esti-

[1] This word appears to be used by Justin and Irenæus (see below) as synonymous with "baptized."

[2] *First Apology*, c. lxi., A. N. L.

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mated the external at its true value. In his time the spiritual teaching of Christ and his apostles still strove against the more outward and carnal interpretation of the Christian mysteries. Commenting in another place on the same passage of Isaiah, he asks, "What is the use of that baptism which cleanses the flesh and body alone? Baptize the soul from wrath and covetousness, envy and hatred, and lo, the body is pure. What need have I of that other baptism, who have been baptized with the Holy Ghost?"[1]

By Tertullian's time (A.D. 200) fresh rites had been added, and the notion of the virtue and power of the outward observance had penetrated deeper, although the reliance on its mechanical effect, irrespective of faith, had not as yet found entrance. He thus describes the ceremony: "A little before we enter the water, in the presence of the congregation, and under the hand of the president, we make a solemn profession that we renounce the devil, his pomp and his angels. Upon this we are thrice immersed, making a somewhat ampler pledge than the Lord has appointed in the gospel. When we come up out of the water there is given to us a mixture of milk and honey, and we refrain from the daily bath for a whole week."[2] Again, "When we

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[1] *Dialogue with Trypho*, c. xiv. xxix.

[2] *The Soldiers' Chaplet*, c. iii. To this day in Syria, members of the corrupt Eastern Churches frequently refrain from washing for months and years, lest they should "wash off their baptism."

issue from the font,[1] we are, according to ancient custom, thoroughly anointed with a blessed unction, as the priests were wont to be anointed with oil from a horn; and the unction running down our flesh profits us spiritually, in the same way as the act of baptism, itself carnal in that we are plunged in water, has a spiritual effect in delivering us from our sins. Then the hand is laid on us, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit, through the words of benediction; and over our cleansed and blessed bodies freely descends from the Father that most Holy Spirit."[2] "In this way," he says exultingly, "without pomp, with no novelty of preparation, without cost, a man descends into the water, and being immersed, with the utterance of a few words, rises up out of it, scarcely if at all cleaner in body, but—incredible consequence—the possessor of eternal life."[3]

Tertullian's treatise on baptism was launched against the followers of a woman named Quintilla, a preacher of the gospel at Carthage a little before his time. He is very severe and even scurrilous against the members of this sect, who rejected water.

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[1] Lavacro. [2] *On Baptism*, c. vii. viii., A. N. L.

[3] Idem, c. ii. Hippolytus, a little later (he died A.D. 238) indulges in equally florid language. Like Justin, misinterpreting Isaiah i. 18, he says, "Do you see, beloved, how the prophet spoke beforetime of the purifying power of baptism? He who descends in faith to the laver of regeneration, and renounces the devil and joins himself to Christ, comes up from the baptism brilliant as the sun, flashing forth the beams of righteousness." *Discourse on the Holy Theophany*, c. x.

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baptism as useless, and held that faith alone is now, as it was in Abraham's time, sufficient for salvation.[1] There were other sects at the same period who rejected both water-baptism and the Eucharist. Such were the Ascodrutæ, who held, "that the divine mysteries, being images of invisible things, are not to be accomplished by the things which are seen, or the incorporeal by that which is visible and corporeal, but that the true knowledge of that which exists is complete redemption."[2] They were said to be "a sort of Gnostics," and the truth which they held may perhaps have been largely mixed with error; but it is also possible that they may have incurred undeserved censure on account of their protest against the encroachments of ritualism. The Seleucians and Hermians, again, rejected water-baptism, maintaining that it was not instituted by Christ, and laying stress on John the Baptist's words: "I indeed baptize you with water, &c."[3] The number of such dissidents may have been much larger than history declares, and the fact of their

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[1] C. i. He calls Quintilla a *viper*, and says that such reptiles "affect dry and waterless places." "But we," he says, "as little fishes, after the example of our Ἰχθύς, Jesus Christ, are born in the water, and have no safety but in abiding there." Ἰχθύς signifies fish, and its letters are the initials of the formula Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς Θεοῦ Υἱος Σωτήρ, *Jesus Christ Son of God Saviour*. This fanciful connection caused the fish to be adopted as a Christian symbol.

[2] Theodoret, *Hær. Fab.*, i., c. x. Irenæus has the same passage, except that for "that which exists" he reads "the unspeakable greatness." *Adv. Hær.*, i., c. xxi. § 4.

[3] Bingham, *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, b. xi., c. ii.

existence indicates that even in this early age, there was not wanting in the Church a spirit of protest against the leaven of formality and ceremonial observances. II. Cent.

At what time Infant Baptism came into use is not known. No mention of it occurs in any author previous to Irenæus, who is thought to refer to it in the following passage: "Christ came to save all who through Him are regenerated to God, infants and children, and boys and youths, and old men."[1] A few years afterwards we find Tertullian strenuously opposing it. "Why is it deemed necessary," he asks, "that little children should be baptized, and their sponsors exposed to danger, for both these themselves may die, and so be unable to fulfil their promises; and the infant for whom they have promised may grow up with an evil disposition. The Lord indeed says, 'Forbid them not to come unto Me.'[2] Let them come while they are growing up, while they are learning, while they are being taught whither to come; let them become Christians[3] when they are able to know Christ."[4]

Origen, writing some thirty or forty years later, claims apostolic tradition for the practice. "Little children," he says, "are baptized agreeably to the usage of the Church:" and again, "The Church

[1] *Adv. Hær.*, ii., c. xxii. § 4.

[2] Matt. xix. 14. It need scarcely be remarked that these words can have no reference to baptism.

[3] That is, be baptized. [4] Tertullian, *On Baptism*, c. xviii.

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received it as a tradition from the Apostles that baptism should be administered to children." On which Neander remarks, "that such a tradition should first be recognised in the third century, is evidence rather against, than for, its apostolic origin. For it was an age when a strong inclination prevailed to derive from the Apostles every ordinance which was considered of special importance, and when, moreover, so many walls had been thrown up between it and apostolic times, hindering the freedom of prospect."[1]

It was long before the practice became general. Dean Stanley points out that Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen, Basil, Ephrem of Edessa, Augustine,[2] Ambrose, though they were all the children of Christian parents, were not baptized until they were of mature age.[3] Neander is of opinion that it did not become universal till the fifth century.[4]

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[1] *Planting of the Church*, i., p. 163; *Church History*, i., p. 435.

[2] His father was not a Christian when Augustine was born.

*Christ. Instit.*, p. 2. [4] *History of Dogmas*, p. 234.

## CHAPTER XII.

PRAYER — ALMSGIVING — MIRACULOUS AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS—SUPERSTITIOUS PRACTICES.

II. Cent.

PRAYER. Besides the occasions of public worship, the Jews observed stated hours of private prayer, the third, sixth, and ninth, corresponding to nine, twelve, and three o'clock of our day.[1] Through the Judaizing spirit in the Church, which regarded particular times and places as sacred, and failed to perceive that "prayer was to be the soul of the whole life," the same rule was early taken to be incumbent on the Christian believer.[2]

Some very superstitious practices had crept into the Church by the second century. There were Christians who, as Tertullian informs us, were careful to wash their hands at every prayer, even when they had just come from the bath. Others, when they prayed, made it a matter of conscience, —like the heathen, to lay aside their cloaks,—"just as though cloaked suppliants would not be heard by God, who hearkened to the three saints in the

[1] Ps. lv. 17; Dan. vi. 10; Acts ii. 15, iii. 1, x. 9.

[2] Tertullian, *On Prayer*, c. xxv. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*, b. vii., c. vii.

furnace of the king of Babylon, when bound in their hose and turbans. Matters of this kind," he adds, "belong not to religion, but to superstition, being of curious rather than reasonable service, and deserving of restraint even on this ground, that they put us on a level with the Gentiles."[1]

Had Tertullian looked further he might have applied the same remark to another practice. Prayer in the assemblies was offered standing, and by his time a custom had grown up for the congregation to turn their faces to the east. Tertullian takes no exception to this practice, although he acknowledges it may have given rise to the report that the Christians worshipped the sun. The observance was not taken from the Jews, who turned their faces to the west. Some derive it from the ceremonies which, as will be shown in a future chapter, were used in baptism, when it was customary to renounce the devil with the face to the west, and then to turn round toward the east to recite the covenant with Christ. The practice in time of prayer, was, however, probably older than that in baptism; it is spoken of a hundred and fifty years earlier.[2]

But the Church writers of this period were far from countenancing formality in prayer. There are few passages in any author more deeply imbued

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[1] *On Prayer*, c. xiii., xv.

[2] See Tertullian, *Apology*, c. xvi.; Clement, *Miscell.*, b. vii., c. vii; *Apostolical Constitutions*, b. ii. § 7, c. lvii.; Bingham, *Christ. Antiq.*, b. xiii., c. viii. § 15.

with the spirit of true prayer than are to be found in Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen.[1]

Tertullian, says: "We are the true worshippers and the true priests, who pray in the spirit, and thus offer the sacrifice which is acceptable to God. What has God ever denied to prayer offered in spirit and truth? Of what mighty examples of the efficacy of prayer do we read! *Old world* prayer used to free men from fire, and from beasts, and from famine. How far more operative is *Christian* prayer! It does not muzzle lions, nor take away the sense of pain;[2] but it arms those who suffer and those who mourn with strength to endure. The prayer of righteousness averts God's anger, keeps the watch against enemies, intercedes for persecutors. Prayer can call back departing souls from the very pathway of death, make strong the weak, restore the sick, purge the possessed, open prison bars, loose the bonds of the innocent. . . Prayer is the wall of faith, her armour, offensive and defensive, against the foe who is lying in wait on every side. Thus armed we mount guard round the standard of our general; we await in prayer the angel's trump. Even the Lord himself prayed:

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[1] Origen does not belong to this period but to the third century. Illustrative passages from the Church writers are occasionally anticipated,—seldom, however, when any questions of government, ritual, or doctrine are involved, and never without notice being given of the circumstance.

[2] Is not this saying too much? The martyrs would often seem to have been witnesses to the contrary.

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to whom be honour and power, unto the ages of ages!"[1]

Let Clement of Alexandria speak: "Not in a specified place or selected temple, or at certain festivals and on appointed days, but during his whole life, the mature Christian[2] honours God; that is, offers his grateful thanks for the knowledge of the way to live. . . Whilst walking, or conversing, or silent, whilst reading or occupied in useful labour, will the experienced Christian pray. . . Holding festival throughout our whole life, we cultivate our fields praising, we sail the sea hymning. . . Prayer, to speak boldly, is converse with God. Even if we address God in silence, without opening the lips, yet when we cry inwardly He always listens to us. Prayer, then, may be uttered without the voice, by concentrating the whole spiritual nature within in undistracted turning towards God. If only the breathing is begotten in the secret chamber of the soul, and with unspoken groanings we call on the Father, He is near, He is at our side."[3]

Again, from Origen: "How much would each one among us have to relate of the efficacy of prayer, if only he were thankfully to recall God's mercies.

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[1] *On Prayer*, c. xxviii. xxix.

[2] The word in the original is *Gnostic*, which Clement employs to designate, not the heretic of that name, but the man of true *knowledge*, one who has grown to the stature of a man in Christ Jesus.

[3] *Miscell.*, b. vii., c. vii.

Souls long unfruitful, becoming conscious of their dearth, and being fructified by the Holy Spirit through persevering prayer, have given forth words of salvation, full of the intuitions of truth. What mighty enemies which threatened to annihilate our faith have from time to time been brought to shame! The might even of bewildering arguments, sufficient to stagger those who are accounted believers, has been often vanquished by prayer. How many instances are there of such as were exposed to sore temptations, and yet have suffered no injury from them, but have come forth unharmed, without even the smell of the flame passing upon them! And many who have fallen from the precepts of the Lord, and were already in the jaws of death, have been delivered by the prayer of repentance." Again, "He prays without ceasing who unites prayer with action; for works also are a part of prayer. We cannot understand the Apostle's words, 'Pray without ceasing,' in any practicable sense, unless we regard the whole life of the believer as one great continuous prayer, of which what is commonly called prayer forms but a part."[1]

Little need be said on the subject of ALMSGIVING. The example so fully set by the Apostles[2] was nobly followed by the Church. The East and the West vied with each other in their generous care of the widow

[1] *On Prayer*, c. xii., xiii.; in Neander, i., pp. 394, 395.

[2] Gal. ii. 10, and elsewhere freq.

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and orphan, the sick, the poor and the captive, in the relief of all who were in distress, far off or near.[1] But a danger lay in the tendency, early developed, to regard acts of charity as meritorious in themselves, as entries on the right side of the ledger in the account between the soul and God. We find this erroneous notion beginning to show itself as early as in the *Shepherd* of Hermas. "If you do any good beyond what is commanded by God, you will gain for yourself more abundant glory, and will be more honoured by God than you would otherwise be."[2]

Miraculous Gifts. Some of the writers of this period tell us that the miraculous gifts of healing, exorcism, and even raising the dead, which distinguished the Apostolic Church, were continued down to their day. Justin Martyr speaks of evil spirits being cast out by believers through the name of Jesus Christ.[3] He is confirmed by Irenæus. "Some certainly and truly drive out devils, so that those who have been delivered from them become believers and join themselves to the Church. . . Others lay hands upon the sick and heal them. Yea, and even the dead have been raised to life again, and have remained among us for many years. . . The entire Church entreating with much fasting and prayer, the spirit of the dead man has returned. . .

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[1] "It is the glory of a Bishop to relieve the poverty of the poor." Jerome, quoted by Hatch. Lect. ii., p. 48.

[2] B. iii.; *Similitude* v., c. iii. [3] *Second Apology*, c. viii.

For all these benefactions," he adds, "the Church takes nothing in return, for as she has freely received from God so freely does she minister."[1]

Spiritual Gifts. The early writers bear witness also to the presence of other gifts which graced the Church in the time of the Apostles, and which continued to their day to be exercised by women as well as men. Justin, citing the prophecy of Joel, adduced by Peter on the day of Pentecost,[2] states, "We may still see amongst us women and men possessing the gifts of the Spirit of God. . . The prophetical gifts remain with us even to the present time."[3] And Irenæus writes, "Some amongst us possess the foreknowledge of things to come; they see visions and utter prophecies."[4] The Montanists especially maintained that the gift of prophecy continued to be bestowed upon women. The Bishop of Rome even acknowledged this gift to have been conferred upon two opulent ladies of that communion, Priscilla and Maximilla, although he afterwards excommunicated the whole party.[5]

Although the Worship of Relics had not yet begun, the steps may already be traced by which its way was being prepared. When Stephen died, we read simply that devout men buried him, and made

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[1] *Against Heresies*, b. ii., c. xxxi. § 2.; c. xxxii. § 4. [2] Acts ii. 16-18.

[3] *Dialogue with Trypho*, c. lxxxvii., lxxxviii., lxxxii.

[4] *Against Heresies*, b. ii., c. xxxii. § 4.

[5] See ante, p. 98. Euseb., *E. H.*, b. v., c. xvi. Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, c. i. Mosheim, i., p. 200.

great lamentation over him.[1] What the lions left of the body of Ignatius was wrapped in linen, and carried to Antioch to be buried.[2] Fifty years later the Smyrniote Church, whilst expressly repudiating the idea of *worshipping* any, living or dead, except Christ, yet speaks of the ashes of Polycarp as "more precious than the most exquisite jewels," and of depositing them where the faithful may "gather round to celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom."[3] In allusion to which custom Tertullian tells us, "As often as the anniversary comes round, we make offerings for the dead, as birthday honours."[4]

The SIGN OF THE CROSS came very early into use. Probably at first it was employed only as a token of recognition; but it soon took its place amongst those observances, in which an external sign is so easily substituted for the true worship of the believing heart. It was supposed to put to flight evil spirits, and to act as a charm against temptation, disease or mishap. By Tertullian's time the practice of making the sign had evidently become general. "In all our travels and movements, in all our coming in and going out, in putting on our clothes and shoes, at the bath, at the table, in lighting our lamps, in reclining or sitting, in all the actions of daily life, we mark our foreheads with the sign of the cross. If," he adds, "for these and other such

[1] Acts viii. 2. [2] Ante, p. 43. [3] Ante, p. 80.
[4] *The Soldier's Chaplet*, c. iii.

practices thou shouldst insist on scriptural warrant, thou wilt find none. Thou wilt be told that they have their origin in tradition, are confirmed by custom, and must be observed in faith. That tradition and custom and faith are supported by reason, either thou wilt thyself perceive, or learn from some one who has; and meanwhile thou wilt believe that some reason exists to which submission is due."[1] These remarkable words of Tertullian show us the way in which, one by one, were laid and cemented together the foundation stones of that monstrous fabric of Romanism which was to take the place of the true Church and to overshadow the world. Tertullian, however, did not always write in this strain. Elsewhere he nobly says, "Christ surnamed himself *Truth*, not *Custom*."[2] To which may be added the involuntary testimony of the Clementine Homilies, directed indeed against the Greeks, but equally applicable to the Church: "There is a great difference between truth and custom. Truth is found when it is honestly sought, but custom, whether true or false, is received, not by judgment but by prejudice, at haphazard, on the opinion of those who have

[1] Harum et aliarum ejusmodi disciplinarum si legem expostules scripturarum, nullam invenies; traditio tibi prætendetur auctrix, consuetudo confirmatrix, et fides observatrix. Rationem traditioni et consuetudini et fidei patrocinaturam aut ipse perspicies, aut ab aliquo qui perspexerit disces; interim nonnullam esse credes, cui debeatur obsequium. Idem, c. iv., ed. Lipsiæ, 1839.

[2] Christus Veritatem se non Consuetudinem cognominavit. *The Veiling of Virgins*, c. i. See John xiv. 6.

lived before; and it is not easy to cast aside the ancestral garment, although it be proved to be utterly absurd."[1]

IMAGE-WORSHIP. On another matter of supreme importance the Church was still uncontaminated. We have seen that it was made by the heathen an objection to the Christians that they worshipped without images.[2] Nothing could possibly have been more odious to the early disciples than image-worship. Even the more enlightened among the heathen rejected it. Zeno forbade the making of both temples and images; and the ancient Romans were said to have admitted, for 170 years, no images into their temples, on the ground that it is impious to represent things divine by that which is perishable, and that it is impossible to reach God otherwise than with the mind.[3] But there was a disposition among the early Christians to go still further. Standing upon the Jewish interpretation of the second commandment, some of their teachers condemned all pictorial representations. Tertullian thought it wrong to make masks such as are worn by actors, saying, "If God forbids the making of every likeness, how much more the likeness of man, who is made in the image of God!"[4] Clement appears to hold the same rigid view: "We are ex-

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[1] Hom., iv., c. xi. See also Clement of Alexandria, *Exhort. to the Heathen*, c. xii.

[2] Ante, p. 71. [3] Plutarch, *Life of Numa*, c. viii.

[4] *On the Public Shows*, c. xxiii.

pressly prohibited," he writes, "from exercising a deceptive art; thou shalt not make the likeness of anything which is in the heaven above or in the earth beneath."[1] And Origen commends the Jews for disallowing painting and sculpture, in order, as he says, "that there might be no pretext for the manufacture of images, an art which distracts the minds of foolish men, and draws the eyes of the soul from God down to the earth."[2]

The avenue through which image-worship crept into the Church was by the usages of family life. The offensive objects of the heathen mythology presented themselves at every turn. The walls of the shops, parlours, and bedchambers, were hung with licentious pictures; figures provocative of unholy passions were painted on the drinking vessels and engraved on seals and rings.[3] For these the Christians substituted objects which should remind them, in their daily use, of gospel facts and gospel teaching. Thus Tertullian: "We may begin with the parables, in which you have the lost sheep sought by the Lord and brought home on his shoulders. Let the very pictures upon your cups stand forth" [as witnesses]. And again, "the Shepherd whom thou paintest on thy chalice."[4] Clement, forgetful it would seem of his former prohibition, speaks of Christian signet-rings, "Let the devices be a dove,

[1] *Exhortation to the Heathen*, c. iv. [2] *Against Celsus*, b. iv., c. xxxi.
[3] Clement, *Exhort.*, c. iv. Neander, i., pp. 403-5.
[4] *On Modesty*, c. vii., x.

or a fish, or a ship sailing before the wind, or a harp, or an anchor, or a fisherman, by which the Apostle will be brought to mind, and the children who are drawn up out of the water.[1] But let us not engrave the figures of idols—us who are forbidden all intercourse with them; or a sword, or a bow, following peace as we do; or a drinking cup, being enjoined to temperance."[2]

But any attempt to introduce paintings or statues into the places of worship, either in this (the second) century or the next, would have been stoutly resisted. Even Eusebius, in the fourth century, writing to Constantia, daughter of Constantine, asks indignantly, "What and of what kind is this image which thou hast written about, and which thou callest the image of Christ? Hast thou ever seen such a thing in a Church thyself, or heard of it from another?" And he goes on to say that he himself had taken from a woman two pictures of persons dressed like philosophers, which she called portraits of our Saviour and Paul, lest, he adds, "we should seem to carry our God about like idolaters."[3]

The use of crucifixes was not introduced until a much later period.

One of the hindrances with which Christianity had to contend from within, was the publication of Spurious Gospels and pretended apostolic canons.

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[1] That is, in baptism. [2] *Instructor*, b. iii., c. xi., Finger Rings.

[3] *Dict. of Christ. Antiq.*, art. Images, p. 814.

Many of these writings are believed to have been fabricated by heretical sects and parties in the Church, for the purpose of supporting their views of doctrine and practice. The falsification of the gospels, and even of his own letters, is complained of by Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth (A.D. 168-177). "As the brethren," he says, "desired me to write epistles, I wrote them; and these the apostles of the devil have filled with tares, exchanging some things and adding others, for whom there is a woe reserved. It is not matter of wonder if some have attempted to adulterate the sacred writings of the Lord, since they have done so with those which are not to be compared with them."[1] II. Cent.

[1] Eusebius, b. iv., c. xxiii.

## CHAPTER XIII.

GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH—MAINTENANCE OF MINISTERS — CLERGY AND LAITY — CHURCH ACTION AND DISCIPLINE—PLACES OF WORSHIP.

WE come now to the government of the Church.

ELDERS AND OVERSEERS. The Synagogue was for the Jew not only his house of worship, but his town-hall and his court of justice. Two classes of officers belonged to it, one for worship or teaching, the other for government. The Sabbath day's assembly for prayer, reading and exhortation, was presided over by the rulers of the Synagogue,[1]— the week-day assemblies or local courts, by the chief men or elders.[2] When the Synagogue became a Christian Church the same order continued, even the weekly court days remaining the same,[3] but both offices now met in that of the Elder.

The Gentile Churches were constituted after a different model. As already noticed[4] there existed in most parts of the empire, just as is the case in modern society, associations for various purposes.

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[1] ἀρχι-συνάγωγοι, Luke viii. 41, xiii. 14; Acts xviii. 8, 17, &c.

[2] πρεσβύτεροι.

[3] Monday and Thursday. [4] Ante, p. 111.

There were trade guilds and dramatic guilds, athletic, dining and burial clubs, friendly, literary and financial societies. Most of these associations seem to have had a religious element, and to the outside observer the Christian Churches only added one more to the existing number. The Churches used the same names for their meetings as did the guilds,[1] and in part also for their officers. In both cases the members contributed to or received from a common fund, and in both, admission was open, not only to freeborn citizens, but to women and strangers, to freed-men and slaves. A usual name for the officers in the non-Christian societies of Syria and Asia Minor (the nearest neighbours to the Christian organizations), was that of Overseer,[2] and their functions seem to have been both administrative and financial. This office and this name were from the beginning adopted by the Gentile Churches; but they also made use of the title of Elder, although they derived it, not from the elders of the Synagogue, but from the corresponding rank of men in the Grecian institutions.[3]

From whatever source they were derived, or whatever difference of signification they may originally have had, it is certain that throughout the first century and in the early years of the second, the

[1] Ecclesia, synagogue, synod. [2] ἐπίσκοπος, bishop.

[3] The foregoing paragraphs are condensed from Hatch's valuable *Lectures on the Organization of the Early Christian Churches.* Lect. ii., iii.

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names of elder (or presbyter), and overseer (or bishop), were convertible terms, and that the body of men so called were the pastors and administrators of the Church. "The elder," wrote Jerome at the end of the fourth century, "is identical with the bishop, and before parties had so multiplied under diabolical influence, the Churches were governed by a council of elders."[1]

Bishops. As time went on, one overseer or presbyter became elevated above the rest. The superior abilities of this or that man, coupled with exemplary life and diligent service in the Church, would naturally beget confidence on the part of the community, and a ready submission to his authority. As the first ardent love to the Saviour cooled down, and the primitive independence of spirit declined, a guard was no longer maintained against the abuse of homage thus rendered, and of authority thus acquired; and so an undue reverence grew up, and what was at first offered willingly and even rightfully to the man, came, first by custom and then by rule, to be granted and exacted for the office. By the middle of the second century, the presiding overseer was distinguished as *the bishop*, the rest being called presbyters.

Many writers maintain that the elevation and power of the bishops in this and the succeeding ages must not be regarded as a sign of declension,

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[1] "*On Titus*," in De Pressensé's *Early Years of Christianity*, p. 310.

but as a necessity of human nature.[1] It may be answered, Was the Lord ignorant of human nature when he said, speaking both "to the multitude and to his disciples, 'Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Teacher even Christ, and all ye are brethren; neither be ye called Masters, for one is your Master even Christ'"?[2] And in his private teaching to the twelve He expressly distinguishes between the lordship and authority proper to civil rule, and the government which was to obtain in the Church: "The kings of the Gentiles have lordship over them; and they that have authority over them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."[3]

At first the jurisdiction of the bishop was bounded by his own congregation. But as congregations multiplied, instead of creating new bishoprics, their needs were met by detaching presbyters from the council of the neighbouring bishop, by which means the bishoprics were enlarged, and the new Churches were made dependent on the old. The influence of the bishops further increased when synods began to be common, at which they chiefly represented their congregations, although the presbyters had at the first also a seat.[4]

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[1] See for example Milman's *Hist. of Christianity*, vol. iii., 249-255.
[2] Matt. xxiii. 8-11. [3] Luke xxii. 25, 26. See also 1 Pet. v. 2-5.
[4] Gieseler, i., p. 171.

In time the bishops themselves ceased to be equal and independent of one another. The larger capitals of the empire from which Christianity had been diffused—Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Alexandria, Rome—were, with Jerusalem, held in peculiar veneration, and were styled Apostolical Sees or Mother Churches. Amongst these, from the time of Hadrian, when Jerusalem ceased to exist as a Church, Rome held the first place. Her bishops were the heads of the wealthiest community in Christendom, and were known in the most distant lands for their liberal benefactions.[1] But it was the claim to be the successor of the Apostle Peter, and the inheritor of his spiritual authority, that enabled the Bishop of Rome to exalt himself above the other bishops. This claim, however, and this rank, although their germ may be discovered in the second century, were not fully acknowledged until a later period.

Deacons. The only office whose origin is related in the New Testament is that of "deacon."[2] To the care of the poor, for which it was instituted, many other duties were afterwards added; and, because the free access of men to women was likely to give offence, especially in the East, deaconesses

[1] Dionysius of Corinth (A.D. 162-170), writes thus to Soter, Bishop of Rome: "This practice has prevailed with you from the very beginning, to send contributions to many Churches in every city. In thus refreshing the needy, and supplying the wants of the brethren condemned to the mines, you preserve as Romans the practices of your ancestors the Romans." Eusebius, b. iv., c. xxiii.

[2] Acts vi. 1-6.

(at first usually widows), were also appointed, whose duty it was to instruct the younger sisters, assist at the baptism of female converts, and visit the women of the community in their own homes.[1]

ELECTION OF OFFICERS. The appointment of officers was made by the choice or with the approval of the whole Church. It was the Church that chose Stephen and his fellow-deacons, and set them before the Apostles, who laid their hands on them.[2]

The same mode of procedure was followed by the immediate successors of the Apostles. Clement of Rome, in his Epistle (A.D. circ. 97), writes: "The Apostles, preaching through countries and cities, appointed the first fruits of their labours, when they had proved them by the Spirit, to be overseers and deacons; and gave instructions that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed to their ministry. We are of opinion, therefore," he continues, "that those appointed by them, or afterwards by other eminent men, *with the consent of the whole Church*, and who have blamelessly served the flock of Christ, cannot be justly dismissed from the ministry."[3]

This two-fold election of Church officers held its place for several centuries, the apostolic element being supplied by the consensus of the neighbouring bishops. Thus Cyprian, in the third century,

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[1] *Apostolical Constitutions*, b. iii., c. xvi.; Neander, i., p. 262.

[2] Acts vi. 5, 6. [3] Chaps. xlii. xliv.

says, "It comes from divine authority that the presbyter should be chosen in the presence of the people, under the eyes of all, and be approved worthy and suitable by public judgment and testimony." And again, "You must diligently keep the practice handed down from divine tradition and apostolic observance, and maintained among us and almost throughout all the provinces, that for the proper celebration of ordinations, all the neighbouring bishops of the same province should assemble, and the bishop be chosen in the presence of the people, who are fully conversant with the life of each one, and have been spectators of his habitual conduct."[1] In another epistle he thus sums up the elements required in the election of a bishop, "The divine judgment, the popular voice, the consent of the fellow-bishops."[2] To the same purpose Origen: "The presence of the people is required in the ordination of a presbyter, that he who is known to be more learned, more holy, more excellent than the rest may be chosen to the office."[3] Also from the *Apostolical Constitutions:* "A bishop is to be chosen by the whole people. When he is named and approved, let the people assemble, with the presbytery and bishops, on the Lord's day, and let them give their consent."[4]

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[1] Epist. lxvii. § 4, 5. [2] Epist. liv. § v.

[3] Hom. vi. *On Levit.*, cited in *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, art. Bishop, p. 214.

[4] B. viii., sec. ii., c. iv. The *Apostolical Constitutions*, though probably containing "some ancient ore," are judged to be in the main the

But as the hierarchical notion gained strength, the free choice of the people, or their approval of the bishops' nomination, was gradually taken away, represented for a while by "the chief men of the laity," but in time totally lost. In like manner the suffrages of the co-provincial bishops were replaced by the nomination of the chief bishop of the province, first the Metropolitan and then the Patriarch. Another revolution of the wheel, during much later and darker ages, snatched the choice out of the hands of the Church altogether, and those who were to be God's stewards, to take the charge of his household, came to be the nominees of emperors and kings.[1] II. Cent.

From what has been said it is evident that the bishop of the primitive Church, even after that title came to be centred in one officer, occupied a very different place from the bishop of later times. He was one of the people, already known and beloved, the man of their own choice, the representative of their congregational life. He was also regarded as the representative and embodiment of apostolic teaching. Even when the New Testament writings had been collected together, the volume was very far from being a household book such as it is with us.

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production of post-Nicene times. Their date may range from the third to the fifth century. With the Constitutions are usually printed the "Apostolical Canons," which belong to the same age. Wordsworth, *Church History*, pp. 413-416; Ante-Nicene Library, Introductory Notice to the *Apost. Const.*

[1] *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, art. Bishop, pp. 213, 214.

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In many places very few copies, and in some places none at all, were to be found, excepting in the meeting-house itself; and it was to their bishops and teachers, to the lips of the living witnesses, that men looked for primary instruction in the precepts of Christ.

MAINTENANCE OF MINISTERS. At first those who filled offices in the Church continued to depend upon their former trades and occupations for the support of themselves and their families.[1] The sense of the mutual honour which religion and industry reflect upon each other, and of which Paul showed so memorable an example, was strong in the early days of Christianity. Polycarp, in his *Epistle to the Philippians*, about the middle of the second century, charges the presbyters to provide for that which is becoming in the sight of God and men;[2] and this independent spirit long survived in the Eastern Churches. However it might be the duty of some then, as it may be now, to set themselves entirely at liberty to serve the Gospel, it is in the main a wholesome condition of things when the ministers and officers of the Church share in the common lot of labour. Who should be so well able to counsel and sympathize with their brethren as those who are themselves bearing the same burdens? And whilst the necessities of those who dispense spiritual things are to be ungrudgingly supplied, it should

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[1] Neander, i., p. 274. [2] Chap. vi.

be the glory of the Church, as it would be one of her mightiest weapons in her warfare against the world, freely to give what she has so freely received. It is worth almost any sacrifice to preserve the Christian ministry in all its offices from ever being appraised at a money value or brought down to the level of a trade.[1]

As however, by degrees, not only the travelling preachers, but the presbyters also, began to devote themselves more and more exclusively to their spiritual vocation, provision had to be made for their wants. A proportion of the voluntary contributions collected every Lord's day,[2] was appropriated to their maintenance; but it was long before any stated payment or salary was made either to presbyters or bishops; and when this practice was introduced, the clergy were contented with very modest incomes. Natalius, who, at the end of the

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[1] Some have attempted to show that our Lord's words in Matt. x. 8, "Freely ye have received, freely give," will not bear the meaning which has been almost universally put upon them. Let us hear the comment of a recent German writer on this passage, "The direction does not refer to the working of miracles alone. It embraces all the Apostles had to impart, the exercise of their power to heal, and their preaching of the kingdom. No gift of God's grace is to be bought and sold with money (Acts viii. 20.), or, as Tertullian says, *nulla res Dei pretio constat.* A comprehensive and most pregnant position, which cannot be too much laid to heart by God's ambassadors, even to the present day; condemning all improper methodical and commercial stipulations in preaching God's grace, all payment that surpasses the limits of their need (ver. 10.), and all those unbecoming perquisites which are ungracefully attached to the direct ministration of the word and sacraments." Stier's *Words of the Lord Jesus.* By Pope. Vol. ii., pp. 9, 10.

[2] At Carthage once a month. See ante, p. 119.

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second century, was elected bishop by one of the heretical sects, received 150 denarii a month, or about £60 a year.[1]

CLERGY AND LAITY. The distinction of clergy and laity was unknown in apostolic and primitive times.

"In removing that which separated men from God, Christ removed also the barrier which had hitherto divided men from one another. There was now the same High Priest and Mediator for all, through whom all men, being once reconciled with God, are themselves made a priestly and spiritual race; one heavenly King, Guide, and Teacher, through whom all are taught of God; one faith, one hope, one Spirit quickening all. Believers were now called to dedicate their entire life as a thank-offering for the grace of redemption, to publish abroad the power and grace of Him who had called them out of the kingdom of darkness into his marvellous light, and to make their life one continual priesthood. The advancement of God's kingdom, the diffusion of Christianity among the heathen and the good of each particular community, was to be the duty, not of one select class alone, but of all; everyone co-operating by the special gifts which God had bestowed upon him—gifts grounded in his peculiar nature, but that nature renewed and ennobled by the Holy Spirit."[2]

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[1] Eusebius, b. v., c. xxviii. This sum may represent about £120, according to the present value of money.

[2] Neander, *Church History*, i., pp. 249, 250.

I. Cent.

"The whole body of Christians," observes Hatch, "was upon a level; 'All ye are brethren.' The distinctions which St. Paul makes between Christians are based not upon office, but upon varieties of spiritual power. . . The gift of ruling is not different in kind from the gift of healing. The expression, 'He that ruleth,' is co-ordinate with 'he that exhorteth,' 'he that giveth,' 'he that showeth mercy.' Of one or other of these gifts every Christian was a partaker."[1] "The kingdom of Christ," says Dr. Lightfoot, has no sacerdotal system. It interposes no sacrificial tribe or class between God and man, by whose intervention alone God is reconciled and man forgiven. . . Every member of the human family is *potentially* a member of the Church, and as such a priest of God." . . In the records of the apostolic Churches, the sacerdotal title is never once conferred upon [the special officers.] The only priests under the Gospel, designated as such in the New Testament, are the saints, the members of the Christian brotherhood. As individuals, all Christians are alike. . . Tertullian," he observes, "is the first to assert direct sacerdotal claims on behalf of the Christian ministry."[2]

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[1] Hatch, *Early Christian Churches*, Lect. v., p. 119.

[2] *Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians*, 3rd ed., pp. 179-183, 253. Tertullian styles the bishop a high priest. See his treatise *On Baptism*, c. xvii. It is only just to Dr. Lightfoot to present his whole mind on this matter, although his conclusion does not seem fully consistent with the premises. "It is most important that we should keep this ideal defi-

Gradually, however, the notion of a priesthood, of a sacred order of men, found its way into the new society. Gradually the congregations were willing to relieve themselves of the onus of maintaining a thoroughly Christian life, and to commit their spiritual concerns to the care of their bishops or presbyters. These, on their part, began to assume a certain superiority in rank, and to restrict to themselves the title of the *cleri* or clergy (*heritage* of God), a title which hitherto had comprehended the whole body of believers. It must be presumed that the Church, having her vision somewhat dimmed by the spirit of the world, failed to see the danger into which she was falling, and did not perceive that Jewish modes of thought instituting a false comparison between the Levitical priesthood and the Christian ministry, were perverting her original character.

The result of this change was equally disastrous to both parties, to the officers of the Church and to the rest of the congregation. The injury sustained by the latter is forcibly expressed by Neander. "As the idea of the universal Christian priesthood was more and more lost sight of, that of the priestly

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nitely in view, and I have, therefore, stated it as broadly as possible. Yet the broad statement, if allowed to stand alone, would suggest a false impression, or at least would convey only a half truth. . . As appointed days and set places are indispensable to her efficiency, so also the Church could not fulfil the purposes for which she exists, without rulers and teachers, without a ministry of reconciliation, in short, without an order of men who may in some sense be designated a priesthood," pp. 179, 180.

consecration of the whole life, which was enjoined on all Christians, was also forgotten. As, in contradiction to the original Christian consciousness, a distinction had been drawn between a particular priesthood and the universal and ordinary calling of all Christians, so were now contrasted with each other a spiritual and a secular province of life and action; notwithstanding Christ had exalted the *entire* earthly existence to a spiritual life."[1] I. Cent.

Church Action. The same principle by which the election of officers was determined governed all the transactions of the primitive Church. What was done, was done not by the authority of the overseers or elders only, but by that of the whole Church, under the direction of the Holy Spirit.[2] In the Council of Jerusalem, the letters which contained its sentence were written in the name of the "Apostles, elders, and brethren," and the messengers to whom they were entrusted were chosen by the "Apostles and elders, and the whole Church."[3] The same principle is recognized by Paul in the instructions he gives to the Corinthians regarding the treatment of an offender: "When ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c."[4]

The practice of referring important questions to the congregation soon fell into disuse: it is met

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[1] *Church Hist.*, i., p. 276.

[2] Acts xv. 28. [3] Acts xv. [4] 1 Cor. v. 4.

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with in some places as late as the third century. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, notwithstanding the exalted idea he entertained of the episcopate, was careful to uphold it. Thus he writes to his presbyters and deacons (A.D. 252): "From the commencement of my episcopacy, I made up my mind to do nothing without your advice and *without the consent of the people.*"[1] And again in his epistle on the reinstatement of the Lapsed: "It is agreeable to the modesty and the discipline, and even the life of all of us, that the chief officers with the clergy *in the presence also of those of the people who have stood firm*, &c."[2] Hippolytus, who died A.D. 235, speaking of the heretical opinions of a certain Noetus, tells us that, on "hearing of these things the blessed presbyters summoned that heretic *before the Church* in Smyrna and examined him; and after a second examination, excommunicated him."[3] It would probably be difficult to find any instance of the congregation taking part in the affairs of the Church at a later period. Thus insensibly did the Churches lose much of their strength and independence.

DISCIPLINE. Christian discipline occupied a very important place in the Early Church. "It is difficult for us in modern times," observes Hatch, "with the widely different views which we have come to

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[1] Epist. v. § iv. [2] Epist. xiii. § ii.

[3] *Against the Heresy of Noetus*, c. i.

hold as to the relation of Church government to social life, to understand how large a part discipline filled in the communities of primitive times. Those communities were what they were mainly by the strictness of their discipline. The tie of a common belief was looser than the tie of a common ideal and a common practice. The creed was as yet vague: the moral code was clear. For the kingdom of God was come, which was a kingdom of righteousness. . . In the midst of a 'crooked and perverse nation,' the Christian communities could only hold their own by the extreme of circumspection. Moral purity was not so much a virtue at which they were bound to aim, as the very condition of their existence. If the salt of the earth should lose its savour, wherewith should it be salted? If the lights of the world were dimmed who should rekindle their flame? And of this moral purity the officers of each community were the custodians. They 'watched for souls as those that must give account.' Week after week, and in some cases, as the Jewish Synagogue had done, on two days in a week, the assembly met not only for prayer but for discipline."[1]

What kind of humiliation was enjoined on those who fell away and committed grave sins we learn from Tertullian. He terms it "utter confession."[2] "In this kind of penance the penitent is required

[1] *Early Churches*, Lect. iii., pp. 68, 69. See also the extract from Tertullian, ante, p. 119.

[2] *Exomologēsis.*

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to assume a demeanour calculated to move mercy. He is to lie in sackcloth and ashes; to steep his spirit in sorrow; to exchange the sins he has committed for self-mortification. His food is to be of the plainest,—not for the stomach's sake but for the soul's,—his meat is to be prayer and fasting; he is to groan, weep, roar unto the Lord night and day; to roll before the feet of the presbyters, and kneel to God's dear ones, and to beseech all the brethren as his ambassadors to bear his supplications to heaven." Tertullian complains, however, that, "Most men either shun this work as a public exposure, or else defer it from day to day."[1] The reader will scarcely wonder that they did so! Origen, writing in the next century, says, "The Christians lament as dead those who have been overcome by licentiousness or any other sin, because they are lost and dead to God. If at some future time these manifest a becoming change, they receive them as risen from the dead, but after a greater interval than in the case of those who were admitted at first, and not placing in any office in the Church those who after professing the Gospel have lapsed and fallen."[2]

Abuses early appeared in connection with the discipline of the Church. The distinction of some sins as mortal and others as venial was set up. The outward signs of repentance came to be con-

[1] *On Repentance*, c. ix, x. [2] *Against Celsus*, b. iii., c. li.

founded with the inward work of the heart. The administration of the discipline being taken away from the congregation and given into the hands of the priesthood, the people came to look rather to priestly absolution than to the divine forgiveness of sins. But these abuses had scarcely shown themselves by the end of the second century. Firmilian, Bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, a friend of Origen's, writing to Cyprian, says, "With us the elders and presidents meet once a year to consult together for the recovery by repentance of our fallen brethren, not as though they received from us the forgiveness of sins, but that, by our means, they may be brought to a sense of their sins and driven to render a more perfect satisfaction to the Lord."[1]

Places of Worship. The disciples met at first in private houses, or wherever they could find a suitable room. "Even the Jew had his public Synagogue or his more secluded *proseucha;*[2] but where the Christians met was indicated by no separate and distinguished dwelling; the cemetery of their dead, the sequestered grove, the private chamber, contained their peaceful assemblies."[3] "For nearly two hundred years," writes Stanley, "fixed places of worship had no existence. About this time notices of them became more frequent, but in such ambiguous terms that it is difficult to ascertain how

[1] Printed with Cyprian's Epistles. No. lxiv. § 4.

[2] Place of prayer. [3] Milman, ii., p. 179.

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far the building or how far the congregation is the prominent idea in the writer's mind."[1]

But whether fixed or otherwise, it is a significant fact, that during its period of greatest purity and most active growth, the Church had no special buildings *consecrated* for the worship of God. Clement of Alexandria, not satisfied with citing Paul's declaration at Athens, "God dwells not in temples made with hands," appeals, in support of the same great truth, to the ancient poets and philosophers. "Most excellently does Euripides write:—

> What house constructed with the workman's hands,
> With folds of walls can clothe the shape divine?

And Zeno, founder of the Stoics, 'We ought to make neither temples nor images, for no work is worthy of the gods. . . There is no need to build temples; a temple ought not to be regarded as holy. For nothing is worth much, or is holy, which is the work of builders and mechanics.'" Elsewhere Clement himself adds, "It is not the place but the assemblies of the elect that I call the Church."[2]

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[1] *Christ. Instit.*, p. 176.

[2] *Miscellanies*, b. v., c. xi.; b. vii., c. v.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### Holy Days and Festivals—Marriage—Asceticism—Burial.

Holy Days and Seasons. Although the sanctity of *place*, incident to the Old Dispensation, had not yet found its way into the Christian mind, it was otherwise with the sanctity of *days* and *seasons*. The great truth that the worship of God, springing from a conversation in heaven, and not depending on the elements of the world, is no longer confined to any especial time, early began to fall out of sight, and men turned back to the particularizing spirit of the Mosaic dispensation. To the apostolical practice of assembling for divine worship on the First day of the week, was added the observance of a variety of seasons for fasting and prayer. It was supposed to be a fitting preparation for the Sunday, the joyous festival of the resurrection, that Wednesday and Friday should be set apart as days of mortification and prayer, in memory of Christ's betrayal and sufferings. The Churches of Jewish Christians, although they adopted the First day of the week, retained also the Sabbath; and from them the custom became general in the East of distinguishing this day (Saturday) as well as

II. Cent.

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Sunday, by never fasting, and by the congregation standing during the time of public prayer.[1] In the Western Churches, on the contrary, and especially in Rome, where the opposition to Judaism was in this period strong, a custom prevailed of observing the last day of the week as a fast day.[2]

Easter. The Jewish Christians, not content with retaining the Sabbath, kept also all their Old Testament feasts, although they gradually ascribed to them a Christian meaning. The Gentile Churches, especially those of the West, which had received the gospel through the Apostle Paul, seem for a considerable time to have observed no yearly feast days; and when they began to commemorate the crucifixion and the resurrection, a difference arose between them and some of the Eastern Churches as to the days on which these anniversaries should be held. Amongst the latter, where Jewish ideas prevailed, the day of our Lord's passion was kept according to the reckoning laid down for the Passover, from which it happened that it would often fall on another day of the week than Friday, and the resurrection day on another day than Sunday. But in the West the Jewish calendar had no place; and when the festival of Easter was adopted, the day of the week and not that of the month was taken into account. It was by a coincidence which

[1] Kneeling in prayer was esteemed an attitude of humiliation, inconsistent with the joyousness proper to seasons of thanksgiving.

[2] Neander, i., pp. 406-410.

took place at intervals only, and which without doubt happened that year by divine appointment, that the Passover at which our Lord suffered fell on the day next preceding the Sabbath. The consequence was that a Sixth day was set apart to the memory of our Lord's crucifixion, and a First day to that of his resurrection.

This diversity of custom existed at first without being deemed of sufficient importance to be made a matter of dispute; it was still kept in mind that the kingdom of God consists neither in meat nor drink, nor any other kind of external usage. When in 162, Polycarp visited Bishop Anicetus at Rome,[1] this difference of practice was the subject of a conversation between them. Anicetus maintained that the presbyters who governed the Roman Church before him never observed any such custom,[2] while Polycarp replied that he had always observed such a Passover with the Apostle John. In the end they came to the conclusion that a difference on such points might be allowed to continue without prejudice to fellowship and unity; and Anicetus invited Polycarp to preside in place of himself at a celebration of the Lord's Supper.[3]

But in the last decade of this century, when

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[1] This was five years before Polycarp's martyrdom.

[2] The passage is obscure: it has even been supposed to mean that the festival of Easter itself had to that time not been kept in the Roman Church. Neander, i., 414, note.

[3] Eusebius, b. v., c. xxiii., xxiv.

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Victor was Bishop of Rome, the question became a matter of public controversy. On the one side stood the Church of Rome, supported by those of Tyre, Cæsarea in Palestine, Jerusalem and Alexandria; on the other the Churches of Asia Minor, headed by Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus. The dispute waxed warm. Synods were convoked. The bishops of Asia Minor decreed that Easter ought to be kept on the fourteenth day of the moon, on whatever day of the week it should fall, because the paschal lamb was slain on that day. A counter-mandate was issued by Rome and the rest of the Churches, directing all Christians everywhere to celebrate the resurrection on no other than the Lord's day. The bishops of Asia Minor persevered in their resolution; and the Roman bishop, a man of a proud and hierarchical spirit, attempted to cut them off from the common unity. For this he received a severe rebuke from Irenæus of Lyons, and others of the bishops. "The Apostles," wrote Irenæus, "directed us to let no man judge us in meat or in drink, or in respect of a feast day, or a new moon, or a Sabbath day.[1] Why then these disputes? whence these divisions? We observe the feast, but it is with the sour leaven of malice and wickedness, and we rend the Church of God; we observe externals, but we omit the weightier matters of faith and love. Such feasts and such fasts, as we learn from the prophets; are

[1] Colossians ii. 16.

an abomination to the Lord."[1] It was reserved for a later age to carry out the dictate of the Roman bishop, and to rend the outward Church in twain.[2] II. Cent.

Besides Easter, and the feast of Pentecost, which is spoken of by Tertullian as observed in his time,[3] no mention seems to be made of any annual festival among Gentile Christians so early as the second century.

HEATHEN NAMES OF THE DAYS. In their zeal against every usage which could remind them of the idolatrous worship around them, the early Christians scrupled to make use of the heathen names of the days of the week. They had received from the Jews the simple nomenclature, *the first, second, third of the Sabbath*, &c., and to the *first of the Sabbath* they gave also the name of *the Lord's Day*. For some time they adhered to the ancient practice. Justin Martyr and Tertullian employ the classic names for the most part only when writing for the heathen; and the former, speaking of the first day of the week, denotes it "the day called Sunday."[4]

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[1] It is not quite certain that the above are the identical words of Irenæus' letter to Victor; they are a fragment from his lost writings (No. 38), without heading or context. But the supposition agrees with the testimony of Eusebius and Socrates Scholasticus. The former says, "Some of the Bishops expressed themselves to Victor with much severity; . . amongst them Irenæus becomingly admonished him." *E. H.*, b. v., c. xxiv. According to Socrates, Irenæus, in his letter to Victor, "severely censured him for his immoderate heat." *E. H.*, b. v., c. xxii.

[2] See Part II., c. xi. [3] *On Idolatry*, c. xiv.; *On Baptism*, c. xix.

[4] See ante, p. 115.

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From the date of the edict of Constantine (A.D. 321), in which it is designated "the venerable day of the sun," both styles were used. Philastrius (so late as A.D. 380) condemned the use of the planetary names of the days as heretical.[1]

MARRIAGE in the ancient Roman world was crippled by law and degraded by custom. A legal union could only exist between Roman citizens; and the condition of the wife was one, not of equality, but of servitude. Even in the best days of Greece, marriage was regarded as an institution for the bringing up of children, and for the government of a household of slaves, rather than as a union for mutual comfort and help. The natural consequences were a widespread disregard of this divine institution, frequent divorce, infanticide, and abounding illegitimacy, not to speak of still greater abominations. For all these crying evils the Gospel was the true and only remedy. It was the tree which was cast into the bitter waters, and they became sweet.[2] Marriage was restored to its original honour and was resanctified. Home, with all its blessings and virtues, came into the world through the Gospel.[3]

"How shall we find words," says Tertullian, "fully to set forth the happiness of that marriage which the Church cements, and the oblation con-

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[1] *Dict. of Christ. Antiq.*, Lord's Day; Week.

[2] Exodus xv. 23-25. [3] See Wordsworth's *Church History*, p. 326.

firms, and the benediction seals; the news of which angels carry up to heaven, where it is ratified by the Father? What a yoke is that of two believers, partakers of the same hope, the same discipline, and the same service! They are truly fellow-servants, one in flesh and one in spirit. They prostrate themselves in prayer together; they fast together; they instruct, exhort, and sustain one another. They are found together in the Church of God, at the banquet of the Lord; they are united in trials, in persecution, in consolations. Neither conceals anything from the other, nor shuns the other, nor occasions uneasiness to the other. They visit the sick and give alms to the indigent, without fear of mutual reproach. They respond to one another in psalms and hymns, challenging each other which shall better chant their Lord's praises. Hearing and seeing such things, Christ rejoices, and sends to them his own peace. Where two such are, there is He himself; and where He is, there the evil one is not."[1] And Clement of Alexandria writes: "Marriage, as a holy picture, must be kept pure from everything which would defile it. Married persons ought to confess the Lord in their whole life,

'Both when they sleep, and when the holy light comes;'

rising with Him from their slumbers, and retiring to sleep with thanksgiving and prayer; possessing

[1] Tertullian *To his Wife*, b. ii., c. viii.

Part I. Chap. 14.

piety in the soul, and extending self-control to the body."[1]

Not much is known of the usages of the early Christians in regard to the marriage ceremony. No description of it is found in the early Church writers; but they contain some allusions which help us to see what rites were observed by the end of the second century. It was evidently conducted with great simplicity. Amongst the Jews, marriage was contracted without any definite religious observance, the essential act consisting in the removal of the bride from her father's house to that of the bridegroom or his father.[2] The important points in the Christian ceremonial were publicity and the sanction of the Church. "It is becoming," says Ignatius, "that men and women marry with the counsel of the overseer (or bishop), that the marriage may be in our Lord and not in lust."[3] "Secret unions," writes Tertullian, "that is, not first professed in presence of the Church, are in danger of being judged akin to adultery and fornication;"[4] and we learn from his treatise on monogamy,[5] that it was customary for the parties to ask consent of the bishop, presbyters, deacons, and widows. We have just seen also that a benediction was pronounced on the newly married pair, no doubt by

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[1] *Miscellanies*, b. ii., c. xxiii.

[2] Smith's *Dict. of the Bible.* [3] *Epist. to Polycarp*, c. v.

[4] *On Modesty*, c. iv. [5] Chap. xi.

the bishop or presiding presbyter, and that they partook together of the communion.[1] Elaborate ceremonials afterwards came into use, both at the betrothal and the nuptials, but these belong to a much later period. II. Cent.

FASTING. Ascetic tendencies, which from a very remote period have characterized the religions of the East, early manifested themselves in the Christian Church. We have seen how much importance was attached to fasting, the ceremonial observance of which seems to have prevailed even in sub-apostolic times. The author of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, though by no means free from superstitious notions, rebukes this tendency. The following dialogue is taken from one of his *Similitudes*. "While I was fasting, sitting upon a certain mountain, and giving thanks to the Lord for all his dealings with me, the Shepherd sat down beside me, saying, 'Why hast thou come hither so early in the morning?' 'Because, sir,' I answered, 'I have a station.'[2] 'What is a station?' he asked. 'I am fasting, sir,' I replied. 'What is this fasting?' he continued, 'which thou observest?' 'As I have been accustomed, sir, so I fast.' 'Thou dost not know,' he said, 'how to fast unto the Lord; this fasting which

[1] Neander, i., p. 393. Others explain the word *oblation* to signify an offering made by the bride and bridegroom for the use of the Church.

[2] One of the names applied by early writers to a fast-day; so called, either because it was kept on fixed days (statis diebus), or because fasts were regarded as military posts (stationes) against the attacks of the enemy. *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, Statio.

Part I. Chap. 14.

thou observest is worthless. I will teach thee the fasting which is acceptable to the Lord. Serve Him with a pure heart, keep his commandments, walk in his precepts, and let no evil desire arise in thee. If thou do this, thou shalt keep a great fast, acceptable to God. Be on the watch against every evil word and every evil desire, and purify thy heart from all the vanities of this world. Then, on the day on which thou fastest, taste nothing but bread and water, and having reckoned up the cost of the meals which thou wouldest have eaten, give it to a widow or an orphan or to some one in want, so that he who has received benefit from thy self-denial may satisfy his wants and pray for thee to the Lord."[1]

Celibacy. Another form of Asceticism was the honour paid to the unmarried state. At a very early date, perhaps from the times of the Apostles, celibacy was esteemed a holier condition than marriage.[2] Athenagoras (A.D. 177) says, "You will find many among us, both men and women, growing old unmarried, in the hope of living in closer communion with God."[3] Some even, like the hermits and monks of the third and fourth centuries, with-

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[1] Book iii., *Similitude V.*, c. i., iii., A. N. L. This romance was one of the most popular books amongst the Christians of the second century. It has been called the Pilgrim's Progress of the early Church; but the comparison is not complimentary to Bunyan.

[2] See Frag. of Ignatius, ix., vi., in Wordsworth's *Church History*, pp. 136, 141, notes.

[3] Plea, c. xxxiii.

drew from the haunts of men to spend their lives in meditation and prayer. But the more healthy view of the Christian life still made head against these ascetic tendencies. The writer of the *Epistle of Barnabas* thus reproves those who yielded to them: "Do not retire apart to live a solitary life as if you were already perfect: but coming together in one place, make common inquiry about what concerns your general welfare. For the Scripture says, 'Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight.'"[1]

Clement of Alexandria treats the question in his usual vigorous and enlightened manner. "The mature Christian," he says, "has the Apostles for his example. And truly it is not in the solitary life one shows himself a man; but he who, as a husband and father of a family withstands the trials that beset him in providing for a wife and children, servants and an establishment, without allowing himself to be drawn from the love of God. The man who has no family escapes many trials; but as he has only himself to provide for, he is inferior to him who, having more to disturb him in working out his own salvation, yet fulfils more duties in social life, and truly exhibits in his family a miniature of [Providence itself]."[2]

Second marriages were in general disrepute, and

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[1] Isa. v. 21. *Epist. of Barnabas*, c. iv.

[2] *Miscell.*, b. vii., c. xii. Neander, i., p. 389.

Part I. Chap. 14.

were by some writers even denounced as sinful.[1] Such a doctrine, it need hardly be said, is contrary to the clear voice of Scripture.[2]

Burial. The Christians would have nothing to do with the classic custom of burning the dead,[3] but followed the more honourable practice of God's ancient people, in "returning the dust as it was"[4] to its kindred earth. To the Christian mind cremation was altogether repugnant, as savouring of profanity, and suggesting a denial of one of the dearest of all truths, the resurrection. Many followed the Jewish custom, borrowed from the Egyptians, of embalming the dead. Cæcilius, the heathen interlocutor in Minucius Felix's Dialogue, objects that the Christians used no perfumes whilst living, but reserved their unguents for the funeral obsequies;[5] and Tertullian, in his *Apology*, says: "Let the Sabæans be well assured that as much of their costly merchandise is used in the burial of Christians as in burning incense to the gods."[6]

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[1] See the *Shepherd of Hermas*, Commandment iv., c. iv. Tertullian *To his Wife*, b. i., c. vii., &c.; *On Monogamy*, passim; *Exhortation to Chastity*, c. ix. He calls second marriages adultery: this was the Montanist view.

[2] Rom. vii., 2, 3; 1 Cor. vii. 39.

[3] The ancient Romans used burial till the time of Sulla, B.C. 78 (*Cicero de Legg*, ii. 22), when the custom of burning the dead was introduced from the Greeks. It never became universal, and interments recommenced soon after the Christian era, influenced possibly by the strong feeling which existed amongst the Christians. By the end of the fourth century cremation had entirely ceased. *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, Catacombs, p. 300. Parker's *Archæology of Rome*, Catacombs, pp. 42, 43.

[4] Eccles. xii. 7. [5] *Octavius*, c. xii. [6] Chap. xlii.

MOURNING. It was consonant also with the new and glorious hopes brought in through the Gospel, that the Christians should despise and cast aside the whole paraphernalia of mourning which they saw around them;—the sackcloth and ashes and rent garments of the Jews; the black apparel of the Romans; and the mourners hired to wail, in both Eastern and Western nations. They also protested against crowning the head of the deceased with flowers, partly as a practice tainted with idolatry, partly as associated with revels and effeminacy.[1] Cyprian expresses himself in very strong terms regarding mourning and mourning apparel. Writing concerning those who died in the pestilence, in the reigns of Gallus and Valerian,[2] he says, "How often and how manifestly has it been revealed to me by the condescension of God, that I should publicly declare that our brethren who are escaped from this world by the Lord's summons are not to be lamented, since we know that they are not lost but gone before. Though they are to be longed for, they are not to be bewailed; and it is not becoming in us to put on *black* garments for them *here*, when they are already clothed in *white* raiment *there*."[3]

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[1] Clement of Alexandria, *Instructor*, b. ii., c. viii. Tertullian, *Soldier's Chaplet*, c. x.

[2] A.D. 251-260. This and the following extract are anticipatory; but if the objection to such practices was made in the third and fourth centuries, *a fortiori* would it exist in the second.

[3] *On the Mortality*, c. xx.

Par I. Chap. 14.

So Augustine, still later: "Why should we disfigure ourselves with black, unless we would imitate the unbelieving nations, not only in their wailing for the dead, but also in their mourning apparel? Be assured these are foreign and unlawful usages; but if lawful they are not becoming."[1]

The coffin was borne to the grave on the shoulders of the kinsmen and near friends, who, as they went along, sang hymns of hope and praise.[2]

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[1] Sermon ii.; *De Consolat Mort.*, cited in Coleman, *Antiq.*, c. xx. § 4. *Dict. of Christ. Antiq.*, Mourning.

[2] Idem, Burial of the Dead.

Corridor and Staircase at the entrance of the Catacomb of Pontianus.
Restored in the 9th century. *Taken with magnesian light.*

# CHAPTER XV.

## The Catacombs.

In Rome the Christian dead were buried in the Catacombs, a vast cemetery, which has preserved to the present day a monument of their faith and hopes such as is nowhere else to be found. The burial-places were excavated in the low hills which surround the city, chiefly those lying towards the south, and on the east side of the Tiber; the Roman law forbidding interment within the walls. The catacombs were hollowed out in the *tufa granolare*, one of the three strata (of volcanic origin) of which the surface is composed, the other two being unfit for the purpose, the *pozzolana* or sand, as too friable, the *tufa litoide* or building stone, as too hard. They consist of narrow galleries or corridors *(ambulacra)* running into one another, with here and there an opening into a larger excavation. The height of the galleries is from five to eight feet; their width from two-and-a-half to three feet. When the first tier of galleries could not be further extended, a second was made underneath it at a lower level, and sometimes a third, and even to a fifth, each

I. & II. Cent.

Part I. Chap. 15.

tier communicating by steps or otherwise with the one below it.[1]

The walls of the galleries are hollowed out on both sides into horizontal niches, somewhat resembling the berths on board a ship, and each large enough to contain a body; these were known under the name of *loculi*.[2] There are from five to eight rows of loculi

A LOCULUS, FROM DE ROSSI'S "INSCRIPTIONES CHRISTIANÆ."

in a gallery. The larger spaces or chambers *(cubicula)*, which are shut off from the corridor by a door, were family vaults.[3] There is in general no communication between one catacomb and another, each occupying a separate hill or rising ground in the Campagna, and being isolated from the rest by the intervening valleys. The number of catacombs is very large, amounting to upwards of forty. A few are Jewish, and in some, heathen as well as Christian dead were interred. The bodies were wrapped

[1] The Catacombs have been so often restored that scarcely any part remains in its original condition. The accompanying photograph will give some idea of the construction of the galleries.

[2] A tomb for two bodies was called a *bisomus*.

[3] The remains of the wealthy were enshrined in *sarcophagi*, and in *table-tombs*, which, when vaulted above, were styled *arcosolia*.

A Fossor or Grave-digger, from a fresco in the Catacomb of Calixtus.
*Taken with magnesian light.*

in linen cloths, and either embalmed, or else cased in quick-lime that the flesh might be entirely consumed; and when they were deposited in the *loculi*, the opening was closed by a tile or a marble slab, and sealed with mortar.

It has been supposed that the catacombs were constructed in secret, and that the entrances to them were concealed from the public, and especially from the authorities, and also that they were used as dwelling-places. Such, however, was not the case. Except in times of persecution, which were not generally of long duration, the Christians lived as other citizens, and were protected by the laws equally with the rest of the community. When persecution broke out, the first blow was almost sure to be aimed at the bishops and presbyters, and it was a great object to secrete these for a time. For this purpose the catacombs were admirably adapted; their intricate winding passages were known to few besides the grave-diggers *(fossores)*; and as there were frequently several entrances, the fugitive might escape by one while the officers were seeking him by another. But the catacombs were never intended or indeed fit for dwelling-places, and the stories of persons living in them for months are probably fabulous. They were, however, the frequent resort of the faithful for worship, and especially for the celebration of the "birthdays of the martyrs."[1]

[1] See ante, p. 80.

The chambers became chapels, where sometimes as many as a hundred persons might be accommodated within hearing, and here and there have been discovered, hewn in the wall, a chair for the presiding officer, and benches for the company.

With the dead were often buried a variety of objects. By the heathen mind the life after death is regarded as a continuation of the present life with its occupations and amusements; and the ancient Romans, in common with many other nations, were accustomed to deposit in the graves of their loved ones the tools and ornaments and playthings which had been used by the deceased. Possibly by the force of custom the Christians may have followed the same practice from early days, but it is more likely that the tombs containing these objects belong to a later age, when the churches had rest from persecution, and when the heathen were admitted in large numbers and on easy conditions.[1]

In the tombs of the women have been found numerous articles for the toilet and personal ornaments; mirrors, combs, bodkins, ivory pins, vinaigrettes, bracelets, necklaces, ear-rings, brooches, rings and seals, studs and buttons. In those of the children, small bronze bells, earthenware money jars, mice in metal and terra-cotta, and jointed dolls of bone or ivory. Ivory knife handles have also

[1] Very rarely has any account of the locality in which these objects have been discovered been preserved. Northcote and Brownlow, *Roma Sotterranea*, p. 275.

been discovered in the *loculi*, nail heads, dice, stone weights, and small glass fish engraved with numbers; tools and implements of handicraft, and countless lamps, in terra-cotta, bronze, &c., mostly stamped with the monogram of the name of Christ. Besides these, cups and glass vessels are sometimes found, which had once contained a red fluid supposed to be the Eucharistic wine.[1]

The graves soon began to be distinguished by inscriptions, and were in time embellished with paintings and sculptures. The epitaphs are not of a uniform type, like those we generally see in our churchyards and cemeteries; some contain no more than the name of the deceased, or with the addition of a few words indicative of hope and faith; others present only the single but significant word, PEACE, which may be taken indeed as the key-note of all. Many of the earliest are in Greek; and in some cases the Latin words are written in Greek letters. On some graves, figures instead of words are carved, either emblems of Christian faith,—as the palm-branch, the dove, the anchor,[2] the ship sailing heavenward, the fish,[3] and most frequent of all, the Good Shepherd;—or symbols of the trade

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[1] *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, p. 314.

