

# DOCTRINAL ERRORS

OF

## THE APOSTOLICAL AND EARLY FATHERS.

“ I HAD RATHER TRUST TO THE SHADOW OF THE CHURCH WHICH THE  
SCRIPTURE TEACHES, THAN TO ALL THE MEN’S WRITINGS SINCE THE DAYS OF  
POLYCARP.”

BISHOP HOOPER.

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✓  
BY WILLIAM OSBURN, JUN.

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## PREFACE.

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It has been very common with writers on divinity to deal tenderly with the errors of the early Christian fathers, and much might with propriety be urged in justification of the practice. There is that also, in the nature of past controversies, which will satisfactorily account for it. But, it cannot be concealed, that this forbearance of the Protestant divines is now taken advantage of by the Roman Catholics, and those who agree with them on the subject of the unwritten tradition of the church, and that it occasions considerable difficulty and inconvenience.

The following work is composed under a sense of this difficulty. The author began to peruse the writings of the early fathers with considerable doubt and hesitation, as to the mode in which their tradition ought to be received. And it occurred to him long before he had completed his undertaking, that a faithful exposure of their mistakes might subserve an useful purpose in the cause of Christianity.

As neither the author's time, nor his opportunities of

access to books, are unbounded, he has been compelled to forego the perusal of any modern works which may have preceded him on the various subjects that have fallen under discussion, and to devote himself entirely to the writings of the fathers themselves, in preparing it. He is conscious that his book may have suffered considerably on this account; but, nevertheless, it appeared perfectly evident that nothing could compensate for want of acquaintance with the authors whose opinions he proposed to examine.

But to the works of one modern divine he is glad of this opportunity of expressing his deep obligations. It is scarcely necessary to name the treatises of the Bishop of Lincoln upon Justin Martyr and Tertullian. These, he hopes, that he has generally applied to the purpose for which the right reverend author intended them: he has endeavoured, by their help, to extend his acquaintance with the fathers of whom they treat, rather than to save his own labour. In one instance, however, he has departed from this rule, and he regrets that, through inadvertency, it has not been acknowledged in the proper place. It is in the fifth chapter of the present work, upon Angels: the idea of embodying the opinions of an author upon angels and demons is altogether the learned prelate's: it is merely extended there to a synopsis of the doctrine of the fathers of the two first centuries upon these subjects.



The rough note of the remarks upon the cessation of miracles in the second chapter, was written before the author had the advantage of seeing these admirable treatises, and it gave him the utmost pleasure to find his conjecture confirmed by so high an authority. He merely mentions this, because, as it is a question of evidence, every separate and independent examination of the same facts which leads to the same conclusion, is of some importance in it.

Archbishop Wake's translation of the apostolical fathers is generally adopted in the present work, though it is sometimes departed from.

He has only further to observe, that it has been throughout his earnest endeavour to state the opinions of these early writers fairly and accurately. Should he prove to have failed (and he well knows that this is far from improbable) he will have at any rate the consolatory reflection, that it has not been for lack either of honesty of purpose, or of the most zealous and devoted attention he was capable of giving to the subject.



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## INTRODUCTION.

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The following account of the fathers quoted in the present work is principally from the ecclesiastical histories of Eusebius of Pamphylia, who wrote early in the fourth century. It may sometimes save the reader the trouble of referring to other books.

A.D.

**CLEMENT OF ROME.**—The first bishop of that See; he was ordained thereto by the apostles St. Peter and St. Paul. He is said to have suffered in the persecution that arose in the third of Trajan, A.D. 101. His epistle to the Corinthians was written about.....70 + —

**BARNABAS.**—The companion of St. Paul. He was originally a Levite, of Cyprus. (Acts iv. 36, 37.) His name is supposed to have been changed from Joses to Barnabas, (the son of consolation,) on account of the large estate which he sold and divided among the poor at his conversion. He alludes to the meaning of this name at the commencement of his epistle; a production which is not so highly spoken of by the ancients as that of Clement. It was written somewhere about the time of the fall of Jerusalem ..... 71.

**HERMAS.**—The author of the books which go under this name, was unknown in the times of Eusebius. The

notion that he was the **Hermas** mentioned by St. Paul, (Rom. xvi. 14,) is manifestly a fable. They are an imitation of the Apocalypse of St. John, and do not appear to have been composed earlier than the commencement of the second century.

**IGNATIUS.**—Regarding this very eminent servant of God, we only know that he was the disciple of St. John the apostle, by whom he was ordained to the see of Antioch ; and the circumstances of his martyrdom. He voluntarily presented himself to the emperor Trajan, when that monarch passed through Antioch, on his way to Armenia, to repel the aggressions of the Parthians, and avowed himself a Christian. This brave and high-minded (but not very prudent) proceeding, of course, procured his own immediate condemnation : and seems to have been the commencement of a persecution, though the mind of the emperor was not before made up to such a measure. He, and three others, were sent to Rome, under a guard of ten soldiers, to be devoured by wild beasts, in the circus, at the games which were then about to begin. They set sail from Seleucia, and coasted the southern shore of Asia Minor to Smyrna, where he was allowed to communicate freely with St. Polycarp and the Christians there. It would appear, that he was met here by deputations from the Christians of several cities in Asia Minor, who had heard the news of his condemnation. To three of these, Ephesus, Magnesia, and Tralles, he wrote epistles from Smyrna, and also one to Rome. The soldiers hurried him away to Troas ; and it was from thence that he sent the three remaining epistles that have come down to us ; to Philadelphia, Smyrna, and to Polycarp, their bishop. He complains of the conduct of the soldiers more than once ; calling them “ ten leopards, to whom he was bound as with a chain.” (Rom. c. v.) Notwithstanding, the facts we have detailed, will show that



he must, under the circumstances, have been treated with considerable indulgence. The martyrdom of Ignatius took place during the Kalends of January, in the 19th of Trajan ..... 118.

**POLYCARP.**—The most perfect exemplar of the spirit of Christianity in the compass of uninspired Christian antiquity. He was the disciple of St. John, and the friend of Ignatius. By that apostle he was ordained bishop of Smyrna, in Asia Minor. The few particulars that we know concerning him are nearly all detailed in the course of the present work. He was burnt at the stake at Smyrna, at the advanced age of eighty-six. Only one of his epistles remains to us, which was addressed to the church at Philippi. Others are mentioned, though not named, in the epistle of Irenæus to Florinus, (*apud Eusebium, lib. 5. c. 20.*) but, it seems probable, that they were merely of a private nature. His martyrdom took place, according to the modern chronologies, in the tenth of the emperor Antonius Pius ..... 147.

**JUSTIN MARTYR.**—A native of Flavia Neapolis, in Samaria. He was born of Gentile parents. By his own account of himself, he embraced Christianity after having tried the various sects of philosophy, without satisfaction to his mind. Of his works, (which exercised a very powerful influence over the early church,) three only remain. Two Apologies for Christianity; and his dialogue with Trypho the Jew. Some others are also mentioned by Eusebius. According to Tatian, his scholar, he suffered martyrdom during the reign of Antoninus Philosophus, which commenced ..... 161.

*The Bishop of Lincoln's Justin.*

**ATHENAGORAS.**—The pupil of Justin, and a philosopher of Athens. These are all the particulars we know

concerning him. Two of his works are still extant. The one is an Apology for Christianity; the other is a treatise on the resurrection of the dead. The former was written on the occasion of a persecution, and is addressed to the emperor Antoninus Philosophus, after his son, Commodus, had been associated with him in the imperial dignity, and, therefore, late in his reign. Probably it was during the persecution, so many details of which, in the Gallic provinces, are preserved by Eusebius: and which, as he informs us, raged with equal fury over the whole world. This is generally computed to have taken place ..... 177.

TATIAN, the Assyrian, was also the pupil of Justin. After his death, he fell into the errors of the Encratites, who macerated the body through hatred to matter. Eusebius informs us that he was a voluminous writer, but that his master-piece was his oration against the Greeks, which alone remains to us of his works: but there is nothing in it to excite a moment's regret at the loss of the rest.

THEOPHILUS, bishop of Antioch.—A list of the works of this father is likewise given by Eusebius; one of them is still extant: a defence of the Christian religion, addressed to Autolycus, a heathen. It is a very learned, but diffuse and heavy, production.

IRENÆUS.—The pupil of St. Polycarp; by whom he was sent to preach the Gospel among the Gauls, where he was a presbyter under Pothinus, bishop of Lyons, and at his martyrdom, succeeded him. According to the martyrologists, he suffered in the early persecutions of Severus, who was raised to the imperial dignity A.D. 194: but this is a very doubtful authority. His principal work, the five books against the Heretics, still remains in a barbarous

Latin translation. It is frequently quoted and remarked upon in the present work.

**TERTULLIAN.**—Our information regarding this eminent and highly talented individual is just as defective as in the preceding instances. According to Jerome, he was a native of Carthage; the son of a proconsular centurion. He remained a presbyter of the church until middle life, when he was driven by the envy and contumelious treatment of the Roman clergy, to embrace the doctrine of Montanus, a fanatical heretic, of Phrygia. His opinions and proceedings bear a close resemblance to those that, within these few years, have made their appearance in this country, and in Scotland: some of the partisans of which are understood to avow that Montanus was inspired by the Holy Ghost. After his conversion to Montanism, Tertullian resided at Carthage, where he founded a sect who named themselves Tertullianists. His works, which are very numerous, have been divided into such as were written before he left the church, and those he composed afterwards.—*The Bishop of Lincoln's Ecclesiastical History*, (whence this notice of Tertullian has been extracted,) contains the best account of them; perhaps, the best account that ever was written of the works of any ancient author. Tertullian is said to have lived to an advanced age, and to have flourished during the reigns of Septimus Severus and Caracalla; the latter began to reign 211. And was murdered by Macrinus ..... 217.

**CLEMENT of Alexandria.**—Perhaps a native of Sicily; was afterwards the pupil of Pantænus in the school of Christian philosophy at Alexandria. The founder of this sect of philosophers is unknown. It is said to have had the approbation of Athenagoras, and I suspect that his master, Justin, was by no means unfavourable to it. Like his cotemporaries, Clement was a voluminous writer. Several

works of his, mentioned by Eusebius, and referred to by himself, are now lost. Of those that remain, the Exhortation to the Gentiles is a powerful exposure of the follies of heathenism, the *Pædagogus* is a rule of life for ordinary Christians, and the *Stromates* is a guide to gnostical perfection. Eusebius says that he composed this last during the reign of Severus, and accordingly we find that the chronologies in the first book all terminate with the death of his predecessor Commodus. The same author mentions also, that it consisted of eight books, and that number occurs in our copies: but the eighth is a dissertation on dialectics, I think, by another hand. Clement is best known as the tutor of Origen. The time and mode of his death are not to be found in any author.

# DOCTRINAL ERRORS,

*&c., &c.*

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## CHAPTER I.

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### NECESSITY OF A DIVINE REVELATION.

THE human mind was not created for a state of entire independence of all communications of knowledge from the great Author of its existence. We might easily point out its incapacity of attaining to certain truths which it is, nevertheless, needful for man to know, and to know assuredly; and by referring to the monstrous absurdities in religion which, in all ages of the world, have arisen out of this incapacity, triumphantly demonstrate the necessity of a divine teaching. But the enquiry would be foreign to our present purpose, for which it will be sufficient to show that such has been the divine economy, by a very superficial glance at the early history of the human race.

In the paradisaical state, the intercourses between God and man were so constant and familiar as to evidence

that man, in maintaining that communion, was fulfilling a primary purpose of his creation. It was only when, by man's disobedience, sin entered into the world, that he hid himself from the presence of his Heavenly Father. And, notwithstanding, we are taught by his subsequent history, that even sin could not frustrate this purpose of his most benevolent Creator. It did not comport with that inscrutable wisdom, which condescends not at all to our unhallowed curiosity, to reveal to us many particulars regarding the nature and frequency of the intercourse between heaven and earth, during the long period that intervened between the fall and the flood. Thus much, however, we easily gather from what is written ;—that the direct revelations of the divine will to mankind were of very frequent occurrence, and that the providential dispensations of God then assumed a decidedly judicial character ; much more so than at any subsequent period :—that is, viewing the general tenor of God's providential government at that time as compared with any other period of equal duration, and excluding, of course, those particular epochs when, to effect some great change in the theocratic notions of mankind, the Omnipotent unveiled for a season the hidings of his power ; and said to the functions of nature, as well as to the consciences of men, *be still, and know that I am God.*

Under this aspect we shall find, that the visible dealings of God with man have been regulated by a law exactly analogous to that which governs the rise and growth of all beings within the range of our observation, both in the physical and moral world. Their earliest mode of existence is a very crude and imperfect one ; rendering them dependent, at first altogether, and for a longer or shorter subsequent period in great measure, upon assist-

ances external to themselves for its continuance : and they attain to that degree of perfection which enables them to become self-existent, as it respects their fellow-beings, by a process of gradual development.

Exactly after this manner hath God dealt with the human race. When man was first driven from the presence of his Maker in paradise, to wander over the earth that was cursed for his sake, he was dependent upon the direct agency of the Supreme Being for the supply of his every want ; the very coats of skins that clothed our first parents did the Lord God make, Gen. iii. 21.

This direct superintendence appears to have been long continued ; and to have been gradually withheld, partly, because men had so far profited by the instructions which had flowed to them from the fountain of all wisdom, respecting the common arts of life, as no longer to require it,—but principally, because they had rejected the word of the Lord, as it regarded the far more important concerns of the life to come, and sinned against him. And if we trace the divine economy downward, through the succeeding periods of the human history, we shall find the Almighty slowly withdrawing himself behind the veil of providence—every successive departure hastened by that fatal cause which first began the separation between man and his God, sin : but all harmonised by the skill of Omniscience into an entire subserviency of his great purposes ; until, in the fulness of time, God was manifest in the flesh, the great atonement for the sins of the whole human race was offered upon Calvary, the gospel of the kingdom was preached to all the nations of the Roman world, and the last breath of inspiration refreshed the fainting spirit of the aged exile of Patmos, and closed, finally and for ever, the book of God's revelation to mankind.

The subsequent history of the world informs us, that the economy of the divine dispensation had now attained to that state of perfection for which the long preceding series of supernatural interferences had been disciplining and preparing the human mind. The whole will of God to man, and all things necessary for him to know regarding his future state of existence, were upon record; and that record was capable of authentication, by every mode of proof which it was possible for his understanding to require. God then altogether withheld any more direct display of his power, or even existence, than the standing miracle of universal providence, whereby *the invisible things being clearly seen by those that do appear, men are left without excuse*; and those hidden miracles of grace, which the Holy Spirit, by the ministry of the word, works from time to time in the hearts of men, convincing the happy subjects of them *of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment*, and witnessing with their spirits that they are the children of God. But though the believer knows, with the full assurance of faith, that God speaks to his heart, yet *a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy*,—the evidence hereof is for himself alone.—He departs from the evil that is in the world, and walks with God in newness of life; and these are the only demonstrations he can offer to his fellow men of the reality of the blessing he has received.

Miracles, then, ceased, because the Divine Revelation, and human society, were now placed in circumstances which obviated the necessity of further miraculous interposition: and therefore it inevitably follows, that the Bible is the substitute which God hath appointed for those interferences with the established orders of Providence, wherewith, in the infancy of the world, he manifested his will to man-



kind. So that to the question, How ought it to be received by the succeeding generations of the human family? we reply, without hesitation, exactly in the same manner as would have been received those previous revelations of the divine will which were attended with supernatural phenomena. The Bible contains the words of God, though we hear not the voice from heaven that utters them: and every precept therein is equally binding upon the man who, at any period, shall have its meaning and its sanctions presented to his understanding, as it was upon him in the circumstances of whose life the revelation originated, whose ear heard the accents of the voice of God, whose eyes beheld the vision of angels. We have only to consider how a revelation would be received and regarded, by the person to whom it was vouchsafed, and we have the exact measure of the duty of every man regarding the Holy Scriptures.

This obligation arises from the circumstances of the case, and is of universal authority. It was as binding upon the apostolic men as upon the men of this generation; and it will be equally binding upon mankind a thousand years hence, (should the present dispensation continue so long,) as it is upon us. The time that may have elapsed between the revelation, and the existence of the individual who is made acquainted with it, is no element of the question.

All this is sufficiently apparent, and we never find any difficulty in carrying the argument forward; we can readily comprehend that, if we afford to our children the same religious advantages as we ourselves enjoy, their obligations, as to the mode in which they shall receive the Scriptures and bow to their authority, are exactly the same as our own; and we easily follow it out to any number of succeeding generations. But a difficulty certainly does

arise, when we come to pursue these reasonings retrospectively ; and the more remote the period to which we carry our enquiry, the more formidable does the difficulty become ; until we discuss the mode in which the New Testament Scriptures ought to have been received and interpreted by the apostolic fathers, when it would appear that we have raised a question of considerable intricacy. It is, however, essential to our present enquiry that we should endeavour to enter fully into the merits of it. Let us, then, consider, whether Clement, Barnabas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, (the only apostolic men of whose writings any thing remains to us) had or had not advantages over their successors, whereby they were liberated from that obligation to defer entirely to the authority of the New Testament which we ourselves acknowledge.

There are, apparently, two circumstances in which these advantages might have consisted. Of these an obvious one, of which we may suppose them to have been possessed, is the gift of inspiration. If this be the case, the authority of their epistles must, of course, be equal to that of any of the canonical writings ; and whatever we find of novelty in them, whether they be new truths or doctrines, or new modes of stating truths or doctrines with which we were already acquainted, we must accept all such as further revelations vouchsafed to their authors.

The only remaining circumstance in their favour is that they were the cotemporaries of the first propagators of Christianity, and therefore had the opportunity of listening to the instructions of inspired apostles, and possibly of our Lord himself. From one or other of these they must have derived their advantages, if they really possessed them. The discussion of both will involve questions of great and grave importance, which have already engaged

the attention of the Christian church to a considerable extent.

It shall be our endeavour in treating them, strictly to confine ourselves to those matters which are indispensable to the subject in hand ; upon no occasion to lose sight of it, for the purpose of stating opinions on points in debate : and here, as well as elsewhere, to substantiate the facts upon which we may ground our arguments, by quotations from cotemporary authors ; thus availing ourselves rather of the materials which the talents and industry of the learned have provided, than of the opinions and speculations they may themselves have advanced upon them.

## CHAPTER II.

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### THE WRITINGS OF THE APOSTOLICAL FATHERS WERE NOT INSPIRED.

IN denying that the Apostolical Fathers derived any assistance in their writings, from direct inspiration, we are met, at the threshold of the subject, with a circumstance which naturally enough presents itself to the mind as a difficulty of some magnitude. The Epistles of Clement and Barnabas were written from twenty to thirty years before the completion of the New Testament canon, and those of Ignatius and Polycarp a very short time afterwards. Now, of Barnabas, we know that he was for a long period the companion and fellow-labourer of the apostle St. Paul. The constant tradition of the Church regarding Clemens Romanus is, that he was the individual of whom the same apostle informs us, Phil. iv. 3., that his name was in the book of life:—and from the same authority we learn, that Ignatius was ordained bishop of Antioch, and Polycarp of Smyrna, by St. John Theologus.<sup>1</sup> Plainly, therefore, they flourished at the period when the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were bestowed upon the church of Christ:—were not they, as well as the canonical writers, favoured with the gift of inspiration? We can only ob-

<sup>1</sup> Euseb. Hist. lib. 3.

viate this difficulty, by opening a perplexing question ;— that of the cessation of miracles.

At what precise period the thaumaturgic gifts were withdrawn from the church, and the advance of Christianity was left to the ordinary operations of the Holy Spirit and to the intrinsic powers of its own verity, is a point which has been frequently argued, but upon which no satisfactory conclusion has yet been arrived at. I do not, therefore, presume to offer any opinion of my own upon it, without, in the first instance, laying before the reader the evidence upon which I conceive it to be founded.

I gather, from Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians, that, when he wrote, the extraordinary influences of the Holy Spirit were no longer enjoyed by that church : he expressly mentions the schism he rebukes as the occasion of their departure ;<sup>2</sup> and all parties appear to have considered it as final, for he never once directs them to pray for more than the ordinary influences. There appears to be strong evidence, in the same epistle, that they had likewise ceased from the church of Rome, at whose request it was written. I infer this from his entire silence upon the subject : it would have so powerfully served the writer's purpose as an illustration, that I feel persuaded he would not have failed to take advantage of it, had he been able. This epistle was probably written before the fall of Jerusalem,<sup>3</sup> A. D. 71, and certainly after the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, A. D. 66.<sup>4</sup>

There is the same absence of all allusion to the present existence of miraculous powers in the church, in the Epistle of Barnabas, which appears to have been written

<sup>2</sup> Clem. Rom. ad Cor. 1., § 1, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Idem, § 23, 41.

<sup>4</sup> Idem, § 5.

very shortly after the fall of Jerusalem,<sup>5</sup> and I draw from thence the same inference; so cogent an argument in their own favour, as that of miracles then occurring, would hardly have been overlooked by either writer, had it been possessed by them.

The same peculiarity is observable in the seven Epistles of Ignatius, written about forty years afterwards; and I see not how we can assign other than the same reason for it.

Of the pious and humble Polycarp we have only one memorial, but that most precious: his Epistle to the Philippians is, in my opinion, the most edifying production of the second century that remains to us. But here again, there is not a single allusion to miraculous powers, possessed either by himself or any other individual his cotemporary. We also derive, from another source, a convincing proof that the blessed martyr was not endowed with the power of working miracles. The epistle of his pupil Irenæus<sup>6</sup> to Florinus, preserved by Eusebius, describes his person and habits, and lays great stress upon his account of the miracles of our Lord, which agreed exactly with that in the Gospels: had Polycarp himself wrought miracles, Irenæus would doubtless have dwelt upon that fact also, and with minuteness, to the backsliding Florinus, whom he exhorted to return to the bosom of the church.

The earliest ecclesiastical writer of the second century, of whose works any thing remains to us, was Justin Martyr. In his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew,<sup>7</sup> he men-

<sup>5</sup> S. Bar. Epistola Cath. §. 4. *Edit. Or.*

<sup>6</sup> Opera, p. 463. It is quoted by Milner. Vol. I.

<sup>7</sup> We (the Christians) have the gift of prophecy even now.—*Opera*, p. 308, B. We pray for the Jews and for all others who hostilely oppose us:

tions, generally, the existence of miraculous powers in the church, but brings no particular instances. This is, assuredly, not the course ordinarily pursued by an eye-witness; the particulars of one miracle, wrought by a person then living, would have had much more weight with Trypho, than vaguely to assert the performance of a hundred.

Theophilus of Antioch, his pupil, was not himself possessed of thaumaturgic powers, though his language regarding them resembles that of Justin.—He was challenged by a heathen philosopher to raise a man from the dead, but declined the challenge.<sup>8</sup>

Irenæus speaks of miracles, in his time, in a manner similar to that of the preceding authors.—He merely asserts that there then existed miraculous powers in the church,<sup>9</sup> generally; but certainly does not write as if he himself had seen them.

Tertullian's expressions, regarding the supernatural gifts imparted to his cotemporaries, are also very nearly those of the writers to whom we have already referred.—He

that ye may repent with us, and not blaspheme Jesus Christ in whose name so many mighty works are wrought even now.—Ib. 254. B. *Edit. Lut.*

<sup>8</sup> Ad Autol., lib. 1., 77. C.

<sup>9</sup> Adv. Hær., lib. 2., c. 56. After discrediting the false miracles of the Valentinians, he proceeds, “*Tantum autem absunt ab eo ut mortuum excitent quemadmodum Dominus excitavit, et Apostoli per orationem, et in fraternitate sæpissime propter aliquid necessarium, eâ quæ est in quoquo loco ecclesiâ universâ postulanti per jejunium et supplicationem multam, reversus est spiritus mortui, et donatus est homo orationibus sanctorum.*” p. 186.—*Edit. Græc.* Further on, c. 57, p. 188, he speaks in the same manner of casting out devils, foretelling future events, and healing diseases; he likewise resumes the subject of raising the dead, and says, that the persons resuscitated had afterwards *lived many years among them*; but this mode of speaking quite excludes the idea that any such were then living, and therefore throws the time when the miracles were wrought considerably backward.

asserts, in vague general terms, that they then existed,<sup>10</sup> but only once ventures to relate an instance of their exercise : than which it is hardly possible to conceive of an alleged case of miracle with fewer rational claims to credibility.<sup>11</sup> Yet the tract in which it occurs was written after he had embraced the tenets of Montanus ; and as that crazy enthusiast professed to work miracles, we cannot doubt that his disciple would adduce the most striking example he could find, in proof of the reality of these pretensions. It is likewise well worthy of remark, that he derives the *manuum impositio*, (a part of the ceremonial of baptism,) not from the practice of our Lord and the apostles, with Irenæus,<sup>12</sup> but from Jacob blessing the two sons of Joseph.<sup>13</sup> Is not this merely in order to avoid the acknowledgment, that the imposition of hands was no longer accompanied by miraculous gifts as in the times of the apostles ?<sup>14</sup>

Clement of Alexandria certainly believed that miracles had ceased in his time : after speaking of the Israelites in the desert, he proceeds, “ but we are of those Israelites

<sup>10</sup> “ Let one possessed of a devil be brought before your (the Heathen) tribunals ; and at the command of any Christian the spirit will confess that he is a demon.”—*Apol.* c. 23. “ We (the Christians) bind the demons, and expose them daily ; and cast them out of men, as is known to many persons.”—*Ad Scap.* c. 2.

<sup>11</sup> “ An example occurred of a woman who went to the theatre, and returned from thence possessed of a devil :—and when the unclean spirit was pressed by an exorcist to say why he had dared to enter into one of the faithful ; ‘ I did right and most justly,’ he replied, ‘ for I found her on my own ground.’ ”—*De Spect.* c. 26.

<sup>12</sup> U. s. c. 57.

<sup>13</sup> De Bapt. c. 8.

<sup>14</sup> St. Austin does not attempt to evade the admission, but expressly says, that the ceremony had ceased to confer miraculous powers.—*Tr. 6 in. 1 Ep. Johan.* For several equally striking evasions on the same point in Tertullian’s Works, see *Bishop Kaye’s Eccl. Hist.* c. 2. note 12.



whose faith and obedience cometh not by seeing miracles but by hearing.”<sup>15</sup>

Exclusive of the ecclesiastical historians, whose authority, in my opinion, is of far too doubtful a character to be of any service to such an enquiry, this is the evidence from which we are to form our judgment upon the question :—It would seem that the following are the facts deducible from it.

The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were enjoyed but for a very short time by the church. Not more than thirty years after the first propagation of Christianity, it is probable that already were the churches of Rome and Corinth deprived of them.

So rapid was their disappearance from the earth, that they had become of very rare occurrence at the end of the first century ; neither Ignatius nor Polycarp were endowed with them, nor were they able to make any appeal to their present existence in their writings.

Their departure was, nevertheless, not simultaneous but gradual ; fifty and eighty years afterwards Justin Martyr and Irenæus assert that they still existed ; though the miracles to which the latter alludes had been performed some time when he wrote.

The very equivocal and imperfect account given by Tertullian of miracles then occurring, and the express declaration of Clement of Alexandria that the Christian dispensation was no longer a miraculous one, leave but little room to doubt, that at the end of the second century miracles had ceased altogether.

The passage in Clemens Romanus acquaints us with another fact, regarding their departure. They were withdrawn for the same reasons that grieve the Spirit to with-

<sup>15</sup> 2 Strom., c. 6.

hold his ordinary influences,—their misimprovement by those upon whom they were conferred : and when once so withdrawn they were never afterwards restored.

We hesitate not for a moment to assert, that these facts would be true of the most excellent of all his gifts, inspiration.

That a mortal and sinful man shall have the faculties of his understanding, as well as the affections of his heart, pervaded by the divine presence, being constituted thereby the unerring historian of the past and the inspired prophet of the future,—we confidently anticipate, that a grace so transcendent should, of all others, exhibit the most exquisite sensibility of sin—should soonest shrink from its contact with a world that lay in wickedness, and with a church distracted by schisms, and return to the bosom of God.—And such, in effect, was the case at all times, and especially under the New Testament dispensation. The purpose which called forth this immeasurable display of the divine condescension, was speedily, as well as effectually, realised : it had certainly departed, before the termination of the first century ; and to eight persons only, of all those who attended upon our Lord's ministry, was this grace given,—by them was the entire canon of this inestimable book begun and completed.

These considerations will sufficiently obviate any difficulty we may imagine to arise, in deciding against the inspiration of the apostolic men, on the ground that they were cotemporary with the founders of Christianity.