[2] Understood to signify the close of a well-spent life, the conclusion of a successful voyage when the anchor is cast. Maitland's *Church of the Catacombs*, p. 173.

[3] As containing in its name the initials of the names of Christ. See ante, p. 127.

Part I. Chap. 15.

of the defunct;—or scenes from the Old and New Testaments. On some, both words and figures are found. The most ancient inscriptions, scratched on the stone or plaster, or the letters painted on the tile by which the grave was closed, were short and simple. When the Church grew into importance, and especially after her union with the State under Constantine, the epitaphs underwent a change, becoming lengthy and eulogistic. Much learned labour has been bestowed in ascertaining the date of the tombs. Where the names of the Consuls are given, the year of the monument has been readily determined; others have been approximately fixed by inference and analogy, but the date of a large number still remains uncertain.

The inscriptions in the accompanying plates are selected from the well-known collection in the Lateran Museum, and are copied from Parker's photographs. Whilst the greater part are no doubt later than the year 200, it is probable that several of the shorter inscriptions may belong to the second century, and so strictly fall within our present period.[1]

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[1] One inscription has been discovered the date of which is fixed so early as A.D. 72. A very few others are referred *with certainty* to the second century. The interesting epitaph on Marius purporting to be of the reign of Hadrian, and that on Alexander containing the name of Antoninus Pius, are now pronounced to be spurious. See Northcote's *Epitaphs of the Catacombs*, 1878, p. 32.

PLATE A.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

IV.
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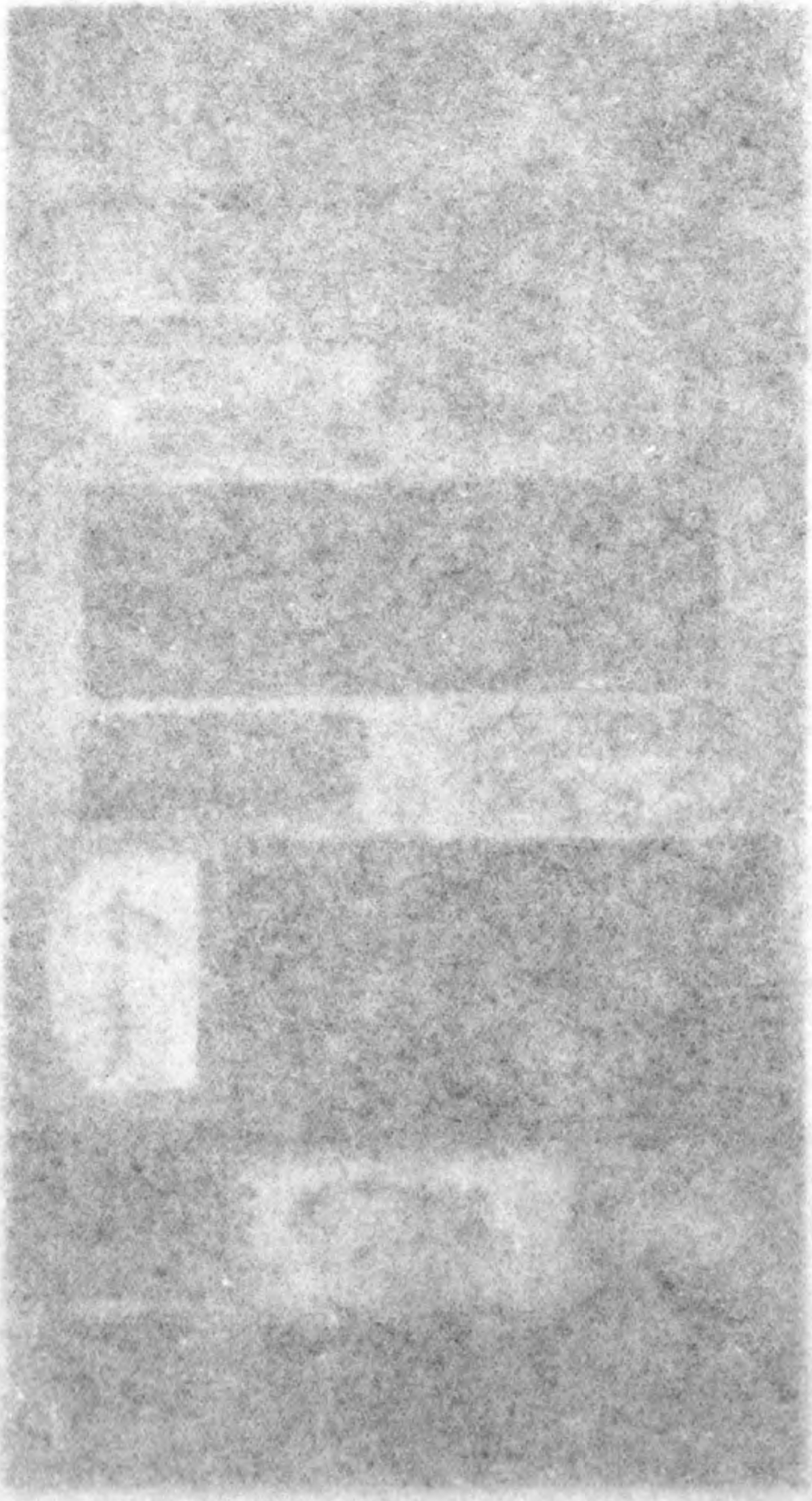

## EXPLANATION OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS.

### PLATE A.

II.-IV. Cent.

1. *Lvcilla, in pace.* LUCILLA, IN PEACE. The symbols consist of an ancient form of the cross, and the monogram of the name of Christ, formed of the two first letters in Greek.—3rd century.

2. *Vrsina, vibes Deo.* URSINA, THOU SHALT LIVE IN GOD. The letter B is often used in place of V.

3. *Regina, vibas in Domino Zesu.* REGINA, MAYST THOU LIVE IN THE LORD JESUS. Z is written for J. On each side of the inscription is a palm branch.

4. *Favstina dvlcis bibas in Deo.* SWEET FAUSTINA, MAYST THOU LIVE IN GOD.

5. *Agape vibes in eternvm.* AGAPE, THOU SHALT LIVE FOR EVER. With an olive leaf.

6. Ειρηνη τη ψυχη σου Οξυχολει. PEACE TO THY SOUL, O OXYCHOLIS!

7. The emblem is an olive branch, encircling the words IN PACE. The inscription is:—*Avrelio Felici qvi bixit cvm coivge annos xviii dvlcis. in coivgio bone memorie bixit annos lv raptus eterne domvs xii Kal. Ienvarias.*[1] TO AURELIUS FELIX, WHO LIVED 18 YEARS WITH HIS WIFE IN SWEETEST WEDLOCK; OF GOOD MEMORY; HE LIVED 55 YEARS. SNATCHED AWAY TO HIS ETERNAL HOME ON THE 21ST OF DECEMBER.—3rd or 4th century.

8. *Sanctae ac dvlcissimae conivgi Felicitati cvivs indvstria vel conservantia dificile invenire poterit qvae vixit an. xxxv dep in pace die v. nonas ivl. Avsonio t Olibrio conss.* TO MY SAINTED AND MOST SWEET WIFE, FELICITAS, WHOSE INDUSTRY AND FRUGALITY IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO EQUAL, WHO LIVED 35 YEARS; SHE WAS LAID HERE IN PEACE ON THE 3RD OF JULY, IN THE CONSULSHIP OF AUSONIUS AND OLIBRIUS.—A.D. 379.

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[1] The student of these ancient inscriptions is frequently reminded that "grammar was not taught in that school."

9. *Refrigera Devs anima Ho. . .* REFRESH, O GOD, THE SOUL OF . . . For the meaning of this prayer, see Part ii., c. xvi.

10 to 16. Various Christian emblems.

In 11 the fish, ἰχθύς, is expressed by the word instead of the figure. (The workman has by mistake carved a κ for a χ.) The inscription is:—*Bono et innocenti filio Pastori q. v. an. iiii. m. v. d. xxvi. Vitalio et Marcellina Parent.* TO OUR GOOD AND INNOCENT SON PASTOR, WHO LIVED 4 YEARS 5 MONTHS AND 26 DAYS, VITALIO AND MARCELLINA, HIS PARENTS.

16. On this tomb is seen the monogram within a circle, with the Greek letters Alpha and Omega on either side, in allusion to Revelation i. 8, 11, &c. It is engraved on the back of No. 8, and is assigned to the same year. *Sed quære.*

## PLATE B.

1. *Aelia Victorina posvit Avreliae Probae.* ÆLIA VICTORINA SET UP THIS TO AURELIA PROBA. The peacock was an emblem of immortality.—3rd or 4th century.

2. This inscription has not been completely made out. *Hic est positvs Bitalis Pistor nna s hic es rs xii. qvi bicsit ap nvs pl minvs n xlv. depositvs in pace i natale domnes Sitiretis tertivm idvs Febb consvlatvm Fl Vincentivs conss.* HERE IS LAID VITALIS, A BAKER, OF THE TWELFTH REGION,[1] WHO LIVED 45 YEARS, MORE OR LESS, AND WAS BURIED IN PEACE ON THE BIRTHDAY OF SAINT SITIRETIS, THE 11TH OF FEBRUARY. IN THE CONSULSHIP OF FLAVIUS VINCENTIUS. Underneath is the Roman modius or peck measure. The date of this tomb is A.D. 401.[2]

3 to 13. Trade emblems;[3] mason, wool-comber, cooper, smith, surgeon, &c.

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[1] That is, of the City of Rome.

[2] De Rossi's *Inscriptiones Christianæ.*

[3] The early explorers, who supposed that most of the graves were the tombs of martyrs, imagined many of these figures to represent the instruments with which they were tortured. This belief is still current in Rome.

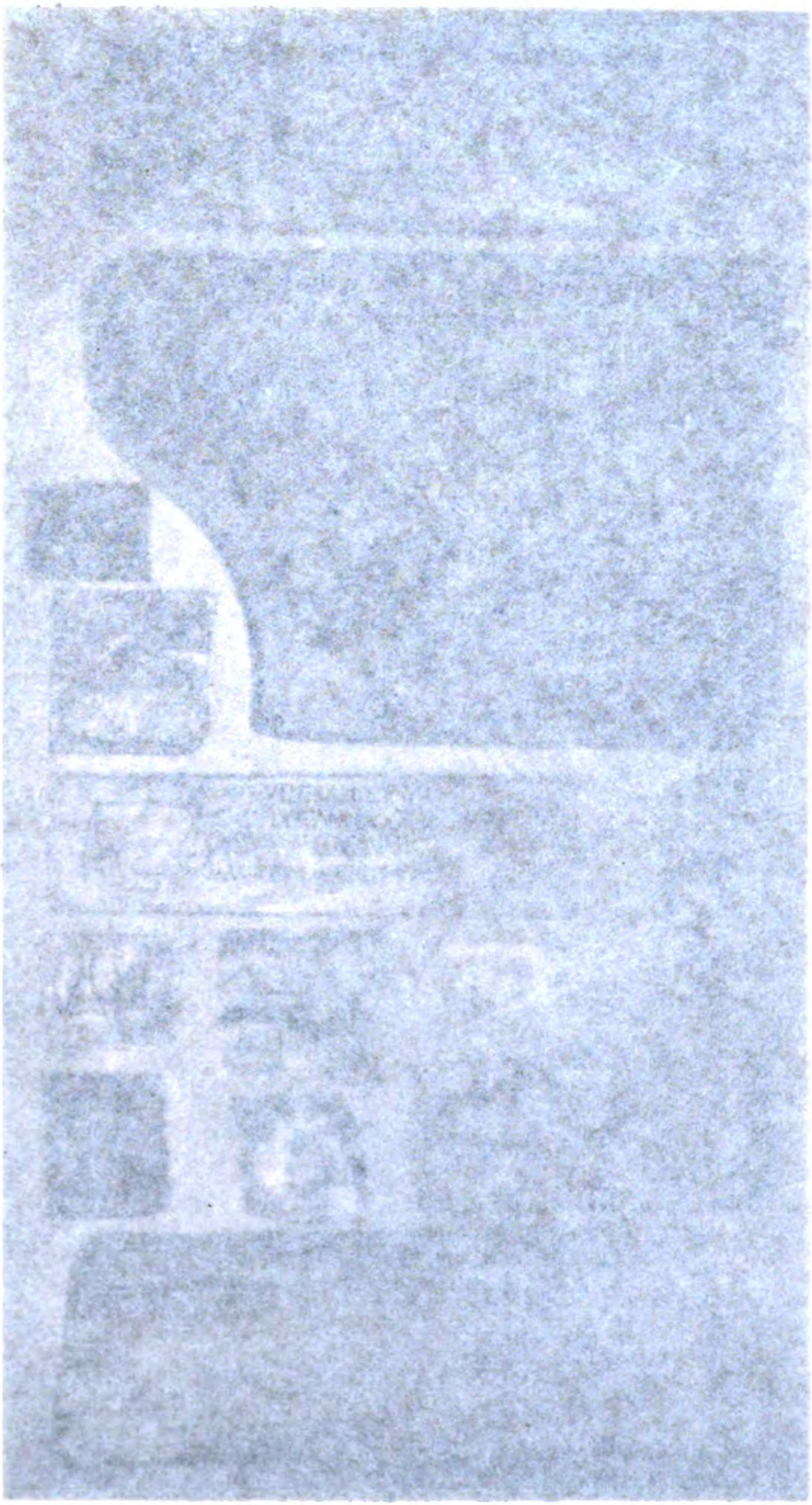

PLATE B.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

II.–IV. Cent.

5. *Avr Venerando nvm*$^{vl.}$ *qvi vixit ann. xxxv. Atilia Valentina fecit marito benemerenti; in pace.* To AUR. VENERANDUS, MONEY-CHANGER, WHO LIVED 35 YEARS. ATILIA VALENTINA MADE THIS TO HER WELL-DESERVING HUSBAND. IN PEACE. The epithet *well-deserving* is exceedingly common.—3rd or 4th century.

8. *Maximinvs qvi vixit annos xxiii. amicvs omnivm.* MAXIMINUS, WHO LIVED 23 YEARS; A FRIEND OF ALL MEN.—3rd or 4th century.

## PLATE C.

1. *Cassane Vitalloni alvmno benemerenti qvi vixxit annos xxi.* To CASSANEUS VITALLONIUS, MY WELL-DESERVING PUPIL, WHO LIVED 21 YEARS.—3rd or 4th century.

2. *Felici filio benemerenti qvi vixit annos xxiii dies x qvi exivit virgo de saecvlv et neofitvs; in pace. Parentes fecervnt. Dep iiii. nonas Aug.* To FELIX, THEIR WELL-DESERVING SON, WHO LIVED 23 YEARS 10 DAYS; WHO DEPARTED FROM THE WORLD A VIRGIN AND A NEOPHYTE;[1] IN PEACE. HIS PARENTS MADE THIS. BURIED ON THE 2ND OF AUGUST.

3 to 8. These are mostly Scripture subjects.

Μουσης ζων εποιησεν ατω και τη γυνεκι. MOSES WHILST LIVING MADE THIS FOR HIMSELF AND HIS WIFE. Accompanied by the favourite emblem of the Good Shepherd. What the female figure represents is not known; perhaps the Church, the bride of Christ.—3rd century.

4. *Bictorina in pace et in Christo (the monogram).* VICTORINA, IN PEACE, AND IN CHRIST. The figure is thought to be the same as in No. 2 of Plate B, a modius.

5. Contains five scenes from Scripture history, viz.:—the Good Shepherd; Noah's ark; the temptation of Adam and Eve; Elisha at the plough (?); and Daniel with the lions;—with the words, *Vipas Pontiz in ae[t]erno.* PONTIUS, MAYST THOU LIVE FOR EVER.—3rd century.

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[1] Νεόψυτος, one *newly planted*; a new convert. It is translated *novice* in 1 Tim. iii. 6.

6. A ship and a lighthouse. *Firmia Victora qve vixit annis lxv.* FIRMIA VICTORA, WHO LIVED 65 YEARS.

7. *Asellv benemberenti qvi vicxit annv sex mesis octo dies xxiii.* TO ASELLUS, WELL-DESERVING, WHO LIVED 6 YEARS 8 MONTHS AND 23 DAYS. With the busts of the Apostles Peter and Paul. —3rd or 4th century.

8. This very interesting epitaph is somewhat obscure. The Good Shepherd with the sheep between his shoulders, safe from the lion and the dragon, points to spiritual deliverance, and thus agrees with the word signifying *victors* in the inscription. Those who overcame, the Veratii, were perhaps two brothers, martyrs, husbands of Julia and Onesima, and sons of Lazaria, to whose memory their wives and mother raised the monumental stone. The inscription ends with the aphorism, *Such is life.* Βηρατιους νικατορας Λαζαριη και Ιουλιη και Ονησιμη κον ψιλιους βενεμερεντες. Ο βιος ταυτα.—3rd century.

9. The Good Shepherd. A fragment. The inscription ends with the words, IN PEACE.

10. *Pontivs Leo se bivo fecit si et Pontia Maza cozvs vzvs fecervnt filio svo Apollinari benemerentti.* PONTIUS LEO MADE THIS FOR HIMSELF DURING HIS LIFE-TIME; AND PONTIA MAZA (OR MAXIMA) HIS WIFE; THEY MADE IT FOR THEIR WELL-DESERVING SON APOLLINARIS. The figure of the lion is in allusion to the name.—3rd or 4th century.

Epitaphs indicating the graves of martyrs, and actually inscribed during the age of persecution are rare. "The bones of the martyrs," observes a French antiquarian, "are the sole remains of those heroes of the faith, even in their sepulchres: cups and fragments of glass, instruments of their profession, or symbols of their faith, are the only monuments left of their life or of their death. To look at the catacombs alone, it might be supposed that

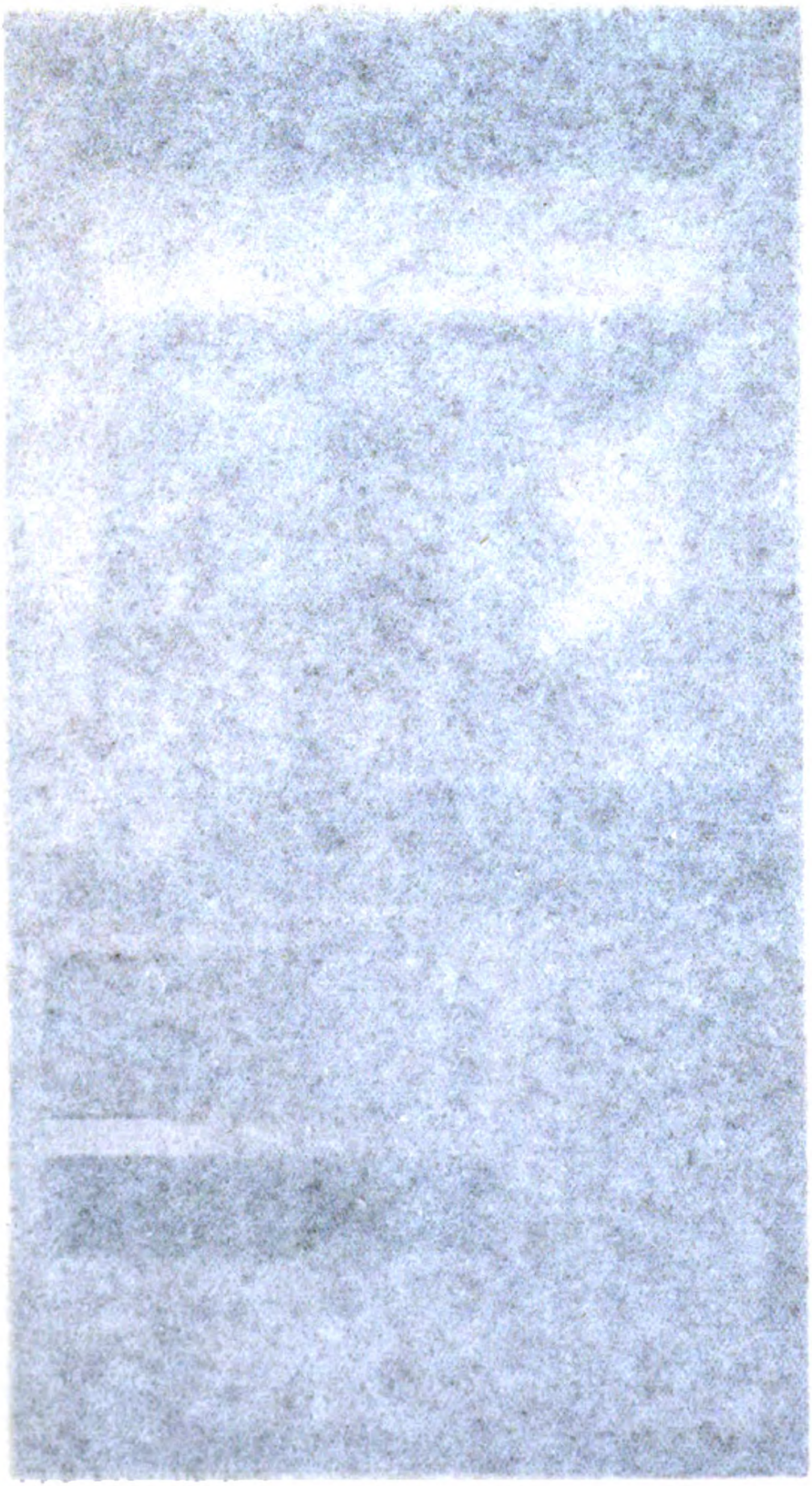

PLATE C.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

persecution had there no victims, since Christianity has made no allusion to suffering."[1]

Some of the few which can claim to be genuine are here subjoined.[2]

Lannus, a Martyr of Christ, rests here; he suffered under Diocletian. The sepulchre is also for his successors.

Here Gordianus of Gaul, a messenger, put to death for the faith with his whole family, rests in peace. Theophila a handmaid made this.

Primitias rests in peace, who after many hardships died a most brave martyr; he lived about 38 years. To her husband, most sweet and well-deserving, his wife placed this.

It has been noticed that Jews and Pagans as well as Christians used the catacombs as a burial place.

Some of the inscriptions on the heathen sepulchres speak of a large measure of conjugal happiness, and are otherwise expressive of those natural affections which were left us in the Fall, but which without Christ cannot penetrate beyond the tomb.

The following are testimonies from surviving husbands:—

She never gave a bad word to her husband.

She never committed any fault except by dying.

Though dead she will always be alive to me, and always be golden in my eyes.

An epitaph set up by one freedman to another breathes the genuine spirit of friendship:—

Aulus Memmius Urbanus to Aulus Memmius Clarus, my

[1] Raoul-Rochette, *Tableau des Catacombes*, p. 194, quoted in Maitland's *Church in the Catacombs*, p. 151.

[2] Maitland, pp. 127-129.

dearest fellow-freedman. I know not that there has ever been any quarrel; and here on this epitaph I call the gods above and below to bear witness to my statement: we met together first in the slave-market, and in one and the same house we received our liberty; nor could anything have ever separated us but this thy fatal day.

The next is full of pathos:—

Farewell, farewell, O most sweet; for ever and eternally farewell!

But this ray of natural affection was too feeble to dispel the gloom with which in the old heathen world life was shrouded. The epitaphs from the Pagan sepulchres are the utterances of those who had no hope and were without God in the world. Some are epicurean, others cynical and agnostic, others self-complaisant, others despairing or defiant.

Fortune makes many promises but keeps none of them; live then for the present day and hour, since nothing else is really ours.

I have been seeking gain all my life, and always losing; now death has come, and I cannot do either the one or the other. I hope you who read this will live happy.

I lived as I liked, but I don't know why I died.

The bones of Nicen are buried here. Ye who live in the upper air, live on, farewell. Ye shades below, hail, receive Nicen!

I have been pious and holy; I lived as long as I could; I have never had any lawsuit or quarrel, or gambling or debts; I have been always faithful to my friends; I had a small fortune, but a great mind.

Once I was not; now I am not; I know nothing about it; it does not concern me.

The next is of a young lady:—

I lift up my hands [and the hands stand there carved between the letters, suiting the action to the word],—I lift up my hands against God who took me away though I had done no harm, at the age of twenty.

Caius Julius Maximus in his second year and fifth month. O dark fortune, who takest pleasure in grim death, why is Maximus so suddenly snatched from me, who lately used to lie beloved on my lap? This stone, behold, O mother, now rests on his tomb!

With these contrast the faith by which death is robbed of its sting and the grave of its victory; the name and age are obliterated.

Blessed be the name of the Lord who gave and has taken away . . . . . lived . . years, and ended his life in peace.[1]

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[1] Northcote's *Epitaphs of the Catacombs*, pp. 59-72. Maitland, p. 42.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### Spread of the Gospel—Life of the Early Christians, its Lights and Shadows.

We now proceed to make some enquiry as to the moral character and condition of the Church during the first and second centuries, and her relation to the world.

"The whole Church," observes De Pressensé, "was essentially a missionary society. A stranger and a sojourner rather than a settler in the world, hard pressed on all hands by surrounding paganism, its very life was one long conflict. It must fight in self-defence, and conquer or die. There was no distinction then between home and foreign missions; the Christian had but to cross his own threshold and walk the public streets of his own city, and he found at his door a pagan people to be converted. The whole civilization of the empire was the creation of paganism; there was therefore no delusive veil, such as is too often drawn over the true state of the heart by modern civilization, in which the presence of some Christian elements suffices to conceal from superficial observers the undying paganism of a world at enmity with God. In the cultivated citizen of Rome or Alexandria, the

Church saw only a pagan harder to convert than a barbarian of Scythia or Germany, because more skilful in eluding the truth." "Missionaries," he says again, "were not subjected, any more than pastors or bishops, to any course of special training. A new mission generally arose out of some incidental circumstance, and wherever a Christian set his foot, however barren the soil, there he planted the cross."[1]

The spread of the Gospel during this period was rapid and continuous. Eusebius thus describes its propagation in the opening years of the second century. "There were many next in order of time to the Apostles, who built up the churches founded by them, and pushing further the preaching of the Gospel, scattered broadcast over all the world the seeds of the Kingdom of Heaven. Many evangelists, first obeying the Saviour's command to give their substance to the poor, set forth, vying with one another in preaching Christ and distributing the Scriptures of the divine Gospels. After they had thus laid the foundations of the faith, and ordained pastors into whose hands they could commit the care of the new converts, they would themselves pass beyond to further regions and nations, God accompanying them with his grace; for even down to that time the Holy Spirit wrought so mightily by them, that at the very first hearing,

[1] *Martyrs and Apologists*, pp. 20, 21.

whole assemblies embraced the Gospel."[1] May we not say it is these obscure evangelists, whose work remains but whose names have perished, who are especially worthy of honour in the Church? The most glorious time in her annals was the century or more during which she had little or no history.

By the end of the second century the Gospel had extended beyond the limits of the Empire. Justin Martyr says,—but the words must be taken with reference to the limited knowledge of that day—"There exists not a single race of men, whether barbarians or Greeks, or by whatever name they may be known, whether they live in tents or wander about in covered waggons, amongst whom prayer and giving of thanks are not offered through the name of the crucified Jesus."[2] Crossing the Euphrates,[3] it had penetrated into Parthia, Persia and Media; in Africa it had reached Upper Egypt, Numidia and Mauritania; in Europe, Spain, Southern and Northern Britain,[4] and Independent as well as Roman Germany. Speaking of the *free Germans*, Irenæus tells us that the message of the Gospel had outstripped the sacred writings: "Many tribes of the barbarians, without paper and ink, have the

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[1] *E. H.*, b. iii., c. xxxvii. [2] *Dialogue with Trypho*, c. cxvii.

[3] At Edessa in Mesopotamia, a locality which makes a great figure in the early traditions, it is said the Christians, in A.D. 202, had a Church built after the model of the temple at Jerusalem. Neander, i., p. 111.

[4] Tertullian expressly says, "Britain beyond the Roman pale." *Answer to the Jews*, c. vii.

words of salvation written in their hearts through the Holy Ghost."[1] Tertullian, in his noble *Apology*,[2] says, "We Christians are but of yesterday and we have filled your cities, your islands, your fortresses, your towns, your market places, the very camp, palace, senate, forum, and have left you nothing but the temples of your gods. . . If we were to make a general secession, and betake ourselves to some remote corner of the world, you would be horror-struck at the solitude."[3]

The Church writers of this age have left us several pictures of its life, which while they glow with bright colours, too frequently bear evidence of a declension from the robust Christianity of earlier days.

Justin Martyr testifies that many Pagans, who had evinced a violent and tyrannical disposition against the Christians, were disarmed when they beheld the constancy of their lives, their honesty in business, and the forbearance they manifested when defrauded of their just rights.[4]

Athenagoras, an accomplished Athenian philosopher, converted through reading the Holy Scriptures, which he had taken up in order to refute, presented in the year 177, an *Apology, or Plea for the*

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[1] *Against Heresies*, b. iii., c. iv. § 2.

[2] Variously assigned between A.D. 198 and 217.

[3] Chap. xxxvii. In Tertullian's statements large allowance must be made on the score of his impassioned and rhetorical style.

[4] *First Apology*, c. xvi.

*Christians*, to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius and his son Commodus. In this treatise he says, "Amongst us you will find uneducated persons and artisans and old women, who if they are unable by words to prove our doctrine, yet exhibit by their deeds the good arising from their conviction of its truth. They do not make speeches, but they practice good works; when smitten they do not strike again; when robbed they do not go to law; they give to those who ask of them, and love their neighbours as themselves." Repudiating the stock accusation of being murderers and cannibals, he continues, "The stories told about us rest on nothing better than indiscriminating popular talk; no Christian has been convicted of crime. . . We cannot endure even to see a man put to death, though justly. The pastime which you fondly dote upon is the combats of gladiators and wild beasts. But we, deeming that to gaze on manslaughter is much the same as slaying a man, have renounced such spectacles."[1]

In the next century, Origen writes to the same purpose: "Those who are despised as ignorant fools and no better than slaves, no sooner commit themselves to God's direction by accepting the teaching of Jesus, than, forsaking their sins, many of them, like perfect priests for whom such pleasures have no charm, keep themselves pure in act

[1] *Plea for the Christians*, c. xi., ii., xxxv.

and thought. The Athenians had one hierophant[1] who, not having confidence in his power to restrain his passions, resolved to smother them at the seat by hemlock, but amongst the Christians are men who have no need of hemlock to fit them for the pure service of God, and for whom the Word, instead of hemlock, is able to drive all evil desires from their thoughts."[2]

But we learn from Tertullian, that some who professed Christ had so far forgotten their vows as to frequent the public shows. Hear how he burns with indignation at the conduct of his unworthy brethren, and exposes the iniquity of these spectacles. "Passionate excitement is forbidden to the Christian, and the *circus* is the place where such excitement reigns supreme. See the people coming to it tumultuous, passion-blind, agitated about their bets. The prætor is too slow for them; their eyes roll along with the lots in his urn; they hang all eager on the signal; they raise the united shout of a universal madness. Observe by their foolish speeches how they are beside themselves. He has thrown it! they exclaim, and they announce each to his neighbour what all have seen. But they do not see what is really thrown, and they fly into passions and causeless curses and recriminations; there are cries of applause with nothing to merit

[1] Priest, one who teaches the mysteries of religion.

[2] *Against Celsus*, b. vii., c. xlviii.

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them. . . Are we not in like manner enjoined to put away all immodesty? But the *theatre* is the very focus of indecency, where nothing is in repute but what is elsewhere disreputable. . . Let the Senate, let all ranks blush for very shame. . . How is it that the things which defile a man going out of his mouth, are not regarded as doing so when they go in at his eyes and ears?"

Then as to the *amphitheatre:* "If it is right to indulge in the cruel and the impious, let us go there and regale ourselves with human blood. . . He who looks with horror on the corpse of one who has died under the common law of nature, gazes down with eyes unmoved on bodies all mangled and torn and smeared with their own blood, where the unwilling gladiator is driven to the murderous deed with rods and scourges. . . Even in the case of those who are judicially condemned to the amphitheatre, what a monstrous thing it is that in undergoing their punishment they are compelled to be manslayers. But I shall not insult my Christian readers by adding another word as to the aversion with which they should regard this sort of exhibition, though no one is more able than myself to set forth fully the whole subject, unless it be one who is still in the habit of going to the shows. I would rather leave it incomplete than any longer set memory to work."

"These things," he says again, speaking of all the shows, "are that very pomp of the devil which we

Christians have renounced. The rejection of these amusements is the chief sign to the heathen that a man has adopted the Christian faith. . . Seated where there is nothing of God, will one be thinking of his Maker? Will there be peace in the soul when there is eager strife about a charioteer? Wrought up into frenzied excitement, will he learn to be modest? . . Will the measures of the effeminate actor remind him of a psalm? With his eyes fixed on the jaws of bears and the sponges of the net fighters, can he be moved with compassion? May God avert from his people all such passionate eagerness after this pernicious enjoyment. How monstrous it is to go from God's Church to the devil's, from the sky, as the saying is, to the sty;[1] to raise the hands to God, and then to weary them in the applause of an actor; with the lips which have uttered Amen over the holy thing, to scream out in a gladiator's favour; to shout 'for ever' to any other but God and Christ."[2]

But those who were thus rebuked were not wanting in arguments and excuses for their conduct. "Why," said they, "should we give up these public amusements? Nothing is employed in them but God's gifts which He has bestowed on men for

[1] De cœlo, quod aiunt, in cœnum.

[2] *On the Public Shows*, c. xvi., xvii., xix., xxi., xxiv., xxv. A. N. L. See also Tatian's *Address to the Greeks*, c. xxiii., xxiv. Carthage, where Tertullian dwelt, was a corrupt and luxurious city, the "Corinth of the West." How often in these pictures are we reminded of the race-course and the theatre in this enlightened nineteenth century.

their enjoyment. Nowhere in Scripture are they forbidden. Elijah rode in a chariot to heaven; and we read of choirs, cymbals, trumpets, and harps, and of David dancing before the ark; and the Apostle Paul, in exhorting Christians, borrows images from the stadium and the circus." Others pleaded their want of learning and culture. "All cannot be philosophers and ascetics. *We* are ignorant people; we cannot read; we understand nothing of the Holy Scriptures. Ought such rigorous demands to be made upon us?"

To the former, Tertullian answers: "How acute in reasoning is human ignorance when it is afraid of losing some of the pleasures and amusements of the world! To be sure all things are the gift of God, but the question is for what end has God given them, and how may they be so used as to answer their true end: for there is a wide difference between the original purity of nature and its corruption, between its Creator and its perverter. . . Grant that you have there things that are agreeable and innocent in themselves, even some things that are excellent. No one dilutes poison with gall and hellebore; the accursed thing is served up with condiments well seasoned and of sweetest taste." Then, inviting the Christians to compare with those empty pleasures of the heathen world, the true spiritual enjoyments which have become theirs through faith, "How is it," he asks, "that you are so ungrateful, that you are not satisfied with the many

and exquisite pleasures that God has bestowed on you? For what is more delightful than reconciliation with our Father and our Lord, the revelation of the truth, the confession of our errors, and the pardon of so many past transgressions? What pleasure so great as the contempt of pleasure itself, or so sweet as true liberty, a pure conscience, a peaceful life and deliverance from the fear of death." Another writer (of the third century), answers the same objections: "It were far better that such persons knew nothing of the Scriptures than to read them thus; for in this way the language and examples which ought to lead men to virtue are perverted for the defence of vice." He points out that such similes [as those used by Paul] were employed in order to inflame the zeal of the Christian in behalf of profitable things, whilst the heathen display so much eagerness on trifles; and winds up with the wise maxim that from the general rules laid down in Scripture, reason itself can deduce those conclusions which are not expressly set forth."[1]

To those who pleaded their ignorance, Clement of Alexandria replies: "But are we not all striving after life? What sayest thou? How didst thou become a believer? How lovest thou God and thy neighbour? Is not that philosophy? Thou sayest, 'I have never learned to read.' But thou hast heard the Scriptures read; and the faith may be learned

[1] Ratio docet quæ scriptura conticuit.

without hearing the Scriptures, for there is a Scripture which is adapted to the capacity of the most ignorant, and which yet is divine, and that is love. Even the business of the world may be transacted in an unworldly, in a godly manner."[1]

Some may object that the Fathers manifest but little condescension towards the instincts and wants of men less gifted than themselves. But there can be no question that the pastimes they condemned were vicious and corrupt in the last degree, absolutely inconsistent with the Christian life. That they could unbend may be seen in a passage of Clement, in which he tells us what kind of exercises and recreations he approves. "Gymnastic exercises are sufficient for boys, and are good for young men, producing not only a healthy habit of body, but boldness of spirit. When this is done without dragging a man away from better employments it is not unprofitable. . . Let some strip and engage in wrestling, not for the sake of vainglory, but for the exuding of manly sweat; not struggling with cunning or mere show, but in a stand-up wrestling bout, grasping and disentangling of neck, hands and sides. Such a struggle with graceful strength is becoming and manly. Let others play at the ball, others take exercise in a

[1] Tertullian *On the Public Shows*, xx., xxvii., xxix. Clement, *Instructor*, b. iii., c. xi. § Religion in Ordinary Life. The tract *On the Public Shows* printed among the works of Cyprian, c. ii., iii. Neander, i., pp. 367, 368, 385, 386.

country walk. To handle the hoe, or other implement of agriculture is not ungentlemanly. Pittacus, King of Miletus, used to exercise himself in turning the mill; and it is respectable for a man to draw water for himself, and to split billets of wood for his own use. Reading aloud, again, is useful to many; and to watch beside a sick friend, to help the infirm, to supply the wants of the indigent are all proper exercises. So with fishing, as in the case of Peter; but there is a better sport which the Lord assigned to his disciple when He taught him to catch men."[1]

Another great temptation was extravagance in dress. From the numerous treatises on this subject it is evident that many Christian ladies fell into the snare of vying with their heathen acquaintances in the costliness and splendour of their apparel. It was the meridian day of Roman luxury. The expenditure of the wealthy was prodigal beyond all calculation. "If there dwelt upon earth," Tertullian thus commences his tract *On Female Dress*, "a faith commensurate with the reward of it which is looked for in heaven, not one of you, best beloved sisters, from the time when she first knew the living God, and became acquainted with her own condition, would desire too gay not to say too ostentatious a style of dress." He proceeds to particulars. "The smallest casket contains a patrimony. On a single

[1] *Instructor*, b. iii., c. x.

thread is suspended a million sesterces.[1] One delicate neck carries about it the value of forests and islands. To adorn the slender lobes of the ears a fortune is required, and every finger of the left hand represents a bag of silver." "I see some women," he says again, "dye their hair with saffron, as though they were ashamed of not having derived their birth from Germany or Gaul. . . Which of you, asks God, can make a white hair black or a black hair white? But these refute God, and say instead of white or black we make it yellow, more winning in grace."[2]

He reminds them of the hand of persecution ready at any time to seize them in its iron grasp; and asks, "How the wrist, wont to be encircled with the palm-leaf bracelet,[3] will endure till it grow into the numb hardness of its own manacle? Or how the ancle that has stepped so proudly in its glittering ornament, will suffer itself to be squeezed into the gyve, or the neck, encircled with chains of pearl and emerald, part with them to make room for the broadsword? The robes of martyrdom," he tells them, "are even now preparing; the angels are waiting to carry us away. Go forth then to meet them arrayed in the adorning of the Prophets and Apostles. Let simplicity be to you for a transparent complexion, modesty your roseate bloom, and silence the grace of your lips; fix in your ears the

[1] £8,000. [2] Book i., c. i., ix.; b. ii., c. vi. [3] Spatalis.

words of God and upon your necks the yoke of Christ. Array yourselves in the silk of integrity and the fine linen of holiness. Thus adorned you will have God for your lover."[1] "Those women," says Clement of Alexandria, "who beautify the outside but are all empty within, are like Egyptian temples, with their porticoes, pillared halls and groves, their walls glittering with gold and gems and artistic paintings, and the shrines veiled with embroidered hangings. But when you enter the penetralia to behold the inhabitant of the temple, the object of worship, and the priest withdraws the veil, you will find nothing within but a cat or a crocodile."[2]

There was a strong temptation to women to exhibit their beauty and wealth at the public baths. The baths were constructed on an enormous scale, so as to accommodate many thousands of bathers,[3] and were open to both sexes; and in their desire for admiration the ladies too often overstepped the bounds of modesty. Clement gives a startling picture of the luxury with which this favourite pastime was surrounded: portable tents were set up, covered with transparent textures or fine linen and furnished with gilded chairs, and gold and silver vessels for eating, drinking, and bathing.[4]

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[1] Ibid, c. xiii. A. N. L. [2] *Instructor*, b. iii., c. ii.

[3] The baths of Caracalla at Rome would contain 30,000 people.

[4] *Instructor*, b. iii., c. v.

It must not be supposed that it was the women only amongst the Christian professors who thus gave way to the follies of the age. The men also come under the censor's lash because of their extravagance and foppery. "But the man," writes Clement, "with whom the Word dwells does not get himself up, does not ornament himself; he is beautiful, for he is made like to God." While, however, he thus deals out wise counsel to his erring brethren and sisters, he does not fail to set before them the important truth that Christ who is the Word and Son of God is Himself the great Instructor.[1]

The looseness of the times is to be seen in other ways. "I know not how," says Clement again, "but people now change their manners with the place. When they leave the meeting they become like others with whom they associate. Laying aside the mask of solemnity they show what they secretly are. They leave inside the church what they have been hearing, and amuse themselves with gambling, love-songs, flute-playing, dancing and intoxication.[2] He forbids the use of dice altogether.[3]

Whenever the Church goes out to meet the

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[1] Idem, i., xii. It is evident from the above extracts that many wealthy families belonged to the Christian community.

[2] Idem, c. xi., § Out of Church.

[3] Idem, § Amusements and Associates. Judging from Clement's reproofs on their manners and behaviour, the Alexandrian Christians in his day must have been much wanting in refinement.

world she is sure to lose her lion-heart; her valiant sons are changed into a herd of deer. It was so at this period. The fear of persecution sat like a nightmare on the slumbers of the easy-going Christians, and the practice was introduced, and sanctioned by many bishops, of bargaining with informers or corrupt officers for the privilege of remaining unmolested when the evil day should come. So far was this shameful procedure carried that Tertullian says whole Churches clubbed together to purchase tranquillity.[1]

The increasing laxity of morals is shown also in the tolerance of trades and occupations which would not have been suffered in earlier days. Some were now admitted into the Church who practised astrology, or gained their living by trading in frankincense for the heathen temples; working in the temples themselves, and even carving or casting the statues of the divinities. Nay, Tertullian complains that "idol makers were chosen into the ecclesiastical order." To the unworthy excuses made by such, he replies: "One says, 'I *make* but I do not *worship*.' As if there were some cause for which he dare not *worship*, besides that for which

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[1] *On Flight in Persecution*, c. xii., xiii. In this practice the Christians would have for their companions those who followed illegal and mostly infamous professions. "The severe Marcionites and the enthusiastic Montanists disdained this compromise; they classed together the practice of paying for safety and that of flight in persecution, as alike unworthy of their profession." Robertson, *Hist. of the Church*, i., p. 65.

he ought not also to *make*. Assuredly thou who makest idols to be worshipped art thyself a worshipper of idols. Thou worshippest them, not with some worthless perfume, but with thy own intelligence; not with a beast's life, but with thy own existence. To them thou pourest out thy sweat as a libation, before them thou burnest the torch of thy cunning." "Although the act of idolatry be committed by others, it makes no difference if it be by my means. In no case ought I to be necessary to another while he is doing what to me is unlawful."[1]

The manner of conducting trade also called for remonstrance. "Let not him who sells or buys," says Clement, "name two prices, but state the fixed price and keep to the truth: if he does not get his price, he gets the truth, and is rich in the possession of integrity. But above all," he continues, "avoid an oath regarding what is sold, and let swearing on account of other things be far from you."[2]

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[1] *On Idolatry*, c. vi., xi.

[2] *Instructor*, b. iii., c. xi. § Religion in Ordinary Life.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### Pagan Animosity and Christian Loyalty—The Philosophers assail the Church.

The Pagan hatred towards the Christians continued unabated throughout the whole of this period. The stories of their devouring children, wallowing in deeds of darkness, and worshipping an ass's head,[1] long exposed them, in spite of their virtuous conduct, to the scorn of their adversaries. Tertullian writes of the scoffing multitude: "They blindly knock their heads against the mere name of Christian. 'A good man,' says one, 'is Gaius Seius, only he is a Christian.' 'I am astonished that a wise man like Lucius should suddenly have become a Christian.' And again, 'What a woman she was; how wanton, how gay! What a youth he was; how profligate! They have become Christians.' Thus the reclaimed character is branded with the odious name. Some will even barter away their comforts out of sheer hatred to the name. The husband, now no longer jealous, chases the exemplary wife out of his house; the son become dutiful, is disinherited by his father; the master, once so indulgent, com- II. Cent.

[1] See ante, pp. 54, 71.

mands out of his presence the servant become more faithful than before."[1]

Notwithstanding, however, the contempt of the public, and the State persecutions to which they were subjected, the Christians were a loyal as well as a peaceable people. "All the taxes," says Justin Martyr,[2] "both ordinary and extraordinary, we, above all others, are everywhere ready to pay to your appointed officers, as our Master has taught us. We worship God alone; but cheerfully serve you in other things, since we acknowledge you as rulers of men." "Knowing," writes Tertullian, "that the Emperor is appointed by God, we cannot but love and honour him, and desire the welfare of the Empire over which he reigns so long as the world shall stand, for so long shall Rome endure. It must be abundantly clear that the religious system under which we live is one which inculcates a divine patience, since, though our numbers are so great, constituting all but the majority in every city, we conduct ourselves with so much quietness and moderation; being, I may perhaps say, known rather as individuals than as organized communities, and distinguished only by having forsaken our old vices."[3]

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[1] *Apology*, c. iii. [2] *First Apology*, c. xvii.

[3] *To Scapula*, c. ii. Milman thinks these sentiments of loyalty were by no means universal, and refers to two writings which were extensively circulated amongst the Christians of the second century, as proofs of the existence of a *fifth monarchy* element, which aimed at the overthrow of

II. Cent.

To the charge that Christianity was a fraud on the temple revenues, the same writer replies: "You say the revenues of the temples are daily falling off. We cannot be expected to give alms to divine as well as human mendicants; nor do we think we are required to give to those who do not ask. Let Jupiter, if he wants anything, hold out his hand. Our compassion dispenses more in the streets than yours in the temples. But," he adds, "the *civil* taxes will acknowledge a debt of gratitude to the Christians. The same integrity which restrains them from defrauding one another, obliges them scrupulously to pay all civil dues; and it would be easy to show that the falsehood practised by others in the census declarations, deprives the state in one source of its revenues of as much as is conscientiously withheld by us in another."[1]

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the empire as well as of Paganism. These writings were *The Second Book of Esdras* (a Jewish production, with some interpolations of Christian thought), and the *Sibylline Oracles*. Of these famous oracles there were three collections. The verses said to have been brought by the Sibyl to Tarquin, and consulted in times of difficulty by the Senate, were destroyed by fire B.C. 82. A new collection was then put together from books preserved in other places, which, after several revisions, was also burnt, viz.: in the reign of Honorius, A.D. 395-423. The Sibylline verses now extant are in Greek hexametres, and are the production of Jewish or Christian writers. They range in date from B.C. 170 to A.D. 700. Of the fourteen books once known to exist twelve remain, the ninth and tenth being lost. Chief amongst the subjects treated of are the Jewish longing for a political restorer of Israel, the history of the world from the flood, the future triumphs of Christianity, and the Millennium. (Amongst the Montanists there was a general expectation of the Millennium.) Milman's *History of Christianity*, vol. ii., pp. 116-125. Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*, Second Book of Esdras. Jebb's *Primer of Greek Literature*, pp. 160, 161.

[1] *Apology*, c. xlii.

Part I. Chap. 17.

At the same time he indignantly repels other charges advanced against the Christians; such as that they were the cause of the public calamities, and that they were the drones of society; and exultingly warns his adversaries that the more his brethren were trampled upon, the more they would multiply and prosper. "Of every public disaster," he exclaims, "of every popular distress, you say the Christians are the cause. If the Tiber rises up to the city walls, if the Nile does not overflow the Egyptian fields, if the heavens give no rain, if there is earthquake, famine or pestilence, the cry is, The Christians to the Lion.[1] Tell me, I pray, how many calamities befel the world before Tiberius reigned, before Christ came?"

Again: "We are no Brahmins or Indian Gymnosophists,[2] who dwell in woods and exile themselves from common life. We do not forget the gratitude we owe to our Creator; we reject none of his creatures, though we use restraint lest we should abuse his bounty. Sojourning with you in the world, we shun neither the forum nor the shambles, nor bath nor booth nor workshop, nor inn nor weekly market, nor any other resort of commerce. We sail with you, fight with you, and till the ground with you. . . In

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[1] Christianos ad Leonem. Observe the *metre* of the original (⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ – ⏑ –). It was, no doubt, a popular song in the streets of Rome and elsewhere. Wordsworth's *Church History*, p. 101, note.

[2] Philosophers, so called from their going barefooted, or with little clothing.

vain does the populace exult in our destruction. What they demand against us is our joy. We prefer to die rather than to fall from God. Our battle is, to be summoned to trial in order to fight for the truth at the hazard of life. It is victory to gain that for which one fights. Our victory is the glory of pleasing God; our spoil is life eternal. We conquer by being killed. Call us if you will, men of the faggot or of the half-axle (in which we are burned or racked); this is our robe of victory, this is our chariot of triumph. Therefore, on, on with your work. Popular you will be if you immolate us, torture us, execrate us, crush us. Your cruelty is the trial of our conscience; God permits us to suffer these things in order that it may be seen by all that we prefer to suffer death rather than to commit sin. Your cruelty, even the most exquisite, is of no avail against us. It is rather that which is our hire, it draws converts to us. We grow by being mown down. The blood of Christians is the seed of the Church."[1]

But the Gospel had other enemies no less formidable than the magistrates, the priests or the populace. These were the heathen philosophers, who employed against it the powerful weapons of

[1] Semen est sanguis Christianorum. These words have passed into a proverb. *Apology*, c. xl., xlii., xlix., l. A. N. L. The translation of the last paragraph is from Dr. Wordsworth, who has admirably reproduced the impetuous style of Tertullian in its rugged grandeur. *Church History*, pp. 101, 102.

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misrepresentation, sophistry and sarcasm. We have seen the arguments with which, in the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix, Cæcilius assails Christianity and defends paganism.[1] The same warfare was carried on with unabated virulence to the time of Constantine. Of those who wrote during the first two centuries, the most noted was Celsus, an Epicurean,[2] whose treatise, entitled *The Word of Truth*, written about A.D. 160, is known to us only by the refutation which nearly a century afterwards it drew from the learned pen of Origen.

Amongst the charges which Celsus brings against Christianity, are the conduct of those who preached it and the character of those to whom it was preached. Underneath his words, often false and unjust, there lies a profound homage to the truth, the more valuable because it is involuntary. He describes the preachers: "There are many nameless persons who in the most facile manner act as if they were inspired. They go through the cities, declaiming within the temples and outside the temples, and through the armies, everywhere attracting attention. They declare, 'I am God; I am the Son of God;' or, 'I am the Divine Spirit. I have come because the world is perishing, and you, O men, are perishing for your iniquities. But I want to save you; and you shall see me return with heavenly power. Blessed is he who now does me reverence. On all

[1] Ante, p. 71. [2] Or, as others think, a Platonist.

the rest I will send down eternal fire, both on cities and countries. Those who know not the punishments which await them shall repent and grieve in vain; but those who are faithful to me I will preserve eternally.' To these promises they add strange and unintelligible words which every fool and impostor may apply to serve his own purposes."[1]

Regarding those to whom the preachers of the Gospel addressed their message, he says, "Such as invite to participation in other religious mysteries begin by proclaiming, 'Let everyone come who is free from stains, and his soul conscious of innocence, and who has lived an upright life.' But these Christians call to those who are sinners, those who are foolish, to children and to the unfortunate, and offer to them the Kingdom of God. What are sinners but unjust persons and thieves and housebreakers and poisoners and committers of sacrilege and robbers of the dead?" To all which Origen makes a Gospel answer, concluding with the words, "They that be whole have no need of a physician but they that are sick."[2]

Again Celsus reproaches the Christians with saying, and often repeating to their disciples, such words as these: "Do not examine, only believe; your faith will save you. The wisdom of this life is vain, but the foolishness of faith is a good thing."

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[1] Quoted by Origen, *Against Celsus*, b. vii., c. ix. A. N. L.

[2] Matt. ix. 12. Origen, *Against Celsus*, b. iii., c. lix., lxi.

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"We answer," replies Origen, "that if it were possible for all to leave the business of life and devote themselves to philosophy, no other method ought to be adopted. But this is impossible, partly on account of the necessities of life, partly on account of the weakness of men, so that only a very few devote themselves to study. As to the great multitude of believers, who have washed away the mire of iniquity in which they once wallowed, is it not better for them to believe without a reason, and become changed through the belief that men are chastened for sins and honoured for good works, than to have refused to be converted on the strength of faith alone, putting it off until they could make a thorough examination of the reasons for it?"[1]

Another philosophic author was Lucian of Samosata, a friend of Celsus, who sought to bring the Christians into disrepute by a story which he called "The Death of Peregrinus." This satirical production is only worthy of notice as containing, like the accusations of Celsus, an unconscious testimony to the faith and virtues of the Christians. He says, "These poor men, it seems, had persuaded themselves that they were to be immortal. Despising death, therefore, they offered up their lives a voluntary sacrifice. They had learned from their lawgiver that they were all brethren, and that, quitting our Grecian gods, they must worship their

[1] Ibid, b. i., c. ix.

own Sophist who was crucified, and live in obedience to his laws. From these laws they learned to despise worldly treasures and to possess everything in common, a practice which they adopted without cause or reason."[1]

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[1] Neander, i., pp. 218-221. *Works of Lucian*, translated by T. Francklin, London, 1781, vol. ii., p. 435. A similar testimony to that of Lucian, but from a more friendly hand, is rendered by the celebrated physician Galen, who flourished at the same time. In a fragment of his lost work, *On the Republic of Plato*, preserved by an Arabic writer, he says, "The people called Christians have founded a religion in parables and miracles. In moral training and virtue they are in no wise inferior to philosophers; they honour celibacy, are abstemious in diet, and assiduous in fastings and prayers. They practise honesty and continence, and injure no one, and in the genuine performance of miracles they infinitely excel the philosophers." *Dict. of Christ. Biog.*, Galenus.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### Christians and the Military Service—Slavery—Oaths.

War. An important question arises: Did Christians of the first and second centuries serve in the Imperial armies? Justin Martyr, quoting the prophecy of Micah respecting the Gospel days, "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into sickles,"[1] speaks of it as being already fulfilled by the Christians. "We," he says, "who were once full of war and mutual slaughter, have every one through the whole earth changed our swords into ploughshares and our spears into implements of tillage, and now cultivate piety, righteousness, charity, faith and hope, which we have from the Father Himself through Him who was crucified."[2]

These words may be taken as expressing the mind of the more thoughtful amongst the members of the Church, but they must not be construed too literally. The fact is that many Christians enrolled themselves in the military service. The words of

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[1] Chap. iv. 3.

[2] *Dialogue with Trypho*, c. cix., cx. See also his *First Apology*, c. xiv.

Tertullian cited in the last two chapters,[1] making all allowance for rhetorical exaggeration, prove this to be so, as well as incidental notices in other ecclesiastical writings.

The story of the "Thundering Legion" has often been advanced as furnishing conclusive evidence that the Christians of the second century united with their fellow-subjects in serving the Emperor in the field; but the narrative will not bear critical examination. We are told that during the war with the Germans and Sarmatians, in the year 174, Marcus Aurelius and his army were thrown into a situation of extreme peril. The soldiers were suffering under the torture of intolerable thirst, and at the same time were threatened by an attack from the enemy. In this extremity, the Twelfth Legion, composed entirely of Christians, fell upon their knees. Their prayer was followed by a shower of rain which allayed the thirst of the Roman soldiers, and by a storm which terrified the barbarians. The Roman army obtained the victory, and the Emperor, in commemoration of the event, bestowed on the legion the name of the "Thundering," and in gratitude for the signal deliverance, ordered the persecution of the Christians to cease.[2]

But these statements are manifestly erroneous; for the persecution at Lyons did not take place until

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[1] Pp. 193, 210.

[2] Eusebius, b. v., c. v. Tertullian, *To Scapula*, c. iv. *Apology*, c. v.

three years after the Emperor's victory, and the Twelfth Legion had borne the name of the "Thundering" from the time of the Emperor Augustus. The deliverance of the Roman army from imminent danger is, however, an historical fact, which the heathen writers themselves acknowledged to be the work of heaven, ascribing it to Jupiter, and variously asserting that it was in answer to the prayers of the Emperor, or of the Pagan army, or to the incantations of an Egyptian magician.[1]

However unfaithful individuals may have been, the Church, as has been said, gave on this vital question, through her approved teachers, no uncertain voice. Tertullian himself held the military calling to be unlawful for the believer. There were two grounds on which service in the Imperial armies was irreconcilable with the Christian profession; the one that it required the military oath, and the countenancing, if not the actual performance, of idolatrous acts; the other that it contravened the express commands of Christ and the whole spirit of the Gospel. On both points Tertullian is explicit.

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[1] One account attributes to the Emperor, as he stretched forth his hands to Jupiter, the words, "This hand which has never yet shed human blood I raise to thee." There were paintings in which he was represented in the attitude of prayer, and the army catching the rain in their helmets; and an Imperial medal is extant in which Jupiter is exhibited launching his bolts on the barbarians who lie stretched upon the ground. Neander, i., pp. 159-162. Tertullian's words in one of the passages referred to above, may imply some doubt of the soldiers being really Christians, "Christianorum *forte* militum precationibus." *Apol.*, c. v.

"You inquire," he writes, "whether a believer may enter the military service, and whether soldiers are to be admitted into the faith, even the rank and file and the subaltern officers, who are not required to take part in sacrifices or in capital punishments. There is no agreement between the divine and the human sacrament,[1] the standard of Christ and the standard of the devil, the camp of light and the camp of darkness. How will a Christian man war without a sword, which the Lord has taken away? In disarming Peter, he unbelted every soldier."[2] II. Cent.

Again, in the tract entitled *The Soldier's Chaplet:* "We must first inquire whether warfare is proper at all for Christians. What sense is there in discussing the merely accidental, when that on which it rests is to be condemned? Do we believe it lawful for a human oath to be superadded to one divine? for a man to come under promise to another master besides Christ, and to abjure father and mother and all nearest kinsfolk, whom even the law has commanded us to honour and love next to God Himself? Shall it be held lawful to make an occupation of the sword, when the Lord proclaims that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword? Shall the son of peace take part in the battle, when it does not become him even to sue at law? . . If faith comes later and finds any pre-occupied with

[1] On this word, see ante, p. 121.

[2] Matt. xxvi. 52; John xviii. 36; 2 Cor. x. 4. *On Idolatry*, c. xix.

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military service, their case is different; and yet when a man has become a believer, and faith has been sealed, there must be either an immediate abandonment of the service, which has been the course with many, or all sorts of quibbling will have to be resorted to in order to avoid offending God; or last of all, that same fate must be endured for Him which non-combatant citizens are ready to accept."[1]

In the same tract he relates an instance of refusal, not indeed to enter the army, but to wear the laurel-wreath of victory. The bounty of the Emperors[2] was being dispensed in the camp; the soldiers were approaching, crowned with laurel: some of them were Christians. "One, more stedfast than his brethren (who imagined that they could serve two masters), his head alone uncovered, the useless crown in his hand, was nobly conspicuous. He was presently marked out, and all began to jeer him while at a distance and to gnash upon him when he came near. The murmur was wafted to the tribune, as the soldier was leaving the ranks. The tribune stops him, 'Why do you not wear your

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[1] Chap. xi. A.N.L. This tract was written by Tertullian after he had joined the Montanists, the body which, more faithfully than any other, upheld New Testament teaching on this point. In his *Apology*, a pre-Montanist work, he says, "We pray for protection to the Imperial house, for brave armies" (chap. xxx.); but in the treatise *On Patience*, generally ranked also amongst his pre-Montanist writings, he describes it as "the business of the heathen to hire themselves to the camp." (c. vii.)

[2] Severus and one or both of his sons; he associated Caracalla with himself in the year 190, and Geta in 208.

crown like the rest?' 'I have no freedom to do so,' he answered. Being pressed for his reasons, he confessed, 'I am a Christian.' The case was considered by the officers and voted upon, and it being decided to remit the judgment to a higher tribunal, the offender was conducted to the Prefects. Immediately he put off his heavy cloak, loosed his military sandals, gave up his sword, and dropped the laurel crown from his hand. He was taken to prison, where," adds Tertullian, "he now awaits the white crown of martyrdom. Adverse judgments," he continues, "have been passed upon his conduct, as if he were headstrong and rash and too eager to die, because, in being called to account about a mere matter of attire, he brought trouble on the bearers of the Christian name;—he forsooth alone brave among so many soldier-brethren, he alone a Christian! So they murmured and were alarmed because the peace and immunity they had so long enjoyed was endangered."[1]

The evidence of Celsus, who, as noticed above,[2] wrote against the Gospel in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, goes to show that the number of Christians who then served in the army must have been small. He objects that the State received no help from the Christians, either in civil government or war, and that if all men were to follow their example, the Sovereign would be deserted, and the world would

[1] *The Soldier's Chaplet*, c. i. [2] p. 212.

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fall into the hands of barbarians. To this objection Origen makes a noble answer, full of the spirit of faith. "The question is, What would happen if the Romans should be persuaded to adopt the principles of the Christians, to renounce the service now rendered to the gods and magistrates, and to worship the Most High? This is my answer. We say that if two of us shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of the Father of the just, who is in heaven.[1] What then are we to expect, if not only a very few should agree, as at present, but the whole empire of Rome? They would pray to the Word, who of old said to the Hebrews, when pursued by the Egyptians, 'The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace;'[2] and if all should unite in prayer with one accord, they would put to flight enemies far more numerous than were discomfited by the prayer of Moses, and of those who prayed with him. . . If all the Romans should embrace the Christian faith, they would overcome their enemies by prayer; or rather they would not go to war at all, being guarded by that Divine Power which promised to save five whole cities for the sake of fifty just persons."

In what follows, however, Origen seems to abandon this firm ground, the only safe position for the Christian. "We do give help to kings, a divine

[1] Matt. xviii. 19. [2] Exodus xiv. 14.

help so to speak, putting on the whole armour of God. . . If the priests of the idol-temples keep their hands free from blood, and even in time of war are never enlisted in the army, how much more, while others are engaged in battle, should we, as the priests and ministers of God,[1] keep our hands pure and wrestle in prayer for those who are fighting in a righteous cause, and for the king who reigns righteously, that whatever is opposed to them might be destroyed? And as by our prayers we vanquish the demons who stir up war and cause the violation of oaths and disturb the peace of nations, we are in this way much more helpful to kings than those who take the field to fight for them. None fight better for the king than we do. We cannot indeed fight under him, even if he should require it; but we fight for him; we form a special army, an army of piety, offering our prayers to God."[2] II. Cent.

In this passage, Origen supposes that it is lawful for Christians to pray for the success of the sword. But the sword is forbidden to the Christian; and, this being so, it is forbidden to him also to pray for its success. If we should pray that men everywhere would obey Christ's commands, lay aside the sword, and trust for defence, as Origen expresses it, to "that Divine Power which promised to save five whole cities for the sake of fifty just persons,"

[1] He means all Christians, as he has said above.

[2] *Against Celsus*, b. viii., c. lxviii., lxix., lxx., lxxiii. A. N. L.

the object for which we pray would be far sooner and better attained.

We shall return to this question in the second part of the volume.

SLAVERY. It has been stated above that the slaves made up half the population of the ancient Roman world.[1] This, which is Gibbon's estimate,[2] is regarded by many as excessive, but when we reflect that labour, whether on the farm, in trade, or in the household service, was abandoned almost entirely to the slave, we may believe that the calculation is not far from the truth. Pliny tells us of a rich man in the reign of Augustus who owned at his death upwards of four thousand slaves; and Athenæus, in the third century, knew very many who possessed, not for use but for ostentation, ten and even twenty thousand.