But it has been a prevalent opinion with the Christian church, that there are writings, by eminent men in religion, which, though not inspired to the same degree as the canonical books, were, nevertheless, indited under such a measure of the direction of the Holy Spirit as to be of

high authority. Let us endeavour to analyse this notion :—there are certain books which the Spirit dictated in part, but not altogether. But can the portions so dictated be pointed out?—If they can, to what are we indebted for the remaining portions? if to the writer alone, a fallible and erring man, what assurance have we that he may not be misleading us?—If the inspired portions can not be pointed out, How can we safely assent to the authority of that of which we know not the origin;—or believe in doctrines, concerning which we are ignorant, whether they are propounded to us by the Spirit of God, or by the fancy of the author in whose writings they occur? It is needless to proceed with the argument.—The notion of semi-inspiration, involves a manifest absurdity: it supposes that the inspiring Spirit sanctions the introduction into the sacred text of that which of all things will most effectually defeat the object of the revelation. For the gift of inspiration was granted in order that its receiver might be constituted thereby the recorder of absolute, unmingled truth, and that his writings might claim the unhesitating belief of mankind, through all succeeding generations, on this ground alone:—and how could this object be more entirely frustrated, than by allowing the inspired truths to be intermixed with the unassisted reasonings, or imaginations, of him to whom they were revealed? It would be idle to object here, that the writer might be kept from error by the Spirit in these his mental efforts:—because that is itself inspiration; and all that is meant by it in one of the ordinary acceptations of the word.—Assuredly, therefore, there is no such thing as semi-inspiration: that unspeakable grace was either imparted wholly, or it was altogether withheld. And in every written production, wherein the intellectual faculties of the writer have not been entirely

under the dictation and guidance of the Spirit, in the nature of things it is impossible that he can have interfered supernaturally at all. For these reasons we unhesitatingly deny that the apostolical men could have received any assistance from the Holy Spirit, in inditing their epistles, short of plenary inspiration.

But we have already endeavoured to show, that the early period at which they were written, is a circumstance by no means involving the necessity, that therefore their authors should be inspired : and when we further state, that plenary inspiration has never been demanded for them, and that they generally repudiate such an idea in their own writings,<sup>16</sup> no further impediment remains in the way of our conclusion, that the Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers are uninspired productions ; and consequently, that so far as supernatural assistance was concerned, the obligation of the writers to defer to the authority of the New Testament was exactly the same as our own.

<sup>16</sup> Barnabas, c. 1. Ignat. ad Rom., c. 2, &c.

## CHAPTER III.

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### TRADITION.

IT remains for us to consider, whether the advantages which the apostolic fathers derived from being cotemporary with our Lord and the apostles, conferred upon them the right to advance doctrines which are not sanctioned by the New Testament writers, and the power of authenticating such, independently of that sanction. It may be proper to premise in this place, that we have not to consider their title to credibility, as transcribers of acts and discourses of Jesus Christ and his disciples, at which they profess to have been present, but which are not to be found in the New Testament; in no single instance do their writings assume this character. We must also bear in mind, that whatever advantages might accrue to them from hence, they only had them in common with Simon Magus, Cerinthus, Nicolaus, and others, who were, nevertheless, the originators of some of the foulest and most fantastic heresies that ever disgraced Christianity. Assuredly, therefore, this is no infallible security against their being in error.

But, notwithstanding, their proximity to the times of inspiration appears to be an important circumstance in their favour. They were possibly the hearers of our Lord, certainly the pupils of his apostles; and their reli-

gious opinions seem to have been derived from the oral discourses of these highly gifted persons, as well as from their written epistles. There is evidence of this in their extant productions, which referring not often to the New Testament, contain, nevertheless, a scheme of religion corresponding, in its general outline, to that which is there promulgated. But we find in them, besides, many doctrines and modes of interpretation for which there is no such authority ; and the point at issue is, did they receive these also from the apostles ?

Here, again, we fall in with the well-known and long agitated question of Christian Tradition. We treat it as arising from, and forming a part of, our present enquiry.

It is perfectly evident, that no one of the Apostolical Epistles contains, in itself, so full an exposition upon every point of Christian doctrine and ethics as may be obtained from a digest of the entire volume of which it forms a part ; but the apostles certainly declared the whole counsel of God to all the churches they founded : in all of them, therefore, a portion of the divine truth would be known traditionally only, or from the oral instructions of the apostles. Those of the apostolic churches to whom no epistles were addressed, would remain, for a considerable period, in the same situation as that in which the whole of them were originally placed ; their knowledge of Christianity would be derived entirely from this tradition. Nevertheless, the written word of God is a complete transcript of the mind of God regarding man,—not one jot or tittle of all that Jesus Christ and the apostles uttered, which it is needful for us to know, is omitted in the New Testament : had the Gospels of our Lord been multiplied, so that the world itself could not contain the books that should be written, John xxi. 25 ; had we an accurate and un-

doubted record of all that the apostles spake and wrote from the first moment of their conversion to their final ejaculation at their martyrdom, we should not thereby be put into possession of one important truth or principle in religion, with which we were not already perfectly acquainted, through the books of the New Testament. We utterly repudiate the notion of an oral law in Christianity; of the existence of certain traditions besides the written word, which were committed by Christ to the apostles, and by the apostles to the churches they planted and the bishops they ordained, to remain thenceforward with the Church universal, as a *lex non scripta*.

We refute this opinion, in the first place, by the argument that demolishes an exactly similar figment, raised by the Jews from the Old Testament. We can find no allusion to any such, in the writings of those with whom these traditions are said to have originated. The passages ordinarily adduced in support of it,<sup>1</sup> merely refer to the fact we have already endeavoured to explain, that the apostles gave verbal as well as epistolary instructions to their converts. We, in the second place, reject it, on the ground of its great improbability.—Is it to be believed, that after our Saviour had so severely rebuked the traditions of the Jews,<sup>2</sup> and called them back to the simplicity of the written word, he would, nevertheless, cast a portion of that truth, which he came from heaven to reveal, into the same polluted channel, and thus give his adversaries the power of unanswerably condemning him out of his own mouth?—the supposition is intolerable.

We are supported, in the present instance, by the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 2. 2 Thess. ii. 15, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xv. 1, 20. Mark vii. 1, 23.

authority of those ancient writers, whose opinions, upon some other points, we shall be compelled to call in question.

It has been already noticed, that the Epistles of Clement and Barnabas were probably written before the canon of the New Testament was completed, and consequently, that their views of Christianity were derived, in a measure, from the oral instructions of the apostles. Yet, it is remarkable, that they never claim any authority for these instructions: their authoritative appeals are invariably to the Scriptures, generally of the Old Testament: they plead no other justification either of their doctrinal or ethical opinions.

This negative testimony of the apostolical fathers against the existence of traditional doctrines in Christianity, we are able to corroborate by the more direct evidence of the fathers of the second century.

Irenæus discusses this subject in the first five chapters of his Third Book *adversus Hæreses*. He expressly denies their existence against the heretic Valentinus and others who asserted it.<sup>3</sup> He appeals, it is true, to the oral instructions of the apostles, which he informs us were, in his time, well known throughout the world;<sup>4</sup> but only for the purpose of pointing out the entire accordance between them and their written epistles. He places this in a strong light, by supposing the case, that they had left no inspired writings behind them, when this tradition would have been our only guide. This case had actually occurred with certain nations of barbarians, among whom the apostles

<sup>3</sup> "Etenim si recondita mysteria scissent Apostoli, quæ seorsim et latenter ab reliquis perfectos docebant, his vel maxime traderent ea quibus etiam ipsas ecclesias committebant."—C. 3.

<sup>4</sup> "Traditionem apostolorum in toto mundo manifestatam."—*Id.*



had preached the faith and planted churches, while they were ignorant of written characters; and they remained in the same state to his time, diligently observing this tradition, which agreed, in every particular, with the doctrine of those churches that were in possession of the inspired Volume.<sup>5</sup>

In the writings of Tertullian we find the views of Irenæus on this subject abundantly confirmed. He reiterates his denial of the existence of oral doctrines in Christianity, which had been asserted by Valentinus and other heretics, rejects the idea as madness, and declares that it casts a reproach upon Christ, as great, at least, as the more impudent fabrication that the apostles did not teach certain truths, because they were ignorant of them.<sup>6</sup> “For the one,” he says, “accuses him of sending forth ignorant apostles, the other dishonest ones.” He also refers more than once to the existing Christian tradition, in order to point out its entire accordance with the New Testament Scriptures.<sup>7</sup>

Clement of Alexandria was infected with the error which is reproved by the two preceding writers, and sought in tradition for a sanction of the heathen absurdity of a double doctrine in Christianity, which he could not find in the written word.<sup>8</sup> We can hardly, therefore, con-

<sup>5</sup> C. 4.

<sup>6</sup> “Solent dicere : non omnia apostolos scisse ; eadem agitati dementiâ qua rursus convertunt : omnia apostolos scisse sed non omnia omnibus tradidisse. In utroque Christum reprehensioni injicientes, qui aut minus instructos aut parum simplices apostolos miserit.”—*De Præs. Hæc.*, c. 22. p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Idem 32—37.—*Adv. Mar.*, lib. 1. c. 21.

<sup>8</sup> He thus describes it in his great work, the *Stromates*, which professes to be an exposition of the second or mystical doctrines of Christianity, as his *Pædagogus* is, of the primary and simple truths for the uninitiated.—“This work is not a mere treatise composed according to technical rules for the sake of show ; for in me are treasured up, even to old age, memorials

ceive of a better proof of the rule we are endeavouring to lay down, than the present exception.

As, then, we deny the existence of traditional doctrines in Christianity, both from the improbability of such a notion and upon the evidence of those persons who, occupying distinguished places in the Christian church at the times nearest to those of the apostles, must have been their depositories had they existed, we, of course, deny all authority, on this ground, to the writings of the apostolical fathers.

Greatly admiring, therefore, the little that we know concerning the characters of these eminent and holy persons, and fervently thanking the God of all grace for that he enabled them, in times of unexampled peril and of super-abounding error, to hold fast, in all its great features, the faith once delivered to the saints; and at length to lead forth, as we believe, that noble army of martyrs,

which are a specific against oblivion: for I possess the very image and adumbration of the discourses, at once easy of comprehension and spiritual, which I was counted worthy to hear, and of the blessed and excellent men who uttered them." He then proceeds to describe the various teachers of the new Platonics to whom he had listened; and lastly, mentions one whom he found concealed in Egypt and with whom he remained;—probably Pantænus, whom he succeeded as principal of the school at Alexandria. Him he describes as a "truly Sicilian bee, hovering over the flowers that grow in the prophetic and apostolical meadows, and distilling the virgin honey of the doctrines he had drawn from thence into the souls of his hearers."—"But all these kept the true tradition of that blessed doctrine which they had received immediately from the holy apostles, Peter, and James, and John, and Paul, as a son from a father; and though few be like their fathers, yet, by the help of God, these apostolical seeds, sown in our fathers, have come down to us. I well know that many will rejoice in this my book, because this tradition is preserved in it."—*1 Strom.* § 1. In exactly the same spirit he speaks a little further on, of "the glorious and venerable canon of tradition which was established before the foundation of the world."—*Id.* p. 20. See also *Pæd.* 1, 5. *7 Strom.* § 6, &c.

who, overcoming the confederate powers of darkness by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, loved not their lives unto the death, we, nevertheless apply to their writings the precept of Tertullian,<sup>9</sup> and their own example ; we enquire and search diligently whether the apostolic men write according to the mind of the apostles ; and we say of them as of every other unassisted writing, *to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because* (on the point whereon they differ,) *there is no light in them.*<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> De Presc. Hæret. c. 32.

<sup>10</sup> Isa. viii. 20.

## CHAPTER IV.

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### OPINIONS OF THE EARLY FATHERS UPON INSPIRATION.

THAT the works of the apostolical fathers were held in very high estimation by the ancient church, is a fact too notorious to require that it should be here formally established by an array of quotations :<sup>1</sup> and they certainly were in some measure entitled to it, both on account of the deserved reputation for sanctity of their authors, and with some of them, on the score of literary merit also. But it is much to be regretted, that the limits between these and inspiration were but little sought into or understood in those days. They do not seem to have considered, that whatever be the excellence of a merely human production, or of its author, between these and the words of him who is under the inspiring influence of the Holy Ghost there is an immeasurable distance, when viewed in the light of a religious authority :—for the one is the truth of God, that shall stand for ever ; the other is valuable only in proportion to its close and faithful adherence to the tenets of that word, and whatever it contains which is not to be found there, either mediately or immediately, is necessarily false.

<sup>1</sup> The Preliminary Discourse to Archbishop Wake's admirable translation of their Works leaves nothing to be desired upon this point, which it ably and amply treats upon.

It is, to us, hardly credible, that this broad and most obvious distinction should have been lost sight of in the Christian church at any time, and especially at one so close upon its first establishment in the earth as the first and second centuries. Such was the fact, nevertheless; they had but an imperfect idea of the tests by which all claims to inspiration ought to be tried, and were far too ready to admit them, by whomsoever they were advanced. One immediate consequence was, that even good men extended the same lax rule of judgment to their own mental emotions, and thus mistook them for the impulses of inspiration. Passages are not wanting in the writings of the early fathers which prove the existence of this mistake. St. Barnabas concludes his well-known comment upon the ceremonial law, thus, "But how should we know all this and understand it? We, understanding aright the commandment, speak as the Lord would have us. Wherefore, he has circumcised our ears and our hearts, that we might know these things."<sup>2</sup> This bold avowal of inspiration is made in favour of a tissue of obscenity and absurdity which would disgrace the Hindoo Mythology; though, in the same epistle, the writer entirely disclaims it for the very pious and scriptural train of reasoning with which he commences.<sup>3</sup>

Ignatius makes a similar general disclaimer of inspiration.<sup>4</sup> He experienced no necessity for it so long as his sentiments were in accordance with the teaching of the apostles; but when he inculcates his wild, extravagant notions of subjection to the Christian hierarchy, he becomes inspired.—"Some would have deceived me according to the flesh; but the Spirit being from God is not deceived.—I cried while I was among you, I spake with a loud voice,

<sup>2</sup> C. 10.<sup>3</sup> C. 1. a. f.<sup>4</sup> Rom. c. 4.

attend to the bishop, and to the presbytery, and to the deacons. Now some supposed that I spake as foreseeing the division that should come among you ; but he is my witness for whose sake I am in bonds, that I knew nothing from any man ; but the Spirit spake, saying on this wise, *do nothing without the Bishop.*"<sup>5</sup>

The mental process by which these good men were deluded is not very difficult to analyse ; both were evidently conscious that the doctrines they advanced did not rest upon a very firm basis of scriptural authority : but they nevertheless entertained towards them that kindly parental prepossession against which every one who commits his thoughts to writing ought to be upon his guard ; they were elated with the idea of having struck out something clever and original, and this emotion they mistook for the inspiring influences of the Holy Ghost.

It can never be out of place to point out the links of that mysterious chain of providences, along which the Scriptures have been transmitted to us, pure and unadulterated ; and here, I conceive, is a very remarkable one. Had Barnabas and Ignatius avowedly written throughout under the same delusion, there would have been, *a priori*, no argument whatever against the probability of their being inspired, and then the only point upon which we could have fairly contended against their admission into the canon, would have affected their authenticity. But as the case now stands, we have no difficulty in dealing with it ; when they write scripturally they declare that they are not inspired, while they claim inspiration for that which is so utterly at variance with all conceivable rules of scriptural interpretation and with the whole tenor of the Sacred Volume, that it condemns itself.

<sup>5</sup> Phil. c. 7.

One other instance of this self-deception will show that the same undefined notions on inspiration prevailed, at the end, as at the beginning of the second century. We have already mentioned the Stromates of Clement of Alexandria; and we shall have frequent occasion to refer to the errors with which this voluminous work abounds. The author thus describes its plan and character. "The books of the Stromates are not like to those trimmed gardens, wherein trees and plants are arranged in a certain order to delight the eye; but rather to a mountain covered with tangled thickets, where the cypress and the plane, the laurel and the ivy, apples, olives, and figs are so twisted together that it is difficult to separate the productive from the worthless."<sup>6</sup> It is not possible to form a juster or more exact notion of his strange and rambling miscellany than the author conveys in this passage. It is, indeed, a tangled thicket of prickly and worthless bushes, with here and there a plant from Scripture, withering for want of depth of earth and choked with weeds and rubbish. And yet in the middle of the work we are informed, that the writer, having recorded the first part of the Gnostical tradition in what writings "*the Spirit pleased*," will now proceed to the completion of his undertaking, "*if God will and as he shall inspire*."<sup>7</sup> A plain declaration that the whole of the Stromates were dictated by God the Holy Ghost! That a man of good natural abilities, of strong and highly cultivated reasoning powers, and of astonishing learning, (and all this was true of Clement of Alexandria,) should, nevertheless, have been the dupe of so palpable a delusion, can only have arisen out of the loose and vague conceptions of the nature of inspiration which were entertained by the Church in those times.

<sup>6</sup> 7 Strom. § 18, a. f.

<sup>7</sup> 4 Strom. § 1.

Another and a still more melancholy consequence of this undecided state of so important a question, remains to be considered.

If there is any virtue which of all others the revelations of God most jealously vindicate to themselves, it is truth. As this was the case with both the earlier forms of the divine dispensation, so, in a still more emphatic and peculiar manner, is it characteristic of that more perfect revelation which, in these last days, hath been vouchsafed unto us. Not only are we informed, that *truth* came into the world by its divine founder, and that he is *full of truth*, but he assumes to himself *the truth*, truth in the abstract, as one of his peculiar and distinctive titles. Truth, is the one quality upon which Christianity rests its entire claim to be regarded: it never urges the authority of its precepts upon the conscience, without, at the same time, presenting the evidences of its authenticity to the understanding. Totally different from the Paganism over which it so soon triumphed, and which, devoid of any rational ground of credence whatever, retained its votaries by the beauty and magnificence of its external ceremonial and by its servile ministration to their baser passions, the new religion rejected ornament as well as every other external aid, denounced, in terms the most sweeping and unequivocal, the vengeance of eternal fire against the soul that sinned after whatsoever manner, and called upon all men to believe its testimony because it *was true*. At the same time, it constantly invited, yea, courted, the investigation of these pretensions; the whole apparatus whereby its first propagation was accomplished, being adjusted with an especial view to affording the greatest possible facility to such enquiries. The apostles were sent forth to teach all nations, because



they had been themselves the witnesses of those things that established the divine origin of their doctrine. And in the spirit of their mission they constantly raise the question of the truth of Christianity by an appeal to its external evidences, to “*that which they had seen, and heard, and their hands had handled.*”<sup>8</sup> It was their boast that these things were “*not done in a corner,*”<sup>9</sup> but before all men, so that thousands then living, besides themselves, could bear testimony to the truth of them : while, under the impulse of the same feeling, the inspired historian of their labours highly commends certain converts, who enquired more diligently than the rest, into the truth of those things which were spoken by them.<sup>10</sup> Christianity thus exemplifying this glorious attribute of its divine founder, even in its mode of annunciation, we are not surprised to find that its precepts more energetically enforce, and more fearfully sanction, its observance, than that of any other virtue. With a perfect unity of design, which we shall always have to admire under whatever aspect we regard its economy, this divine revelation, professing to be the word of truth, proceeding from the God of truth, and inspired by the Spirit of truth, assigns also to truth, a place of exactly corresponding prominence in its ethical system. Truth, is the mother element of all Christian morality. For, as on the one hand, it enjoins no virtue of which truth is not an essential ingredient ; so, on the other, there is no vice against which it denounces such an emphasis of damnation as falsehood. In a word, truth is the characteristic of the real disciple of Christ ; it is the badge of his profession.

Keeping these considerations in mind, our astonish-

<sup>8</sup> 1 John i. 1.

<sup>9</sup> See Acts ii. 22. xxvi. 26.

<sup>10</sup> Acts xvii. 11.

ment and indignation are justly excited when we discover, that the most striking feature of the literature of Christianity in the first century, and the early part of the second, was falsehood; and falsehood in the gross, intolerable forms of forgery and interpolation. The number of spurious gospels relating false facts, of spurious epistles propounding false doctrines, and of spurious revelations describing invented or imaginary visions, which appeared within that period is really appalling. Not fewer than eighty of such are referred to, by name, in the writings of the fathers of the first four centuries;—and these all forgeries relative to Christ and his apostles: besides which, we have a mob of apocryphal fabrications in the names of the ancient prophets, patriarchs, sibyls, &c., which were either produced at that time, or were probably then largely interpolated. It had been well, if these dishonest meddlings with existing books had stopped here.—But in the fathers of the second century there are constant complaints, that even the inspired writings were by no means safe from the mutilations and interpolations of the heretics; though such were easily detected by a reference to the *authenticæ litteræ*, the autograph copies,<sup>11</sup> which were religiously preserved by the primitive church. To the heretics also were ascribed the invention of many of the spurious books we have just mentioned, and such was undoubtedly the fact:—nevertheless, that a very large proportion of them were fabricated by persons untainted with heretical opinions, we have (besides the testimony of cotemporary writers) the direct evidence of the books themselves. In not many of those that are still extant

<sup>11</sup> See *Tertullian, de Præs. Hær. c. 36.* See also *Bishop Kaye's Eccl. Hist., c. 5, p. 307. c. s.*

can any thing be detected which would have been accounted heterodox in the second century.<sup>12</sup>

Strange and unaccountable as all this may appear, the light in which the apocryphal books were regarded, at the time of their publication, is still more so. Nearly all the fathers quote from them largely, in confirmation of their own statements and opinions. Tertullian attempts to defend the authenticity of one of them in an argument which is absurd, almost to madness;<sup>13</sup> but such an attempt was quite unnecessary, for even the circumstance that the books were forgeries by the acknowledgment of their authors does not seem to have in any degree impaired their authority.<sup>14</sup>

Such a state of opinion sufficiently shows the prevalence of very gross misapprehensions on the subject of inspiration. We proceed to notice some other passages from the fathers of the second century, which further illustrate their sentiments upon it.

<sup>12</sup> It is surprising that the enormity of forging the name of an inspired person to a spurious book, or, in other words, of lying in the name of the Holy Ghost, should ever have found an apologist. One would imagine that such a sin would go before its perpetrator to judgment;—that of its unspeakably heinous nature there could not be a moment's question. Notwithstanding, a divine of the present day, who has edited three apocryphal books in a manner that reflects infinite credit upon his ability and learning, has assumed, in speaking of such productions, a tone of palliation at which I cannot find words to express my astonishment.

<sup>13</sup> De Hab. Mul. c. 3.

<sup>14</sup> The book entitled "the Acts of Paul and Thecla," which is still extant, and of which, as Tertullian informs us (*de Bapt. c. 17,*) an Asiatic presbyter avowed himself to have been the fabricator "out of love to St. Paul," is quoted, nevertheless, with great respect by Cyprian, who called Tertullian his master, and boasted that he read a portion of his works daily; by Gregory Nazianzen, by Chrysostom, in a word, by a greater number of subsequent fathers than any other production of the same class.

Irenæus,<sup>15</sup> Tertullian,<sup>16</sup> and Clement of Alexandria<sup>17</sup> were of opinion, that the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures had been lost during the second captivity, and that after the return from Babylon they were again communicated to Ezra by *re-inspiration*.<sup>18</sup> The last-named father entertained the same opinion regarding the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament; he held it to be an inspired version.<sup>19</sup>

He also assigns a measure of inspiration to the Greek poets. He grounds this opinion upon the quotations from Euripides and some others of them, that occur in the New Testament.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> U. s. lib. 3. c. 25.

<sup>16</sup> De Hab. Mul. c. 3.

<sup>17</sup> 1Strom. § 22.

<sup>18</sup> I am persuaded that a large allowance must be made, in this and similar cases, for the cramped and enfeebled state of the reasoning faculties in these eminent men, arising from the total absence of subjects favourable to their development, in the course of study which was then in use. The natural abilities of all of them were of a superior order. The style of Irenæus is remarkable for neat and precise arrangement—a rare accomplishment in those days: of Tertullian I hesitate not to affirm, that for the fervent eloquence of his thoughts, though not of his language, for the dexterity with which he pursues the subtle sophistries of the heretics through their most intricate windings, and always to draw them forth to a triumphant exposure, and above all, for the stinging pungency of his sarcasms, it will not be easy to find his equal in any age: the talents and learning of Clement are also universally and deservedly acknowledged. But, notwithstanding, the constant recurrence of similar follies, throughout their works, bears me out in concluding, that the, to us, most palpable and mad absurdity of the notion of re-inspiration was altogether out of the range of their mental perceptions. The right use and application of our reasoning faculties is a gift which the long predominance of Christianity has imparted to us, of which we are all too proud, and for which we are none of us sufficiently thankful.

<sup>19</sup> U. s.

<sup>20</sup> 1 Strom. § 14.

The quotation from the book of Enoch in St. Jude's Epistle seems to have decided the early church in favour of its inspiration ; it is frequently referred to by Tertullian and Clement.

Justin Martyr,<sup>21</sup> and his pupil Athenagoras,<sup>22</sup> both believed that the Greek philosophers had a certain measure of inspiration, whereby they were enabled to arrive at those parts of their systems which are in accordance with the Scriptures.

Clement of Alexandria enlarges and improves upon this notion : he declares the divine origin of the Eclectic philosophy, "a system composed of all that is well said and according to righteousness by all the Greek philosophers." "This," he says, "they received from the fertilizing influences of the Logos or Divine Wisdom, which descended at the same time upon the Jews, giving them the law and the prophets, and upon the Gentiles, giving them philosophy ; like the rain which falls upon the house-tops as well as the fields."<sup>23</sup> In another part of his work he argues thus : "All virtuous thoughts are imparted by divine inspiration ; and that cannot be evil, or of evil origin, which tends to produce good : the Greek philosophy has this virtuous tendency ; therefore, the Greek philosophy is good. Now God is the author of all good ; but the Greek philosophy is good ; therefore, the Greek philosophy is from God. It follows, that the law was given to the Jews and philosophy to the Greeks, until the advent of our Lord."<sup>24</sup> Elsewhere, he terms philosophy

<sup>21</sup> Apologia I., p. 83. D.

<sup>22</sup> Legatio, 7. D.

<sup>23</sup> 1 *Strom.* § 7. So in another place ἡ φιλοσοφία θεία δαρεῖα ἡλλήσιν δεδωμένη.—Id. § 2.

<sup>24</sup> 6 *Strom.* § 17., where see more to the same purpose.

“ a peculiar testament, *δικαίαν διαθήκην*, imparted to the Greeks, which served them as a stepping-stone to Christianity ;”<sup>25</sup> he also ascribes to it the power of “purifying and preparing the soul for the reception of the Christian faith.”<sup>26</sup>

The notions regarding inspiration entertained by the early church being now before us, we are not at all surprised to find that the apostolical fathers are frequently quoted, as scriptural authorities, by those of the succeeding century :—since in doing so, they only assign to them the station to which they had already exalted a mere version of the Old Testament, the most palpable forgeries, and even, the writings of professed idolaters ! We triumphantly conclude that, however eminent the fathers of this epoch may have been for piety and learning, their opinions upon a point whereon they so grievously err are, as an independent testimony, utterly valueless, and by no means to be regarded, except when supported by that irresistible weight of collateral evidence which establishes the authenticity of the canonical books.

It remains that we endeavour to account for these strange hallucinations of the early Christians.

Inspiration, like the other miraculous gifts of the Spirit, was gradually and imperceptibly, though rapidly, withdrawn from the Church :—and, as might have been anticipated, she continued to covet earnestly this best gift long after the period of its final departure. The writings we are considering abound with unequivocal proofs of the prevalence of this desire with their authors ; and it is needless to remark, that in no conceivable state of mind, would they be so liable to the delusions and mistakes into which they were betrayed upon this subject.

<sup>25</sup> 6 Strom. § 8.

<sup>26</sup> 7 Strom. § 4.

Nor have we seen as yet the extent of the mischief. According to tradition St. Hermas was a Christian minister whose holy and useful life highly adorned the religion he professed. Nevertheless, his entire work, the Shepherd, is written under this delusion; and is, moreover, the silliest book that ever exercised an influence over the human understanding.

I think it possible that some of the apocryphal writers may have been deceived in the same manner.—Like Hermas, they were agape for inspiration, and therefore easily imposed upon themselves.

The same passion also originated the desire to be *wise above what is written*, which characterises the writings of this period.—It was under the influence of this longing after further revelation, that Tertullian supported the pretensions of Montanus to be the *paraclete* promised by our Saviour; declared that the preceptive part of the Gospel was imperfect, and required alteration, correction, and addition;<sup>27</sup> and countenanced, like his cotemporary Clement of Alexandria, the fanciful notion of two doctrines in Christianity; the one obvious and deducible from the simple meaning of the inspired text, the other occult and only to be acquired by the initiated.<sup>28</sup> The same unhallowed and inordinate desire betrayed Clement also, into the aberrations we have already noticed.

We can readily imagine that a period of the Church thus distinguished by a feverish thirst for hidden knowledge, would also be eminently favourable to the success of forged books professing to be inspired, and greatly encourage their appearance. Men were prepossessed on behalf

<sup>27</sup> Cetera disciplinæ et conversationis admittunt novitatem correctionis; operante scilicet et proficiente gratiâ Dei.—*De Virg. Vel.*, c. 1.