The unfortunate condition of this class, and the treatment to which they were subjected, can scarcely be depicted in too dark colours. The slaves were regarded as mere chattels, inventoried with the beasts of the field, and the implements of agriculture. They had no political existence; they were devoid of the rights of parent or husband; they could not profess the religion of their owners. They were sold, they were beaten, tortured and crucified; were declared incapable of being bound by oath; and when their growing power threatened the

[1] Ante, p. 9. [2] *Decline and Fall*, vol. i., p. 56.

tranquillity of the State, they were kept down by wholesale massacre. Even the most humane and enlightened amongst the ancients fully shared in the popular prejudices regarding slavery. Aristotle and Cicero considered it to be an institution of divine origin, whereby inferior races were designedly subjected to the superior, and the latter apologizes to Atticus for being affected by the death of his slave. Cato advised that, like beasts of burden, slaves should be worked to death rather than be allowed to become old and unprofitable; and in order to divert them from forming conspiracies, he suggested that masters should incite them to quarrel with each other. Columella declares that the more intelligent they are, the more frequently it becomes necessary to put them in chains.[1] II. Cent.

Although the glad tidings that Christ died for all men, and that in Him there is neither bond nor free, laid the axe at the root of the corrupt tree of slavery, yet it was long before the Church learned to use the axe, or even to see that it was her duty to do so. All perhaps that could be done, in the then condition of the Roman world, was to lighten the yoke of bondage, and to receive the bondman into Christian brotherhood. The Apostle Paul calls the runaway slave, Onesimus, "a brother beloved

[1] *Early Christianity and Class Influence*, by E. G. Clarke, *Contemp. Review*, Dec. 1882; *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, p. 1902; Wordsworth's *Church Hist.*, p. 333.

Part I. Chap. 18.

in the Lord;"[1] and Clement of Alexandria shows how this teaching had borne fruit among the Christians. "We ought," he says, "to treat slaves as ourselves; they are men as we are; and there is the same God of bond and free; and we ought not to punish our brethren when they sin, but to reprove them."[2] It is thought that the epitaphs on the catacombs afford silent but significant evidence of the disposition which existed within the Church to ignore the distinction between the slave and the free man. The inscriptions over the sepulchres of the heathen contain frequent statements as to whether the deceased was slave or free; but in the case of the Christian tomb no trace of such a distinction has ever been discovered.[3]

Oaths. Swearing is emphatically forbidden in the New Testament. Nothing can be plainer than the words of our Lord in his Sermon on the Mount, and the same injunction is reiterated in the strongest terms by the Apostle James.[4] That our Lord spoke of the solemn oaths permitted under the Mosaic Dispensation can admit of no doubt. Some indeed have imagined that the precept was directed against profane swearing; but such a supposition is excluded by the words "Thou shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths;" and this inference is confirmed by the injunction which follows, "Let your com-

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[1] Philemon, 16. [2] *Instructor*, b. iii., c. xii.

[3] *Dict. of Christ. Antiq.*, p. 1904. [4] Matt. v. 34-37; James v. 12.

munication be yea, yea, nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."[1] II. Cent.

The early Christian writers deprecate the use of oaths. Their objection was not confined to the military oath, but extended to every kind of swearing. We have seen what Clement's mind was on this subject.[2] He enlarges upon it in another place: "He who possesses the true knowledge does not swear, but prefers making his affirmation by yea and his denial by nay; and as a confirmation to those who do not perceive the certainty of his answer, he adds the words, 'I say truly.'" Referring to some who allowed themselves to take an oath on certain occasions he continues, "Our

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[1] A great living statesman has said: "Probably there is nothing in the New Testament more especially condemned and forbidden than oaths. The practice of swearing to the truth of anything makes two kinds of truth and truthfulness. If oaths are of any avail, by so much as they make truth more certain, by so much they lessen the value of any ordinary statement and diminish the probability of its truth. I think oaths and oath-taking have done more than any other thing to impair and destroy a regard for the truth."—Letter of John Bright to the *Daily News*.

The same maxim, almost in the same words, is expressed by W. R. W. Stephens in a letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette*. In illustration of the immoral notion that there can be two kinds of truth, he refers to the middle ages: "No one can read mediæval history without being struck by the extraordinary and shameless mendacity which prevailed. Yet this disregard for ordinary truth existed side by side with the most exalted ideas respecting the sanctity of oaths. Not indeed that the violation of oaths was at all uncommon; but this arose, not from a low estimate of the sin of perjury regarded in itself, but rather from the fact that the mediæval system of religion was skilful in devising casuistical contrivances for evading exact obedience to the oath, or means for compounding for the crime of breaking it outright."—Reprinted in his *Memoir of Lord Hatherley*, vol. ii., p. 17, note.

[2] Ante, p. 206.

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life, I think, ought to be such as to inspire confidence in those who are without, so that an oath may not even be asked of us. Their speaking truth on oath arises from their being in accord with the truth: where then is the necessity for an oath? . . It was a compendium of righteousness to say, Let your yea be yea and your nay, nay."[1] Justin Martyr's testimony on this point is quite clear: "With regard to our not swearing and always speaking the truth, Christ commanded, 'Swear not at all; but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.'"[2] So Tertullian: "I do not speak of perjury, since all swearing is forbidden."[3]

Basilides, a catechumen of Origen's, was an officer in the army under Septimius Severus, A.D. 202. Being appointed to lead away a maiden named Potamiæna to execution, this man from sympathy with her sufferings, received the Gospel, and became willing to obey Christ's precepts, including his command to abstain from swearing. Not long afterwards, when required by his fellow-soldiers to take an oath, he declared it was not lawful for him to swear at all, for he was a Christian. He was committed to prison, and persisting in his resolution, was beheaded.[4]

Some of the most eminent writers of the suc-

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[1] *Miscellanies*, b. vii., c. viii., xi.

[2] *First Apology*, c. xvi. [3] *On Idolatry*, c. xi. [4] Eusebius, b. vi., c. v.

ceeding centuries, Lactantius, Athanasius, Chrysostom, Epiphanius, Jerome, Ambrose, and others, express themselves in very emphatic terms on this question. Chrysostom frequently refers to it. Quoting Matthew v. 33, 34, he says, "Avoid oaths of every kind. Neither in a good cause, nor in a bad, is it allowable to swear; the lips must be kept pure from oaths. . . An oath is Satan's snare. . . When Christ said, 'Whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil,' it was not that the old law proceeded from the devil, but because He Himself would more powerfully withdraw men from the old state of corruption." So Epiphanius: "It is not good to swear either by the Lord Himself, or by any other oath, for swearing is of that wicked one, the devil." And Jerome: "Swear not at all. The Jews were permitted to swear by God, not because it was right that they should do so, but because it was better to call upon Him than upon the demons. But Gospel speech does not admit of an oath, to a believer every word is as binding as an oath."[1] II. Cent.

With the New Testament in their hands, it is not easy to see how unprejudiced men could come to any other conclusion; but custom sometimes prevailed over truth. Tertullian, notwithstanding his positive declaration just quoted, says elsewhere: "Though we decline to swear by the genii of the

[1] Chrysostom, Homily *On Genesis*, c. ii.; Hom. xiv., *On the Acts; On Matt.* xvii. Sixtus Senensis, *Bibliotheca Sancta*, b. vi., annotation 26.

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Cæsars, we swear by their safety." In like manner, Origen: "We will never swear by 'the fortune of the king,' or by aught else that is considered equivalent to God." And Athanasius, when arraigned before Constantius, required that his accusers should be put upon oath.[1]

Insensibly this feature of Christ's religion was lost sight of, and the oath found its way into the usages of the Church.

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[1] Tertullian, *Apology*, c. xxxii.; Origen, *Against Celsus*, b. viii., c. lxv. *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, Oaths.

Mosaic of Felicitas in the Archbishop's Palace, Ravenna.

*Copied from the original by* ***Edward Backhouse.***

# PART II.

FROM A.D. 200, TO THE DEATH OF CONSTANTINE,
A.D. 337.

# CHAPTER I.

## The Martyrs of Africa—Alexander Severus favours the Christians.

Our narrative of events in the history of the Church came down to the reign of Septimius Severus. In A.D. 202 that Emperor issued an edict forbidding, under severe penalties, conversion either to Judaism or to Christianity. The blow appears to have fallen most heavily on Egypt and Africa.[1] A.D. 200.

A little earlier indeed, in the year 200, some Christians suffered martyrdom in the latter province. They belonged to the city of Scillita in Numidia. When they were brought before the Proconsul he said to them, "You may obtain pardon if you will sincerely return to the gods." One of them, Speratus, replied, "We have injured no man; we have spoken ill of no man: for all the evil you have brought upon us we have only thanked you. We give praise to our true Lord and King for all his

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[1] The Romans sometimes applied the name of *Africa* to the whole continent, but it properly belonged to the Carthaginian territory. In no part of the Empire had Christianity taken deeper root than in this province, then crowded with rich and populous cities, but afterwards wasted by long centuries of Christian feud, Vandal invasions, and Mohammedan misrule. It is the modern Tunis.

Part II. Chap. 1.

dispensations." The Proconsul replied, "We also are pious: we swear by the genius of our lord the Emperor, and we pray for his welfare, as you must do." To which Speratus answered, "I know of no genius of the ruler of this earth; but I serve my God in heaven, whom no man hath seen or can see. I have never failed to pay the taxes on all that I purchase, for I acknowledge the Emperor as my ruler; but I can worship none but my Lord the King of Kings, the Lord of all." Upon this they were taken back to prison. Being brought up again the next day and again examined, Speratus answered in the name of the rest, "We are all Christians; we will not depart from our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Do with us as you please." They were condemned to be beheaded, and being brought to the place of execution, they fell on their knees and gave thanks to God.[1]

About two years afterwards there took place at Carthage[2] the memorable martyrdom of Perpetua and her companions. Six young catechumens, Revocatus and his fellow-servant Felicitas, Saturninus, Saturus, Secundulus and Vivia Perpetua, were seized and accused of being Christians. Perpetua was a lady of twenty-two years, whose husband had

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[1] Ruinart, *Acta Sincera*. Neander, i., pp. 169, 170.

[2] It is a question whether the scene was Carthage itself, or one of two small towns called Tuburbium, some forty miles from the capital. Milman's *History of Christianity*, vol. ii., p. 165, note.

died a short time before, and whose mother was a Christian; but her aged father was still a Pagan. She had two brothers, one of whom was a catechumen. At the time of her imprisonment she was nursing a new-born infant. The story of her sufferings is related mainly by herself. "While," she says, "we were in the hands of the persecutors, my father sought with all his power to turn me away from the faith. 'Father,' said I, 'do you see this little pitcher lying here?' He said, 'I see it.' Then I said, 'Can it be called by any other name than what it is?' He answered, 'No.' 'Neither can I,' I replied, 'call myself anything else but what I am, a Christian.' Provoked at my words, he threw himself upon me as if he would tear my eyes out." A.D. 202.

Before they were put into the dungeon they were permitted to be baptized. "In the water," says Perpetua, "the Spirit prompted me to seek for nothing but patient endurance. After a few days," she continues, "we were removed into the dungeon. I was terrified, for I had never felt such darkness. O what a dreadful day! The excessive heat occasioned by the multitude of prisoners, the rough behaviour of the soldiers, and anxiety on account of my child, overwhelmed me. I endured this distress for many days, until I obtained leave for my infant to be with me in the dungeon, when I at once grew strong and the prison became a palace to me."

It being reported that she was to undergo a public

examination, her father renewed his attempts to shake her resolution. "'Have pity, my daughter,' he said, 'on my grey hairs; have pity on your father, and do not expose me to the scorn of men. Lay aside your lofty spirit, and do not plunge us all into ruin.' Thus saying he kissed my hands, and throwing himself at my feet, called me, not daughter, but lady. I grieved when I thought of his grey hairs, and that he alone of all my family would not rejoice at my martyrdom, and I strove to comfort him, saying, 'On that scaffold whatever God wills will come to pass; for we stand not in our own strength, but by the power of God.'

"Another day, while we were at dinner, we were suddenly taken to the Town Hall, where an immense multitude of people were assembled. We ascended the platform. The others were interrogated, and confessed Christ. When it came to my turn, my father appeared with my child, and drawing me aside, said in a supplicating tone, 'Have pity on your babe.' The Procurator also said, 'Have compassion on thy father's grey hairs; pity thy infant child; offer sacrifice for the welfare of the Emperor.' 'That I cannot do,' I answered. Then the Procurator said, 'Art thou a Christian?' I replied, 'I am.' And as my father was still standing there, endeavouring to turn me from the faith, the Procurator ordered him to be thrown down and beaten with rods. I felt as if I had myself been beaten. Then the Procurator delivered judgment,

condemning us to be exposed to the wild beasts; A.D. 202. and we went down cheerfully to our dungeon." Perpetua sent to her father to beg for her infant, but he refused to give it up.

Possessed with the erroneous notions, which were even then current, regarding the state of the dead, Perpetua, whilst in prison, prayed for her brother Dinocrates, who had died at the age of seven; and after days and nights of groaning and weeping, she saw a vision with which she was comforted, believing that he had been released from his abode of gloom and suffering.

One of the warders named Pudens, a soldier, won by the good conversation of the prisoners, and perceiving that the power of God was with them, admitted many of the brethren to see them, to their mutual refreshment. As the fatal day drew near, Perpetua's father made one more effort to move her. "Worn out with suffering, he came in to me, and began to tear his beard and throw himself on his face to the earth, uttering words which might move all creation. I grieved for his unhappy old age."

While they were thus awaiting martyrdom, Secundulus died; and Felicitas, three days before they were to be exposed to the wild animals, was delivered of a daughter. Being in the pains of child-birth, and crying out, the jailer said reproachfully, "If thy present sufferings are so great, what wilt thou do when thou art thrown to the wild beasts? This thou didst not consider when thou

refused to sacrifice." She answered, "What I *now* suffer, I suffer myself, *then* there will be another with me who will suffer for me, because I shall suffer for Him."

"When the day of their victory shone forth (thus the narrative continues), the martyrs proceeded from the prison to the amphitheatre as if to an entertainment; Perpetua walking last, with a placid countenance and the step of a matron of Christ beloved of God, casting down her lustrous eyes from the gaze of all." A custom still prevailed, which had come down from the time when human beings were offered in sacrifice, of attiring the victims in priestly garments. It was proposed to clothe the men amongst the confessors as priests of Saturn, and the women as priestesses of Ceres; but their free and Christian spirit protested against such a degradation; and the justice of their demand being acknowledged, they were led in attired as they had come. Perpetua advanced singing a hymn. Revocatus, Saturninus and Saturus rebuked the gazing multitude; and when they came within view of the Procurator, began to say, "Thou judgest us, but God will judge thee;" at which the people, exasperated, demanded that they should be made to run the gauntlet. This was done, and then a leopard and a bear were let loose on Saturninus and Revocatus. Saturus was made to contend with a wild boar, which, instead of attacking him, gored the huntsman. He was then fastened to the ground

beside the cage of a bear, but the animal would not come out. A.D. 202.

Perpetua and Felicitas, being stripped and enclosed in nets, were exposed to a wild cow, selected on account of her fierceness. But from this spectacle even the hardened devotees of the amphitheatre recoiled; and, being brought back, the victims were covered with a loose robe. Perpetua was first led in. She was tossed and fell on her loins, and when she saw her tunic torn from her side, she drew it over her, more mindful of her modesty than her suffering. Then, being called for again, she bound up her hair, "For," says the narrator, "it is not becoming in a martyr to die with dishevelled hair, lest she should appear to be mourning in her glory." Seeing that Felicitas was wounded and crushed, she went to her, gave her her hand and lifted her up. So these two noble women stood together, a sight unworthy to be beheld by so heartless a crowd, who however were for the time overawed by the spectacle, and suffered their victims to be removed. Being taken out of the arena, Perpetua roused herself as one who wakes out of sleep, and looking round said, "I cannot tell when we are to be led out to that cow;" and when she heard what had already happened, she could not believe it until she saw her torn garment and the wounds on her body. Then to her brother and to one of the faithful catechumens she said, "Stand fast in the faith,

and all of you love one another, and be not offended at my sufferings."

The bear and the wild boar failing, Saturus was thrown to a leopard. Before the beast was let loose he said to the soldier Pudens, "Believe with thy whole heart; I am going forth and shall be destroyed with one bite of that leopard." So it happened, for the first bite of the animal so covered him with blood that the people in mockery of the rite of baptism, and as though he was undergoing it a second time, shouted, "Saved and washed, saved and washed." Bidding farewell to Pudens, he said, "Remember my faith, and let not these things disturb thee but confirm thee." Then he asked for a ring from the soldier's finger, and dipping it in his blood handed it back to him as a token of martyrdom.

The *coup de grace* was now ordered to be given; but before this was done the bloodthirsty people called for the confessors to be brought again into the midst of the arena, that they might feast their eyes with their dying agonies. Hearing the call the martyrs rose up of their own accord and stood where the people directed, and having given each other the kiss of peace, all received the sword-thrust, unmoved and in silence, except Perpetua, who, on being pierced between the ribs, cried out aloud, and herself directed the wavering stroke of the youthful gladiator to her throat. Thus they died; and the narrator of their last sufferings ex-

claims, "O most brave and blessed martyrs! O truly called and chosen to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ!"[1] A.D. 211-235.

The foregoing narrative is admitted on all hands to be a genuine monument of antiquity, written by a contemporary, and probably an eye witness. Several visions, which occupy a considerable place in the original, are here omitted; from these and from the craving after the supernatural generally which runs through the account, as well as from some doctrinal indications, it is inferred that the martyrs were Montanists.[2]

Under the Emperor Caracalla (A.D. 211-217), monster though he was, no new persecution was instituted. The Syrian Elagabalus (218-222), who constituted himself "high-priest of Baal-Peor," meditated the blending of Christianity with his own abominable rites. This dream was so far realized by his more worthy successor, Alexander Severus (222-235), that he set up an image of Christ, amongst others, in the chapel of the Imperial

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[1] Ruinart. A. N. L. Neander, i., pp. 170-172. The mosaic of Perpetua which forms the frontispiece of this volume, and that of Felicitas, at the head of the present chapter, have no pretension to be portraits, and are probably the work of the fifth century, when Ravenna became one of the chief centres of Christian art.

Gieseler, i., p. 214, note 9; Milman, ii., p. 165, note x; A. N. L. Introd. Notice; Cooper's *Free Church*, p. 272. Cooper remarks, "It will detract nothing from the reader's admiration of these Carthaginian martyrs, when it is added that they were all Montanists. In like manner, others of the sects, stigmatized as heretics, and especially the Marcionites, furnished some of the noblest of these spiritual heroes."

Palace.[1] Christian bishops were also admitted at court in their official character; and the usages of the Church in the choice of its officers had become so well-known that the Emperor took them as his rule in the election of procurators and magistrates. He ordained that the names of the candidates should be published beforehand, saying that it would be a reproachful thing if the forms observed by Jews and Christians in the choice of their priests, should be neglected in the appointment of those to whom the goods and lives of men were entrusted.[2] Heathenism itself was passing into a new phase. The Neo-Platonic philosophy, which had stolen its ideas of worship and morality from the Gospel, and yet lent itself at the same time to the grossest popular superstitions, came forward to prop up the tottering fabric and give it a more spiritual character. But whilst heathenism thus drew nearer to Christianity, Christianity, as we shall have abundant occasion to remark, made on her side unmistakeable approaches towards heathenism.[3]

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[1] The other statues were those of Abraham, Orpheus and Apollonius of Tyana. (The last-named was a Pythagorean philosopher and pretender to supernatural powers, whom the philosophic school set up as a rival to our Saviour.) Lampridius, *Life of Alexander Severus*, c. xxviii. The same author informs us that the Christian maxim, "Do to others as ye would that they should do unto you," so delighted this Emperor that he caused it (or rather, to speak accurately, its converse, "Do not to another what thou wouldst not have done to thyself,") to be inscribed on his palace and on his public works. Idem, c. l.

[2] Idem, *Life of Elagabalus*, c. xi., ix.

[3] Gieseler, i., pp. 188-190; Milman, ii., pp. 179-184.

## CHAPTER II.

### Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria.

About the year A.D. 220 died Tertullian, the illustrious teacher of the African Church. We know little more of the incidents of his life than that he was the son of a centurion, of Carthage, that he was educated as a rhetorician, and that he embraced Christianity after he attained to manhood, viz., about the year 185. He was ordained presbyter about 192, and adopted the opinions of the Montanists in 199. It has been well said that the African Church, of whose origin we have no record, rises suddenly upon us in the pages of Tertullian, already well established and full of life. His character and writings did much to raise her to a leading place in the republic of the Churches. A.D. 220.

The loving hand of Neander has thus drawn his portrait: "Tertullian was a man of an ardent mind and warm and deep feelings, inclined to surrender himself up with his whole soul and strength to the object of his love, and sternly to repel whatever was foreign to it. He possessed rich stores of knowledge and profoundness of thought, but was deficient in logical clearness and sobriety. An unbridled, ardent, but highly sensuous imagination

governed him. His fiery and positive disposition, combined with his training as an advocate, impelled him, especially in controversy, to rhetorical exaggerations. . . Christianity is the inspiring soul of his life and thoughts, out of which an entirely new and rich inner world developed itself in him; but the leaven of Christianity had first to penetrate and refine that fiery, bold and rugged nature,—the new wine in an old bottle. Tertullian had often more within him than he was able to express: the overflowing mind was at a loss for the suitable form. He had to create a language for the new spiritual matter (and that out of the rude Punic Latin), without the aid of a grammatical education, and in the midst of the current of thoughts and feelings by which his ardent nature was hurried along.[1] The theological spirit of the North African Church was continually shaping itself into a more settled form from the time of Tertullian to that of Augustine, and afterwards, through Augustine, it acquired the greatest possible influence over the whole Western Church."[2]

De Pressensé's character of this great man is equally discriminating. "He does not, like Justin or Clement of Alexandria, seek to trace in paganism a dim preparation for Christianity. He takes the

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[1] His thoughts seem often to struggle for utterance in the rugged sentences: the style has been compared to that of Carlyle.

[2] *Church History*, vol. ii., pp. 442, 443.

axe of John the Baptist, and lays it at the root of the tree, with the full intention to cut it down and consume it utterly. . . The Montanist sect could not fail to be attractive in its exalted piety to such a mind as Tertullian's. The stern severity of its discipline, the union of a realism coloured by the warmest hues of the Oriental imagination, with an unbending spirit of independence; these peculiar characteristics of Montanism answered so exactly to the aspirations of Tertullian, that he inevitably became one of its apostles. Had Montanism not been already in existence he would have been its founder."[1] A.D. 220.

Although we have extracted freely in previous chapters from Tertullian's writings, we must find space for two more passages.

In the first we have a burst of song over the marvels of Creation, which he introduces to illustrate Christian faith in the resurrection. "The day dies into the night and is buried in darkness. The glory of the world is shrouded in the shadow of death; all is turned to gloom; silence reigns, and labour is at rest. Nature mourns in sable garments for the lost light. But again the light revives, with its dowry of beauty undiminished, its sun going forth unchanged throughout the whole world, slaying as he goes the night which had been his death, and rejoicing in his glorious inheritance until once

[1] *The Martyrs and Apologists*, pp. 412, 413, 421.

more night returns and leads her retinue again through the heavens. The starry fires are rekindled which had been quenched in the morning glow; the heavenly pictures come back to view; the refulgent horns of the moon are renewed, which her monthly circuit had worn away. Winter and summer go and come, and spring-tide and autumn; for the earth receives her instruction from heaven to clothe again the trees which were spoiled, to paint the flowers afresh, to spread again the grass, to reproduce the seed which had been consumed, and not to reproduce it until consumed. Admirable method! which preserves for us that of which it deprives us, which spoils only to enrich, and destroys only to increase; giving us back more abundant blessings than it took away, and turning destruction into profit and loss into gain."[1]

More than once he adverts to the unconscious testimony borne by mankind, heathens as well as Christians, to the spark of divine knowledge hidden in the souls of all men. It was a point on which he could speak with authority, having passed half his days in heathenism. "We worship the one God, who by his commanding word, his disposing wisdom, his mighty power, brought forth out of nothing this entire mass of our world, for the glory of his majesty. The natural eye cannot see Him, but He is spiritually visible. He is incompre-

[1] *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, c. xii.

hensible, but manifested in grace. He is beyond the utmost reach of our conceptions, but our very incapacity of fully grasping Him affords us the idea of what He really is. It is the crowning guilt of men that they will not recognize One of whom they cannot possibly be ignorant. Will you have the proof from the works of his hands, so numerous and so great, which both contain and sustain you, which at once minister to your enjoyment and strike you with awe? Or would you rather have it from the testimony of the soul itself? Though shackled by the body, led astray by depraving customs, enervated by lusts and passions, enslaved by the worship of false gods,—yet whenever the soul comes to itself, as out of a surfeit, or a sleep, or a sickness, and attains to something of its natural soundness, it speaks of God, using no other name. 'God is great and good;' 'God sees;' 'I commend myself to God;' 'God will repay me.' O noble testimony of the soul, by nature Christian! And in using such words it looks not to the Capitol[1] but to the heavens; it knows that there is the throne of the living God, from whom and from whence itself came down."[2] The same thought appears in another treatise. "Thou art always ready, O soul, to exclaim, 'God

A.D. 220.

[1] The Roman Capitol, the highest part of the city, contained the great national Temples of Jupiter, Minerva and Juno. In the passage above it is used to express the whole pagan religion.

[2] *Apology*, c. xvii. A. N. L.

Part II. Chap. 2.

sees all.' How happens this, since thou art not Christian? How is it that, even with the garland of Ceres on the brow, wrapped in the purple cloak of Saturn, wearing the white robe of the goddess Isis, thou never thinkest of appealing to any of these deities? O striking testimony to truth, which in the very midst of demons draws forth a witness for us Christians!"[1]

Contemporary with Tertullian was Clement of Alexandria. In race, in education, in intellectual character, he was the very opposite of the great African. An Athenian by training, if not by birth, as soon as he had embraced Christianity, his inquisitive spirit carried him into Italy, Palestine and Egypt, to drink in wisdom and knowledge from the lips of the most eminent instructors. At Alexandria he met with Pantænus, who had transferred to that city from Athens the Catechetical school said to have been founded by Athenagoras. Eusebius has preserved a tradition that Pantænus preached the word to the nations of the East, and that in India (Yemen?) he found a copy of Matthew's gospel in Hebrew, supposed to have been left there by Bartholomew.[2] "When I had tracked out this instructor," says Clement, "the last whom I came upon, but the first in power, I found rest." He affectionately calls him "The bee of Sicily, flitting

[1] *On the Testimony of the Soul*, c. ii.

[2] Eusebius, b. v., c. x.

so joyously over all the spiritual meadows, sipping the sweet flowers from the writings of the prophets and apostles, and distilling immortal knowledge into the souls of his hearers."[1] About the year 189, Clement succeeded Pantænus in the Alexandrian School, where he continued to teach with great distinction till A.D. 202, when the persecution under Severus compelled him to fly from the city. He sought an asylum with Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem, and died about the same year as Tertullian, A.D. 220. A.D. 220.

"Severe in manners, and even in garb, an austere Christian without being a violent ascetic, of large mind and broad sympathies, responsive to all the pure aspirations of the human conscience, a devoted worshipper of the Word, in whom he had found the fulness of truth, yet not ashamed to stoop to gather out of the dust and mire any grain of pure gold which he saw half buried there; such was Clement of Alexandria."[2] Instead of rejecting the Grecian philosophy, like Tertullian, he vindicated it as "the gift of God, the work of Divine Providence;" and even went so far as to assert that philosophy was given to the Greeks as the law was to the Jews; that it had been necessary for their justification before Christ came, and was still to be regarded as a preparative for the Gospel, and if

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[1] *Miscellanies*, b. i., c. i.; Cooper's *Free Church*, p. 212.

[2] De Pressensé, *Martyrs and Apologists*, pp. 298, 299.

Part II. Chap. 2.

rightly understood was compatible with it. "Like farmers, who irrigate the land before-hand, we also," he tells us, "water what is earthly with the liquid stream of Greek learning, so that it may receive the spiritual seed cast into it, and may be able easily to nourish it."[1] But the ground on which he had thus ventured was not firm and solid, and led him into the error of identifying the maxims of the Greek philosophy with the truths of Christianity.

Clement, and still more his successor Origen, carried the figurative interpretation of Scripture, to which the Oriental writers were so prone,[2] to its highest pitch. No soil could have been more congenial to the growth of this tendency than that of Alexandria, where Philo the Jew had employed it with immoderate license on the Old Testament. Scripture, it was said, has three senses, the historical, the moral and the mystical, and the first of these was treated as if it were merely subservient to the other two. "There was something in the system," observes Robertson, "attractive at once to ingenuity of speculation and to a pious feeling of the depth of God's word; but the effect too commonly was that instead of seeking for the real meaning of each passage, men set themselves to discover some fanciful analogy to ideas which they had derived from other parts of Scripture, or from altogether

[1] *Miscellanies*, b. i., c. i. [2] See ante, p. 64.

different sources. The historical sense was lost sight of or even denied; the moral sense was often perverted. Nor can an unprejudiced reader open any work in which this kind of interpretation is followed, without feeling how utterly unlike it is in its general character to those Scriptural instances of figurative interpretation which its advocates allege as precedents for it."[1] A.D. 220.

Three works remain from the hands of Clement, forming a connected series. In these the "Word" appears first as converting the heathen to the faith; then as forming by His discipline the life and conduct of the believer; lastly as the teacher of the true knowledge to those who are purified.[2]

Before we take leave of this writer let us taste again the rich fruit of his sagacious spirit.

He thus counsels those who undertake the office of Christian teacher. "Everyone ought to ask himself whether he has taken to teaching rashly,

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[1] *History of the Church*, i., pp. 88-90.

[2] Neander, vol. ii., p. 455. The most considerable of the three works is the Στρώματα (*Miscellanies*). The word signifies anything laid out for resting upon; a bed; hence the *coverlet* of a bed; and hence again *patchwork*, such as the coverlets were often made of. Clement tells us he has given this name to his book because it consists of notes *patched* together, passing from one subject to another; and he illustrates its contents from a passage of Sophocles, the bill of fare of an ancient oblation:—

> There was a fleece, and there was a vine,
> And a libation, and grapes well stored;
> And mixed with these, fruit of all kinds,
> The fat of the olive; and wax-formed work,
> Most curious, of the yellow bee. (B. iv., c. ii.). A. N. L.

The date assigned to the *Miscellanies* is A.D. 194.

Part II. Chap. 2.

or from rivalry or vainglory; or whether the only reward he proposes to himself is the salvation of those who hear him." Again: "The *oral* teacher takes time to try his hearers, and distinguishes from the rest those who are able to receive his instruction. He watches their words, their manners, their habits, their attitude, their look, their voice. He discerns in them the diversified condition of the ground, the roadside, the rock, the trodden path, the forest tract, and the fruitful field which multiplies the seed sown." . . He who teaches *through his writings* consecrates himself to God, labouring, "not for gain, nor for vainglory, not to be turned aside by partiality, nor enslaved by fear, nor elated by praise, but awaiting the future reward which God has promised to the labourer. . . By teaching one is continually learning, and in speaking the teacher is often a hearer together with his audience. For the Teacher of him who speaks and of him who hears is One; He waters both the mind and the word."

"As he who is devoted to the chase must first seek, track and scent the game, and hunt it down with dogs, before he can capture it; so it is necessary to go out in quest of truth, and pursue it with toil before we can know how sweet and excellent a thing it is."[1]

Quoting the glorious words of Paul to Titus,

[1] *Miscellanies*, b. i., c. ii.

"After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour to man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy He saved us,"[1] he exclaims, "Behold the might of the new song! It has made men out of stones, men out of beasts. Those who were as dead, not being partakers of the true life, have come to life again, simply by becoming listeners to this song. By it the universe was composed to melodious order, and the discord of the elements tuned to harmony. . . This undying song, reaching from the centre to the circumference, and back from the extremities to the centre, has harmonized this universal frame, not according to the Thracian music, which is like that of Jubal, but according to the paternal counsel of God, which David magnified. He who is of David and yet before him, the Word of God, passing over the lyre and harp, which are but lifeless instruments, and attuning by the Holy Spirit the universe, and especially man, who is a universe in miniature, makes melody to God on this instrument of many tones."[2] A.D. 220.

[1] Chap. iii., 3-5. [2] *To the Heathen*, c. i.

## CHAPTER III.

HIPPOLYTUS—THE CHURCHES HAVE REST—THE DECIAN PERSECUTION—CYPRIAN—THE LAPSED—THE EDICT OF GALLUS—PESTILENCE.

DURING the short reign of the Thracian Maximinus, a giant in stature and strength and a monster of cruelty (A.D. 235-238), there was a partial return of persecution. Amongst the victims was Hippolytus, a presbyter of Rome, who, it is supposed, was transported, with Bishop Pontianus, to the Island of Sardinia, and there perished in the mines.[1] He is said to have been a disciple of Irenæus, and was the most learned member of the Roman Church in the early part of the third century. His treatise entitled *Philosophumena, or the Refutation of all Heresies*, of which ten books only remain, has acquired a special interest from their discovery, in 1842, in a convent on Mount Athos, by a learned Greek, Minoïdes Mynas, whom the French Government sent out to search for manuscripts. In the year 1551, there was dug up near Rome a marble statue of a venerable person seated in a chair, clad in the

[1] See ante, p. 92.

Greek pallium. This statue has been identified as that of Hippolytus.[1] A.D. 238.

In the following passage from one of his writings the union of the divine and human nature in Christ is set forth in a clear and forcible manner. "Let us, dear brethren, believe that God the Word came down from heaven, and entered into the Holy Virgin Mary, that so, becoming all that man is, with the exception of sin, He might save fallen man. . . In this way, though demonstrated to be God, He does not refuse the conditions proper to Him as man. He hungers and toils and thirsts in weariness, and prays in trouble. He, who as God never slumbers, sleeps on a pillow. He, who for that very end came into the world, deprecates the cup of suffering. He, who strengthens those who believe on Him, Himself in his agony sweats blood and is strengthened by an angel. He, who knew what manner of man Judas was, is betrayed by Judas. He, who is set at nought by Herod, is Himself the judge of the whole earth; and He, who is mocked by the soldiers, is He at whose behest stand myriads of myriads of angels and archangels. He who fixed the heavens like a vault, is fastened to the cross by man; and though inseparable from the Father, He cries to the Father and commends

[1] The back and sides of the chair contain Greek inscriptions, one of which is a cycle of sixteen years for harmonizing solar and lunar time, and so determining the Paschal full moon. *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, Hippolytus Romanus.

Part II. Chap. 3.

to Him his spirit. Bowing his head, He gives up the ghost, saying, 'I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again.' He who raises the dead is laid in a sepulchre, and on the third day is raised again by the Father, though He is Himself the resurrection and the life. . . This is He who breathed upon the disciples and gave them the Spirit, and came in among them when the doors were shut, and was taken up into the heavens while they gazed on Him, and is set down at the right hand of the Father, and will come again as the judge of the living and the dead." [1]

From A.D. 238-249 (the reigns of Gordian and Philip the Arabian), the Churches again enjoyed a season of undisturbed repose. Philip indeed is claimed by some ancient authors as a convert to Christianity; but this seems to be inconsistent with the part which he took in the religious solemnities at Rome, when the thousandth year of the city (A.D. 247) was celebrated with unexampled magnificence. Of his friendly inclinations towards the Church there is no doubt. Origen maintained a correspondence with him and his Empress Severa.[2]

Decius, who succeeded Philip, occupied the throne only two years, but his reign is memorable for a more general and determined persecution of the Church than had yet taken place. It was in fact the

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[1] *Against the Heresy of Noetus*, c. xvii., xviii. A. N. L.

[2] Milman, ii., pp. 186, 187; Neander, i., pp. 175, 176.

first systematic attempt to root out the Christian religion. By a successful rebellion, Decius had snatched the imperial crown from the head of Philip; and being himself a zealous upholder of paganism, he chose to look upon the Christians, now a very numerous and influential party in the State, as the political friends of that monarch, and therefore hostile to himself.[1] As had been the case under Septimius Severus half-a-century before, a signal from the head of the government sufficed to let loose the malignant passions of the multitude against the Christians. A.D. 249-251.

The evil day came upon the Church suddenly, and found her, though outwardly prosperous, unprepared for suffering. In most parts of the Empire the Churches had been undisturbed for at least thirty years; in some provinces for a longer period; so that organized persecution was a terrible ordeal for those who had known no conflict with the world out of which they were called.

In this attempt to suppress the rival religion, law and justice were equally set at nought. Trajan's instructions to Pliny[2] were disregarded, and rigorous search was ordered to be made for all persons suspected of non-compliance with the national worship. The inquisition commenced in Rome, and was from thence extended to the provinces.

In every city, on the receipt of the imperial

[1] Milman, ii., p. 187. [2] Ante, p. 39.

rescript, a day was appointed for the Christians of the place to present themselves before the magistrates, renounce their religion, and offer sacrifice at the altar. Many stood firm, but very many yielded. Those who refused to sacrifice, after being repeatedly tortured, were thrown into prison, and tormented with hunger and thirst. Such as sought refuge in flight had their goods confiscated, and were forbidden to return under pain of death. Many who were too fainthearted to face the danger, purchased safety by bribing avaricious officials; whilst others found magistrates of a compassionate disposition, or friendly to Christianity, who were ready to release them on the production of forged certificates of their having obeyed the imperial edict.

The effect produced at Alexandria is thus described by Dionysius, then bishop of the Church in that city. "All were thrown into consternation by the terrible decree. Of the more distinguished Christians, many at once submitted: some as private individuals, impelled by their fears, or urged forward by their acquaintances; others as public officers, required to present themselves by virtue of their office. As the name of each was called, they approached the unholy offering. Some advanced pale and trembling, as if they were going to be sacrificed instead of to sacrifice, so that the populace who thronged around jeered them, and it was plain to all that they were equally afraid to sacrifice or to die. Others performed the act with

alacrity, audaciously asserting that they had never been Christians. As to the common people, some followed the evil example set them by their wealthier brethren; others found safety in flight. Of those who were apprehended, a part held out till the manacles were fastened on; a part suffered themselves to be imprisoned for several days, but abjured before they were summoned to the tribunal; others even bore the tortures to a certain point, but finally gave in. Yet there were firm and ever-blessed pillars of the Lord who, made strong through Him, endured all with a steadfastness worthy of their faith, and became admirable witnesses of his kingdom."[1] A.D. 249–251.

Foremost amongst the faithful was Julian, an aged man afflicted with gout, and unable to stand or walk. With him were arraigned two others, one of whom immediately denied his Lord, but the other, named Cronion Eunus, confessed Christ along with Julian. Being mounted on camels they were scourged through the city and afterwards consumed in an immense fire in the presence of the people. A soldier who sought to protect them from the insolence of the multitude was beheaded. Dioscurus, a youth of fifteen years, would neither yield to entreaties nor to torture, and his replies to the questions put to him showed a wisdom so uncommon that the judge dismissed him on account of his youth, "to give him," as he said, "time for

[1] Eusebius, b. vi., c. xli.; Neander, i., p. 183.

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repentance." Many of those who fled perished miserably. "How," adds Dionysius, "can I tell of the multitudes who wandered about in deserts and mountains, and died of hunger and thirst, frost and disease, robbers and wild beasts:—the survivors of whom are the witnesses both of their election and victory."[1]

The corrupt state into which the Church had fallen in another large city, Carthage, is described in strong language by Cyprian, bishop of that place. "The Lord would prove his people; and because the divinely prescribed rule of life had been disturbed in the long interval of tranquillity, a divine judgment was sent to revive our tottering, I might almost say slumbering, faith. Forgetting how believers lived in the times of the Apostles, and how they ought always to live, Christians have laboured with insatiable desire to increase their earthly possessions. Crafty frauds were used to deceive the simple; subtle meanings, to circumvent the brethren. They united in marriage with unbelievers; they swore rashly, and what was worse, they swore falsely; they spake evil of one another with envenomed tongues; they quarrelled and hated one another. . . The priests have neglected religion; sound faith has been wanting to the ministers; there has been no mercy in their works, no discipline in their manners. Many bishops, despising

[1] Eusebius, b., vi. c. xli., xlii.

A.D. 249-251.

their divine charge, have forsaken their sees, deserted their people, and wandered over foreign provinces to traffic for gain, whilst their brethren were starving in the Church.[1] They have hoarded up money; they have possessed themselves of estates by fraud; they have increased their wealth by multiplied usuries." It will be readily understood that amongst men so devoted to the world there was little strength to stand against persecution. "Many were conquered before the battle; prostrated before the attack. They did not even leave it to be said for them that they sacrificed unwillingly; they ran to the market-place of their own accord; they hastened as if they had now at length found the opportunity which they had long desired, of denying Christ. Even infants were carried by their parents to partake of the sacrifices."[2]

Nor was this miserable condition of the Church confined to these two great cities. Rome had hitherto enjoyed especial immunity from trial. From the reign of Nero down to the present period, there seems to have been no general persecution of the Christians in this city;[3] and the Roman

[1] The trading here spoken of may perhaps in some cases have originated, not in covetousness, but in the need of a further means of subsistence in addition to that provided by the Church. Robertson, i., p. 161.

[2] *On the Lapsed*, c. v., vi., viii., ix.

[3] Roman tradition, it need hardly be said, tells a very different tale. The Roman calendar designates all the first thirty bishops except two as saints and martyrs; but the martyrdom of two only, before Fabian, rests on any sufficient authority. *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, art. Fabianus (1).

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Churches were as little prepared as any to bear the fiery ordeal. Their clergy address Cyprian in piteous language. "Almost the whole world is devastated; and the ruins of the fallen are lying about on every side."[1]

But although, as in Alexandria, the number of the apostates and the fearful-minded was very large, there were yet at Carthage also many bright examples of the power of faith. "The multitude of the spectators," writes Cyprian, "witnessed with admiration the heavenly contest, the battle of Christ. The tortured stood more brave than the torturers; and the limbs beaten and torn overcame the hooks that bent and tore them. The scourge often repeated, with all its rage could not conquer invincible faith, even when it fell no longer on the limbs but on the wounds of the servants of God. Precious," he exclaims, "in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."[2]

Amongst the confessors was Numidicus, who after seeing his wife perish beside him at the stake, was himself left for dead and covered with stones. His daughter, going to search for her father's body in order to bury it, found signs of life remaining, and by her filial assiduities succeeded in completely restoring him. In reward for his constancy Cyprian ordained him a presbyter.[3]

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[1] Cyprian, Epist. xxx.

[2] Psalm cxvi. 15. *Epistles of Cyprian*, viii.

[3] Ibid, xxxiv.

Another was Celerinus, the first to suffer during the persecution. For nineteen days he lay in a dungeon, racked and in irons; but "although his body was bound, his spirit remained free; although his flesh was wasted by pain and hunger, his soul was sustained by heavenly nourishment from God Himself." He came of a noble stock; his grandmother Celerina, and two uncles Laurentius and Egnatius, Roman soldiers, having been martyred.[1] A.D. 249-251.

The fury of the Emperor was directed especially against the bishops, and at the very outbreak of the persecution Fabian of Rome was put to death,

EPITAPH IN GREEK OF BISHOP FABIAN, FROM THE CATACOMB OF CALIXTUS.[2]
(PHABIANOS EPISKOPOS MARTYR.)

The double letter at the end, MR, which stands for martyr, is less deeply incised than the rest, and is supposed to have been added afterwards.

and Alexander of Jerusalem and Babylas of Antioch died in prison. Several of the bishops however

[1] Ibid, xxxiii. [2] From a photograph.

withdrew from their sees, till the first blast of the tempest should have passed over. As their presence served only to exasperate the pagans, they probably looked upon it as a duty to contribute by their temporary absence to the peace of their flocks. Such was the case with Cyprian. "At the beginning of the troubles," he writes, in the year 250, "when the furious outcries of the people had repeatedly demanded my life, I withdrew for a time, not so much out of regard for my own safety, as for the public peace of the brethren. . . Our Lord commanded us in times of persecution to give way and fly. He prescribed this rule and followed it Himself. As the martyr's crown comes from the grace of God, and cannot be received if the appointed hour has not arrived, he who withdraws for a season, while still remaining true to Christ, does not deny the faith but abides the right time."[1]

In his retirement Cyprian did not neglect his charge. He maintained through his presbyters a constant correspondence with the Church at Carthage, and his letters show how vigilantly he laboured, not only to uphold discipline, but also to provide for the wants of the prisoners and the poor, and of those who were hindered by the persecution from following their ordinary employments.[2] Hearing that some of the faithful were in captivity

[1] Epist. xiv. § 1. *On the Lapsed*, § 10. His property was confiscated.

[2] Neander, i., pp. 185, 186.

amongst the barbarians, the Church at Carthage, under his direction, raised the sum of a hundred thousand sesterces (£800) and sent it to the Numidian bishops to be expended in their ransom. "Not without excessive grief and tears, dearest brethren," wrote Cyprian, in remitting the money, "have I read your letter concerning the captivity of our brethren and sisters. . . We considered that it was the temples of God which were taken captive, and that we ought not through inactivity or neglect to suffer them long to remain so. In our captive brethren we beheld Christ, Him who redeemed us from captivity, death, and the jaws of the devil, and who is Himself now to be rescued from the hands of the barbarians. . . We give you the warmest thanks that you have been willing we should share in so great and necessary a work, and that you have offered us fruitful fields in which to cast the seeds of our hope, looking for an abundant harvest from this heavenly and saving act."[1] A.D. 249-251.

The attention of Decius was diverted from the Christians by an invasion of the Goths, then a new enemy of the Roman Empire, against whom he found himself obliged to take the field. After some alternations of defeat and victory, he was slain in battle A.D. 251. A lull in the storm of persecution succeeded his death.

The position of the *lapsed*, those who had yielded

[1] Epistles, lix. 1-3.

in the hour of trial, and the number of whom was far larger than in any former persecution, caused great trouble to the Church. The miserable sense of having lost caste by sacrificing to the heathen gods, weighed heavily upon them. They saw that unless some powerful hand should interpose, it was only by the slow and painful process of a long probation that they could expect to be restored. The needed assistance was supplied by the faithful; the *confessors* were the ladder by which the false and the fearful were enabled to climb back into the fold. The veneration for those scarred veterans who had borne faithful testimony under torture, and were now awaiting martyrdom, was such as to invest their words with the character of a message from heaven; and it was asked how could their last moments be better employed than in lifting up their fallen brethren, and recommending them to the compassion of the Church. To these accordingly the *lapsed* applied for *certificates of repentance*, which were in many instances only too easily granted. "Without discrimination or examination," writes Cyprian, "thousands of such certificates were given daily, contrary to the law of the Gospel." Sometimes these tickets were couched in peremptory language, and with culpable vagueness: "Let such a one, *together with his*, be received into the communion of the Church."[1] Armed with these

[1] Epistles, x., xiv.

A.D. 251-253.

recommendations, the less scrupulous amongst the offenders would hear of no delay, submit to no probation of their conduct. At first Cyprian was inclined to the severer course of refusing to all such re-admission into the Church;[1] but afterwards his paternal heart relented, and he yielded so far as to hold out to those who applied, the hope of restoration when more tranquil days should allow their cases to be examined. Notwithstanding this concession, however, he incurred no little obloquy both for his severity towards the *lapsed*, and his supposed lack of veneration for the confessors. The popular excitement on this question grew to such a head, that in some cities of the province the multitude made an attack upon their presbyters, and compelled them, under the influence of fear, to grant their demands.

[1] Tertullian, in whose days the same means were resorted to, waxes indignant at the idea of pardoning offences for the sake of the martyrs. "As soon as anyone is confined by an easy imprisonment, straightway he is surrounded by criminals of every description; he is beset with the prayers and tears of the impure. But suppose your martyr beneath the glaive with head already poised; suppose him on the cross with body already outstretched; suppose him at the stake with the lion already let loose; suppose him on the axle with the fire already heaped; with the very certainty, I say, and possession of martyrdom. Even then, who permits man to condone offences which are to be reserved for God? Offences, which not even Apostles, so far as I know (martyrs withal themselves), have judged condonable? Paul had already fought with beasts at Ephesus when he decreed destruction to the incestuous person (1 Cor. v. 5, xv. 32). Let it suffice to the martyr that his own sin is purged. It is besides the part of ingratitude or pride to lavish upon others what one has obtained at a high price. Who has redeemed another by his own death, but the Son of God alone? How will the oil of your puny lamp suffice for you and for me?" *On Modesty*, xxii.

The conduct especially of a confessor named Lucian caused Cyprian excessive trouble. This man gave certificates to all who applied for them, in the name of Paulus a martyr, even after that martyr's death, and wrote an insolent letter in the name of the body of confessors, announcing that they had granted reconciliation to all whose conduct since their fall had been satisfactory.[1]

The calm which followed the death of Decius was of very short duration. A destructive pestilence spread throughout the Empire in the reign of Gallus (A.D. 251-253), accompanied in several of the provinces by drought and famine. In the hope of obtaining deliverance from the national calamity, an imperial edict was put forth ordering all persons to sacrifice to the gods. The public attention was arrested by the large numbers who held back from these solemnities, and the fury of the populace was excited against the Christians. The bishops of the metropolis under the very eye of the Emperor were naturally marked out first for destruction. Cornelius, who, at the hazard of his life, had entered on his office while Decius was Emperor, was first banished and then put to death; and Lucius, who had the courage to mount the vacant chair, soon followed him into exile and martyrdom.[2]

In this new trial Cyprian extended his pastoral

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[1] Neander's *Ch. Hist.*, i., pp. 315-319; Cyprian, *Epist.*, xiv., xxii.

[2] Neander, i., pp. 188, 189.

consolation to the numerous class of fugitives. A.D. 251-253.
"Let no one, my beloved brethren, be disturbed because he no longer sees the congregation gathered, or hears the bishop preach. Whosoever by the necessity of the times is separated awhile from the Church, in body not in spirit, let him not be deterred by the terrors of such a flight, or appalled by the solitude of the desert which he makes his refuge. He who has Christ for a companion cannot be alone, and if robber or wild beast attack the fugitive, if hunger, thirst or cold assail him, still Christ is present to take account of the conduct of his soldier."[1]

The ravages of the pestilence brought the two religions into sharp contrast. The epidemic, though it by no means spared the Christians, raged with greatest violence among the pagans, the result probably of fear, which predisposes so strongly to infection. Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, graphically describes the devotion with which the Christians of that great city attended on one another. "Regardless of their own peril, they visited the sick and ministered to them assiduously; and when they died, taking them on their upturned hands and on their bosoms, they closed their eyes and their mouths; then laying them out decently they carried them to their burial: and in a little while after, joyfully following those who had de-

[1] Epistle lv. § iv.

parted before them, the same services were in turn done to them. With the heathen all was the very reverse. They thrust aside those who began to be sick, kept aloof even from their dearest friends, and casting the sufferers out on the public roads to die, left them there unburied." Such was the condition of the city under this dreadful visitation, that Dionysius exclaims, "When will this air, befouled by noxious exhalations, become pure again? For there are such vapours sent up from the earth, and such blasts from the sea, and airs from the rivers, and reeking mists from the harbours, that for dew we might suppose we have the impure fluids of the corpses which are everywhere rotting underneath."[1]

The moral contrast was still more striking at Carthage, where the care of the Christians was not confined to their own community. The pestilence spread from house to house, especially amongst the dwellings of the poor, with awful regularity. Whilst the rest of the population were hardened in selfishness, and wretches were even plundering the houses of the dying; and whilst the multitude reviled the Christians as having drawn down the terrible visitation by their impiety, Cyprian called his flock together and exhorted them to extend help to all who needed it, heathens as well as Christians. "If," said he, "we merely do good to our own, we do nothing more than publicans and heathen.

[1] Epist. xii., xiii. § 2. A. N. L.

Now is the time to overcome our enemies by love." Under his direction the city was divided into districts; the rich gave their money, the poor their labour; the bodies which tainted the air were buried; and the sick, whether Christians or pagans, were nursed at the expense and by the care of the Church of Christ.[1] A.D. 251-253.

[1] Pontius, *Life of Cyprian*, c. ix., x. Robertson, *Hist. of the Church*, i., pp. 121, 122.

## CHAPTER IV.

### Origen.

During the brief interval of tranquillity enjoyed by the Church between the persecution of Gallus and that of his successor Valerian, died Origen, the renowned Church Teacher of Alexandria. In the history of the Church from the time of the Apostles to the Council of Nicæa, the most prominent place is occupied by Tertullian and Cyprian in the West, and Clement and Origen in the East. We have already spoken of the two earlier of these illustrious men. The characters of the two later stand out in even bolder relief. In nature and genius Origen and Cyprian were singularly unlike, and may be taken as types respectively of the Eastern and Western Churches. The East was the cradle of speculative theology. There was not a single heresy in the earlier ages of the Church but had its birthplace there. In the West it was not questions of doctrine, but of government and discipline, which occupied the Churches. They were agitated and rent, not so much by heresies as by schisms. Whilst Cyprian was aiming to build up a visible Catholic Church, and battling for the power and glory of the episcopacy, Origen, who hated priestly assumption, was

striving to sound the depths of philosophic science and to scale the heights of divine knowledge. A.D. 202.

Origen was born at Alexandria in the year 185. Of those whose course we have thus far traced, he is the first who could claim a Christian parentage. His father, Leonides, was a devout believer, and made his son daily commit to memory a portion of the sacred Scriptures. The boy took great delight in his task, and early gave indications of a deeply inquisitive mind. Not satisfied with the explanation of the literal sense, he desired to know also the inner meaning of the text. Although Leonides frequently found himself unable to give the required explanation, and even chid his son for his inconsiderate curiosity, yet he secretly rejoiced over the possession of such a child, and would often, when he was asleep, uncover his breast and kiss it as a temple in which the Holy Spirit designed to take up his dwelling.

In the persecution under Septimius Severus (202), Leonides was thrown into prison, and Origen, then about seventeen, felt himself impelled to follow his father and share his sufferings. His mother, unable to deter him by remonstrance or entreaty, hid his clothes, and the youth thus thwarted, wrote to his father, "See thou dost not change thy mind for our sake." Leonides was beheaded; and his property being confiscated, the family was left penniless. Origen was received into the house of a noble Christian lady, where he characteristically displayed his

steadfast adherence to what he recognized as the true faith. His patroness had taken up with a Gnostic teacher, who gave lectures in her house; young Origen refused to attend them, declaring his abhorrence of such erroneous doctrine. He was soon enabled to free himself from his dependent condition by giving instruction in grammar.

As he grew older his zeal for the Gospel increased. He visited the confessors in the dungeons, and accompanied them to the place of execution, sustaining them in the presence of death by the strength of his faith and the ardour of his love.[1] His devoted conduct drew upon him the rage of the fanatical multitude, and on more than one occasion he was obliged to fly from house to house to escape their hands. When only eighteen, bishop Demetrius appointed him teacher of the Catechetical school. No salary was then attached to the office, and in order to devote himself without distraction to his new calling, Origen sold his library of beautifully written books for a daily pension of four oboli (about sixpence), on which pittance he subsisted for many years. He strove with monastic zeal to attain to holiness of life; he allowed himself but one coat, which was too thin to protect him from the cold, walked barefoot, fasted often, slept on the bare floor, and too literally interpreting certain

[1] Eusebius, b. vi., c. ii. iv. He gives the names of seven of Origen's catechumens whom he thus attended.

words of our Lord,[1] even made himself a eunuch, for the kingdom of heaven's sake. This act he afterwards condemned. A.D. 216-228.

In the year 216, the wanton massacre of the citizens of Alexandria, ordered by the cruel Emperor Caracalla, obliged Origen to fly from the city. He was kindly received by an old fellow-student, Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem,[2] and by Theoctistus, bishop of Cæsarea in Palestine. His fame, though he was still a "layman," had already spread through the Eastern Churches, and he was invited by these two bishops to expound the Scriptures in their presence before a public assembly. When this proceeding was reported at Alexandria, it excited the displeasure and envy of Bishop Demetrius, who declared that such an act had been never before done or heard of, that laymen should deliver discourses in the presence of bishops.[3] Origen was ordered to return to Alexandria, where he was able for the time to pacify Demetrius, and was suffered to continue in his office of teacher.

In 228 he was sent into Greece, probably to dispute with the Gnostics. While on this journey he again visited Alexander and Theoctistus, who now gave him ordination as a presbyter. On hear-

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[1] Matt. xix. 12.

[2] Ælia Capitolina, as it was still called (see ante, p. 50). Alexander founded a library there, which supplied Eusebius with materials for writing his history. Eusebius, b. vi., c. xx.

[3] Idem, c. xix.

ing of this new step, Demetrius was more enraged than before, protesting that it was utterly irregular for a presbyter to be ordained by any except his own bishop; and on Origen's return he brought him to trial before a synod composed of Egyptian bishops and presbyters, who deposed him from his rank in the Church and his office of teacher, and expelled him from the city. He took refuge in Cæsarea, but persecution followed him. By a second synod his writings were condemned as heretical, and he himself was excommunicated. The personal dispute grew into a doctrinal controversy. The Churches of Palestine, Phœnicia, Arabia and Greece, took the part of Origen; the Church of Rome sided with Demetrius and the Egyptian bishops.[1]

In his retreat at Cæsarea, Origen wrote and taught for a quarter of a century. He corresponded with many distinguished Christians, one of whom was Julius Africanus, a learned citizen of Nicopolis in Palestine,[2] and the earliest author of a Christian history of the world. In one of his letters to Origen, Julius has left us a maxim honourable to himself and very seasonable for the Church: "God forbid that the opinion should ever prevail in the Church of Christ, that any false thing can be fabricated for Christ's glory."[3]

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[1] Neander, ii., pp. 456-473. Burton, pp. 304-306.

[2] Now the village of 'Amwâs, half-way between Jaffa and Jerusalem.

[3] Neander, ii., p. 479, note.

On the outbreak of the Decian persecution, which A.D. 253. was, as we have seen, aimed especially at the heads of the Church, it was natural that such a man as Origen should become a shining mark for heathen fanaticism. After a steadfast confession, he was cast into the bottom of a loathsome dungeon and loaded with irons. A chain was fastened about his neck, and his feet were set in the stocks, with his legs stretched four holes distant from each other, many days together. He was threatened with fire, and tried with all the torments merciless enemies could inflict. Although his life was spared, the sufferings he underwent hastened his end, and in 253 or 254 he yielded up his spirit, at the age of sixty-nine years.[1]

Origen's labours as a teacher and a scholar are well known. On the decline of Athens, Alexandria became the university of the ancient world, the leading school, as well of Christian doctrine as of heathen philosophy, and Origen, by his learning and his free spirit of inquiry, drew around him, not orthodox Christians only, but heretics, Jews and heathens. One of his hearers was a wealthy citizen named Ambrosius. Dissatisfied with the way in which Christianity had been set forth by the Church teachers, this man had attached himself to the Gnostics, who pretended to a more spiritual conception of the Gospel. Being through

[1] Neander, ii., pp. 481, 482. Cave, *Lives of the Fathers*.

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Origen's teaching convinced of his error, he not only rejoiced to find the right *gnosis* (knowledge) in conjunction with the true faith, but also became his teacher's most intimate friend. During the persecution under Maximinus the Thracian, Ambrosius and another friend were thrown into prison. Origen wrote thus to them: "If anguish should enter into your souls, may the Spirit of Christ that dwells within you, tempted although you may be to dispossess it, enable you to cry, 'Why troublest thou me, my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?'[1] Let the Word of God, which is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit,[2] cause his peace to reign in our souls as He did in his Apostles. He has cast the sword between the image of the earthly and the image of the heavenly within us, that He may receive our heavenly man to himself, so that, when we have so far attained as to need no more such dividing, He may make us altogether heavenly."[3]

After he had attained to manhood Origen undertook the study of Hebrew, at that time but little cultivated. The Greek version of the Old Testament, commenced in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus,[4] and known as the Septuagint, was com-

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[1] Ps. xlii. 11. [2] Hebrews iv. 12.

[3] Origen, *On Martyrdom*, in Neander, ii., pp. 475, 476.

[4] B.C. 285-247.

monly used in the churches, and was regarded by many Christians as inspired. But, as is well known, this version is very unequal, and contains many variations from the Hebrew, and Origen being in the habit of contending with Jews as well as pagans on religious questions, saw how necessary was an acquaintance with the original text. The critical comparison of the two texts, which he was thus compelled to make, drew him into his greatest literary work. After settling the text of the Septuagint from an elaborate collation of manuscripts, he exhibited it side by side in parallel columns with the original Hebrew, the Hebrew in Greek letters, and three other Greek versions.[1] Origen was also the first to produce a regular Commentary on the sacred Scriptures. These colossal labours extended over many years, and were not completed till a short time before his death. They have earned for him the well-merited title of "the father of biblical criticism." A.D. 253.

[1] That of Aquila, a Jew, who lived in the reign of Hadrian; that of Theodotion, published in the reign of Commodus; and that of Symmachus, an Ebionite, circa 202. This last came into his hands at Jericho (?), where, in a time of persecution, he was concealed in the house of a rich Christian lady named Juliana. She had inherited the library of the translator, and Origen found the precious parchment stowed away in a cask. The original manuscript of the *Hexapla*, as Origen's work was called, was preserved at Cæsarea, and is supposed to have perished in the destruction of the famous library at that place by the Arabs in 653. It had never been transcribed as a whole; but separate copies of the various columns had been made, and that of the Septuagint became a standard. From the addition of two other versions in certain parts, it was sometimes called the *Octapla*. Robertson, i., p. 102. Neander, ii., pp. 476-478.

In his learned inquiries Origen enjoyed the powerful aid of Ambrosius, who stimulated him by his encouragement, and placed his wealth at his disposal for the purchase and collation of manuscripts and other expenses necessary to such a work. Seven amanuenses, who relieved one another, were employed, besides the transcribers. Regarding this friend, whom he called his *work-driver*,[1] and concerning his own studies, Origen writes, "He gives me credit for diligence and a thirst after the divine word, but I am in danger of not coming up to his requirements. The collation of manuscripts leaves me no time to eat; and after meals I can neither go out nor rest, but am compelled to continue my philological investigations. Even the night is not granted me for repose, a great part of it is consumed in study. I do not speak of the time from early morning till three or four o'clock in the afternoon, for all who take pleasure in such labours employ those hours in the study of the divine word and in reading."[2]

Origen's bold and inquisitive spirit often led him into rash speculations. "His intellectualizing mysticism disqualified him for distinguishing between what belongs to a Christian creed and what belongs to Christian philosophy, and prevented him from keeping duly in view the essentially practical end of divine revelation. He did not refer every-

[1] Or taskmaster, ἐργο-διώκτης. [2] Neander, ii., p. 468.

thing to what ought to be the sole object of all human efforts, redemption, regeneration, sanctification and salvation. In his view the practical end of man's recovery is only subordinate, designed for the multitude of believers who are as yet incapable of anything nobler. Speculative knowledge is with him the highest object; and the great aim which he proposes to the Christian teacher is to communicate the higher truths to spiritual men who can comprehend them."[1] A.D. 253.

The tendency to idealize which characterises the writings of Clement predominated still more in those of Origen. Happily it was "modified by the earnestness of his belief. He was kept in the right line of the Christian faith by the depth of his religious feeling. Although he was beyond question one of the most learned men of his age, he never bowed the knee before that idol of science which was then worshipped by Greek philosophy and exalted by Gnostic heresy. He ever put conscience above science; and moral freedom circulates like a life-giving current through all his system. Liberty, as he conceives of it, is the first of the gifts of God; it is real only in so far as it is verified and made fruitful by Him, and the first work of Christ was to restore it."[2]

In conclusion, it may be said that no one knew better than Origen how impotent man is to com-

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[1] Idem, pp. 256, 262. [2] De Pressensé, *Martyrs and Apologists*, p. 350.

prehend the things of God without the help of the Spirit of God. In a homily on Leviticus, he says, "This passage of Scripture is very hard to expound, but we shall be able to interpret it if *you* ask God, the Father of the Word, to enlighten us." Again, "Study will not suffice for the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. We must intreat God, day and night, that the Lion of the tribe of Judah may come to us and deign to open the seal of the book." He expresses the same thought elsewhere by a beautiful simile. "If a man puts out to sea in a little boat, he at first fears nothing so much as grounding on the shallow shore; but when he has presently come into deep waters, when the big waves swell around him, sometimes tossing him on their seething crests, sometimes plunging him down into the deeps, then a great fear comes upon him, seeing that he has committed himself in so frail a skiff to such stormy seas. Such are we, we who, utterly devoid of merit, have dared to launch our feeble mind upon this great sea of divine mysteries. But if through our prayers our sails are filled with the favouring winds of the Holy Spirit, we shall arrive safe in port."[1]

On the essential relation between man and God, the manifestation of Christ to the whole race of Adam, he concurs with Tertullian.[2] "The Divine Word slumbers in the hearts of the unbelievers, while it is awake in the saints. It slumbers, but is

[1] Idem, pp. 351, 352. [2] See ante, p. 248.

not the less really present, as Jesus Christ was in the ship with his disciples when they were tossing in terror on the stormy sea. It will awake so soon as the soul, become anxious for salvation, shall call, and then immediately there will be a great calm."[1] A.D. 253.

Origen's reputation was wide-spread. At one time a soldier came to Alexandria from the Governor of Arabia, with a letter to the Bishop and another to the Prefect, desiring them to send Origen to him in all haste, to teach him the doctrine of Christ.[2] Mammæa, the mother of Alexander Severus, invited him to come to her for a similar purpose. Nor was he less in request to recover Christians who had fallen into error. Beryllus, Bishop of Bostra,[3] was entrapped by a specious heresy, in which the existence of our Lord before He dwelt amongst men was denied. Origen, by reasoning and demonstration, brought him back to sound doctrine; and when (also in Arabia) there arose a sect who held mistaken views on the resurrection, Origen was again sent for, and handled the question with so much power and ability as to induce them completely to change their opinions.[4]

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[1] Idem, p. 601. [2] Eusebius, b. vi., c. xix.

[3] Now Bosra in the Haurân. The province of Arabia, of which Bostra was the capital, consisted under the later Roman Empire, mainly of the Haurân or Bashan.

[4] Idem, c. xxxiii., xxxvii.

## CHAPTER V.

PERSECUTION UNDER VALERIAN—CYPRIAN'S MARTYRDOM. HIS LIFE AND TEACHING—NOVATIAN.

VALERIAN, who in A.D. 253 succeeded Gallus on the imperial throne, treated the Christians at first with unusual clemency. But in 257 he fell under the influence of Macrianus, the chief of the Egyptian Magi, at whose instigation he offered human sacrifices in order to pry into futurity; and from this time he became the avowed enemy of the Church. His first step was to remove the bishops and teachers, and to prohibit the Christians from assembling for worship.[1]

Cyprian was one of those who were banished. The Proconsul of Africa, having summoned him before his tribunal, addressed him thus: "The Emperors Valerian and Gallienus[2] have sent me a rescript, in which they command that all men shall at once observe the ceremonies of the Roman religion. I ask, therefore, what art thou?

*Cyprian.* I am a Christian and a bishop. I know of no other god than the true and only God, who created the heavens, the earth, the sea and all that

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[1] Eusebius, b. vii., c. x. Neander, i., p. 189.

[2] Son of Valerian, and associated with him on the throne.

is therein. To this God we Christians pray day and night, for ourselves, for all men, and for the welfare of the Emperors. A.D. 257.

*The Proconsul.* Dost thou persist then in this resolution?

*Cyprian.* A good resolution grounded on the knowledge of God cannot be changed.

Upon this the Proconsul sentenced him to exile; and informing him at the same time that the decree applied to priests as well as bishops, demanded the names of those who resided in the city.

*Cyprian.* Your laws justly forbid the laying of informations: I therefore cannot tell thee who they are; thou mayest find them in the localities where they preside.

*The Proconsul.* We are concerned to-day only with this place.

*Cyprian.* As our doctrine and your laws alike forbid a man to give himself up, they cannot surrender themselves; if thou seek for them thou wilt find them.

Before Cyprian left the court, the Proconsul bade him take notice that the assembling of Christians in any place soever, and visiting the cemeteries (which more than anything else kindled the enthusiasm of the faithful), were forbidden under pain of death.[1]

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[1] Idem, p. 190. Cyprian was treated with marked consideration. He was taken to Curubis, a city on the Mediterranean, about forty miles south-east of Carthage, which his deacon, Pontius, describes as "a sunny and agreeable retreat." *Life and Passion of Cyprian*, § 12.

The design was at first only to separate the bishops and presbyters from their flocks, but soon the "laity" also were assailed, and even women and children were subjected to the scourge, and then condemned to imprisonment or to labour in the mines. The sufferers were followed by the sympathy of their pastors. From his place of exile, Cyprian sent them a large sum of money, drawn from his own income and the Church chest, accompanying the gift with one of his epistles, mighty in sympathy and consolation.

"O feet," he exclaims, "blessedly bound, which are loosed, not by the smith, but by the Lord! O feet blessedly bound, which are guided to Paradise in the way of salvation! O feet bound for the present time in the world, that they may be always free with the Lord. Your bodies are refreshed, not by beds and pillows, but by the comforts and joys of Christ. Your limbs, wearied with labour, are stretched upon the ground, but it is no punishment to lie there with Christ. If the outward man, unbathed, is defiled with filth, the inner is but the more purified by the Spirit from above. Your bread is scanty, but man lives not by bread alone but by the word of God. You shiver for want of clothing, but he who has put on Christ has clothing and ornament enough. Even though, my dearest brethren, there is now no opportunity for God's priests to celebrate with you the divine sacrifices, yet you celebrate a sacrifice equally precious and glorious,

for the Holy Scripture says, 'The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit, a contrite and humble heart He does not despise.' This sacrifice you offer without intermission day and night, being yourselves made holy offerings to God." To this letter the confessors returned grateful answers from their several localities in the mines.[1] A.D. 257.

Cyprian continued, as in his former retreat, assiduously to watch over his flock. The same was no doubt the case with many of the exiled bishops in this new trial. The banishment of Dionysius of Alexandria was instrumental under Divine Providence in extending the Gospel into new regions. Being brought with several of his clergy before Æmilian, the prefect of the city, and commanded to recant, he answered, "We ought to obey God rather than man." "Hear the clemency of the Emperor," replied Æmilian; "you are all pardoned if only you return to your natural duty. Adore the gods who guard the empire, and forsake those practices that are contrary to nature."

*Dionysius.* Men worship variously, according to their opinions; but *we* worship the one God the maker of all things, who has given dominion to the sacred Emperors Valerian and Gallienus, and

[1] Cyprian's *Epistles*, lxxvi. § 2, 3, lxxvii. A. N. L. They address Cyprian in flattering terms, and with the title of lord as well as brother. Adulatory language in addressing the bishops, and also from the bishops to one another, was now become common.

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to Him we pour out incessant prayers for their prosperous administration.

*Æmilian.* But why can you not adore that God of yours, supposing he is a god, in conjunction with our gods?

*Dionysius.* We can worship no other God but Him.

Upon this they were all banished to a village near the desert, called Cephro, and obliged to depart immediately, though Dionysius was sick. "But here in this remote region," writes Dionysius in one of his epistles, "we were not absent from the Church, for many brethren followed us from Alexandria and other parts of Egypt. Here also God opened a door for me to preach his word to a people who had never heard it before. At first they persecuted and stoned us; but in the end not a few forsook their idols and were converted. And when our ministry there was completed, God removed us to another place. On being told that I must go to Colluthium, a heathen place, and infested by robbers, I confess it to my shame, I grieved immoderately. But I was reminded that it was nearer to Alexandria, and that we should more frequently enjoy the sight of those who were dear to us. And so it proved."[1]

The Church had been purified and strengthened by her late afflictions; there were now few instances

[1] Eusebius, b. vii., c. xi. Milner's *Church Hist.*, i., pp. 407-409. Neander, i., pp. 191, 192.

of apostacy, such as were so frequent under Decius;[1] A.D. 258. and Valerian soon discovered that his object was not likely to be attained by prohibition, imprisonment and exile, and accordingly adopted more rigorous measures. In 258 a new edict appeared. "Let bishops, presbyters and deacons be immediately put to death by the sword; let senators and knights be first deprived of their rank and possessions, and if they still continue Christians, let them suffer the due punishment of death; let women of condition be deprived of their estates and banished. Christians in the service of the palace are to be treated as the Emperor's private property, and distributed to labour in chains on the imperial estates."[2]

The Roman Bishop Sixtus and four deacons of his Church were the first to suffer under this rescript.[3] They were surprised in the Catacomb of Prætextatus, whilst the bishop was in the act of celebrating divine service, and put to death.[4]

Four days after the death of Sixtus, his faithful deacon Laurentius met the same fate. The heathen magistrate before whom he was arraigned, ordered him to give up the Church treasures, of which he was reported to be the custodian. Laurentius admitted that the Church possessed valuable trea-

[1] Robertson, i., p. 98. [2] Neander, i., p. 192.

[3] Idem, p. 192. This was the fifth bishop of Rome in succession who had suffered martyrdom in the space of eight years.

[4] Cyprian, Epist. lxxxi. Northcote's *Visit to the Catacombs*, p. 31.

sures, and promised to deliver them up in three days, but as they were ponderous he requested the judge to send waggons and horses to fetch them. In the meanwhile he collected the poor and the widows into one place, and when the judge arrived pointed to them, saying, "These are the treasures of the Church." He was condemned to be roasted alive on a gridiron; and it is related that his spirit had so great a mastery over his bodily sufferings that he said to the judge, "This side of my body is roasted enough; now turn it and roast the other, and then if thou wilt, devour it."[1]

Cyprian's time was also now come. A year before, on the day of his arrival at Curubis, he had a waking vision of his martyrdom. He thought he was taken into the Prætorium and led before the Proconsul by a young man of uncommon stature. The Proconsul, when he saw him, began without speaking to make an entry on his tablet, which the young man who stood behind him looking over his shoulder, read with an anxious countenance; and because he was afraid to utter it, made Cyprian understand by a sign what the Proconsul had written. Expanding his hand and flattening it like the blade of a sword he imitated the stroke of the executioner. Cyprian, who comprehended his

[1] The "Acts" of this martyr seem to have been lost in Augustine's time, who cites tradition for the narrative. But it is considered that few martyrdoms of the first three centuries are better attested. *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, art. Laurentius (36).

meaning as clearly as if he had spoken, begged the Proconsul for the delay of at least one day, to arrange his affairs. Urgently repeating his request, the Proconsul made a second entry on his tablet, and Cyprian perceived from the calmness of his countenance, and from a second sign which the young man made with his fingers, that his request was complied with.[1] A.D. 258.

Cyprian interpreted the vision to mean that he was certainly appointed to martyrdom, but that one year more of life was accorded to him. Permitted to leave his place of exile, he had returned to his residence near Carthage, when, a year all but one day having passed over since he saw the vision, two chief officials suddenly presented themselves at his door. He advanced to meet them with a dignified and cheerful mien. The officers placed him between them in a chariot, and conveyed him to Sexti, a few miles from Carthage, whither the Proconsul, who was in failing health, had retired. He was lodged that night in the house of the chief jailer, which stood between the Temples of Venus and Salus,[2] and was allowed the society of his friends at supper. The street was thronged with Christians who had flocked from the city on the news of his arrest. The next morning he was brought before the Proconsul, followed by a great crowd of people.

[1] Pontius, *Life and Passion of Cyprian*, § 12.

[2] The goddess of Health and of the Public Weal.

"Art thou Thascius Cyprianus?" demanded the Proconsul.

*Cyprian.* I am he.

*The Proconsul.* The most sacred Emperors have given orders that thou shouldst conform to the Roman rites.

*Cyprian.* I refuse to do so.

*The Proconsul.* Take heed to thyself.

*Cyprian.* Execute the Emperor's orders; in a matter so plain I may not deliberate.

After a brief consultation with his judicial council, the Proconsul, reminding Cyprian that he was accounted a ring-leader in an unlawful association, and an open enemy to the gods, reluctantly read from his tablet the sentence of the court: "It is the decision of this court that Thascius Cyprianus be immediately beheaded."

*Cyprian.* Thanks be to God.

The assembled brethren on hearing the sentence cried out, "Let us go and be beheaded with him." The place of execution was a level space surrounded by thick trees, the boughs of which were soon filled with members of his flock, eager to witness their beloved bishop's triumph over death. Laying aside his upper garment, Cyprian kneeled down and prayed, and then divesting himself of his tunic, and binding his eyes with his own hands, he stood in his linen vestment, awaiting the sword of the executioner, to whom he desired twenty-five pieces of gold should be given. The brethren spread linen

cloths and napkins on the ground before him, that they might be sprinkled with his blood. Encouraging the executioner, whose hands trembled, he received the fatal stroke. His body was exposed, to gratify the curiosity of the heathen; but was removed in the night by the brethren, and buried with prayers, wax tapers, funeral torches, and great pomp.[1] A.D. 258.

Thus died this great pastor, meeting death with a courage and a trust in his Saviour worthy of his devoted life. Of that life, so full of influence upon the Church in his own day, we will here note a few more particulars.

Cyprian was born about A.D. 200. After distinguishing himself as a teacher of rhetoric, he embraced Christianity in mature age.[2] He has left us in one of his letters a description of the spiritual darkness in which he had previously lived, and of the new life which he found in Christ. The letter commences with a charming picture of the place and season in which it was written. It was the time of the vintage; the gentle breezes of a mild autumn breathed with an influence at once cheering and soothing over his beautiful garden. The arbour in which he wrote, hidden from view by surrounding thickets, was formed of reeds clustered thick

[1] *Acts of Cyprian's Martyrdom.* Pontius § 12-18.

[2] Jerome says he received his first religious impressions through hearing the book of the prophet Jonah read. (*On Jonah*, iii.) De Pressensé, *Martyrs and Apologists*, p. 442.

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with vines which hung down in tangled luxuriance, producing a grateful shade. Here he reviewed his former life. "I was in the gloom of night, wandering hither and thither, and tossed on the foam of this boastful age. Ignorant of my real life, far from truth and the true light, I regarded it as a very hard thing, especially for one in my state, that a man should be born again, that anyone should be so quickened into a new life in the laver of saving water, as to be able to put off what he had previously been. How, said I, is it possible that we should undergo a sudden and rapid divestment of all which, either innate in us, or hardened in the corruption of our nature, or acquired by us, has become inveterate by long use? As I did not believe that I could possibly be delivered, so I had been ready to give myself up to my clinging vices, and because I was in despair of better things, used to indulge my sins as if they were actually a part of me. But when, by the help of the water of new birth, the stains of former years were washed away, and a light from above shone serene and pure into my reconciled heart; when, by the agency of the Spirit breathed from heaven, a second birth had restored me to a new man, then in a wondrous manner doubtful things began to become certain, hidden things manifest, and dark things to be filled with light. What before had seemed difficult, began to suggest a means of accomplishment; and what had been thought impossible, to become capable of being

done. . . Anything like boasting of oneself," he continues, "is odious; we have in reality nothing to boast of, but only to be grateful; for we do not ascribe this change to man's virtue, but declare it to be the gift of God. From God, I say,—from God comes all that we are able to do. Only let fear be the keeper of innocence, that the Lord, whose celestial grace has shone into our hearts, may be held there by righteous obedience as in the guest-chamber of a grateful mind, and that the assurance we have gained may not beget carelessness, and so the old enemy creep upon us again."[1] A.D. 258.

In this beautiful account, Cyprian identifies his conversion with his baptism, not merely making the latter the outward sign of admission into the visible Church, but the procuring cause of the inward change. It will be said by those who at the present day hold the same belief, that Cyprian's experience is a strong argument for, if not a convincing proof of its validity; that unless the external rite had been of Divine ordinance it could not have been accompanied by such a spiritual change,—cleansing, reconciliation and a new birth. But it is a dangerous thing to make inward feelings and experience the test of doctrinal truth or error. If we could believe that the Lord would grant his grace and peace only where his truth is intellectually held in exact proportion, and unmingled

[1] Epistle i., *To Donatus*, c. i.-iv.

with error, how few would be in a condition to receive it. It is not thus that He deals with his children; He condescends to their ignorance and infirmities. He looks at the heart, and communicates of his heavenly gifts, pardon and peace, according to the necessities and the sincerity of those who call upon Him. Cyprian had evidently long been preparing for the Gospel, and having, agreeably to the belief of the times, his mind fixed upon the outward ceremony, as the moment to which he must look for the great transformation, he naturally couples the two, and supposes the one to be dependent on the other. It was through his faith, not through the water, that the great change was wrought.

On his baptism, Cyprian sold his villa and gardens in the neighbourhood of Carthage,[1] and devoted the proceeds to the relief of the poor. He was rapidly promoted to the offices of deacon and presbyter, and the see of Carthage becoming vacant in the year 248, he was elected bishop. Although scarcely three years had passed since his conversion, and his election was opposed by five of the presbyters who felt themselves superseded, yet such was the admiration and love with which he had inspired the people, that they were determined to have none else to rule over them. He attempted to make his escape, but the multitude surrounded his house, and

[1] They were afterwards restored to him by the liberality of his flock.

by a loving compulsion forced him to accept of the dignity.[1] A.D. 258.

His deacon and biographer, Pontius, writes, "His manners were dignified, conciliatory and affectionate, his countenance attractive by its grave joyousness." The tradition of his gentleness long survived in the Church. Before his conversion he had many friends among the pagans of high rank, and he never lost their regard. His intellectual powers were of a high order. He had a most retentive memory, and his systematic habits and capacity for business contributed greatly to his success as a Church organizer.[2] Notwithstanding the dissimilarity in their characters, Cyprian was a great admirer of Tertullian. "When I was at Concordia, in Italy," relates Jerome, "I saw an old man named Paulus. He said that, when young, he had met at Rome with an aged amanuensis of the blessed Cyprian, who told him Cyprian never passed a day without reading from Tertullian's works, and used frequently to say, 'Give me my teacher.'"[3]

But although Cyprian's disposition was loving and sociable, yet his extravagant estimate of the

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[1] Pontius, § 5. Neander, i., p. 310.

[2] *Life and Passion of Cyprian*, c. vi. *Dict. of Christ. Biog.*, vol. i., p. 740.

[3] "Da magistrum." *Book of Illustrious Men*, c. liii. Jerome, whose life extended from A.D. 346 to A.D. 420, is supposed to have met with Paulus at Concordia about the year 370, a hundred and twelve years after Cyprian's martyrdom. *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, iii., p. 30.

episcopal office, and an innate love of power, sometimes betrayed him into harshness and intolerance. Neander says of him, "A candid consideration cannot fail to see in Cyprian a man animated with true love to the Redeemer and to his Church. It is undeniable that he was honestly devoted as a faithful shepherd to his flock, and that it was his desire to use his episcopal authority for the maintenance of order and discipline; but it is also certain that he was not sufficiently on his guard against that radical evil of human nature, which so easily fastens on what is best in man, (an evil most dangerous in those who are endowed with the greatest gifts and powers for the Lord's service); he was not watchful enough against self-will and pride. The very point he contended for, the supremacy of the episcopate, proved the rock whereon at times he made shipwreck. In the bishop appointed by God Himself, and acting in the name of Christ, he forgot the man still living in the flesh, and exposed to the temptation of sin. In the bishop whom no layman might pretend to judge, the bishop called to rule, and gifted with an inviolable authority from God, he forgot the disciple of Christ, of Him who was lowly in spirit, and who for the sake of his brethren took upon Him the form of a servant."[1]

During Cyprian's episcopate the Churches of

[1] *Church History*, vol. i., pp. 311, 312.

North Africa and Rome were not only sifted by persecution, but convulsed by schisms and controversies. These arose partly out of the dissatisfaction of the five presbyters with Cyprian's election, partly, as we have already seen, from the loose way in which indulgence was granted to the Lapsed, partly on the vexed question of the re-baptism of heretics. A.D. 251.

Foremost amongst those who protested against the lax discipline of the times was Novatian, a presbyter of Rome. Whilst still a catechumen he fell ill, and being supposed to be at the point of death, received what was termed *clinical* baptism, that is, baptism by sprinkling whilst on his sick bed. On his recovery he distinguished himself by steadfastness in the faith, a happy facility in teaching, and a zeal for holiness, which prompted him to adopt an ascetic manner of life. He was ordained a presbyter by Bishop Fabian. This ordination gave offence to the clergy, who contended that clinical baptism was insufficient for a presbyter, and that as Novatian had not been confirmed by the laying on of the hands of the bishop, he could not possibly have received the Holy Ghost. On the death of Fabian in 251, Cornelius, an advocate for leniency in the treatment of the Lapsed, was chosen to fill his place. Novatian, as he tells us himself, would have preferred to continue the life of privacy and meditation he had hitherto led, but Novatus, one of the disaffected presbyters of Carthage, a man of loose character and of an intriguing spirit, drew

him forth, and induced him to become the head of a party, and to offer himself as a rival bishop to Cornelius. Both parties appealed for recognition to the leading Churches. Several of the bishops sided with Novatian, but the greater part, and amongst them Dionysius of Alexandria and Cyprian, stood by Cornelius. Dionysius did all in his power by friendly arguments to induce Novatian to yield. "Martyrdom," he told him, "to prevent schism would be no less glorious than martyrdom to escape idolatry; nay, in my opinion," he says, "it would be nobler, for in the latter case you become a martyr for the peace of your own soul, in the former for the good of the entire Church."[1] The episcopal schism did not last long, Cornelius remaining undisturbed in his office; but the sect which had been thus formed, called Novatians after their founder, but by themselves *Cathari* (Puritans), extended itself almost throughout the whole empire, and did not become entirely extinct until the sixth century.[2]

The leading tenet of the Novatians was that the Church, being a communion of pure persons, cannot tolerate within it any who are impure; and therefore that it cannot readmit such as have been excommunicated, even though they have repented and submitted to ecclesiastical discipline. Cyprian,

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[1] Eusebius, b. vi., c. xlv. (He calls him Novatus, but it is Novatian who is meant.) Neander, i., pp. 330-332.

[2] Kurtz, *Hist. of the Church*, pp. 133, 134.

who regarded Novatian as a wolf amongst his sheep, A.D. 258.
compared this doctrine to the conduct of the priest and the Levite, who left the wounded traveller to die unpitied; likening himself and those who thought with him to the good Samaritan, who rescued him from death. Novatian however did not deny that the fallen must be looked after and exhorted to repentance. He maintained as strongly as Cyprian that the penitent Lapsed might be the objects of Divine mercy; but insisted that the Church has no power to grant absolution to such, and that, by readmitting them into her communion she forfeits her Christian character. Cyprian replied that the presence of tares in the Church is not a sufficient cause why we should separate ourselves from it. But, as Neander observes, Cyprian and Novatian were alike involved in the same fundamental error, and differed only in their application of it. They both confounded the visible with the invisible Church. The same theory which made Novatian conclude that every Church which suffers unclean members to remain in it, ceases to be a branch of the one true Church, caused his opponents to maintain that the Church of Christ, being an outward and visible community, carried on and sustained by the succession of bishops, is necessarily pure, and that all who are outside its pale must be profane and unholy.[1]

[1] Neander, i., pp. 339-345.

Cyprian, as is well known, carried this idea to its furthest limit. In his celebrated treatise on *The Unity of the Church*, he says, "That man cannot have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother. If any one of those could escape who were outside the ark of Noah, then may he escape who is outside the Church." Likening the Church to Christ's garment, he says, "This coat possessed a unity which came down from the top, that is from Heaven, and which was not to be rent. He who parts and divides the Church of Christ cannot have Christ's garment." Again, "He cannot be a martyr who is not in the Church." "Where there is no Church, sins cannot be put away." "The proud and contumacious are slain with the sword of the Spirit, in that they are cast out of the Church; for they cannot live out of it, since the house of God is one, and there can be no salvation to any except in the Church."[1] If by Church we may understand the spiritual Church, and not, as is intended, the visible Church on earth, all these quotations would be true. To what a length this doctrine of Cyprian's was able to lead him may be seen in his comment on Matt. xviii. 19, 20; "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father, who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my

[1] *On the Unity of the Church*, vi. vii. xiv. Epistle lxi., c. iv.; lxix., c. ii.

name, there am I in the midst of them." We know of no words of our gracious Lord which have in every age brought to his fainting and scattered children greater comfort than this promise; but if Cyprian's interpretation should be accepted, in how many thousands of instances would the heavenly bread be snatched out of the children's mouths. "Corrupters," he says, "and false interpreters of the gospel quote the last words and lay aside the former. Where the Lord says, 'If two of you shall agree on earth,' He places agreement first. But how can that man agree with anyone who does not agree with the body of the Church itself, and with the universal brotherhood? How can two or three be assembled together in Christ's name who, it is evident, are separated from Christ and from his gospel?"[1] Cyprian's mistake consists in making the agreement and the assembling in Christ's name, here spoken of, absolutely to require outward fellowmembership, instead of proceeding simply from spiritual communion, which may be altogether independent of external relations. A.D. 258.

Cyprian nevertheless possessed a large and deep experience in the things of Christ. Let us turn to a few short paragraphs from his writings, in which he has left us the fruits of this experience.

In his epistle to Donatus he writes, "Be constant as well in prayer as in reading; now speak with

[1] *On the Unity of the Church*, c. xii.

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God, now let God speak with thee; let Him instruct thee in his precepts, let Him direct thee. Whom He has made rich none shall make poor. Ceilings refulgent with gold, and houses adorned with mosaics of costly marble, will seem mean to thee now that thou knowest that it is thou thyself who art rather to be adorned, and that that dwelling in which the Holy Spirit has begun to take up his abode is of more importance than all others. He who is actually greater than the world can crave nothing from the world."[1]

"When we stand praying, beloved brethren, we ought to be watchful and earnest with our whole heart. Let the breast be closed against the adversary, and be open to God alone. Suffer not God's enemy to approach at the time of prayer; for he steals upon us, and winds his way in, and by crafty deceit calls away our prayers from God, that we may have one thing in our heart and another in our voice. What carelessness it is to be distracted by foolish and profane thoughts, when you are praying to the Lord! How can you ask to be heard of God, when you yourself do not hear yourself? The Christian, even when he is asleep with his eyes, ought to be awake with his heart, as it is written in the person of the Church, speaking in the Song of Songs, 'I sleep, yet my heart waketh.'"[2]

Cyprian could eloquently defend the authority of

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[1] Chap. xv., xiv. [2] *On the Lord's Prayer*, c. xxxi.

Scripture against the inventions and corruptions of custom. Stephen, Bishop of Rome, in his charge on the baptism of heretics, had said that "nothing should be introduced except what had been handed down by tradition." Cyprian asks, "Whence is this tradition? Does it come down from the authority of the Lord or his Apostles? . . What obstinacy, what presumption, to prefer human tradition to the Divine commands, and not to observe that God is angry as often as human tradition passes by the Divine precepts. . . Custom which has crept in among some ought not to prevent the truth from prevailing; for custom without truth is the decrepitude of error."[1] . . If we return to the source of divine tradition, human error ceases. If a watercourse which used to flow freely suddenly fails, do we not go to the fountain to find the cause of the failure, whether it has arisen from the drying up of the springs, or from an interrupted or leaky channel; and do we not repair and strengthen the channel, that the city may be supplied with the same copiousness as the waters issue from the fountain head? Thus it behoves the priests of God now to do, so that if the truth has in any respect wavered and vacillated, we should return to our Lord and Original, and to the evangelical and apostolical tradition."[2] A.D. 258.

[1] Consuetudo sine veritate vetustas erroris est.

[2] Epistle lxxiii., c. ii., iii., ix., x. A N. L.

We will conclude with a few sentences from his tract on the mortality during the pestilence. "The fear and faith of God ought to prepare you for every trial, whether it be the loss of property, the agony of sharp diseases, or the wrench from wife or children taken from your side. These things are not designed to weaken the Christian, or impair his faith, but rather as an occasion to put forth his strength, since all the injury inflicted by present troubles is to be despised in the assurance of future blessings. Without the warfare there cannot be the victory. The pilot is proved in the tempest; the soldier in the battle. The tree which is deeply rooted is not moved by the storm; the ship which is built up of solid timbers is not shattered by the waves; and when the ears are winnowed on the threshing-floor, it is the empty chaff which is blown away, the solid grains of corn despise the blast."[1]

[1] Chap. xii. Wordsworth, p. 340.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE EMPERORS GALLIENUS AND AURELIAN—DIONYSIUS, BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA, AND GREGORY THAUMATURGUS.

A.D. 259-261.

IN 259 Valerian was taken prisoner in a war with the Persians. He was succeeded by his son Gallienus. The new Emperor, who was more indifferent about public affairs than his father had been, and cared little for the maintenance of the national worship, immediately put a stop to the persecution. He even issued an edict securing to the Christians the free exercise of their religion, and restoring to them the lands, church buildings and cemeteries, which had been confiscated in the preceding reign. By this act the Christian Church was recognized as a legally existing corporation; for no other, according to Roman law, could hold corporate property. But as Macrianus had usurped the Imperial authority in Egypt and the East, it was not until his overthrow, A.D. 261, that the edict of Gallienus could be carried into effect in these provinces.[1]

[1] Neander, i., p. 194.

An instance of martyrdom which occurred in Palestine during this interval is recorded by Eusebius. Marinus, a Christian soldier of Cæsarea, was about to be invested with a centurion's command. Just as the staff[1] was held out to him, another soldier, the next in rank, stepped forward, and declared that according to the ancient laws, Marinus was incapable of promotion because he was a Christian, and would not sacrifice to the Emperor. The objection was held to be valid, and a space of three hours was allowed to Marinus to renounce his religion. As soon as he came out of the Prætorium, Theotecnus, the bishop of the city, took him by the hand and led him into the Church. Raising his military cloak a little, and pointing to the sword which hung by his side, the bishop held up before him a copy of the Gospels, and bade him choose between the two. Without hesitation, Marinus seized the sacred volume. "Now," said the bishop, "hold fast to God, and mayst thou attain what thou hast chosen. Depart in peace." On his return he heard the herald proclaiming his name before the Prætorium, for the appointed hour was already past. He continued steadfast in his confession, and was beheaded. One of the Christian spectators, a noble and wealthy Roman, named Astyrius, took up the corpse, and covering it with

[1] A vine-rod. Eusebius styles the rank of centurion, the "honour of the vine."

a costly mantle, carried it away on his shoulder, and committed it honourably to the tomb.[1] A.D. 270-275.

On the death of Macrianus, the Churches had rest for a whole generation, the sword of religious intolerance being suffered to sleep in its scabbard during the remainder of the century. It is true that Aurelian (270-275), whose mother was priestess of the Sun, issued, near the close of his reign, more than one sanguinary edict against the Christians, but his cruel designs were cut short by his death. What the Christians had to expect from him, and to what a degree the old superstition retained its vitality, may be seen by the Emperor's speech to the Senate, when a motion to consult the Sibylline books[2] met with some opposition. "I am astonished, sacred fathers," said the Emperor, "that you should have been so long in doubt as to opening the Sibylline books, as though you were debating in a church of the Christians, and not in the temple of all the gods. To action! and by the purity of priests and solemn rites, aid your prince, struggling with the public emergency! Let the books be searched; let the forms which should be followed be observed. Any expense whatever, captives of whatever nation, royal animals of whatever kind, I eagerly offer. For it is no disgrace to conquer by the help of the gods. Thus, in the days of our ancestors were many wars ended, because thus begun. If there be any

[1] Eusebius, b. vii., c. xv., xvi. [2] See ante, p. 209.

expense, I have, by letters to the Prefect of my treasury, ordered it to be paid; and, moreover, the public chest is at your disposal."[1]

During this time of tranquillity died Dionysius and Gregory Thaumaturgus, the two most illustrious disciples of Origen.

The former, who was Bishop of Alexandria, has already been more than once referred to. He was the son of opulent parents, who were pagans, and his conversion to Christianity cost him the sacrifice of worldly honour. He succeeded Heraclas, another of Origen's pupils, in 232, as teacher of the Catechetical school, and afterwards, about the year 247, in the bishopric of Alexandria. He died about the year 265.

Dionysius was a pupil after Origen's own heart. A letter which he wrote to Philemon, a presbyter of Rome, exhibits the independence of his character. "I have read the writings of the heretics, defiling myself for a little while with their execrable sentiments; but I have also derived this benefit from them, viz., to refute them in my own mind and to feel the greater disgust at them. And when a certain brother of the presbyters, dreading lest I should be drawn down into this sink of iniquity, attempted to restrain me, I was confirmed in my purpose by a voice from heaven which commanded me, 'Read whatever falls into thy hands, for thou art

[1] Vopiscus, *Life of Aurelian*, c. xx. See Cooper's *Free Church*, pp. 311, 312.

qualified to judge and prove all things; from the first this has been to thee the occasion of faith.' I accepted the voice as in unison with the Apostolic declaration, which says to those of strong mind, 'Be ye skilful money-changers.'"[1] A.D. 265.

He was also an example of Christian moderation and gentleness. Writing to his suffragan bishop on matters of Church discipline and worship, Dionysius thus concludes: "I have laid open to thee my own opinions, not as thy teacher, but with the frankness which we are bound to use in our communications with one another. It is thy business to judge of what I have said, and to write to me if anything seems to thee better, or if thou agreest in what I have advanced."[2] An Egyptian bishop, named Nepos, taught that a millennium of sensual indulgence[3] on the earth was to be looked for. His error survived him, and Dionysius undertook to write a refutation of it. In his treatise, however, instead of denouncing its author, he speaks of him with reverence and affection. "Not only do I in many things agree with Nepos; I loved him, both for his faith and industry, his knowledge of the Scriptures, and his careful attention to psalmody, by which many are still delighted. I reverence him

[1] That is, skilful to distinguish the genuine from the counterfeit coin. The words are found in one of the Apocryphal Gospels. Eusebius, b. vii., c. vii. Neander, ii., pp. 483, 484.

[2] Idem, ii., p. 484. [3] τρυφῆς σωματικῆς.

also, because he is gone to his rest. But," he adds, "truth is to be loved and honoured above all."

Besides undertaking to answer in writing the erroneous opinions of Nepos, he held an oral disputation with Coracion, the chief leader in the heresy, and his adherents. In his conduct on this occasion he has left an example of the manner in which Christian disputants ought to behave towards one another. "When I was at Arsinoë," he writes, "I called together the presbyters and teachers, with those of the brethren who desired to be present, and proposed we should examine the doctrine together. They entrenched themselves in Nepos's book as in an impregnable fortress. I sat with them three whole days from morning till evening, endeavouring to refute his arguments. I was greatly pleased to observe the constancy, sincerity, teachableness and intelligence of the brethren, the moderation of the questions and doubts that were advanced, and the mutual concessions which were made. We studiously avoided insisting upon our own preconceived opinions, however correct they might appear to be. We did not attempt to evade objections, but endeavoured as far as possible to keep to the point. When reason required it, we were not ashamed to change our opinions, but received sincerely, and with a good conscience, opening our hearts towards God, whatever was established by the Holy Scriptures. In the end, Coracion, in the hearing of all the brethren, confessed himself convinced by the

arguments advanced, and declared he would no longer promulgate the erroneous doctrine."[1] A.D. 265.

A treatise is extant, written by Dionysius against the Epicurean school of philosophers, who denied the existence of a Creator and Governor of the world, and referred the formation of the universe to the chance combination of atoms. He thus deals with their speculations: "Giving the name of atoms to certain imperishable and most minute bodies, supposed to be infinite in number, and assuming the existence of a vacant space of unlimited vastness, they allege that these atoms, as they are borne along casually in the void, and clash all fortuitously against each other in an unregulated whirl, and become commingled in a multitude of forms, enter into combination with each other and thus gradually form the world and all objects in it." "Never surely," he answers, "did Epicurus look up to heaven with eyes of true intelligence, so as to hear the clear voice from above, which another attentive beholder did hear, and of which he testified when he said, 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork.' And never surely did he look down with due reflection upon the world's surface, for then he would have learned that 'the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord,' and that 'the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.'"[2]

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[1] Eusebius, b. vii., c. xxiv.

[2] Psalms xix. 1, xxxiii. 5, xxiv. 1. *Against the Epicureans*, ii., c. i., v. A. N. L.

Dearer to Origen even than Dionysius was Gregory, surnamed *Thaumaturgus* or the Wonder-worker. He was born at Neo-Cæsarea in Pontus, of noble and wealthy parents, who were pagans. His original name was Theodorus. At the age of fourteen he lost his father, and about the same time he passed through a remarkable spiritual experience. "My life," he says, "in my paternal home was one of error. The loss of my father was, perhaps, to me the beginning of the knowledge of salvation, for it was then that I was first brought to the truth; in what manner I cannot tell, but it was by constraint, rather than by voluntary choice. From this time this sacred Word began somehow to visit me; and though I thought but little of it at that early period, yet now as I ponder it I see in this concurrence no insignificant token of the marvellous providence which watched over me. Thus when my soul first expanded to the power of reason, it was not left without that fear which is accordant with reason, but the divine and human began to act in me in consonance, the one giving, and the other receiving help. And when I reflect on this I am filled at once with gladness and with awe: with gladness, because of the guidance of Providence; with awe, lest after having been favoured with such blessings, I should in any wise fail of the end." In this way did the Lord Himself visit him, ere he knew aught of the Gospel.

As yet however the religious life was with Theo-

dorus only subordinate; a splendid career in the world appeared to him of more importance. His mother had him educated for a rhetorician or advocate, for which purpose he studied Latin and the Roman law; and in course of time formed the design of visiting Rome. "But at once," he tells us, "bonds were cast upon my movements." Instead of going to Rome his course was directed to Cæsarea in Palestine. His sister's husband, who was legal adviser to the Prefect of Palestine, had been called to that city by the duties of his office, and had been obliged, very unwillingly, to leave his wife behind. Receiving permission after a while to send for her, he requested the young Theodorus to attend her on the journey. "When," he continues, "I and my brother were minded to travel, a soldier suddenly came upon the scene, bearing a letter of instructions to us to escort our sister to her husband. Our friends thought well of this errand, as we should thus be able to visit Berytus,[1] which is not far from Cæsarea, and pursue our studies at the school of law in that city."

A.D. 234-256.

Origen was then living at Cæsarea, and "to his care," to use Gregory's [*i.e.*, Theodorus'] own words, "my Divine Guide handed over my brother and myself." No sooner had they come within the influence of the great teacher than they were "like birds caught in a net;" and whenever they

[1] Now Beyrout.

attempted to return home or to proceed to Berytus, they found themselves unable to escape.

Origen at once perceived the promising talents of the youthful Gregory, and was not long in infusing into him his own enthusiastic love of truth. Gregory on his part conceived a profound affection and reverence for his teacher, of whom he writes in terms of the warmest admiration. "He was possessed of a rare combination of sweet grace and the power of persuasion. I cannot recount all the arguments he used, to induce us to pursue philosophy. He asserted that there can be no genuine piety towards the Lord of all in the man who despises this gift of philosophy; a gift which man alone of all the creatures of the earth has been deemed worthy to possess. By continually pouring in upon us his argumentations, he at last carried us fairly off by a kind of divine power; and, as if by some spark lighting upon our inmost soul, love was kindled and burst into a flame within us, a love to the Holy Word, the most lovely object of all, who by his unutterable beauty attracts all men irresistibly towards Himself, and at the same time, a love to this man, his friend and advocate. Being mightily smitten by this love, I was persuaded to give up all my objects and pursuits, my boasted jurisprudence, yea, my very fatherland and friends!"

"He did not," continues Gregory, "confine his teaching to those faculties of the mind which are the province of dialectics. He instructed us in natural

science; distinguishing and illustrating the several divisions of created objects, and discussing the multiform revolution and mutation of things, until he had filled our minds with a rational, instead of an irrational wonder, at the sacred economy of the universe. . . None the less did he teach us to be at home with ourselves; which, indeed, is the most excellent achievement of philosophy. Nor did he accustom us to a mere profession in words, to the knowledge only of what ought to be done, and what ought not to be done; much more he incited us to the practice of virtue, stimulating us more by the deeds which he did, than by the doctrines which he taught. . . A.D. 234-265.

"He considered it right for us to study all that has been written, as well by the ancient poets as by the philosophers, except only the writings of the atheists. From these he would have us to abstain, lest the soul within us, created for piety, should be defiled by hearkening to words which are contrary to faith in God. And it was with great sagacity that he acted on this principle, lest a single word, though not true, should lodge in our mind, and make us its own, and we no longer have power to withdraw from it, or to wash ourselves clear of it. For a mighty thing and an energetic, is the discourse of man, and subtle with its sophisms, and quick to find its way into the ears and mould the mind; and when once it has taken possession, even though it be false, it can overmaster, like some

enchanter, and retain as its champion the very man it has deluded. . . There is no forest so dense and devious, no swamp so difficult to escape from, nor any labyrinth so intricate and inextricable, as is the sophistry of false philosophy."[1]

Theodorus spent five years at Cæsarea, and would probably have continued to reside there, but for the persecution under Maximinus the Thracian. It was with profound sorrow that he took leave of his beloved teacher. He compares the affection which existed between them to the friendship of David and Jonathan, and his being obliged to leave Cæsarea, to Adam's expulsion from Paradise.[2]

On his return to his own city, Neo-Cæsarea, Theodorus changed his name to Gregory. He was followed by a letter from Origen, reiterating the advice he had already given him, viz., to study classical learning, telling him that in this way he might spoil the Egyptians, and manifest to the heathen the superiority of the Gospel. Quitting the city and retiring to a solitary place, that he might carefully ponder this counsel, Gregory received a summons from the Bishop of Amasea to undertake the episcopal office at Neo-Cæsarea. His sensitive nature shrank from such a responsibility, and he kept himself beyond the bishop's reach, until the latter, unable to discover him, actually had re-

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[1] *Panegyric on Origen*, c. v., vi., viii., ix., xiii., xiv. A. N. L.

[2] Idem, c. xv.

course to the expedient of ordaining him in his absence. On hearing of this extraordinary step, Gregory yielded, and entered zealously on the duties of his office. So well did he discharge them that, as we are told in the rhetorical language of the chronicler, "whereas at his ordination there were in the city only seventeen Christians, at his death (between A.D. 265 and 270) there remained only seventeen pagans."[1] He occupied the see about thirty years. A.D. 234-265.

The surname of Thaumaturgus was given him in consequence of the popular belief in his power of working miracles. Very marvellous legends are related of him; but "when the marvellous is dissociated from the historical, we have the figure of a great, good and gifted man, deeply versed in the heathen lore and science of his time, yet more deeply imbued with the spirit of another wisdom, which under God he learned from the illustrious thinker of Alexandria, and exercising an earnest, enlightened and faithful ministry of many years, in an office which he had not sought, but for which he had been sought."[2]

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[1] *Introductory Notice to the Writings of Gregory.* A. N. L.

[2] Idem.

## CHAPTER VII.

### The Diocletian Persecution.

The reigns of Diocletian and his immediate successors, A.D. 284-312, will be for ever memorable in the annals of the Church, as the era of the last and most terrible of all the persecutions, the death-struggle of Paganism in its contest with Christianity.[1]

The great Roman Empire, compacted of so many heterogeneous elements, and perpetually threatened by the barbarous nations which swarmed around its frontiers, demanded the sceptre of a master hand. But such had rarely been wielded since the reign of the Antonines, a period of more than a century, and the foundations of the vast fabric were rapidly giving way. Diocletian, who saw the impending danger, attempted to avert it by reconstructing the empire, but the means he adopted only palliated the disorder which they could not permanently cure. He cast aside the old republican forms and assumed the pomp of an Oriental

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[1] The *era of Diocletian* (otherwise called the *era of Martyrs*), is the chronological epoch used in the Church till the introduction, in the sixth century, of the *Christian era*. It dates from the first year of this Emperor's reign, although the general persecution did not commence till 303.

monarch; he also removed his own residence from Rome to Nicomedia, and associated three other rulers with himself in the sovereignty of the State, —a second Augustus (as the senior Emperors were styled), and two Cæsars or subordinate Emperors. A.D. 284-303.

For some years Diocletian does not seem to have manifested any especial hostility to the Church. His wife Prisca and his daughter Valeria were believers in the Gospel, and many high offices in the palace were filled by Christians. There were many Christians also in the army, both officers and soldiers, and these were exempted, either by connivance or direct indulgence, from taking part in the heathen sacrifices. But they were accustomed on such occasions secretly to sign themselves with the cross, as a supposed protection against the malignant influence of the demons invoked in the Pagan worship. The suspicion was mutual; the Pagan priests on their part regarding the sign of the cross as hateful to the gods, and sufficient to drive them away from the sacrifices.

An incident of this kind is related by Lactantius. "Diocletian being of a timorous disposition, was a searcher into futurity, and during his abode in the East he began to slay victims, that from their livers he might obtain a prognostic of events. While he was sacrificing, some of his Christian attendants who stood by made the immortal sign on their foreheads. At this the demons were chased away and the holy rites interrupted. The soothsayers

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trembled, unable to investigate the wonted marks on the entrails of the victims. They repeated the sacrifices again and again, but the victims still afforded no tokens for divination. At length Tages, the chief of the soothsayers, either from guess or from his own observation, said, 'There are profane persons here who obstruct the rites.' Upon this Diocletian, in furious passion, directed not only all who were assisting at the sacred ceremonies, but also all who resided within the palace, to sacrifice to the gods, ordering that, in case of refusal, they should be scourged. At the same time, by letters addressed to the commanding officers, he enjoined that all soldiers should be forced to the like impiety under pain of being dismissed the service."[1] Many officers threw up their commissions and many soldiers quitted the ranks.[2]

One of the former was a centurion named Marcellus. When the decree was published, the legion to which he belonged, stationed at Tingis (now Tangiers), was holding a sacrificial feast in honour of one of the Cæsars. Marcellus rose from the mess-table and unclasping his military belt, threw it down, exclaiming, "From this moment I cease to serve your empire as a soldier. I am resolved to obey none but Jesus Christ, the Eternal King. I despise the worship of your gods of wood and

[1] *On the Manner in which the Persecutors died*, c. x. A. N. L.

[2] Eusebius, b. viii., c. iv.

stone. Since the service involves the obligation of sacrificing to the gods and Emperors, I renounce the standards and am a soldier no longer." He was condemned to death and beheaded. Before he suffered, Cassianus, the clerk of the court, whose duty it was to commit the sentence to writing, threw the tablet and stilus with evident aversion to the ground. Marcellus smiled, for he foresaw that Cassianus would soon be his companion in martyrdom. Cassianus suffered not many days afterwards.[1] A.D. 303.

Diocletian was indisposed for the time to take further steps against the rival religion; but was again roused to action in the winter of 302-303 by his son-in-law, Galerius, one of the Cæsars, who came to Nicomedia in order to propose measures for the complete extirpation of Christianity. This man, of morose disposition and profligate life, the son of a shepherd and of a woman notorious for her superstition, was looked up to as the hope of the Pagan party. He found Diocletian unwilling to listen to his proposals. The infirm monarch, already labouring under the malady which two years afterwards forced him to lay down the burden of empire, shrank from disturbing the peace of the State and shedding torrents of blood, which he saw to be inevitable. Unable by himself to withstand his son-in-law, he called a council of civil magistrates and

[1] Ruinart, *Acts of the Martyrs*, pp. 302, 304. Wordsworth's *Church Hist.*, pp. 378, 379.

military commanders, to whom he referred the decision of the question. From one motive or another they all concurred with Galerius; but even then Diocletian was not satisfied. He resolved to consult the gods, and despatched a soothsayer to Miletus to ask counsel at the oracle of Apollo. The answer was such as might have been expected, and the Emperor yielded. He still insisted however that the more sanguinary and barbarous of the means it was proposed to use should not be employed. Galerius would have burned alive all who refused to sacrifice; Diocletian stipulated that life should not be taken.[1]

Eusebius has left a description of the Church on the eve of the persecution, by which it may be seen how ill prepared were the professors of Christianity to withstand so tremendous a shock. After telling us that many places of trust, and even governments of Provinces, were in the hands of Christians, who enjoyed entire freedom of speech and action on the subject of their religion, and almost boasted of this liberty; and after dilating on "the multitudes who in every city crowded together for worship, not in the old buildings, but in new and spacious churches," he confesses that "the unwonted ease and honour they had enjoyed had robbed them of faith and love." "We envied and reviled one another: we assailed one another with words as if with actual darts and spears, which

[1] Lactantius, c. xi.

indeed we were almost ready to take up. Rulers inveighed against rulers, and people rose up against people; hypocrisy and dissimulation abounded. The divine judgment, which usually proceeds with a lenient hand, began by little and little to afflict us; but, as if destitute of all sensibility, we were not prompt to propitiate God, some even acting as though they thought He took no account of their conduct. Some who ought to have been our shepherds, abandoning the law of piety, were only anxious to acquire lordship over the rest."[1] A.D. 303.

It was resolved by Diocletian and Galerius to open the campaign by demolishing the church at Nicomedia. On the 23rd of February, 303, therefore, (the great Roman festival of the *Terminalia*,) almost before it was light, came the Prefect, with the chief military and civil officers, to the church. It stood on an eminence commanding the city, conspicuous above the Imperial palace.[2] Having broken open the doors they searched everywhere for an image of the divinity, and were astonished to find none. The copies of the Holy Scriptures were committed to the flames, and the church was plundered of its utensils and furniture. The proceedings were watched from the palace windows by Diocletian and Galerius, who disputed with each

[1] Eusebius, b. viii., c. i.

[2] A proof of the importance which the new religion had by this time attained.

other whether the building ought or ought not to be burned. Diocletian's fear, lest so great a fire should produce a conflagration in the city, in the end prevailed; the Prætorian guard was dispatched with axes and other tools, and in a few hours the lofty edifice was levelled with the ground.[1]

The next day the Edict was published. All Christians who held places of honour and rank were to abjure the faith, or to be degraded: the rest to be deprived of their civil rights, being debarred from bringing a legal action before any tribunal whatsoever; and torture might be employed in their examination. Christian slaves were declared incapable of receiving their freedom. All copies of the Scriptures were to be publicly burned; the churches were to be demolished, and the Church property confiscated. A Christian of noble birth, in a transport of indignation, tore down the edict, scornfully exclaiming, "These are the triumphs of Goths and Sarmatians." He was seized, and being condemned to be roasted at a slow fire, bore his sufferings with a composure which astonished and mortified his executioners.[2]

The impression produced by this edict was the more terrible from its being published in many of the provinces about the time, and in several on the very day of the Easter Festival. There was also one

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[1] Lactantius, c. xii.

[2] Idem, c. xiii. Neander, i., pp. 205, 206. Robertson, i., p. 145.

new feature in the decree which was of a kind to fill all but the most stouthearted with gloomy forebodings. The attempt in former reigns to suppress the religion by removing the rulers and teachers had failed. The importance of the sacred writings in preserving the Christian faith was now better understood; and it was supposed that if these could be destroyed, the source of Christianity, the very life of the Church, would be extinguished. But the might and ingenuity of man, even of Imperial Rome, is folly when arrayed against God. Even if it had been permitted to the authorities to drag to light and destroy every copy of the sacred Scriptures, God's care over his own Church, and his power to preserve and transmit the Gospel of his Son, would have remained the same. Further, it may not have been wholly to the disadvantage of the Church that the ancient and revered copies of the sacred books were lost. Some of them may have been penned, or reputed to have been penned, by the Apostles themselves, or their immediate disciples, and veneration of the individual book might easily take the place of reverence for its contents. Whether or not it be owing to the inquisition made at this time for the sacred manuscripts, it is certain that none have come down to us of so early a date as the reign of Diocletian.[1] A.D. 303.

[1] Tischendorf conjectures (Introduction to the *Tauchnitz* New Testament, p. xii.), that the Sinaitic Codex is one of the fifty copies of the sacred

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Many of the magistrates were ready rigorously to carry out the edict; but there were others who strove, as far as they dared, to evade it. The bishop of Carthage, Mensurius, had removed all the copies of the bible from the church to his own house, leaving in their place some heretical writings of no value. When the search officers arrived they seized these books, asking no further questions. Some senators informed the Proconsul of the artifice, and advised him to search the bishop's house, where the real books would be found, but the Proconsul paid no attention to them. Another, a Numidian, being unwilling to surrender the Scriptures, the officers told him he could give them instead any worthless manuscripts he might have.

This new test of fidelity to Christ brought out into strong relief the varying characters of men. Not a few, yielding to the fear of imprisonment and torture, at once gave up their copies of the New Testament, which were burnt in the market places. Such were called *Givers up* or *Betrayers*,[1] and were removed from the communion of the Church. In previous persecutions, many had found safety in flight, feeling themselves unequal to a public confession, or believing that they might apply to themselves our Lord's injunction to the Apostles, "When they persecute you in this city, flee into the

writings which Constantine directed Eusebius to have handsomely engrossed on parchment. See *Life of Constantine*, b. iv., c. xxxvi., xxxvii.

[1] Traditores.

next."[1] But now the search was so universal and so rigorously enforced that escape by this means was all but impossible. Some, especially in Africa, that land of burning zeal and reckless daring, did not wait to be summoned, but hastened to the tribunal and avowed that they were Christians and possessed copies of the Scriptures, but declared that they would never give them up. In such cases, the prudent Mensurius refused to grant the coveted honour of martyrdom. But there were not wanting in every country, men and women, who neither ran rashly into death nor sought to shelter themselves under any subterfuge, but who by the power of faith courageously withstood all the malice of the enemy, and obtained the crown of victory. A.D. 303.

The persecution had scarcely begun before an untoward accident impelled the government to harsher measures. The Imperial palace in Nicomedia, and Diocletian's bed-chamber, amongst others, was discovered to be in flames. The Christians were accused of the deed. Diocletian, who was greatly alarmed and incensed, gave orders that all his domestics should be tortured; and even sat by, to hear the confessions which were wrung from them. A fortnight afterwards a second fire broke out in the same apartments. Galerius hurried out of the city in order, as he declared, to escape being burnt alive; and Diocletian was beside himself with rage. He

[1] Matt. x. 23.

compelled his own wife and daughter to sacrifice to the gods. Many court officers and presbyters, with their families, were put to death, some being burned, some beheaded, and others drowned.

Political disturbances arising in Armenia and Syria, the clergy fell under suspicion, and a second edict was issued, ordering that the Church officers should be everywhere seized, and cast into prison. This law was so effectually put into execution, that the dungeons were filled with bishops and presbyters, and no room could be found for malefactors.[1] Three months afterwards a third edict ordained that Christians in prison who were willing to sacrifice might be set at liberty, but that such as refused should, by the application of every kind of torture, be compelled to offer incense to the gods.

This was followed in 304 by a fourth and last decree, more sweeping than the former, by which the penalties of the third edict were extended to the entire body of Christians. In the cities proclamation was made that all the inhabitants,—men, women and children,—should repair to the temples. Every individual was summoned by name from rolls which had been made out; all who came in or went out at the city gates, were subjected to a rigid

[1] All were not thus immured. Eusebius speaks of "some bishops who, neglecting to shepherd the reasonable flock of Christ in a becoming manner, were by divine justice, as unworthy of such a charge, condemned to be keepers of the unreasonable camel, and of the Imperial horses." *Martyrs of Palestine*, c. xii. (A supplement to the eighth book of the *Ecclesiastical History*.)

examination; and such as were found to be Christians were arrested. Although as before, very many showed themselves unequal to the trial, yet everywhere there were found numerous witnesses ready to sacrifice liberty and life itself for their Lord. A.D. 305.

The persecutors now fondly imagined that their triumph over Christianity was secure. Already they

COIN OF DIOCLETIAN TO COMMEMORATE HIS SUPPOSED TRIUMPH OVER CHRISTIANITY.

On the obverse is the head of the Emperor crowned with laurel, with the legend, *Diocletianus P[erpetuus] F[elix] Aug[ustus]*. DIOCLETIAN, IMMORTAL, HAPPY, AUGUST.

On the reverse, Jupiter is brandishing a thunderbolt, and trampling a kneeling figure with serpent-like feet, designed to represent Christianity. This figure resembles the Abraxas, or mystical godhead, of the Gnostic gems. The legend is, *Jovi Fulgeratori*. TO JUPITER, THE LIGHTNING HURLER. The letters P R below stand for *Pecunia Romæ*, Money of Rome. The coin is of gold, and of the size of a sixpence.[1]

raised the pæan of victory, "The name of the Christians who were seeking to overturn the State has been blotted out. Everywhere the Christian superstition is destroyed and the worship of the gods universally restored."[2]

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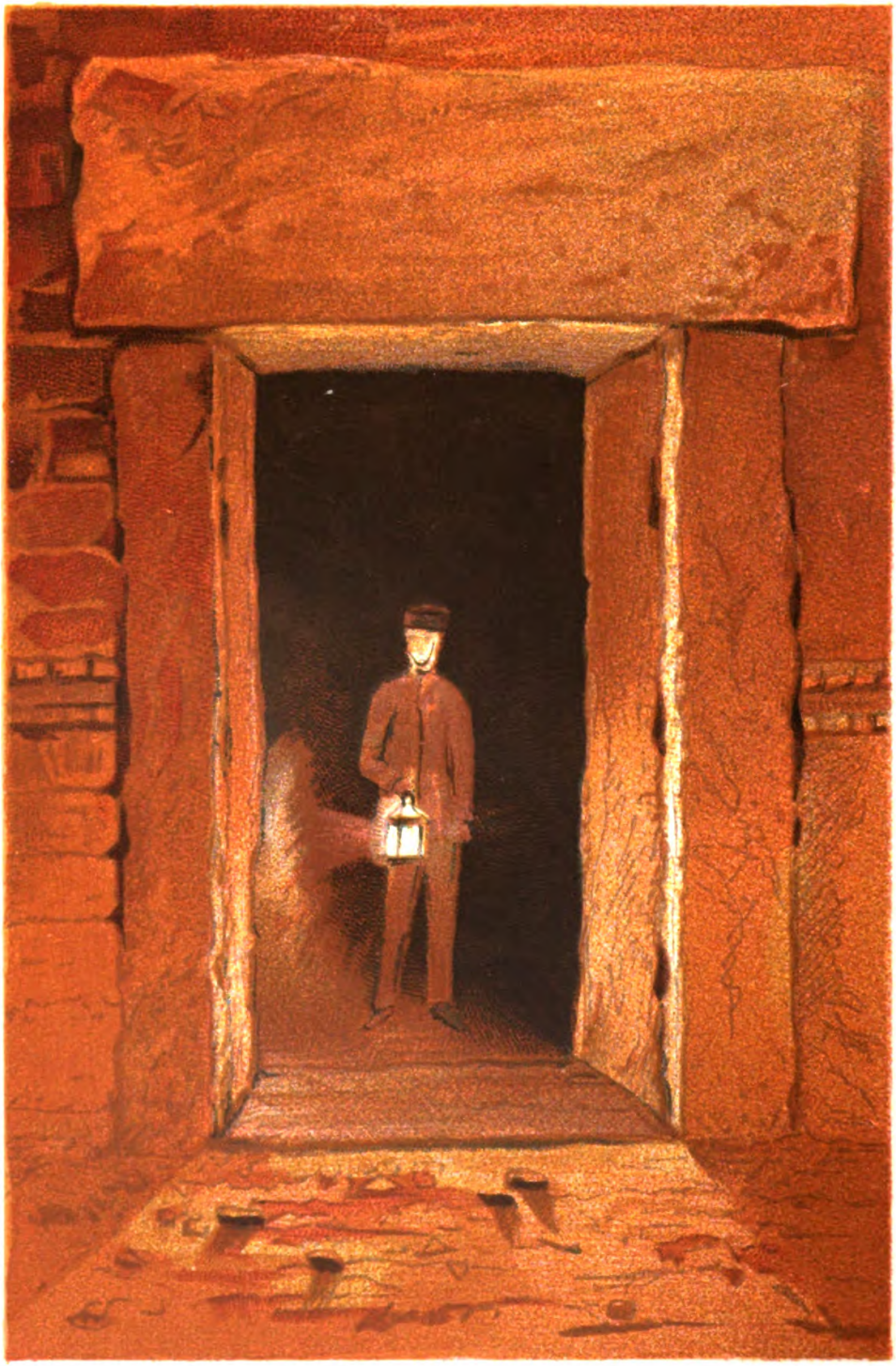
[1] Walsh's *Essay on Ancient Coins, Medals and Gems, as Illustrating the Progress of Christianity in the Early Ages*. 3rd edition, London, 1830. Maximinus Daza issued a similar coin.

[2] Neander, i., p. 214.

But at the very time when the oppressors were thus sounding the trumpet of exultation, Divine Providence was preparing means for the deliverance of the Church.

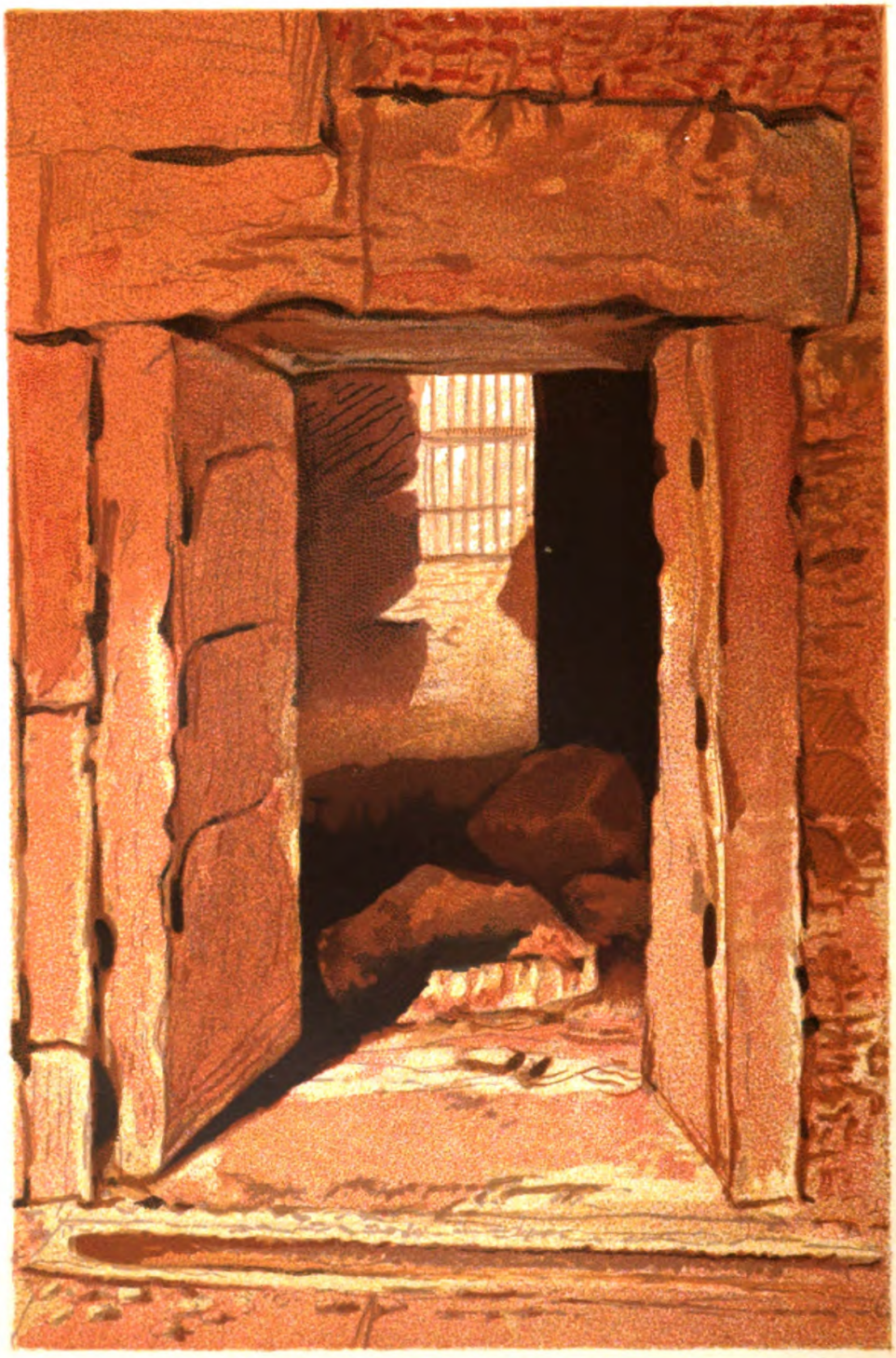
The persecution never extended into the extreme West of the Empire, Gaul, Spain and Britain. Over these provinces Constantius Chlorus ruled as Cæsar. He was of a mild and humane disposition, and although not himself a professed Christian, was favourably disposed towards the Church. Those Christians about his person who showed themselves steadfast in their faith he treated with special confidence, saying that he who has been unfaithful to his God would be little likely to remain faithful to his prince. Unable openly to disobey the edicts which had been issued, he suffered some churches to be pulled down in order to save appearances. But when, in 305, Diocletian abdicated, and Constantius succeeded to the supreme rank of Augustus, his new power enabled him more openly to protect the Church in the Western provinces.

There was, however, for the present, no abatement of the fury of persecution in the East, where, in the same year, Galerius, who had become Augustus in conjunction with Constantius, appointed his nephew Maximinus Daza, as Cæsar over Syria and Egypt. This cruel profligate was a slave to pagan superstition, and the dupe of priests and soothsayers; and in the ingenuity and ferocity of the



Cell in the Amphitheatre at Verona in which Firmus and Rusticus are said to have been confined previous to their martyrdom.

*From an original drawing by Edward Backhouse.*



One of the Dens in the Amphitheatre at Verona from which the wild beasts were let loose upon the Arena.

*From an original drawing by Edward Backhouse.*

measures by which he strove to eradicate Christianity he even exceeded his patron.[1] A.D. 305-308.

Lactantius, who was at Nicomedia when the persecution commenced, and lived to write its history, in reviewing these, its earlier years, exclaims,

> "Had I a hundred mouths, a hundred tongues,
> A voice of brass, and adamantine lungs,
> Not half the dreadful scene could I disclose."

"From East to West," he continues, "except in the provinces of Gaul, three ravenous wild beasts raged incessantly.[2] In the East, under Galerius, the common mode of torture was burning at a slow fire. The Christians were fastened to a stake: at first a moderate flame was applied to the soles of their feet, until the muscles contracted by the fire were torn from the bones; then torches, lighted and put out again, were held to all their limbs, so that no part of the body should escape. All the while water was continually poured upon their faces and their mouths moistened, lest their jaws being parched they should expire too soon. And when at length, after many hours of agony, the heat had

[1] Neander, i., 206-215.