<sup>28</sup> De Pallio, c. 3., de Idol. c. 5.

of their claims, and thereby unfitted for accurately examining and judging of them.<sup>29</sup>

The consequence of such a state of things was inevitable. The views of Christian doctrine entertained by the early fathers are not the transcripts of that which, *having the eyes of their understandings enlightened*,<sup>30</sup> they discerned in the word of God by the light which itself diffuses, but of that which they discovered there, through the discoloured and distorting medium of a vast mass of apocryphal and uninspired productions. And though all this was speedily overruled to the final purification and establishment of the canon, a process which had commenced even in Tertullian's time,<sup>31</sup> yet it is deeply to be regretted that no care whatever was taken to reconstruct the doctrine of the church according to the views of the Christian religion that were then held to be the only inspired ones; but the old errors remained in her traditional creed for many succeeding ages: and in their progress down the stream of time, the worst parts of them were grievously exaggerated.

Our purpose is, carefully to compare the doctrines advanced by these early writers with those we find in Holy Scripture; and thus to discover, if possible, the first germ of that accursed plant which so soon engrafted itself upon the true vine that God had planted in the earth: and which, absorbing the sap and nutriment of its parent stem, spread its boughs unto the sea and its branches unto the river, until the whole of Christendom languished in the shadow of death that brooded beneath it, and all who professed the Christian name fed on the ashes which its deceitful and bitter fruit afforded them.

<sup>29</sup> 1 John iv. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Eph. i. 16.

<sup>31</sup> De Pudicitia, c. 10.



## CHAPTER V.

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### ANGELS.

THE opinions of the early Christian fathers upon the nature of angels, are so interwoven with their notions upon other doctrinal points, that with them we may very conveniently commence our examination. This is a revealed truth, regarding which it was the evident intention of the Spirit of inspiration, that nothing should be disclosed beyond the fact of its existence. Their name, both in Hebrew and Greek, imports the office in which they are ordinarily found engaged in the sacred history, but gives no definition of their nature.<sup>1</sup> It is also remarkable, that nothing concerning them exclusively, is ever made the subject of revelation; they are only mentioned casually, in the accounts of transactions accomplished through their agency.

The following would seem to be all that we really know of this mysterious subject. The angels are created beings,<sup>2</sup> who came into existence before the foundation of the world.<sup>3</sup> Their essence is different both from the divine and human natures;<sup>4</sup> it is immortal, that to which we shall in a future state be assimilated,<sup>5</sup> and spiritual.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Angelus officii non naturæ vocabula.—*Tert. de Carni Christi*, c. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Nehem. ix. 6. Col. i. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Job xxxviii. 4—7.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. ii. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Luke xx. 26.

<sup>6</sup> Psa. civ. 4.

As it respects their powers and faculties, they excel in strength,<sup>7</sup> they can assume the external appearance<sup>8</sup> and perform the functions of human beings,<sup>9</sup> and were generally invested with a splendour or brightness, which distinguished their presence from that of a mere man.<sup>10</sup> Under this form they have the power of working miracles:<sup>11</sup> they can appear and disappear at pleasure, sometimes to all present, at other times only to a part;<sup>12</sup> the mode of disappearance being, on one occasion, by ascent into the air.<sup>13</sup> Of this power of gliding or flying through the air, we find them to be possessed from other passages.<sup>14</sup> They are likewise endowed with the still more incomprehensible faculty of impressing the signs of their presence upon the mental apprehensions of men, without the interposition of the external senses: thereby making known their messages in dreams.<sup>15</sup>

Of their hierarchies and orders our knowledge is very limited. The celestial beings who guarded the approaches to Paradise after the fall<sup>16</sup> and whose sculptured images overshadowed the mercy-seat,<sup>17</sup> are not angels. These representations, fashioned after the pattern which was shown to Moses in the mount,<sup>18</sup> agree in so many particulars with Isaiah's vision in the temple,<sup>19</sup> with that which appeared to Ezekiel by the river Chebar,<sup>20</sup> and which St. John beheld in the island of Patmos,<sup>21</sup> that we cannot doubt but the same scene and the same beings were

<sup>7</sup> Psa. ciii. 20.      <sup>8</sup> Judges xiii. 6. 1 Sam. xxix. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Gen. xvii. 8. xix. 1—11, &c.      <sup>10</sup> Matt. xxviii. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Gen. xix. 11. Judges vi. 21. Acts xii. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Gen. xxii. 23, &c., Dan. x. 7.      <sup>13</sup> Judges xiii. 20.

<sup>14</sup> Dan. ix. 21. Rev. viii. 13. xiv. 6.      <sup>15</sup> Matt. ii. 13, 20, &c.

<sup>16</sup> Gen. iii. 24.      <sup>17</sup> Exod. xxv. 18—22.      <sup>18</sup> Exod. v. 40.

<sup>19</sup> Isa. vi. 1, 2.      <sup>20</sup> Ezek. i. 3—21.      <sup>21</sup> Rev. iv. 6—8.

revealed to all of them. But they are termed cherubs, seraphs, living creatures,—never angels.

However, that some subordination obtains among the beings who partake of the angelic nature, is frequently hinted at in the Holy Scriptures,<sup>22</sup> and is moreover in strict analogy with the arrangement of every other part of God's creation.

One particular concerning it may be deduced from several passages. We read in the visions of Daniel of an exalted being named Michael, who is one of the chief princes;<sup>23</sup> and the epistle of St. Jude informs us, that he is an archangel. In the same visions, the name of another celestial personage, Gabriel, is mentioned:<sup>24</sup> he is also called *the man Gabriel*.<sup>25</sup> He was afterwards seen by Zacharias in the temple, when he declared his office to be “that he stood in the presence of God.”<sup>26</sup> and he again appears in the inspired account of the annunciation, where he is expressly named, *the angel Gabriel*.<sup>27</sup> Now as we can conceive of no higher office than that of standing in the presence of God, and of no higher honour than that of announcing the incarnation of God, we, without hesitation, assign to him the most elevated rank in the angelic hierarchy. But we have seen that Michael the archangel is likewise one of the chief princes, and we find in the New Testament that he leads forth the hosts of heaven to battle:<sup>28</sup> he is moreover an angel of the presence; for he is the angel of Israel,<sup>29</sup> who is declared to be of the presence also.<sup>30</sup> We cannot, therefore, err in assigning a post of equal elevation to him. The apostle St. John informs us in the Revelations,<sup>31</sup> that seven angels stand before God.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 39—41. Rom. viii. 38. Eph. i. 31, &c., &c.

<sup>23</sup> Dan. x. 16.      <sup>24</sup> Dan. viii. 16.      <sup>25</sup> Dan. ix. 21.      <sup>26</sup> Luke i. 19.

<sup>27</sup> Ver. 26.      <sup>28</sup> Rev. xii. 7.      <sup>29</sup> Dan. xii. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Isa. lxiii. 9.      <sup>31</sup> Rev. viii. 2.

Nothing more is disclosed to us, either regarding the archangels, or generally, upon the subject of the subordinations of rank which obtain in the angelic host.

We proceed to the offices which Holy Scripture assigns to the angels, of which it informs us there is "an innumerable company."<sup>32</sup> Their office in heaven is to surround the throne and to sing the praises of God, but that they are continually dispatched from thence on messages of mercy or of wrath to mankind, and to wield the powers of nature in conformity to the divine will, is plainly revealed, and too well known, to require that we should here dwell upon it. Of the mode of discharging these several functions, enough is disclosed to enable us to discover therein, the same system of harmony and adaptation that characterises the entire government of the Lord of heaven and earth. The fulfilment of the destinies of the several nations of the world, and their protection seems, in a mode to us incomprehensible, (because not revealed) to be assigned to particular angels or hosts of angels. Thus Michael is called by Daniel, the prince that standeth up for or protects the children of Israel;<sup>33</sup> in the same prophecy we are informed that he strove for twenty-one days with the prince of Persia; the prince of Javan is also mentioned; all these expressions we can only understand of the tutelary angels of those countries.<sup>34</sup> In the Apocalypse also we read of the angel of the waters—that is, of the figurative waters; the people thereby symbolized.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Heb. xii. 22.; see also Dan. vii. 10. Psal. lxxviii. 17. Matt. xxvi. 53.

<sup>33</sup> Dan. xii. 1.

<sup>34</sup> Dan. x. 10—21.

<sup>35</sup> Rev. xvi. 5.; or it may be, of the element of water; for we read, Rev. xiv. 13., of the angel that had power over fire.

We are also borne out by Scripture in concluding that the offices of the angelic hosts are still further subordinated.—We are informed of the existence of guardian angels, the appointed protectors of individuals;<sup>36</sup> to minister to their religious advancement;<sup>37</sup> to deliver them from evil;<sup>38</sup> and finally to bear their spirits to the presence of God.<sup>39</sup>

Hitherto we have endeavoured to collect the Scripture account of those angels that, fulfilling the purpose of their existence, remain the willing and faithful ministers of their great Creator. But from the same unerring authority we find that there are, besides these, other angels *who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation*;<sup>40</sup> we only know further concerning this event, that it took place before the fall of man.

These angels having powers and faculties like the angels of God, employ them with the same energy in the promotion of physical and moral evil, as the good angels address theirs to the accomplishment of the beneficent and holy purposes of their God and King. They are, in a future state, to be the companions of the finally impenitent among mankind; with them they are to pass an eternity of torment in the place of fire, which the wrath of God has prepared for them. We learn from many passages that the number of these evil angels is very great, and that they obey one ruler or king over them, whose most ordinary Scripture names are Satan or Diabolus and Beelzebub; the one merely describing

<sup>36</sup> Matt. xviii. 10. Acts xii. 15.

<sup>37</sup> Heb. i. 14.

<sup>38</sup> Gen. xlviii. 16. Psal. xxxiv. 7. xci. 11. Dan. vi. 22. Acts v. 19., &c.

<sup>39</sup> Luke xvi. 10.

<sup>40</sup> Jude 6.

his office, that of an accuser or enemy, the other being the name of a fabulous deity, under the form of which he was worshipped by the heathen nations bordering upon Palestine.

This being was the author of the fall of man in Paradise ; which he compassed, either by assuming the form of a serpent, or by embodying himself in that reptile, so as to make it an accomplice in the guilt and a participant in the punishment.<sup>41</sup>

We also find that, during the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, Satan and his angels were allowed to appear before God ; that they constantly took advantage of this to remind him (if such an expression may be permitted) of the failings and sins of his people on earth : and that they likewise undertook offices congenial to their malignant nature, by the divine permission.<sup>42</sup> But the apostle St. John informs us that there was war in heaven ; Michael and his angels fought with Satan and his angels, and finally and for ever cast them out, “neither was their place found any more in heaven.”<sup>43</sup>

By collating the account of this event with some other passages, we may form a conjecture as to the time of its occurrence. The prophet declares that immediately upon this defeat, Satan or the dragon persecuted the man child, or Jesus Christ, upon earth.<sup>44</sup> Now our Saviour, immediately after his baptism, was tempted of Satan in the wilderness : the inspired accounts of his subsequent ministry also inform us, that his miraculous powers were almost incessantly exerted in expelling the evil spirits from Demoniaes ; though in them, we hear of the complaint itself, nearly for the first time ; and he expressly

<sup>41</sup> Gen. iii.                      <sup>42</sup> Job i. 6—12. 1 Kings xxii. 19—22., &c.

<sup>43</sup> Rev. xii. 7—9.            <sup>44</sup> Ver. 13.

tells his disciples, on the occasion of their discovering that they also possessed the power to exorcise demons, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."<sup>45</sup> These circumstances render it not improbable, that the defeat of the evil being and his expulsion from heaven, by Michael the archangel, took place somewhere about the time of our Lord's baptism.

It will be observed that in this our epitome of the Scripture doctrine of angels, we have endeavoured that the writers whose opinions we are about to examine should have all the advantage which could possibly be derived to them from the inspired volume. It is on this account that we have ventured to the utmost bounds of what can justly be inferred from thence, and given them the benefit of some obscure and controverted places, of which interpretations widely different have been proposed by divines of deserved celebrity: though in doing so, it has been our earnest wish to avoid any thing like unfair or dishonest violence to the import of the text.

It would also appear that, though the Scriptures afford us much information regarding the angelic existences, yet on no single point, have we enough to impress the mind with a definite notion. Of their nature, their powers, their orders, their history, we know nothing beyond a few facts, which are merely isolated points on the canvass; it is hopelessly beyond our powers to trace even the connecting outline, much more to finish the picture. And if our faith in the Christian revelation be but as a grain of mustard-seed, our unhallowed aspirations after a more distinct acquaintance with these mysterious subjects will instantly be repressed by the reflection, that soon, very soon, we shall

<sup>45</sup> Luke x. 18.

enter upon a state of existence, wherein our knowledge of them shall be commensurate with our most enlarged desires. *We shall know even as also we are known.*

Considerations like these, however, have but too little weight with mankind at any time, and we cannot discover that they exercised any influence upon the early church. The subject fell in exactly with the temper of those times, which were as much distinguished by the predominance of an ardent longing to pry into the secrets of the immaterial world, as are our own, by researches into those of the visible creation. We are therefore not surprised to find, that it was seized upon with avidity by the curious and intermeddling spirit with things not revealed, which characterised that epoch. It seems to have been the point upon which, of all others, further revelation was most impatiently looked for. Immediately on the termination of the first century, Ignatius the martyr thus expresses himself, "I myself, although I am in bonds, yet am I not able to understand heavenly things—as the orders of angels and the several companies of them under their respective princes: things visible and invisible, in these I am yet a learner."<sup>46</sup> But whence was he to learn these things? certainly, in his own apprehension, from further revelation:—and it would appear from a passage in a subsequent epistle,<sup>47</sup> that he then believed himself to have obtained it.

But whether Ignatius arrived at this knowledge or not, it was poured forth in copious streams by a writer who, by no account can be shown to have lived later than contemporaneously, and who preceded him, according to the vulgar chronologies;—a writer who, as far surpassed

<sup>46</sup> Ignat. ad Trall., § 5.

<sup>47</sup> Ad Smyrn., § 6.



Ignatius in audacity, as he fell short of him in doctrinal piety, in scriptural knowledge, and in natural ability.—In the Shepherd of Hermas we have a system of angelic orders and ministrations perfectly digested and familiar to the mind of the author. The personage who reveals the visions and similitudes to him, declares of himself, “I am the angel of Repentance, and give understanding to all that repent:”<sup>48</sup> and “all who repent have been justified by this most salutary, or health-giving, angel, who is a minister of salvation.”<sup>49</sup> It would also appear that all the graces of the Spirit are communicated through the ministration of angels; for we are told, that “*the holy angel of God* fills men with the blessed Spirit in answer to prayer.”<sup>50</sup> We are, moreover, made acquainted with some circumstances touching guardian angels, for which we should search in vain, in the inspired volume.—We discover, with surprise, “that there are two angels with men, the one of righteousness the other of iniquity;”<sup>51</sup> and that with these, all the good or evil suggestions of the heart originate. Their powers also would seem to approximate much nearer to those of omnipotence, than the scriptural account will warrant us in assuming.—In the tenth Command we read of an angel of sadness, who, we are informed, is the worst of the servants of God; and who has the power of *tormenting the Holy Spirit*, of mixing itself with him, and destroying the efficacy of the prayers he prompts.<sup>52</sup> Nay, the whole work of grace

<sup>48</sup> Command 4.

<sup>49</sup> Command 5.

<sup>50</sup> Command 11.

<sup>51</sup> Command 6.

<sup>52</sup> Command 10, § 3. Archbishop Wake says upon this place, “the reader will please to observe, that he speaketh not of the Holy Ghost as He

is accomplished by the ministration of angels ; men are brought into the church and edified there, or, if they are false professors, ejected thence, entirely by their agency.<sup>53</sup>

On consulting the fathers of the second century, we find that our subject is no longer in the unfinished and doubtful state in which it had been left by the Revelations of God ; but that upon almost every part of it, we obtain from them a large accession of new facts.

As to the nature of angels ; They are distinct, positive, and permanent existences ; not mere emanations resolveable into the substance whence they have originally issued.<sup>54</sup> They belong to a class of essences which partakes of the nature both of spirit and matter ;<sup>55</sup> like the human soul it is invisible, though not impalpable ;<sup>56</sup> but is transfigurable into human flesh in order that they may become visible to, and converse with, mankind ; the power of this assumption is resident in the angels themselves, and may be exerted at pleasure : it is effected, either by a direct creation, or by assuming and changing

is the Spirit of God and the third person of the sacred Trinity ; but of the spirit given to Christians, being an emanation or gift from the Spirit of God." The good Archbishop was mistaken ; the early fathers speak too often in this most unscriptural and profane manner of the Holy Ghost ; thus Tertullian, "*Si spiritus reus apud se sit, conscientie erubescens quomodo audibit orationem ducere ab illo ? de qua erubescens et ipse suffunditur sanctus minister ; etenim est prophetica vox veteris testamenti.*"—*De Exhort. Cast.*, c. 10.

<sup>53</sup> 1 Her., 3. 3 Her., 9, *passim*.

<sup>54</sup> Justin Martyr., *Dial. cum Tryphone*, p. 358. C.

<sup>55</sup> Angeli sine carne sunt.—*Irenæus*, *lib. 3.*, c. 23. *Imago Dei generosior spiritu materiali quo angeli consistunt.*—*Tertullian adv. Marc. lib. 2.*, c. 7. *Angeli natura substantia spiritualis.*—*Idem. de Anima*, c. 9.

<sup>56</sup> *Id. de Animâ*, c. 9.

the appearance of some terrene substance.<sup>57</sup> Angels are sustained by food, but of a quality altogether different from that required by human beings.<sup>58</sup>

As to their offices; Angels were created by God with reference to his general works, that as God exercised a general providence over the universe, they might exercise a particular providence over the different parts assigned them.<sup>59</sup> They fulfil the duties of these offices as perfectly free agents, possessed of entire liberty of will, free to stand and free to fall, capable of both good and evil.<sup>60</sup> In consequence of this, there have been already two angelic defections from the Creator.

The first, which took place immediately upon the creation of man, was headed by the firstborn angel, whose name was Sathanas,<sup>61</sup> and who presided over the element of air:<sup>62</sup> it originated in his envy at mankind; and he exhibited the first proof of his apostacy in the temptation of Eve.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>57</sup> *Id. de Carne Christi*, c. 6. The incarnation of angels is a favourite subject with Tertullian: he often uses it as an illustration. *De Resur. Car.*, c. 62, &c.

<sup>58</sup> *Justin. Dial.* 279. D., *Tert. ubi supra*; they derive this notion from the Septuagint translation of *Psa. lxxviii. 25*, which is followed in our authorised version, but is probably erroneous.

<sup>59</sup> *Just. Apol. II.*, 44. A. *Athenagoræ Legatio* 27. C.

<sup>60</sup> *Justin Dial.* 370. A., *Athena. Leg.* 27. D., *Tat. con. Græc.* 146, c., &c., *Iren. lib.* 4. c. 71.

<sup>61</sup> *Tatian contra Græc.* 146. D.

<sup>62</sup> *Iren. u. s. lib.* 5. c. 34. he deduces this from *Eph. ii. 2*.

<sup>63</sup> *Iren. lib.* 4. c. 7. 8. This opinion was afterwards adopted and improved upon by Mohammed. Allah commands the angels to *worship* Adam, and only Eblis (*quasi diabolus*) refuses.—*Koran, Sur* 2. v.v. 34, 36. Clement of Alexandria says it was the fear of the divine image in man which made the angels conspire to deface it. The idea of their being envious he treats as incredible.—2 *Strom.* § 8.

The second fall of the angels occurred shortly after the creation. The angel of the earth or matter was the ringleader;<sup>64</sup> many of the subordinate angels of the same element being participant with him. It originated in their negligence of the charge with which they had been entrusted by their divine Creator : instead of watching over inanimate nature, they occupied themselves in admiring the beauties of the fairest portion of the animate creation. *The angels of God beheld the daughters of men that they were fair, and they chose to themselves brides from among them.*<sup>65</sup>

We can hardly conceive of a fiction so palpable as this, which will not bear the test of the slightest examination. It is contradicted at the outset, by our Lord's declaration that the angels are incapable of such affections;<sup>66</sup> and supposing this to be overpast, we are again met with the intolerable absurdity, of a class of beings so constituted and yet created of one sex only !! We have only to complete our exposure of its utter nothingness by stating, that it is founded altogether upon a well-known, and I fear wilful, mistranslation of a passage of Scripture in the Septuagint.<sup>67</sup>

Yet there is scarcely a religious truth however elementary, for which we could produce a more formidable array of authority from the writers of the second century, than for this falsehood. It is repeatedly referred to by Justin Martyr,<sup>68</sup> and by his pupils Athenagoras<sup>69</sup> and Tatian the Syrian.<sup>70</sup> To these may be added Irenæus,<sup>71</sup> Tertullian,<sup>72</sup> and Clement of Alexandria :<sup>73</sup> and we have now named,

<sup>64</sup> ὁ τῆς ὑλῆς καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ εἰδὼν ἀρχῶν.—Athen. leg. 27. D.

<sup>65</sup> Athen. leg. 27. D., &c.

<sup>66</sup> Matt. xxii. 30.

<sup>67</sup> Gen. vi. 2.

<sup>68</sup> Apol. II, p. 44. A. ; Dial. 305. c., &c.

<sup>69</sup> Leg. ubi supra.

<sup>70</sup> Contra Græcos, 147. A.

<sup>71</sup> Adv. Hær., lib. 4. c. 70.

<sup>72</sup> De cultu Mulicbri, c. 3, &c.

<sup>73</sup> Pæd. lb. 3. c. li., &c.

with one exception,<sup>74</sup> the whole of the writers of that epoch, of whose works any thing is left.

Nor was it allowed to remain as a mere isolated fact in the systems of these theologians : it acted an important part therein, and produced an abundant crop of doctrines.

The danger of still further defections from the heavenly hosts is by no means past : St. Paul's injunction regarding the dress of unmarried females during divine worship,<sup>75</sup> originated in his consideration, not for the women, but for the angels. The prohibition was rendered needful by their susceptibility of the tender emotions ; and the sin of the offender consists principally, in the needless exposure to temptation of her guardian angel.<sup>76</sup>

The sinning angels of the second fall instructed their mortal paramours in the ornamental arts ;<sup>77</sup> they likewise taught mankind magic,<sup>78</sup> divination, and astrology ;<sup>79</sup> as well as the more useful sciences of metallurgy and botany.<sup>80</sup>

Two distinct races of beings sprang from the intercourse between angels and women. The one consisted of

<sup>74</sup> That exception is Theophilus of Antioch ; and from the general tenor of what remains of his writings, we cannot doubt but his creed upon this point was that of his cotemporaries. He refers to a lost book on the nature of Satan, p. 104, D.

<sup>75</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 4—16.

<sup>76</sup> *Tertullian de Virg.* c. 1. He found his authority for this strange notion in 1 Cor. xi. 10.

<sup>77</sup> *Idem de Hab. Muliebri*, c. 2, de cultu Fam. c. c. 4, 10, &c.

<sup>78</sup> *Idem de Animâ*, c. 57.

<sup>79</sup> *Justin Apol.* I, p. 61. A. ; *Tertullian de Hab. Mul.* c. 2.

<sup>80</sup> *Tert. Apol.* c. 35. According to Clement of Alexandria, these fallen angels revealed to their brides many truths which it was the intention of the divine mind to have concealed, until the advent of our Lord. This was one of the sources whence the Greek philosophy derived the truths it inculcated. —5 *Strom.* § 1.

the giants and other monsters that infested the antediluvian earth; by their evil communications, the human race was so depraved as to be incapacitated for rendering acceptable service to the Creator, and was therefore swept away by the deluge.<sup>81</sup>

Demons were also the offspring of this connection. They are, according to some, a separate class of beings;<sup>82</sup> while others suppose them to be the souls of the giants.<sup>83</sup> These beings are not material, though they take their nature from matter,<sup>84</sup> but spiritual, like fire and air.<sup>85</sup> To this nature, both their parent angels, and those of the Satanic fall, are perfectly assimilated,<sup>86</sup> for having been excluded from heaven by their transgressions, they are no longer able to elevate themselves to heavenly things, but hover about the earth and air.<sup>87</sup>

This innumerable host of demons and angel-demons are entirely under the control and guidance of Satan,<sup>88</sup> “the angel of wickedness, the author of all error, the corrupter of all generations; who, having, at the first, tempted man to transgress the divine law, and made him, therefore, liable to death, infused the seeds of all sins into his posterity. thus rendering them also obnoxious to his own

<sup>81</sup> Irenæus lib. 5. c. 70.

<sup>82</sup> Justin Apol. 11, 44. B.; Tert. Apol. c. 22.

<sup>83</sup> Athen. u. s. p. 28. A.

<sup>84</sup> Tatian contra Græc. 151. c.

<sup>85</sup> Id. 154. C.

<sup>86</sup> *Idem* 147. A., &c. Tertullian seems to have considered the assimilation not quite complete. He says the demons are more wicked than their parents.—*Apol.* c. 22.

<sup>87</sup> *Athenagoras u. s.* According to Tatian, they sojourned among the different animals that inhabit the earth and the waters; and in order to deceive mankind into the idea that they were still celestial, they introduced these their companions into the Zodiack.—*Contra Græc.* 147. A.

<sup>88</sup> Tertullian u. s.

punishment.”<sup>89</sup> Between this prince and his subordinates, there is the most perfect unity of design and of action. Their one motive is hatred to man; their one object, his temporal and eternal perdition: and for the accomplishment of this purpose, the subtilty and tenuity of their natures furnish them with fearful facilities. They are able to possess themselves of the bodies of men, afflicting them with divers diseases and sundry kinds of death; and of their mental faculties, in the case of demoniasm. They have likewise power over the elements, which they always exercise to annoy and distress the unhappy objects of their antipathy, by raising storms and blights to destroy the fruits of the earth.<sup>90</sup>

But these fallen beings use their most strenuous exertions to effect the destruction of the soul: and therefore, are incessantly devising temptations, whereby they may allure mankind to the commission of acts of wickedness. Nor are their powers of mischief limited to mere external provocations: they can, at all times, transfuse themselves into those secret recesses of thought where the motives of human action originate; and they suggest the evil motions, which produce murders, wars, adultery, and the long catalogue of crimes wherewith man offends his Maker.<sup>91</sup>

Of all sins, however, that of idolatry appears most readily to have accomplished their wicked purposes; into this, therefore, they were the most earnest and unremitting in their efforts to seduce their victims.<sup>92</sup> In putting men

<sup>89</sup> Idem de Testimonio Animæ, c. 3.

<sup>90</sup> Idem Apol. c. 22.; de Spect. c. 2.

<sup>91</sup> Justin Apol. I, p. 61.; Apol. II, p. 43. A.; Tertullian *ubi supra*; Tatian contra Græcos, 154. C.

<sup>92</sup> Justin Apol. I, 61. A.; Tert. Apol. c. c. 23, 27.; Tatian u. s. 152. B.; Athen. leg. 29. B. C.

upon these courses, they were actuated by the ambition of their prince, to be worshipped as God;<sup>93</sup> a passion in which themselves also largely participated. They had, besides, another and more intelligible object in view.—The blood of the victims and the odours that arose from the consuming flesh and incense, in the sacrificial acts which they prescribed as the mode wherein they would be worshipped, were the proper food of the fallen angels and demons;<sup>94</sup> and, of course, its quantity and quality depended upon the number and rank of their votaries. To effect this, they possessed the statues of deceased mortals; deluding mankind into the belief that they were deities,<sup>95</sup> by means of the various supernatural operations which were performed, apparently by the idols, but really through their agency.

But their most efficacious mode of keeping up the credit of the various images, under the forms and names of which they were worshipped as gods,<sup>96</sup> was the utterance of oracular responses.<sup>97</sup> They obtained the knowledge which enabled them frequently to declare very astonishing and startling facts, to those who enquired at their shrines, by the inconceivable rapidity of their movements. They are all furnished with wings, and such are their powers of flight, that the world is but as one place to them, for they are every where in a moment; and as they are perpetually

<sup>93</sup> *Iren. lib. 3. c. c. 24, 25.* His authority for this is Matt. iv. 8, 9.

<sup>94</sup> Justin Apol. I, 59. D.; Tert. ad Scap. c. 2.; Athen. 29. c.

<sup>95</sup> Justin Apol. I, 55. E., 57. D., &c.; Tert. de Spect. c. 10.; and in many other places.

<sup>96</sup> The demons had no names but of these fabulous deities.—Justin Apol. I, 55. E., &c.; Tert. de Idol. c. 15. Athenagoras contends that the gods of the heathen were dead men, and the demons merely haunted them.—Leg. 31. A., &c.

<sup>97</sup> Tatian *ubi supra*, 152. B.



passing to and fro in the region of the air, they are able to apprise their votaries of events in one country, the instant they are transacted in another.<sup>98</sup> This velocity passed with mankind for divinity.

For the same purpose, of deluding the sons of Adam, and drawing them on to their eternal perdition, they taught them certain ceremonies in their mistaken worship, which bore a strong resemblance to those of Judaism, and even of Christianity.<sup>99</sup> Nay, the divine truths, with which their insight into the Almighty's dispensations had furnished them during their perfect state,<sup>100</sup> they made subservient to their illusions, by disclosing them under a mutilated form, and thus obtained credit for virtue as well as divinity.<sup>101</sup>

The advent of our Lord, produced important changes in the condition of the evil angels, by greatly curtailing their power of deceiving mankind. The blasphemous heresies of the second century are declared, by the contemporary fathers, to have been the direct expressions of the rage which possessed the devil and his angels, when they discovered, from the preaching of Christ and his apostles, that they were doomed to eternal torment : of this they had before been ignorant, and therefore had not gone to the same extent of blasphemy.<sup>102</sup>

Our spiritual enemies, however, are still sufficiently formidable, both in their powers of evil and in their numbers. They swarm in every element ; they throng

<sup>98</sup> Tert. Apol. c. 22.

<sup>99</sup> Justin Apol. I, p. 89. A. ; Tert. Apol. c. 22.

<sup>100</sup> See Note 80.

<sup>101</sup> Justin Dial. p. 296. C., &c. &c.

<sup>102</sup> *Iren. lib.* 5. c. 28., where he also quotes from a lost book of Justin's in support of his opinion. That Justin held this notion is evident ; see his first Apology, pp. 69. C., 91. A., 92. A.

the universe; they make mankind the objects of their individual and personal, as well as of their general, malignity. Every human being is attended by an evil demon,<sup>103</sup> as well as by his guardian angel, through life. Nor can even our eternal salvation save us from apprehensions of suffering from them, in a future state; for at the hour of death, a struggle takes place, between the good angel and the evil one, for the soul of their charge; and if the latter prevails, as is frequently the case, even with the departed spirits of good men, it remains from thence until the day of judgment, so under the control of the demons, as to be compelled to do their bidding.<sup>104</sup>

Our protectors against all these machinations to accomplish our ruin are the holy angels; who, in numbers equal to those of their antagonists, are engaged incessantly in defending from their assaults, that universe, the particular providential dispensations of which, they administer as free agents; responsible only to God for the use or abuse of the divine power delegated to them. The performance of these duties calls the host of heaven to a state of interminable warfare with the infernal legions,—a warfare, which combines all the horrors of a personal combat, with those of a general battle. To enable them successfully to cope with their enemies, a most exact system of discipline and subordination was deemed, by our authors, indispensable. Individual angels are specially deputed to preside over each of the operations of providence; the angel of death,<sup>105</sup> for instance, and the angel of ven-

<sup>103</sup> Tert. de Animâ, c. 57.; Apol. c. 46.

<sup>104</sup> Justin Dial. 322. C.

<sup>105</sup> Angelus evocator animarum.—Tert. de Animâ, c. 53.; his authority for this fiction was probably the ἀγγελοῦ θανάτοφωρος of the Septuagint version; see Job xx. 15. &c.

geance.<sup>106</sup> But besides these, prefectures of good angels are distributed throughout the cities and nations of the world, according to the divine and primitive orders.<sup>107</sup> And, as a shepherd gives the whole flock his general attention, but nevertheless, bestows his especial care upon the sheep that promise the most abundant reward of his labour, so the angelic ministrations are principally lavished upon those individuals of the human race, that give the finest promise of regal and philosophic mental powers. Over these, a particular angel was deputed to watch, and upon the diligent discharge of his duty, their progress in wisdom greatly depended.<sup>108</sup> By the ministration of these national angels, philosophy was revealed to the Greeks:<sup>109</sup> and generally, it was an important part of their function, to instil good and holy desires into the minds of men.

But this last duty was performed by them, in entire subordination to another order, which occupied a much more exalted rank in the angelic hierarchy. The Christian graces (as we have seen) were ministered by angels of this high class, an individual presiding over each of them; and the same arrangement obtained also, with the Christian ordinances; each had its peculiar angel, whose ministrations

<sup>106</sup> *Angelus executionis.—Idem c. 35.*

<sup>107</sup> *Clem. Alex. 7 Strom. § 2.*, where he copies his namesake of Rome, *ad Cor. c. 29*; they, as well as Irenæus, *lib. 5. c. 12. p. 230.*, were misled by the Septuagint, which renders Deut. xxxii. 8., in utter defiance of the Hebrew; “he” God “appointed the bounds of the nations according to the number of the *angels* of God.”

<sup>108</sup> *6 Strom. § 17.*

<sup>109</sup> *7 Strom. § 2.* Clement supposes that the Greeks derived their philosophy from three sources: from the inspiration of the Logos ministered by angels, which Tatian calls, sympathy with the breath of God; (*see* Note 80) from the unhallowed revelations of the fallen angels: and from the writings of Moses and the prophets; whence he endeavours to show that they drew largely, *1 Strom. § 3. 4.; 5 Strom. § 1.*

were indispensable to the efficacy of the rite. Tertullian casually mentions the angel of baptism,<sup>110</sup> and the angel of prayer:<sup>111</sup> and we cannot doubt but that, in his system, the other Christian ordinances were similarly presided over.

Thus we perceive that the doctrine of the church in the second century, regarding the holy angels, as well as the impure demons, was altogether impatient of the narrow bounds to which revelation had confined it, and that a system of demonology, perfect and complete in all its parts, was as zealously propounded for universal belief as any truth which that word contains.

We need not institute any detailed comparison of the two schemes of angelic existence which are now before us, to discover, not only a want of harmony and coherence in their several parts, but, that there is really no affinity whatever between them. Certain facts it is true are common to both; but all these are evidently foreign to the latter scheme, and have been fitted into it afterwards; often clumsily enough. They set out upon notions of the Supreme Being, altogether at variance with each other. The one supposes a God omnipotent and omniscient, who impresses, equally on the minutest and the greatest of his works, the infallible signs of his existence, as a proper act of his own Godhead. The brightest seraph that burns in his heaven, and the meanest mite that crawls upon his earth, are both the tokens of his creative power and the objects of his providential care; to him, and to him alone, they, and all that infinite range of existences whereby these two extremes are ultimately connected, are indebted for life, and breath, and all things. This, his glory, he gives

<sup>110</sup> Angelus baptismi.—*De Baptismo*, c. 6.

<sup>111</sup> Angelus orationis.—*De Oratione*, c. 12.

not to another ; he accomplishes no part of his purposes by delegating his divine power ; he rules no where by deputy. As to the heavenly host that encircle his presence in innumerable multitudes, they are *his ministers that do his pleasure : they do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.* They know no other motive. Instinct with his will, they are as much the passive instruments in his hand for the fulfilment of his high behests, as the powers of inanimate nature. It matters not, whether he cut off in judgment by the blast of the pestilence, or by the sword of the destroying angel : in either case, the act is his own. *Can there be evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?* Or does he save in mercy ? He converts the sinner by the instrumentality of his accredited minister, thereby giving joy to the angels of his presence. By the faithful admonitions of his earthly ambassador, and by the agency of “ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto the heirs of salvation,” the convert is kept, amid many difficulties, in the narrow way that leadeth unto life ; and in God’s good time his ransomed soul is released from the burden of mortality, and wafted, on the wings of its guardian angel, to his presence in glory. But the minister that labours on earth, and the angel that flies in mid heaven, and the beatified spirit that sings in paradise, all combine their voices to proclaim to the universe—“This hath God wrought.” The agency of the man and of the angel are lost. *I, even I, am he ; and beside me there is no Saviour.* In the scheme of angelic existences we are now considering, God, is all in all !!

Let us endeavour to collect the attributes of the God of the other system.—We soon find that it is, in the nature of things impossible, that he can exercise either omnipotence or omniscience, consistently with the entire

free agency of the countless myriads of spiritual existences, to whose responsible administrations he has committed the economies of providence and grace. For, whatever may be said of free agency under a dispensation like ours, where our God *is a God that hideth himself* and will be sought of them that find him, to talk of the free agency of sentient beings, dwelling everlastingly in the full blaze of their Creator's presence, and beholding the perfect manifestation of incessant displays of his omnipotence and omniscience, is absolute idiocy. Whatever attributes, therefore, the God of the early fathers may have possessed, he never could show himself forth in any other character than that of the mere president, or, at most, monarch of the universe: having a natural and imprescriptible right to the supremacy which is conceded, by an artificial one, to an earthly potentate, by his fellow men; but differing from him only in this particular. We readily grant, that these authors are happily inconsistent with themselves, in their perfect orthodoxy upon the subject of the divine attributes. But we refer to the passages we have quoted, wherein they ascribe to the angels powers which trench so painfully upon those of the Supreme Being,<sup>112</sup> as proofs they were conscious of this inconsistency, and endeavoured thus to palliate it.

Again; if it be true that innumerable multitudes of responsible angels administer the whole of our relations to the invisible world, both temporal and spiritual, if to their good will we must ascribe our mercies, and to their anger or malignity our afflictions,—what rational objection can be urged against our addressing our prayers and praises to them personally, as well as to the First Great Cause, from whom (it would appear) we are estranged by so many

<sup>112</sup> See page 45.

removes? If they fulfil the commands of the Almighty, as responsible agents, punishable for disobedience; if the same abyss which has already swallowed up countless myriads of their compeers, still yawns for them, surely their acts of obedience are, as it regards us the receivers of the benefits thereof, highly meritorious, whatever they may be with their Creator; and call for our supplications when we need them at their hands, and our thanksgivings when they are granted, upon principles so plainly elementary to the relations of one being to another, that we hesitate not to assert, that the God of Infinite Wisdom cannot, because he will not, contradict them in any of his precepts. Yet, upon the scheme we are considering, we cannot at all reconcile to this principle, the stern prohibitions of angel worship, and of all attempts at communication with the spiritual world, with which his word abounds. For if our parents and our guardian angels are equally the voluntary and responsible dispensers to us of the bounties of the Universal Parent, what reason is there for honouring the one, which is not equally a reason for honouring the other? Or why is not he who honours his father and mother, in conformity with the divine precept, guilty of impiety towards God, as well as he who worships the angels; since both stand in exactly the same relation between God and himself? We are not surprised to find that the believers in such a system felt this difficulty to be insurmountable. Irenæus administers a very gentle rebuke to the practice of angel worship:<sup>113</sup> and an irrefragable proof of its universal prevalence soon afterwards,

<sup>113</sup> He merely says that such was not the custom of the church in his time. *Nec in vocationibus angelis facit aliquid nec incantationibus.*—*Lib. 2. c. 57.* According to the Romanists, Irenæus condemns the worship of evil demons only in this passage.

may be gathered from the circumstance, that nearly all the ancient liturgies sanction acts of demonology, by express prescription. It is unnecessary to proceed further with our comparison of the two systems. The God of the one is the Jehovah of the Christian Scriptures, the God of the other is the Jove of the heathen mythologies.

It is quite needful to state here that the early fathers were by no means the authors of these unhallowed additions to the divine truth. In the writings of the later Jews, they found the two in a state of incorporation so intimate, that I do not hesitate to assert that no critical skill, which they had, humanly speaking, the opportunity of acquiring, could have enabled them to effect the separation. The Targumists<sup>114</sup> and the Apocryphal Books<sup>115</sup> abound with demonological allusions; the system they adopted is also that of Philo<sup>116</sup> and Josephus;<sup>117</sup> and to all these, they followed the example of the Jews in deferring, as to high

<sup>114</sup> See the Targum Jonathan on Gen. vi. 3: also the Targum on Psa. lxxxvii. 25., and other similar places.

<sup>115</sup> See the ridiculous fable of Tobit and his dog, *passim*. To this the Christian demonologists are probably indebted for the name of the archangel Raphael. (Tob. c. 4., &c.) Though in adopting it, they seem to have overlooked the circumstance that it is in reality a mere *soubriquet*, descriptive of the part which the angel performs in the story, in restoring Tobit to sight: ῥαφαελ quasi רפא-אֵל, the divine healer, or physician. The name of the archangel Uriel, which occurs in the 2nd book of Esdras, (c. 5. v. 40., &c. &c.) is also of the same character; it signifies *the illuminations of God*, (אורי-אֵל) and refers to the office which the angel is made to fulfil in this *ex-post-facto* prophecy, which, according to the Archbishop of Cashel, was written about twenty-eight years before the Christian æra.—*Prim. Ez. lib. Vers. Ethiop. ed. R. Laurence, p. 317*. See also the mode of speaking of the angels, and the parts they act, in Susanna and Bel and the Dragon, as compared with corresponding passages in the canonical books.

<sup>116</sup> See his tract περί Γυγαντων.—*Opera p. 221*. Edit. Col.

<sup>117</sup> Ant. lib. 1. c. 3., &c.



authorities. But their main support in this their error was certainly the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament; the translators of which, whoever they were, were deeply infected with these opinions, and have, in many places, corrupted the word of God for the purpose of supporting them.<sup>118</sup> We have already seen that the early fathers held this to be an inspired version, and therefore did not acknowledge the necessity of any appeal to the Hebrew verity in confirmation of its renderings.

We have also observed that they entertained the same opinion regarding the Book of Enoch, which they imagined had been lost at the flood, and afterwards communicated to Noah by re-inspiration.<sup>119</sup> This book, so long supposed to be irrecoverably lost,<sup>120</sup> has been recently restored to European literature, through the admirable translation of an Ethiopic copy by the Archbishop of Cashel: whose ingenuity and learning have supplied us with some very important facts regarding its origin. It is the production of a Jew residing in a country considerably to the North of Palestine, (therefore probably one of the Captivity of the ten tribes) who flourished in the early part of the reign of Herod the Great,<sup>121</sup> about thirty years before the birth

<sup>118</sup> It is of course impossible here to enter upon a subject like this. I would merely request the reader to compare the following passages in the Septuagint, in addition to those already referred to, with the corresponding ones in our English version, or still better, with the Hebrew original, Deut. xxxii. 8, 10, 43. xxxiii. 2. Job. xx. 15. xxxvi. 14. xxxviii. 7. xl. 6, 14. Psal. cxxxvii. 1. Prov. xvi. 14. Isa. xxx. 4. I am much mistaken if the whole of these places, as well as many others, are not mistranslated, often very artfully, in order to favour the false doctrine we are considering.

<sup>119</sup> Tert. de Hab. Mul. c. 2.

<sup>120</sup> Ludolph treats the idea of its existence in Ethiopic as altogether ridiculous.—*Hist. Æth. lib. 3. c. 5.*

<sup>121</sup> The Book of Enoch translated from an Ethiopic MS. by R. Laurence, LL.D., &c.—*Preliminary Dissertation, pp. 20—40.*

of Christ. This highly imaginative and beautiful work embodies the notions imbibed by the Jews, during the Babylonian captivity, regarding the angels: and it is from hence that the early fathers derived nearly the whole of the details of their system. The idea of hosts of angels, the appointed and responsible guardians of the universe, and the dispensers of the various operations of providence and grace, is the basis upon which the entire work rests. It was here also that Hermas found his angel of repentance.<sup>122</sup> Tertullian's angels of vengeance<sup>123</sup> and of death<sup>124</sup> may likewise be detected amid the obscurity which a double translation, and doubtless many careless transcriptions in both, have inevitably accumulated upon a book already sufficiently mysterious and perplexed.<sup>125</sup>

The second fall, which was so universally believed by

<sup>122</sup> Enoch xl. 9. His name is Phanuel, i. e. פַּנְיֵאֵל, which in Hebrew is descriptive of his office; "he presides over repentance and the hope of those who will inherit eternal life." Hermas is also largely indebted to the Book of Enoch for the scenery of his visions. Origen long ago discovered this resemblance; *περί ἀρχῶν*. lib. 1. c. 3.

<sup>123</sup> "Raguel, one of the holy angels who inflicts punishment on the world."—Enoch xx. 4. He is likewise mentioned by Hermas, *lib.* 3. *sim.* 6.

<sup>124</sup> "Surakiel, one of the holy angels who presides over the spirits of the children of men that transgress."—Idem. xx. 6. In another place he is called Suryal, c. 9, 1.

<sup>125</sup> The Book of Enoch was originally written in Hebrew; but the Ethiopic has been translated from a Greek version. The former has existed for many ages, only as a church language. Ethiopic MSS. are therefore often mere transcriptions, many times copied, by persons whose knowledge of them was confined to the characters only; a process of all others the most certain to multiply and perpetuate errors. Add to this, that Europeans have hitherto had but very limited opportunities of acquiring it. All that could be done, amid these formidable difficulties, has certainly been effected by the most reverend and learned author of the English translation. I mention this, to account for the apparent failure of our comparison in some minute particulars—as the names of angels: in all the great outlines of the systems, it holds exactly.

the Christians of the second century, was exactly copied by them from the Book of Enoch. The unfaithfulness of the angelic watchers,<sup>126</sup> their marriages with the daughters of men,<sup>127</sup> their instructions in wicked arts and forbidden knowledge,<sup>128</sup> the corruption of the human race by them and the giants their offspring,<sup>129</sup> and the conversion of the souls of the latter into demons after their bodies had perished in the flood,<sup>130</sup> are circumstances for which they are altogether indebted to this splendid fiction. The leader of this defection also is the angel of the world, who seduces the legions of inferior spirits that are under him, with Enoch, as well as with the early fathers.<sup>131</sup> The mixed and restless nature of the demons is another point of coincidence, which would appear to leave nothing to be desired in the proof of the absolute identity of the two systems.<sup>132</sup>

The fathers of the second century, therefore, adopted opinions regarding the angels which were very widely diffused among the cotemporary Jews, being traceable throughout nearly all their writings, from the period of the Babylonian captivity; and which appear to have been embodied and systematized by the highly gifted, but erring, author of the Pseudo-Enoch.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>126</sup> C. 7.

<sup>127</sup> Id. v. 10.

<sup>128</sup> C. 8.

<sup>129</sup> C. 7. vv. 11—14., &c.

<sup>130</sup> C. 15. 8., &c.

<sup>131</sup> C. 14. 1. c. 7., &c.

<sup>132</sup> C. 15. 9, 10. The Platonic philosophy has also contributed to the metaphysics of the patristic scheme. The notions of good and evil demons, and of their inhaling the *nidor* of the sacrifices as their proper food, are both from thence. Many similar coincidences will be found in Porphyry, Iamblichus, and the later writers of that school.

<sup>133</sup> If any proof be wanting (in addition to those collected by the Arch-

With regard to their origin, we conceive that cannot be a question of any great difficulty : since the notion of the Supreme Being upon which they are founded, that of a father of all administering his universe through the medium of free and responsible gods or angels, is the primary element of all idolatry. It is probable, that the process by which this assimilation of the inspired truth to the errors of heathenism took place was a very gradual one ; beginning in the idolatrous practices which disgrace the early history of the Jewish nation, and perhaps attaining its consummation with the children of the captivity ; who, dwelling with the Chaldæans, a people famed for enquiries and theories regarding the world of spirits, would be placed in circumstances naturally conducive to the progress of such an error among them.

But whatever might be its origin, the prevalence of this false doctrine in the Christian church was but of short duration. It is pleasant to find, that even in the third

bishop of Cashel) that this book was originally written in Hebrew, or some of its cognate dialects, we may find it in the word "Ophanim," which occurs throughout, as the appellation of one of the three exalted orders of spirits who are the immediate attendants upon the person of Jehovah : thus c. lxxx. v. 9, "The Cherubim, the Seraphim, and the Ophanim, surrounded the throne of God ; these are they that never sleep." This is a Hebrew word which also describes one of the accompaniments of the divine presence in Ezekiel's visions (אופנים see Ezek. i. 16, to the end, &c.) but which, on the authority, of the context, of every other place where the word occurs in the Hebrew Bible, and of the ancient versions, (from the Septuagint downwards,) is translated "wheels."

Another circumstance also ought not to be lost sight of. The copy we now possess has been largely interpolated from the New Testament ; expressions and sentiments peculiar to this revelation abound throughout the book : and one long passage, c. c. 60—63. pp. 65—71., is made up of little else than a string of such quotations artfully disguised : for example, he quotes Matt. xxv. 31, with the very suspicious alteration, "son of woman" for "son of man," as it reads in the Gospel, c. lxi. v. 9.

century the Hebrew learning of Origen had cast a considerable shade of suspicion upon the divine authority of the Book of Enoch and of the Septuagint version:<sup>134</sup> while in the succeeding century, the still more profound erudition of Jerome no longer hesitated to pronounce the former altogether apocryphal,<sup>135</sup> and to point out that the occurrence of a quotation from it in a canonical epistle, no more conferred a title to inspiration upon the Book of Enoch, than upon certain heathen poets of whose productions St. Paul had made a similar use.<sup>136</sup> At the end of the same period John Chrysostom treats the second fall of the angels as a mere fable,<sup>137</sup> and thenceforward it was no longer believed or taught as a doctrine of the church.

But though the error itself was thus early exploded, the later fathers do not appear to have considered that it exercised a very powerful influence upon the other parts of the theology of their predecessors. It is for this reason, that we had rather speculate upon some previous probationary state of existence through which the angelic nature has passed, than admit, for a moment, into our system even its elementary doctrine; that of the present free agency and peccability of the angels of God. There is scarcely a revealed truth which this notion does not interfere with and vitiate: but especially, upon that vast range of important questions which regard our duties to God and God's dealings with us, the mind is perfectly bewildered in endeavouring to disentangle clear perceptions, from the inextricable maze of contradiction and confusion which this error introduces. It was therefore plainly

<sup>134</sup> Contra Cels. p. 267, 268, Ed. Spenc. *περί Αρχῶν*, lib. 4. cap. ult., &c.

<sup>135</sup> "Manifestissimus liber est et inter Apocryphos computatur."—*Hier. Comm. in Psa. cxxxii.* 3.

<sup>136</sup> Comm. in Tit. i. 12.

<sup>137</sup> *μυθολογία*.—*In Gen. vi. Hom.* 22.

impossible, that the opinions of the early fathers upon these and other points of Christian doctrine, should not have been materially modified by the grievous mistakes into which they fell regarding the angels. Yet were their opinions, though grounded in acknowledged error, implicitly adopted by their successors for many ages, with little or no alteration. And thus again, the errors generated remained in the church, long after the generating error had passed away.

## CHAPTER VI.

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### THE CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS.—BAPTISM.

THE visible church has long halted between two opinions upon the nature of the Sacraments which Christ has ordained therein. One of these opinions, which would seem to have a considerable advantage over the other, on account both of its antiquity and of the present number of its adherents, maintains that there is a spiritual efficacy inherent in the elements of either sacrament; and that, provided they be administered according to the divine institution, the receiver must necessarily partake of the benefits they are intended to convey. The waters of baptism undergo a certain change, which renders them instrumental to that inward washing from corrupt and evil dispositions, of which the rite itself is the symbol; so that regeneration follows baptism, as effect follows cause. In the same manner, there is an actual transmutation of the elements themselves in the other sacrament; they become, during the performance of the eucharistical service, the material body and blood of Jesus Christ, of which he who partakes is therefore necessarily apprehensive.

The other opinion, which, according to its opponents, was scarcely heard of before the Protestant Reformation, and which, even now, has but few adherents, in comparison of the former, asserts, that the elements are

the mere outward, visible signs of certain inward and spiritual benefits, the communication of which depends altogether upon the will of the blessed and eternal Spirit who is the giver of them. Consequently, the sacramental graces are imparted with exactly the same regard to the frame of mind in the partaker of the outward rite, as obtains in all the other ordinances and means of grace prescribed by the New Testament. The unworthy receiver, neither experiences spiritual regeneration in baptism nor discerns the Lord's body in the eucharist; for the same reason, that the prayer which goeth forth of feigned lips fails to obtain the answer which God is pleased to give to the right performance of that Christian duty. We shall presently review the whole of the Scripture testimony to the point in question: independently of it, however, the latter opinion would seem to be most in harmony with the general spirit of the Christian doctrine; which, in the matter of distribution of gifts and graces, always brings prominently forward the divine omniscience, regarding scrupulously the heart of him who seeks, and giving or withholding them, accordingly. This analogy is certainly violated, if we account the sacramental elements as means of grace in themselves necessarily efficacious. But the inconsistency is greatly heightened, when, after the example of a large and authoritative portion of the Christian church, we arrange the two sacraments under different categories; and make the one efficacious when rightly administered, the other, when rightly received; or in other words, when we assert baptismal regeneration, and deny eucharistical transubstantiation. We readily grant, that the Scriptures alone can ultimately decide the question; but, nevertheless, there is so plain an inconvenience in the want of an analogous system of theology, that we may fairly argue *a*



*priori*, from the improbability of a revelation from heaven being so circumstanced. How this consistency is to be maintained, without assuming the sameness in nature of the two sacraments, I must confess I cannot comprehend. Again, let this hallucination be permitted in our theological scheme, and there is an end of all argument upon the nature of either sacrament: since our logical deductions in favour of baptismal regeneration, will equally prove the real presence in the eucharist; while on the other hand our deductive refutations of this opinion, will be, to the same extent, refutations of our own, regarding baptism.

We now proceed to compare the scripture doctrine upon each sacrament, with those which have been advanced by the early fathers. Though, in raising these much-tossed questions, we abjure all idea of rekindling the unhallowed fires wherein they were once enveloped; but which (as we hope) the Spirit of God, dropping as the rain and distilling as the dew upon his church, has now quenched for ever.—Our only desire is, to afford a contribution of help, however feeble, towards that brotherly adjustment, which is so evidently the mind of Him who prayed, *that his disciples might be all one, even as he is one with the Father*.

“Sacraments,” says Hooker,<sup>1</sup> “by reason of their mixed nature are more diversely interpreted and disputed than any other part of religion besides.” And though the controversy occupies less of the public attention and is disputed with less acrimony now, than it was two hundred years ago, yet the opinions of the various sections of the church upon the subject remain nearly in the same state as when Hooker wrote. He then that goeth about to

<sup>1</sup> Eccl. Pol. b. 5. § 57.

treat upon a point in religion thus circumstanced, is not to be heard, unless his argument be always grounded upon the declarations and precepts of Holy Scripture concerning it. Having, therefore, in the exercise of faith and humility, cast from us all preconception and prejudice, let us reverently bow before these pure fountains of divine wisdom, that we may receive into our hearts, as into prepared and consecrated vessels, the clear stream of truth that flows from thence.

We commence with the sacrament of Baptism, which is first mentioned in the New Testament, as the rite of initiation into the school or sect of John Baptist, where<sup>2</sup> it is termed the baptism of *change of mind, repentance*,<sup>3</sup> unto *remission, (renunciation)*<sup>4</sup> of sins. In other words, they who by submitting to this ceremony became John's disciples professed a new course of life, renouncing their former sins. The account given of it by another evangelist is to the same purport: John's disciples were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins;<sup>5</sup> that is, declaring their former course of life to be sinful, and professing to renounce it. In other parts of Scripture also it is invariably named, for the sake of distinction, the baptism of repentance.

It may also be observed, that the Evangelists speak of the rite, as one with which John's cotemporaries were already familiar: and such appears, from other authorities, to have been the fact. Converts were admitted by baptism

<sup>2</sup> Luke iii. 2, 3.

<sup>3</sup> μετάνοια.

<sup>4</sup> ἁφesis. The primary meaning of the word, is merely *deliverance*, by whatever means accomplished. John never ascribes to his baptism any efficacy in procuring the pardon of sin, nor did his disciples so receive it: else, what necessity for any other baptism?

<sup>5</sup> Matt. iii. 6.

into the Jewish sect of the Essenes ; and it probably formed a part of the temple service for the admission of proselytes to the law, among the later Jews. John, therefore, neither invented the rite, nor associated a new idea with it. It had long been in use among the Jews, as a mode of professing a change of religious sentiments. We find moreover, that the Baptist omitted no opportunity of pointing out the imperfection of his own ministry, by directing the attention of his disciples to Him, whose way he was sent to prepare, and who, coming after him, was mightier than he ; from him they were to receive an inward baptism, a purification of the heart, through the agency of the Holy Ghost ; resembling the penetrative and destructive efficacies of fire, rather than the mere detergent properties of water.<sup>6</sup>

It is well known that the first public act of our Lord's ministry was, to sanction the rite of water baptism, by himself accepting it, at the hand of his precursor ; and that, on his ascent from the waters of Jordan, that effusion of the Holy Spirit took place, wherein the church has long discerned an unanswerable proof of the Trinity of Persons in the Divine Unity.<sup>7</sup> The sacred histories also inform us that baptism was employed for the purpose of initiation by the disciples of Christ, during the period of his ministry ; and though he himself never administered it,<sup>8</sup> yet, on one occasion certainly,<sup>9</sup> and doubtless, on many others also, he was personally present at its administration by his followers ; until, at length, after his resurrection, he for ever constituted it a part, and an important one, of the

<sup>6</sup> " With the Holy Ghost and with fire."—Matt. iii. 11. Mark i. 8. Luke iii. 16. John i. 33.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. iii. 13—17.