[2] Diocletian, Galerius, and Maximian. The last, who was Augustus over the West from 286 to 305, and again from 306 to 308, enforced the persecuting edicts throughout Italy. In the amphitheatre at Verona, several cells or dungeons are still to be seen, where it is supposed the victims were kept, previous to being taken to the arena; they are very narrow, and no light is admitted except through the doorway. Tradition relates that two martyrs, Firmus and Rusticus, were confined in one of these cells during the persecution under Maximian. The amphitheatre still possesses also, four of the dens for the wild beasts.

destroyed their skin and penetrated to their vitals, their dead bodies were consumed upon a funeral pile, and their bones being ground to powder were thrown into the water."[1]

We must not omit to add that the attempted work of extirpation was sometimes too horrid even for Pagan votaries. At Alexandria the citizens concealed the persecuted Christians in their houses, and many chose rather to lose their property and their liberty, than to betray those who had taken refuge with them.[2]

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[1] Lactantius, c. xvi., xxi. [2] Neander, i., 214.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### The Diocletian Persecution (continued)—Constantine.

The political changes at this period were very numerous. Emperors and Cæsars follow one another across the stage in rapid succession. Diocletian abdicated in 305; and after him the Augusti were not limited to two. On the death of Constantius Chlorus, in 306, his son Constantine the Great became Cæsar, and two years afterwards, Augustus. His colleague in the West was Maxentius, a man notorious, even in that age, for rapacity, cruelty and lust. In 307, Licinius, a Dacian peasant who afterwards married Constantine's sister, was proclaimed Augustus; and the next year Maximinus Daza, nephew to Galerius, was raised to the same rank. On the death of Galerius in 311, these two divided the East between them. Persecution in the Western provinces of the Empire appears to have ceased about 307; but in 308 Galerius and Maximinus Daza commenced a perfect reign of terror in the East. This was the most prolific in bloodshed of any period in the whole history of the Roman persecutions; and the vast majority of those

A.D. 305-311.

Part II. Chap. 8.

who in the East are celebrated as "Martyrs under Diocletian" really suffered between 308 and 311.[1]

At length Galerius was obliged to admit that the diabolical work which he had undertaken was too mighty for him. In the year 311, finding his measures utterly insufficient for the suppression of the Gospel, and feeling himself to be sinking under a loathsome and excruciating disease,[2] he issued in his own name and in those of Licinius and Constantine, an edict, which virtually put an end to the sanguinary conflict of the Roman Empire with the Christian Church. In this remarkable document the dying Emperor even makes respectful allusion to the God of the Christians, and recognizes the efficacy of their prayers. He first reproaches them with departing from the religion of their fathers, to which it had been the purpose of the Emperors to bring them back, and then proclaims that as it had now become evident that they could not consistently worship their own Deity, and at the same time perform sacrifice to the gods, the Emperors had resolved to extend to them their wonted clemency. Thenceforth they were permitted to hold their assemblies unmolested, provided only they

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[1] *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, Galerius.

[2] He was "eaten of worms." His agony was indescribable, and the whole palace was infected by the insupportable stench which issued from his sores. Milman draws attention to the coincidence that Herod, Galerius and Philip the Second of Spain, all met their death by the same terrible and loathsome disease. *Hist. of Christ.*, vol. ii., p. 227.

did nothing contrary to the good order of the Roman State. "Let them now," concludes the edict, "after experiencing this proof of our indulgence, pray to their God for our prosperity and that of the State, and that they themselves may live quietly in their own homes."[1] A few days after the publication of the edict Galerius died. A.D. 311, 312.

Great was the joy of the Christians at their unexpected deliverance. From their several places of exile, from the prisons and the mines, they flocked to their homes. The public roads, the streets and market-places, were crowded with trains of confessors, singing psalms and hymns of thanksgiving. The heathens were amazed at this sudden change of affairs, and exclaimed that the God of the Christians was the only great and true God.[2]

But Maximinus Daza had consented to this humane decree from policy only, not from any relaxation of hatred towards the Christians; and after awhile he began again to harass them by new and ingenious devices. He made an attempt to galvanise paganism into fresh life by reconstructing its hierarchy on the model of the Christian episcopacy. Men of the highest rank were nominated as provincial pontiffs, and, arrayed in white tunics, were inaugurated with a pompous ceremonial. Orders were issued to restore the ruined temples. The sacrifices were performed with splendour and regu-

[1] Neander, i., pp. 216, 217. [2] Eusebius, b. ix., c. i.

larity, and the pontiffs were empowered to compel all persons, slaves and free men, women and infants at the breast, to attend and partake of them; such as refused being liable to every penalty short of death. All provisions brought into the markets were to be sprinkled with water or wine that had been used in the sacrifices, and guards were placed at the doors of the public baths to defile by the same means those who went out. More subtle methods still were employed to discredit the Christian faith. Forged "Acts of Pilate," filled with blasphemies against Christ, were everywhere circulated, and the schoolmasters were directed to put them into the hands of their pupils to commit to memory for recitation; "so that the boys had the names of Jesus and Pilate, in derision, in their mouths the whole day."[1] "The policy of the Emperor," observes Milman, "in general confined itself to vexatious and harassing oppression, and to other punishments which inflicted the pain and wretchedness without the dignity of dying for the faith; the persecuted had the sufferings but not the glory of martyrdom." Some indeed were put to death, amongst whom was Peter, Bishop of Alexandria; but the greater number of victims were mutilated or blinded, or sent to labour in the unwholesome mines.[2]

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[1] Eusebius, *Martyrs of Palestine*, c. ix. *Hist.*, b. ix., c. v. vii.

[2] *Hist. of Christianity*, vol. ii., p. 233.

A.D. 311-312.

The pagan population, either from hatred to the Gospel, or from obsequiousness, seconded the efforts of their Emperor. Antioch, Tyre, Nicomedia, and other great cities sent up petitions, praying that no enemy to the gods might be suffered to dwell or practise his rites of worship within their walls. The Imperial manifesto, in response to the memorial from Tyre, was by that loyal city engraved on a tablet of brass. A copy of it has been preserved by Eusebius. The Emperor congratulates the citizens on their piety and his own, and exults in the glorious consequences which as he pretends had already flowed from it. "The earth, by the gracious benevolence of the gods, has not now as in former times disappointed the hope of the husbandman; neither war, nor tempest, nor earthquake has desolated the land. Let the Christians look at the broad fields waving with loaded ears, the meadows gay from seasonable showers, and the air restored to a calm and genial temperature; and let all men rejoice that by your piety and sacrifices and veneration of the gods, mighty Mars has been propitiated, so that henceforward you may enjoy tranquillity and solid peace and be filled with pleasure and rejoicing."

This rash boast was presently falsified in an unexpected manner. The rains which usually fall in the winter season were withheld, and the succeeding harvest failed. A sudden famine desolated the whole East. Corn rose to an incredible price. Vast

Part II. Chap. 8.

numbers of people died in the cities, whilst in many villages and country places the population was almost swept away. Some endeavoured by chewing herbs and remnants of hay to preserve their miserable existence. Many, wasted to skeletons, tottered and fell down in the streets, with their last breath uttering the word "hunger;" and their dead bodies became food for the dogs of the city. Even ladies of rank, whose modest countenances and decent apparel bespoke their station, were seen begging in the highways. The rapacity of the Emperor aggravated the general misery. The granaries of private persons were seized, and their stores closed up with the Imperial seal. The flocks and herds were driven away to be offered in unavailing oblations to the gods; and the court insulted the general suffering by its excessive luxury, the foreign and barbarian troops living in wasteful plenty, and plundering on all sides with impunity.

Scanty and unwholesome food produced its usual effect, a pestilential malady. Carbuncles broke out all over the bodies of those who were seized with the disorder, but particularly attacked the eyes, so that multitudes became blind. The houses of the wealthy, secure against the famine, seemed especially marked out by the pestilence; mourning processions continually went about the city.[1] Although

[1] Eusebius, here and in what follows, probably refers to the Imperial city of Nicomedia.

at first some of the more wealthy pagans relieved the distressed with a liberal hand, yet as the numbers of the destitute increased they became alarmed for themselves, and sternly refused further help. The Christians alone were equal to the occasion. They showed what manner of spirit they were of, by doing all in their power to lighten the distress. They visited the infected houses, and attended to the burial of the dead; and collecting the multitude of the famine-stricken throughout the city, distributed bread amongst them; "so that men glorified the God of the Christians, and acknowledged that they were the only pious and real worshippers."[1] A.D. 312.

In 312, Maxentius took up arms to revenge the death of his father, of which Constantine had been the author or instigator. Constantine marched to give him battle, and on his way towards Rome, near Cremona, on the night before the engagement, is said to have seen the famous vision by which he was warned to adopt the sign of the Cross as his standard. The following is the story as related by Eusebius.

Maxentius was known to be preparing for the struggle by magical rites, and Constantine felt the need of supernatural aid in order to cope with him. Revolving in his mind to what god he should betake himself, he remembered how his father Constantius

[1] Eusebius, b. ix., c. vii., viii.

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had always been blessed with prosperity, whereas the persecutors of Christianity had come to miserable ends. He determined, therefore, to forsake the service of idols, and to make his prayer to the God of his father, the one Supreme Being. Whilst he was thus engaged, he saw, soon after mid-day, spread on the face of the heavens, a luminous cross, and above it the legend or inscription, "By this conquer."[1] Perplexed in his thoughts as to what could be the meaning of the vision, the Emperor fell asleep, when Christ appeared to him with the same symbol which he had seen in the heavens, and commanded him to make a banner in the shape of that celestial sign, which would never fail to lead him to victory. On awaking he sent for Christian teachers, of whom he inquired concerning the God who had appeared to him, and the import of the symbol, and received from them instruction in the knowledge of Christianity. He then commanded an ensign to be made after the pattern he had seen, the famous *Labarum*, or Standard of the Cross, which for a long time was borne at the head of the Imperial armies, and afterwards kept as a sacred relic at Constantinople. It consisted of a long pole or staff overlaid with gold, with a transverse beam so as to form a cross. On the top was a golden crown set with precious stones, bearing the two Greek letters XP to represent the name of Christ,

[1] Ἐν τούτῳ νίκᾳ. In hoc vince.

the X being intersected by the P.[1] To the cross-beam was attached a banner of purple lawn, embroidered with gold and precious stones, in the border of which were worked figures of the Emperor and his children.[2] A.D. 312.

What was the real nature of the occurrence, in what proportions truth, imagination and invention were mixed up, are questions which have always perplexed and divided the minds of historians. "There are," writes Milman, "three leading theories on this inexhaustibly interesting yet inexplicable subject:—first, a real miracle; second, a natural phenomenon presented to the imagination of the Emperor; third, a deliberate invention on the part of the Emperor or of Eusebius." Discarding the first and third, he decides, with Neander, Robertson and other dispassionate writers, in favour of the second, and suggests that the legend over the cross originated in an inference drawn in the Emperor's mind, and gradually grew into an integral part of the vision. In coming to this conclusion, he insists upon a view of the question which is now at length beginning to exert its proper influence in the interpretation of the ways of Providence. After describing the

[1] See plate iv. of the photographs in chap. 15. The Greek letters XP (in English CH R) were used as the abbreviation for ΧΡΙΣΤΌΣ.

[2] Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, b. i., c. xxi.-xxvi. Lactantius, a contemporary historian, in noticing this story, says only, "Constantine was directed in a dream to cause the heavenly sign to be depicted on the shields of his soldiers, and so to proceed to battle. He did as he was commanded." *On the Manner in which the Persecutors Died*, c. xliv.

Labarum, he says, "Thus for the first time, the meek and peaceful Jesus became a God of battle, and the Cross, the Holy Sign of Christian Redemption, a banner of bloody strife. This irreconcilable incongruity between the symbol of universal peace and the horrors of war, in my judgment is conclusive against the miraculous or supernatural character of the transaction."[1]

The army of Maxentius was defeated. Constantine entered Rome, and commemorated his triumph by erecting a magnificent arch, which still bears his name.[2] He more worthily signalised his victory by issuing at Milan, in conjunction with Licinius, his memorable edict of universal toleration, which the next year was reissued at Nicomedia in an enlarged form.[3] In the struggle between Constantine and Maxentius, Maximinus Daza secretly supported the latter, and on the defeat of that Emperor he openly declared his hostility, and took the field against Constantine and Licinius. His army was utterly routed. He had vowed that if he were victorious he would exterminate the Christian name, but the signal overthrow which he met with turned his fury in an opposite direction. In his despair he put to death many of the priests and soothsayers

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[1] *Hist. of Christ.*, vol. ii., pp. 286-288. He cites Mosheim as concurring in these sentiments. Neander, iii., pp. 10-16. Robertson, i., p. 180.

[2] In the photograph of the Arch of Titus, at p. 21, Constantine's Arch is to be seen in the distance on the right-hand.

[3] This second edict is also known as the edict of Milan.

by whose auguries he had been deceived, and even proclaimed in the provinces which still adhered to him, entire toleration of the Christian faith and the restoration of the Church property. He died a few months afterwards in great misery, consumed, it is said, by an internal fire.[1] A.D. 312-314.

Thus, after ten years' duration, this great persecution came to an end. Gibbon estimates the number of those who were actually put to death at less than two thousand.[2] But this low estimate, even if it should be accepted, would convey a very inadequate idea of the extent of the suffering endured. The bodily torments short of death, the mental anguish, not of the confessors only, but of their families and friends, the temporal ruin, above all the remorse on account of unfaithfulness in the hour of trial, would multiply a hundredfold the tribulation which the Church had to endure. How many gave way or drew back we have no means of knowing. The historian confesses that he had taken no pains to preserve such a record. "We shall not," he says, "make mention of those who were shaken by the persecution, nor of those who suffered shipwreck in their salvation, sunk by their own act and will into the depths of the gulf."

It remains to be observed that the Christians were not the only sufferers under the grinding

[1] Eusebius, b. ix., c. x.

[2] Chap. xvi., vol. ii., p. 244. [3] Eusebius, b. viii., c. ii.

tyranny of this distracted period. The empire, as we have seen, was torn in pieces by civil wars. Taxation, to use the strong expression of Lactantius, had so exhausted the landowners, farmers, merchants and artisans, "that none remained to tax but beggars;" contributions were extorted by torture; roasting by a slow fire, invented to force the Christian conscience, was borrowed in order to wring the reluctant impost from the unhappy provincial.[1]

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[1] Lactantius, *On the manner in which the Persecutors died*, c. xxii. Milman, ii., pp. 223, 224

## CHAPTER IX.

### The Diocletian Martyrs.

We turn now to some examples of that unshaken faith and indomitable constancy which the Church had manifested from the first ages, and which, even in these days of waning love, so many of her sons displayed. Details of barbarity and physical torture are so especially revolting, that the historian is always disposed to keep them out of sight. But in this age of ease and security, it is only right that we, who are come into the possession of so rich an inheritance, should sometimes be reminded at how costly a price, in long past ages, that inheritance was secured. A.D. 303-312.

One of the earliest scenes in this persecution at which history permits us to be spectators, took place in Numidia, at the inland city of Abitina. A band of Christians, amongst whom was a boy of tender years, were seized in the house of a Church Reader, where they had assembled to hear the Scriptures and partake of the Communion. Being taken to Carthage to be arraigned before the Proconsul, they sang hymns of praise as they went along. Several were put to the torture for the purpose of extorting confessions from the rest. The ejaculations and

Part II. Chap. 9.

broken sentences which have been preserved, wrung from agonized lips under the rack, are an evidence of the truthfulness of the record, and seem to bring the sufferers very near to us in spirit.

The first examined was Dativus, a senator. The Proconsul asked of what condition he was, and if he had been present at the meeting. He replied that he was a Christian, and that he had been so present. "Who presided, and in whose house was it held?" asked the Proconsul; and then, without waiting for a reply, commanded that he should be set on the wooden horse,[1] and torn with iron claws.

But no sooner had the tormentors stripped Dativus and produced the claws, ready to commence their horrid work, than another of the prisoners, a man named Thelica, broke through the crowd, and presented himself, exclaiming, "We are all Christians, we have all been at the meeting." Exasperated at the interruption and at the dauntless confession which accompanied it, the Proconsul commanded Thelica to be cruelly beaten, and then stretched on the horse. The sufferer bore his tortures with patience and fortitude, expostulating with his persecutors, and calling on God and Christ his Saviour. "Ye do wrong, unhappy men, ye lacerate the innocent. We are no murderers; we have never defrauded any man. O God, have mercy—Give me strength to suffer in thy name! I thank Thee,—

[1] Equuleus.

and yet am unable to thank Thee." The Proconsul hearing him thus cry out, reviled him: "Thou art beginning now to taste the suffering due to thy crime." To which Thelica, as if already a partaker of the glory which was to follow, responded: "To glory! I thank the God of the kingdoms. It appears, the eternal, the imperishable kingdom.—O Lord Jesus Christ, we are Christians; we are thy servants; Thou art our hope! O God, most holy, most high, almighty; we praise Thee for thy name's sake!" "Thou shouldst have obeyed the law of the Emperor," persisted the Proconsul. Thelica, strong in spirit, though exhausted in body, replied, "I reverence no law but the law of God, which I have learned. This law I keep, for it I am willing to die; in this law I am made perfect; there is no other." A.D. 303-312.

Dativus, who was all this time being lacerated on the horse, encouraged his fellow-sufferer, whilst he prayed also for himself, crying, "Help, O Christ!—I pray thee have pity on me. Preserve my soul, and let it not be confounded. O give me power to suffer!"

When it came to the turn of the Church Reader to be examined, he was told by the Proconsul, "Thou oughtest not to have received them into thy house." His reply was, "I could not do otherwise than receive my brethren." "The Emperor's commands," said the Proconsul, "should have been of more authority with thee." "God," he replied,

"is greater than the Emperor.—Lord Christ grant me patience!" "Hast thou in thy house," demanded the Proconsul, "any sacred writings?" "I have such," he replied, "but they are in my heart."

Among the prisoners was a maiden named Victoria, whose father and brother were still pagans. The brother had come to the tribunal for the purpose of persuading her to renounce her religion, and of thus procuring her release. When she steadfastly declared that she was a Christian, he pretended she was not in her right mind. "But," said she, "this is my mind, and I have never altered it." Upon the Proconsul asking her if she would not go with her brother, she replied, "No, for I am a Christian; those are my brothers who obey the commands of God."

As to the lad, the Proconsul supposed he would be easily intimidated, but even in the child the power of God proved mighty. "Do what you please," he replied, "I am a Christian."[2]

Another North African confessor, Felix, Bishop of Tubzoca,[1] withstood all efforts to make him surrender his copy of the Scriptures. "I have such," he said, "but I will never give them up. It is better that I should be burned, and not the Holy Scriptures. God is to be obeyed rather than man."[3]

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[1] Ruinart, *Acta Sincera.*, pp. 415–422.

[2] So in the *Acta*, conjectured to be Thibaris. [3] Idem, pp. 390, 391.

A.D. 303-312.

Eusebius has left us an elaborate and harrowing description of the sufferings endured by the martyrs in Egypt and the East, of some of which he was himself an eye-witness. Speaking of Egypt, he says, "I myself was present at the slaughter of many at one time. Some were consumed in the flames; others were decapitated in such numbers that the sword was blunted and broken in the hands of the executioner. It was wonderful to see men of birth and wealth, men of repute in learning and philosophy, count all those things as of inferior moment when compared with the testimony of Jesus Christ." But in his extreme admiration for martyrdom, the historian does not distinguish between those who patiently resigned themselves to death, and those who fanatically courted it; for some, as he tells us, could not wait to be apprehended, but rushed to the tribunal, proclaiming that they too were Christians, and submitted to the sentence, singing hymns of praise.[1]

Not only were the officers of justice employed, but the populace were let loose to wreak their vengeance on the Christians, whom they assailed with clubs, rods, whips and ropes. The legalized tormentors exhausted their ingenuity to break the spirit of the martyrs, or to intensify their agony. The stout

[1] *Eccles. Hist.*, b. viii. De Pressensé considers this conduct to have resulted from a sense on the part of the Christians of their growing importance as a political body, as well as to be a token of deterioration in religious feeling. *Martyrs and Apologists*, pp. 221, 222.

branches of trees were drawn together, and the limbs of the victims being firmly bound to them, they were suddenly set free, and springing back, tore the bodies asunder. Some having their hands tied behind them, were mounted on the wooden horse, and not only every limb stretched with racks, but the whole body torn with pincers. Some were hung up by one hand; some were crucified with the head downwards; others, their feet stretched in the stocks to the furthest hole, were beaten to death. The sufferers were animated by the presence of sympathising and admiring multitudes. Women crowded to kiss the hems of their garments; and their scattered ashes or unburied bones were eagerly collected and treasured up as incentives to faith and piety.[1]

Palestine furnishes in the record a numerous contingent to the army of martyrs, not perhaps because the furnace of persecution burnt hotter there than elsewhere, but because the historian to whom we owe these annals resided at Cæsarea. The persecution commenced in that city, where many bishops of the neighbouring churches became noble examples of the power of faith. One being led by force to the pagan altar, the unhallowed offering was thrust into his right hand, and he was dismissed as one who had sacrificed. Another, subjected to the same usage, and loudly protesting against so

[1] Eusebius, b. viii., c. ix. x. Milman, ii., p. 226.

injurious an imputation, was struck on the mouth, and being silenced by many blows was driven violently away, and his name also set down amongst the sacrificers.[1] A.D. 303-312.

In this country and in other parts of Syria were exhibited many acts of high religious courage, undertaken with a more reasonable object than some which occurred in Egypt. Apphianus, a native of Lycia, was a rich young man of scarce twenty years, who had studied in the school of Berytus. He left his father's house that he might live a Christian life, and became a pupil of Eusebius at Cæsarea. It was in the third year of the persecution. The heralds were proclaiming that men, women and children should come to the temples; the military tribunes were calling out from the rolls the names of the citizens; and the heathen were rushing up from every quarter. Unobserved, Apphianus left Eusebius' house and betook himself to the forum. Urbanus, the Proconsul, was in the act of pouring out libations. Noiselessly threading his way through the guard, Apphianus came up to his side and seized his right hand. Then in a solemn tone he exhorted him to

[1] *Martyrs of Palestine*, c. i. Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, himself a martyr, relates that some being cast on the ground, their mouths were forced open and gagged, and the wine and meat which had been offered to the idols poured down their throats; others had hot coals with incense thrust into their hands, which they were made to sprinkle upon the altar. *Canonical Epistle*, c. xiv.

abandon his error, telling him it was not right to forsake the only true God for the worship of idols and demons. He had not time to say more before he was laid hold of by the soldiers, and after being beaten over his whole body, was cast into prison. The next day, having been tortured all night, he was again brought up, and a succession of the most cruel torments employed to compel him to sacrifice. On the third day, the executioners being baffled in every attempt to overcome him, he was thrown into the sea and drowned.[1]

Some Christians in the city of Gaza, who had met to hear the Holy Scriptures, were apprehended and tortured. One of them, a woman, provoked by gross insult as well as violence, cried out against the Emperor for committing the administration of government to such wicked magistrates. This brought fresh sufferings upon her, which so affected another woman in the crowd, that she exclaimed, "How long then wilt thou thus cruelly torture my sister?" The enraged magistrate ordered the speaker to be seized and dragged to the altar. In her resistance to every attempt to force her to sacrifice, she overturned the fire and the frankincense, upon which the two women were bound together and burned.[2]

At the same time with these was condemned and executed another confessor, named Paulus, who

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[1] Idem, c. iv. [2] Idem, c. viii.

met his death in a most Christian spirit. He begged the headsman to withhold his hand for a little while; and his request being granted, with a loud and clear voice he offered prayer and intercession to God on behalf of his fellow Christians, and entreated that peace and liberty might soon be granted to the Church. He prayed for the Jews and the Samaritans, and for those Gentiles who were still in error and ignorance, that they might come to the true knowledge of God. He prayed for the multitude who were standing round the place of execution. Lastly,—"O inexpressible forbearance!" exclaims the historian,—he prayed for the judge who condemned him to death, for the Imperial rulers, and for him who was about to sever his head from his body, entreating the Most High not to lay their sin to their charge.[1] A.D. 303–312.

Romanus was a deacon and exorcist[2] of Cæsarea, who came to Antioch at the time of the demolition of the churches in the former city. Seeing men, women and children approaching in crowds to offer sacrifice to the idols, he could not refrain himself, but reproved them with a loud voice. He was instantly seized, and condemned to be burnt alive.

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[1] Idem, c. i., iv., viii.

[2] In the early days of the Church it was considered that the power of exorcising evil spirits was a special gift. "An exorcist is not ordained, for his gift is of the grace of God, through Christ, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit." *Apostolical Constitutions*, b. viii., c. xxvi. In later times the exorcists formed one of the minor orders of the clergy. *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*

Part II. Chap. 9.

Being fastened to the stake, and the wood heaped around him, as the executioners were waiting for orders to kindle the pile, he exclaimed, "Where is the fire?" For this he was sentenced to have his tongue cut out, which he endured with the utmost fortitude; and after suffering a long time in prison, he was crowned with martyrdom.[1]

A young Christian from Egypt, who had accompanied a number of confessors to the Cilician mines, was with four other persons returning home through Palestine. At the gates of Cæsarea they were arrested by the guards and brought before Firmilianus the Proconsul. Being asked his name, the young man refused to give that which he had received at his birth, in honour of some heathen divinity, and called himself by the name of one of the Old Testament prophets. The Proconsul, somewhat puzzled, inquired of what country he was, and was more bewildered when he received for answer, "Of Jerusalem," for the former Jewish capital had now for nearly two hundred years been known as Ælia Capitolina.[2] After pausing awhile, full of deep suspicion, Firmilianus ordered the torture to be applied, and insisted on knowing whereabouts Jerusalem was situated. He was told it was the city of the righteous, none else being admitted into

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[1] Idem, c. ii.

[2] See ante, pp. 50, 277. It was not until the reign of Constantine that its ancient name was revived.

it, and that it lay far toward the East, toward the rising sun. Firmilianus was now fully convinced that the Christians were collecting in some Oriental city, with a view to make war upon the Empire, and after endeavouring by severe applications of the torture to extract further confessions from his victim, he put him to death as an enemy to the State.[1] A.D. 303-312.

An example of innocent boldness and fidelity was afforded by Theodosia, a maiden of Tyre, not eighteen years of age. Some confessors were being arraigned before the judgment-seat. She approached to salute them, and, as the historian suggests, to ask them to remember her when they should come into the Lord's presence. She was seized by the soldiers as though guilty of some atrocious crime, and was taken before the governor, who ordered her to be torn and furrowed with the instruments of torture, even to the bones. Still breathing, and wearing a cheerful and joyous countenance, she was cast into the sea.[2]

The measures resorted to in Pontus were, if possible, more infernal even than the barbarities practised in Egypt and Palestine. Some had their fingers pierced throughout their length with sharp reeds thrust under their nails; others had molten lead, bubbling with heat, poured down their backs; on others new tortures were inflicted "which," says

[1] Idem, c. xi. [2] Idem, c. vii.

the historian, "it is not fit to describe." "But at last," he continues, "the magistrates were in despair, and weary with slaughter, and surfeited with blood, were pleased, as they termed it, to exchange severity for clemency. They now, therefore, contented themselves with maiming their victims; and it is impossible," he adds, "to calculate the number of those who had the right eye dug out with the sword and seared with a hot iron, or of those whose left foot was maimed, or of those again who were sent to labour. in the copper mines."[1]

Amongst those who laid down their lives in these long years of persecution, were many eminent bishops and Church writers, as Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, Lucian, presbyter of Antioch, Methodius, Bishop of Tyre, Arnobius and Pamphilus. The two last merit particular notice.

Pamphilus was, it is believed, a native of Berytus and a scion of a distinguished Phœnician family. He studied in the Christian school of Alexandria, and was afterwards ordained presbyter of Cæsarea in Palestine. Thrown into prison, in 307, by Urbanus the Governor of the province, he was kept there until his martyrdom in 309. He employed himself while in prison in writing a defence of Origen against the charge of heresy, in which labour he was assisted by his pupil Eusebius, who affectionately

[1] *Eccles. Hist.*, b. viii.

attended upon him, and who in remembrance of his teacher, took the surname of Pamphili. Pamphilus was put to death by decapitation, with twelve of his companions; and their bodies were exposed for four days, that the birds and beasts might devour them. He was a man of sound learning, and an enthusiastic student of the Holy Scriptures, in the diffusion of which he exerted himself, as well as in the critical examination of the text. He gave away many copies, some of them to women whom he observed disposed towards reading; and, with the help of Eusebius, he produced from the Hexapla of Origen a revised edition of the Septuagint.[1] A.D. 303-312.

An illustration of the influence which Pamphilus exercised over those about him is furnished by the history of his slave, Porphyrius, a young man of eighteen years, whom he educated with a father's care, and to whom he had imparted a glowing love for the Redeemer. When Porphyrius heard the sentence of death pronounced on his beloved master, he made request that after the execution he might be allowed to commit his body to the grave. The request excited the suspicion of the fanatical prefect; and when he confessed that he was a Christian, and steadfastly refused to offer sacrifice, he was subjected to the most cruel torture, and at last, after being dreadfully lacerated, was conducted to

[1] *Biographical Notice of Pamphilus.* A. N. L. Vol. xiv. Neander ii., pp. 496, 497. Burton, *Christian Church*, pp. 388, 389.

Part II. Chap. 9.

the stake. He bore his tortures with the utmost constancy, only exclaiming, when the fire reached him, "Jesus, Son of God, help me!"[1]

Two scenes only in the life of Arnobius are presented to us; the rest is shrouded in obscurity. At the outbreak of the persecution he was professor of rhetoric at Sicca[2] in Africa, where he had numerous pupils, amongst whom was Lactantius. Arnobius was a pagan, and although well versed in the systems of philosophy, was none the less an abject idolator. "But lately," he says, "O blindness, I worshipped images produced from the furnace, gods made on anvils and forged with hammers, the bones of elephants, paintings and garlands hung on aged trees; and whenever I espied a stone bedaubed with olive oil, as though some power resided in it, I worshipped it, and begged blessings from a senseless stock."[3] He was moreover, as a lecturer, incessant in his attacks upon Christianity. But the martyrdoms which followed the edict of Nicomedia appear to have touched his heart, and he forsook the mazes of error for the "highway of truth, into which," he says, "I was led by the Great Teacher." He presented himself to the Christians at Sicca; but like

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[1] Eusebius, *Martyrs of Palestine*, c. xi. Neander, ii., p. 497, note.

[2] Sicca Veneria, an important town on the Numidian border. As its name implies, it was a seat of that vile worship of the goddess of love, to which the Phœnician race were addicted.

[3] *Disputations*, b. i., c. xxxix.

the disciples at Jerusalem on the reappearance of Saul, "they were afraid of him," and demanded from their late enemy some proof of his sincerity. The result was the composition of his learned work in defence of Christianity, the *Disputations Against the Pagans*. Although nothing certain is known regarding his death, there is a strong probability that he was one of that "glorious army of martyrs" who fell in this great persecution.[1]

A.D. 303-312.

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[1] Introduction to the Writings of Arnobius, A. N. L. *Dict. of Christ. Biog.*

## CHAPTER X.

CONSTANTINE'S LEGISLATION—HE ASSUMES POWER OVER THE CHURCH—THE DONATISTS—THE CHRISTIANS SLAUGHTER ONE ANOTHER.

THE edicts of Milan did not profess to constitute Christianity the religion of the State; they placed the Church on a par only with Paganism and Judaism.[1] But after the defeat, in 314, of his brother-in-law Licinius, who from an ally had become a rival, Constantine openly avowed himself the patron of the new religion. He was not, it is true, a member of the Church, putting off his baptism until he was on his dying bed; but both in his public acts and in his private life he now identified himself with the Christian party. He discountenanced the heathen worship, exhorted his subjects to embrace the Gospel, and selected the members of the Church as the objects of his patronage. He regarded it as his high commission, "to bring all nations to agree in one opinion concerning matters of religion, and to restore the sick world to health."[2]

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[1] Lactantius, *On the Manner in which the Persecutors died*, c. xlviii.

[2] *Letter to Bishop Alexander and Arius.* Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, b. ii., c. lxiii.

A.D. 314-325.

The laws of Constantine, which were the outcome of the triumph of Christianity, mark a great era in the history of the world. The gladiatorial shows were prohibited; and although this decree became, for the Empire generally, little more than a dead letter, and it was three-quarters of a century before those horrid spectacles ceased to disgrace Roman civilization, yet the amphitheatre never found a place in the Emperor's new capital. He abolished the punishment of crucifixion, repressed infanticide and child-stealing, and even promoted the emancipation of slaves. He discontinued the State sacrifices to the gods, and put down Pagan rites of an obscene character[1] and the practice of private divination. He proclaimed the religious observance throughout the Empire, of the First day of the week, on which no public business was to be transacted, nor any traffic or industry followed. A form of prayer to the Supreme Being was also ordained for the use of the army on that day, which even the heathen soldiers were obliged to repeat.[2]

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[1] See Eusebius' account of the demolition of the temple and grove on Mount Lebanon, polluted with the worship of Venus, of her shrine at Heliopolis (now Baalbek) in Cœle-Syria, and of one of the temples of Æsculapius. *Life of Constantine*, b. iii., c. lii-lvi.

[2] Idem, b. iv., c. xx. The prayer was as follows: "We acknowledge Thee, the only God; we confess Thee to be our King; we call upon Thee for thy aid. By Thee we have obtained victories; by Thee we have overcome our enemies; from Thee we enjoy our present happiness; and we hope Thou wilt bless us with the continuance of the same. We all humbly beseech Thee to preserve our most gracious and victorious Emperor, Constantine, with all his royal progeny."

Part II. Chap. 10.

But when Constantine began to distinguish the Christians from the rest of the community by State gifts and Imperial favours, and even to set himself up as their head, he went beyond his province as a magistrate, and invaded the prerogative of Christ. Amongst his acts of this kind may be specified:— His endowment of churches with revenues derived from the confiscation of heathen temples, and from the common funds of the cities; his appropriation to the Church and clergy of a portion of the corn and other produce which was received in kind by the officers of the revenue, and also of the tribute exacted from conquered nations; and the exemption of the clergy from all civil offices. He even purposed to free the Church lands from taxation, but this law was afterwards repealed. No less revolutionary, and fruitful in results, were two other measures; by one of which litigants, instead of taking their suits to the civil courts, were permitted to carry them before the bishops, whose decisions were to be enforced by all governors and military officers; by the other the clergy were empowered to receive bequests and to hold lands, "a gift which would scarcely have been exceeded if the Emperor had granted them two provinces of the Empire. It became thenceforth almost a sin to die without some bequest to pious uses; and before a century had elapsed the mass of property which had passed over to the Church was so enormous, that the prodigality of the devout had to be

restrained by law."[1] The evil effects of this policy were such as might have been expected. Many rich men procured for themselves "ordination" as ecclesiastics, in order to enjoy the immunities and privileges attached to the clerical office. The Emperor became alarmed, and saw that measures must be taken to secure the interests of the State; he therefore prohibited all such as were by their property qualified to fill municipal and other public offices, from entering the priesthood, and (a new exercise of authority) deprived of their ecclesiastical rank all such as in this way evaded their civil duties.[2] A.D. 313.

The first act of interference by the Emperor in the affairs of the Church happened so early as 313. The province of Numidia was suffering extreme distress from the ravages of Maxentius; and Constantine sent a sum of money (upwards of £2,000) to Carthage, for the relief of the "Catholics" or supporters of Bishop Cæcilius, to the exclusion of those whom he regarded as heretics.[3] This brings us to the history of the Donatists.

Donatism, which had its origin during the Diocletian persecution, appears to have sprung out of

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[1] Milman, iii., pp. 273, 274; Sozomen, *Eccles. Hist.*, b. i., c. viii., ix., b. v., c. v.; Robertson, *Hist. of the Church*, i., pp. 182, 183; Bingham, *Antiq. of the Church*, b. v., c. iii.

[2] Bingham, b. v., c. iii. § 15.

[3] Eusebius, x., 6; Robertson, i., 191. He also directed that the catholic clergy in the province should be wholly exempted from the public offices.

party-spirit and schism. This, however, was but the accident of its birth. That the Church should return in manners and discipline to the purity of former days, was still in many hearts an ardent desire, which only wanted an occasion to assert itself. And although, at first, the Donatists committed the great error of invoking Imperial aid, yet when they came more clearly to understand the true character and position of the Church in the world, and to see through the mist in which her new alliance with the State had enveloped her, they rendered substantial service to the truth, by their steady and uncompromising opposition to State interference. They may be said to be the ecclesiastical successors to the Novatians of the third century, as those had been to the Montanists of the second.

In the year 305 a synod of Numidian bishops (about twelve in number) was held at Cirta, under the presidency of Secundus of Tigisis. It was convened to ordain a bishop in the room of one who had "lapsed" during the persecution; and in the course of the debates it became apparent that scarcely one present was entirely clean-handed. One had given up the Scriptures to be burned; another had offered incense to the gods; a third had surrendered some papers of little account as if they were the sacred manuscripts. A foul crime was laid to the charge of a fourth, the Bishop Purpurius, that of having murdered his two

nephews. The eyes of all present were fixed on him. Turning in fury to Secundus, he cried, "Dost thou wish to frighten me as thou hast frightened others? Not only have I killed, but I do kill all who thwart me. Do not provoke me too far, or I shall have to tell what thou didst when the curator required thee to deliver up the sacred books." Upon this the nephew of Secundus interposed, saying to his uncle, "Thou seest he is ready to depart and make a schism; and not only he, but all the rest: thou hearest what they say against thee; they will unite and pass sentence on thee, and so thou wilt be the only heretic." Secundus, seeing his dilemma, consented now to the proposal which he had before resisted, namely that all that was past should be buried in oblivion, and that each must account for himself to God. His decision was greeted with the unanimous response, "Thanks be to God."[1] A.D. 305.

The "pious fraud" already mentioned,[2] as practised by Mensurius, Bishop of Carthage, in passing off some heretical writings in place of the Holy Scriptures, drew upon him the censure of some of the Puritans. But it was his prudent conduct in checking the inordinate reverence for martyrdom that brought out the ill-humour of the disaffected. He saw that there were too many would-be martyrs,

[1] Optatus, *On the Donatist Schism*, b. i., p. 39. Cooper's *Free Church*, p. 357.

[2] See ante, p. 330.

whose characters would not bear scrutiny,—insolvent debtors, for example, fanatics and idlers, who were fed by injudicious devotees: and with his archdeacon Cæcilian he did his best to discountenance the mistaken reverence with which good Christians regarded these undeserving men.[1]

During the lifetime of Mensurius the storm was brewing; it burst when Cæcilian succeeded him, A.D. 311. The opponents of the new bishop rested their principal objection to his ordination on the plea, true or false, that he had been consecrated by a Traditor,[2] Felix. At the head of their party was a devout and wealthy lady of Carthage named Lucilla, whom Cæcilian had mortally offended by reprimanding her for a habit she had of kissing the bone of an alleged martyr before she would partake of the bread and wine. Numidia was the focus of the disaffection. Secundus of Tigisis came to Carthage attended by seventy bishops, before whom he cited Cæcilian to appear, alleging that his consecration was void, both for the reason mentioned above, and because it ought to have taken place in the presence of the Numidian bishops, and by their primate. Personal charges were also brought against him. Cæcilian refused to appear before so prejudiced a tribunal, but offered, if they could prove his consecration invalid, to be consecrated by them afresh;

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[1] *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, vol. i., pp. 881, 882.

[2] See ante, p. 330.

on which Purpurius is said to have cried: "Let him come to receive our imposition of hands, and we will break his head by way of penance." The Numidian bishops excommunicated Cæcilian, and ordained in his stead as Bishop of Carthage, a reader named Majorinus, a member of Lucilla's household.[1] In consequence of this proceeding, the whole Church of North Africa was divided into two hostile camps,—the supporters of Cæcilian and the adherents of Majorinus, or rather of Donatus, Bishop of Casæ Nigræ,[2] now become the head of the party. A.D. 313.

Cæcilian had already received Imperial recognition, as stated above. The Donatists now appealed to the Emperor that their claims might be considered. Of this appeal, a transaction of great historical importance, some particulars have been preserved. The appellants placed in the hands of the Proconsul Anulinus a sealed packet of papers contained in a leathern bag, which was inscribed, "Statement of the Catholic Church, presented by those in communion with Majorinus, in proof of the crimes of Cæcilian." The packet was accompanied by a petition, the closing portion of which ran thus:—"We address ourselves to you, most excellent Prince, because you are of a righteous

[1] Robertson, i., pp. 190, 191. It is said that Lucilla purchased the appointment of Majorinus by bribing the Numidian bishops. *Dict. Christ. Biog*, Lucilla.

[2] This name, which signifies *The Black Huts*, seems to point to some missionary see on the borders of civilization.

parentage, and the son of a father who did not persecute us, as did his colleagues, the other Emperors. Since, therefore, the regions of Gaul have not fallen into the sin of surrendering the Scriptures, and, since there are disputes between us and other prelates of Africa, we supplicate your Piety, that our cause may be submitted to judges chosen from Gaul."[1]

With the exception of the case of Paul of Samosata, when the bishops invoked the authority of Aurelian to compel that arrogant prelate to make way for his successor,[2] this is the first instance in which the Church asked aid of the State for the settlement of her internal affairs. It was a fatal precedent, the commencement of an unholy alliance by which the Church was a sore loser.

Constantine was quite ready to interfere. Influenced largely by the counsels of Hosius, bishop of Cordova, he seems to have considered that the duty of settling disputes in the Church belonged to him, both as Emperor and as Pontifex Maximus.[3] "I do not believe," he said, at a later stage of the proceedings, "that it is permitted us to tolerate

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[1] Cooper's *Free Church*, pp. 365, 366.

[2] The occurrence is related in chap. 14.

[3] The Pontifex Maximus, or chief of the Pontiffs, was the highest sacerdotal functionary of ancient Rome. He was the supreme judge in all religious matters. When the Republic was merged in the Empire, the new rulers assumed to themselves this dignity, as they did the other high offices of State. Even the Christian Emperors for a while retained the title, which was first refused by Gratian.

these divisions and disputes, which may draw down the wrath of God, not only upon the commonwealth, but also upon myself, whom his divine will has charged with the care and management of all things upon earth."[1] And again, "I believe that I cannot without the greatest criminality, overlook what is amiss, there being nothing to which I am more strictly bound, if I wish to fulfil the duties of a prince, than to extirpate all the errors which the rashness of men has introduced, and to establish union and concord amongst the faithful."[2] Yet on a similar occasion, he could profess the greatest indignation, "that they should have constituted him judge, who was himself amenable to Jesus Christ," and charged them with "acting quite like the heathens in calling upon him to settle their religious disputes."[3] Constantine had not counted the cost; and in constituting himself arbiter of the Christian differences, he did not find himself upon a bed of roses. The interminable quarrels amongst the bishops, and disputes as to heretical doctrine, gave him no rest during the remainder of his days. A.D. 313.

The demand of the adherents of Majorinus was that their cause might be examined by the bishops of Gaul. A council or synod was accordingly held, by the command of the Emperor, at Rome, in the palace of the Lateran, October, 313; but to the five

[1] *Letter to the Prefect Ablavius.* Cooper, p. 367.
[2] *Letter to Celsus, Vicar of Africa.* [3] *Letter to the Council of Arles.*

Gallic bishops who were summoned, were added fifteen from Italy, Miltiades[1] of Rome presiding. Cæcilian came attended by ten bishops of his party, and Donatus of Casæ Nigræ with the same number of the accusers. The synod decided in favour of Cæcilian. Miltiades proposed a compromise, which Donatus and his brethren rejected with disdain, and prayed the Emperor to grant them a further hearing. The Emperor consented, but before another council was summoned he directed a judicial examination by torture to be held at Carthage, where the charges against Bishop Felix, by whom Cæcilian had been ordained, might be sifted. The case was tried, and Felix was pronounced innocent.

The new council, which was drawn from all parts of the Western Empire, met the same year, 314, at Arles. The judges, accusers and accused, were conveyed thither at the public expense.[2] Above two hundred bishops are said to have met, the most numerous assembly of the kind that had yet been known. Cæcilian's ordination was again confirmed. But the defeated party were by no means inclined to give up the contest; they entreated the Emperor to take the matter into his own hands. Constantine again granted their request, and the case was

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[1] Or Melchiades.

[2] In the Imperial summons to Chrestus, Bishop of Syracuse, to attend the Council, he is directed to take a public carriage for himself, two presbyters and three servants, and to meet the other bishops at Arles on the day appointed. Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.*, b. x., c. v.

argued before him at Milan in 316. By this time the first Donatus has disappeared from the scene, and is replaced by another of the same name, styled by his followers, The Great; who, on the death of Majorinus in 315, was elected Bishop of Carthage, and gave his name to his party. He was "a man of fiery, untutored eloquence, great firmness of principle, and great energy of action."[1] A.D. 316-317.

Constantine, who was irritated at the obstinacy of the Donatists, confirmed the sentence which had been pronounced by the synods of Rome and Arles. He did not stop there. An Imperial dictum must not be an inoperative word, and he proceeded to enforce his decision by the aid of the secular power. The losing party were proscribed as enemies to the State. Decrees were issued depriving them of their churches, confiscating their ecclesiastical property, and exiling their bishops. They defied the authority of the Emperor, who sent an armed force under Ursacius, a Count of the Empire, to reduce them to submission. The "Catholic" party were only too ready to assist in this crusade. A sanguinary contest ensued; and now for the first time the world beheld the followers of the Prince of Peace engaged in slaughtering one another. The Imperial attempt at coercion stirred to its depth the fanaticism of this hot-blooded province. Bands of furious desperadoes, known under the name of Circumcelliones, who

[1] Neander, vol. iii., p. 270.

Part II. Chap. 10.

held their own lives cheap, and deemed no death too cruel for those who differed from them, swept over the country carrying fire, torture and slaughter wherever they came.[1] Their war cry was *Deo laudes*;[2] and because Christ had forbidden the use of the sword to Peter, they took for their weapon a huge and massive club, which they named *The Israelite*. The Catholics, according to their own admission, were not far behind them in violence; they appealed to the Old Testament to justify, by the examples of Moses, Phineas and Elijah, the Christian duty of slaying by thousands the renegades or unbelievers. It must be acknowledged that the first-fruits of the alliance between the Church and the State were bitter enough.[3]

Constantine soon found that Donatism was not to be put down by the sword, and he had reason to be alarmed for the security of his African dominions. In 317 Ursacius received instructions to hold his hand, and Cæcilian was exhorted to treat his opponents kindly, and leave vengeance to God. "All schisms," wrote the Emperor, "are from the devil; and these Separatists proceed from him. What good canst thou expect from those who are

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[1] The Covenanters, Fifth-monarchy men and Camisards, although in a much milder form, may be regarded as the modern representatives of these ancient fanatics. The very names which our English enthusiasts assumed, were anticipated, a bishop of the Circumcelliones being surnamed *Habet Deum*, Has-God.

[2] Praises to God.

[3] Milman's *Church Hist.*, ii., pp. 305, 306. *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, i., p. 883.

the adversaries of God and the enemies of the holy Church? . . By patience and kindness we may hope to gain them. . . As I understand that these men have destroyed a church at Constantina,[1] I have ordered my finance minister to build a new one." The Emperor took no further notice of the Donatists; and they held on their own way, increasing so largely in numbers, that in A.D. 330 one of their synods was attended by 270 bishops. The sequel of their history belongs to succeeding reigns. A.D. 314-330.

The political events of the reign of Constantine from the death of Maximinus Daza in 313, may here be briefly noticed. Licinius, after his defeat in 314, fell back upon Paganism, and became its champion. The struggle between himself and Constantine for the dominion of the world, was renewed in 323, when Licinius was defeated in two great battles, and was shortly afterwards put to death by order of the conqueror. Constantine, thus become sole ruler, resolved to remove the seat of Empire to Byzantium, which he called after his own name, Constantinople. The new city was solemnly dedicated in 330.

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[1] Cirta had been restored by Constantine, and its name changed in his honour. It is still called *Constantineh*.

## CHAPTER XI.

### The Arian Controversy—The Council of Nicæa.

Many heresies had vexed the Church since the time of its fearful combat with Gnosticism. No sooner had that moral fever subsided than another epidemic arose in the East, and spread rapidly throughout the world. This was Manicheism, the doctrine of Manes or Mani,[1] a Persian ascetic, who flourished in the middle of the third century. Like the Gnostics, he attempted to engraft Christianity on the ancient religions of the East, especially Buddhism and Zoroastrism; but the Gospel took but an unworthy place in his system, and whilst he acknowledged certain portions only of the New Testament, he entirely rejected the Old. From Zoroaster he borrowed his dualist theory of two original and opposite principles, the one good, the other evil. It is said that Manes was so infatuated as to give out that he was himself the promised Paraclete,[2] and that he was come to impart a more perfect knowledge of the truth than had previously been revealed. His success exciting the jealousy of

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[1] In Latin, Manichæus.

[2] Παρακλητος, Comforter, advocate, helper. John xiv. 16.

the Persian priesthood, he was cruelly put to death by the king, Varanes I., A.D. 272-276. His followers were everywhere persecuted, their very name being branded as infamous; nevertheless, the sect continued to increase, and even the great Augustine was for awhile entangled in the subtleties of its doctrines.[1]

But foreign foes are not the hardest to resist; the Church had also to contend against powerful enemies from within. Not a few of the errors by which men's minds were distracted during the third century sprang out of speculations concerning the relation of the Son of God to the Father. Amongst them was that of Theodotus, who taught that Christ is nothing more than a man; and that of Praxeas, better known as the doctrine of his successor Sabellius, in which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, were explained as denoting only three different manifestations or aspects of one and the same Divine person.[2]

The reign of Constantine saw the rise of a new heresy which rent the Church asunder, and in the course of the succeeding century powerfully influenced the affairs of the world.

Arius, a native of Libya, was a presbyter of Alexandria, and had studied at Antioch under Lucian,

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[1] Neander, vol. ii., 157-195.

[2] Robertson, i., pp. 83, 86. Sabellius illustrated his idea by the body, soul and spirit in man, and by the threefold combination in the solar luminary, of shape or substance, light and heat.

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who suffered as a martyr in the persecution of Maximinus Daza. Several of the most zealous supporters of Arius were trained in the same school. The controversy arose about the year 317. Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, was discoursing on the Trinity, when Arius, who was one of his hearers, charged him with Sabellianism, and asserted, in opposition to his teaching, that the Son of God had not existed from all eternity. Alexander endeavoured for some time to convince him of his error; but finding that he was exposing himself to censure by tolerating a heretic, whose opinions were fast taking root in the Churches, he convened, in 321, a synod of Egyptian and Libyan bishops, who deposed Arius from his office and excluded him from the communion of the Church. The heretical doctrine laid to his charge is stated by Bishop Alexander in a circular letter accompanying the decision of the synod. "The apostates assert that God was not always Father, but that there was a period when He was not a Father; that the Word of God was not from eternity, but was made out of nothing."[1] With this statement seem to agree in substance the words of Arius himself: "We say and believe that the Son is not unbegotten, and that He does not derive his subsistence from any matter; but that by his own will and counsel He has subsisted before time as perfect God, only-begotten and

[1] Socrates Scholasticus, *Eccles. Hist.*, b. i., c. vi.

unchangeable, and that He existed not before He was begotten or created. We are persecuted because we say that the Son had a beginning, but that God was without beginning."[1] A.D. 317-321.

Although this doctrine is based on a grave misconception of Scripture, and its tendency can be no other than to undermine the foundation of the Christian faith, we must not conclude that Arius was himself conscious of promulgating opinions at variance with the general belief of the Church. "He did not believe," observes Neander, "that he was preaching a new doctrine. He was animated by a sincere zeal for what he recognized as true, and withal a strong predilection for logical clearness and intelligibility; but he possessed no depth of religious intuition or apprehension of Christian truths. He received his peculiar, exegetical direction from the Antiochian school. His intention was to defend the old doctrine of the Church concerning the Trinity, against Sabellian and Gnostic opinions, and to exhibit it in a consistent manner. He was in no wise conscious to himself of the result to which his tendency and his principles really led. It may justly be inferred, however, that if Arianism had been able to gain the victory, men would not have rested content with the results which satisfied Arius, but the transcendent doctrines of the Gospel

[1] *Letter to Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia.* Theodoret, *Eccles. Hist.*, b. i., c. v.

would have been drawn to another and an alien province. To him who had seized the doctrine of Christ's Divinity in its true import, and in its coherence with the entire system of Christian faith, the Arian doctrine must have appeared repugnant to the essence of Christianity; and hence there can be no mistaking the fact that this controversy related to a matter of the greatest moment, both in a doctrinal and in a more general Christian point of view."[1]

Arius had passed middle life at the time of the controversy. He is described as being tall and graceful, with engaging manners and a countenance calm, pale and subdued; his conversation fluent and persuasive. In his habits he was a rigid ascetic. According to his enemies, under this modest and mortified exterior were concealed a crafty, intriguing spirit, and unmeasured ambition.[2]

On hearing the sentence of the synod, Arius withdrew into Palestine, and afterwards to Nicomedia, where he was protected by Eusebius, bishop of that city, an old fellow-pupil who shared in his opinions, and who is not to be confounded with Eusebius of Cæsarea, the historian. In his exile he employed himself in writing letters to expound his views, and in composing, for the propagation of his doctrines, hymns or songs in popular metres,

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[1] Neander, *Christian Dogmas*, p. 286, and *Church Hist.*, vol. iv., pp. 8, 9.

[2] Milman, vol. ii., p. 360. Neander, vol. iv., p. 9.

"to be sung at table, and by sailors, millers and travellers."[1] A.D. 323.

But although Alexandria was thus freed from the presence of Arius, his opinions were not so easily banished. They spread throughout Egypt and Libya. In Syria too he was soon able to count amongst his partizans the most learned and influential of the bishops. Constantine, on becoming in 323 master of the East, found the whole Church in a state of distraction. Heedless of the lesson his interference in the affairs of the Donatists should have taught him, he seems to have imagined that his Imperial authority would suffice to calm the tempest. He wrote a letter to Alexander and Arius jointly, in which he tells them that the questions about which they were disputing were "the idle cobwebs of contention, spun by curious wits," and asks, "Who is capable of distinguishing such deep and hidden mysteries?" He admonishes them to take example by the heathen philosophers, who, though they differed in opinion, agreed in a common profession. "Seeing," he continues, "our great and gracious God, the preserver of all, has given us the common light of his grace, I entreat you that my endeavours may be brought to a prosperous end, and his people be persuaded to embrace peace

[1] Neander, *Church Hist.*, iv., 10, 11. Athanasius has preserved some lines of these hymns. "God was not always Father; there was when [he does not say *a time when*] God was alone and was not yet Father. The Son was not always, &c." *Oration against the Arians*, i., § 5.

and concord. Suffer me," he concludes, in an imploring tone, "to spend my days in quiet, that I may enjoy the happiness of a peaceable reign."[1]

Armed with the Imperial letter, Hosius, Bishop of Cordova, to whom the settlement of the affair was entrusted, proceeded to Alexandria and summoned a second synod. The result of his inquiry was that the wound was too deep to be thus healed. "In every city," writes one historian, "bishop was opposed to bishop, and the people contended with one another, like a swarm of gnats fighting in the air."[2] "Those," writes another, "were indeed melancholy times, well deserving of our tears. It was not then as it had been in former ages, when the Church was attacked by strangers and enemies; now those who were natives of the same country, who dwelt under one roof, and sat down at one table, fought together with their tongues as if with spears."[3] The ridicule of the heathen was excited, the disputes of the Christians were rehearsed on the stage, and so much contempt was awakened for their Christian emperor, that his statues were treated with indignity.[4]

Constantine now saw that he had mistaken the matter. He began to understand that the doctrine

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[1] Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, b. ii., c. 63-70. [2] Idem, b. iii., c. iv.

[3] Theodoret, *Eccles. Hist.*, b. i., c. vi. Of the four ancient historians quoted in this chapter, Eusebius alone was contemporary. The other three, Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomen and Theodoret, wrote about a century later.

[4] Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, b. iii., c. iv.

at stake was not so unimportant or so recondite as he had supposed, and although the Arians appeared to him as disturbers of the public peace, he could not hope, after his experience with the Donatists, to extinguish the faction by Imperial authority or force of arms. One resource remained, namely, to refer the controversy to a general council of the whole Church, presided over by himself. He was the more disposed to this measure as he was desirous to terminate the old disputes respecting the time of keeping Easter. Accordingly a general council was summoned to meet at Nicæa, an important city of Bithynia, not far from Constantinople. The time appointed was the month of June, A.D. 325. A.D. 325.

Messengers were sent out to all parts of the empire to invite the bishops to this new and august assembly. By command of the Emperor, the public establishment of post-horses afforded every facility for their journey, free of charge; vehicles or mules were provided, as though the council was an affair of State; and the delegates when they came together were entertained at the public expense.[1]

[1] "The posting arrangements of the Empire made such a convention far more easy than would have been the case at any period in the Middle Ages. The great lines of communication were like railroads, straight as arrows, from one extremity of the Empire to the other. From Bordeaux to Constantinople, a few years later, we have the record of two hundred post stations (monai) and ninety-one inns; an inn at the interval of every half day's journey. Each bishop was to have two presbyters and three slaves as his retinue." Stanley, *Eastern Church.* Lect. iii., p. 93.

The number of bishops who assembled was about three hundred and twenty, besides a much more numerous body of presbyters, deacons, acolyths (or sub-deacons) and lay persons, "many pious and learned men of the neighbouring provinces" being drawn together by so novel and extraordinary an occasion. Some came out of curiosity to see the Emperor. Even heathen philosophers were attracted to the spot, either from desire of knowledge, or because they smarted under the recent suppression of their religion, and burned with eagerness to engage the Christian doctors in disputation and to sow dissension amongst them.[1]

The great body of ecclesiastics were from the East. Europe had not yet been agitated by the schism, and west of Greece only Hosius of Cordova, Cæcilian of Carthage, and two Roman presbyters, as representatives of the aged Bishop Sylvester, attended the council.[2]

Many of the delegates still bore the marks of their sufferings in the recent persecution. One of the Asiatic bishops had lost the use of both hands by the searing of a red hot iron; some, like Paphnu-

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[1] Sozomen, b. i., c. xvii., xviii. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, b. iii., c. vi.-ix. Socrates, b. i., c. viii.

[2] Three lists of the delegates are extant; a Greek, a Syriac and a Coptic. They differ from each other in some particulars, and in none does the enumeration nearly come up to the number mentioned above. We shall perhaps not be far wrong in assuming that Asia Minor contributed at least two-fifths of the members of the council, and Syria, including Phœnicia, Palestine and "Arabia," one-fourth. One bishop came from Persia and one from "Gotthia." B. H. Cowper's *Syriac Miscellanies*, 1861.

tius of Upper Egypt, had had the right eye dug out; others had been deprived of the right arm. In short, says the historian, with pardonable exaggeration, it was an assembly of martyrs.[1] A.D. 325.

Previous to the opening of the council, the disputants engaged in dialectic contests with one another, attracting around them a crowd of listeners. On one of these occasions, a simple-minded layman who had been a steadfast confessor during the persecution, stepped forward and reproved the combatants for their vain reasoning, telling them that Christ and his apostles did not bequeath us the art of logic or empty subtleties, but *naked truth*, to be preserved by faith and good works.[2] At another time, when a pagan philosopher, who prided himself on his superior argumentative powers, began to ridicule some of the presbyters, an aged confessor, unpracticed in dialectics, offered himself as his opponent, and addressed him as follows: "In the name of Jesus Christ, O philosopher, hearken to me. There is one God, who made all things by the power of the Word, and established them by the holiness of his Spirit. The Word, whom we also call the Son of God, seeing mankind sunk in error and living like the beasts which perish, was filled with compassion, and condescended to be born of a woman, to dwell amongst men and to die for them;—and He will come again to judge

[1] Theodoret, b. i., c. vii. [2] Socrates, b. i., c. viii.

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every one of us for the actions of his life. With all simplicity we believe these things to be true. Do not therefore waste thy labour in striving to disprove what can only be understood by faith, or in scrutinizing the manner in which these things did or did not come to pass. Answer me; dost thou believe?" The philosopher, startled by the abruptness of the question, and smitten in his conscience, replied, "I believe;" and immediately began to instruct others in his new faith.[1]

The earlier sessions of the council were probably held in a basilica or other place of public resort; and here the bishops summoned Arius before them, and gave him the opportunity of vindicating his opinions. Many took part in the discussions, but the most distinguished champion on the orthodox side was a young man, a deacon of Alexandria, who had accompanied Bishop Alexander. This was the great Athanasius.[2]

On the Emperor's arrival he caused the council to be removed to the palace, where a large hall was prepared, in which the bishops and other delegates took their places according to their rank.[3] When they were all seated, and as they waited for the Emperor, the whole assembly was hushed into stillness. At length he came, preceded by no guard

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[1] Sozomen, b. i., c. xviii. [2] Idem, b. i., c. xvii.

[3] Tradition points out the spot, marked by a few broken columns, where the palace stood, close to the shore of Lake Ascania. A solitary plane-tree grows amongst the ruins. Stanley's *Eastern Church*, p. 121.

to make way for him, and accompanied only by a few of his Christian favourites. As he entered, all rose and remained standing, whilst, with his eyes cast down, and a blushing countenance, he passed slowly through the midst of them. His handsome features and strong-built, well-proportioned frame were set off by a robe of rich purple, embroidered with gold and jewels. When he came to the upper part of the hall, he stood awhile, and a low chair of gold being brought him, he made a sign to the bishops to sit down before he would take his seat.[1] A.D. 325.

As soon as they were all seated, Eusebius of Cæsarea, who occupied the place of honour at Constantine's right hand, rose, and addressed the Emperor in a short speech, after which he recited a hymn of thanksgiving to God. When he had ended, the eyes of all were fixed upon Constantine, who, looking on them with a cheerful countenance, in a soft and gentle voice began an oration in Latin, which was afterwards rendered into Greek and other languages by his interpreter. "It was my desire, dear friends" (thus he spoke), "that you should meet together in a general council. . . Let not any private envy deprive us of the good which ought to arise from this meeting. Seeing God has made the Christians victorious over the tyrants, let not the devil's tares of dissension spring up amongst

[1] Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, b. iii., c. x.

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you, for seditions in the Church are of worse consequence than war; this kills the body, but those destroy the soul. . . And although I rejoice to see you here assembled, I should be much more pleased to see unity and affection amongst you. I intreat you, therefore, beloved ministers of God, to remove the causes of dissension, to cut off the heads of this hydra of heresy, and establish peace."[1]

Many ecclesiastics seem to have resorted to the council in the hope of obtaining redress for private or party grievances, and on the day before, many petitions had been presented to the Emperor with this object. These he now took, and caused them to be burnt before him, telling the memorialists that all their mutual accusations would be produced again at the last day, and be judged by the great Judge of all.[2]

But neither this act nor his admonitory speech produced much effect on the excited spirits by whom he was surrounded. "As soon," writes Eusebius, "as their tongues were loosed, some began to accuse those who sat nearest to them, and others to defend themselves, and lay the blame on their adversaries."[3] "It was," as the historian Socrates styles it, "a battle in the night, in which neither

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[1] Ibid, c. xii.

Socrates, b. i., c. viii. Sozomen, b. i., c. xvii. Some uncertainty exists as to the stage of the proceedings when the petitions were burnt.

[3] *Life of Constantine*, b. iii., c. xiii.

party appeared distinctly to understand the grounds on which they calumniated one another."[1] "Many questions," continues Eusebius, "were propounded on either side, and the disputes grew hot and turbulent; but the Emperor patiently attended to all their disagreements, praising some, pacifying others, reasoning impartially and arguing courteously, and delivering his own opinion in the Greek language, in which he was not unskilful."[2] A.D. 325.

The Arian controversy brought to a focus the desire which had begun to manifest itself ever since the priestly element gained the ascendancy, namely, that of possessing a declaration of faith which should be binding on the universal Church. It had not then, it has scarcely even now, been discovered that this object, however desirable it may seem, is unattainable, and that the paths by which men attempt to reach it, must inevitably lead into lack of charity, intolerance and persecution. Various succinct forms of belief seem to have existed in some of the Churches from an early period. The most ancient which has come down to us is to be found in Irenæus, A.D. 182-188.[3] The writings of Tertullian also contain two or three forms, one of which nearly resembles the Apostles' Creed in its

[1] *Eccles. Hist.*, b. i., c. xxiii.

[2] Idem. Sozomen, however, says Constantine was almost ignorant of Greek. *Eccles. Hist.*, b. i., c. xx.

[3] It is unmethodical, and contains several clauses not to be found in later exemplars. Irenæus, *Against Heresies*, b. i., c. x., § 1.

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more ancient shape, as it was used in the fourth century.[1]

The creed which was first presented to the council originated in one of the Eastern churches, and was not exactly identical with any of the above-mentioned. It was brought forward by Eusebius of Cæsarea, as "that which had been held from the first by the bishops of his church." It was mostly couched in scripture language. Christ's divinity was distinctly stated, but in such terms that, although according to their full import they stood in contradiction to the Arian tenets, they might be so construed as to be accepted by the dissentients. According to one authority the document was received with universal disapprobation, and immediately torn to pieces. According to others, the party of Bishop Alexander was satisfied with the articles, but declared that as the creed was capable of a double interpretation, it was necessary to add such other words or propositions as should effectually exclude the "blasphemous doctrines of Arius." To this view the Emperor, under the influence of Hosius and his associates, lent the weight of his authority;

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[1] *On Prescription against Heretics*, c. xiii.; *On the Veiling of Virgins*, c. i. The old form of the Apostles' Creed is as under: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Ghost, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, buried, arose from the dead on the third day, ascended to the heavens, and sits on the right hand of the Father; whence He will come to judge the living and the dead; and in the Holy Spirit; the holy Church; the remission of sins; and the resurrection of the body." Mosheim, *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 93, note 2.

and the anti-Arian party, in defining the Divine nature of the Son of God, introduced the famous epithet, *Homoousion*[1] (that is of the *same being, substance* or *essence* with the Father), a term which they are said to have chosen as being especially obnoxious to their opponents.[2] Not satisfied with this, they added other antithetic clauses having in view the same object, namely, to put Arius and his adherents completely out of the orthodox pale, and they wound up with pronouncing the anathema of the Church on everyone who should hold the heretical opinions. Notwithstanding the repugnance of many of the Eastern Churches to phraseology which, like the word Homoöusion, was capable of admitting a sensuous interpretation, and notwithstanding the numerical importance of those who at heart agreed with Eusebius of Cæsarea, and formed the semi-Arian party, the tactics of the orthodox section were successful, and the form of belief which they presented was accepted by all except a few, and became the celebrated Nicene Creed.[3] A.D. 325.

[1] ὁμοούσιος.

[2] It is a curious circumstance that this term *homoousion* was rejected by the Council of Antioch (A.D. 264), which sat in judgment on Paul the heretical Bishop of Samosata. Neale's *History of the Holy Eastern Church, Patriarchate of Antioch*, by Williams, p. 49.

[3] Neander, vol. iv., pp. 20-24. Amongst the bishops who were summoned to the council was Gregory the Illuminator, the apostle of Armenia. Being unable to attend, he sent his son, who brought back the decrees. The venerable man on reading them greatly rejoiced, and exclaimed, "Now let us praise Him who was before the worlds, worshipping the most Holy Trinity and the Godhead of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, now

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The creed was as follows: "We believe in one God Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, by whom all things, both in heaven and earth were made. Who for us men and our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate, and made man, and suffered, and the third day rose again, and ascended into heaven, and shall come again to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost. And those who say, There was a time when the Son of God was not, or that He did not exist before He was made because He was made out of nothing, or of another substance or essence, or that He was created or mutable, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes them."[1]

On the morrow, when the council again assembled, Eusebius of Cæsarea expressed in strong terms his objection to the new articles. But after many explanations he yielded, for the sake, as he said, of peace, satisfying his conscience by interpreting the words, not in accordance with the intentions of

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and ever, world without end, Amen," which words are still added to the Nicene Creed when repeated in the Armenian Church. *Dict. Christ. Biog.* St. Gregorius (7).

[1] Bingham, *Antiq. of the Church*, b. x., c. iv., § 14. It was afterwards enlarged by the Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381.

those who had introduced them, but in a sense which made them harmonize with his own doctrinal belief. Others followed his example. At first seventeen bishops, who probably all belonged to the strictly Arian party, declined to go with the majority, but when they understood that the Creed was to be published under Imperial authority, and that the penalty of recusancy would be the loss of place and favour, the greater part submitted. There remained finally but two bishops besides Arius, namely, Theonas of Marmarica, and Secundus of Ptolemais, who declared without reserve against the new creed. The two intimate friends of Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicæa, subscribed the creed; but they refused to put their hands to the condemnatory clause, because, as they said, they did not believe from what they knew of his written and oral communications, that Arius had actually taught the doctrines of which he was accused.[1] A.D. 325.

The other chief matter for which the council had been summoned, namely, to settle the time of celebrating Easter, was determined with more unanimity, though not without injustice. That which had been the Western or Roman rule was established, and the Jewish reckoning condemned; and those communities and individuals in the East who refused to abandon their old traditional prac-

[1] Neander, iv., pp. 19-27.

tice, were excommunicated. So far had the Church declined from the spirit of Polycarp and Anicetus,[1] so completely had the lust of uniformity eaten out the heart of charity! The dissentients united together as a separate body, and were known as Quartodecimanians.[2]

Thus ended the famous Council of Nicæa. Loving pens represent it as a venerable assembly, full of wisdom and heavenly grace, successfully disposing of the grave and difficult questions which agitated the Church. This is its picture as it should have been, rather than as it was. The rulers of the Church, who claimed to be the successors of the Apostles, had here an opportunity of showing to the world how men anointed with the Holy Spirit are able to handle and resolve the Lord's business. Most of them had had large experience, both of adverse and prosperous times; many had shown themselves valiant for the truth in the sharp hour of trial, and still carried the marks of their fidelity. But instead of the dignity, patience and charity, which ought to have been the very life-breath of such an assembly, strife and envy too often prevailed. To hold the truth with the understanding only, however sound and scriptural the creed, is the lesser part. If we would defend or propagate it to good purpose, we must possess it, not in the

[1] See ante, pp. 165-167.

[2] That is, Observers of the fourteenth day.

head only, but in the heart and in the conduct. A.D. 325.
Could any stronger proof of the declension of the Church in the fourth century be afforded, than the conduct of the bishops on this occasion? Could any spectacle be more humiliating than that this, the first Œcumenical Council, should be so agitated by interest and passion, so forgetful of the very primer of the Gospel, as to be indebted for lessons of forbearance, courtesy and charity to the half-heathen sovereign who presided over it? Before the Diocletian persecution, the Church had sunk into a state of pride and ease. By that furnace seven times heated she had been purged and recalled to her duty; but the good then gained would seem to have been lost in the thirteen years which followed, years, not of peace only, but of accompaniments far alien to her true life,—wealth, power and Imperial patronage.

It may be urged that although the council was not conducted with all the decorum which was to be desired, yet in stemming the torrent of Arianism, in establishing the orthodox faith, and setting up a clear, enduring symbol of belief round which all might rally, it performed a work worthy of its character and fame, and of the gratitude of posterity. Let the council receive its full meed of praise. What might have happened if the Nicene Creed had not been adopted no one can say. But let us not ignore the incalculable mischief of enforced uniformity, nor overlook the fact that the

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conclusion arrived at by the council was very far from settling the question at issue. "The manner in which the controversy was left," observes Neander, "could only contain the seeds for new disputes. Here was no cordial union, springing freely by a natural course of development out of inward conviction, but a forced and artificial conjunction of men, still widely separated by their different modes of thinking, in relation to a creed which had been imposed on them, and which was variously expounded according to the doctrinal proclivities of the various parties. Some who received the debated word *Homoousion*, explained it to mean *Homoiousion*[1] (that is to say not of the *same* but of *like substance with*) and charged the others who interpreted it in its proper and original signification with Sabellianism; while the latter accused the former of Tri-theism.[2]

Towards the conclusion of the council, which lasted two months, Constantine invited the bishops to a banquet. It was the twentieth anniversary of his reign.[3] As they entered the palace the guards, as was customary, stood with drawn swords at the gate, but the guests passed between them without fear. Some sat beside the Emperor, others at tables below on either side. As Eusebius says, they could scarcely believe that what they saw was a reality not

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[1] ὁμοιούσιος. [2] Neander, vol. iv., pp. 27, 28.

[3] Reckoned from the death of his father, Constantius Chlorus, at York.

a vision, and were ready to imagine that the King- A.D. 325.
dom of Christ had actually commenced. When the feast was over, Constantine presented every one with gifts according to his degree; but he whom he most honoured was Paphnutius, whom he embraced, kissing the empty socket from which the eye had been torn out by the executioners.[1] When the bishops were prepared to return home, he again called them together, and after exhorting them to be of one mind and to maintain peace with one another, and enjoining them to be diligent in prayer for himself, his children and the Empire, he bade them farewell.[2]

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The Turkish village of Isnik now occupies the place where Nicæa once stood. The ancient glory of the city has long since departed; the natural beauty of its situation remains. Sir Charles Fellows, who visited it thirty years ago, after describing the underwood and evergreen shrubs through which he passed; the arbutus, the laurestinus, and the daphne scenting the air, with violets, hyacinths and anemones beneath his feet, continues: "Amidst this garden the most beautiful view opened before us, not grand but perfectly lovely. In the extreme distance was the snowy range of Olympus, and before it a series of fine mountains with their feet bathed in the most placid of lakes, the ancient Ascania, which is about ten miles long, and four in breadth. At the southern end of the lake, beautifully situated, stood the ruined towers of the many-times famous

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[1] Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, b. iii., c. xiv., xv. Socrates, b. i., c. xi.
[2] Sozomen, b. i., c. xxv.

Nicæa. Beneath us, sloping from our feet to the edge of the lake, was a highly cultivated and rich valley." *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor.* London, 1852, pp. 82, 83.

The gate represented in our lithograph is one of the four principal gates of the city, which still remain to attest the solidity of Roman architecture. It is on the South side, and was built about half-a-century before the holding of the council; so that between those massive towers and under that archway must have passed long trains of bishops and clergy, gentlemen with their attendants, heathen philosophers, merchants, and people of every description, coming from the greater part of Asia Minor, and from Syria and Egypt.

The Gate of Yeni-Cheher, Isnik, the ancient Nicæa.

*From Texier, Asie Mineure*

## CHAPTER XII.

INTOLERANT EDICTS OF CONSTANTINE—HE ESPOUSES THE ARIAN CAUSE—ATHANASIUS—BAPTISM AND DEATH OF THE EMPEROR—LACTANTIUS.

THE breaking up of the Council left the Emperor overflowing with hatred of the doctrines of Arius, which now appeared to him nothing less than blasphemous. To the ecclesiastical sentence by which Arius and the two bishops, Theonas and Secundus, were deposed and excommunicated, he added the Imperial penalty of banishment. He directed, moreover, that the writings of Arius should be burnt, threatening with death all who should secrete them. Three months afterwards, Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis, who had subscribed the creed but not the anathemas, were also banished.[1] A.D. 325.

It was not the Arians only who felt the weight of Constantine's displeasure. Now that the bishops had gained the ear of the Emperor, and could make use of the secular arm, it fared ill with other dissenters, or "heretics" as they were called. Ostensibly persecution had ceased. The Church was supposed to have come out of a sea of storms into

[1] Neander, vol. iv., p. 27.

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a smooth haven of repose and liberty. But this was only in name. The objects and the actors were changed, but the attempt to coerce men's consciences still survived. Constantine was persuaded to promulgate a penal law against several communities of the dissenters,—a measure by so much the more infamous than the edicts of Diocletian, as it was enacted professedly in the cause of Christ. The former coercive acts against the Donatists might possibly find an excuse in the appeal which had been made by that party to the arbitrament of the Emperor, or in the danger with which the public peace was threatened. The new measure could shelter itself under no such plea; it was the first of its kind, and opened the way to a long succession of intolerant laws, enacted by self-styled Christian rulers, which has not even yet come to an end.

The edict commences thus: "Know ye Moravians, Valentinians, Marcionites, Paulians and Cataphrygians,[1] that your doctrine is both vain and false. O ye enemies of truth, authors and counsellors of death, ye spread abroad lies, oppress the innocent and hide from the faithful the light of truth. . . That your pestilential errors may spread no further, we enact by this law that none of you dare hereafter

[1] The Valentinians were the most numerous of all the Gnostic sects. The Marcionites were the followers of Marcion (see ante, p. 99), the Paulians, of Paul of Samosata, whose history will be found in a subsequent chapter. Cataphrygian was another name for Montanist. Of the Moravians we know nothing.

to meet at your conventicles, nor keep any factious or superstitious meetings, either in public buildings, or in private houses, or in secret places; but if any of you have a care for the true religion let them return to the Catholic Church; for it is agreeable to that flourishing estate which we by God's Providence enjoy, that they who live in such an age of knowledge and hope as this is, should be converted from all wandering blindness of error to the right way of salvation. And that our careful providence for curing these errors may be effectual, we have commanded that all your superstitious places of meeting, your heretical temples (if I may so call them) shall be, without delay or contradiction, pulled down and confiscated to the Catholic Church." A.D. 325, 327.

The hand of Eusebius of Cæsarea is plainly to be seen in this measure. In transcribing the edict into his *Life of Constantine*, he heaps abuse on the objects of it, calling them "hypocrites, caterpillars and locusts." He tells us also that many returned, some creeping back in a dissembling, crafty manner, as terrified by the Imperial threats, others with joy, as having again found their true mother Church; and that by this means the heretics were suppressed, and the Catholic Church became again a firm and united body.[1] But this jubilant language is very far from being borne out by the facts of history.

Shortly after the close of the council, Bishop

[1] B. iii., c. lxi.-lxiv.

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Alexander died, and Athanasius, though only thirty years of age, was, by general acclamation, chosen to succeed him. Like Cyprian, he tried to conceal himself to escape the dangerous honour, but, as in Cyprian's case, the attempt was futile. He was already the soul of the orthodox party, and for nearly half a century after his election he acted as its acknowledged leader, steadily pursuing this grand purpose of his life against all opponents, whether in the Court or in the Church itself. However disinclined we may be to adopt the *words* of the Nicene Creed, we must believe with Neander, writing in the name of Athanasius, that "on the holding fast of the Homoousion *doctrine* depends the whole unity of the Christian consciousness of God, the completeness of the revelation of God in Christ, the reality of the redemption which Christ wrought, and of the communion with God restored by Him to man."[1]

To a large part of the Eastern Churches, as already hinted, the Homoousion article was distasteful, as founded upon too sensuous an idea, and Constantine, who can hardly himself be supposed to have had a clear insight into these doctrinal questions, soon began to come under the influence of Arian opinions. His sister, Constantia, the widow of Licinius, was in frequent intercourse with Eusebius of Cæsarea. She had also an Arian presbyter

[1] Neander, vol. iv., pp. 30, 31.

A.D. 327-332.

for her spiritual guide, who convinced her that Arius had been unjustly condemned. Constantia possessed great influence over her brother, and on her death-bed, in 327, she earnestly commended the presbyter to his attention. This ecclesiastic rapidly gained the Emperor's confidence, and succeeded in persuading him that personal motives and passions had had much more to do with the decision of the late council than any concern for sound doctrine. Constantine accordingly sent Arius a message (A.D. 328 or 329) giving him permission to return to Alexandria, and assuring him of his favour; and Arius in his turn presented to the Emperor a confession of his faith, and besought him to put a stop to what he termed "these idle controversies on mere speculative questions." The confession satisfied the Emperor, who extended his favour also to Theognis and Eusebius of Nicomedia, restoring them to their sees.[1]

But the readmission of Arius into the Church was not so simple a matter as Constantine seems to have supposed. Athanasius refused to receive back the heretic. In vain the friends of Arius employed representations, petitions and threats; the bishop was unyielding as a rock. The Emperor interfered, and commanded him under pain of deposition and banishment, to receive again into communion Arius and all those of his adherents who were willing to

[1] Neander, vol. iv., pp. 28, 29.

return. But Athanasius regarded the threats of the Emperor as little as he did those of the Arians, and returned him for answer, that his duty as a pastor did not permit him to receive the teachers of false doctrines into the fellowship of the Church. Constantine could not help paying homage to this example of lofty courage, and forbore as yet, further to urge the matter. The enemies of Athanasius, however, were not disposed to relinquish their object. They brought a heavy charge against the bishop, in answer to which, in A.D. 332, he presented himself before the Emperor at Psammathia, a suburb of Nicomedia. His personal appearance, for he was a man of remarkable presence, seems to have overawed the spirit of Constantine, who not only honourably acquitted him, but in his letter to the Church at Alexandria, referred to him as "a man of God."[1]

Nevertheless Alexandria continued to be the scene of disturbances, which Athanasius, who acted with more zeal than discretion, vainly attempted to quell; and in the year 335 Constantine was again obliged to interfere. It was the thirtieth year of the Emperor's reign; the magnificent church which he had erected over the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem had just been completed, and he had invited the bishops of the surrounding countries to assist in its dedication. But before they assembled at Jerusalem

[1] Idem, pp. 32, 33.

he directed them to meet at Tyre, under the presidency of Eusebius of Cæsarea, in order to inquire into the matters in dispute between Athanasius and his opponents. Various extravagant charges were brought against that prelate, some of which he successfully refuted; whilst others, which were investigated in Egypt itself by a committee of his adversaries, were reported to be proved. Athanasius, who felt himself aggrieved by the conduct of his judges, resolved to appeal to the Emperor in person, and for that purpose proceeded to Constantinople. Constantine was making his entry into the city on horseback, when the bishop, with a band of ecclesiastics, suddenly presented himself in his path. Not recognizing him at first sight, the Emperor was startled, and ordered him to be removed from his presence. Athanasius, nothing daunted, said that all he asked for was that the synod by which he had been judged might be removed to Constantinople, so that he might have a fair hearing in the Emperor's presence. His request was granted, and a letter was despatched to Jerusalem, whither the synod had by this time proceeded, requiring their presence in the capital. A few of the bishops only obeyed the summons.[1] The accusers, instead of pressing the former charges, now brought forward another of a still more serious kind, namely, that Athanasius had said it

A.D. 335.

[1] Neander, vol. iv., pp. 34, 35. Socrates, b. i., c. xxxiv., xxxv.

lay in his power to keep back the half-yearly convoy of grain from Alexandria, on which Constantinople depended for subsistence. Whether Constantine gave credence or not to this improbable accusation, he made use of it as the occasion for getting rid of the intractable bishop, and banished him (A.D. 336) to the city of Treves.

Arius was now triumphant. The synod during its session at Jerusalem had solemnly received him back into the bosom of the Church. He returned to Alexandria, but the Christian community in that city was too enthusiastically devoted to their exiled bishop to allow his antagonist to take peaceable possession. Fresh disturbances arose, and the Emperor, to whom the preservation of peace was all-important, sent for Arius to give an account of the matter. Being satisfied with his report, and with the confession of faith which he again required him to make and to confirm by an oath, he directed that his reinstallment should take place with all proper solemnities in Constantinople. It was on a Sabbath, on which day, as well as on Sunday, public worship was held in the city. But the bishop, whose name was Alexander, a zealous champion of the Homoousion doctrine, refused to open the church doors. The friends of Arius, who were numerous, threatened to obtain an Imperial order, and effect a forcible entry on the following day. Alexander was thrown into the greatest perplexity. He prostrated himself, it is related, on the pave-

ment before the altar, and prayed that either he might be himself taken away, and so not compelled to act contrary to his conscience, or else that Arius might be removed. That same evening Arius died.[1] A.D. 337.

Whatever effect the death of Arius may have produced upon the mind of Constantine, it did not soften him towards Athanasius. He contemptuously rejected the petitions which were sent from Alexandria soliciting the recall of their beloved pastor, whom he now designated that "proud, turbulent, obstinate and intractable" prelate. It was not until the following year, when he was on his death-bed, that in spite of the opposition of Eusebius of Nicomedia, he ordered his recall.[2]

The Emperor was taken ill as he was setting out on an expedition against Persia, and he felt that his illness was mortal. He now sought the baptism which he had so long deferred. This rite had come to be looked upon "much as the Pagans regarded the purifications and lustrations of their own religion, as a complete obliteration and expiation of all former sins; and, therefore, partly from a super-

[1] Neander, vol. iv., pp. 35-40. According to Socrates Scholasticus, the death of Arius occurred on tbe Sunday morning whilst he was proceeding in triumph from the Imperial palace to the church. On approaching Constantine's Forum, where stood the column of porphyry, a violent disorder seized him, followed by hæmorrhage, of which he almost immediately expired. *Eccles. Hist.*, b. i., c. xxxviii. Athanasius, however, says that his death took place on the Sabbath evening. Neander, ubi supra.

[2] Milman, vol. ii., pp. 382, 383.

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stitious dread, partly from the prudential desire of making the best of both worlds, Constantine had deferred the ceremony to the moment when it would include the largest amount of the past, and leave the smallest amount of the future."[1] Kneeling in the Martyrs' church he made confession of his sins, and removing thence to his palace in a suburb of Nicomedia, he called the bishops together, and told them, that his purpose had been to receive baptism in the river Jordan, where our Saviour was baptized, but God who knew what was best had appointed otherwise; he desired them therefore to administer the rite without delay. His robe of imperial purple was removed; the ceremony was performed; and clothed in white, he returned to the palace and lay on the royal bed expecting his end.

Being thus, as Eusebius tells us in his courtly style, "the first of all the Emperors to be regenerated by the new birth of baptism, he was in a rapture of faith, and exclaimed, 'Now I know that I am happy, and that I shall enjoy immortal life in the presence of God.'"[2] And when the officers of the army were admitted to his presence and deplored his approaching death, he answered that "now only had he begun to live, and that he was impatient to go to

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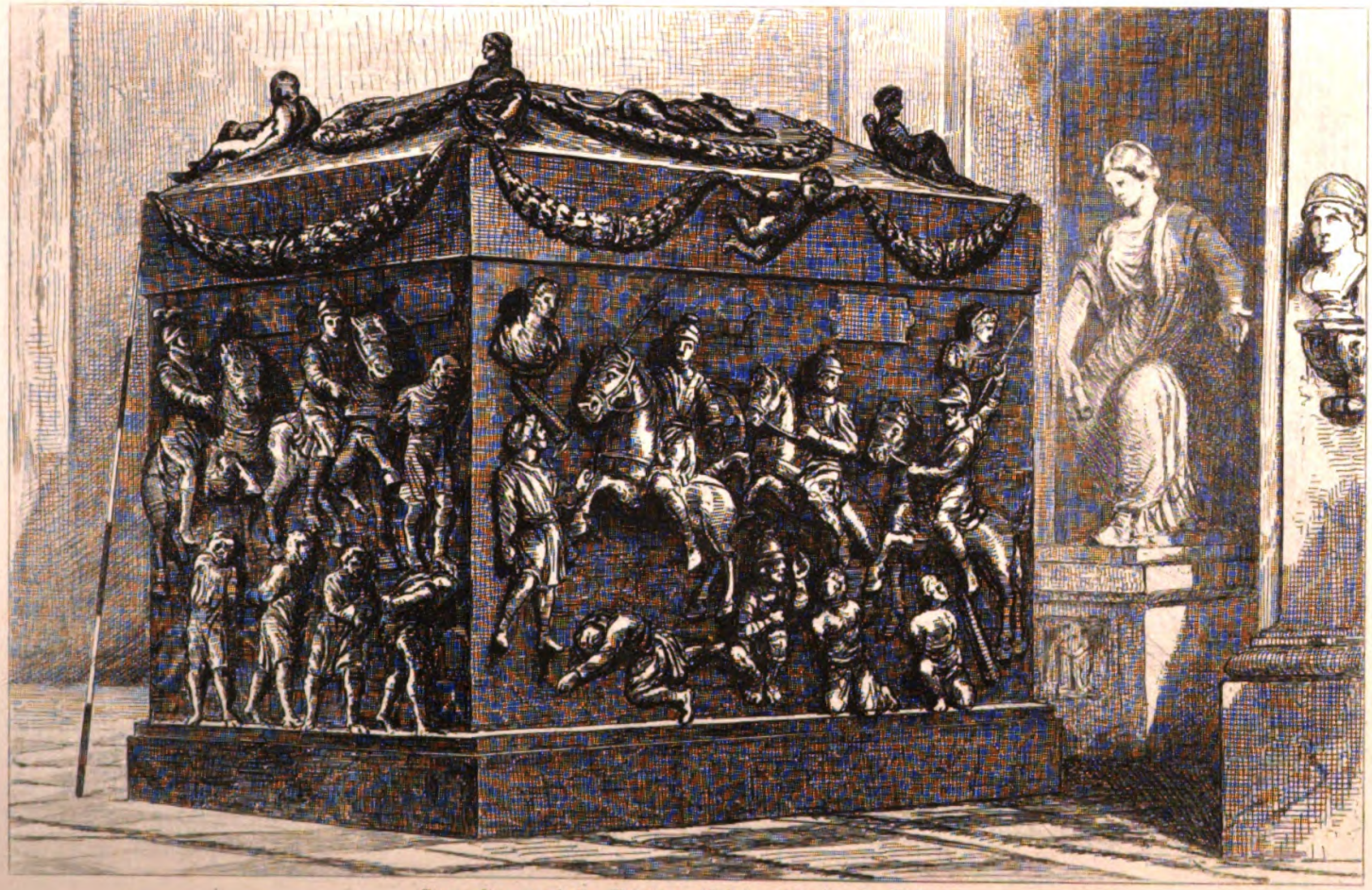
[1] Stanley, *Eastern Church*, pp. 215, 216.

[2] Eusebius relates Constantine's postponement of his baptism without a word of reprobation. Yet the Council of Neo-Cæsarea, A.D. 314, had ruled that persons deferring baptism superstitiously were to be regarded as infamous. Canon 12.



Sarcophagus of the Empress Helena, now in the Vatican.

*Etched from a photograph, by W. Bell Scott.*

heaven." He expired A.D. 337, in the sixty-fourth year of his age and the thirty-first of his reign. A.D. 337.

The tidings of his death caused universal grief; "the army mourning like sheep who had lost their shepherd, and the people with cries and tears running to and fro in the city." The body was wrapped in cloth of gold and covered with a purple pall and thus taken to Constantinople, where on a golden bed and surrounded with wax lights in golden candlesticks, it lay in state many days.[1] At Rome, Constantine was enrolled with his predecessors among the gods of the heathen Olympus, and incense was offered before his statue. In Constantinople he had prepared himself a tomb in the magnificent church which he had built,[2] and had placed it in the midst of twelve pillars set up in honour of the twelve Apostles. Here he was buried, and the Church, in grateful memory of his deeds, canonized him and his mother the Empress Helena, under the presumptuous title of *Isapostoloi*, or Equal to the Apostles.[3]

The city of Constantinople is an enduring monument to the genius of Constantine. Its selection as the seat of empire rivals Alexander's choice of the mouth of the Nile as the emporium of com-

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[1] *Life of Constantine*, iv., c. lxi.-lxvi.

[2] The church of St. Sophia. Constantine's building was burnt, as well as that which succeeded it; the present structure (the celebrated Mosque of St. Sophia) was built by Justinian in A.D. 532.

[3] Stanley, p. 219.

merce. The foundation of the city was inaugurated with the same reference to supernatural interposition as had preceded his victory over Maxentius, but whether the god of Romulus or the God of David was more in his mind may be a matter of question. The Emperor, followed by a solemn procession, walked out, spear in hand, to trace the circuit of the city walls. As mile after mile went by, all wondered at the growing space, and one of his suite going up to him inquired how much further he intended to advance. "I shall go on," was the reply, "until he who marches before me thinks right to stop."[1] Although the Emperor boasted that the new city was Christian, the Pagan world was made to contribute to its splendour. The statues of tutelary deities were removed thither from the cities of Greece, Asia, and even Italy, to the intense chagrin of the Pagan inhabitants, and at the ceremonial of dedication the Emperor rode on a magnificent car, with a golden statue of Fortune in his hand. His religion, indeed, seems to have been from first to last of a mixed character.[2]

[1] Philostorgius, *Eccles. Hist.*, b. ii., c. ix.

[2] An indication of this is afforded by the porphyry column above alluded to. Taken from a temple at Heliopolis (or at Ilium) it was originally surmounted by a statue of the Sun-God; this was exchanged for one of the Emperor, with the inscription, "To Constantine, brilliant as the sun." Within the column was placed a relic of the true cross; and at its base the Palladium of Rome (an image of Pallas, supposed to have fallen from heaven, and to have been carried from Troy to Greece and from Greece to Rome), or an exact copy of the image. *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, art. Constantinus, vol. i., p. 632.

A.D. 325-330.

In 326, on the anniversary of the battle of Lake Regillus, so familiar to readers of Macauley's *Lays*, he not only refused to take part, but as the procession rode by, indulged in sarcastic humour over the sham knights and the empty pomp. It was this slight, no less than the removal from their city of the Imperial court, that excited the hatred of the citizens towards him, and made Rome for a time more Pagan than before. Near the end of his reign the heathen philosopher Sopater, the disciple of Iamblichus, is said to have gained an ascendancy over him; and the dark domestic crimes of which he was guilty, prove that the Christianity he professed did not at all times influence his actions.[1]

In endeavouring, however, to estimate impartially the character of Constantine, it must be borne in mind that he was the first of the Emperors to espouse Christianity, and it is no marvel if, as the inheritor of pagan traditions, bound up with the civil administration of a vast empire, his conduct should sometimes have been swayed by these, as well as sometimes have been influenced by higher motives. In war he is said to have used his victories with moderation, and to have left a grateful memory amongst those he conquered. His interference in the affairs of the Church, however mistaken, and mainly due perhaps to motives of State policy, was doubtless the result also of a sincere

[1] Stanley, p. 200. Milman, vol. ii., p. 380.

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desire for her prosperity and peace. His opening address at the Council of Nicæa, and the manner in which he acted the part of Moderator in that assembly, must be acknowledged to have been worthy of a Christian Emperor.

COIN OF CONSTANTINE.

The obverse legend is, *Fl[avius] Val[erius] Constantinus P[erpetuus] F[elix] Aug[ustus]*. FLAVIUS VALERIUS CONSTANTINE, IMMORTAL, HAPPY, AUGUST.

On the reverse, the Emperor is represented in his helmet, standing on the prow of a galley. In his right hand he holds a globe, surmounted by a rayed phœnix, the adopted emblem of his family, to signify the renovation of the empire. In his left he holds the Labarum. Behind him stands the Angel of Victory, directing his course. The words of the legend are *Fel[ix] Temp[orum] Reparatio*, THE HAPPY RENOVATION OF THE TIMES. The P T below denotes *Pecunia Trevirorum*, Money of Treves.[1] This coin is of brass, and of the same size as the woodcut.—From Walsh's *Essay on Ancient Coins*.

We have already spoken of Lactantius as one of the chroniclers of the Diocletian persecution.[2] He is said to have filled the important office of adviser to Constantine in his work of legislation,[3] as well as of tutor to his son Crispus. He was a pupil of Arnobius at Sicca, and became a Christian in early life. He died at Treves between A.D. 325 and 330.

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[1] Or *Prima Tarracone*, First Coinage of Tarragona. *Dict. Christ. Antiq.* vol. ii., p. 1277.

[2] See ante, p. 335. [3] Milman, vol. ii., p. 394.

A.D. 325-330.

Lactantius held the sound opinion that the profession of Christianity is not to be defended by violence. "To defend religion," he says, "by bloodshed, torture and crime, is not to defend, but to pollute and profane it. For nothing is so much a matter of freewill as religion, in which, if the mind of the worshipper is disinclined, religion is at once taken away and ceases to exist. The right way to defend religion is by patient endurance unto death, through which the keeping of the faith is pleasing to God, and adds authority to the truth."[1]

His experience went to prove the truth of Tertullian's saying, "The blood of the Christians is the seed of the Church."[2] "Very many," he says, "are driven from the worship of the false gods by their hatred of cruelty. Some again are attracted to Christianity by the virtue and faith which they behold. Others become suspicious of the worship of their own divinities, when they see men ready to die rather than conform to it. Others, lastly, are curious to know what that good is which they see preferred before all the pleasant things of this life, and to gain which men will submit to the loss of goods, the deprivation of light, to pain and even to the torture of their vital parts."[1]

The barbarities of the arena continued many years after the government became professedly Christian.

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[1] *Divine Institutes*, b. v., c. xx.

[2] See ante, p. 211. [3] Idem, c. xxiii.

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Lactantius not only strongly condemns the gladiatorial combats; he goes further, and insists on the absolute inviolability of human life:—this enlightened sentiment however is carried to an extreme. "When God forbids us to kill, He not only prohibits open violence, but He warns us against the commission of acts esteemed lawful among men. It is not lawful for a righteous man to engage in warfare, or to accuse any one of a capital charge, because it makes no difference whether you put a man to death by the sword or by a word, since it is the act of putting to death which is forbidden. To this divine precept there ought to be no exception; for it is always unlawful to put to death that being to whom God has given a sacred life."[1]

[1] Idem, b. vi., c. xx.

## CHAPTER XIII.

RAPID GROWTH OF RITUALISM—MANNER OF WORSHIP IN THE FOURTH CENTURY—THE EUCHARIST—BAPTISM.

III.-IV. Cent.

IN former chapters we reviewed the worship and government of the Church, from the days of the Apostles to the end of the second century. Enough has already been said to show that in the period now under consideration (from A.D. 200 to 337), not only there was no check to the growth of ritualistic observances, but the substitution of external forms in place of the primitive simplicity was still going on, and with constantly increasing force.

The worship of the Apostolic age was without altars, without temples, without images; but as sacerdotal ideas entered and prevailed, ancient simplicity disappeared. The common meal, in which the early Christians united to commemorate their Saviour's love, became a sacrifice; the table at which they sat to partake of it became an altar; the community which Christ designed to be one body, was divided into clergy and laity. When the liberty of prophesying was lost, and the spiritual gifts promised to the congregation were exercised by a restricted order of ministers alone, those ministers became priests; whilst the simple effusions of Gospel love prompted by the Holy Spirit, and there-

Part II. Chap. 13.

fore powerful to break in pieces the stony and bind up the broken heart, were replaced by learned and eloquent discourses, which were even at times received with plaudits, as in a theatre. Lastly the room or simple meeting-house was exchanged for a stately temple, richly furnished with gold and silver vessels.[1] Even the wise Dionysius of Alexandria so completely loses sight of the New Covenant idea, as to call the table at which the bread and wine were partaken of, the "Holy of Holies."[2]

The circumstantial description of the assemblies for Divine worship contained in the *Apostolical Constitutions* probably belongs to an age not later than the reign of Constantine. "Let the building be long, with the head towards the East, and the vestries at that end on each side. Let the bishop's throne be set in the middle, with the seats for the presbytery on either hand, the deacons standing near in close-girt garments. Let the laity sit on the opposite side, with all quietness and good order; the women by themselves, also keeping silence. Let the reader stand on a raised place and read from the [Old Testament,] and when two lessons have been read, let another sing the

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[1] It is mentioned that the church at Cirta in Numidia possessed at the outbreak of the Diocletian persecution, A.D. 303, two golden and six silver chalices, and seven lamps, with other church utensils, of silver. Other churches may have been furnished in a similar manner. After the accession of Constantine, "church services" of a costly kind became general. Cooper, p. 356.

[2] *Epistle to Basilides*, Canon 2.

hymns of David, and let the people join at the conclusions of the verses. Afterwards let there be a reading from the [New Testament,] the presbyters and deacons and all the people standing with profound silence, for it is written, 'Be silent, and hear, O Israel.' Then let the presbyters one by one exhort the people, and lastly the bishop, as being the chief over all. Let the porters stand at the doors where the men enter, and take notice of them, and the deaconesses at those of the women; and if any one be found sitting out of his place, let the deacon rebuke him. Let the young people sit by themselves, if there be a place for them; if not, let them stand, the younger women behind the older. Let the parents take charge of the little children; the married women with their children by themselves. Let the deacon keep watch over the congregation, that no one whisper or slumber, or laugh, or nod. IV. Cent.

"After the catechumens and penitents are gone out, let all rise together, and turning towards the East, pray to God, who ascended up eastward to the heaven of heavens. When the prayer is over, some of the deacons are to attend on the oblation of the Eucharist, ministering to the Lord's body with fear, whilst others keep the multitude in quietness; and let the deacon who is at the high priest's[1] hand say to the people, 'Let no one have

[1] The bishop is thus designated.

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any quarrel against another; let no one come hither in hypocrisy.' Then the men are to give to the men, and the women to the women, the Lord's kiss. This done, let the deacon pray for the whole Church and the whole world, for the priests and the rulers, and the peace of the universe. Then let the high priest pray for peace upon the people, and bless them in the words of Moses, 'The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee and give thee peace.' After this let the sacrifice follow, the people standing and praying silently; and when the oblation has been made, let every rank by itself partake of the Lord's body and precious blood, and approach with reverence and holy fear, as to the body of their king; the women with their heads covered, as becomes the order of women. Let the door be watched, lest any unbeliever or one not yet initiated come in."

Then follow directions as to the reception of strangers, for whom the deacon, when he has examined their letters of recommendation, is to find a seat, according to their rank. If the visitor be a bishop, the bishop of the place is to invite him to exhort the congregation, offer the Eucharist, and pronounce the blessing; "for," say the *Constitutions*, "the exhortation and admonition of strangers is very acceptable and profitable. If there should be no seat for the stranger, and a junior brother do not offer him his seat of his own accord, the

deacon shall compel him to do so; and even if the stranger be poor, or of a mean family, the deacon shall by all means and with all his heart find him a place, that there be no accepting of persons." IV. Cent.

The bishop is then directed to exhort the people to come daily to church, morning and evening, for prayer and singing of psalms, repeating in the morning the 62nd Psalm, and in the evening the 140th.[1] Especially is he to enjoin them to come together on the Lord's day. For "what excuse will he make to God, who does not assemble on that day to hear the saving word concerning the Resurrection, when we pray thrice, standing, in memory of Him who rose in three days, when is performed the reading of the prophets, the preaching of the Gospel, the oblation of the sacrifice, the gift of the holy food? If any one allege the pretence of his own work as an excuse [for absenting himself from public worship], let him know that the trades of the faithful are secondary occupations, but the worship of God is their great work."[2]

THE EUCHARIST. The progress towards a religion of material observances is in nothing more apparent than in the manner of regarding the bread and wine of the Eucharist, and the rite of baptism. We hear

[1] It is probable the numeration here followed was that which was adopted in the Vulgate; the Psalms would then be the 63rd and 141st of our version.

[2] *Apostolical Constitutions*, b. ii., c. lvii.-lxi. The Council of Elvira ruled that any citizen absenting himself from church for three Sundays should be separated for a season from communion. Canon 21.

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much of the miraculous virtue of the consecrated elements, but little of that true communion with Christ, and soul-feeding upon Him, the heavenly bread, of which He spoke when He said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood ye have no life in you."[1] It was not that such men as Origen and Cyprian, and thousands more of that day, were strangers to this inward communion, this true Supper of the Lord, but that the teaching of the Church had become outward and ritualistic. A large proportion of members, born within her pale, probably knew as little of the new birth as do many who occupy the same place at the present day. Of the numerous accessions which the Church received from without during the intervals succeeding the storms of persecution, many would be actuated by inferior motives—the example and influence of others, family ties, the hope of partaking in the well-known charity of the Christians. Such as these would necessarily bring with them heathen habits and ideas, and especially a craving for outward performances and splendid ceremonial.

But as the need for spiritual teaching was thus augmented, the source from whence the supply should have been looked for, had become almost dried up. Even men of the most powerful intellect and of the deepest Christian experience, are found yielding to the force of the stream, and losing them-

[1] John vi. 53.

selves in puerilities. Thus Origen says, "When you frequent our sacred mysteries, and receive the body of the Lord, you make use of all caution and veneration, that not even the smallest particle of the consecrated gift should fall to the ground, and be wasted. If through inattention any part does fall, you justly account yourselves guilty."[1] So in the Canons of the Egyptian or Coptic Church (which, if we may follow Bunsen, should be referred to this period), it is directed that the believer should partake of the Eucharist fasting, and that care should be taken "that no unbeliever eat of it, nor a mouse, nor any other creature; for it is the body of Christ, and must not be despised." In like manner of the cup, "Spill not of it, lest a strange spirit lick it up, and so God be angry with thee, and thou be guilty of the blood of Christ."[2]

The unscriptural notion of a *sacrifice* in the communion of the bread and wine, which began to appear in Justin Martyr and Irenæus,[3] is fully matured in the writings of Cyprian. "The priest imitates the act which Christ performed, and offers a true and plenary sacrifice in the church, to God the Father."[4] His credulity is marvellous regarding the miraculous effects, in certain cases, of the consecrated

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[1] Homilies on Exodus, Hom. 13, quoted in Coleman's *Christian Antiquities*, c. xvi. § iv.

[2] B. ii., Canons lvii.-lx. Version of Bunsen in his "Church and House Book of the Ancient Christians." *Hippolytus and his Age*, vol. ii., p. 63.

[3] See ante, pp. 117, 121. [4] *Brit. Quart. Rev.*, Oct., 1880, p. 307.

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bread and wine, as is also his presumption in anathematizing those who are more sceptical than himself.[1] The idea of sacrifice once developed, spread rapidly, and from the end of the third century inspired the language of almost all the ecclesiastical writers. It was no more than a corollary to this doctrine, that absence from "communion" should mean loss of salvation. "As it is manifest," writes Cyprian, "that those who receive the Eucharist are the living, so we must fear lest any, abstaining from communion, and thus separate from Christ's body, should remain at a distance from salvation." In support of which he misapplies Christ's words thus: "He himself threatens and says, 'Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood ye [shall] have no life in you.'"[2]

In the catechetical writings of Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, there is a particular description of the celebration of the Eucharist. Cyril's lectures were delivered between A.D. 347 and 350, that is a few years after the termination of our present period;

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[1] He tells of an aged woman who furtively creeping in amongst the faithful when they were sacrificing, and receiving the bread, found not food but a sword, for as if she had taken some deadly poison she fell down in torments, shivering and trembling. Although she had deceived man she could not go unpunished. Also of a man, who venturing unfit to take a portion of the sacrifice celebrated by the priest, found when he opened his hand nothing but a cinder. *On the Lapsed*, c. xxv., xxvi.

[2] The word [shall] is not in the scripture text. John vi. 53. Cyprian, *On the Lord's Prayer*, c. xviii. See, however, his letter to the confessors in the mines, ante, p. 288.

but they may be taken as nearly descriptive of the Church ceremonials at the time of Constantine's death. IV. Cent.

"After hallowing ourselves," he says, "by sundry spiritual hymns, we beseech the merciful God to send forth his Holy Spirit upon the elements set on the table, to make the bread the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ. For most certainly whatsoever the Holy Spirit touches is hallowed and transformed. Then, after the spiritual sacrifice, the bloodless service, is completed, over that sacrifice of propitiation we beseech God for the common peace of the Churches, for the welfare of the world, for kings, for soldiers and allies, for those in infirmity, for those in special trouble, and generally for all who need help. We make mention also of those who have gone to rest before us, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, that God at their prayers and intercessions would receive our supplication; also on behalf of the holy fathers and bishops, and of all of our body who have gone to rest before us, believing that the greatest benefit will accrue to the souls of those for whom the supplication is offered, whilst the holy and most awful sacrifice is set forth."[1]

Baptism. The notion that water-baptism is essential to salvation had now become rooted in

[1] *Catech. Mystag.*, quoted in *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, art. Canon of the Liturgy, vol. i., p. 269.

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the mind of the Church. Infants were baptized on or before the eighth day,[1] for fear that if the observance should be neglected they might be eternally lost.[2] The *Clementine Recognitions* are very emphatic respecting the virtue of baptism. "Make haste, for there is in these waters a certain power of mercy conferred upon them from the beginning, which rescues the baptized from the punishment to come. He who delays to approach them, in him still remains the idol of unbelief, which prevents him from hastening to the saving waters. Whether you are righteous or unrighteous, baptism is indispensable; to the righteous man, that he may be made perfect and be born again to God; to the unrighteous, that his sins may be pardoned which he has committed in ignorance."[3] Cyprian errs so widely as to interpret our Lord's words to the Samaritan woman, 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst,' to signify "the very baptism of saving water, which indeed," he says, "is once received and is not again repeated."[4]

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[1] In imitation of circumcision. See Cyprian, Ep. lviii. § 2.

[2] Infant-baptism however, as we have seen, was not universal. Ante, p. 130.

[3] Book vi., c. ix.

[4] Epistle lxii. § 8. It is hardly necessary to add that Cyprian held conversion of heart to be essential. "It is nothing," he says, "to be baptized and to receive the communion, if a man's actions and life do not correspond. . . Even the baptized person will lose the grace bestowed, unless he continues pure from sin." Cited by Neander, vol. i., p. 352.

We must go to Cyril again for a description of baptism as practised in his day. It will be observed that the ceremony had gained largely in outward circumstance since the time of Justin Martyr and Tertullian.[1] "Throughout Lent," as Cyril tells us, "the catechumens met together day after day, in the church of the Resurrection at Jerusalem, for prayer and catechetical instruction. At the close of the fast, on the "Sabbath" or Easter Eve, those who were to be baptized assembled in the outer chamber of the baptistery. Facing towards the west, as being the abode of darkness and of the powers thereof, with outstretched hand they made open renunciation of Satan. Then turning about towards the east, the abode of light, they said, 'I believe in the Father, in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost, and in the one baptism of repentance.' This said, they went forward into the inner chamber, and putting off the garment with which they were clothed, were anointed with oil from head to foot. Then being led by the hand to the font, each was asked, 'Dost thou believe in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?' and they, confessing their faith, dipped themselves thrice in the water, and thrice raised themselves out of it, by this symbol setting forth the three days' burial of the Lord, and his resurrection; and the saving water was to them at

[1] See ante, pp. 125-127.

once death and life, a tomb and a mother." After this they were clothed in white, and anointed on the forehead, ears, nostrils, and breast; and when they had partaken of the communion, they returned to the church in procession with lighted candles, chanting, "Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven and whose sin is covered;" "blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth no sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile."[1]

One of the questions which divided the Church in the time of Cyprian was the validity of baptism administered by dissenters. When a "heretic" came over to the orthodox Church, was the baptism he had received sufficient, without his undergoing the ceremony a second time? The Churches of Asia Minor and the adjacent countries, with Cyprian and the African Churches, held the baptism of heretics to be null and void. In the Roman Church on the contrary, in virtue of the imaginary objective value of the name of Christ or of the Trinity, invoked in its administration, baptism by whomsoever administered, was deemed to be valid; but the additional rite of confirmation by the bishop was judged necessary, in order that the Holy Spirit might render it efficacious.[2] The Roman Bishop Stephen stigmatized those who differed from him as anabaptists (re-baptisers),

[1] Cyril, *Catecheses*, quoted in *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, vol. i., p. 157.

[2] This was one of the causes which led to the separation of confirmation from baptism.

and attempted to excommunicate them. Dionysius of Alexandria showed his accustomed moderation in the part which he took in this dispute. Although he agreed in the main with Cyprian and the Churches of Asia Minor, he was inclined to make exceptions on behalf of the Montanists and other sects whose doctrines were more or less in harmony with those of the Orthodox Church. At the same time he endeavoured to maintain brotherly unity with Rome, and earnestly entreated Stephen not to disturb the Eastern Church in her enjoyment of that external tranquillity which the Emperor Valerian had granted to her, and of that internal peace which since the suppression of the schism of Novatian had accompanied it.[1]

The dispute itself is a proof that the Church had now again become subject to the rudiments of the world, from which Christ had set her free. How far the peace and joy of a believer could be destroyed by such bondage, may be seen in a case related by Dionysius himself. There was in his Church a converted heretic, who had been a communicant many years. Happening to be present at a baptism of catechumens, he remembered that the baptism he himself had received (probably among the Gnostics), bore no resemblance to the one he now witnessed. He began therefore to doubt his title as a real Christian, and fell into the deepest

[1] Neander, vol. i., pp. 439-444.

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distress, believing himself to be destitute of Divine grace. He besought the bishop with tears to give him the true baptism. The bishop endeavoured to tranquillize him, but told him that after having so long partaken of the body and blood of the Lord this would be both unnecessary and improper. But the poor man seemed unable to overcome his scruples and regain his peace of mind.[1]

[1] Eusebius, b. vii., c. ix.

## CHAPTER XIV.

POWER OF THE BISHOPS—PRETENSIONS OF ROME—PAUL OF SAMOSATA—MAINTENANCE OF THE CLERGY—TITHES—CLERICAL DRESS.

THE BISHOPS. Cyprian's theory of the supreme power of the bishop has been already alluded to.[1] In his letter to the bishop Rogatianus, concerning a deacon who contended against him, he reminds him that he, Rogatianus, has the right, "according to the vigour of the episcopate and the authority of his throne," to exercise his "priestly power" upon the "insolent deacon;" and to strengthen his hands he instances the judgment which fell on Korah, Dathan and Abiram, when they "dared to deal proudly, and exalt their neck against Aaron, and to equal themselves with the priest set over them." And in a letter to Pupianus he says, "The bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop; and if any one be not with the bishop, he is not in the Church."[2] III. Cent.

But Cyprian's language on this subject is thrown

[1] See ante, p. 300.

[2] Epist., lxiv., c. i.; lxviii., c. viii.

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into the shade by that of the *Apostolical Constitutions*, which savours of the servility and prostration before rulers, common in the far East. "The bishop is the minister of the word, the keeper of knowledge, the mediator between God and you. After God he is your father, who has begotten you again to the adoption of sons by water and the Spirit; your ruler and governor; your king and potentate; your earthly God. . . Let not the laity on all occasions trouble their governor; but let them signify their desires to him through the deacons, with whom they may be more free. For as we may not address ourselves to Almighty God, but only by Christ, so let the laity make known all their desires to the bishop by the deacon, and let them act as he shall direct them. . . How dare any speak against their bishop, by whom the Lord gave you the Holy Spirit through the laying on of his hands; by whom ye were sealed with the oil of gladness and the unction of understanding; by whom the Lord illumined you and sent his sacred voice upon you, saying, 'Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.'"[1]

When ideas such as these were current, it is no wonder that the more worldly-minded among the bishops began to assume to themselves great outward importance. Many who occupied the sees in

[1] Book ii., c. xxvi., xxviii., xxx., xxxii. The Council of Elvira deprived of communion, even when at the point of death, those who had falsely accused a bishop, priest or deacon. Canon 75.

the large cities were addressed and waited upon as though they were persons of rank in the State.[1]

It was now also that the Bishop of Rome began to put forward a claim to pre-eminence over his fellow-bishops. Even before the end of the second century, Victor, a haughty and ambitious prelate, had attempted to assert such a superiority. The attempt was premature; the Roman bishop was still only one amongst many equals, and when his decrees clashed with the judgment of others, superior in experience and character to himself, he was forced to give way. Thus in 254, in the dispute upon the validity of baptism administered by heretics,[2] when the Roman bishop Stephen found Cyprian of Carthage, Firmilian and other eminent prelates opposed to him, he attempted to brandish the spiritual weapons of the Church against all the host of his adversaries. He excommunicated the Bishop of Carthage, denouncing him as an Antichrist, and threatening with spiritual censures any member of the Roman Church who should dare to entertain his delegates. He proceeded to cut off Firmilian and the Asian bishops. But the thunder-

[1] Speaking of the jurisdiction of the bishops in the fourth century, Milman says: "Thus, in every city, in almost every town and every village of the Roman Empire, had established itself a new permanent magistracy, in a certain sense independent of the government, with considerable inalienable endowments, and filled by men of a peculiar and sacred character, and recognised by the State. Their authority extended far beyond their jurisdiction; their influence far beyond their authority." *Hist. of Christianity*, vol. iii., pp. 283-284.

[2] See ante, p. 428.

bolts which were to be launched with such tremendous effect by his successors were not yet forged, and the prelates treated his "audacity and insolence" with contempt, Firmilian declaring that he who boasted of being the successor of Peter was "the real schismatic, who by his excommunication of others had made himself an apostate from the communion of the Church."[1]

But spiritual Rome was nevertheless advancing by sure steps towards the same pinnacle in the ecclesiastical world which the capital of the Empire had occupied in the political. Notwithstanding his dispute with Stephen, Cyprian calls the Roman bishopric "the throne of Peter, and the chief Church whence priestly unity takes its source."[2] The Emperor Decius, after the martyrdom of Fabian in the year 250, was so conscious of the growing power of the Roman see that he declared he would rather hear of a rival to his throne than of a new bishop;[3] and in 272, when Paul of Samosata,[4] Bishop of Antioch, who had been deposed by a Church synod, refused to vacate his bishopric in order to make room for his successor, and the matter was referred to Aurelian, that Emperor willed that the vacant see should be granted "to him for whom the

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[1] In Cyprian's *Epistles*, Ep. lxxiv., c. iii., xxiv.

[2] Epist. liv., c. xiv.

[3] Cyprian Epist. li., c. ix. The see remained vacant a year and a half.

[4] A city of northern Syria, on the Euphrates.

bishops in Italy and the city of Rome should give sentence."[1] III. Cent.

The history of Paul of Samosata is so illustrative of ecclesiastical life in the third century that it must not be passed over. Paul was elected bishop of Antioch in 260. He was of a speculative turn of mind, and attempting to blend the philosophy of Plato with the doctrines of the New Testament, he conceived very false opinions regarding the nature of Christ. He seems also to have been a man of a worldly character, fond of power and display. His heretical opinions alarmed the heads of the Eastern Churches, and in 265, a council was held in his own city to call him to account. The Christian world had never before seen so numerous a convention of its spiritual rulers; the bishops of

[1] It was not until a later period that the title of Pope was monopolized by the bishops of Rome; πάππας, or πάπας, *papa*, signifies father, and was at first used to denote the relationship between the spiritual teacher and the convert. It was afterwards restricted to bishops and abbots. The clergy in their letters to Cyprian give him this title. In A.D. 1076 it was ruled that it belonged only to the Bishop of Rome. In making use of the term, the Church disregarded, both in spirit and in letter, her Lord's command (Matt. xxiii. 9), "Call no man your father on the earth." The council of Nicæa shows the position occupied by the Roman see in the time of Constantine. The Bishop of Rome was *primus inter pares*, the first amongst his equals, and nothing more; and in the roll of signatures to the acts of the council, a corresponding place is accorded to his delegates. The name of Hosius, president of the council under the Emperor, stands first, and next in order, those of the two Roman presbyters who subscribed on behalf of Bishop Sylvester. So far from any idea being entertained of his supremacy, the name even of the Roman bishop seems not to have been introduced into the deliberations, and there is nothing to show that his judgment or authority was of more weight than that of any other bishop. See *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, art. Pope, p. 1658.

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all the principal sees from Pontus to Arabia were assembled. Paul made a skilful defence, and Firmilian, whose age and character gave him the first place in the council, advised his colleagues not to come to any formal decision. His advice was adopted, but the leniency thus shown was of no avail.

Paul continued to propagate his heretical doctrines, and in 269 a second council was summoned in the same city. On this occasion Paul's chief accuser was a presbyter named Malchion, teacher in a school of philosophy in Antioch. The questions put by him to Paul, with the bishop's answers, were taken down in shorthand and published; and the council, after addressing a letter to the offender embodying the belief of its members in the divinity of Christ, his eternal pre-existence, his creation of the world, his son-ship, and his miraculous incarnation, deposed Paul from his office, and excluded him from the communion of the whole Catholic Church. They proceeded to ordain another bishop in his place, and to issue a circular letter to all the Churches, particularly in the West, acquainting them with the deposition of Paul and the election of his successor. But Antioch was just then in the hands of the celebrated Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, to whom Paul seems to have paid court, and so long as that sovereign was able to maintain her independence against Rome, namely, till the year 272, he kept possession of the building in

which he had been accustomed to perform divine service.[1] III. Cent.

The circular epistle of the council is still extant. It is thus addressed:—"To Dionysius and Maximus, and to all our fellow-ministers, bishops, presbyters and deacons, and to the whole Catholic Church under heaven: Helenus [then follow fifteen other names] and all the others who are with us, bishops, presbyters and deacons, together with the Churches of God, send greeting to the beloved brethren in the Lord." The charges which had been brought against Paul are not, it is expressly stated, the grounds of his deposition. "We need not," such is the language of the circular, "say anything of such matters as this; that whereas he was formerly poor and beggarly, having neither inherited any patrimony nor acquired any property by art or trade, he has now come to have excessive wealth by his deeds of iniquity and sacrilege, and by the extortion he has practised on the brethren. Nor need we say anything about his pride and assumption of worldly dignities, and his preferring to be styled a Ducenarius[2] rather than a bishop, strutting through the market-places and reading letters and reciting them as he walked in public, attended by multitudes of people. Nor need we say

[1] Burton, pp. 359-363.

[2] A fiscal magistrate who received 200 sestertia (nearly £1,600) of annual salary.

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anything of the affectation he practises in our ecclesiastical assemblies, making a great parade and courting popularity, and confounding by his arts the minds of the more simple; nor of his setting up for himself a lofty tribunal and throne, so unlike a disciple of Christ, nor of his having, like the rulers of this world, a *Secretum*,[1] and calling it by the same name; nor of his striking his thigh with his hand, and stamping on the tribunal with his feet, and reproving and insulting those, both men and women, who did not applaud him or shake their handkerchiefs, as in the theatres, or shout and leap about, but chose to hear reverently and modestly as in the house of God. Besides this he put a stop to the psalms which were sung in honour of our Lord Jesus Christ, as being new compositions of modern men, and prepared instead, at the great Paschal festival, women to sing psalms in the midst of the church in honour of himself, which choristers one might shudder to hear; and he suborned the bishops and presbyters of his party in the neighbouring districts and cities to promote the same kind of things. And then again there are these women, these adopted sisters,[2] as the people of Antioch call them, who are kept by him and by his presbyters and deacons. We are not ignorant that many

[1] An elevated place railed in and curtained where the Roman magistrates sat to decide causes.

[2] Or priests' housekeepers.

have fallen through the introduction of such women into their houses, whilst many others have come under suspicion; so that, even though it should be admitted that nothing really disgraceful has been done by him, yet was he in duty bound to have avoided the suspicion arising out of such conduct."

It is not however on such charges as these that the council ground their act of excommunication. His judges committed the mistake of regarding orthodoxy of creed as the one thing needful, and counting all besides as of secondary importance. The epistle continues, "These matters one might perhaps take account of in the case of a man who held the true Catholic faith and associated himself with us, but as to one who has trifled away the mystery of the faith, and who swaggers with the execrable heresy of Artemas, we consider it unnecessary to exact of him an account of these things. We have been compelled therefore to excommunicate this man, who sets himself up in opposition to God, and refuses submission, and to appoint in his place another bishop over the Catholic Church."[1]

The case of Paul is not adduced to prove the degenerate state of the episcopacy in the third century; it is evidence rather in the opposite direction. There must have been at this time in the various provinces of the empire hundreds of bishops of whom history has nothing to say, whose aim and

[1] Eusebius, b. vii., c. xxix., xxx. Writings of Malchion, i, A. N. L.

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desire it was to rule wisely and live as examples to the flock. But the state of the Eastern Churches a few years later, as described by Eusebius,[1] and that of the African Churches, as exhibited at the origin of the Donatist schism,[2] forbid us to suppose Paul's case to have been altogether exceptional. Origen writes in the middle of the third century: "We proceed so far in the affectation of pomp and state as to outdo even bad rulers among the Pagans. Like the emperors, we surround ourselves with a guard that we may be feared and made difficult of approach, especially by the poor. In many of our so-called Churches, particularly in the larger cities, may be found rulers of the Church of God who would refuse to own as their equals even the best among the disciples of Jesus whilst on earth."[3]

MAINTENANCE OF THE CLERGY. We have seen how, in her days of pristine simplicity, the ministers of the Church supported themselves by their own labour. The free-will offerings of the congregation were at first appropriated to the use of the sick and the poor, of orphans, widows and captives. By degrees, a portion of the weekly contributions was set apart for the maintenance of the presbyters. At a later period, in some Churches a three-fold, in others a four-fold division was adopted; one share, in the latter case, being appropriated to the bishop,

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[1] Ante, pp. 326, 327. [2] Ante, pp. 368, 369.

[3] Neander, vol. ii., p. 330, note ‡.

another to the rest of the clergy, a third to the church building and service, and the remainder to the poor.[1]

The spirit of independence however long survived. In the circular issued by the synod of Antioch against Paul, it is taken for granted that he might have acquired his wealth by commerce or manufacture; and the *Apostolical Constitutions* say, "Let the young be diligent in their business so as to have enough for their own support and to bestow on the needy. For we ourselves, besides our attention to the word of the Gospel, do not neglect our inferior employments. Some of us are fishermen, some tent-makers, some husbandmen; for none of those who are dedicated to God ought to be idle."[2] We have seen in Cyprian's lamentation over the state of the Church,[3] that the pursuit of trade was not unknown to the African clergy, and was indeed too eagerly followed by some. The council of Elvira, A.D. 305, forbids the bishops and clergy to be itinerant merchants, but permits them to trade within the province. They were on no account to exact usury.[4] Even so late as A.D. 398, a council held at Carthage directs that "clergymen, however learned they may be in the divine word, should provide themselves with food and clothing by some handicraft or agri-

[1] Lyman Coleman, c. vii.; Milman, *Hist. Christ.*, vol. iii., p. 276.

[2] B. ii., c. lxiii. [3] Ante, pp. 362, 368.

[4] Canons 18 and 20. The Council of Arles, A.D. 314, canon 12, and that of Nicæa, canon 17, ordain the same as to usury.

cultural labour, but not to the hindrance of their office in the Church; and that such as were strong enough to labour should be instructed in some handicraft and in letters."[1] "The bishops and presbyters of those early days," observes Hatch, "kept banks, practised medicine, wrought as silversmiths, tended sheep, or sold their goods in open market. They were like the second generation of non-juring bishops a century and a half ago, or like the early preachers of the Wesleyan Methodists. They were men of the world, taking part in the ordinary business of life. The point about which the Christian communities were anxious was, not that their officers should cease to trade, but that in this as in other respects they should be ensamples to the flock. The chief existing enactments of early councils on the point are, that bishops are not to huckster their goods from market to market, nor are they to use their position to buy cheaper and sell dearer than other people."[2]

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[1] Bingham, b. vi., c. iv. § 13. There are not wanting, however, as we might suppose, directions and injunctions on the other side. The *Apostolical Canons* say, "Let not a bishop, priest or deacon take upon him worldly cares, under pain of deprivation." Canon 7; see also canons 81, 83. In North Africa, even before Cyprian's time, the clergy had been forbidden to act as executors or guardians. "The bishops our predecessors," says that writer, in his usual lofty style, "decided that no brother departing should name a cleric for executor or guardian; and if any should do this, no offering should be made for him, nor any sacrifice be celebrated for his repose. For that man does not deserve to be named at the altar of God in the prayer of the priests, who has wished to call away the priests and ministers from the altar." Epist. lxv., c. ii. Certain other secular employments or trades were also especially forbidden to the clergy.

[2] *Organisation of the Early Christian Churches*, Lect. vi., pp. 148, 149.

But this liberty was not suffered to continue. The Church had now become subject to the State. It is true we find Theodosius at the end of the fourth century exempting the inferior clergy from the trading tax, provided their mercantile transactions were kept within bounds; but this immunity being abused, all clerical persons whatsoever were by a law of Valentinian III. (A.D. 425-455), interdicted from trade.[1]

The practice of taking fees for the services of the Church, a practice utterly unknown in her days of purity, was not admitted without opposition. In Spain, at the beginning of the fourth century, it had become a common custom to drop a piece of money into the font or box as a gratuity for the rite of baptism. The Council of Elvira prohibits this custom, assigning this cogent reason, "Lest it be thought that the priest gives for money what he has freely received." In the same spirit, at a much later period, the Council in Trullo[2] forbids the clergy to receive anything from the communicants at the Lord's table, because "the grace of God is not an article of merchandise, nor is the sanctification of the Spirit to be bought with money." In like manner Jerome declares it to be unlawful to take a fee for performing the burial service.[3]

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[1] *Dict. Christ. Antiq.* Art. Immunities of the clergy.

[2] Held at Constantinople, A.D. 692; and so named because the place of meeting was a dome hall, called *Trullus*, in the Imperial palace.

[3] Coleman, *Christ. Antiq.*, c. vii.

TITHES. To this age, the third and fourth centuries, may possibly be referred the origin of tithes.

Before this time indeed the gifts of the congregation had been compared with the firstfruits and offerings of the Old Testament. Irenæus was one of the earliest to institute such a comparison. He speaks of such gifts as being divinely commanded to be offered by all men, citing Deut. xvi. 16, "They shall not appear before the Lord empty;" and continues: "As there were sacrifices among the Israelites, so there are sacrifices in the Christian Church; the kind alone has been changed, inasmuch as the offering is now made not by slaves but by free men."[1] Origen, quoting Matt. v. 20, appeals to Christians not to suffer their righteousness to fall short of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, who did not dare taste the produce of their land before they had brought the firstfruits to the priests, and set apart the tithes for the Levites."[2] And Cyprian, on the ground that the tribe of Levi was supported by tithes in order that it might be devoted entirely to the Lord's service, claims the same inheritance for the Christian clergy, "who receive *as it were tithes*, that they may not depart from the altar."[3]

The idea had acquired yet stronger hold upon men's minds by the time of the *Apostolical Consti-*

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[1] *Against Heresies*, b. iv., c. xviii.

[2] Homily xi., *On Numbers*, in *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, vol. ii., p. 1963. [3] Idem.