<sup>8</sup> John iv. 1, 2.

<sup>9</sup> John iii. 22.

religion he came into the world to proclaim, in the memorable words which his church has nevertheless so strangely forgotten: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."<sup>10</sup>

The rite of baptism consists, as its name imports, of submersion in water, either literally or figuratively, by sprinkling, in the name of the Trinity. The intent of this symbol is shadowed forth in Holy Scripture under a two-fold metaphor. The one, taken from the detergent properties of the sacramental element, expresses it by the washing or purifying of the conscience from the guilt of sin, and of the heart from the pollution of sinful desires, by the agency of the Holy Ghost.<sup>11</sup> The element wherein this internal washing takes place is, in other parts of Sacred Scripture, declared to be the blood of Christ.<sup>12</sup>

The other metaphor, which is somewhat more remote from the symbol, finds in the act of immersion the idea of death, and in the subsequent emergence from the baptismal font, that of resuscitation; and this, again, is presented to us under the double aspect of, the death and quickening of the seed in the womb in animal reproduction, and the natural death and resurrection of the body. The first of these notions is denoted by its accomplishment, rather than by its process. Our Saviour expresses it by being "born of water and of the spirit;"<sup>13</sup> and employing the same metaphor, St. Paul styles the baptismal font "the laver of regeneration."<sup>14</sup> The other aspect of the metaphor is further illustrated by the death and resurrection of Christ. "So many of us as were

<sup>10</sup> Matt. xxviii. 19.      <sup>11</sup> Acts xxii. 16. 1 Cor. vi. 11. Eph. v. 26.

<sup>12</sup> Heb. ix. 14. 1 John i. 7.      <sup>13</sup> John iii. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Tit. iii. 5.

baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death : that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."<sup>15</sup> These figures may, with some show of reason, be held to be, to us, somewhat remote and obscure ; but happily no doubt whatever hangs over the meaning they are intended to convey. The inward grace of baptism is the purification of the soul from sin, through the blood of Christ, ministered by that Holy Spirit whose office it is to take of the things of Christ and show them to his disciples, after the same manner as water purifies the body. To apply the stronger figure of the Baptist : it is, having the inner man pervaded by the influences of the Holy Ghost, which as fire consume the body of sin, as is the outward man, by the waters of baptism. By a change of metaphor, it is a death unto sin and a new birth, or resurrection,<sup>16</sup> unto righteousness. In a word, it is a change in the affections and principles of the mind, to the full as entire, as these figurative expressions would imply.

It will be observed that in all these places the outward sign and the inward grace of baptism are mentioned together. This circumstance is the ground of the argument for their inseparability. We will, therefore, reconsider them with reference to this important question. The last command of our Saviour to his disciples as recorded by the Evangelist St. Mark, reads thus : " Go ye into all the

<sup>15</sup> Rom. vi. 3, 4 : see also Col. ii. 12. and 1 Pet. iii. 20, 21., where the submersion is typified by Noah, shut up and saved in the ark, and the emergence, by the resurrection of Christ.

<sup>16</sup> These two ideas were often confounded by the early Christian writers.

world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.”<sup>17</sup> Here is a plain unequivocal assertion of the general necessity of baptism to salvation: but we maintain, that the passage also embodies an equally positive declaration that faith in the receiver is indispensable to its efficacy. For faith and baptism are not two independent agents in the work, as appears from the antithesis that concludes the sentence: “he that believeth not shall be damned.” The omission of baptism in this clause clearly intimates, that, as the damning sin is unbelief, so the saving grace is faith; and consequently, the meaning really conveyed by it is as though it had read: “he that believeth not, shall be damned, though he be baptized.” To exactly the same effect is another text to which we have already referred.—“Ye are buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead.”<sup>18</sup> In other words, ye, being buried with Christ in the waters of baptism, have risen again with him from thence unto newness of life, because ye had faith in the ability and willingness of God to perform this miracle of grace.

The correctness of this interpretation is further confirmed by the cases of baptism recorded in the inspired account of the ministry of the Apostles. Observing an exact conformity to the precept of their Divine Master, they only administered the rite to those in whom they found faith in the word of God, and convictions of sin resulting therefrom:<sup>19</sup>—both which are elsewhere declared to be divine gifts, and the tokens of that work of the

<sup>17</sup> Mark xvi. 15, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Col. ii. 12.

<sup>19</sup> See Acts ii. 41. viii. 12, 37, 38. ix. 17, 18. xvi. 14, 15. xvii. 8.

Spirit upon the heart which is called regeneration.<sup>20</sup> Our view of the subject is also strongly supported by the narrative of the conversion of Cornelius the Centurion ;<sup>21</sup> whence we derive much instruction regarding the nature of baptism. An angel appeared to this devout proselyte and told him, that his prayers and alms had come up for a memorial before God. Now we know assuredly, that no man can pray acceptably, unless he have the renewing influences of the Spirit of God upon his heart :<sup>22</sup> such, therefore, was doubtless the case with Cornelius,—yet he was not then baptized. We also read,<sup>23</sup> that during the preaching of St. Peter the miraculous influences of the Holy Ghost fell upon Cornelius and his household : though Cornelius and his household were even then unbaptized. The mightiest energies, therefore, of the Holy Spirit were poured out without measure, conveying to the subjects of this his grace, spiritual regeneration in its largest and most comprehensive sense ; and all, without the intervention of the external rite. Nor was it accounted by the inspired apostle under whose ministry it occurred, either a departure from the ordinary course of the divine procedure, or a reason for the omission of the outward sign : which it certainly would have been, were this, in other instances, the unerring and only vehicle of the inward grace.—Far from it, St. Peter<sup>24</sup> found in this very circumstance an argument for its immediate administration. Most plainly, therefore, does it appear from Scripture, that all the regenerating graces of the Spirit may precede the rite of baptism : and that in every instance upon record of the apostolic use of this sacrament, the outward sign was applied to confirm the inward grace, not to convey it.

<sup>20</sup> Eph. ii. 8. Acts xi. 18, &c.

<sup>21</sup> Acts x.

<sup>22</sup> Rom. viii. 26.

<sup>23</sup> Acts x. 44.

<sup>24</sup> Ib. 47, 48.

The examination of the remaining passages will discover to us the import which Scripture really attaches to the outward sign in baptism.

Our Saviour declares to Nicodemus : “ Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”<sup>25</sup> St. Paul also writes in his epistle to Titus, that “ God hath saved us according to his mercy by the laver of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>26</sup> The passages are exactly parallel; the expression “ *being born of water*,” refers to the same idea as, “ *the laver of regeneration* ;” as also “ *being born of the Spirit*,” in the one, corresponds in meaning with “ *the renewing of the Holy Ghost*,” in the other. These expressions having always been interpreted by the church, as denoting respectively the outward sign and inward grace of baptism, we cannot err in affixing this meaning to them. When, therefore, we shall have ascertained the exact sense in which the phrases, *being born of water*, and *laver of regeneration*, were understood in the times of the New Testament, we may hope to have arrived at the mind of the Spirit regarding the former. The word here translated “ regeneration,” occurs in only one other place in the Inspired Volume ;<sup>27</sup> where it plainly refers to that new system or economy of all things, which shall be introduced at the consummation of the divine purposes in human redemption. In the same sense, it is employed by the cotemporary Hellenising Jew Josephus,<sup>28</sup> as well as by the classical writers: and, which

<sup>25</sup> John iii. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Tit. iii. 5.

<sup>27</sup> παλιγγενεσία.—Matt. xix. 28.

<sup>28</sup> When Zorobabel obtained the decree of Darius permitting the building of the temple, the Jews on hearing the intelligence feasted for seven days. τὴν ἀνάκτησιν καὶ παλιγγενεσίαν τῆς πατρίδος ἑορταζόντες.—Ant. Jud. lib. II. cap. 3.



is still more to our purpose, it was also accepted with this meaning by the early Christian church, as appears from a passage in Clement's epistle.<sup>29</sup> The word regeneration conveyed the idea of a new and improved state of things in nations, and an amended course of life in individuals in all these instances. Can a doubt then remain that by it and its equivalent, in the passages before us, we are to understand that course of external obedience to the divine commands, which the gospel requires, and upon which the convert first enters, through the waters of baptism? By regeneration in the font, therefore, the Spirit of God indicated the profession of purpose to lead a new life, which the act of submission to the rite of baptism implies: with no reference to the inward grace of that sacrament, which is also expressed in both places; in the one, by a figure of easy comprehension, "*being born of the Spirit*;" in the other, by a phrase divested of all metaphorical allusion, "*the renewing of the Holy Ghost*."

We now comprehend, without difficulty, the nature of baptism.—It is the divinely appointed rite of initiation into the Christian religion; occupying (as the Scriptures inform us<sup>30</sup>) under the gospel dispensation, the place of circumcision under the law; both which ceremonies are therefore equal in point of obligation, upon those to whom they were respectively imparted, as initiatory rites. They likewise closely resemble each other in the figurative meaning attached to them; both are acts of bodily purifi-

<sup>29</sup> Ναῦς πτερός εὐρεθείς, διὰ τῆς λειτουργίας αὐτῆ παλιγγενεσίαν κόσμῳ ἐκέρυξεν.—2d. Cor. c. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Col. ii. 11—13. Baptism is often opposed to Circumcision by the early fathers.—See *Just. Dial. Tryph.* 261. D. Tertullian calls Baptism *signaculum fidei*, de Spec. c. 24., and Circumcision *signaculum corporis*, Apol. c. 21. καὶ τέτα βαπτίσμα λόγος ἡμῶν, ἡ ὀκλαήμερος περιτομή, τυπικότης ᾧ σα σφραγίς.—Greg. Naz. Orat. 40, p. 638. B., Op. Vol. I.

cation, shadowing forth a similar act upon the heart, by the divine agency:—but, neither in the one case nor the other, do we perceive the slightest scripture ground for concluding, that this inward grace necessarily and irrespectively accompanies the outward sign.

We will proceed to the examination of the opinions entertained by the early Christian writers, upon the subject of baptism.

No allusion to it occurs in the first epistle of Clement: but in the second (which, though of somewhat doubtful authenticity, is, nevertheless, a very ancient production) we find the following passage:—"If Noah, Job, and Daniel were not able by their righteousness to deliver their children, how can we hope to enter into the kingdom of God, unless we keep our baptism pure and undefiled."<sup>31</sup>—He obviously uses baptism, for the profession of Christianity signified thereby.—And that he so understood it, we have further assurance from a succeeding passage; wherein, exhorting to the same act in different words, he calls baptism "a seal;"<sup>32</sup> that is the seal or token of the Christian profession; the figure that St. Paul uses, in speaking of circumcision:<sup>33</sup> implying the writer's conviction of the spiritual identity of the two ordinances.

St. Barnabas styles this sacrament, "the baptism that leads to remission of sins,"<sup>34</sup> to distinguish it from the baptisms of the Jews:<sup>35</sup> for, in their preference of these ceremonies to the gospel, he finds the literal fulfilment of Jer. ii.

<sup>31</sup> Clem. 2 ad Cor. § 7.

<sup>32</sup> Id. 10. Keep your bodies pure, and your seal without spot.—*III Herm.* 9. § 16. "Signaculum lavacri."—*Tert. de Pudic.* c. 8.

<sup>33</sup> Rom. iv. 11. The apostle also applies this metaphor to the inward grace of baptism.—*Eph.* i. 13, &c.

<sup>34</sup> τὸ βάπτισμα τὸ φέρον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν.—*S. Bar. Epis.* c. 11.

<sup>35</sup> Mar. 7. 4.

12, 13. This weak and fanciful, but very pious, author entertained perfectly scriptural notions upon this subject, as we discover in another passage of the same chapter ; where, in commenting upon the first Psalm, he strikes out from the expression, “he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,” (ver. 2.) the following, not very obvious, meaning, “blessed are they who, putting their trust in the cross,<sup>36</sup> descend into the waters (of baptism;)” thus unequivocally declaring, that faith in the receiver was the condition of the blessing. A little further on, in the course of a still more foolish comment, he thus beautifully describes the outward and inward change which the believing reception of this rite confers.—“We go down into the water full of sins and pollutions, but we come up again, bringing forth fruit ; having in our hearts the fear and love that is in Jesus Christ, by the Spirit.”

In the epistles of Ignatius, there is but one passage wherein he alludes to baptism ; it occurs in that to Polycarp:<sup>37</sup> “let your baptism remain as your shield,<sup>38</sup> your faith as your helmet, your love as your spear, your patience as your coat armour.” It was therefore, in his apprehension, the token of the Christian profession : a view of the ordinance, identical with that which we have already noticed in St. Clement, as well as in the canonical writers.

In the dull and silly visions of Hermas, which are equally devoid of imagination and of wisdom, we, notwithstanding, recognise a book which exercised a powerful influence over the early church.—Consequently, it is im-

<sup>36</sup> ἐπὶ τῷ ξύλῳ. The early fathers were greatly delighted with the equivoque which the two meanings of this word afforded : it is used in the New Testament for “the cross” and “a tree.”

<sup>37</sup> § 6.

<sup>38</sup> ὁ πλᾶ ; *scutum*, old Latin Version.

portant that we should investigate the views regarding baptism, which he intended to convey by his clumsy allegories. There is an acknowledged allusion to it in the first vision of the tower,<sup>39</sup> which is a wretched attempt to allegorise the metaphor of St. Peter.<sup>40</sup> The tower, the erection of which is to illustrate the progress of Christianity, is founded in water;<sup>41</sup> and the interpreter informs the dreamer, that it is thus built, "because your life is, and shall be, saved by water."<sup>42</sup> Through this water, all the living stones that constitute the building must pass:—some of these, "appeared very desirous to roll into the water, but could not;"<sup>43</sup> the interpreter afterwards explains to him, that, "these were such as had heard the word and were willing to be baptized in the name of the Lord; but considering the great holiness which the truth requires, they withdrew themselves."<sup>44</sup> He also saw that, after the stones had been passed by the angels who collected them, through the baptismal waters, and lay on the ground, they underwent a trial or ordeal, before they were fitted into the building. The round stones, that is, the rich, were hewn square;<sup>45</sup> the rugged and cracked ones were polished: and certain stones were even cut off and cast far away from the tower.<sup>46</sup> He could not have laid down more plainly the scripture doctrine, that the inward grace of baptism is conditional, not upon the right administration of the ceremony, but upon the mental state of the receiver.

In the same spirit, I conceive, he elsewhere speaks of the repentance, or change of mind, that takes place, when we go down into the water and receive the "remission of

<sup>39</sup> I Hermas, Vis. 3.

<sup>40</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.

<sup>41</sup> Id. §§. 2, 7.

<sup>42</sup> Id. § 7. Sec I Pet. iii. 21.

<sup>43</sup> § 2. a. f.

<sup>44</sup> § 7.

<sup>45</sup> § 6.

<sup>46</sup> § 2.

our sins,"—for immediately afterwards he tells us, that "remission of sins is given to those only that believe."<sup>47</sup> He also calls baptism a "great and holy vocation;" an expression which harmonises perfectly with the notion of baptism as a token of external profession.

In the same place he states, that there is repentance for one sin after baptism, and only for one:<sup>48</sup> an opinion so utterly at variance with the whole of the evangelical doctrine regarding the forgiveness of sins, that it is surprising it should ever have been entertained.—It could not be but that such an error should produce evil. At the time it is said to have had the effect of causing many to defer their baptism until the very article of death:<sup>49</sup> but it inflicted a more permanent evil upon the church of Christ, in that it gave to the baptismal office a place in the Christian economy more exalted than that which the Holy Ghost had assigned to it. The following passage from the second vision of the Tower,<sup>50</sup> which is a further attempt and more at large upon the same allegory as the first, is still more obnoxious to this censure: "And I said," (that is, the dreamer,) "Sir," (interpreter,) "why did these stones come out of the deep and were placed in the building of this tower, seeing that they died long ago?" He answered, "it was necessary for these prophets

<sup>47</sup> II Hermas, Com. 4. § 3.

<sup>48</sup> This opinion was believed in the church long afterwards. Tertulian maintained it.—*De Baptis.*, c. 18. Clement of Alexandria certainly favours it: see his comment upon the passage of Hermas referred to in the text:—2 *Strom.*, § 13.: though elsewhere he takes a different view of the subject. Sin, before baptism, he supposes to be remitted; sin, after baptism, to be expurgated by the chastisement of the offender.—4 *Strom.*, § 24. That the error likewise prevailed nearly two centuries later; see *Gregory of Nazianzum. Oral.* Εἰς τὸ ἄγιον Βάπτισμα. P. 642. A.

<sup>49</sup> See Greg. Naz. *ubi supra*, p. 643. D., 647. A., 648. A., &c.

<sup>50</sup> III Hermas, Simil. 9.

and teachers to ascend by water that they might be at rest :—for they could not otherwise enter into the kingdom of God ; they, therefore, being dead, were sealed with the seal of the Son of God, which seal is the waters of baptism :<sup>51</sup> that is, the Old Testament saints were baptized after the coming of Christ, and therefore after their own death, in order that they enter into their rest. The tendency of this strange absurdity to aggravate the evil of the former error is sufficiently obvious.

The church, then, even at this early period, though perfectly orthodox in her doctrine upon the nature of the sacrament of baptism, had, notwithstanding, opened the door of error, by giving an unscriptural and unseemly prominence to the mere outward ceremony.

This mistake fell in exactly with the temper of the times that followed ; and did not fail to take root downwards and bear fruit upwards. The sentiments of the fathers of the second century well illustrate its growth and progress.

Justin Martyr, the first professor of philosophical Christianity whose writings are still extant, gives the following account of baptism in his first Apology : “ We will now explain the manner wherein we dedicate ourselves to God, being made anew<sup>52</sup> in Christ Jesus. As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach is true, and undertake to conform their lives to our doctrine, are instructed to fast and pray, and entreat from God the remission of their past sins,<sup>53</sup> we fasting and praying together with them. They are then conducted to a place

<sup>51</sup> § 16. This notion probably arose from a misapprehension of 1 Cor. xv. 29.

<sup>52</sup> *καὶνοποιήσεως*.

<sup>53</sup> “ Ingressuros baptismum, orationibus crebris, jejuniis et geniculationibus orare oportet.”—*Tertull. de Baptis.*, c. 20.

where there is water, and are regenerated by the same mode of regeneration<sup>54</sup> as that wherewith we were regenerated ; for they are immersed in the water<sup>55</sup> in the name of the Father and Lord of the Universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost."<sup>56</sup> It is pleasant to find from this passage, that the early church required not only faith in the neophyte, but faith exercising itself in the devotional acts of fasting and prayer ; and moreover, an express undertaking on his part to conform his future life to the Christian doctrine. Not a doubt, therefore, can remain, that she was perfectly correct in her apprehension of the necessity of faith in the receiver, before baptism could be spiritually profitable.<sup>57</sup> We also admit, that under such circumstances, she had reason to hope that, in the majority of instances, the outward sign of baptism would be accompanied by the inward grace. But, nevertheless, there is a confusion, or rather identification, of the one with the other in the expressions here made use of, which is utterly destitute of scriptural authority.<sup>58</sup> Immediately afterwards also, he calls baptism " illumination,"<sup>59</sup> a mode of speech which is liable to the same objection. There is not a more copious source of inconvenience and error than

<sup>54</sup> ἀναγεννήσεως.

<sup>55</sup> ἐν τῷ ὕδατι λυτρὸν ποιῶνται.

<sup>56</sup> Just. Apol. I., p. 93. D. e. s.

<sup>57</sup> It will be observed that the agency of the Spirit is altogether overlooked in this passage ; I lay no stress upon this omission in so loose and inaccurate a writer as Justin. He certainly was orthodox in his opinion upon this point.—See Dial. 246. C. τίς ἐκείνῃ τῇ βαπτίσματός (that is, the ceremonial washings) χρίσιν ἀγίου πνεύματι βιβητισμένῃ ;

<sup>58</sup> *Potestatem regenerationis in Deum mandans discipulis dicebat eis : Euntes, &c., Matt. xxviii. 19.—Irenæus, adv. Hær. 3., c. 19.*

<sup>59</sup> Id., p. 94. D. φωτισμός. I suspect that the views of Justin were in accordance with the Alexandrian school in regard of the double doctrine ; which will account for his applying this epistle to baptism.—Vide infra, p. 92.

these departures from scripture phraseology, in treating upon matters whereof we know nothing but from thence. The grievous misapprehensions which have originated in both these instances we shall soon discover.

Irenæus writes thus upon the nature of baptism: "The pentecostal effusion of the Spirit was imparted that the gate of life might be opened to all nations; that in all languages a hymn to God might be sung in unison—the Spirit uniting men of distant tribes in one, and offering them to the Father, the first-fruits of all nations. On this account also, the Lord promised that he would send the Paraclete who should make us one with God. For, as dry meal cannot be kneaded into one mass nor made one bread without moisture, so, neither can we, being many, be made one in Christ Jesus without the water which is from heaven: and as a dry and thirsty land if it have no rain produces nothing, so we, being by nature<sup>60</sup> dry trees, can never bear fruit unto life unless the showers of grace descend upon us from heaven.<sup>61</sup> For our bodies have received the unity of incorruption by baptism; our souls by the Spirit: wherefore, both are needful, since both are profitable unto the life of God through the mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."<sup>62</sup> Here, for the first time, so far as I know, we are told of a benefit to the body from the external rite of baptism, totally distinct from the inward grace.<sup>63</sup> It is needless to observe that this opinion is altogether destitute of sanction from the inspired wri-

<sup>60</sup> Primum.

<sup>61</sup> "Superna voluntaria pluvia;" the LXX. rendering of Psa. lxxviii. 9. βροχὴν ἐκέσταν. Heb. נָשַׁם דְּבָרָה.

<sup>62</sup> Adv. Hær. lib. 3. 19., p. 243. c. s.

<sup>63</sup> Tertullian also entertained this notion of the incorruptibility communicated to the body by baptism.—*De Res. Car.* c. 47.



tings: I am not able to point out the passage of Scripture out of which such a meaning could be tortured.

The voluminous remains of the eloquent and fiery enthusiast Tertullian, afford ample materials for ascertaining the opinions of the early church, regarding this sacrament. His writings abound with allusions to it; and we have, moreover, a controversial tract, composed expressly in its defence, which embodies nearly the whole of his doctrine of baptism. It is written against Quintilla, a female who denied the necessity of the ordinance. He commences,<sup>64</sup> with more zeal than courtesy, by calling names; <sup>65</sup> Quintilla is a most venomous viper and asp who, like those reptiles, delights in arid places without water: “but we little fishes are born in the water through Jesus Christ our fish.”<sup>66</sup> Nor can we be saved otherwise than by remaining therein. Yea, this most monstrous Quintilla well knows that the way to kill little fishes is to take them out of the water.” He goes on, (c. 2.) to premise, that nothing hardens men’s minds more than the inadequacy of cause to effect in the divine operations.—“As here, so sim-

<sup>64</sup> De Baptismo, c. 1.

<sup>65</sup> An ordinary mode of procedure with our author.—See adv. Marc. l. 1., adv. Hermogenem, c. c. 1, 27, &c. The sketch of a crabbed logic-chopper in this last passage is wonderfully correct; still more so is the commencement of the tract, contra Gnosticos: where he compares Nicander, the heretic to a scorpion, drawing back the *hamatile spiculum*, the hooked sting at its knotted tail, in act to strike.—Such is his fearful fidelity to nature, that the reptile absolutely lives.—I doubt that a finer specimen of graphic writing can be found any where.

<sup>66</sup> ἰχθυῖς, a fish.—An acrostic from the Greek sentence, ἰησοῦς χριστὸς θεὸς υἱὸς σωτήρ, which would be thus abbreviated, ι. χ. θ. υ. ς. This contemptible and disgusting quibble originated in certain verses of one of the pseudo-sibyls, the Erythræan.—See *Onuph. de Sibyll.*, p. 27: also *Sib. Orac. lib. 3. p. 380.*, Ed. Lut., 1697. I know of no figure which so revoltingly degrades the person of the Son of God.

ply, without pomp, with no apparatus of novelty or expense, a man merely descends into the water, is immersed while a few words are pronounced, and then comes forth, little, if at all, cleaner than before : that any eternal consequence should follow the performance of such an act is deemed incredible !—While, on the other hand, the splendour and expense of the heathen rites obtained for them credence and authority ! Wretched unbelief ! which denies to God his own attributes, simplicity and power.—What then ? is it not a wonderful thing that death should be dissolved in the laver ? Surely it is so ; but is that a reason why it should not be believed ? For what ought the divine operations to be, but admirable beyond all conception ? We also wonder, but it is because we believe.—Incredulity wonders and disbelieves ; it wonders at simple acts as though they were vain and foolish ; and at magnificent effects as if they were impossible.” He next proceeds, (c. 3.) to show the dignity of the element of water, and its fitness to communicate spiritual blessings ; he finds this in Gen. i. 1, 2. The antiquity of water constitutes its worthiness to be the seat of the Divine Spirit above the other elements.—“ For the entire darkness was without form, not decked with stars, and the abyss was sad, and the earth unprepared, and the heavens rude ; water alone, always perfect, glad, simple, pure in its own nature, expanded itself before God, a throne worthy of himself.” He proceeds to assert that all things, when first modelled by the hand of their Creator, were tempered with water. He shows that, in the work of creation, the disposition of the waters was first attended to, Gen. i. 6, 9. ; and that the waters were first called upon to produce living beings,<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> “ God, in the work of creation, blessed the creatures inhabiting the waters, to show that hereafter all who come to the truth and are rege-

vv. 20—22. He finds, that water must also have been an agent in the creation of man ; for he was formed of earth, which is only plastic when moistened : “ and as the waters had left the land only the day but one before, the earth would of course be in a state of mud or slime.” He infers that water was thus extensively honoured and employed by God, in order to fit it for sacramental purposes. “ The first consecration (c. 4.) of the element took place at the creation, when the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. On that occasion the holy was borne upon the holy ; or rather, that which bore derived sanctity from that which was borne upon it.”—This he supposes to have taken place by mechanical intercommunication of particles between two subtle bodies in contact.<sup>68</sup> “ Hence it is, that all water, whether in the sea or in a river, whether running or standing, is equally proper for the rite of baptism.—Whether John baptize in Jordan, or Peter in the Tiber, or Philip in a pool by the road side, the waters of each equally attained to the sacrament of sanctification,<sup>69</sup> when the name of God was invoked over them.—For the Spirit immediately supervenes from heaven, and broods upon the waters and sanctifies them from himself ; and so they, being sanctified, imbibe the power of sanctification.”—After a remark or two on the detergent properties of water he

nerated and receive a blessing from God, shall obtain repentance and remission of sins through water and the laver of regeneration.”—*Theophilus Antioch. ad Aut. lib. 2. 95. B.*

<sup>68</sup> The notions of spiritual existence which obtained in Tertullian’s time were exceedingly gross. Our author assures us that “ the soul is capable of being grasped in the hand, soft, shining, transparent, and in form exactly resembling the body.”—*De Animâ, c. 9.* See also above, pp. 46, 52, the opinions upon the substance of angels and demons.

<sup>69</sup> “ Sacramentum sanctificationis.” Justin Martyr also connects sanctification with baptism.—*Dial. 314. A.*

concludes thus ; “ the waters then are medicated, in a manner, by the intervention of an angel,<sup>70</sup> and the Spirit is corporeally dissolved in the water and the flesh is thereby spiritually purified.”

Further on, (c. 6.) he informs us that we do not obtain the Spirit in the water, but we are there fitted for receiving him through the agency of the angel whom he terms “ angelus baptismi arbiter,” who is the precursor of the Holy Ghost, as John was of Christ, and prepares his way before him by washing away the offences of the sinner in the waters of baptism. The ceremony of the Chrism succeeded that of immersion ; this he justifies by the example of Moses and Aaron ; and then came the confirmation, or *impositio manuum*, during which the Holy Spirit was invoked and communicated.<sup>71</sup> The same previous course of fasting and prayer was required in the *preparandi* for baptism as in Justin’s time, c. 20.<sup>72</sup> He also especially cautions the clergy against the rash administration of the rite. The cases of the Eunuch, and St. Paul,<sup>73</sup> he considers exempt ones, wherein the minister was made acquainted with the mind of God by inspiration. “ This delay,” he proceeds, “ is serviceable to the condition and disposition of all, but especially is it expedient in the case of little ones : for what necessity is there that the sponsors should be exposed to the danger either of failing

<sup>70</sup> See John v. 4., to which there is an allusion here.

<sup>71</sup> It is remarkable, that the advocates of the irrespective communication of spiritual blessings in infant baptism should have overlooked this important circumstance. Now that the two rites are separated, it is at confirmation, not at baptism, that they should look for inward regeneration, to be in accordance with the early church, for whose authority they plead so loudly.

<sup>72</sup> See above, p. 82.

<sup>73</sup> Act. viii. and ix.

in their promise through death, or of falling into error in the education of their charge? The Lord says, indeed, ‘forbid them not to come unto me.’<sup>74</sup> Let them come, then, when they are of age, let them come that they may learn, when they come that they may be taught: let them become Christians when they are capable of knowing Christ.—Why does the age of innocence hasten to the remission of sins?<sup>75</sup> More caution is observed in secular matters; shall we then entrust those with heavenly riches whom we do not consider competent to the possession of earthly goods? Let them first learn to seek them, that it may appear ye give to those that ask.”

The first inference that presents itself on perusing this passage is, that the writer knew nothing of the modern notion of baptismal regeneration: the idea had obviously never occurred to him that the inward grace necessarily accompanies the right administration of the outward sign: else, why recommend delay in all cases, in order that the officiating minister might be well assured of the state of mind of the candidate:<sup>76</sup> or reprove the prevailing practice of infant baptism, because of the necessary departure from this recommendation which it involves? But notwithstanding, we nowhere find more lamentable proofs of the rapid growth of the error regarding baptism, than in the present author. The efficacy of the outward rite, *per*

<sup>74</sup> Matt. xix. 14.

<sup>75</sup> The Bishop of Lincoln is of opinion that this expression is inconsistent with Tertullian’s sentiments upon original sin, as expressed in other parts of his works.—*Eccles. Hist. c. 5., p. 325.*

<sup>76</sup> “Si qui pondus intelligunt baptismi, magis tenebunt consecutionem quam dilationem.”—*De Baptism. c. 18.* He also informs us elsewhere that faith was needful to the efficacy of baptism; as in the tract de Resurrect. Carn. c. 42., where he defines baptismal resurrection, that is, regeneration, to be, “*vita quæ ex fide per baptismum in novitate vivenda est.*”

se, which Irenæus only hints at, Tertullian broadly states, and assigns two reasons for it:—the first of them is evidently the old philosophical notion of the superior excellence of the element of water, in a Christian dress.<sup>77</sup> Tertullian, like the other authors of this century, had been a heathen philosopher; he threw aside his heathenism, but, though by no means erring in this direction to the extent of some of them, he did not, or would not, perceive that Christianity required the sacrifice of his philosophy also.—He gives another reason for the efficacy of the outward rite in baptism; the agency of the baptismal angel: for this he is indebted to that fabulous system of demonology wherewith (as we have seen) Christianity was so early intermingled and corrupted.

Clement of Alexandria, a writer greatly the inferior of Tertullian, both in the force and vigour of his conceptions and in the orderly arrangement of his thoughts, has written much, but really said very little, upon baptism. The following passage, however, will show that he yielded to none of his cotemporaries in the high estimation in which he held the outward rite: after asserting that our Saviour was necessitated to submit to baptism, as the only means whereby he could have been perfected and consecrated by the advent of the Spirit, he proceeds thus,<sup>78</sup>—“That, then, whereof the Lord was the exemplar, comes to pass also in us.—When we are baptized we are enlightened; when we are enlightened we are made sons; when we are made sons we are perfected; when we are perfected we become immortal. This operation is

<sup>77</sup> Ἄριστον μὲν ὕδωρ.—Pind. Olym. I. 1. ἀρχὴ δὲ τῶν πάντων ὕδωρ ὑπεστήσατο (ὁ Θεολῆς) καὶ τὸν κόσμον ἔμψυχον καὶ δαιμόνων πλήρη.—Diog. Laert. lib. I., p. 18.

<sup>78</sup> Pæd. I. 6.

named variously, grace, illumination, perfection, or completion, the laver.<sup>79</sup> The laver, wherein our sins are washed away; grace, whereby the punishments due to our sins are remitted; illumination, whereby we behold the holy and saving light: that is, whereby we discern divine things. We call that perfect to which nothing is wanting:—and what doth he want who knows God?” After some remarks upon perfection he returns to baptism,—“He who is regenerated and illuminated, is immediately delivered (as the word imports) from darkness, and sees the light from that time; for as they who undertake to remove a cataract from the eye, do not supply the organ with an external light which it had not before, but only remove an opacity in order that the pupil may be free to receive the impression of light, so, when we are baptized, our sins, which like a mist darkened the Divine Spirit, are dispelled, and the eye of the soul is clear, and unclouded, and brilliant; by this alone we discern divine things when the Holy Ghost pours down upon us from heaven: this is the immortal eye-water which fits the eye to gaze upon immortal light.”<sup>80</sup> Then follows a digression at some length upon light as identified with knowledge, and darkness with ignorance; after which he returns once more to baptism.—“But the chains of ignorance are soon struck off, by faith in man and grace from God: that is, when our sins are remitted by the one salutary<sup>81</sup> medicine, even baptism, according to the word.<sup>82</sup> For then we are

<sup>79</sup> λουτρὸν.

<sup>80</sup> There is an exactly similar figure in Tertullian, de Baptismo, c. 41. —“Proinde cum ad fidem pervenit (anima) reformata per secundam natiuitatem ex aqua et superna virtute detracto corruptionis pristinae aulæo; totam lucem suam conspicit.”

<sup>81</sup> παώνιος. There is an allusion here to one of the names of Apollo.

<sup>82</sup> λογικῷ βαπτίσματι.

washed from all our sins, and walk no more in evil ways : for this is one of the graces of illumination that our manner of life is no longer that which it was before we were washed." He then proceeds to enforce the necessity of that system of previous catechetical discipline used by the early church, on the ground that it leads to faith; "and that faith as well as baptism is needful, the Holy Spirit himself teaches." After another digression upon the necessity of faith, not unmixed with his own peculiar errors, wherein he quotes and comments upon Gal. iii. 23—29, he thus concludes his account of baptism,—“Nor is there any impropriety in calling good thoughts the infiltrations<sup>83</sup> of the Holy Ghost. For that may be called filtration which precipitates evil thoughts from the mind by the remembrance of good ones; but he who returns to better thoughts necessarily repents him of his former evils; and it is acknowledged that the Spirit himself brings back those who come to repentance. In like manner we also, repenting of our former sins, renouncing our evil courses, and being percolated by baptism, are brought back to the eternal light, as sons to the Father.” We observe here exactly the same opinions regarding the necessity of faith to the beneficial reception of the ordinance as in the preceding writers; and we also discover the same notions of an efficacy in the outward rite, perfectly independent of the Spirit’s influences, still more forcibly illustrated. But in addition to this, the present writer greatly exaggerates the inward grace of the sacrament. With him it is not merely spiritual regeneration or change of heart, as the Scriptures define it; but it is illumination,<sup>84</sup> perfection,

<sup>83</sup> διύλισμός. The same gross notion of spiritual existence as in Tertullian. See above, Note 68.

<sup>84</sup> Elsewhere he informs us the origin of the application of this epithet



immortality ; in a word, it is the entire life of God in the soul of man, from its commencement to its consummation. Incomprehensibly strange as this notion may seem to a modern reader, it was held by the philosopher of Alexandria as an important part of his theological system ; and his purpose in thus framing it, was to make room for the secret or gnostical doctrines, by merging as much of ordinary Bible Christianity as possible in the baptismal font.

We proceed to our summary of the opinions entertained by the church regarding baptism at the close of the second century : and here we cannot refrain from expressing our astonishment at the rapid progress which has been made by the error of the preceding era. Then we had merely to complain that the outward sign was somewhat displaced in relative importance :—now the baptismal waters have acquired a power of communicating both material and spiritual blessings, altogether independent of the present agency of the Holy Ghost and of the inward grace ; residing in the inherent holiness of the element of water, and in the agency of an angel. The whole sacrament has also risen very far above the place in Christianity which the Bible had assigned to it. Instead of being the merely initiatory rite of Christ's religion, the outward sign of spiritual regeneration, it has become illumination, perfection, yea, immor-

to baptism: "Among the barbarous philosophers, to catechise and *illuminate* their disciples, is called to *regenerate* them."—5 *Strom.*, § 2. *παρὰ τοῖς βασιβάρτοις φιλοσόφοις, τὸ καλῆχῆσαι τε καὶ φωτίσαι ἀναγεννῆσαι λέγεται.* This passage is likewise important as establishing past the possibility of doubt, the sense in which these writers understood the words translated 'regeneration,' which corresponds exactly with that we have endeavoured to gather from other sources.—(pp. 76, e. s.) Any act denoting a change for the better in state, or profession, or sentiment, they would have termed, regeneration.

tality ! We have pointed out the various mistakes in which these false doctrines have originated ; and, by the invariable process of error producing error, they, in their turn, gave rise also to other false doctrines. In the fate of these last, we again recognise that unaccountable principle which so deeply influenced the theology of those times, and which we have already endeavoured to develope ;—viz., that the detection of the parent error should in no degree affect the erroneous conclusions which had been drawn from it. Of the working of this principle the false doctrine of baptism furnishes us with an apt illustration. —The ordinance continued to be regarded as illumination,<sup>85</sup> when the Pagan absurdity of a double doctrine was long ago forgotten. The baptismal element retained its spiritual efficacy long after Tertullian's *angel of baptism* had taken his flight.

But notwithstanding the extent which the error regarding the outward rite attained in the second century, we have shown, by quoting from each author an explicit avowal of the necessity of faith in the candidate, an unanswerable proof that the doctrine of irrespective baptismal regeneration was altogether unknown at that period : but in these errors it certainly originated, though to pursue them through succeeding centuries until this opinion was fully elicited, is not the scope of the present enquiry. We may, however, state in few words, that it was in the change that took place in the age of the candidates for baptism, after Christianity became the established religion of the Roman empire, that the proximate cause of its elicitation is

<sup>85</sup> Thus Cyprian : de suo Baptis., Ep. 2. ; Chrysostom : Catach. ad *illuminandos* de baptismo. See also the Oration, or rather *rant*, of Gregory of Nazianzum, *ubi supra*. The font is called indifferently φωτιστήριον and βαπτιστήριον in the baptismal offices of nearly all the ancient liturgies.

to be found. While Christianity was still in progress, the baptism of adults would entirely occupy the attention of the church; because, though the infant children of converts, as well as the rest of their household, were baptized with their parents; and though the infants of Christians were in like manner presented at the font, yet the number of such was too inconsiderable to attract any special notice beyond the mild rebuke of Tertullian, at the close of the second century.<sup>86</sup> But when Christianity was widely diffused throughout the empire, adult and infant baptism would necessarily change places, in point of importance; cases of the latter being of daily occurrence, while the former would be seldom heard of. Such was undoubtedly the

<sup>86</sup> That infant baptism was an apostolic practice is evident from the following considerations :—

1.—The constant comparisons of baptism with circumcision which occur in the early writers; (see p. 77, note 30:) had the one rite differed from the other in so material a point as that, while the one was by express ordinance administered to infants of eight days, the other was reserved exclusively for those who had come to years of understanding, as the antipædobaptists contend, the resemblance between them would have been so faint as hardly to have admitted of the comparison.

2.—We have no mention whatever in any of the early Christian authors of the introduction of the practice of infant baptism; neither did the question of infant or adult baptism ever originate a schism, or even a controversy, in the early church; had such been the case, it would undoubtedly have been recorded somewhere in the cotemporary writings, so many of which are entirely devoted to the exposure of the errors in doctrine and discipline which arose in those times.

3.—Notwithstanding, that the practice was universally prevalent, the citation from Tertullian in the text affords unanswerable evidence; had it been otherwise, he would not have failed to point out the introducer of the custom by name, and set him up as a mark for those “arrows, even bitter words,” which he discharges in such copious showers at every other heretic.—It will also be observed that his objections to infant baptism are altogether founded upon the erroneous notions regarding the efficacy of the outward rite with which he was embued.

state of things in the fourth century : yet the mistaken views of the independent efficacy of the outward rite, the origin and progress of which we have endeavoured to trace through the first and second centuries, then also prevailed universally, and in an exaggerated form, if that be possible.<sup>87</sup> Now it was not easy to predicate that faith in the candidate for which the early fathers contended, of infants, whose reasoning faculties were undeveloped ; yet were infants then almost the only partakers of the baptismal sacrament.—The inevitable consequence was that this most important condition was gradually lost sight of : we perceive less and less of it as we proceed downwards with the stream of the patristical writers, until at length it vanishes altogether. This removed the only impediment to the indissoluble union of the two parts of the sacrament, and hence arose baptismal regeneration ; an error which, originating in some of the earliest departures from scriptural truth, has rooted itself in the very heart of all the ancient churches, and from which even Protestantism, and at this day, is far, very far, from being expurgated.

<sup>87</sup> See Greg. Naz., u. s., p. 643. C.

## CHAPTER VII.

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### THE EUCHARIST.

THE sacrament of the Eucharist is the remaining pledge of obedience which our Lord hath required of those who profess themselves his disciples, in the way of ordinance or ceremony. When we contrast this with the burdensome round of observances from which his religion delivered its first converts, both Jews and Gentiles, we shall be able to comprehend the force of the apostle's description of his commandments, "they are not grievous."<sup>1</sup> Upon this occasion also, observing our accustomed order, we commence our examination with a careful review of the testimony of the Word of God to the nature of the sacrament. Of the institution of the Holy Eucharist we can render no account so clear and succinct as in the very words of inspiration.—“Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover in thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they were eating,

<sup>1</sup> 1 John v. 3.

Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, Take, eat ; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it ; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”<sup>2</sup> “This do in remembrance of me.”<sup>3</sup> Here is an evident allusion to the paschal lamb, of whose flesh they had just partaken, and with the blood of which the door-posts of the house were sprinkled, according to the law : <sup>4</sup> —the feast of which it was the ceremonial, having been founded in remembrance of the deliverance of Israel in Egypt from the destroying angel. The disciples were familiar with the purport of the figure employed by our Lord ; for long before, in the synagogue at Capernaum, he had denoted that vital union and communion with himself, which constitutes the hidden life of the true believer in his doctrine, by the same highly metaphorical expression ; <sup>5</sup> — “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life.” ‘Here, then, I appoint a sign of this mystery : I am the lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world ; do this, not in remembrance of the deliverance from the sword of the destroying angel in Egypt, but in remembrance of that greater deliverance from the guilt and dominion of sin which, by my body offered, and my blood poured out, I am about to accomplish for all that believe in me.’ This paraphrase is sufficiently obvious, and the passage itself does not appear beset with any peculiar difficulties : though, to judge from the many senses in which it has been understood, no part of Scripture would seem to be of more doubtful interpretation.— Three of these senses still number many adherents in the

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvi. 17—20, 26—28.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xxii. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Exod. xii., &c.

<sup>5</sup> John vi. 48—58.

visible church. According to the earliest of them (in point of claim to antiquity) the elements themselves are actually transmuted; they become the very body and blood of Christ, by a miraculous and divine energy. Another section of the church teaches, that the elements are consubstantiated with the real presence, by being therewith incorporated or kneaded up. The third opinion (the abettors of which were once called Sacramentarians) propounds, in the unimproveable language of Hooker, that “the real presence of Christ’s most blessed body and blood is not to be sought for in the sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the sacrament.”<sup>6</sup> Exactly the same presumption in favour of the latter opinion, will be found here as in the controversy regarding baptism: but let us rather look for direction and guidance to that Word, which is declared to be a light unto the feet and a lamp unto the paths of those who with faith and diligence search therein.—“If we doubt at all what these admirable words may import, let our Lord’s apostle be his own interpreter; (1 Cor. x. 16.) ‘my body,’ the communion of my body; ‘my blood,’ the communion of my blood. Is there any thing more expedite, clear, and easy, than, that as Christ is termed our life because through him we obtain life, so the parts of this sacrament are his body and blood; for that they are so to us who, receiving them, receive that by them which they are termed. The bread and cup are his body and blood, because they are causes instrumental, upon receipt whereof his body and blood ensueth.”<sup>7</sup>

That such also was the apostolic teaching regarding this sacrament, will further appear from the mode of celebrating it which had obtained at Corinth, and which St. Paul in the same epistle reproves; the Eucharist, with

<sup>6</sup> Eccl. Pol., b. 5. § 67., p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Hooker, u. s.

them, partook of the character of a social repast rather than of a religious ordinance :—a mistake altogether incredible, upon the supposition that they had been taught that, in that ordinance, they literally and corporeally manducated and swallowed the very body and blood of Christ. Here, then, at any rate, we have no doubtful or recondite meanings to search out ; for the light of revelation that shines upon this question is steady, and clear, and bright as the noon-day sun. No fact is more perfectly apparent than that the grosser notions regarding the sacrament of the Eucharist are altogether destitute of sanction or authority from the Word of God. But, as we have already stated, one of them, transubstantiation, lays claim to a very high antiquity. We will once more turn our attention to the early Christian authors, if, perchance, we may discover there the germ of this error also.

In the epistle of Clement of Rome, I find the following passage :—“ For the love that he bore towards us, our Lord Jesus Christ gave his blood for our blood, his flesh for our flesh, his soul for our souls.”<sup>8</sup>

To this mode of stating the doctrine of the atonement I object, that it is altogether unsanctioned by the inspired writings.—I find it every where proclaimed that Christ gave himself for us ; but no where do I discover that his all-sufficient sacrifice was in this grossly literal sense vicarious. Should the question be urged upon me, where is the great harm, nevertheless, of such an expression ? I answer : that I hold all revealed truths to be above the comprehension of the human intellect ; and therefore, that all additions to them, whether originating in its reasoning or imaginative faculties, are necessarily false, and on that account evil, both in themselves and in their con-



sequences. Nor is there any thing in the instance before us which otherwise than confirms this position. The doctrine of the atonement was presented to the early church, upon an authority to which she paid the utmost deference, under a debased and materialised aspect. Christ died, not only to save the souls of men, but also that from his body the principle of immortality might be imparted to the corporeal substance of their bodies. Here is a strong case made out in favour of transubstantiation; for what more probable, or consistent with analogy, than that an atonement like this should have also, by a standing miracle, a material application?<sup>9</sup>

The consequences that followed upon this error, we soon discover in the view of the sacrament of the Eucharist taken by this author's immediate successor, Ignatius of Antioch.—He writes thus to the Philadelphians:<sup>10</sup> “there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup in the unity of his blood, one altar.”<sup>11</sup> The association of the *altar* with the bread and cup in this passage, is, as well as the use of the word itself, to denote the table upon which the ordinance was celebrated, introduces an entirely new notion of the Eucharist, that of a sacrifice; to which we object that it is devoid of scriptural authority. We take the same objection to the following;—“Breaking one and the same bread, which is the medicine of immortality, the antidote that we should not die but live for ever in Christ Jesus.”<sup>12</sup> This figure also innovates considerably upon our

<sup>9</sup> This opinion certainly obtained with the early church; see Ign. ad Trall., c. 8.

<sup>10</sup> C. 4.

<sup>11</sup> *θυσιαστήριον*, that is, place whereon a sacrifice is offered; he certainly uses it in this literal and offensive sense. See below, Note 30.

<sup>12</sup> Ign. ad Ephes., c. 20. ἵνα ἄρτον κλωνίς, ὅς ἐστὶ φάρμακον ἀθανασίας ἀντίδοτος τῇ μὴ ἀποθανεῖν ἀλλὰ ζῆν ἐν Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ διὰ παντός.

previous views of the nature and efficacy of the sacrament; even applied to the inward and spiritual grace only, it has no sanction from the inspired writings; Christ styles himself, “the bread” that sustains life, not the drug that cures disease, nor the antidote that counteracts poison; and the two metaphors convey notions so widely different, that we see not how, without direct revelation, the latter can be safely employed: but by a still further departure from the apostolical doctrine, Ignatius applies it to the outward sign. The act of celebrating the Eucharist, therefore, has become sacrificial, and the external elements are a medicine, an antidote to corruption: notions, all traceable, in my judgment, to St. Clement’s error of a materially vicarious atonement; though considerably in advance of it towards the grosser doctrine, which Ignatius explicitly avows in his letter to the Smyrnæans. The passage rebukes the error of those who, by neglecting the public ordinances of religion, “confessed not the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which the Father of his goodness raised from the dead.”<sup>13</sup> He proceeds to exhort them “not to delay receiving it, that they might one day rise through it.” It is impossible for words to be more explicit; beyond all question the writer of this passage inculcated the doctrine of the real presence in some form or other; and we regret much for the cause of truth, that this was not long ago conceded by all parties; inasmuch as, to those who look for their religion to the Bible, and the Bible only, the earlier or later origin of an error is a matter of little real importance.

<sup>13</sup> Ign. ad Smyrn., c. 7. It is proper, however, to observe, that some doubt is thrown upon the authenticity of this last passage by the circumstance, that neither it, nor any reference to it, is to be found in the interpolated copy of Ignatius, which bears evident marks of having been corrupted during the Arian controversy.—*See Ittig. Bib. Pat. Apos.*, p. 150.

Justin Martyr seems not only to have been himself infected with the errors we have pointed out in his predecessors, but speaks of them as being universally prevalent among Christians at the time he wrote. In the well-known passage of his first Apology,<sup>14</sup> we find that the cup in the Eucharist contained a mixture of wine and water;<sup>15</sup> an unauthorised and unhallowed addition to the ceremony, originating in the inspired account of the transactions at the crucifixion,<sup>16</sup> and obviously intended to improve upon our Saviour's ordinance, by giving to the symbol a still more exact conformity to the thing signified: affording, in my opinion, an important evidence to the general leaning of the divinity of the times to the grosser doctrine. He goes on to inform us, that "the elements were not only distributed by the deacons to those who were present, but portions were also sent to the absent, because, after the offertory, we hold them to be no longer common meat and drink:"<sup>17</sup> or, in other words, because we believe that the offertory confers a spiritual efficacy upon the elements. Then follows an obscure and much controverted passage, describing the mode in which this efficacy was communicated; "for as Jesus Christ our Saviour was made flesh by the word of God, and became flesh and blood for our salvation, so we have been taught that the food which has been blessed with the word of blessing from him, and which nourishes our flesh and blood by being changed into

<sup>14</sup> Opera., 97. B. e. s.

<sup>15</sup> ποτήριον ὕδατος καὶ κράματος.—Id., 97. C. κράμα signifies the mixture of wine and water, which was in ordinary use among the ancients; to this water was added as a part of the ceremonial. So Irenæus: τὸ κεκραμένον ποτήριον.—Lib. 5. c. 2., p. 327. So also Clement of Alexandria: κλονᾶται ὁ οἶνος τῷ ὕδατι.—Pæd., lib. 2. c. 2.

<sup>16</sup> John xix. 34.

<sup>17</sup> Idem, 98 A.

them, is (likewise) the flesh and blood of the same incarnate Jesus." Upon the very high authority of the Bishop of Lincoln,<sup>18</sup> we are informed that the grosser doctrine is not favoured by this citation. This opinion he supports by comparing it with two parallel places in the dialogue with Trypho, in one of which<sup>19</sup> he terms the Eucharist "the commemoration of our Lord's passion;" and in the other, "wet and dry food."<sup>20</sup> And nothing can be more certain than that this comparison entirely explodes the idea that Justin entertained the wild absurdity of the Romanists, transubstantiation. But, nevertheless, after the most careful perusal I have been able to give both to these passages, and to the tractates whence they are extracted, I am compelled to express my conviction that our author, who agrees with Ignatius in terming the Eucharist a sacrifice,<sup>21</sup> is also in accordance with him, as well as with his successors, in the notion that the spiritual efficacy of the elements arose from the real presence. The mode in which the presence took place does not seem to be accurately determinable from his writings; though the use of the word "change,"<sup>22</sup> in the passage just quoted, favours the suspicion that the doctrine of transmutation was not altogether unknown in the second century.

<sup>18</sup> Account of the writings and opinions of Justin Martyr, c. 4., p. 98, c. s.

<sup>19</sup> Opera, 260. A.: see also 296. D.

<sup>20</sup> Idem, 345. A.

<sup>21</sup> Idem, 344; though page 346. D., he terms it a spiritual sacrifice.

<sup>22</sup> μεταβολή.—It certainly occurs to me that Justin meant to say in this passage: "as bread and wine are transmuted into human flesh and blood by the digestive process, so the sacramental bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ by the eucharistical blessing." Though the opinion would be peculiar to himself; the other fathers of the second century taught the real presence by supervention, not by transmutation.

From Irenæus we derive a still further elucidation of the doctrine of the Eucharist as expounded by the church at this period. He terms it "a sacrifice,"<sup>23</sup> in the offering of which we show forth the communion and union of flesh and spirit ; for as the food (that is, the elements) when the name of God is invoked over it, becomes no longer common food but Eucharist, compounded of two things, the one earthly, the other heavenly ; so, our bodies, receiving the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, but possessed of the hope of eternal life."<sup>24</sup> The following passage is also highly instructive on the same point : " For since we are his (Christ's) members, and nourished by the creature, he gives the creature unto us, making the sun rise, and the rain fall as he will ; and the cup, which is his creature, he hath declared to be his own blood, whereby he enriches<sup>25</sup> our blood ; and the creature bread, he hath constituted his own body, whereby he nourishes<sup>26</sup> our bodies. The tempered cup and the made bread, therefore, receive the word of God, and become the Eucharist of the body and blood of Christ, whereby the substance of our bodies is increased and strengthened."<sup>27</sup> After applying this, by a favourite argument with the early fathers, though a very inconclusive one, to the refutation of the error of those who denied the resurrection, he proceeds : " For as a vine-cutting planted in the earth bears grapes in due season, and as a grain of wheat falling to the ground and decaying there, rises again and reproduces itself manifold

<sup>23</sup> It is, however, evident from the context that he uses the word sacrifice in a spiritual sense.

<sup>24</sup> Adv. Hær. lib. 4. c. 34., p. 327.; Edit. Oxon., 1702.

<sup>25</sup> ὁρμίζει.

<sup>26</sup> ἀνθρῖζει.

<sup>27</sup> It will be observed that this passage very closely resembles our extract from Justin Martyr.

through the Spirit of God which comprehends all things ; then, by the wisdom of God, these are made serviceable to man, and receiving the word of God become Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ ;—so, likewise, our bodies, being nourished by these, and being deposited in the ground, and corrupting there, will also rise again in due season, through the word of God which gives them resurrection, to the glory of God the Father.”<sup>28</sup> Here is an unequivocal avowal of the same opinions that we have observed in Justin Martyr.—The elements undergo a change during the offertory ; they are no longer bread and wine, but Eucharist ; the body and blood of Christ supervening each to its proper symbol, during the performance of that ceremony. This union of the sign and its signification is declared to be similar in nature to that of flesh and spirit in the living man. Misled by the erroneous view of the atonement propounded by Clement of Rome, Irenæus also teaches that the Eucharist confers benefits strictly corporeal : the bread imparting an immortal principle to the body, and the cup to the blood of the receiver. With the learned commentator upon this writer<sup>29</sup> I also entirely agree, that the papistical doctrine of transubstantiation receives no countenance whatever from these passages.—Nevertheless, it is but too evident that, following the guidance of the apostolical men rather than of the apostles, Irenæus grievously errs from the scripture doctrine of the Eucharist, and that the tendency of his error is towards materialism.

Tertullian supplies us with abundant confirmation of this melancholy view of the church in the second century.—The Eucharist is, with him likewise, a sacri-

<sup>28</sup> Idem, lib. 5. c. 2., p. 396, c. 8.

<sup>29</sup> Grabe.

fice, and the table on which it is celebrated, an altar.<sup>31</sup> The consecrated elements were deemed so holy, that they were most carefully watched, lest any part of the bread or wine should fall to the ground.<sup>31</sup> He conveys the idea of the independent spiritual virtue of the element in expressions partaking largely of that coarseness which is a characteristic of his style. He speaks of “feeding on the fatness of the Lord’s body, that is, on the Eucharist;”<sup>32</sup> of our flesh feeding on the body and blood of Christ in order that our souls may be fattened of God:<sup>33</sup> nay, “that believers partake of the grace of the Eucharist by the cutting up and distribution of the Lord’s body, in the same manner as the flesh of the victim was distributed at a sacrifice.”<sup>34</sup> It will appear also from the following passages, that notwithstanding these expressions, his opinions did not really differ from those of his predecessors. He speaks of “the bread whereby he *represents* his body;”<sup>35</sup> he declares the meaning of the scripture phrase “this is my body,” to be “this is the representation of my body:”<sup>36</sup> and in the same way he terms the cup “the commemoration and representation of the blood.”<sup>37</sup> Most triumphantly, from these and similar passages, does the

<sup>30</sup> De Oratione, c. 14. The Bishop of Lincoln doubts that the altar is here to be understood in the Church of England sense of the word.—*Eccles. Hist.*, p. 448., and his doubt is perfectly well founded; by altar, all these writers certainly denoted, not a mere altar-table, but that on which a sacrifice is offered.

<sup>31</sup> De Corona, c. 3.

<sup>32</sup> De Pudicitia, c. 9.

<sup>33</sup> De Resurrec. Carn., c. 8.

<sup>34</sup> Dominicæ gratiæ quasi *visceratione* quadam fruerentur.—*Adv. Marc.*

III. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Adv. Mar. I. 14.

<sup>36</sup> Id. IV. 40.

<sup>37</sup> De Anima, c. 17.