*tutions*. "As the Levites, who attended upon the Tabernacle (in all things a type of the Church), partook of the gifts, offerings, firstfruits, tithes, sacrifices and oblations, so you, O bishops, are, to your people, priests and Levites, ministering to the Holy Tabernacle, the Holy Catholic Church, ye who stand at the altar of the Lord your God, and offer to Him reasonable and bloodless sacrifices through Jesus, the great High Priest. . . Oblations and tithes belong to Christ and to those who minister to Him. Tenths of salvation are the first letter of the name of Jesus."[1] IV. Cent.

Thus far however all was voluntary. But the neck was becoming gradually prepared for the unscriptural yoke which was to be laid upon it, and which in after ages was firmly secured, both by ecclesiastical authority, and by civil law.[2]

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[1] *Apost. Const.*, b. ii., c. xxv. The letter I, which stood for the numeral ten, is the initial of the name in Greek, Ἰησοῦς. The *firstfruits*, of corn, oxen, sheep, wine, oil, honey, nuts, grapes, were for the bishop, presbyters and deacons. The *gifts* of silver, garments and other possessions were appropriated to the orphan and widow. The *tithes* were for the rest of the clergy, and also for the widow, the orphan, the poor and the stranger. Idem, b. vii., c. xxix; b. viii., c. xxx.

[2] In a recent number of the *Contemporary Review* (Sept. 1883), Mr. Hatch rejects the hypothesis that the origin of tithes is to be sought in the analogy of the Levitical priesthood. He regards them as arising out of the perpetual leases of Church lands, granted in the eighth century for the political security of Christendom, and would refer the particular amount of the rent, the tenth part, to an ancient Roman custom which then still survived. The analogy of the Levitical law he considers to have been superinduced during the ninth and tenth centuries in order to invest the claim with a divine sanction. For several centuries, tithes were applied to the support of the poor, equally with that of the clergy.

Part II. Chap. 14.

CLERICAL DRESS. There is no need to say that in early times the officers or ministers were not distinguished by their attire from the rest of the Church. The great truth that all Christians are endowed with spiritual gifts,—are all brethren,—all priests, is disregarded by the use of religious costumes, male or female. Moreover, men are so influenced by externals, that the daily spectacle of such costumes, or of marks indicating a separate order, or a supposed higher degree of spirituality, operates as a serious hindrance to that freedom of spirit and full manhood in Christ to which all are called. When however the Church, following the example of Jews and of heathens, set apart an order of priests, it was only natural that these should wear a priestly garment. There seems nevertheless to be no allusion to such vestments, even for times of service, before the reign of Constantine. Until the fourth century the Church was, so far as evidence can tell us, free from the use of sacerdotal garments. Her ministers were attired in the common garb of their fellows. It will be interesting, however, in a few words to trace the subsequent rise of the clerical dress, although this will take us beyond the limits of our present period.

Constantine is said to have given a rich vestment, embroidered with gold, to Macarius, Bishop of Jerusalem, in which to perform the service of baptism; and Athanasius was accused of laying a tax upon the Egyptians to raise a fund for the

linen vestments of the Church. From this time allusion by Church writers to such vestments becomes more frequent. The Council of Laodicea, A.D. 375, directed that the habit of an officiating minister should not be worn by subdeacons, singers or readers, and the fourth Council of Carthage, A.D. 398, speaks of the *alba*, or white surplice, which the deacon is ordered to wear when the oblation is made or the lessons are read.[1] IV. Cent.

It was still longer before the clergy were distinguished from the laity in their *ordinary* attire. The monks, indeed, affected a peculiar costume, the cloak and the girdle; but until the fifth century we find no mention of any official garb, even of the bishop. There is no ground for the supposition that the dress of the clergy was borrowed from the vestments of the Levitical priesthood. Its origin, indeed, seems to have been the result of accident rather than of intention. So long as the old Roman customs were maintained, the dress of a clergyman was that of a Roman citizen. Pope Celestinus, in A.D. 428, sharply reproved certain Gallican bishops, who made themselves conspicuous by a dress different from that of the laity about them. They had been monks before they were promoted to the episcopate, and retained as bishops the monastic costume instead of adopting the ordinary civic dress. But when the laity began to put on the short tunic,

[1] Bingham, b. xiii., c. viii. § 2.

Part. II. Chap. 14.

trousers, and cloak of the Teutonic conquerors, the clergy resisted the new fashion and kept to the long tunic and the ancient toga or pallium. The distinction once established was sedulously maintained. Gregory the Great (A.D. 604) would tolerate no one about him who wore the barbaric dress; everyone in his household must appear in the garb of old Rome. Canons from the beginning of the sixth century forbid clerics to wear long hair, or clothes other than "such as befit religion," or a military cloak, or arms, or purple. In the East the distinction was established more slowly; but in 692 the Council in Trullo enacted that clergymen should wear the robes prescribed for their order, under pain of excommunication for a week.[1]

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[1] *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, art. Dress. Various notices showing that long hair was considered unbecoming in a clergyman occur previous to the sixth century, but the earliest evidenee for the use of the *tonsure* is supplied by a mosaic of that century at Ravenna, and a canon of the fourth Council of Toledo (A.D. 633), which directs the clergy to shave the upper part of the head, leaving below a circle of hair. Idem, art. Tonsure.

## CHAPTER XV.

THE NEW AGE OF ART AND SPLENDOUR—CONSECRATION OF CHURCHES— PICTURES IN CHURCHES — EMBROIDERED GARMENTS— LIGHTED TAPERS —THE CATACOMBS.

SPLENDOUR IN WORSHIP. To the ancient simplicity there now succeeded a taste for religious pageantry, the natural associate of ease and opulence in a superstitious age. The notion also began to prevail, that in order to captivate the multitude, Christianity needed to be surrounded with pomp and presented under images of sense. The example of Constantine gave a powerful impulse to this movement. In his new capital on the Bosphorus, in Antioch, Jerusalem and other places, he erected churches which emulated by their magnificence the grandest of the heathen temples. IV. Cent.

CONSECRATION OF CHURCHES. The new churches were dedicated in the most august manner. All the bishops of the province were assembled, and a great concourse of people. At the dedication of the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, bishops were present out of all the Eastern provinces, from Macedonia and Upper Egypt, as far

Part II. Chap. 15.

as Mesopotamia and Persia.[1] "Some," says Eusebius, "extolled the pious Emperor's regard towards the Saviour of all men, and praised the magnificence of the building. Some feasted their ears and understanding with the divine banquet of spiritual manna gathered out of the Holy Scripture, whilst others expounded its more dark and difficult passages. The rest offered bloodless mystical sacrifices, with prayers to God for the common peace of the Church and for the Emperor and his royal family." In all which acts Eusebius himself bore a prominent part. He tells us also that gold, silver and precious stones were lavished upon the new building.[2] He has recorded his own speech on a similar occasion, the dedication of the sumptuous church at Tyre. His style, though perhaps inflated beyond most, shows the vitiated taste of the age. He addresses his ecclesiastical audience as "priests of God, clad in the sacred gown, adorned with the celestial crown of glory, the inspired unction and the sacerdotal garment of the Holy Spirit." He calls Paulinus, the Bishop of Tyre, "a new Bezaleel, a Solomon, king of a new and better Jerusalem, a new Zerubbabel,

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[1] They had been sitting in synod at Tyre, to examine the charges against Athanasius. See ante, p. 406.

[2] *Life of Constantine*, b. iv., c. xliii.-xlvi. Constantine's Church and Basilica were destroyed by the Persians in 614. On the east side of the present church of the Sepulchre, four columns of grey Egyptian granite are still to be seen by the pathway side; these are believed to have formed part of the propylæum of the Basilica of Constantine. Baedeker's *Palestine*, pp. 190-203.

superadding a glory to the temple of God, much greater than the former." The rest of the people are "nurslings of the flock of Christ, the habitation of excellent discourses, school of modesty, the devout and religious auditory of piety."[1] IV. Cent.

One may pause for a moment and ask, Did it never occur to the good bishops of the age of Constantine that all this outward glory, however it might harmonize with the character and purpose of the Old Dispensation, is foreign, if not wholly repugnant to the spirit of the New? So far from being able to serve God better in their glittering temples, than did the early Christians in their simple unconsecrated buildings, the allurements of sense which they had taken so much pains to accumulate, were the very means to obstruct and render more difficult that worship in spirit and in truth which our Lord taught to be alone acceptable to Him.

VIGILS. A practice had grown up of keeping vigils or night-watches on Easter-eve. The churches were lighted up with tapers, and the congregation remained together until midnight. The Emperor, who kept all the Church festivals with great pomp, extended the illumination throughout the whole city of Constantinople, setting up pillars of wax and blazing lamps, so that, as Eusebius expresses it, the night was made as brilliant as the day.[2]

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[1] Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.*, b. x., c. iv. [2] *Life of Constantine*, b. iv.. c. xxii.

PICTURES IN CHURCHES. Following Constantine's example, men of wealth founded and endowed churches, and adorned them with all the treasures of art. Those in particular, which were dedicated to the memory of the martyrs, were embellished with representations of their sufferings, and with pictures of Old and New Testament subjects.[1]

Notwithstanding that Eusebius[2] professed himself shocked at the bare idea of pictures in places of worship, there is no doubt that the practice had already commenced before the time of Constantine. One of the canons of the Council of Elvira forbids "the painting of the objects of worship and adoration on the walls."[3] Later in the fourth century this practice excited the indignation of the aged Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis, in Cyprus. Coming to a church in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and seeing on a curtain a figure (whether of Christ or of one of the saints), he tore down the curtain, declaring that it was an abomination and contrary to the authority of Scripture for the image of a man to be hung up in a Christian church. The cloth, he said, would be better used to bury some poor man in. On his return home he sent a plain curtain to

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[1] Neander, vol. iii., p. 407. The market-place of Constantinople was now surmounted with a cross; another, of gold and precious stones, stood at the entrance of the palace, as a charm against the machinations of enemies. Elsewhere in the city was to be seen Daniel in the lion's den, sculptured in brass. *Life of Constantine*, b. iii., c. xlviii.

[2] Ante, p. 142. [3] Canon 36.

replace that which he had torn down.[1] To paintings in course of time were added statues, and the practice, which soon developed into actual image-worship, provoked so much opposition as to produce in the next century tumults and civil war. IV. Cent.

EMBROIDERED GARMENTS. It was the fashion for men and women of rank in the large cities of the empire, to wear robes on which a chase of wild animals was embroidered in gold and silver thread. Those, on the other hand, who made pretensions to piety, substituted for such pictures scenes from the New Testament :—the marriage feast at Cana, the healing of the paralytic, the blind man restored to sight, Mary Magdalene embracing the feet of Jesus, and the resurrection of Lazarus. Bedizened with such figures, they supposed, as the good Bishop Asterius[2] tells them, that their dress must be well approved in the sight of God. He rebukes their folly, and counsels them to sell their embroidered garments, and use the proceeds for honouring the *living* images of God. Instead of carrying about the sick of the palsy on their clothes, he advises them to seek out and relieve the actually sick ; instead of wearing on their bodies the embroidered figure of a kneeling penitent, to mourn with a penitent spirit over their own sins.[3]

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[1] Neander, vol. iii., p. 414.

[2] Bishop of Amasea in Pontus, in the latter part of the fourth century.

[3] Neander, vol. iii., p. 408. The fashion was probably later than the age of Constantine.

LIGHTED TAPERS. Another practice, both irrational and heathenish, must be noticed in this place, namely, the use of lighted candles during the day time. As belonging to the Pagan religion it was protested against by several of the early Church writers. "Miserable men burn lights to God as to one who dwells in darkness. . . Is that man to be thought in his right mind who offers the light of candles and wax tapers to the author and giver of light? The light which God requires is of another kind, not with smoke, but clear and bright, the light of the mind which no one can exhibit unless he is acquainted with Him. Their gods, because they are of the earth, stand in need of lights, that they may not be in darkness; and the worshippers, because they have no taste for heaven, are recalled to the earth even by the ceremonies to which they are devoted."[1]

The first intimation of this practice in the Church is in the Canons of the Council of Elvira. "It is decreed that wax candles be not kindled in a cemetery during the day; for the spirits of the saints ought not to be disquieted."[2] By the end of the fourth century it had become a part of the ceremonial worship. Paulinus of Nola, A.D. 396,

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[1] Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, b. vi., c. 2. See also Tertullian, *On Idolatry*, c. xv.; *Apology*, c. xlvi.

[2] Canon 34. It is supposed that by the saints we are here to understand, not the martyrs, but the faithful who resorted to the martyrs' graves for prayer. *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, art. Lights, Ceremonial use of, p. 993.

glories in the splendour of his noon-day illumina- IV. Cent.
tions. "The bright altars are crowned with thickly clustered lamps: the fragrant lights smell of the waxed papyri: day and night they burn, so that night glitters with the splendour of the day; and day itself, glorious with heavenly honours, shines the more, its lustre being doubled by innumerable lamps."[1]

THE CATACOMBS. It will be convenient in this place to trace the history of these unique cemeteries subsequent to the period with which this volume closes. Soon after the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the State, the Catacombs began to be disused; and after the year 410, when Rome was captured by the Goths under Alaric, few interments in them seem to have been made.[2]

About the year 354 we have a description of some of the Catacombs from the pen of Jerome, who had come to Rome for his education, being then about fourteen years of age. The description would seem to refer to a place already disused for burial. "When I was a boy," he says, "I used on Sundays, in company with other boys of my own age and tastes, to visit the tombs of the apostles and martyrs, and to go into the crypts excavated in the bowels of the earth. The walls on

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[1] Maitland's *Church of the Catacombs*, pp. 228, 229.

[2] Parker's *Archæology of Rome*, Catacombs, p. 30; *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, art. Catacombs, p. 304.

either side as you enter are full of the bodies of the dead, and the whole place is so dark that one seems almost to see the fulfilment of those words of the prophet, 'Let them go down alive into Hades.' Here and there a little light admitted from above suffices to give a momentary relief to the horror of darkness; but as you go forwards and find yourself again immersed in the utter blackness of night, the words of the poet come spontaneously to your mind, 'The very silence fills the soul with dread!'"[1]

TO THE MOST BLESSED MARTYR, JANUARIUS, BISHOP DAMASUS MADE *this*.

The change of style from the time of Fabian (see ante p. 265) will not escape notice; it marks the transition from the days of persecution to an age of prosperity and of honour paid to men. The martyr whom it perpetuates is probably not the famous Januarius of Naples, put to death at Puteoli, A.D. 305, whose blood annually liquefied is one of the most shameless scandals of the Romish Church, but Januarius of Rome, a fellow-martyr with Bishop Sixtus in the Decian persecution (see ante, p. 291).

When the Catacombs ceased to be places of burial they became shrines of superstitious devotion and pilgrimage. In the latter part of the fourth century[2] Bishop Damasus repaired and renewed them,

[1] *Commentary on Ezekiel*, c. xl. [2] A.D. 366-384.

IV.-XVI. Cent.

widening the passages, constructing flights of stairs, and adorning the chambers with marble. He composed epitaphs in honour of the martyrs, which he caused to be engraved on marble slabs in a singularly beautiful character by the artist Furius Dionysius Filocalus; and he even had catalogues drawn up for the use of the pilgrims.

For a couple of centuries the flame of devotion continued to burn, but before the end of the sixth it had become extinguished. The burial places were spoiled by the Goths and Lombards; and in 761, and again in 817, several thousands of the bodies were, by the Popes Paul the First and Paschal the First, removed and deposited in the Churches.

From this time, having lost their value in the eyes of the devout, the Catacombs sank into oblivion, and remained for more than six centuries absolutely forgotten, as though they had never existed. It was not until May 31st, 1578, that they were again brought to light. Some workmen digging for *pozzolana* sand, came upon a sepulchral chamber, and thus revealed to the astonished inhabitants of Rome the hidden treasures which lay beneath their feet, and awoke an interest which has never since died away.[1]

Frescoes and Sculptures. As the Christians became wealthy they were not satisfied with the simple

[1] *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, v. i., pp. 305, 306.

Part II. Chap. 15.

monuments of earlier days, but emulated the heathen in the costliness and elegance of their tombs. The decorations were of two kinds, fresco and sculpture. Many examples of the former have been found in the *cubicula* and *arcosolia*,[1] but three-fourths of these are not in their original state, being restorations effected in the eighth and ninth centuries. Of those which have not been so restored most belong to the sixth century; many however are of the fourth and fifth. No pictures of Christian subjects have been met with earlier than the reign of Constantine, and from his time down to the year 500 these are entirely Scriptural. "There is not a figure of a saint or martyr extant before the sixth century."[2]

Amongst the subjects of the paintings none has attracted more attention than the groups of persons reclining or seated at the social board. These have been variously supposed to represent an Agape, or the Lord's Supper, or a funeral feast, or the Seven Disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.[3] Although the frequent recurrence in these scenes of the number seven may give some colour to the last conjecture, yet the absence of Christ himself, if not the dissimilarity in the circumstances of the two meals,

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[1] See ante, p. 178.

[2] Parker's *Archæology of Rome*, Catacombs, preface, pp. xi., xii. These are not the opinions of De Rossi and his English editors Northcote and Brownlow, who would assign to many of the frescoes a much earlier date. It may be remembered that one of the *inscriptions* photographed in chap. 15 (plate C, fig. 7, third or fourth century) contains the heads of Peter and Paul.

[3] John xxi. 2.

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Fresco in the Lateran Gallery, being a copy from the original in the Catacomb of Calixtus.

*Drawn by William Beck.*

Fresco from Pompeii in the Gallery of the Louvre. *Drawn from the original by William Beck.*

II.

would seem to be fatal to it. Another hypothesis is, that the seven deacons are here represented. The interpretation of a funeral meal has much to recommend it. The ancient Romans were accustomed to hold a feast on the day of the interment and on its annual recurrence.[1] Faith in our blessed Saviour did not, in many cases, abolish the old social usages, but imparted to them a new meaning and a new life, and, as we have seen, the anniversaries of deceased friends and of the martyrs occupied a large place in the minds of the early believers.

Whatever meaning we may attach to these groups, we cannot but be struck with the resemblance which exists between them and the social scenes depicted on the walls of Pompeii. A specimen of each is here presented in coloured lithography. If, however, the resemblance is striking, the differences in the surroundings of the festal board, and in the attire and character of the guests, are obvious and substantial.[2]

In the woodcut on the next page, the scene is somewhat different. Three men are seated at a couch-table, with a small tripod table in front, on

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[1] "It is still the custom in Rome to assemble at the grave of the deceased members of the family, on the anniversary of their death, and to have a family feast on the same occasion." Parker's *Catacombs*, p. 195.

[2] The Christian scene is repeated with some slight variation in three or four successive chambers in the Catacomb of Calixtus. Northcote and Brownlow, *Roma Sotterranea*, part ii., p. 67.

Part II. Chap. 15.

which lies a large fish surrounded by some other kind of food. At each end of the couch sits a woman. Between one of these and the tripod stands a vase; on the other side a boy is holding out a cup. Over

the head of one of the men are the words, *Irene da calda;* IRENE (or PEACE) GIVE HOT [WATER]: over another, *Agape misce mi;* AGAPE (or LOVE) MIX ME [WINE].[1] The words appear to be addressed to the women opposite, whose names are no doubt symbolical. In the upper margin of the panel are four proper names, and below them a fifth. On the left hand margin are the letters *va*, which with

[1] The custom of mixing water with wine was almost universal amongst the ancients.

*lete*, opposite on the right hand margin, make up the word *valete* (FAREWELL); affording a presumption that in this case the meal was a funeral feast.[1]

Sculpture as an embellishment to the abodes of the Christian dead, came in later than painting. In the fourth century the sarcophagi in which the bodies of the rich were enshrined, began to be adorned with finely-carved representations of Scripture events, sometimes in bold relief. After a time also, as the desire for personal distinction asserted itself more strongly, the portraits of the deceased were engraved upon their tombs. In the handling of Scripture subjects a peculiar and conventional taste early manifested itself. Often no attempt was made to copy nature; it was enough if the artist's tool suggested to the beholder the form or the idea which he wished to convey. Proportion also, and even possibilities, were utterly ignored, so that an effect was produced which, but for the sacredness of the subject and the veneration which antiquity awakens, would be ludicrous in the extreme.[2]

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[1] Parker's *Catacombs*, pp. 195-198. Our woodcut is copied from one of Parker's photographs (taken with magnesian light), assisted by an engraving in Aringhi's *Sculture e Pitture Sagra de la Roma Sotterranea* (vol. ii., plate cxxvii.), which was executed 150 years ago, when the fresco was in a better state of preservation. The part shown in dotted lines has now entirely faded. The letters here are brought out much more clearly than in either the photograph or the engraving. Amongst Parker's photographs is another fresco very similar to the above; but there are in addition two children at the couch. The words over the figures are, *Agape misce nobis;* LOVE MIX FOR US: and *Irene porge calda;* PEACE HAND HOT [WATER].

[2] Maitland is of opinion that the representations of Noah's Ark were copied from a medal of Deucalion and Pyrrha, struck in Apamea during

Part II. Chap. 15.

Some idea of the style of Christian thought and of the workmanship of the fourth and fifth centuries may be gathered from the accompanying specimens.

PLATE I.—This celebrated sarcophagus of white marble is in the crypt of St. Peter's, in the Vatican. The place is entirely dark, and the photograph was taken with magnesian light. The deceased was a person of high position, and doubtless of affluence. The inscription runs, *Jvn Bassvs vc qvi vixit annis xlii men ii in ipsa praefectvra vrbi neofitvs iit ad Devm viii kal sept Evsebio et Ypatio coss.* JUNIUS BASSUS, WHO LIVED 42 YEARS AND 2 MONTHS, WENT TO GOD THE VERY YEAR IN WHICH HE WAS PREFECT OF THE CITY, A NEOPHYTE, ON THE 25TH OF AUGUST, IN THE CONSULSHIP OF EUSEBIUS AND HYPATIUS. He was five times Consul, and died A.D. 359.

The subjects represented in the upper part are, the sacrifice of Isaac; the apprehension of Peter; Christ ascended, delivering a scroll to Peter and Paul; Christ in the garden; and lastly, before Pilate, who is about to wash his hands. In the lower tier is seen Job on his mat, with one of his friends and his wife who is holding a handkerchief to her nose (see Job xix. 17); the temptation of Adam and Eve; Christ's entry into Jerusalem; Daniel and the lions; and the apprehension of Paul. The spandrils of the five arches in the lower portion are ornamented with the emblematical lamb, engaged in various mystical acts.[1]

PLATE II.—On the sarcophagus lid above, is the offering of the Magi. Below is Elijah about to be carried up to heaven

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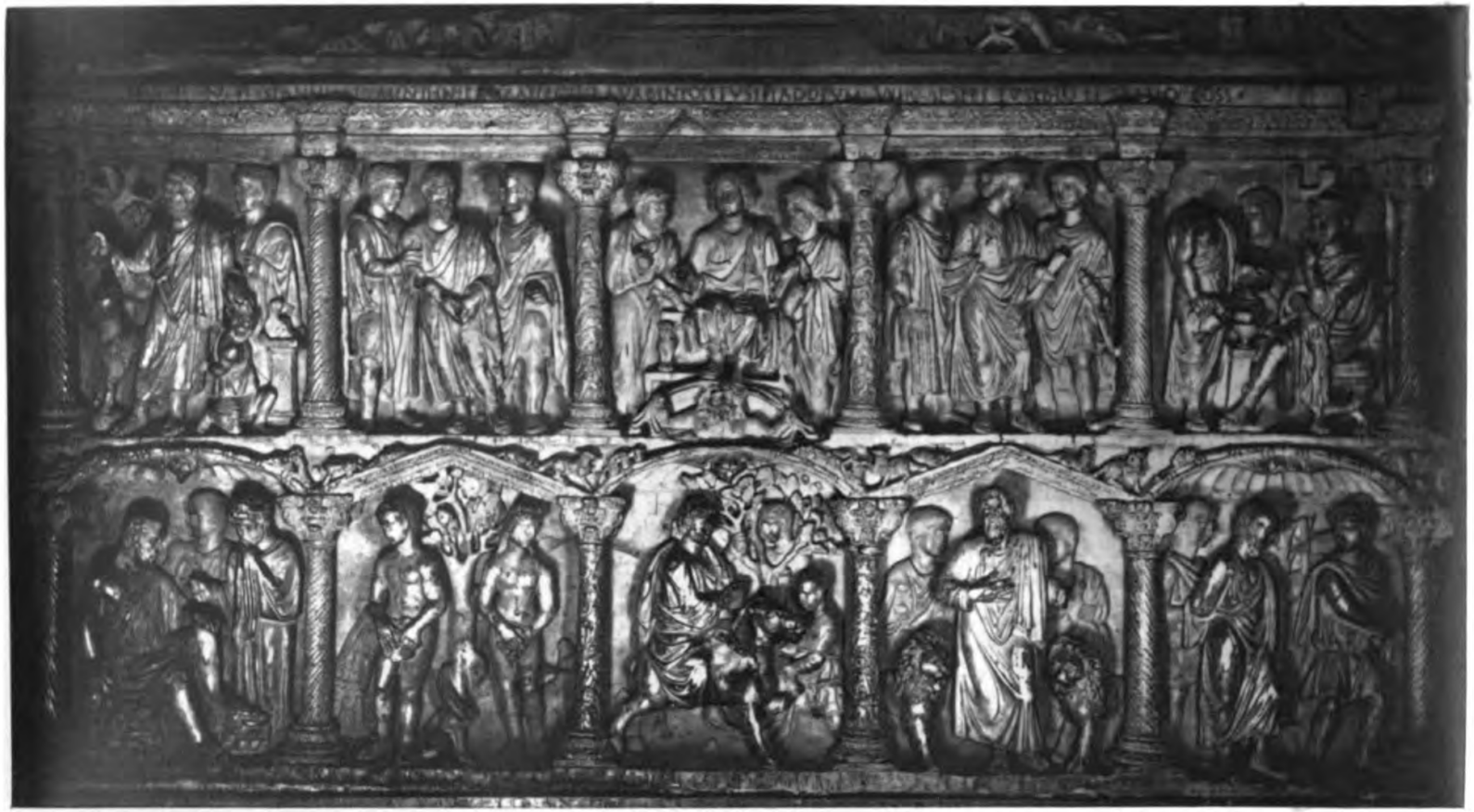
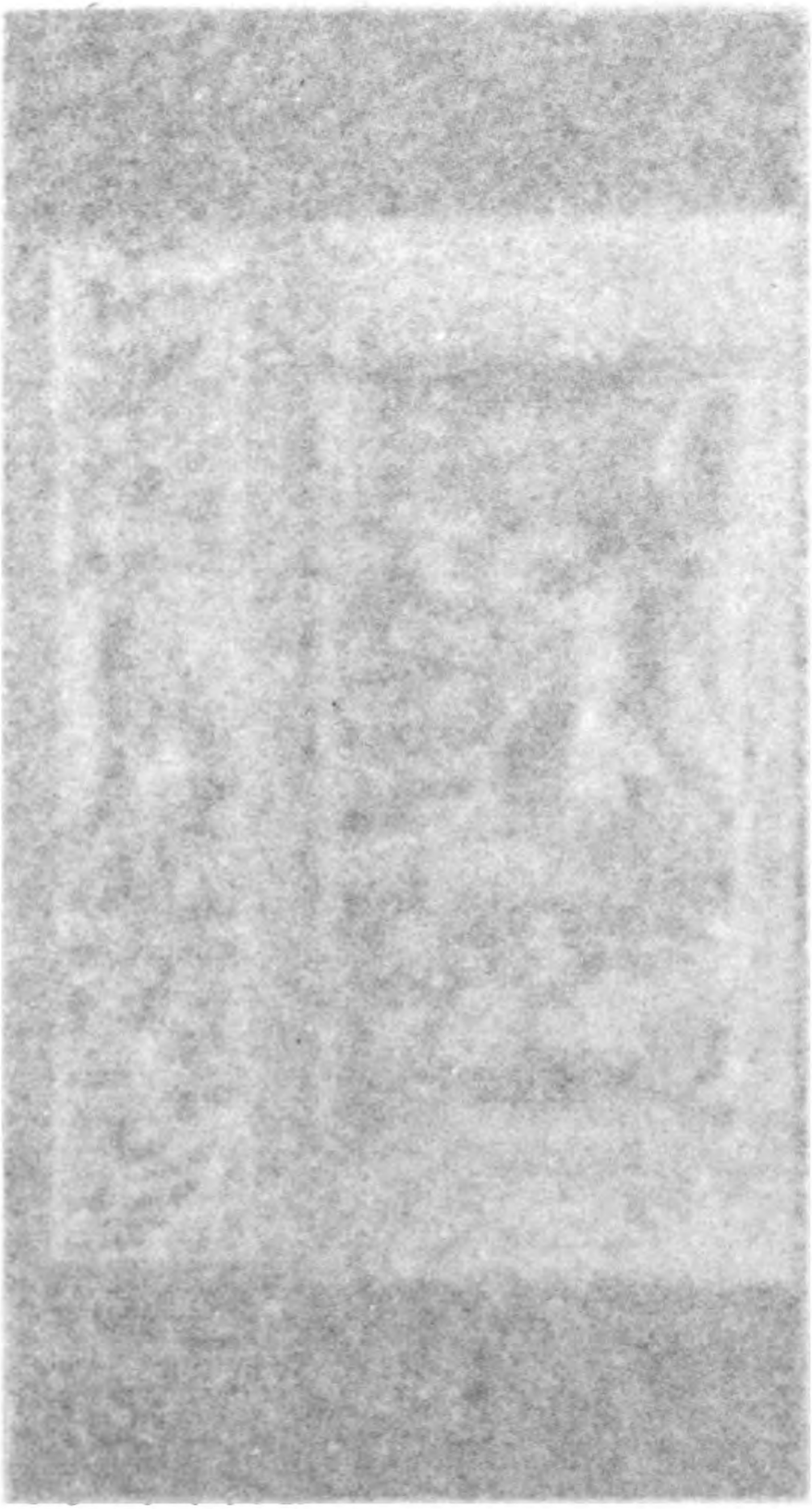
the reign of Septimus Severus. It thus came to pass that the family of the patriarch was reduced to a single person, and the ark to a mere box. The type once consecrated was servilely followed. *Church of the Catacombs*, pp. 251, 252.

[1] Northcote and Brownlow's *Roma Sotterranea*, pp. 312, 313. Parker's *Sculpture among the Greeks and Romans*, pp. 47, 48.

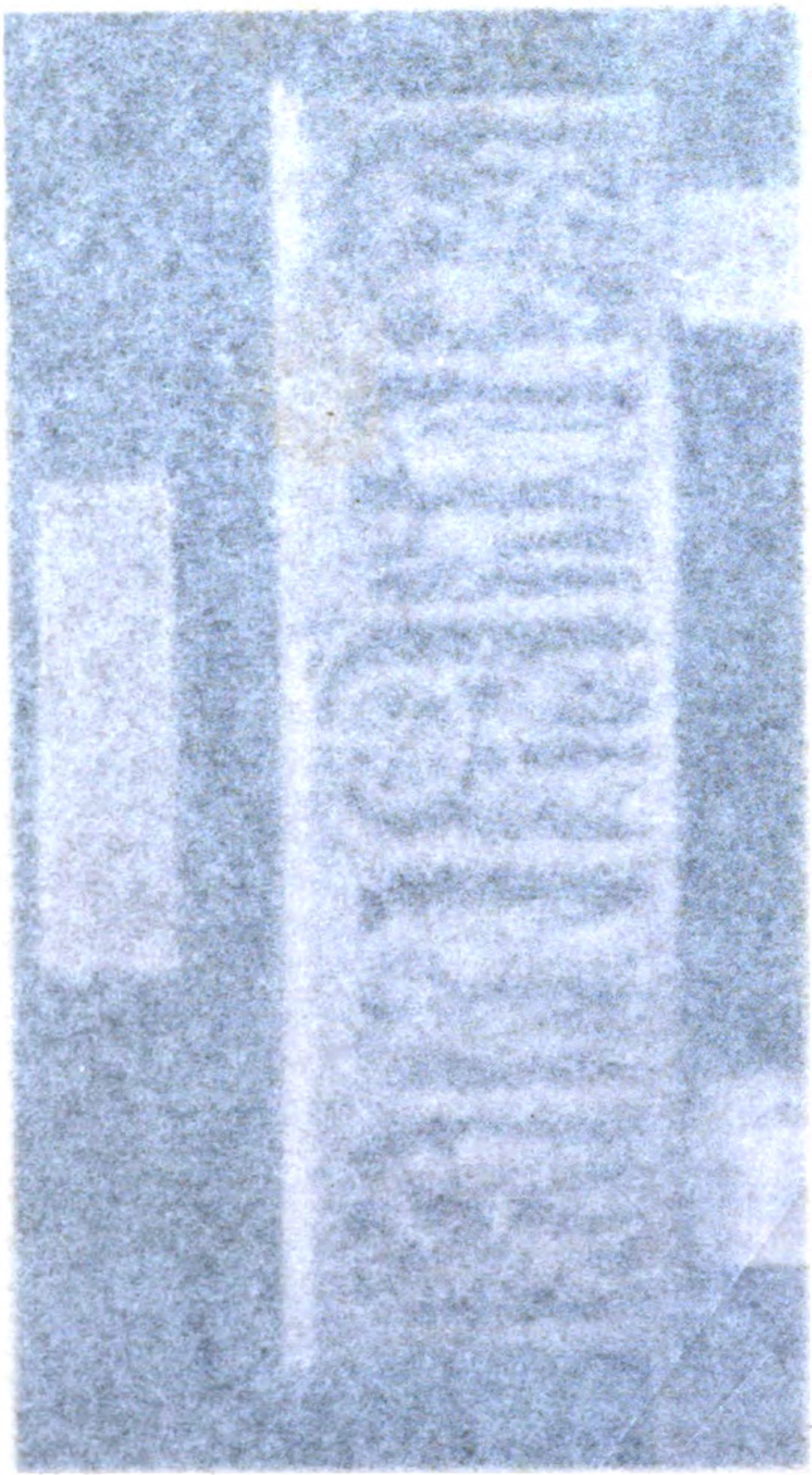


Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, Prefect of Rome, and five times Consul. Died A.D. 359. *Taken with magnesian light.*



The side of a Sarcophagus of the 4th century. Above is the fragment of a Sarcophagus lid.

Sculpture in high relief on a Sarcophagus. 4th century.



Sculpture on a Sarcophagus, with the Imperial Monogram in the centre. A small Sarcophagus above. 4th century.

PLATE V.

A Vase of the 4th century, with the offerings of the Magi.

in the chariot and leaving his mantle with Elisha. Two of the mocking children are represented, and one of the bears.[1] IV. & V. Cent.

PLATE III.—The figures, exquisitely carved in high relief, are placed under a colonnade of columns enriched with spiral foliage and with finely moulded capitals. In the centre is the risen Christ,[2] delivering a scroll to Peter, with others of the disciples around him; on the left is the sacrifice of Isaac prevented by the outstretched hand of God; in the two right-hand spaces Christ is seen standing before Pilate, who is washing his hands, on which an attendant pours water.[3]

PLATE IV.—On the small sarcophagus above, are the codex of the Old and New Testaments, and a Supper.[4] The principal sculpture represents Christ bearing his cross; crowned with thorns by a soldier; and taken before Pilate, who is preparing to wash his hands. The centre compartment is occupied with Constantine's Labarum, which is surrounded with the wreath of immortality, and supported by a cross, on whose arms two doves are perched, and below which are a waking and a sleeping soldier, the two guards appointed daily to watch the sacred standard.[5]

PLATE V.—This vase is in the Kircherian Museum.

PLATE VI.—In the upper part, on the left hand, is the Creation, in which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit unite; and the Temptation of Adam and Eve. On the right are, the miracles of turning water into wine; the loaves and fishes; and

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[1] This and the remaining sarcophagi are in the Lateran Museum of Christian Antiquities.

[2] As represented in Plate I., except that there the figure below the veil on which our Lord's feet rest, is that of an old and bearded man, here of a youthful person. In each case it is conjectured to be the classic figure of Uranus (heaven) adopted by the Christian sculptors.

[3] Parker, *Sculpture among the Greeks and Romans*, pp. 45, 46.

[4] The loaves, as is frequently the case, are marked with cross lines, the original of our *hot cross buns*.

[5] Parker, idem, p. 52. *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, art. Sculpture, Christian, p. 1868.

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the raising of Lazarus. The busts of the defuncts are in the centre. Below are seen the adoration of the Magi; Christ restoring the blind man to sight; Daniel with the lions; Peter healing the sick; his denial of Christ (the cock being represented below); Peter's apprehension; and his smiting the rock in the character of Moses.

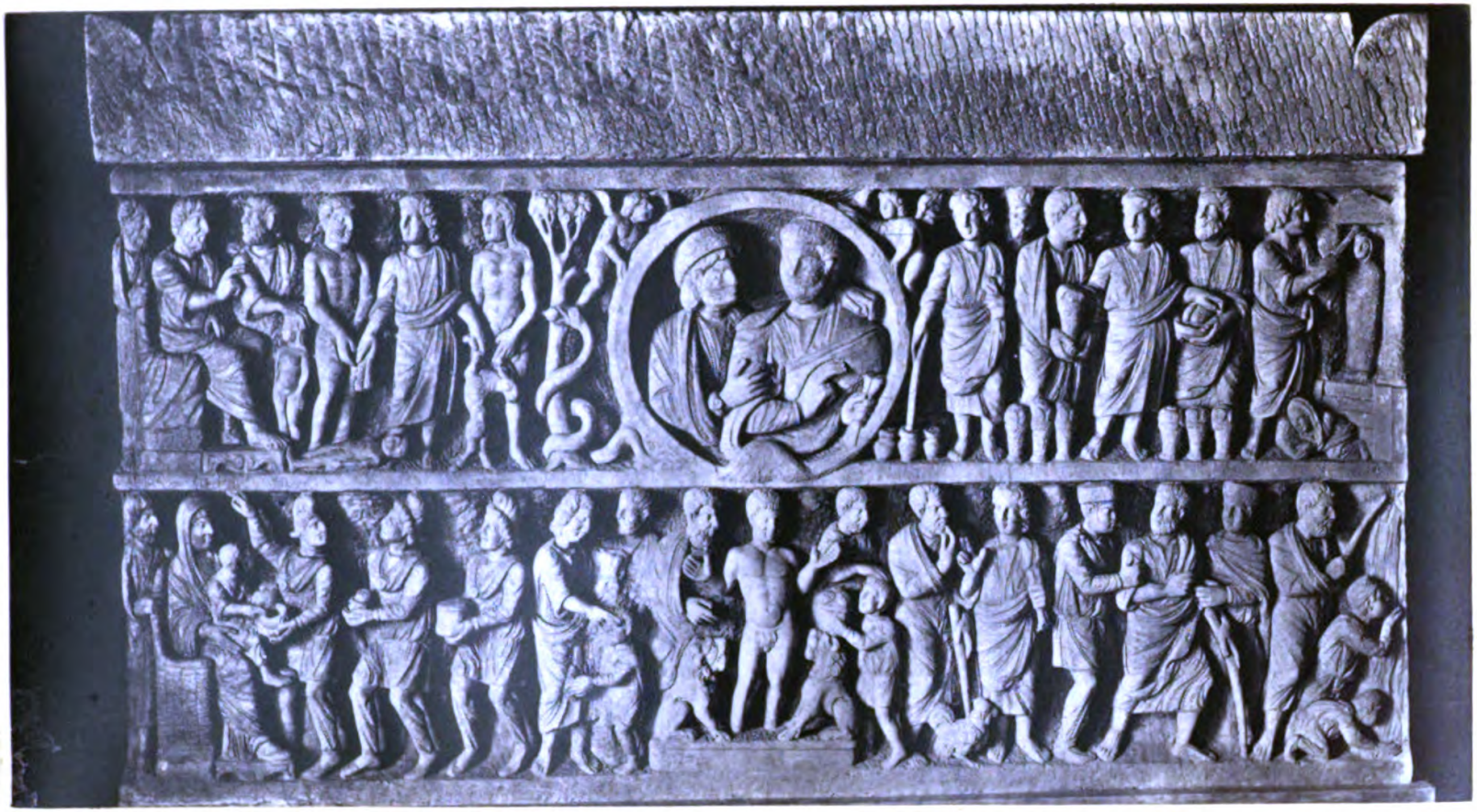
PLATE VII.—The principal subject of this piece of sculpture is the history of Jonah. Besides this, there is also the raising of Lazarus; Peter, as Moses, striking the rock; taken prisoner; and fishing; and Noah standing with two of the animals beside the ark.[1]

It will be observed that although the style of these sculptures is highly conventional, the figures are natural and simple, very different from the stiff solemn representations of the saints in later times. There is also, and this is far more important, a notable absence of features indicating the more corrupt worship which succeeded. There are no aureoles to be seen; the Saviour is always represented simply as a man: there is not the remotest sign of Mariolatry, and nothing to remind one of that servile adoration of the saints into which the Church afterwards fell: no lesson of asceticism even is conveyed in them. Scripture scenes only, in which the Old and New Testaments are curiously interwoven, are presented.

One of the Catacombs is named after the Christian writer and martyr Hippolytus.[2] In a hymn by

[1] All these monuments are Roman. The Christian art of the wealthy metropolis must not be taken as representative of the whole Church; it would probably, at this period, be far in advance of its state elsewhere.

[2] See ante, p. 256.



A Sarcophagus of the 4th or 5th century. In the centre are the busts of the two defuncts.

Sculpture in low relief on a Sarcophagus of the 5th century.

Prudentius, a Christian poet who wrote about A.D. 403, there is a description of it which throws light on the condition of the Catacombs in his day, and on the rapid growth of superstition from the time that Christianity became the religion of the State. "Not far from the city walls, among the well-trimmed orchards, there lies a crypt buried in darksome pits. Into its secret recesses a steep path with winding stairs directs one; and when, as you advance further, the darkness as of night seems to get more and more obscure, there occur at intervals apertures cut in the roof, which admit the bright rays of the sun into the dark galleries. To such a secret place was the body of Hippolytus conveyed, near to the spot where now stands the altar which faithfully guards the martyr's bones, while it feeds the dwellers by the Tiber with holy food. Wondrous is the sanctity of the spot. Here have I, when sick with maladies both of soul and body, often prostrated myself in prayer, and found relief. Yes, O glorious priest! I will tell with what joy I return to embrace thee, and that I owe all this to Hippolytus, to whom Christ our God has granted power to obtain what anyone asks of him. That little chapel which contains the cast off garments of his soul is bright with solid silver. Wealthy hands have put up tablets glistening and smooth as a mirror, have overlaid the entrance with Parian marble, and lavished large sums of money on the work." Describing the pilgrimages to the shrine, he says, "All the youth of

IV.-V. Cent.

the place worship there; they come and go from early morning to the setting of the sun. They imprint their kisses on the shining silver; they pour out their sweet balsams; they bedew their faces with tears. The Imperial city pours forth her streams; the plebeian crowd jostle their patrician neighbours, faith hurrying all forward to the shrine. Albano's gates too send forth their white-robed hosts in a long procession. The noise on the various roads waxes loud. . . The native of the Abruzzi and the Etruscan peasant are there, the fierce Samnite, the countryman of lofty Capua and of Nola, each with his wife and children. The broad fields scarcely suffice to contain the joyful people. No doubt the cavern is too narrow for such crowds; but hard by is another church, enriched with royal magnificence, which this great assemblage may visit."[1]

This was written about seventy years after our present period closes, and displays a rapid change from the simplicity which had hitherto in many ways still maintained its ground. Here we have, already developed, some of the most striking features of the corrupt worship of the Romish Church. Prudentius' description might almost have been written for the festival which still takes place every year in the Catacomb of Calixtus.

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[1] Parker's *Catacombs*, pp. 105, 106.

## CHAPTER XVI.

PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD—INVOCATION OF SAINTS—WORSHIP OF RELICS — FASTS AND FESTIVALS — EDUCATION—CHURCH BUILDINGS.

II.-III. Cent.

IN his description of the Eucharist, Cyril speaks of PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD, as well as for the living;[1] and the reader may have noticed in a previous chapter an expression of Tertullian's to the same purport: "As often as the anniversary of the martyrs comes round, we make offerings for the dead."[2] To this he adds in another treatise: "The widow prays for the soul of her deceased husband, desiring that he may find present refreshment and a part in the first resurrection, and she makes her annual oblation for him on the day of his death."[3] In like manner Cyprian says, "We always, as you remember, offer sacrifice for the martyrs, as often as we celebrate their passion and birthdays by an annual commemoration."[4]

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[1] Ante, p. 425. [2] p. 138. [3] *On Monogamy*, c. x.

[4] Bingham, *Antiquities of the Church*, b. xv., c. iii. § 15. Compare also Cyprian's denial (ante, p. 442, note [1]) to those who have "wished to call the priests away from the altar," the celebration of a sacrifice for the repose of their souls. By the sacrifices and offerings here spoken of some understand prayer, which Tertullian calls "the spiritual victim that has superseded the sacrifices of the Old Covenant." *On Prayer*, c. xxviii.

Amongst the Christians of the second and third centuries there was a wide-spread belief that the soul when it leaves the body enters upon an intermediate state, to be exchanged at the resurrection for one of eternal duration, either of misery or happiness. Many believed also, that for the righteous this intermediate state would come to an end a thousand years before the general resurrection. This was the doctrine of the Millennium. It was supposed also, that the souls of the righteous, while in their separate abode, anxiously look forward to the time of their release, and it was for this release as well as for their refreshment during the term of imprisonment, that their surviving friends were accustomed to offer prayer.[1]

An illustration of this belief is to be found in the narrative of Perpetua's martyrdom. When she was in prison, as related above,[2] she prayed for her little brother, whom she saw tormented with thirst in a gloomy place; and in answer to her prayer the gloom gave way to light, and her brother, refreshed with abundance of water, ran off to play joyously after the manner of children. "By this," she says, "I understood that he was translated from the place of punishment."[3]

Origen's inquisitive mind often busied itself with

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[1] See the epitaph at p. 184, *Refrigera Deus Anima*[*m*]. Burton's *Christian Church*, pp. 317-319.

[2] See ante, p. 239. [3] *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, c. ii.

speculations concerning the nature and destiny of the soul, and he came to the conclusion that no human being at the time of death is so entirely free from sin as to be fit for heaven. He held that every disembodied soul, even of the best of men, must undergo purification by fire, but he supposed that this was to take place, not immediately after death, but at the time of the final resurrection.[1]

Thus did the doctrine of purgatory begin to spring up,—an evil weed, which nurtured by the Church of Rome, has done so much to keep men's souls in bondage. It is a doctrine which may be safely said to have no foundation in Holy Scripture, and to which no allusion is made by the writers of the sub-apostolic age. It is probable that the general belief at this period regarding the pardon and purification of the dead was of a much milder form than it took in the narrative of Perpetua's vision, and very far removed from the purgatory of later times. It thus appears in the *Apostolical Constitutions:* "Let us pray for every brother who is at rest in Christ, that God the lover of mankind, who has received his soul, may forgive him every sin, voluntary and involuntary."[1]

The ceremonial of praying for the souls of the departed is alluded to by Dionysius the (so called) Areopagite, in his description of a Christian funeral. "The body of the deceased being brought

[1] Burton, pp. 319, 320. [2] B. viii., c. xli.

to the bishop, hymns were sung of thanksgiving to God, by whose grace the departed brother had been victorious. Then the priest returned thanks, and some chapters of the Scripture were read, and after the catechumens had been dismissed, the names of those who had overcome and were at rest were read in a clear voice. Finally, the priest having prayed for the departed, that God would grant him pardon and admission among the undying, the body was kissed, anointed and buried."[1]

The Festivals of the Martyrs and other ceremonial days observed by the Church were very attractive to the pagan population; and this was, unhappily, an inducement to multiply them and to invest them with splendour. Gregory of Nyssa, in his Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus, writes, "When Gregory saw how the ignorant and simple multitude clung to their idolatry, on account of the sensuous pleasures and delights it afforded, he allowed them, when celebrating the memory of the holy martyrs, to indulge themselves and give a loose to pleasure, hoping that in course of time they would of their own accord come over to a more becoming and correct manner of life."[2] This is confirmed by Augustine: "When peace was made, the crowd of Gentiles who were anxious to embrace Christianity

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[1] Dionysius, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, in A. N. Library, Arnobius, vol. xix., p. 218, note 3. The works which pass under this name are adjudged to have been written in the fifth century.

[2] Mosheim, vol. i., p. 171, note 3.

were deterred by this, that whereas they had been accustomed to pass the holidays in drunkenness and feasting before their idols, they could not easily consent to forego these most pernicious yet ancient pleasures. It seemed good then to our leaders to favour this part of their weakness, and for those festivals which they relinquished to substitute others in honour of the holy martyrs, which they might celebrate with similar luxury, though not with the same impiety."[1] "Many," he says in another place, "drink most luxuriously over the dead, and when they make a feast for the departed, bury themselves over the buried, and place their gluttony and drunkenness to the score of religion. . . The martyrs hear your bottles, the martyrs hear your frying-pans, the martyrs hear your drunken revels!"[2]

THE INVOCATION OF SAINTS. Simultaneously with the notion that the prayers of the living are of advantage to the dead, the converse idea sprang up, that the intercession of the dead is availing for the pardon and salvation of the living. Cyprian expresses the natural feelings of mankind when he writes, "In paradise a great company of our dear ones await us; parents, brothers, children, eagerly longing for us, assured of their own safety, and

[1] Maitland's *Church in the Catacombs*, p. 213.

[2] *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, vol. i., art. Catacombs, p. 312. Maitland's *Catacombs*, p. 215.

Part II.

solicitous for ours."[1] Origen goes further, and says, "That all the departed saints, having charity towards those who are still in the world, should be said to care for their salvation, and to assist them by their prayers and mediation with God, is not unbecoming." Again, "To my mind all those our fathers who have gone to rest before us, fight with us in our battles and help us with their prayers."[2] It is not however until a somewhat later period in the history of the Church that we come upon the recognized practice of invoking the intercession of the saints, a practice abhorrent to Gospel teaching and derogatory to the honour of Christ.

Towards the close of the present epoch we may also trace the first origin of the adoration of the Virgin Mary. Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, calls Mary "our holy and glorious lady, mother of God and ever virgin."[3] His contemporary Methodius apostrophises her in a style worthy of the dark ages: "Tremendous, verily, is the mystery connected with thee, O virgin mother, thou spiritual throne, glorified and made worthy of God. . . If to the ark, which was the image and type of thy sanctity, such honour was paid that there was access to it for none but the priestly order only, what, and what sort of veneration is due to thee from us, who are of creation the least, to thee who

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[1] *On the Mortality*, c. xxvi.

[2] Quoted in Lyman Coleman, c. x. § 4, note *. [3] Fragment, c. vii.

art indeed a queen, to thee the living ark of God, to thee the heaven that contains Him who can be contained of none!"[1]

When ideas such as these prevailed, it was only to be expected that the actual worship of the virgin should not be far off. Epiphanius, in the latter part of the fourth century,[2] speaks of a "sect of women who had emigrated from Thrace into Arabia, and had there introduced the custom of making offerings of cakes to the name and honour of the virgin;" and although he condemns the practice, yet he strenuously opposes those who doubted Mary's perpetual virginity, and even inclines to the opinion that she was taken up into heaven without tasting death.[3]

THE WORSHIP OF RELICS. We have seen how the brethren who in the year 258 flocked to witness Cyprian's triumph over death, spread handkerchiefs on the ground before him to catch his blood;[4] and in how foolish a way Lucilla, half a century later, manifested her veneration for the memory of the martyrs.[5] There were, it is probable, many Lucillas

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[1] *Oration concerning Simeon and Anna*, c. v. Methodius suffered martyrdom at Chalcis, A.D. 312.

[2] He was bishop of Constantia, in Cyprus (the ancient Salamis), from A.D. 367 to 403.

[3] Epiphanius, *Against Heresies*, b. iii., tome ii.; Heresy lxxviii., pp. 1040, 1041, 1043, 1044. Migne. The *Festival of the Assumption* was not instituted till some centuries later, although the legend on which it was founded is traced to a Gnostic source. *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, vol. ii., p. 1142.

[4] See p. 294. [5] See p. 370.

during this period, but it does not appear that the adoration of relics came into general use before the middle of the fourth century.

One relic however had already begun to command universal veneration previous to the death of Constantine. This was the wood of the supposed true cross. The following is the account handed down and believed for many centuries, of the finding of the cross. In the year 326, the Empress Helena, Constantine's mother, then nearly eighty years of age, made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, to offer up prayer and to visit the sacred places. When Hadrian destroyed Jerusalem and built Ælia Capitolina on its site, tradition states that in order to obliterate every trace of the Holy Sepulchre, he raised the ground around it and erected there temples to Jupiter and Venus. The Empress (so we are told), guided by a heavenly dream, discovered the spot, which had been so carefully concealed. She caused the temples to be destroyed, and on the ground being cleared, the sepulchre was discovered with three crosses lying near it, and apart from them the superscription set up by Pilate! Being doubtful which of the crosses was the Lord's, the Empress, with the Bishop Macarius, subjected them to a miraculous test. A lady of Jerusalem was lying at the point of death. The bishop suggested that all three crosses should be applied to the dying woman. The first two produced no effect, but at the touch of the third she rose up before them per-

fectly healed. The identity of the true cross being thus determined, a portion of it was encased in silver and committed to Macarius to be kept at Jerusalem; the remainder, together with the nails, was sent to Constantine, who enclosed it in his own statue, which stood in the forum of the city on a column of porphyry,[1] and fixed some of the nails in his helmet. He had the rest wrought into a headpiece and bit for his horse, and used them in his wars; in which the next age saw the fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy: "There shall be on the bridles of the horses holiness unto the Lord!"[2] So miserably had men perverted the religion of Christ; so completely had the words of the angels to the women at the sepulchre been forgotten, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"[3]

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[1] See ante, p. 409, 412.

[2] Chap. xiv. 20, marg. Socrates, *Eccl. Hist.*, b. i., c. xvii.; and Sozomen, b. ii., c. i.; also Theodoret, b. i., c. xviii. *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, art. Cross, Finding of. *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, art. Helena.

[3] Luke xxiv. 5. The details of this legend, variously related, rest on the authority of works written from fifty to a hundred years after the event. One of the authors to whom we owe them, Socrates Scholasticus, candidly confesses, either in reference to the piece of the cross or to the whole legend, "This indeed I have by report and have written it down." The silence of contemporary writers is very noteworthy. In the *Itinerary* of the anonymous pilgrim from Bordeaux to Jerusalem, referred to the year 333, we have a description of the city, with the mention of many of the traditional sites both of the Old and New Testament. Amongst these are the Mount of Golgotha and the Holy Sepulchre, with the beautiful church recently erected over it by Constantine; yet there is no allusion to the cross, nor is the name of Helena once mentioned. Eusebius again, whose Life of Constantine was written probably in 338, records the visit of the Empress to Jerusalem, but does not connect her name in any way with the place of crucifixion, or with the Holy Sepulchre; he only speaks of the

It was not however only a credulous old lady and her superstitious son, or an ignorant bishop, who fell into such a snare; the whole Christian world seems to have been ready to follow them. Cyril of Jerusalem, writing not more than twenty years after the supposed discovery, says that by that time the wood of the cross had been diffused nearly throughout the whole world.[1] The fact is that men's minds had long been preparing for a return to idolatry in some form. The Church had become like the trees in the wide valleys of the western world at the end of a scorching season; the legend of the discovery was the spark by which the forest was set on a blaze. By A.D. 386 the interposition of the law was requisite to check the traffic in sacred remains. "Let no one remove a buried body; let no one carry away or sell a martyr." It was the monks, as Augustine tells us, who were the foremost in "retailing the limbs of martyrs, if martyrs they are."[2]

FASTS AND FESTIVALS multiplied during the third and fourth centuries. In imitation of our Lord's forty days' temptation in the wilderness, a

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place as "the spot which was discovered." Constantine himself, in his epistle to Macarius, although he seems to speak of the discovery of the sepulchre as miraculous, says nothing regarding the manner of its discovery, and nothing respecting the cross. Lastly Cyril, whose catechetical lectures were delivered on the very spot, has nothing to say regarding the Empress. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, b. iii., c. xxix-xxxix. *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*; *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, ubi supra.

[1] *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, art. Helena.

[2] Maitland's *Church in the Catacombs*, p. 278.

fast of as many as forty hours was observed, out of which afterwards arose the forty days of Lent.[1] The Feast of Pentecost, instituted to commemorate the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples, followed fifty days after that of the Resurrection, the whole interval being observed as a season of festival, during which there was no fasting, and prayer was made standing. Pentecost, which was also named Whitsuntide from the white robes of the candidates, was one of the three special baptismal seasons, the two others being Easter and Epiphany. Epiphany (the word signifies manifestation), appears to have been instituted by Jewish Christians in honour of our Lord's baptism, and to have travelled from the East to the West some time in the fourth century. Ascension-day is likewise not mentioned before the middle of the fourth century. About the same time Christmas, the festival of our Lord's birth, first began to be observed at Rome, from whence it spread to the East. "It is not yet ten years," says Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, writing about A.D. 386, "since this day was first made known to us. It had been before observed in the West, whence the knowledge of it is derived."[2]

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[1] Or because our Lord was supposed to have been forty hours in the tomb.

[2] Chrysostom's *Homily on the Nativity*. Clement of Alexandria speaks of some in his time who had "calculated not only the year, but even the day of the birth of our Saviour," and of the "followers of Basilides [a Gnostic teacher of Hadrian's time] who kept the day of his baptism as a festival." Clem. Alex., *Miscell.*, i., c. xxi.; Neander, i., pp. 415-418.

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Much has been written regarding the way in which the Christmas festival came first to be observed in the Roman Church, and how the time for its observance came to be transferred to the 25th of December; for although nothing certain is known as to the season of the year when our Lord was born, it may confidently be asserted that it cannot have been very near to the winter solstice. Neander suggests the following solution to these questions, but without committing himself to it in all respects. "Precisely at this season of the year a series of festivals occurred, the celebration of which was closely interwoven with the whole civil and social life. The Christians were on this account exposed to be led astray into many of the customs and solemnities peculiar to these festivals. Besides, these festivals had an import which easily admitted of being spiritualized, and with some slight change receiving a Christian meaning. First came the Saturnalia, which represented the happy times of the golden age, and abolished for awhile the distinction between slaves and free men. This admitted of being easily transferred to Christianity, which, through the restoration of the fellowship between God and man, had brought in the true golden age, the true equality of all men, and the true liberty. Then came the custom peculiar to this season of making presents (the Strenæ), which afterwards passed over to the Christmas festival. There was also the Festival of Infants, with which the Saturnalia concluded, just

as Christmas was the true festival of the children. Lastly came the festival of the shortest day, the birthday of the sun about to return once more towards the earth, in which case a transition to the Christian point of view naturally presented itself, when Christ the sun of the spiritual world was compared with that of the material. To all this series of pagan festivals was now therefore to be opposed that Christian festival which could be so easily connected with the feelings which lay at their root; and hence the celebration of Christmas was transferred to the 25th of December in order to draw away the Christian people from all participation in the pagan solemnities, and gradually wean the pagans themselves from their heathen customs."[1]

To see how the minds even of wise men were in matters of this kind swayed by the opposing influences of truth and custom, it is only necessary to read Origen's answer to the philosopher Celsus, when he objects that Christians did not observe the heathen festivals. He quotes Thucydides, "To keep a feast is nothing else than to do one's duty;" and adds, "he truly celebrates a feast who does his duty and prays always, offering up continually bloodless sacrifices in prayer to God. It was a most noble saying of Paul, 'Ye observe days and months and seasons and years; I am afraid of you, lest by any

[1] *Church History*, vol. iii., pp. 440-443.

means I have bestowed labour upon you in vain.' If it be objected," he continues, "that we Christians are accustomed to observe certain days, as the Lord's day, the Preparation, Passover, Pentecost, I answer, the perfect Christian who is ever in thought, word and deed serving God the Word, he is always keeping the Lord's day. He who is unceasingly preparing himself for the true life, abstaining from the pleasures which lead so many astray, such a one is always keeping Preparation day. He who considers that Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, and that it is his duty to eat of the flesh of the Word, never ceases to keep the Paschal feast. Lastly, he who can truly say, 'We are risen with Christ to sit with Him in heavenly places,' is always living in the season of Pentecost."

No sooner however has Origen said this than he turns round, contradicts Paul's "most noble" saying, and propounds a maxim not to be found in the New Testament, but which he endeavours to support from the Old. "Nevertheless, the majority of those who are accounted believers are not of this advanced class; but from being either unable or unwilling to keep every day in this manner, they require some sensible memorials to prevent spiritual things from passing altogether away from their minds. It would take too long at present to show why we are required by the law of God to keep its festivals by eating 'the bread of affliction,' or 'leaven with bitter herbs,' or why the law says 'humble your

souls,' or the like." In this way were Origen and the teachers of his time accustomed to mix together the precepts of the law and the gospel.[1]

More enlightened was Socrates Scholasticus, the ecclesiastical historian, who although he wrote so late as the fifth century, has some remarks on this subject which manifest a rare freedom of thought. Speaking of the Eastern controversy, he says: "Men have altogether lost sight of the fact that when our religion superseded the Jewish economy, the obligation to observe the Mosaic law and the ceremonial types ceased. The Apostle, in his Epistle to the Galatians,[2] demonstrates that the Jews were in bondage as servants, but that Christians are called into the liberty of sons, and he exhorts them to disregard days, and months, and years. In his Epistle to the Colossians[3] he distinctly declares that such observances are merely shadows: 'Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a feast-day, or a new moon, or a Sabbath day, which are a shadow of the things to come.' . . Men love festivals because they afford them a cessation from labour; therefore

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[1] *Against Celsus*, b. viii., c. xxi.-xxiii. It need hardly be said that the observance of the First day of the week rests on totally different grounds. The weekly day of rest was a divine institution, coeval with the creation, when God blessed and hallowed the seventh day because in it He rested from all his work; and the early Church continued the same institution, only the first day of the week, when the Son of God rose from the dead, was substituted for the seventh.

[2] Chap. iv. [3] Chap. ii. 16, 17.

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it is that each individual in every place, according to his own pleasure, has by a prevalent custom celebrated the memory of the Saving Passion. The Saviour and his Apostles have enjoined us by no law to keep this feast.[1] The Apostles had no thought of appointing festival days, but of promoting a life of blamelessness and piety. It seems to me that even as many other things have become customary in different places, so the feast of Easter from a certain custom has had its peculiar observance, since, as I said, none of the Apostles have enacted anything concerning it."[2]

EDUCATION.—Not much is to be found in the Ante-Nicene writings on this subject. In the *Apostolical Constitutions* there is an interesting summary of religious teaching as set before the candidates for baptism. "Let the catechumen be taught before baptism the knowledge of God the Father unbegotten, and of his only-begotten Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Let him learn the order of the Creation, the course of Divine Providence and of the successive dispensations, why the world, and man, the citizen of the world, were made, and of what nature he himself is. Let him be taught how God punished the wicked with water and fire, and how He has in every generation crowned his saints with glory; how his Providence has never forsaken

[1] *οὐ γαρ νόμῳ τοῦτο παραφυλάττειν ὁ σωτὴρ ἢ οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἡμῖν παρήγγειλαν.*

[2] *Eccles. Hist.*, b. v., c. xxii.

mankind, but recalled them from time to time from error and vanity to the knowledge of the truth, bringing them back from slavery and impiety to liberty and godliness, and from death eternal to everlasting life. After this he must learn the doctrine of Christ's Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection from the dead, and Assumption, and what it is to renounce the devil, and enter into covenant with Christ."[1]

So long as the Church possessed no schools of her own for *secular* instruction (and there is no evidence of these before the fourth century), the education of Christian children presented no little difficulty. Their attendance at the pagan schools was probably however generally regarded as a matter of necessity, since even Tertullian himself permits it. In doing so he enjoins the Christian scholar to receive the good and reject the evil, "just as one taking poison from another who is unconscious of its being poison, refrains from drinking it. Necessity is admitted to him as an excuse, because he is unable to learn in any other way."[2]

But when it came to the question whether a Christian could be a *teacher* in a pagan school, Tertullian was very decided. "The schoolmaster and professor," he says, "are in league with idolatry. They must teach the gods of the nations, and observe their festivals, by which indeed they compute their fees. The first payment of a new scholar

[1] B. vii., c. xxxix. [2] *On Idolatry*, c. x.

Part II. Chap. 16.

is consecrated to Minerva. The New Year and the feast of the Seven Hills must be kept; and the gifts of the Winter Solstice and of the feast of Dear Kinship must be exacted. The schools must be garlanded with flowers, the Flamens' wives and the Ædiles offer sacrifice, and on the birthday of an idol every pomp of the devil is exhibited."[1]

Church Buildings. During the seasons of tranquillity which the Christians enjoyed in the third century, they began to possess church lands and to erect public houses of worship. The first clearly authentic notice of this kind which has come down to us belongs to the reign of Alexander Severus (222-235).[2] There was in Rome, not far from the west bank of the Tiber, a plot of ground which had been regarded as common. One of the Christian congregations appropriated it as the site for their house of worship. The company of victuallers set up a rival claim to it, and the dispute was brought before the Emperor. He gave his judgment in favour of the Christians, on the ground that any kind of religious use would be better than the conversion of it into a tavern.[3] That church buildings had become numerous by the end of the third century is evident, not only from Eusebius' statement quoted above,[4] but also from the edict of Diocletian order-

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[1] Idem. [2] See ante, p. 243.

[3] Lampridius, *Life of Alexander Severus*, c. xlix. This was the origin of the church of Santa Maria in Trastevere [Transtiberina].

[4] p. 326.

ing their destruction and the confiscation of the lands which belonged to them; whilst Lactantius' account of the demolition of the church at Nicomedia[1] shows that some of them at least were buildings of considerable size.

After the edicts of Milan, church buildings multiplied rapidly. Some took their form from the chapels in the Catacombs; others were built on the model of the Roman basilicas, which in numerous instances were themselves transformed into Christian churches. The basilica had itself originated from the forum or market-place. In the times of the later Republic, when the forum at Rome was found too small for the rapidly increasing business of the city, the private houses around it were converted into public halls, where the judicial causes might be heard under cover and with more convenience. These buildings were called basilicas.[2] They were of an oblong form: and the indispensable pillars of ancient architecture, which in the temples stood without, were placed within the building, dividing it into a central avenue with two side aisles. In one of these aisles the male, in the other the female suitors for justice waited their turn. The three avenues were, near the upper end, crossed by another which was elevated a few steps, and was set apart for the advocates, notaries and others employed in the public business. Beyond this transept, and in

[1] See ante, p. 327. [2] Royal or Court edifices.

continuation of the central avenue, the hall ended in a semicircular recess, with a vaulted ceiling, the tribunal or *absis* (apse) where sat the judge with his assessors.

Such an arrangement was well adapted to the growing ritualism of the Church. The two sexes, separated as they were accustomed to be, found their places in the aisles. The central avenue became the nave.[1] The transept was occupied by the inferior clergy and the singers; the bishop took the seat or throne of the magistrate, the superior clergy ranging on each side, in the seats of the assessors.[2] The rapid increase of the Church caused a large demand for new places of worship. The basilicas were numerous, and were attached not only to the market-places but to every Imperial residence; it was easy for Constantine to bestow some of them at once on the Christians, without either interfering with the course of justice or bringing the religious feelings of the hostile parties into collision.[3]

In the East other types of architecture were followed. Eusebius describes the rebuilding, be-

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[1] *Navis*, a ship, so called from the fanciful analogy of the Church to the ship of Peter.

[2] Thus the Cathedral of Torcello, an island near Venice, rebuilt in the eleventh century on the plan of a Roman basilica, still shows amongst other peculiarities, a throne for the bishop in the centre of the principal apse. See Fergusson's *Illustrated Handbook of Architecture*, vol. ii., pp. 497-499.

[3] Milman's *History of Christianity*, vol. ii., pp. 342-344. At Rome, where there were eighteen basilicas, two, the Sessorian and the Lateran, were granted to the Christians by Constantine.

tween A.D. 313 and 322, of the church at Tyre, which had been destroyed in the time of Diocletian. If the building was as florid as the description given of it by the Church historian, it must have been gorgeous indeed.[1] Constantine adopted the circular form, both in the churches in the Holy Land, and in his great church at Constantinople, which was rebuilt by Justinian with incredible splendour in the sixth century, and converted in 1453 into a mosque, the celebrated St. Sophia.

It is said that when Constantine was about to commence a campaign against Persia, he prepared a tent of embroidered linen, formed on the model of a church, which was to be borne before him, that he might like the children of Israel have a house of prayer even in the desert. A band of priests and deacons were to accompany the tent, and officiate according to the rules of the Church. Thenceforth also each legion had its own church tent, with its attendant officers. Constantine had also a private chapel in the Imperial palace.[2]

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[1] *Eccles. Hist.*, b. x., c. iv.

[2] Socrates, b. i., c. xviii. Sozomen, b. i., c. viii.

## CHAPTER XVII.

"FORBIDDING TO MARRY" — AND "COMMANDING TO ABSTAIN FROM MEATS"—THE HERMITS—PAUL—ANTHONY—MONKS AND NUNS.

DURING this period, the unmarried state and the ascetic life rose into ever increasing honour. It was as though, with sorrow be it said, when the excitement of martyrdom ceased, the craving for distinction, and the desire to reach heaven by good works rather than by faith, made choice of the vow of celibacy to set up in its place. Almost all the Church teachers unite in extolling it.[1] Even during the age of persecution Origen predicts a special glory in the world to come for those who

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[1] *The Clementine Homilies* are an exception. "Let the presbyters inculcate marriage, not only upon the young, but also upon those advanced in years. . . For the sake of chastity let all hasten to accomplish marriage," Homily iii., c. lxviii. This work however, if the generally received opinion as to its date be correct, barely falls within the present period. It is one of a series of books, including the *Recognitions of Clement*, claiming to have been written by Clement of Rome. They purport to contain a record of discourses of the Apostle Peter, with an account of the circumstances under which the writer came to be Peter's travelling companion, and other details of his history; and are a kind of romance, partly philosophical, partly religious, drawn from real life. The authorship and doctrinal character of these curious books have been the subjects of keen discussion. They are generally believed to have been written near the end of the second or in the earlier part of the third century. *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, vol. i., p. 567. Introductory notice to the *Recognitions*, A. N. L. Neander, vol. i., pp. 44, 488-499.

had chosen the life of consecrated celibacy;[1] and Cyprian exalts the merit of virginity to the skies, although he has to deplore some most disastrous consequences, which accompanied its profession.[2] In his address to the virgins, he thus perverts the parable of the sower: "The first increase, the hundred-fold belongs to the martyrs, the second, the sixty-fold to you."[3] But in the case of a virgin-martyr he supposes the hundred-fold to be added to the sixty-fold, and so a double glory shed on the heavenly crown.[4] After the age of martyrdom was passed Jerome interpreted the parable in accordance with the new style of thought: "The thirty-fold refers to marriage; the sixty-fold to professed widowhood; the hundredfold is the crown of virginity."[5]

Methodius, bishop and martyr at the beginning of the fourth century, has left a long treatise or dialogue, called *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, composed on the model of Plato's *Banquet*, in which the speakers strive to outdo each other in praises of the virginal state.

But if this condition of life was held up as so desirable for Christians generally, much more was it thought to adorn, if not to be absolutely essential to the clerical vocation. It is true that hitherto married men had not been regarded as

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[1] *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, vol., i. p. 324.

[2] Epistle, lxi. [3] *On the Dress of Virgins*, c. xxi. [4] Epist. lxxvi. § 6.

[5] See Maitland's *Church in the Catacombs*, p, 203.

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disqualified for the priestly office; but for a long time marriage after ordination had been a thing unheard of, at least amongst the higher clergy. The *Apostolical Canons and Constitutions* rule that only the lower orders, sub-deacons, readers, singers, door-keepers, may marry after their appointment.[1] The Council of Elvira bears hard upon the married clergy; and the Council of Nicæa was only saved from adopting its canon on this head as a law for the whole Church, by the protest of Paphnutius, the maimed and one-eyed confessor from the Upper Thebais, himself a celibate.[2] Rising in the midst of the assembly he reminded his fellow-bishops that "marriage is honourable in all," and earnestly entreated them not to impose so grievous a yoke on the ministers of religion, or to injure the Church by intolerable restrictions.[3]

But the headlong course was checked for a time only, not really arrested. Glancing forward beyond the strict limits of this volume, we see how the new doctrine grew and reached its full development. Siricius, Bishop of Rome in A.D. 385, forbade absolutely the marriage of presbyters and deacons; and

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[1] Canon 27. *Constitutions*, b. vi., c. xvii. The Council of Ancyra, A.D. 314, rules that if deacons at the time of their ordination declare their intention to marry they are not to be deprived if they marry, but if they are ordained without making this declaration and afterwards marry, they are to be deprived. Canon 10. The Council of Neo-Cæsarea in the same year directs that a priest who marries after he has been ordained is to be degraded. Canon 1.

[2] See ante, pp. 386, 399. [3] Socrates, i., c. xi.

Innocent the First, A.D. 405, enforced the prohibition by the penalty of degradation. By the ninth Council of Toledo, A.D. 659, the issue of such marriages were declared to be illegitimate and condemned to become slaves, the property of the Church against which their fathers had offended. Seventy-two years later another council of the same intolerant Spanish Church found itself compelled to make new laws to meet the fearful consequences resulting from its former decree. It passed canons, on the one hand, against the spread of unnatural crime among the clergy, pronouncing the sentence of deposition and exile on all who should be guilty of it, and on the other, against the attempts at suicide which were becoming frequent among those who had been subjected to the discipline of the Church.[1] Ever since, the blessing of matrimony has been wholly interdicted to the clergy of the Latin Church.[2] In the Eastern or Greek Church the practice was less rigorous; and at the present day marriage is actually *enjoined* on the inferior clergy whilst it is forbidden to the superior. The bishops are chosen from monks or widowers: second marriages are unlawful.

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[1] *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, art. Celibacy, pp. 326, 327.

[2] The rule was hard to observe. Infractions were winked at, and by the ninth century had become very numerous, especially in Germany and Lombardy. Successive popes attempted to enforce the law, but it was not until 1074, when Gregory VII. put his iron hand to the work, that the offenders were induced to yield. Even then many ecclesiastics resigned their benefices rather than abandon their wives. Waddington, *Hist. of the Church*, c. xvi. § 2.

Of all the infractions of the Gospel rule of life into which the Church was betrayed, there is none more to be deplored than this enforced celibacy of its ministers. As if it were not enough to turn back to the law, and set up again a copy of the priestly order which Christ had for ever abolished, marriage, which had been always permitted to the sons of Aaron under the old dispensation, must be forbidden to the new priesthood. It is almost incredible that, when the echoes of the apostolic voices had scarcely died away, and the apostolic writings were in every hand, Church teachers and Church councils should have the hardihood to fulfil in their own practice and enactments, that most emphatic prediction of the Holy Spirit, that faithless men and hypocrites should arise and forbid to marry.[1] Such an issue must be regarded as a masterstroke of the enemy, who, building on the perversion of man's aspirations after holiness, thus established his stronghold in the very midst of the Church of Christ. The moral safeguard which had been divinely provided for all mankind, was in the case of one order of men removed; and the men who were set apart to guide the flock were cut off from those domestic duties, interests and sympathies, which would best enable them to fulfil their charge. The consequences of

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 1-3. "The Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron; forbidding to marry," etc.

this grand error have been many and terrible; not the least being that the priestly life, instead of rising to that higher level of purity and godliness which was so fondly hoped for, has too often fallen below the common life of the people.

The roots of the evil had taken no light hold in the Church before the death of Constantine.

Fasting. The Holy Spirit who revealed to Paul that some should depart so far from the faith as to deny to men the gracious ordinance of marriage, showed him also that they would withhold the meats "which God created to be received with thanksgiving."[1] Fasting, as we have seen, passed in very early times from a voluntary observance as a help to devotion, into a ceremonial usage obligatory at fixed days and seasons. Wednesday and Friday in every week were set apart as Fast days, the former as that of our Lord's betrayal, the latter as that of his crucifixion; to which various other seasons of humiliation were afterwards added. The fasting consisted in abstinence from food until three o'clock in the afternoon.[2] After that hour, in early times, no restriction was made as to the food which might be eaten whilst the season of humiliation lasted. Even so late as the early part of the fifth century, the historian Socrates speaks of a great

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 3.

[2] Dionysius of Alexandria writes: "Some remain entirely without food the whole six days [of the Passover week]; others fast two three or four days; others not so much as one whole day." *Epistle to Basilides*, Canon 1.

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diversity of usage in this respect. In some countries Christians abstained altogether from animal food; in others they allowed themselves fish; in others fowl as well as fish. Some abstained from eggs and fruits; others ate dry bread only: others not even that; whilst some partook of all kinds of food without distinction.[1] The *Apostolical Constitutions* direct that during the Passover week the diet shall consist of only bread, herbs, salt and water. Meat and wine are expressly forbidden;[2] and the *Apostolical Canons* rule that, "If any bishop, presbyter, deacon, reader or singer, does not fast the fast of forty days, or the fourth day of the week and the day of preparation, he is to be deprived, except he be hindered by weakness of body. If he be one of the laity he is to be suspended."[3]

THE HERMITS. The impulse to renounce the world and retire into solitary places, which as we have seen was early at work in the Church, received a great accession of force from the Decian persecution (A.D. 249-251.) Egypt especially had been exposed to the fury of that storm, and no country of the Empire afforded more secure retreats to those who sought safety in flight. Many who found an asylum in its deserts and mountains never returned to their former homes. Moreover, at a later period, when persecution had ceased

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[1] *Ecclesiastical History*, b. v., c. xxii.

[2] B. v., c. xviii. [3] Canon 69.

altogether, many felt the want of something which might outwardly assure them that they were separate from the world. It was, so they reasoned, no longer enough that they should call themselves Christians, for the world had come to call itself Christian too.[1]

One of the fugitives of the Decian persecution, named Paul, has acquired the celebrity of being the first Christian hermit. His history is distorted by fable; but he is known to have fled into the desert about the year 251 at the age of twenty-two, and to have taken up his abode in a cavern, which he continued to inhabit until the following century. Paul, however, would have remained unknown if it had not been for Anthony, who must be regarded as the father of Monasticism.

Anthony was born at Coma, near Heracleopolis, in the Heptanomis (afterwards called Middle Egypt), near A.D. 251. The Coptic language was his mother tongue, and he never learnt Greek. From his youth a deep religious feeling and craving after the knowledge of God were his predominant characteristics. He was a constant attendant at church, and the Scripture lessons which were read there were so deeply engraven on his memory, that in after life he could dispense with the written Bible. One

[1] Such persons were called *hermits* or *anchorites*; the former signifying one who dwells in a desert or solitude (ἐρημίτης, erēmite, hermit); the latter one who has retired from the world (ἀναχωρητής, anachōrētes, anchorite).

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day as he was walking in the church there arose vividly before his mind, the contrast between the man perplexed with earthly cares, and the primitive Apostolical community in which (as it was usually conceived) no one possessed any property of his own. Occupied with such thoughts he attended the church service, when the parable of the rich young man was read. In the warmth of his imagination he thought the parable was a special message from heaven to his own soul, and interpreting it in a sense which Clement of Alexandria had already shown to be mistaken, he persuaded himself that he was called to part with his earthly possessions. He therefore gave his landed estates to the inhabitants of the village, on condition that they should pay the taxes; sold all his movables, and distributed the proceeds to the poor, reserving only a very small portion for his sister's maintenance. Listening on another occasion to the injunction of our Lord to "take no care for the morrow," he interpreted these words also in too literal and outward a sense, gave away the remainder of his property, and placed his sister in a household of pious virgins: then settling down near his paternal mansion, he began a life of rigid asceticism. Hearing of a venerable old man who was leading a solitary life, he sought him out, and made him his pattern; and whenever the fame of any anchorites reached him, he visited them, abode with them for a season, and then returned to his place. He supported himself by the labour

of his hands, bestowing on the poor what he did not need for his own wants.

Anthony failed in the truest conception of love to God, for instead of destroying man's natural feelings, this love embraces them in itself, refines, sanctifies and ennobles them. Starting with these mistaken views, he struggled forcibly to suppress the natural affection which drew him to his own family. He wanted to forget everything that bound him to the earth. But nature claimed her rights. Thoughts would intrude upon him in spite of himself, and disturb him in his meditations. Moreover the lower instincts and energies of nature were the more active the less they were employed. Hence in his solitude he had to endure many conflicts with sense, from which some active vocation might have saved him. The temptations he had to battle with were so much the more numerous and powerful as he was given to an idle self-meditation; he busied himself in fighting down the impure images that were constantly rising up from the abyss of corruption within his heart, instead of taking refuge in worthier employments, and looking away to the everlasting source of strength and holiness. Imagining that he might overcome the evil spirits by a more severe regimen, he betook himself to a grotto in the rock at some distance from the village, which was used as a tomb. Here he wrought himself up to a pitch of nervous derangement, in which he fancied he had received bodily harm from the

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spirits of darkness. His deadly encounters with these demons, often in forms more ludicrous than terrible, have frequently been made the subjects of the painter's art. He fell at last into a swoon, and was conveyed back to the village in a state of unconsciousness.

At a later period he retired to a distant mountain, where he passed twenty years amidst the ruins of a dilapidated castle, and where at length he gathered valuable fruits of Christian wisdom and experience. The fame of his sanctity spread far and wide, and many from various parts flocked to him to obtain through his prayers the cure of diseases, particularly of those fits which men were in the custom of tracing to the influence of malignant spirits. Others came for consolation and advice both in temporal and spiritual matters. When parties in strife submitted their disputes to his arbitration, his counsel always was that they should sacrifice everything to charity; and he strove to make all who came to him feel the love of God, who spared not his only begotten son, but gave Him up from love to all men.

To escape the wonder of the multitude, and the throng of men who disturbed his meditations, Anthony now betook himself to a still more distant solitude, where some wandering Arabs, impressed with his venerable appearance, brought him bread. As soon also as the hermits whom he had left behind discovered the place of his retreat, they followed

him and provided him with food. But he preferred to live independent of all. He procured implements of husbandry, sought out a well-watered spot, and planted it with grain and vegetables sufficient for his own support, and for the refreshment of those who made a long and wearisome journey to visit him. He also wove baskets, which he exchanged for food. III.-IV. Cent.

Instead of seeking fame as a worker of miracles, as he might easily have done, Anthony pointed those who came to him for help, away from himself to God and Christ. Thus, to an officer who applied to him to heal his daughter, he said, "I also am a man like thyself. If thou believest in the Christ whom I serve, only depart and pray to God in faith, and it shall be done." Usually however he exhorted sufferers to patience; and many who left him without having obtained the relief they expected, learned a lesson more valuable than any deliverance from bodily disease,—submission to the divine will. As he increased in experience Anthony perceived that he had been mistaken in the means he had formerly used to overcome temptation. "Let us not," he said, "busy our imaginations in painting spectres of evil spirits; let us not trouble our minds as if we were lost. Let us rather be cheerful and comforted at all times, as those who have been redeemed, remembering that the Lord is with us, who has overcome the spirits of evil, and made them as nothing."

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It was only on extraordinary occasions that Anthony left his desert home, to make his appearance in the busy world. One of these was in 311, when Maximinus Daza renewed the persecution in Egypt. At this crisis he came to Alexandria, and going about amongst his Christian brethren, he fixed the wavering, and infused new courage into the hearts of the confessors. His example and his words were so powerful that the governor issued an order for all monks to leave the city. Many accordingly concealed themselves, but Anthony paid no regard to the order; he continued to appear in public, and no one dared to touch him. Forty years afterwards (in A.D. 352) when he was a hundred years old,[1] he was again seen in Alexandria, this time to counteract the spread of Arianism, which was supported by the power of the State. His appearance on this occasion made so great a sensation that the Pagans, and even their priests, came to church for the purpose of seeing the "man of God," as they themselves called him. Their sick too pressed forward with the Christians to touch his garments in hope of being healed.

Many sayings of this remarkable man, which have come down through the oral tradition of his disciples, lead us to recognize in him a true greatness of soul. The favour of princes, by which so

[1] The *Dict. of Christ. Biog.* art. Antonius, St., places this second visit about the year 335.

many churchmen in other respects distinguished, have allowed themselves to be corrupted, was of no account with Anthony. When Constantine and his sons wrote to him as their spiritual father, and begged an answer, he said to his monks: "Wonder not that the Emperor writes to us, for he is a man; but wonder much rather at this, that God has written his law for men, and spoken to them by his own Son." At first he was unwilling to hear the letter which he did not know how to answer, but when the other monks represented to him that the writers were Christian princes, and that they might take offence at his neglect, he allowed it to be read. In his reply he first congratulated the Emperor and his sons on being Christians, and then told them that they ought not to look upon their earthly power and glory as a great thing, but rather to think of the judgment to come, and know that Christ is the only true and eternal King; and he exhorted them to philanthropy, justice and the care of the poor.

At the age of a hundred and five, feeling the approach of death, he assembled his disciples round him and said: "I enter, as it is written, the path of my fathers, for I see that the Lord calls me." His dying solicitude was lest the veneration of the Egyptians should convert his remains into an object of idolatry. It was still the custom, after the ancient manner, to embalm and swathe the dead as mummies, especially those whose memory was

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revered, and to place them in the houses of their friends. Anthony charged his monks to keep the place of his burial concealed, lest his body should be dug up and embalmed, for he desired not to be more highly honoured than the patriarchs and Christ Himself, who had all been buried. He died in the year 356. Of his two sheepskins, he bequeathed one to the Bishop of Alexandria, the other to the Bishop of Thmuis; a cloak, the gift of Athanasius, which had been worn many years, he desired to be restored to the donor; and his garment of haircloth to be given to two disciples who had long been his familiar attendants.

Anthony is described as always cheerful and courteous, with something in his presence which, notwithstanding his low stature, commanded universal attention. His austerities were extraordinary. His food was usually only bread and water, and as a rule he tasted nothing till sunset, sometimes fasting for four days together. Of sleep he was equally sparing. His coarse hair shirt is said to have lasted his life, and his only ablutions seem to have been involuntary, in wading occasionally through a river.[1]

Anthony gave to his age a pattern which was seized with avidity by many who panted after Christian perfection, but mistook the road that led to it.

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[1] Neander, vol. iii., pp. 323-333. Robertson, vol. i., p. 316. *Dict. Christ. Biog.* Antonius, St.

Building their cells around his, these zealots took him for their spiritual guide and governor, and in a short time monachism had spread throughout Egypt. The deserts to the borders of Libya were sprinkled with monkish cells and societies. The new fashion extended to Palestine and Syria, where as in Egypt the climate was favourable to such a mode of life, and where among the Jews at an earlier period, much of an analagous nature had already existed.[1] The genius of the Western Church, more practical and less contemplative, was at first unfavourable to monasticism. The powerful influence of Athanasius prepared the way for its reception in Europe and North Africa, which was secured by the enthusiastic adhesion of Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine.[2]

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[1] For example, the Essenes. It is thought by some that the austerities and recluse life of this ancient Jewish sect had no small influence in the origin of monachism. The rocks in many places in Palestine are still riddled with the caves of early Christian anchorites. The mountain Quarentana, by Jericho, is one of the most remarkable instances of this; and the labyrinthine cavern on the south of the "Frank Mountain," near Bethlehem, still bears the name Maghâret Khareitûn, after Chariton, a sainted hermit, who is said to have been the first to occupy it, dying in the year 410. Baedeker's *Syria*, p. 256.

[2] *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, vol. ii., p. 1241. Augustine relates the following anecdote. When the Emperor Theodosius (A.D. 378-395) was at Treves, two gentlemen, agents for public affairs, were walking in the gardens near the city walls, when entering by accident "the cottage of some of the Lord's servants, poor in spirit," they found a little book containing the Life of Anthony. One of them taking it up began to read, and as he read he was filled with admiration, and his spirit was kindled with a desire to forsake his secular service and live like the pious hermit. Casting his eyes on his friend, he said, "Tell me, I pray thee, what we are expecting to gain by all these labours of ours? What are we aiming at? What are we serving for? Can our hopes at Court rise higher than to be the

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MONASTICISM. If Anthony was the founder of the monastic mode of life, it was Pachomius who first reduced it to a system. This man was also a native of Egypt, and was born in 292. He was a convert from Paganism; and after obtaining release from the military service into which he had been forced, he attached himself to an aged solitary, with whom he passed twelve years. Here he felt the impulse of Christian love, which taught him that he ought not to live merely so as to promote his own growth to perfection, but to seek also the salvation of others. Acting therefore in accordance with the spirit of the age, and obeying, as he believed, a call from heaven, he founded on an island of the Nile called Tabennæ, not far from Thebes, a society of monks,[1] which soon became very numerous. Before his death, in 348, it comprehended eight monasteries numbering three thousand inmates, fourteen hundred of them being in the parent establishment; and at the beginning

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Emperor's favourites? And the way, is it not full of perils? Do we not surmount dangers only to encounter a greater danger? Whereas now at once, if we desire it, we may become friends of God." So speaking he turned his eyes again upon the book and read on, and as he read his heart rose and sank like a wave, until his resolution became fixed, and he spoke again to his friend. "Now I have broken loose from our worldly hopes, and am resolved to serve God. If thou art not ready to follow me do not oppose me." His friend answered that he would not forsake him, but would be his companion in so glorious a service and for so glorious a reward. Accordingly they remained in the cottage; and the two ladies to whom they were betrothed in marriage, when they heard of it, dedicated themselves to God in perpetual virginity. Augustine's *Confessions*, b. viii., c. vi.

[1] About A.D. 325, Tillemont; 340, Gieseler. Robertson, vol. i., p. 316, note *n*.

of the fifth century it reckoned under its rules no less than fifty thousand brothers. IV. Cent.

This whole association, called a Cœnobium,[1] (a term which was afterwards applied to single cloisters), stood under the guidance of Pachomius and his successors. The head, or superior, was styled the abbot, from the Hebrew or Syriac word for father.[2] The monks were distributed according to their degree of progress in the spiritual life into twenty-four classes, named after the letters of the alphabet. They were by no means idle, but employed themselves in weaving baskets from the Nile rushes, making mats and ropes, and in agriculture and boat-building. At the end of the fourth century each cloister possessed a vessel of its own, in which the produce of their labour was taken down the Nile to be sold in the markets of Alexandria. What remained of the proceeds, after the supply of their own wants, was expended in charity. A strict community of property was enforced, so that it was a serious breach of discipline to speak of "my cloak," "my book," or "my pen." Jerome tells a story of one of the Nitrian monks,[3] a man "rather saving than avaricious," who left at his death a hundred *solidi* (about forty pounds) which he had earned

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[1] Κοινόβιον, life in common.

[2] In Greek, *archimandrite*, *i.e.*, chief of the fold or flock.

[3] The monks of the Natron mountain, a desert tract west of Memphis and of the modern Cairo. This Society was founded by the elder Macarius, about the same time as Pachomius founded Tabennæ.

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by weaving flax. The brotherhood held a consultation as to the disposal of the money. Some were for giving it to the poor; some to the Church; others to the relatives of the deceased. But the fathers of the society quoted the text, "Thy money perish with thee," and ordered that it should be buried with its owner. This was done, not out of harshness towards the deceased monk, but in order to deter others from hoarding.

The monks prayed many times a day, fasted on the fourth and sixth days of the week, and "communicated" every Sabbath as well as every Lord's day. They took their meals in common, singing psalms before they began, but eating in silence, with their hoods drawn over their faces, that they might not see one another. The chief article of dress was a goat's skin, in imitation of Elijah. They slept with their clothes on,[1] and, it is said, in chairs so constructed as to keep them almost in a standing posture. The whole society assembled at the mother monastery twice every year, viz., at Easter, and in the month of August, at which latter festival the reconciliation of all with God and with each other was celebrated.

Pachomius had a sister who, hearing the fame of his institution, came to visit him. On being informed of her arrival, he sent a message by the

[1] Pachomius, unlike some of his successors, required his monks to be very particular in washing their linen.

porter, desiring that she would be content with the assurance of his welfare, and telling her that if she was disposed to imitate his manner of life he would build her a convent. She accepted the proposal. The house was built by monks from Tabennæ; and the sister of Pachomius was soon abbess of a large community of women, regulated by a code which Pachomius framed on the model of his own, and subject to his orders, although he never visited it. After this first example, the formation of such societies went on rapidly: the recluses were called *Nonnæ*, Nuns.[1] IV.-V. Cent.

The enthusiasm for the anchoretic life having spread with such rapidity, and vast numbers of men of various dispositions, many of them utterly without the inward strength necessary to endure solitary habits, having withdrawn into the deserts, wild sallies of fanaticism and various disorders of the mental faculties were the inevitable result. Some were so persecuted by tormenting thoughts as to commit suicide; they plunged the knife into their own bodies, or threw themselves headlong from a precipice. Others, when they had pushed their abstinence and self-castigation to the utmost extreme, supposed they had reached the summit of perfection, and might dispense with those means

[1] A term of filial reverence, signifying an aged woman, a mother or nurse, just as the older monks were called *nonni* by their younger brethren. The word is perhaps Egyptian. *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, art. Nun.

of grace which weaker Christians found necessary. They ceased to assemble with their brethren for devotional purposes, and gave themselves up to special visions and revelations with which they supposed they were honoured. The end too often was that they fell either into a state of insanity, or that which had hitherto inspired them seemed now to be only a delusion. Often the sensual impulses, which in the intoxication of pride they had succeeded for a short time in suppressing, broke forth with renewed violence, so that they not only rushed back to their ordinary earthly pursuits, but gave themselves up to every kind of carnal gratification.

Two individual instances will suffice as illustrations. Heron, one of the monastic society in the Desert of Nitria, carried the mortification of his senses to such an extent that he could travel thirty miles into the desert under the scorching rays of the sun, without food or drink, repeating as he went passages from the Bible, and could live for three months on nothing but the bread of the Eucharist, and wild herbs. This man became so proud as to acknowledge no earthly superior, to receive advice from no one, and to consider it beneath his dignity to take part in the "communion." In time, however, a restless fever sprang up within him, which suffered him no longer to remain in his cell. He fled from the desert to the city of Alexandria, where he plunged into a directly opposite

mode of life. He frequented the theatre, the circus, and other places of entertainment, and abandoned himself to all sorts of excess. This brought on a severe illness, in the course of which he came back to his senses, and was seized again with a craving after the higher life he had lost. He died in peace. IV.-V. Cent.

The other instance is that of one Ptolemy, who settled down by himself on a spot beyond the same desert, known as the Ladder, where no man had ever dared to reside, the nearest spring of water being fourteen miles distant. Here he persevered in dwelling alone for fifteen years, collecting in earthen vessels during the months of December and January, the dew which at that season plentifully covers the rocks. But this unnatural mode of life at last overpowered him. The attempt at a proud estrangement from all human passions was the means of its own punishment. In striving to ignore his human nature, he lost his hold of real existence; he grew sceptical about his own being and that of God and of all things else: the whole creation appeared to him as a phantasm. He concluded that the world had sprung into existence of itself without a creator, and moved in a mere show. In desperation he forsook the desert, wandered about dumb from one city to another, frequented the public spectacles, and gave himself up to riot and gluttony.

The hideous degree to which some succeeded in

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drying up the springs of human affection is shown in the accounts of Pior and Mutius. The former, one of Anthony's disciples, vowed on leaving his father's house, that he would never again look upon any of his relations. After he had spent fifty years in the desert his sister discovered that he was still alive; she was too infirm to seek him out, but her earnest entreaties set in motion the authority of his superiors, and Pior was ordered to visit her. Arriving in front of her dwelling, he sent her notice of his presence. As the door opened he closed his eyes, and held them obstinately shut throughout the interview; and having allowed his sister to see him in this fashion he refused to enter her house, and hurried back to the desert.

A still more extraordinary example of the extent to which the monks were expected to stifle their natural feelings was given by Mutius. On his desiring admission into a monastery with his son, a boy of eight years old, they were compelled by way of trial to remain long without the gate. The constancy with which this was borne prevailed on the monks to admit them, although children were usually excluded. But their probation was only begun. They were separated from each other; the child was illtreated in every way, was dressed in rags, kept in a filthy state, and often beaten without cause. Mutius made no remonstrance; and at length on being told by the abbot to throw his son

into the river, he obeyed the command. The child was saved.[1] IV. Cent.

Longer to pursue this subject would lead us too far beyond the limits of the period under review. Let us conclude with a more pleasing anecdote. The hermit Pambos, who was ignorant of letters, went to some one to be taught a psalm. The thirty-ninth was chosen. As soon as he had heard the first portion of the first verse :—"I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue," he departed, without staying to hear the remainder, saying that what he had heard was enough, if only he could learn to practise it. His instructor, meeting him six months afterwards, reproved him for not coming sooner to continue his lesson. Pambos replied he had not yet practically learned the first words. Many years afterwards, being again asked if he had yet learned them, he answered, "In nineteen years I have scarcely learned to practice what they teach." By invitation of Athanasius the same hermit came from his desert abode to Alexandria, and seeing there a dancing girl of dissolute character, such as still abound in Egypt, he shed tears. When asked why he wept, he replied, "Two things move me. The one the perdition of that woman; the other, that I do not use so much diligence to please God, as she does to please wicked men."[2]

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[1] Neander, vol. iii., pp. 334-340. Robertson, i., pp. 316-319, and 332, 333. *Dict. Christ. Antiq.*, art. Antonius, St.

[2] Socrates, b. iv., c. xxiii.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GOSPEL CONTINUES TO SPREAD—ARMENIA—ABYSSINIA—BRITAIN—ASSIMILATION OF THE CHURCH TO THE WORLD—THE MAGISTRACY—WAR—CONCLUSION.

THE preaching of the Gospel in countries where it had not before been proclaimed went forward without cessation during the whole of the present period. Origen, in his work against Celsus, written in the middle of the third century, speaks of numerous travelling evangelists who passed through the cities and villages of the different provinces, scattering the seed of the word.[1]

Of the countries which in this period received Christianity as the national religion, two deserve particular notice, Armenia and Ethiopia (now Abyssinia).

The seeds of the Gospel were early sown in the kingdom of Armenia, but remained scattered and almost unproductive until the reign of Diocletian,

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[1] B. iii., c. ix. In one quarter however the progress of the Gospel was suddenly arrested. In 226, Artaxerxes, the founder of the dynasty of the Sassanidæ in Persia, restored the ancient religion of Zoroaster, and used it as the mainstay of his usurped dominion. This, Milman observes, is perhaps the only instance of the vigorous revival of a pagan religion. *Hist. of Christianity*, ii., p. 247.

when Gregory, surnamed the Illuminator,[1] devoted his life to the conversion of that ancient nation. He persuaded the king and his court to receive the rite of baptism, and Armenia became the first country in which Christianity was adopted as the religion of the State. He founded many churches, schools and convents. This happened very soon after the year 300, and was the origin of the Armenian Church, a body which, although probably from the outset more or less corrupt in its spirit and manner of worship, has existed to the present day with a large degree of outward prosperity. Etchmiadzin, to the north of Mount Ararat, which was fixed upon by Gregory as the ecclesiastical centre, is still the seat of the Armenian Catholicos or Head.[2] IV. Cent.

The Abyssinian Church traces its origin to a Providential accident. In the reign of Constantine, a learned Greek of Tyre, named Meropius, undertook a voyage of scientific discovery. On his way back he landed on the coast of Ethiopia to procure fresh water, and was there attacked by the warlike natives, robbed, and himself and most of his crew murdered. Two youths, Frumentius and Ædesius, alone were spared. Being taken into the service of the prince of the tribe, they gained his love and confidence. Ædesius became his cup-bearer; and

[1] See ante, p. 393, note.

[2] *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, art. Gregory of Armenia.

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Frumentiùs, who was distinguished for intelligence and sagacity, was appointed his secretary. After the death of the prince, the education of his youthful successor was intrusted to them; and Frumentius obtained great influence as administrator of the government. He made use of this influence in behalf of Christianity. He sought the acquaintance of the Christian merchants who visited those parts, assisted them in founding a Church, and united with them in worship.

At length the two Greeks obtained leave to return home to their own country. Ædesius repaired to Tyre, where he was made a presbyter, and where the historian Rufinus, from whom this account is derived, met with him, and learned the particulars from his own mouth. But Frumentius felt himself called to a higher work. He longed that the people with whom he had spent a great part of his youth, and from whom he had received so many kindnesses, should be made to share in the highest blessing of mankind. He therefore stopped short in his journey at Alexandria, where Athanasius had just been elected bishop (A.D. 326). Athanasius entered at once into his project, and called together the Alexandrian clergy to consider it; then, wisely judging that no one could be more suitable for the work than Frumentius himself, he consecrated him bishop of the new Church. Frumentius returned to Ethiopia and commenced his Christian labours, which he prosecuted with great

success.[1] In this remote country the profession of Christianity has never been entirely lost, although very little of its spirit has survived. IV. Cent.

The introduction of Christianity into Britain has been already noticed.[2] The early history of the British Church is extremely obscure, few if any of the legends which have been handed down being able to stand the test of historical criticism. All that can be said is that, under the government of Constantius and his son Constantine, there were churches in Britain; and that in the Council of Arles, A.D. 314, are found the names of three British bishops, Eborius of York, Restitutus of London, and Adelfius, whose see is generally identified with Lincoln.[3] The story of St. Alban, called the protomartyr of Britain, who is said to have been put to death during the Diocletian persecution, rests very insecurely on evidence dating no earlier than A.D. 429, when Germanus visited his relics, it is pre-

[1] Socrates, b. i., c. xix. Sozomen, b. ii., c. xxiv.

[2] See ante, p. 192.

[3] Robertson, i., pp. 154, 155. It is difficult to reconcile any extensive profession of Christianity in Britain with the total absence of Christian sepulchres. "Among the multitude of monuments relating to the worship of the inhabitants of Britain under the Romans, among the immense number of Roman sepulchral interments which have been opened and examined, we have records of almost every religion of the heathen world, but we find not the slightest trace of Christianity. It must be borne in mind that all these temples and altars were standing, and their worship no doubt in full vigour, at the time when the Romans abandoned the island." *Edinburgh Review*, No. cxci., art. The Romans in Britain, cited in Cooper's *Free Church*, pp. 219, 220. See also Green's *Making of England*, p. 6.

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sumed at Verulamium. The legend of his martyrdom is yet much later.[1] It is related by our venerable Church historian Bede. We omit the marvels, in his day an almost necessary seasoning to such narratives.

Alban, while he was yet a pagan, fell in with a Christian priest who was trying to hide himself from the persecutors. His kindly feelings being stronger than his religious prejudices, he took the priest into his own house, and was deeply impressed with observing how he prayed to God, and even spent long hours of the night in religious exercises. A sudden visitation of divine grace came upon him, a desire was kindled in his heart to become also a disciple of Christ. The priest gladly instructed him in the truth, in the knowledge of which he made rapid progress.

After some days, information reached the prince of the country that the priest lay concealed in Alban's house. A band of soldiers was accordingly sent to apprehend him, which when Alban heard of he formed the resolution of sacrificing himself for the sake of the good man who had taken refuge under his roof. Putting on the priest's robe he went to meet the soldiers, and gave himself up to them as though he was the man of whom they were in search. The judge before whom he was taken, was standing beside the altar offering sacrifice to

[1] *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, art. Albanus.

the false divinities. He presently discovered the deception which had been practised, and ordering Alban to be brought up to the altar, said to him, "Because thou hast chosen to conceal a sacrilegious man and a rebel, all the torments that were designed for him shall be inflicted on thee unless thou wilt now worship according to our religion." Alban quietly answered that he could never obey such a command. "Of what family art thou?" asked the judge. "To what purpose is it that thou enquirest after my family?" replied Alban; "I am a Christian." IV. Cent.

*The Judge.* I ask thy name. Tell it to me immediately.

*Alban.* By my parents I am called Alban; and I worship the living God the Creator of all things.

*The Judge.* If thou wilt enjoy long life, thou must without delay sacrifice to the great gods.

*Alban.* The gods you worship are demons, who can do nothing to help their worshippers.

Upon this the judge ordered him to be scourged. Alban bore the infliction with patience and even with joy; and the judge finding his resolution was not to be overcome sentenced him to be beheaded. The way to the place of execution lay over a bridge, which was so thronged with people that it was with difficulty the guards could force a way through. The place was a gentle hill, gay with flowers and level at the top. The soldier who was to act the part of executioner was so affected by Alban's steadfast-

ness and joy, that he threw away the sword, and falling at his feet begged he might be counted worthy to suffer with him. They were both beheaded. The town of Verulam was called St. Albans in honour of the martyrdom.[1]

What proportion the Christians bore to the Pagans during this period cannot be accurately determined; they were more numerous in the East than in the West, unless we except the province of Africa. Cornelius, Bishop of Rome, writing during the Decian persecution (A.D. 250), says that there were then in that city forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, seven sub-deacons, forty-two clerks; of exorcists, readers and door-keepers, in all fifty-two; and more than fifteen hundred widows and poor persons dependent on the Church. From this it has been calculated that the Christian population in Rome may have amounted to fifty thousand. There were in the city forty places of worship. At the death of Constantine the number was probably very much greater. Manso reckons the congregations throughout the empire during that Emperor's reign at seven

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[1] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, b. i., c. vii. In reference to this event Bede quotes Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers, "the last representative of Latin poetry in Gaul":

"Albanum egregium fœcunda Britannia profert;"

which an old translator (Thomas Stapleton, Antwerpe, 1565), quaintly renders:

"The fertile lands of batful Britanny
Bringeth furth Albane a Martyr right worthy."

thousand, presided over by about eighteen hundred bishops.[1] IV. Cent.

ASSIMILATION OF THE CHURCH TO THE WORLD. With the increase of the Church in numbers and wealth, the introduction of infant baptism and the growth of a sacerdotal religion, there came an increased assimilation to the world. The dividing line between Pagan and Christian lost its sharpness, or was drawn from a new and entirely different point.

The Christians of the earlier ages were marked out from the rest of mankind by their life and conduct; "being in the flesh, they lived not after the flesh, dwelling on earth they were citizens of heaven."[2] But now the difference began to turn on external and ceremonial distinctions. The Christians were those who had been baptized with water, those who partook of the bread and wine, or as it was now called the Sacrament, or the mysteries. Not that there were wanting other tokens of discipleship of a less questionable kind; the martyrdoms, the conduct of the Church during the times of famine and pestilence, and the holy, watchful life of thousands, both in and out of office, still afforded a shining testimony to the world around, of the vital and energetic power of the Gospel. But in proportion as more importance was attached to the cere-

[1] Eusebius, *H. E.*, b. vi., c. xliii.; Optatus, b. ii., c. xxxiv. Burton, p. 328. Manso, *Life of Constantine*, cited in Cooper's *Free Church*, p. 356.

[2] *Letter to Diognetus*, ante, p. 33.

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monial distinction, the moral difference was less accounted of. When a man like Gregory Thaumaturgus[1] could adopt a pliable policy, and make the holy rule of the Gospel bend to the vicious habits of the newly baptized heathen, it is easy to account for the decline in morality. And after the Edicts of Milan, when the admission into the Church took place in a still more wholesale manner, the maintenance of morals and discipline must have been extremely difficult, not to say impossible.

Moreover, as the danger became more urgent, the voices of the watchmen on the walls grew fainter and fainter. After the second century the influence of the Montanists rapidly declined, whilst the Novatians and others who pleaded more or less earnestly for a return to primitive manners and discipline seem never to have gained the ear of the general Church.[2] Here and there however the cry of warning was still heard from individuals. Amongst these the name of Commodian (about A.D. 250) must not be omitted. His remains consist of two poems written in a rude Latin dialect, and displaying much freedom of spirit. Some whose duty it was to instruct and guide the Church, influenced by fear or gifts, had granted to individuals permission to partake of forbidden indulgences. Commodian protests against this laxity: "Thou art going with

[1] Ante, p. 470.

[2] The Novatians made common cause with the orthodox party against the Arians, and were, in consequence, more *tolerated* than other dissenters.

the multitude to the vain show of the circus, where Satan is at work with din. Thou persuadest thyself that everything pleasant is lawful. Love not the world nor its contents. Such is God's word, and it seems good to thee; but nevertheless thou shunnest it, and observest man's instead. Thou art trusting to thy gift by which the teacher's mouth is closed, that he may be silent and not tell thee the divine commands. . . Be such as Christ would have thee to be, good and joyful in Him, for in the world thou wilt have sorrow."[1] IV. Cent.

Another witness, a century later, was Aërius. He was a native of Pontus or Armenia, and a friend of the semi-Arian Eustathius, Bishop of Sebaste, by whom he was made a presbyter. Disputes arose between himself and the bishop, which widened into a rupture with the Church; and Aërius and his followers, who were numerous, openly separated from their fellow Christians. They also renounced the possession of worldly property. The teaching of Aërius on some points remarkably anticipated that of the most enlightened Protestants at the time of the Reformation, and drew upon him the persecution of the orthodox Church. Epiphanius, who attacks him in no measured language, brings forward four special counts upon which he charges him with heresy. The first is his assertion that the Holy Scriptures make no distinction between a bishop

[1] *Instructions*, c. lvii., lviii.

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and a presbyter. Next that prayers and offerings for the dead are not only useless but pernicious: if they avail to the benefit of the departed, no one need trouble himself to live holily; he will only have to provide by bribes or otherwise a multitude of persons to make prayers and offerings for him, and his salvation will be secure. Although a monk he condemned all set fasts: a Christian man should fast when he feels it to be for his soul's good; appointed days of fasting are relics of Jewish bondage. Lastly he ridiculed the observance of Easter as a Jewish superstition, insisting that Christians should keep no Passover, because Paul declares Christ, who was slain for us, to be our Paschal Lamb.

"Aërius brought," says his biographer, "Scriptural weapons to the attack of the fast growing Sacerdotalism of the age; dared to call in question the prerogatives of the Episcopate; and struggled to deliver the Church from the yoke of ceremonies which were threatening to become as deadening and more burdensome than the rites of Judaism." The warning voice was uttered, but it fell on closed ears. "The protest," he continues, "was premature; centuries had to elapse before it could be effectually renewed." But alas! the rulers of the Church not only rejected the warning; they persecuted the messengers. Aërius and his associates were denied admission to the churches, and even access to the towns and villages; being compelled to sojourn in the fields or in caves and ravines, and

hold their religious assemblies in the open air, exposed to the cruel severity of the Armenian winter."[1] Aërius flourished about A.D. 355. IV. Cent.

As the Church increased, the malicious reports respecting the worship of the Christians and their disloyalty gradually died away. Assaults on the Gospel however continued to be made by heathen writers down to the time of Constantine, but the plan of the attack was changed. To the open infidelity of Celsus and Lucian there succeeded the insinuations and covert approaches of the New Platonic School of which Porphyry was the most celebrated champion.[2] It was now pretended that the old religion and the new were not so antagonistic as had been supposed, and that they might be reconciled and amalgamated. A comparison was drawn between Christ and the ancient philosophers, in which it was attempted to be proved that the latter were in no wise inferior.[3] Some weak

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[1] *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, art. Aërius. See also Mosheim, vol. i., p. 365, note.

[2] Porphyry was about twenty years old when Origen died. Speaking of that Christian teacher, he says, "This man, whom I happened to meet when I was very young, enjoys great celebrity for the writings he has left. He was a hearer of Ammonius [Saccas], the greatest proficient in philosophy in our day, but the course which he took was the very opposite to that of his instructor. For Ammonius, who had been brought up as a Christian, when he began to apply himself to philosophy, changed his views and lived according to the [ancient] laws; but Origen, although educated in Greek literature, fell away to the barbarous rashness [of Christianity]. Eusebius, b. vi., c. xix. Porphyry's work against the Christian faith has not come down to us, but some of the numerous replies which it provoked from the fathers of the third and fourth centuries are extant.

[3] See ante, p. 244.

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heathens who might otherwise have embraced the Gospel may have been by these means retained in the old idolatry; and some unwary Christians may have been caught in the net and induced to abandon the purer faith in which they had been educated; but it is not probable that the progress of the Gospel received any serious check by this kind of attack.[1]

THE MAGISTRACY. When the Church rose into importance, and before her union with the State, Christian gentlemen found themselves in a difficulty with regard to the magistracy. Many held that to take office under a pagan Emperor was incompatible with their Christian profession. Tertullian says: "There is nothing more entirely foreign to us than affairs of State."[2] Others thought differently, and under Diocletian some of the highest offices were, as we have seen, filled by Christians.[3] Some even accepted of offices in which the holder was required to sacrifice to the gods, and preside at the public games. Such conduct the Church emphatically condemned.[4] After the decline of paganism, the Church still continued to exercise an especial care over such as took office. The first Council of Arles (A.D. 314) directed that when a Christian man accepted the government of a province, he should take with him a letter from his

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[1] Mosheim, vol. i., pp. 212-214.

[2] *Apology*, c. xxxviii. [3] Ante, pp. 326, 328, 332.

[4] See canons 1-3 of the Council of Elvira.

bishop, and should be placed under the oversight of the bishop whither he went, so that if he committed anything contrary to Church discipline he might be excluded from communion.[1] This kind of surveillance led in later times to great abuses, ending in lordship over the official acts and State policy of judges, governors, and even emperors and kings. III. Cent.

The Military Service. There is little doubt that the objection to serve in the army on the ground that war is irreconcilable with the Gospel, was held less firmly in the third and fourth centuries than it had been in the second. We have seen from Eusebius that many Christians, both officers and soldiers, were to be found in the army in the reign of Diocletian.[2] The Montanists had declined in numbers and influence, and the testimony on this point, which they had held up before the world, declined with them. Some notice however of this important question is to be found in the Church books which were in use in the third or succeeding centuries. The *Apostolical Constitutions* penetrate no further into the spirit of the New Testament than the dispensation of John the Baptist; "If a soldier comes let him be taught to do no injustice, to accuse no man falsely, and to be content with his allotted wages."[3] *The Canons of the Church of Alexandria*

[1] Bingham, b. xvi., c. iii. § 5.

[2] See ante, p. 324. Dionysius of Alexandria, fifty years before, says that soldiers were among the martyrs in the Decian persecution. Eusebius, b. vii., c. xi.

[3] B. viii., c. xxxii.

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(erroneously ascribed to Hippolytus) declare that, "A Nazarene (Christian) may not become a soldier unless by order."[1] Another edition of the same Canons used by the Æthiopian Christians shows a clearer interpretation of the Gospel rule: "It is not meet for Christians to bear arms."[2] We may remember also in how explicit a manner Lactantius enters his protest against war and violence of every kind.[3]

There is a legend belonging to this period so familiar to the readers of Church history that it must not be passed by, but which when critically examined is found to be of no value; we allude to the story of the Theban Legion. This legion, it is said, consisting of six thousand six hundred men, all Christians, was summoned from the East for the service of Maximian in Gaul. When near the town of Agaunum, in the valley of the Rhone, above the lake of Geneva, the soldiers discovered that they were to be employed in the coercion of their brethren to Paganism, and refused to march onwards for such a purpose. By order of Maximian, who was in the neighbourhood, they were twice decimated. But this cruelty was insufficient to shake the firmness of the survivors; and their leader Maurice (Mauricius), in the name of his comrades, declared to the Em-

[1] Canon 14.

[2] Canon 14 of Abulides (*i.e.*, Hippolytus), A. N. L., Hippolytus: appendix to part ii., pp. 135, 139.

[3] Ante, p. 416.

peror that while ready to obey him in all things consistent with their duty to God, they would rather die than violate that duty. The Emperor, exasperated by their obstinacy, ordered his other troops to close around them, whereupon the devoted band laid down their arms, and quietly submitted to death. From this event the name of the town was changed to St. Maurice. The story is referred to A.D. 286, the year in which Maximian was associated with Diocletian as Augustus. But we find no other mention of any persecution by Maximian at this period, nor of any whatsoever in Gaul during his reign. The documentary evidence in favour of the legend is exceedingly weak. Besides the circumstance that there is no mention of it before the year 520, a similar occurrence is related as having happened in Syria, where a Greek martyr of the same name, a military tribune, is said to have been executed with seventy of his soldiers.[1] III. Cent.

We have already noticed two instances in the course of this period in which Christian soldiers submitted to death rather than do violence to their

[1] Robertson, vol. i., p. 144. Gieseler, vol. i., p. 195 n. 15. Visitors at Cologne are familiar with the ancient church of St. Gereon, where the tradition of the Theban martyrs lingers in yet another form. The church is lined with countless bones, said to be those of Gereon and his comrades of the Theban legion, martyred, so we are here told, in the Diocletian persecution. A number of large stone sarcophagi are built into the lower part of the wall of the church, inscribed in roughly cut characters; the inscription on one of them runs thus:

*Thebeor*[*um*] *xii. corpora et plura reconduntur hic.*

TWELVE BODIES AND MORE OF THE THEBANS ARE BURIED HERE.

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conscience. The one was the case of Marinus, who nobly confessed Christ, though it cost him both his rank and his life.[1] The other was the centurion Marcellus, who rather than join in an idolatrous feast, threw down his sword and was led away to execution.[2] These however were not instances of refusal to serve in the army as being in itself irreconcilable with the precepts of Christ. How many examples of this latter kind may have occurred we cannot tell. They were then probably almost as unpopular as they are now, and the chroniclers may not have been anxious to collect or to record them. One bright instance however of steadfast courage in the refusal to enter the army, because Christ has forbidden his followers to fight, has been preserved amongst the annals of the confessors who were faithful to death during the course of the third century.

In A.D. 295 at Teveste,[3] an episcopal city in Numidia, the recruiting sergeant brought before Dion the Proconsul, one Maximilian, a young man of twenty two years, as fit for military duty. It was during a season of toleration and general tranquillity. The young man was accompanied by his father. As he came up and was about to be measured to see if his height reached the standard of the service, he said, "I cannot engage in military

[1] See ante, p. 310. [2] Page 324.

[3] Now Tebess, in Algeria.

service; I am a Christian." The Proconsul, taking no notice of these words, quietly ordered the officers to take him to the measuring post. Whilst he was being adjusted he said again, "I cannot fight, I cannot do evil, I am a Christian." III. Cent.

*Dion.* Measure him. (The officers called out that he was 5 ft. 10 in.)

*Dion.* Give him the badge.[1]

The young man resisted saying, "I will not suffer it, I cannot fight."

*Dion.* If thou wilt not serve, thou must die.

*Max.* I will not serve. You may cut off my head if you will. I cannot engage in earthly warfare: I am God's soldier.

*Dion.* Who persuaded thee to this?

*Max.* My own mind, and He who called me to his service.

The Proconsul turned to the father, and said, "Advise thy son." The father replied, "He knows his own mind; of what use would my counsel be?"

*Dion.* (to Maximilian). Receive the badge.

*Max.* I will not receive your badge: I have the badge of Christ my God.

*Dion.* I will send thee straight to thy Christ.

*Max.* Do it now; I am ready.

*Dion.* Mark him, and fix on the collar.

Maximilian resisted again, saying, "I shall break

[1] The signaculum, or soldier's badge, consisted of the mark or puncture on the hands, of the Emperor's name, and a leaden collar on which the same with the Imperial device was engraved.

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it, for I count it a worthless thing. I am a Christian, and it is not lawful for me to wear on my neck a leaden seal of this kind, after having received the seal of salvation of my Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God."

*Dion.* Consider thy youth. It is honourable in a young man to be a soldier.

*Max.* I can engage in no warfare but for my Lord.

*Dion.* But there are Christians in the Imperial armies who fight.

*Max.* *They* know what is allowable for *them;* I am a Christian, I cannot do evil.

*Dion.* Why, what evil do those commit who fight?

*Max.* Thou knowest what things they do.

*Dion.* Do not scorn the service, lest thou perish miserably.

*Max.* I shall not perish; for though thou shouldst put me to death, my soul will live with Christ my Lord.

*Dion.* Erase his name.

It was erased, and the Proconsul proceeded: "Because with an impious mind thou hast refused the service, receive this sentence as an example for others;" and he read from his tablet, "Let Maximilian, because of his impious refusal to enter the military service, be put to death with the sword."

Maximilian answered, "Thanks be to God." When he came to the place of execution he said, "Beloved brethren, strive that you may see God, and receive from him a like crown." Then turning

to his father, he said with a cheerful voice, "Give this soldier the new military cloak which thou had made for me. Thou wilt join me again, and we shall glory together with the Lord." When he had said this his head was severed from his body. His father returned to his house with joy, giving thanks to God who enabled him to send before Him so precious an offering. A lady named Pomponiana begged his body and placed it in her chamber, from whence it was taken to Carthage and buried under the hill by the palace, near Cyprian's grave. Thirteen days afterwards the lady herself died, and was interred in the same place.[1] III. Cent.

Thus did this brave man, according to the record which has come down to us, count his life of no value when weighed against the commands of his Lord. The soul-sustaining presence of a host of fellow confessors was not his; he did not breathe that exhilarating atmosphere which is generated in time of persecution. He suffered alone with his Saviour, who had suffered alone for him. His example is worthy of the highest regard. If the Christian youth of our own day, those with whom allegiance to Christ is uppermost, could be brought to see that war of every kind is absolutely and in its very nature, repugnant to the Gospel, and were willing to act on this conviction, there would soon be an end to that military tyranny which grinds

[1] Ruinart, *Acta Sincera*, pp. 300-303.

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the faces of the people, and stifles moral and religious freedom. The cheerful readiness on the part of such to endure reproach and imprisonment, and if needful even death, for the sake of this command of their Lord, would be found to be an argument of irresistible force; and it may not perhaps be too much to assert that until this divine argument is made use of, we shall never see an end to the standing armies and forced conscriptions, the wars and the preparations for war, under which the world has so long groaned.

If the testimony committed by Christ to his disciples against all use of the sword was upheld more feebly in the third century than in the second, it may be considered to have utterly fallen to the ground with the victories of Constantine. Then began that unhallowed union of the worship of Mars with the worship of the God of Peace, that fatal encircling of the cross with the laurel, by which the Church has been dazzled and disgraced down to the present day. From this time the Christian conscience on this great question is silent, or all but silent. Augustine speaks the mind of the Church when he says, "Sometimes the powers of this world fear God; sometimes they fear Him not. The Emperor Julian was an unbeliever, an apostate, an idolater; yet Christian soldiers served under him. When indeed a question arose as to their obedience to Christ, they acknowledged Him only who is in heaven. Whensoever the Emperor

ordered them to worship idols, or to offer incense, they preferred God to him. But when he said, Draw out the line of battle, march against this or that nation, forthwith they obeyed their king."[1]

It was not until the seventeenth century that the voice so long silent began again to make itself heard. But the sound of this voice is every day growing louder, and it will continue to grow louder until nations and governments are compelled to hearken and to enter on a new and a holier career.

Conclusion. We have thus traced, however imperfectly, the history of the Church from its first origin until the epoch of its close alliance with the State under the Emperor Constantine. Its early struggles are now over, the sun of outward prosperity has risen upon it, and it enters henceforth upon a new phase of life. This epoch therefore fitly closes our volume.

Whilst our object has been to show the primitive simplicity of the apostolic Church, the gradual accretion of rites and observances foreign to the spirit of Christianity, and yet through all the preservation of the witness for the Lord Jesus, we have sought to paint the history with an honest hand, to suppress no truth, to admit no falsehood, and withal to preserve, so far as ability has admitted, the historical perspective of the whole.

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[1] *Exposition of Psalm* cxxiv.

It has fully appeared in the course of our narrative that it was at a very early period of its existence that the Church began to be invaded by the weak and beggarly elements of the world. Other forms and superstitions accounted even at the present day by the larger number of professing Christians to be essential parts of our religion, had a later origin, and the testimony of the fathers of the primitive Church is unequivocally against them.

Yet let not this early corruption of the outward Church induce us to regard Church history in a hopeless light. Rightly understood it will have no such effect. "The Church militant," writes Trench,[1] "if in all ages a success, is also in all ages a failure. The success may be more evident in one age and in one land, the failure may be more marked in another; but tokens of this and of that will not be wanting. Some may dwell almost exclusively on one of these aspects; we shall do well not to hide our eyes from either. For us who believe the Church to be a divine foundation in the world, it must be a success, even as it shows itself to be such by many infallible proofs. For us who know that the treasure of God's grace is contained in earthen vessels, it must be a failure no less, an imperfect embodiment of a divine idea. Let us boldly face this side of the truth no less than the other."

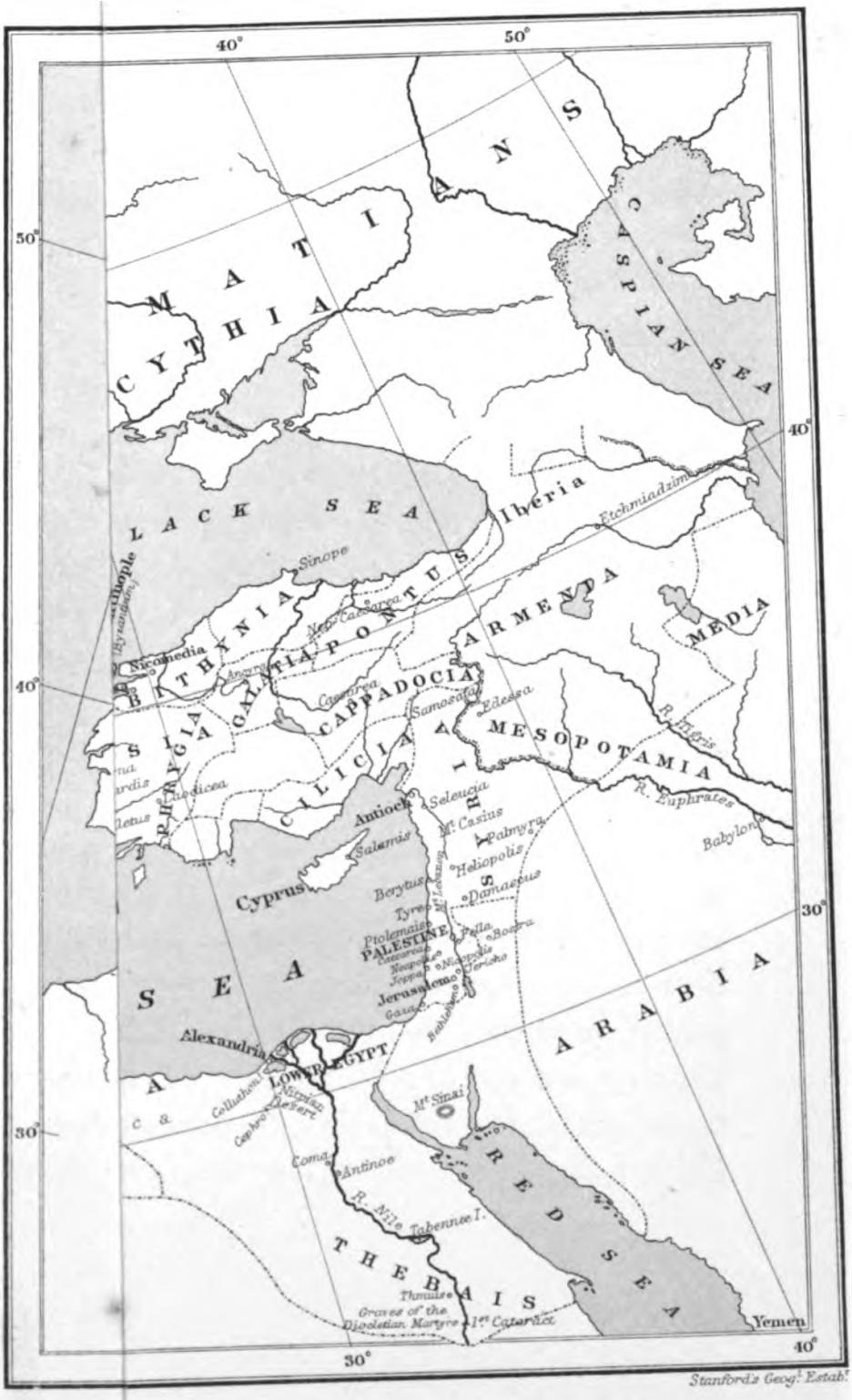
The single feature most worthy of note by the

[1] *Medieval Church History*, lect. i., p. 12.

earnest Christian is that through all the vicissitudes of the Church's external life, and through all the strife and change which took place within, there were ever raised up from one generation to another *witnesses for Christ*. However corrupt the Church organization became, however religious beliefs were overlaid by human inventions and imitations of a former dispensation, men were still not wanting whose writings at this day evince true Christian faith, and the seal (may we not say) of the Holy Spirit. The influence of such men as Irenæus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Clement and Origen, however some of them may have strained doctrine and entertained ideas of Church government beyond the just limits of Scripture teaching, must have tended to build up and to enlarge the spiritual Church of Christ. They were living witnesses for a living Saviour. It is such as these whom the Lord raises up from age to age to testify in the world to Himself, and to nurture and lead his Church, which He has purchased with his own blood. Nor must we forget some whose outward position in the Church was very different, whose names no monument has preserved, and some even to whom the "Fathers" of the Church refused the right-hand of fellowship. These also, included though they might be with teachers of error and immorality under the ban of heresy, though their recognition and honour was not of men, occupied a true and important place in the universal Church, and upheld equally with their more famous brethren,

under it may be more difficult circumstances, a living testimony to their Lord.

The study of early Church history then, whilst it unfolds on the one hand a long tale of human error and infirmity, and too often saddens the heart with the record of good marred and unfulfilled, has yet for us a far different and a brighter lesson. It confirms our faith in the wisdom of God, and in his purposes of love to men, showing us that He has always cared for his Church, has never suffered the torch of truth to be extinguished, but has provided for the needs of each succeeding generation. Even when, as the centuries rolled on, the Church sank down both in worship and in practice to a very low ebb, and its primitive character seemed to be altogether forgotten, there yet remained, as in Israel in the idolatrous age of Ahab, the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. The darkest ages of the Church contained the precious hope and promise of a new dawn. It is true that since the light of the Reformation broke forth the sky has been often overcast, and the clouds continue to gather around us, but the progress of the Church is in the main an upward progress, the noonday of truth is its goal, and in this certain hope of a more glorious future we will rejoice and offer praise.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GALATIA
CAPPADOCIA
Nicomedia
PHRYGIA
CILICIA
MESOPOTAMIA
R. Tigris
R. Euphrates
Babylon
Antioch
Seleucia
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Palmyra
Heliopolis
Damascus
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