Bishop of Lincoln refute the assertion of the Romanists, that Tertullian taught the doctrine of transubstantiation.<sup>38</sup> His notions on the Eucharist are evidently those of Justin Martyr and Irenæus.

In Clement of Alexandria we find that exact accordance upon this point with the preceding writers, which reduces to absolute certainty our assumption, that we are discussing, not the private and peculiar notions of individuals, but the doctrine of the Eucharist as taught by the Catholic church in the second century. “The natural and abstinent beverage needful for those who thirst is water:—with this, issuing from the cleft rock, God supplied the Hebrews of old, the unsophisticated liquor of temperance: for from them, as wanderers, great abstinence was required. Afterward the holy Vine produced the prophetic bunch. This is a sign to those who are taught to cease from error, when the great bunch, even the Word, which was pressed for us, commands to mingle the blood of the grape with water, even as his blood is mingled with salvation: for the blood of the Lord is possessed of two properties; the one carnal, whereby we are delivered from corruption, the other spiritual, wherewith we are anointed.—And this is to drink the blood of Jesus, even to become participant of his incorruption.—For the Spirit is the strength of the Word as the blood is of the flesh; therefore, the humanity and the Spirit (in man) are mingled analogously with the wine and water (in the sacrament) and the one (the mixed wine<sup>39</sup>) nourishes unto faith, the other (the Spirit) guides into incorruption; but the commixture of both, that is, of the tempered wine and the Word,<sup>40</sup> is called Eucharist; whereof they who by faith are partakers are sanctified, body and soul: the will of the Father

<sup>38</sup> Eccl. Hist., u. s., p. 449, &c.

<sup>39</sup> κράμα.

<sup>40</sup> λογός.



mystically commingling the divine admixture man, with Spirit and the Word; for the Spirit is in truth united to the soul which is under its influence, and the flesh to the Word; wherefore the Word was made flesh."<sup>41</sup>

This extremely obscure passage, which is the casual introduction of the Eucharist into an exhortation to water-drinking, is of great importance to our enquiry: inasmuch as if we can disentangle the meaning of the author from the intricate mazes in which he has involved it, we may hope to obtain further light upon the doctrine of the early church, regarding the mode in which Christ was really present with the elements in the Eucharist. We premise, that by the Spirit in this passage the Spirit of Christ is to be understood; a being altogether distinct from the Logos, Word, or Divine Nature of Christ, though united with it.<sup>42</sup> This Spirit is here termed the strength or virtue of the Word or Divine Nature of Christ.—The efficacy of the blood of Christ is also declared to be twofold; the one affecting the flesh, or body, and animal life, giving to it the principle of incorruption,—this is imparted by the

<sup>41</sup> Pæd. 2. 2.

<sup>42</sup> By the Spirit of Christ, the anti-Nicene fathers certainly meant the Holy Ghost, as in the passage before us: the doctrine of the Trinity not having been then made the subject of controversy, we do not find in their writings those accurate and scriptural distinctions regarding the Divine Persons which afterwards obtained.—See the bishop of Lincoln's Justin, p. 71.; and here, where the author speaks of the Holy Ghost as a part of the nature of Christ. So Hermas; "The Spirit spake with thee under the figure of the church; for that Spirit is the Son of God."—*B. 3., Sim. 9. 1.* So also Tertullian: "Dominus noster Jesus Christus in quo et Dei *spiritus*, et Dei sermo et Dei ratio approbatus est."—*De Orat., c. 1.* The heresies and controversies with which the church has for so many ages been harassed, are wonderfully overruled to the elicitation of the very mind and truth of God from the written word. No one can read the early fathers attentively without perceiving this. See above, p. 45, Note 52.

Word: the other affecting the soul, purification from sin, is imparted by the Spirit of Christ.—The faithful partaker, then, of the cup in the Eucharist (for it is of the cup only that he is speaking) obtains both these benefits: for this element is a commixture of tempered wine with the Word, by which we are here to understand the Divine Nature of Christ and the Spirit; and being received in faith, a third intermixture takes place; the compound of wine, water, and the Word, that is, the Eucharist, is mixed with the compound of body, soul, and spirit, that is, man.—And by what would be termed in modern chemistry a double elective affinity, the Spirit of Christ combines with the spirit of the man, purifying it from sin, and the Divine Nature of Christ with the flesh and soul (or animal nature) imparting to it a principle of incorruption. No doubt will now remain as to the opinions entertained by these writers.—The Logos or Divine Nature of Christ was present with the elements in the Eucharist, united with them in the same manner as the soul to the body in man. The benefit of its faithful reception was also twofold;—one to the body, imparting to it a principle of incorruption, the other to the soul, conferring upon it purification from sin. That Clement of Alexandria did not entertain the idea of transubstantiation is sufficiently apparent from the citation before us, where the material blood of Christ is never once mentioned: and it is rendered still more unquestionable by another passage from the same hortative to the use of water; wherein he terms wine “the mystic symbol of the holy blood which the Lord himself instituted.”<sup>43</sup> Nor

<sup>43</sup> Pæd. lib. 2. c. 2., p. 382. In the same chapter also he thus defends the use of wine against the Eneerates and other fanatics, who forbade it. “Our Lord himself drank wine in the days of his flesh: and he blessed wine when he said, ‘Take, drink, this is my blood;’ the blood of the vine

do I discover any countenance whatever to this doctrine in the more elaborate work of the same author, the *Stromates*, which, being an avowed exposition of the *disciplina arcani*, we certainly should have found there, had the most recent defence of this insanity been a valid one.<sup>44</sup>

The doctrine of the early church, therefore, regarding the Eucharist, was widely different from that which is to be found in the canonical writers. Misled partly by her over-zeal in refuting the errors of the Docetæ and other heretics who denied the humanity of Christ, but principally by those gross views of the ceremonial of religion with which all her members would be prepossessed, from whatever creed they were converted, she certainly maintained that the elements acquired spiritual virtue; and that this virtue arose from the Divine Nature of Christ dwelling in them, as the soul in the body. In effecting this union, she probably called to her aid the strange notions of spiritual existence current in those times: we have already seen that they held Spirit to be palpable to

even the word 'which is shed for many for the remission of sins;' he allegorises it as the sacred source of joy. That it was wine that our Lord blessed is evident, for he says again: 'Henceforth I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, &c.'" It is plainly impossible that the writer of this passage should have believed in transubstantiation.

<sup>44</sup> According to the Bishop of Aire, the early fathers denied the doctrine of transubstantiation, because it was one of the inner mysteries which they concealed from the uninitiated.—See *Faber's Difficulties of Romanism*. This defence has also been adopted very recently, in an ingenious and well-imagined attack upon Christianity, by holding up Romanism as its purest and most perfect form. It would have had more weight, had the character of the author as a jester by profession, been somewhat less notorious: as it is, he has completely taken in several good Catholics; and more than one zealous Protestant has formally replied to it: both, doubtless, to the infinite amusement of the author.

the outward senses, and capable of mechanical admixture with matter:<sup>45</sup> in some such manner she seems to have taught the inhabitation of the Divine Nature or celestial part of the Eucharist.<sup>46</sup> As a certain consequence of this error, she also taught her members to anticipate corporeal benefits from the faithful reception of the elements:—they conferred upon the material body and blood that principle of incorruption which rendered them capable of an eternal existence at the resurrection:—a manifest absurdity, inasmuch as the Scripture expressly extends this benefit of our Saviour's redemption to all the sons of Adam, at whatever period they may have lived:<sup>47</sup> and irrespectively of any condition whatever.

In this fearfully corrupt state, the doctrine of the Eucharist was transmitted by the church of the second century to the days of darkness and gloominess, of clouds and thick darkness that so speedily followed. And in times when an appeal to Scripture was seldom heard of, except through the medium of the ecclesiastical writers of preceding periods, there was hardly a possibility that the errors into which these writers had fallen should be corrected by a comparison therewith: and equally remote was the probability, when the errors in which they originated themselves remained unimpaired and still crevice; so that the entire divinity of the church went to the extraction of the ritual of a religion, whose benefits were conditional upon the observance of a wearisome ceremonial, from the unearthly and spiritual precepts and doctrines of the gospel. Under these circumstances, can we wonder that the error on the

<sup>45</sup> See p. 87, Note 68.

<sup>46</sup> It was in the writers of this period that Luther found the doctrine of consubstantiation.

<sup>47</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 22.

Eucharist should speedily attain to its utmost aggravation? and that, by declaring the elements to be actually transmuted into human flesh and blood, the foully erring church debased the blessed supper of the Lord of purity and holiness into a Thyestean banquet, more loathsome and revolting than had ever polluted the most impure orgies of Paganism?<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> There is an impudence of absurdity in this doctrine which it rouses one's indignation to think, that such should ever have been propounded as an article of faith. A change at once substantial, and yet undiscernible by any means; at once miraculous and non-miraculous; a miracle, not for the confirmation of our faith, but requiring faith to believe it to be a miracle! Well may we exclaim with Dr. South, "it is the most portentous piece of nonsense that ever was owned in the face of a rational world!"—*Sermons, Vol. V. p. 17.* That the human mind was not insensible to the follies and contradictions innumerable which this doctrine involves, even in the darkest ages, I adduce as evidence the following story, which "I tell as 't is told to me" in the *Apothegmata Patrum*, edited by Cotelierius.—*Eccl. Græc. Mon., Vol. I., p. 421.* (The Theban-Coptic original, whence it has been translated into Greek, will also be found in *Züega. Catalogus. Cod. Copt., p. 313.*)

"There was a recluse of the desert who was mighty in works but weak in faith; so he fell into error because he was but a simple person, and said 'The bread that we receive is not the body of the Lord really, but only figuratively.' And two old men heard him say so; and they came to him, and said, 'O father, believe according to the tradition of the church.' And he answered, 'I cannot believe it assuredly, unless I see the thing itself: let us, therefore, pray God that it may be shown unto me.' So they all retired to their cells and prayed that God would reveal it to the holy recluse, lest he should lose the reward of his good works. And God heard their prayers; for the next Lord's day they stood together at church upon the same cushion, the recluse being in the middle: and their eyes were opened; and when the bread was put upon the holy table, it appeared to them three like a little boy. And when the presbyter put forth his hands to break the bread, behold! the angel of the Lord came down from heaven with a knife, and stabbed the little boy, and let his blood run into the cup. And when the presbyter broke the bread into little pieces, the angel also cut little pieces from the body of the child. And when they came to take of the

holy elements, the recluse's portion was a gobbet of bloody flesh. Then he cried, 'I believe, O Lord,' and immediately it became bread again."

This *miraculum in miraculo* was probably invented sometime between the eighth and tenth centuries. One is not sorry to find that there were sturdy thinkers, even at such a period as this, and in the heart of the Libyan deserts.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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### RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

THERE is a principle in Christianity, the application of which would have extricated the early fathers from the perplexities and errors, in which their doctrine involves the Christian sacraments.

To this principle, we conceive, must be referred the extraordinary circumstance, that these sacraments should constitute its entire prescribed ritual. Liturgical formularies of devotion, and rounds of observances, which are the very essence of all other religions, engaged no part of the attention of those who were inspired to proclaim the precepts and doctrines of Christianity. Our Divine Master, when appealed to by the Samaritan woman upon the question between her nation and the Jews, at once answered her enquiry, but failed not, at the same time, to foretell the speedy overthrow of the temple worships, both of mount Zion and mount Gerizim; and to embody in a single sentence, more instruction regarding this branch of our duty to our Maker, than was to be found in all the prescriptions of religious service that the world contained: —“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.”<sup>1</sup> This was the principle, and this alone, which was regarded in the construction of

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 24.

the whole exterior of his religion. Nothing else appears to have weighed with him for a moment. He has not left us a single direction regarding the worship of God, which does not bear exclusively upon the heart of the worshipper, discarding every other adjunct of circumstance.—Time, and place, and posture, so important in the older rituals, are less than nothing and vanity with him; he does not bestow even a thought upon them. The apostles also follow exactly the footsteps of their Lord in this, as in every thing. Anxious only to press home the important truths, that form and ceremony were abolished, and that the worship of God was an act and exercise of the heart, none of the other circumstances of religious service appear to have dwelt in their recollection.—As if fearful of withdrawing the regards of the Christian man from them, in any measure, they have studiously avoided recording the particulars of the mode in which the worship of God was conducted by themselves; that there might be no form of their prescription for his wayward heart to rest in, and that this principle of his religion might flash upon his understanding from every page of inspiration, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

It is from hence that we contend to best advantage with the materialists in both sacraments.—If they be part and parcel of Christianity, which we all agree that they are, they must recognise this principle in its whole extent.—We answer the advocates of baptismal regeneration, that the Gospel propounds no other evidence of sin forgiven, than sin forsaken; and no other medium for its remission, than the blood of Christ, applied by faith to the conscience. We tell the materialist in the other sacrament, that it is the faith of the worthy partaker that



alone discerns, or can discern, the Lord's body in the holy Eucharist ; and that, therefore, his doctrine of the real presence is as needless as it is ridiculous. This high ground best befits the dignity of the entire subject :—that in all our acts of worship the heart of the worshipper, and that alone, is regarded by him to whom they are addressed, is a grand principle of Christianity ; and whatever is not in exact obedience to this principle forms no part of Christ's religion.

We have seen that the early fathers have greatly obscured this principle, in their doctrine of the sacraments. We now proceed to consider their opinions upon other acts of religious observance ; when we shall find, that though we may meet occasionally with formal acknowledgments of it, yet it does not exercise that entire influence over their doctrine upon these points, which is so apparent in the canonical writings.

We commence with prayer ; a subject upon which, of all others, he who professes to take the New Testament for his guide, would seem to be in the least danger of error : since, by an apparent departure from the course observed with regard to other acts of religion, the Holy Spirit has recorded in the New Testament both the time, and mode, and form of prayer which will be accepted. The time,—pray always : the mode,—pray with the heart : the form, was given by our Lord himself ; and though too brief to admit, for a moment, of the supposition that it is the only prayer which a Christian man may use, is, nevertheless, so wonderfully comprehensive, that he can scarcely offer a petition to the throne of grace which is not included in it. As Tertullian justly and beautifully observes,<sup>2</sup> “ it is the summary of the whole gospel : for whatever the

<sup>2</sup> De Oratione, cc. 1, 9.

writings of prophets, evangelists, and apostles, the discourses, parables, precepts, and example of our Lord have touched upon, is contained in these few words.—What duty which they enjoin is omitted? Honour to the Godhead in the Father; a testimony of faith in his name; a profession of obedience to his will; a commemoration of hope in his kingdom; a petition for life in the bread; a confession of sin in the deprecation; solicitude concerning temptation, in the prayer for help against it.—But God alone could prompt the prayer, which himself would hear and answer.”

It is surprising that there should be any deflections in these early writers, from a path so straitly hedged in as this. Nevertheless, they do err, and in the direction we have pointed out.

St. Clement of Rome writes thus to the Corinthians: —“It will behove us to take care, brethren, that looking into the depths of the divine knowledge we do all things in order, whatsoever our Lord has commanded us to do: and particularly that we perform our offerings and service<sup>3</sup> to God at their appointed seasons: for these he has commanded to be done, not by chance<sup>4</sup> and disorderly, but at certain determinate times and hours.—They, therefore, that make their offerings at the appointed seasons<sup>5</sup> are happy and accepted.”<sup>6</sup> In perusing this passage we naturally enquire where is the divine command to which St. Clement refers? If his reference be to the ceremonial law of Moses, we instantly reply to him, that it is abolished: neither does any such occur in the New Testament. Should his appeal be to the Christian tradition, which probably it is, we apply to it the argument with which

<sup>3</sup> τὰς τι προσφορὰς καὶ λειτουργίας.

<sup>4</sup> εἰκῇ.

<sup>5</sup> τῶς προστάγματι καὶ καιροῖς.

<sup>6</sup> Clem. ad Cor., c. 40.

Tertullian<sup>7</sup> has supplied us :—we compare the unwritten, with the written tradition, with the canonical and inspired writings: when we discover, that it is in clear opposition to the Christian doctrine upon the point; inasmuch as the same observances which St. Clement urges upon the church at Corinth, St. Paul stigmatises in the Judaizing Christians of Galatia, as a departure from the simplicity of the Gospel, “Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.”<sup>8</sup> We, therefore, at once reject it; on the ground, that there can be no apostolical tradition which contradicts the apostolical epistles. We readily grant, that an order of ecclesiastical service must and will be agreed upon, in every community over which the influence of Christ’s religion is fully exerted: and that order being once settled, according to the Word of God, we greatly question the propriety, or the wisdom, of needless innovations upon it: but that there is any divine command, prescribing the hours and ceremonies of public worship, we utterly deny:—and we produce the assertion of St. Clement that there is such, as evidence that the great principle of Christian worship was soon misapprehended, and that, even in the earliest uninspired records of the church, we discover a leaning to formality and materialism.<sup>9</sup>

The following passage, from another of the apostolical writers, is also highly objectionable :—“Remove from

<sup>7</sup> De Præscriptionibus Hæreticorum.

<sup>8</sup> Gal. iv. 10.

<sup>9</sup> It is quite needful the reader should be aware, that the commencement of the passage from Clement upon which we have commented, is quoted by his namesake of Alexandria—4 *Strom.* § 18.; and that he connects it with a sentence altogether different from the rest of it, which does not occur at all in our copy of the Epistle. Though the learned father occasionally mutilates his quotations, the circumstance certainly raises a suspicion that the place may be a spurious one.

thee all doubting, and question nothing at all, when thou askest any thing of the Lord, saying within thyself, how shall I be able to ask any thing of the Lord, seeing I have so greatly sinned against him? Do not think thus, but turn unto the Lord with all thy heart, and ask of him, without doubting, and thou shalt know the mercy of the Lord.—For God is not as men, mindful of the injuries he has received; but he forgets injuries, and has compassion upon his creature.—Wherefore, purify thy heart from all the vices of this present world, and from doubting, and put on faith, and thou shalt receive all that thou shalt ask.—But he that doubts shall hardly live unto God, except he repent.”<sup>10</sup> The principle for which we contend is here fully recognised; it is the heart of the worshipper, and that alone, which God regards in the acceptance or rejection of prayer. The precept, to put away doubting in prayer, is also scriptural: but, nevertheless, it would hardly be possible to display more consummate ignorance of the nature, not only of prayer, but of the whole scheme of Christianity, than in the passage before us. As many of the points here touched upon will come under our notice elsewhere, we will merely state our objections generally. We deny, then, that the sinner has any ground of hope in the badness of the Divine memory; God does not, cannot, forget any thing.—Nor is there forgiveness of sin with him, save in the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ; a doctrine never once mentioned, or even alluded to, in the entire passage. We also deny that there is any power in man, either to purify his own heart, or to offer to God, by his own unassisted effort, the prayer which he will hear and answer. For these, he must be altogether indebted to that Holy Ghost who is also termed in Scrip-

<sup>10</sup> *Hermas, Comm. 9.*

ture “the Spirit of supplication ;”<sup>11</sup> and of whom it is declared, that he “helpeth the infirmities” of the believer in prayer, “himself making intercession for him.”<sup>12</sup>—St. Hermas had entirely lost sight of this important doctrine also. We in the last place object, that the man who, in compliance with this advice, should endeavour, in his own strength, to put off doubting and to put on faith, would probably appear before his Maker in a spirit even still more offensive to Him : that of vain confidence and presumption.—The prayer of faith, and the assurance of hope, are both unequivocally declared in Scripture to be the gifts of God, and are, therefore, altogether unattainable by any merely human effort. Another fundamental doctrine of Christianity, then, that of the divine assistance, is totally misapprehended by this early writer ; who grievously errs, in ascribing to man the power of so purifying himself from sin as to be competent to offer acceptable prayers to God ; independently, both of the atonement of Christ, and of the aids of the Holy Spirit, to neither of which he makes the slightest allusion.

Tertullian, the next writer who has treated upon prayer, also greatly mistakes the doctrine of Holy Scripture. His comment upon the fifth petition of the Lord’s Prayer, “forgive us our trespasses,”<sup>13</sup> is characterised by the same omission that we have already noticed in the writings of Hermas ; it does not contain a single allusion to the atonement.<sup>14</sup> We only repeat, that in our apprehension of

<sup>11</sup> Zech. xii. 10.

<sup>12</sup> Rom. viii. 26.

<sup>13</sup> De Oratione, c. 7.

<sup>14</sup> The Bishop of Lincoln observes upon the same peculiarity, as running through the whole of Tertullian’s writings ; he also cites other passages, abundantly showing the strict orthodoxy of this father on the doctrine of

the Christian scheme, any petition for pardon of sin which is not mixed with faith in the sacrifice and death of Christ, is a mere mockery of God :—and therefore, that the commentator who forbears all mention of it, in writing expressly upon the subject of remission, greatly misleads his readers, even though his remarks may be excellent in themselves.

Nor have we yet seen the extent of this father's misapprehensions, upon the subject of prayer. He thus rebukes certain evil practices which prevailed in the Christian assemblies during divine worship :—"It is the custom of some to sit during prayer; but if it is irreverent to sit in the presence of those whom we greatly revere and venerate, it is surely a most irreligious act, in the presence of the living God, and while the angel of prayer himself is standing; for we thereby reproach God that praying to him wearies us. We most powerfully commend our prayers to God by worshipping him with modesty and humility, not extravagantly tossing up our arms, but elevating them moderately and gracefully; with the countenance not impudently erect, but meekly and humbly dejected like the publican's.<sup>15</sup> It is also proper that the tones of the voice should be subdued; for, what tremendous windpipes shall we require if our prayers are best heard and answered when we say them the loudest !—God hearkens not to the voice but to the heart. If God listens for a sound in prayer, how could Jonah's prayer ascend to heaven from the very abyss, through the bowels of so great a beast, and through

justification; and endeavours to account for the almost uniform omission of the atonement, in those places where it was most important that it should be introduced, by the circumstance, that no controversy had then arisen upon the subject.—*Ecel. Hist.*, c. 5., p. 330.

<sup>15</sup> *De Orat.*, c. 12.

so vast a depth of sea-water.<sup>16</sup> What do the performers of these obstreperous acts of devotion, but shout that their neighbours may hear them? and if such be the case, where is the difference between their mode of prayer, and praying in the corners of the streets?"<sup>17</sup> Now, though I entirely agree with our author in the great impropriety and indecency of every one of the practices he condemns, (all of which I am sorry to say may even now be observed in public worship,) and though I greatly rejoice in the testimony to the spiritual nature of Christ's religion, which is borne in this passage, by one of whose intellectual powers I entertain so high an opinion, I must, nevertheless, protest against the line of argument he pursues in administering his just and well-merited reproof. I exceedingly disapprove of sitting in prayer, but only because I hold it to be indicative of an irreverent and secular state of mind in the worshipper; this, I conceive, is displeasing to God, not that the mere posture of the body is an act of disrespect to him and to his angels; were this the case, sitting would be at all times unlawful, inasmuch as they are every where present. On exactly the same principle, while I agree with Tertullian in reprobating loud and clamorous tones and violent action, either in public or private devotion, I utterly deny that any modulations of voice we can compass, or any gesticulations we can perform, either with our features or our arms, will one whit commend our prayers to God.—Nay, I maintain that, on the one hand, many an acceptable prayer has been offered with a total disregard to the posture of the body, and with much inde-

<sup>16</sup> The gross notions of spiritual existence which, as we have already stated, prevailed in these times, will in some measure account for the oddity of this remark.

<sup>17</sup> *Idem*, c. 13.

corum both of tone and action ; and that on the other, many a one hath appeared before God with a most scrupulous attention to the external forms of piety, who has, nevertheless, offered the prayer of the hypocrite, which is an abomination unto him : Tertullian himself, and in the same passage, gives us the reason of this : “ God regards the heart and not the tones and gestures of the worshipper : ” and consequently this bodily exercise only profits, when it is a true indication of the mental state of the performer ; and is worse than worthless, when assumed as the disguise of insincerity.

Some other erroneous practices are also mentioned by Tertullian, which it may be well here to enumerate, in order to show the irresistible violence with which the set and current of public opinion was bearing away all that was peculiar and characteristic in Christianity, till nothing but the mere frame-work of its external ceremonial remained ; and even that frame-work, the same current was as rapidly choking up and deforming with the rubbish of the mouldering fabric of heathenism, which drifted upon its surface, and accumulated there. These ceremonies consisted of bathing before prayer, in commemoration of baptism,—washing the hands before devotional acts, (founded, doubtless, on *Psa. xxvi. 6.*)—taking off the upper garment to pray ; this custom, he tells us, originated in a ridiculous misapprehension of *2 Tim. iv. 13*. Refusing the kiss of peace, with which all the public assemblies of the early Christians concluded, on station and fast-days : Tertullian wishes to restrict this usage to the Paschal fast only ; and brings some very bad inconclusive arguments in support of the restriction.

Clement of Alexandria, does not appear to have been at all in advance of his cotemporaries in his apprehension



of the true nature of prayer; this is sufficiently apparent in the following address to the Almighty: "I will liberate myself from lust, O Lord! that I may dwell in thee. I must be in that which is thine, O Omnipotent! and even when I am here, I am with thee; but I will be without fear that I may get near thee, and I will be content with little, imitating thy most just choice, which discerns what is really good, from that which merely resembles it."<sup>18</sup> Not often, I hope, in the annals of human folly, has the Almighty been insulted with a more impious prayer than this! The ambitious aspirant to Gnostical perfection vaunts before his Maker, that he will accomplish in himself that, which God in his word hath declared, is the work of his Spirit only.

The error of the early fathers upon the subject of prayer, consisted in their ascription of far too much to man, and far too little to God, in its acceptable service. This appears in a two-fold character. In the first place, they tax the innate powers of man too heavily: they call upon him to repress sin in his own heart, and then to appear before God; whereas, the Scripture every where exhorts us to ask of God to create a clean heart within us, because it is a blessing which he only can impart. But so possessed are they, with this power in man to deal independently with God in the matter of sin, that, in treating upon forgiveness, they become oblivious of the doctrine of the atonement. In the next place (with not perfect consistency) they ascribe a large measure of efficacy to the observance of a certain orthodox ritual, in the external ceremony of prayer; to this, as well as to the heart of the worshipper, they conceive the Almighty to have regard. It is almost needless to point out the tendency of one of

<sup>18</sup> 4 Strom., § 23.

these errors to aggravate the other. The religionist who is sincere and in earnest, will soon discover that the task of purifying his own heart is an utterly hopeless one : but he has been taught that the outward ceremony, in prayer, as well as the inward frame of mind, obtains acceptance with God : most naturally, therefore, he turns his attention to that which is within his reach, to the neglect of that which he has found to be unattainable : and thus, this important act of Christian duty was rapidly degraded into a superstitious and formal observance.

When the external rites of religion have acquired this degree of value, it would appear to be an inevitable consequence, that the number of them should also begin to multiply.

The following passage from Tertullian will show that that this actually took place in the instance before us : it is also important, as embodying nearly all that we know respecting the external forms of worship in use in the second century. He is speaking of certain customs, the authority for which rested not upon the written Scriptures, but upon tradition ;—"to begin with baptism ; when we are about to go down into the water, we sometimes are required to profess before the church, and under the hand of the bishop, that we renounce the Devil, his ceremonies, and his angels :<sup>19</sup> then we are thrice immersed, answering somewhat more than the Lord had appointed in the gospel. On coming from the font, we taste of a mixture of milk

<sup>19</sup> *Nos renunciare diabolo et pompis et angelis ejus* ;—the word *pompa* alludes to the subject of the tractate, which is a defence of the conduct of a Christian soldier, who suffered martyrdom rather than wearing a laurel crown in a triumphal procession.—See c. 1. It is probable that the expression "pumps and vanities of this wicked world," in our baptismal service, originated in this passage.

and honey ; and abstain from the daily bath for a full week afterwards. The sacrament of the Eucharist, which was instituted by our Lord during a meal, and enjoined upon all present, we also celebrate at our assemblies before day-break, and receive from no other hand than that of the President. We make oblations for the dead annually, on the day of their death. We account it wrong to fast or to kneel during prayer, on the Lord's day. We enjoy the same immunity from Easter to Whitsuntide. When we set out on any journey, every time we go out from our houses, and on our return to them, when we put on our clothes and our shoes, when we bathe, when we sit down to table, when we light the lamps, when we retire to our bed-chambers, when we recline upon couches, whatever subject engrosses our attention, at the time of commencing each of these acts, we invariably trace upon our foreheads the sign of the cross."<sup>20</sup> He proceeds to tell us that "tradition is the author, custom the confirmer, and faith the observer of all these ceremonies." We have already discussed the question of doctrinal tradition ;<sup>21</sup> that of traditional ceremonies may conveniently be deferred, until we come to consider the ecclesiastical polity of the first and second centuries. But we may here remark upon the customs recorded in this passage generally, that though some of them may be innocent, and others even laudable, they are, nevertheless, by no means free from the taint of heathenism ; and are conceived in the true spirit of those "profane and old wives' fables," which St. Paul, by the Holy Ghost, commanded Timothy to "refuse."<sup>22</sup> But, the evil, after all, was not that they existed, but that they were made part and parcel of Christianity in the theology

<sup>20</sup> Tertull. de Corona Militis, c. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Chap. III.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 7.

of the times, for they were certainly accounted as such by Tertullian.

The opinions of the early fathers, therefore, regarding the worship of God, evidently tended to confer an undue importance upon the innate powers of man, and upon the mere outward rite; errors which necessarily obscured and put aside the doctrine of divine assistance, conferring purity of motive upon the accepted worshipper, which is the leading characteristic of the Christian religion.

## CHAPTER IX.

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### CELIBACY AND THE PERPETUAL VIRGINITY.

So far as we have hitherto pursued our investigation, it apparently leads to the conclusion, that the spirit of Christianity, in these early times, was undergoing a process of gradual assimilation to that of the false or abolished religions, in the prepossessions of which all its first converts had been educated. The two points of ecclesiastical discipline we are now about to consider, Celibacy and Fasting, will still more strikingly illustrate and confirm this view of the subject. We commence with the former.

The false doctrine which asserts the superior sanctity of religious celibates, is an error whose influence is by no means departed at the present day, though greatly diminished. The origin of the opinion is likewise perfectly apparent, in the writers whose works are before us. It is, therefore, important, that we should consider the question, even if it be only for the purpose of showing the very little practical effect, which the teachings and writings of the inspired apostles must have produced upon their immediate successors, when an error so plainly pointed out, and so unequivocally repudiated by them, receives, notwithstanding, a strong sanction from the works of the early fathers.

The only two passages which could have afforded the

appearance of a scriptural foundation for the doctrine, either so carefully limit the advice they convey (for command there is none) to circumstances occurring, or arising out of the state and prospects of religion at the time they were delivered, or so strictly confine it to the individual conscience of the Christian, and so perfectly fence it off from all interference on the part of the church, that it seems incredible, that the error could have originated in them. One of these, is a place of great obscurity, and of very doubtful application; and even if we admit, that it applies to Christianity at all times (as the early fathers have interpreted it,) the precept it conveys only amounts to the general position, that the consciences of some individuals, among the disciples of Christ, may be persuaded, that they will better promote the progress of the Gospel if they remain single, than if they marry:<sup>1</sup> the other<sup>2</sup> is an uninspired opinion, given for the existing necessity; when the writer, St. Paul, was prescient, by the spirit of prophecy, of a persecution then imminent over the church he was addressing, and is therefore obviously incapable of any more general application. But when we find the same apostle declaring, with plenary inspiration, that “forbidding to marry is the doctrine of fiends,”<sup>3</sup> and that “marriage is honourable unto all,”<sup>4</sup> we can hesitate no longer. It is morally impossible that the notions upon this subject which so soon led to monachism, with all its follies and crimes, could have been even suggested by the New Tes-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xix. 12. To understand the allusion fully, it should be borne in mind, that celibacy was accounted an absolute crime among the Jews: the doctrine, therefore, that a person abstaining from marriage could serve God acceptably at all, was probably new to many of our Lord's hearers.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. vii.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 1, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. xiii. 4.

tament, unless some powerful prepossession had biassed the interpretation.

But can it be shown that monastic notions existed in times antecedent to the first propagation of Christianity? We conceive that this question will be satisfactorily answered in the affirmative, by the canon of discipline prescribed to his followers by Pythagoras of Crotona in Grecian Italy, who flourished about five hundred years before the Christian era. He required of those who aspired to be his disciples, and their number was very great, a commencing-probation of five years' silence; during which, they listened daily to the maxims of wisdom which fell from the lips of the philosopher; but until that period had elapsed, they never beheld his person. The purport of these instructions was in unison with the policy of this concealment.—While the one inspired them with a reverential awe of his presence, the other exhorted them to an entire submission of their wills to his, in all things.

His course of discipline was exceedingly severe. Animal food was altogether forbidden in the earlier stages of it, and even those roots and herbs that needed cooking: while of the allowed food, none were permitted to eat to satiety.—Water was their only beverage.—Their dress was a perfectly clean white woollen garment. They were forbidden to laugh or jest; to indulge in either joy or sorrow; anger also was to be entirely subdued. In a word, for every emotion of the mind, for every action of their lives, for every hour of the day, a strict rule was prescribed to them. As whole nations became his disciples, it was impossible for him to prohibit marriage; but he evidently greatly discouraged it. His immediate disciples had all things in common; and lived together in a spacious building which he erected near his own dwelling,

in order that he might there enforce the observance of his rule of discipline. All these privations he called upon them to submit to, that they might thereby be prepared to see the gods; a blessing only attainable by the possessor of a perfectly clean body, enveloped in a white garment. Pythagoras, we are informed, learnt these doctrines from certain Indian Gymnosophists or Brachmans, whom he met with at Babylon. I believe it would be impossible to name the individual, whose opinions exercised so powerful an influence over the religion and philosophy of Greece, as Pythagoras of Crotona. But his code of discipline embodies, not only the elements, but the very details of monasticism; which, in every form it assumes, is always based upon these two principles;—entire submission to the will of the superior, and the purification of the soul, by the mortification of the body.

Nor was it from the Pythagorean philosophy alone, that the early Christians derived those monastic notions, which they did not, could not, find in the Bible.

The Jewish sect, called Essæi, or Essenes, were much spoken of about the time of our Saviour's birth. They are said by Josephus,<sup>5</sup> and Philo,<sup>6</sup> to have been then in number about four thousand: and in the account of their customs given by these authors, we discover an astonishing agreement with the discipline of Pythagoras. The probation of the novices was completed in three years; during this time they were, in the first place, inured to the most laborious and self-denying exercises; after one year, they were permitted to minister to the elder brethren at meals, and in the bath, but were not allowed even to enter the house where they resided, until the end of the third year. They were incessantly taught the necessity of entire

<sup>5</sup> Ant., lib. 18. c. 1.

<sup>6</sup> περί Ἑλαιοθρηίας.



obedience to all their commands and wishes : and, though daily permitted to sit at their feet, and listen to their instructions, were never allowed to speak in their presence. The resemblance is preserved throughout the entire course of their discipline.—Simplicity and frugality in diet were among the fundamental maxims of both sects. It is not probable that the Essenes were allowed the use of any animal food whatever ; they appear to have had a horror of taking animal life, like the Pythagoreans ; and, like that sect, they also refused to offer bloody sacrifices, but sent meat-offerings to the temple at Jerusalem : for they never entered that, or any other city themselves, through fear of being polluted, by contact with the uninitiated. Their dress was a clean white garment ; and cleanliness with them, as with the Pythagoreans, was a most important part of their religion :—they always bathed in pure spring-water before their devotions. Their ethical code was evidently founded upon the Mosaic records ; they were taught the most exact performance of their word : and in every other particular, it as much excelled that of Pythagoras, as the morality of the Decalogue exceeds that of the Greek philosophy. But the same strict rules, both of living and thinking, were imposed in both disciplines ; bearing, even in their details, a very extraordinary resemblance to each other : and in both, they produced precisely the same effect, in repressing and subduing the passions and emotions of the mind. The Essenes were remarkable for their sober and grave deportment, and for their unflinching firmness in enduring tortures. Still preserving the close resemblance which we are endeavouring to point out, they also enjoined, and very generally observed, celibacy, though some of them were allowed to marry. Their avowed purpose, in this course of discipline, was, by the mortification and maceration of

the body, to afford to the soul a greater facility in obeying the attraction upwards, by which it was always influenced. —They professed the utmost reverence for the law and institutions of Moses: but their ritual was by no means free from idolatrous practices. They addressed their prayers to the sun in the morning before he rose.

Now it is plainly impossible that all these coincidences should occur in two systems, both springing up about the same time, in regions so widely separated, unless their founders had originally drawn from the same source. It must also be remembered, that the Essenes begin to be noticed in Jewish history almost immediately upon the return from the second captivity.—Is it not, then, highly probable, that it was at Babylon that the Jews, as well as Pythagoras, first learnt these very peculiar notions, and from the same instructors also, the Brachmans or Indian Gymnosophists?—If it be allowed me for a moment to pursue this digression, it was just about the period we are considering, that the followers of the extraordinary being Buddhu, the great reformer of the Hindu mythology, experienced a fierce persecution from the adherents of the ancient religion, which terminated in their expulsion from peninsular India. The votaries of Buddhu fled eastward and northward, planting, in some of the Hindu-Chinese nations, their religion unimpaired; in others, engrafting their strange notions of contemplative Theism upon the prevalent idolatries. That they also fled westward, there can, I think, be little doubt: we recognise them in the Brachmani of whom frequent mention is made, both in the later philosophical, and the ecclesiastical, writings;—the name of Buddhu himself is also known to these authors; he is mentioned by Clement of Alexandria as the head of one sect of the Indian Gymnosophists: a circumstance in itself

sufficient to prove that the Brachmani with whom the Greek philosophers came in contact were Buddhists.<sup>7</sup>—Had they been professors of Brahminism, they certainly would have reported nothing good of Buddhu. Neither do we offer any great violence to probability by the conjecture, that traces of their presence are discernible at this day, in the Soofees of Persia; a sect of Mohammedan deists, who profess to attain to assimilation with the nature of God, by the incessant contemplation of the divine perfections; and whose name is derived from the white woollen garment, which is the badge of their profession.<sup>8</sup> But whether the notions of Pythagoras and the Essenes originated with Buddhu or not, the important and difficult question of the rise and progress of the principle of monasticism, can never be fairly and fully discussed, unless it be taken into consideration, that the countries in which Buddhism is the established religion, abound with convents quite as much as those which profess the corrupt and debased Christianity of the Middle Ages; and that the rules and regulations of the two agree with such wonderful exactness, that the Catholic missionaries in Thibet were driven by it to the old subterfuge of supposing, that the author of evil himself, seeing the essential benefits which had been thereby conferred upon the Catholic church, had inspired the priests of the Great Lama with the Benedictine rule; in the hope that in their hands, it would equally benefit his own cause. But this is not the place where such an enquiry can with propriety be pursued. Our present

<sup>7</sup> 1 Strom., § 15. “Some of the Indians obey the precepts of Butta, and honour him as a God on account of his virtue.” In the same passage he divides the Indian Gymnosophists into two classes, the Sarmani and the Brachmani.

<sup>8</sup> Malcolm’s History of Persia.

purpose is abundantly answered if we have shown, that Christianity was neither the author nor the abettor of the abominations of monasticism; they were already rife in the world when the religion of Jesus Christ first appeared; —with the Jews as the highly popular tenets of the sect of the Essenes,<sup>9</sup> and with the Greeks under the still more influential form of the Pythagorean philosophy.

We shall soon find how deeply the minds of the early fathers were imbued with monastic notions, regarding celibacy: though our quotations from them will be necessarily limited by the nature of the subject, and by the unseemly manner in which they too often treat it.

The earliest proof I can discover of this bias towards celibacy is in the epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnæans; at the conclusion of which, the first notice occurs of an order of female ecclesiastics. St. Paul had directed that certain portions of the funds of the church should be set apart for the maintenance of aged widows:—it appears from the passage before us, that unmarried women were also supported by this fund, who were named by a most uncouth solecism, *Virgin-Widows*. —Tertullian plainly hints, that in his time, the practice had opened the door to great licentiousness, and very properly denominates them *monstrum in ecclesiâ*.<sup>10</sup> The virginal ecclesiastics of the other sex also seem to have occasioned scandal

<sup>9</sup> This coincidence was observed long ago: Eusebius the historian, quotes at length Philo's account of the Therapeutæ, or Essenes of Egypt, points out the many agreements between their regulations, and those of the Christian monastic system which prevailed in his time; and from thence comes to the conclusion, that the Therapeutæ were Christians. He does not seem for a moment, to have entertained the fact of the case, that the Christians had become Therapeutæ.—*Euseb. Eccl. Hist., lib. 2.*

<sup>10</sup> Miraculum, ne dicerim monstrum in ecclesiâ virgo-vidua. — *De Virg. Vel., c. 9.*

and inconvenience to the church, even in the days of Ignatius; he hints at this in his epistle to Polycarp, (c. 5.) “If any man can remain in a virgin state to the honour of the flesh of Christ, let him remain, without boasting: but if he boast he is undone.”

Three heretical sects are enumerated by Irenæus, who declared marriage to be unlawful and sinful.<sup>11</sup> The reasons assigned for its prohibition by some of these Heresiarchs, are so shockingly indecent and profane, that one cannot help hoping that the polemical furor of their orthodox antagonists has carried them somewhat beyond the bounds of exact truth, in stating the opinions they are combatting: but the maintenance of such a doctrine, by persons who scarcely regarded the Bible at all in their wild mythic systems, sufficiently proves, that it was not in the regulations which Christianity prescribes to the baser passions, that the monastic reverie of the sanctity of celibacy originated.

In the writings of Tertullian we shall find the fullest exposition of the doctrine of the church in the second century, upon this point also.—We have two tracts from his pen upon the subject,<sup>12</sup> both written after his conversion to Montanism;<sup>13</sup> and, of course, with an especial view to the establishment of the new doctrine revealed by

<sup>11</sup> The Saturnine Gnostics, *Adv. Hær.*, lib. 1. c. 22; the Marcionites, *id.* c. 30., and the followers of Tatian, *id.* c. 31. The errors of Marcion are very diffusely stated and refuted by Tertullian, *adversus Marcionem*: and those of both Marcion and Tatian by Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromates II. III.*, as well as by Irenæus.

<sup>12</sup> *De Exhortatione Castitatis* and *de Monogamiâ*.

<sup>13</sup> The two letters of Tertullian *ad Uxorem*, dissuading his wife from second marriage, and probably written in the immediate prospect of his own dissolution, are dictated by so very natural and allowable a feeling, and, moreover, breathe throughout, so pure a spirit of conjugal affection, that I cannot bring myself to include them in the censure, I am compelled to pass upon his other works on this subject.

that enthusiast, the entire prohibition of second marriages :—and that in enforcing this prohibition he committed no offence against the orthodoxy of the times, is evident, in the circumstance, that some of his silliest arguments are copied, almost verbatim, in the *Epistolæ familiares* of the fiery bigot, Jerome,<sup>14</sup> with a large accession of foul language from the exhaustless vocabulary of the latter saint. The mode in which he speaks of marriage, in every form, throughout these tracts, is abundantly confirmatory of the view we are taking of the question.—Nothing can be more plainly stated, than his conviction, that there is a peculiar sanctity inherent in virginity to which married persons can never attain. He asserts that, in a well-known passage of Scripture upon this subject,<sup>15</sup> the prohibitions to marry are revealed, while the permissions are only the unassisted opinions of the writer.<sup>16</sup>—A most palpable mistake ; inasmuch as St. Paul expressly states therein, that “ concerning virgins he has no commandment of the Lord ;”<sup>17</sup> and never mentions the subject, without repeating the same caution.<sup>18</sup> He likewise continually endeavours to run parallels between marriage, and the violation of the seventh Commandment ; both he declares to be the same in kind, that is, both unlawful, but different in degree.<sup>19</sup> He argues, that what it is good for a man not to do,<sup>20</sup> it is bad for him to do ;<sup>21</sup> and makes no secret of his desire to destroy marriage altogether, because it consists of that which is pollution : “ it follows, therefore, that it is best for a man not to touch a woman ; and the main sanctity of the virginal state consists in its entire

<sup>14</sup> Lib. 3., Epis. 5, of the selection of Canisius.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Cor. vii.

<sup>16</sup> De Exhortatione Castitatis, cc. 3, 4.

<sup>17</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 25.

<sup>18</sup> vv. 6, 7, 12, 26, 40.

<sup>19</sup> De Exh. Cas. c. 9.

<sup>20</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 1.

<sup>21</sup> De Monogamiâ, c. 9.

freedom from all affinity with fornication.”<sup>22</sup> He proceeds thus to recommend celibacy :—“ by continence thou shalt acquire great wealth of sanctity ; by impoverishing the flesh thou shalt enrich the spirit.—When the continent man prays to the Lord he is near heaven, when he reads the Scriptures he is altogether there, when he sings a psalm his heart sings also, when he adjures a demon he has faith in himself. If prayer out of a pure heart alone be profitable we must always exercise ourselves in continence, that our prayers may always profit us. If prayer be needful for men, daily and every moment, to just the same extent is virginity also needful. Prayer proceeds from the conscience, and if the conscience blushes the prayer blushes also.”<sup>23</sup> The tendency of all this is perfectly obvious ; a certain degree of pollution is necessarily contracted by married persons, from which celibates alone are free. Or, to approach nearer than I had intended, to the bounds which modern custom has most properly prescribed to this hateful subject, no perpetuation of the human species can take place under any circumstances, but the consciences of the parents are thereby necessarily exposed to a certain degree of sinful defilement. This was certainly the doctrine of Tertullian : and I again deny that there is any passage of Scripture which sanctions such an opinion.

In Clement of Alexandria the subject of marriage is also diffusely treated upon —The last chapter of the second and the whole of the third book of the *Stromates*, are almost

<sup>22</sup> De Exhor. Cast., c. 9.—Elsewhere he declares that marriage is the ordinance of an imperfect and immature dispensation ; and that the primæval law which occasioned the necessity for it, (Gen. i. 28,) was abrogated by the complete revelation of Montanus. It appears to have been his notion, that the perfection of Christianity would bring about the end of the world, by extinguishing the human race !—*Adv. Marc. I. 29.*

<sup>23</sup> Id., c. 10.

entirely occupied with it. This long dissertation is somewhat more lucidly arranged than is usual with its author.—He tells us, that all the heretical notions upon marriage then existing might be divided into two classes; the one consisting of those who held licentious doctrines, the other of those whose rule of morals exceeded that of the Scripture, and who refused the gifts of providence through hatred to the Giver;<sup>24</sup> both these he refutes. Against licentiousness, his doctrine is unexceptionable, and he quotes pertinent passages of Scripture, for the most part, in support of it.<sup>25</sup>—But he also falls into the same error which he afterwards condemns: he frames a stricter rule than the scriptural one.—His net has so broad a cast, and so wide a sweep, that it is next to impossible that the consciences of married persons should not be entangled therein.<sup>26</sup> Though in my judgment, no error has been more deeply fraught with disastrous consequences to society than this, I, of course, decline any lengthened remarks upon such a subject. But we may here notice, as one of its evil effects, the unnatural abomination of virgin marriages; which the present author certainly countenances,<sup>27</sup> which Tertullian strongly recommends,<sup>28</sup> and which appears to have attained to its perfection about the times of Jerome.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> 3 Strom., § 5.

<sup>25</sup> Idem, § 5, 14, 18.

<sup>26</sup> See idem, § 11, and throughout there is a constant allusion to it. See also *Pæd.*, lib. 2. c. 10, which is still worse. Something not very unlike it will also be found in Bishop Taylor's "Rules and Exercises of Holy Living," c. 2., § 3.—A book as a composition, exquisitely beautiful, but which would have proved more acceptable to the Church of Christ, had it contained more of the religion of the Bible, and less of that of the fathers.

<sup>27</sup> 3 Strom., § 6.

<sup>28</sup> *De Monog.*, c. 9.

<sup>29</sup> *U. s.* passim.



Upon the other class of errors his remarks are scriptural and sensible, for the most part : he boldly declares, that “ if the law is holy, marriage is holy also ; that marriage and fornication are as far asunder as God and the Devil ; and that it is quite impossible that the apostolic injunctions to moderation and continence could be intended to abrogate or prohibit marriage, inasmuch as the same epistles contain also innumerable injunctions regarding the duties of the married state.”<sup>30</sup> It is plain from hence, that the schools of Alexandria and of Carthage, were at issue upon this point ; and it is equally certain that the latter ultimately prevailed in good measure. Jerome, as we have seen, adopts all the opinions of Tertullian the Montanist upon this subject ; though he attacks Montanus with great acrimony.<sup>31</sup> Several other passages occur in the work before us to the same purport as that we have just quoted : but as they throw no new light upon the question, we content ourselves with merely referring to them :<sup>32</sup>—they are, with the abatement we have pointed out, scriptural and good.

We should, however, give a very wrong impression of this father’s opinions upon the subject, if we did not also quote his remarks upon the other aspect of it. Second marriages, in one place,<sup>33</sup> he permits, with St. Paul ; in another, he declares that monogamy is enjoined ;<sup>34</sup> and stigmatises

<sup>30</sup> 3 Strom., § 12.

<sup>31</sup> U. s., lib. 3., Ep. 11, ad Marcellam.

<sup>32</sup> 3 Strom., § 4, 6, 9, &c.

<sup>33</sup> Idem, § 1.

<sup>34</sup> Idem, § 12. By monogamy he means one marriage only, like Tertullian, as well as monogamy, as distinguished from polygamy ; though he sometimes makes the distinction : *μονογαμίαν καὶ τὴν περὶ τὸν ἕνα γάμον σεμνότητα*, § 1 ; so also, § 12, *πρὸς ἐντροπὴν δὲ καὶ ἀνακοπὴν τῶν εὐεπιφθόρων εἰς τὸν δευτερον γάμον*.

second marriage as fornication.<sup>35</sup> I think his mind was by no means settled upon this question, and that he did not sufficiently distinguish between second marriages and polygamy.

Upon the subject of celibacy, he has likewise fallen into the error we have noticed in the preceding authors.—He speaks of a profession of celibacy as a great grace, for which those to whom it is imparted should thank God, and not despise those who are married.<sup>36</sup> He exhorts them to adhere to their choice and not deflect from it; and to encourage them in it, he tells them that “he who shall be able to extend and increase the severity of his course of life, shall thereby acquire greater dignity with God on account of his pure continence, perfected according to his word: but if he transgress the rule he hath chosen, the stricter that rule the greater will his failure be.”<sup>37</sup> His notion was evidently, that matrimony and celibacy were two separate vocations, in both of which it was in the power of men to serve God:—and though he equalises their capacities in this respect, to a much greater extent than Tertullian, he, nevertheless, gives the preference, for the purposes of religion, to celibacy: and that, not in order that the believer thus unencumbered, might go forth to preach the gospel, and endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, but that he might be able to give himself more unreservedly to the contemplation of divine things, to harmonising the Greek philosophy with Christianity, and to the fantastical interpretation of Scripture, wherein, as he supposed, the true Christian Gnosis consisted.

There is another fiction in Christianity, which originated in these notions; and Clement of Alexandria has the bad eminence of being the first author of account who has

<sup>35</sup> § 12.

<sup>36</sup> § 18.

<sup>37</sup> § 12.

promulgated it. We need not say that there is not a shadow of scriptural authority for the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of the mother of our Lord. That the common speech of the Jews used in the Gospels, which was never very precise in its definitions of degrees of relationship, may have left room for the construction of an opposite argument, is not the question ; for, though I might be inclined to regard that argument as a highly artificial, and even fallacious one, I do not insist upon this point ; but assuming what cannot readily be denied, that we have no revelation upon the subject, I would regard it under another aspect.

The perpetual virginity, and its concomitant fables, the advanced age, previous marriage, and family of sons, of Joseph, the husband of Mary, are never mentioned, or hinted at, by Clemens Romanus, Barnabas, Ignatius, or Polycarp ; and if their silence makes but little for our argument, it at any rate proves nothing against it. But the entire absence of all allusion to the perpetual virginity in the Shepherd of Hermas is, I think, more important, as evidence against its antiquity ; there are so many places in the book where it would have served the author's purpose, that it is surprising, to say the least, he should not have made use of it.

We now proceed to the second century. I cannot find even a hint at the perpetual virginity in Justin Martyr, though he frequently alludes to the miraculous conception in his works ; and in a manner which shows him to have been by no means untainted with the error we are now considering.<sup>33</sup>

It is not alluded to in the writings of his pupils.

<sup>33</sup> See Apol. I., p. 74. C., &c. Dial. cum Tryph., pp. 262. B., 290. B., 297. C., 327. C., &c.

Irenæus follows Justin, in driving a comparison between the Virgin Eve, in whom all men died, and the Virgin Mary, in whose offspring all were made alive; but far from any hint at the perpetual virginity, he carries on the resemblance to the espousal of Joseph and Mary, which he compares with that of Adam and Eve.<sup>39</sup>

We have already seen that Tertullian was engaged in a controversy regarding virginity and second marriages; and that many of his extant works were occasioned by it. Now, upon both these points, can we conceive of any thing more important or influential, than the example of the Virgin Mary? The absence, therefore, of all allusion to the perpetual virginity, on the part of the Montanists, and of even a hint, at the second marriage which, according to these fables, brought the birth of our Lord within the pale of the Divine Law, on the part of the Sensualists, is, perhaps, as strong a negative testimony against their doctrinal existence at the time, as could well be imagined.

But what shall we say, when we find the same writer zealously defending the relationship of *consanguinity* between Christ, his mother, and brethren, in a comment upon Matt. xii. 47., against Apelles and other heretics, who denied it, for the purpose of impugning our Lord's humanity?<sup>40</sup> nay, absolutely doubting that Mary was then a believer in her son's doctrine! and winding up a long train of reasoning, all to the same effect, with a denial of the perpetual virginity in good set

<sup>39</sup> Iren. adv. Hær., lib. 3. c. 33., lib. 5. c. 19.

<sup>40</sup> *De Carne Christi*, c. 7. In the same book he copies the two preceding authors in the parallel between Eve and Mary, c. 17, and though many circumstances in the fable we are combatting would have greatly aided his illustration, he does not allude to one of them.

terms!!<sup>40</sup> We have now, at any rate, safely arrived at the conclusion, that the church *rejected* the doctrine we contend against, up to the end of the second century.

Clement of Alexandria, who wrote about eighteen years after the commencement of the third century, we have noticed as the first ecclesiastical author who believed in this fable. He thus introduces it, as an illustration, into a defence of the discipline of the secret ;—“ It would appear, that many persons suppose in these days, that Mary was no longer a virgin after the birth of her son :—but she was still a virgin.”<sup>41</sup> He then proceeds to narrate the fabulous circumstance upon which his assertion rests ; his authority for which is still extant. It is a spurious gospel ; a foul farrago of falsehood and of filth, deeply tainted with the heresies of those who deny our Lord’s humanity, entitled the *Protevangelion*.<sup>42</sup> In this sink of iniquity, the Alexandrian philosopher found the coarse fiction of the perpetual virginity : and the church of succeeding centuries “supped full” of monachism, greedily embraced it,<sup>43</sup> and would have accepted a doctrine so sea-

<sup>40</sup> *Maria virgo quantum a viro, non virgo quantum a partu.—Id., c. 24. :* see the whole chapter.

<sup>41</sup> 7 Strom., § 16. Ἄλλ’ ὥς εἰκέν, τοῖς παλλοῖς καὶ μέγρι νῦν δόκει ἡ Μαρίαμ λεχῶ εἶναι διὰ τὴν τῆ παιδὸς γένεσιν, ἣν εἶσα λεχῶ. It will be observed that in this passage Clement admits the fact which we have already ascertained from other authors :—he was introducing a new doctrine, and in opposition to the prevalent belief of the times.

<sup>42</sup> *Fabricii Codex Apocr. Nov. Test., Vol. I.* The passage to which Clement alludes, occurs p. 110., cc. 9, 10. I will not defile the page by quoting it in any language :—Clement’s reference to it shows plainly enough that he was ashamed of his authority. φασί τινες (αὐτὴν) παρθένον εὔρεθῆναι.

<sup>43</sup> See *Bishop Pearson’s Exposition of the Creed, p. 173, note ||*, which occurs in the course of a defence of the perpetual virginity, by far the most ingenious and astute that ever appeared. The profoundly learned Prelate observes : “Tertullian himself was produced as an asserter of this

sonable, on the authority of a name far less illustrious than that of Clement.

Enough is now before the reader to show, both that monastic notions existed in the church during the second century, and from whence those notions were derived.— Marriage was very generally imagined to partake of the nature of sin; and even by those who were most tolerant, it was hampered with innumerable regulations and observances; so that, to whichever opinion his spiritual guides might incline, the mind of a married person, possessed of any conscientious feeling, would hardly fail to be greatly harassed and perplexed. Celibacy, on the other hand, was loudly extolled, and zealously recommended by all parties; and, though we no where hear of vows of chastity, yet those who made the profession of it were called upon to hold fast that profession, and to increase the rigour of their abstinences and mortifications, as an unerring means of procuring large accessions of spiritual blessings: nor does it seem improbable that provision was made out of the funds of the church, for the maintenance of these virgin contemplatists.

If such was the state of this question in the second century, we cease to wonder when we find, that before the termination of the third, half the population of Egypt rushed, in a wild frenzy of fanaticism, into the deserts of the Thebaid, or the Salt Marshes of Libya, each vying with the other who dare plunge the deepest into the burning

opinion, (that is, an impugner of the perpetual virginity;) nor doth St. Hierom deny it, though I think he might have done it.” It was this remark which appeared to render it necessary, that in treating upon this doctrine, I should insist upon the negative testimony against it borne by the early fathers, and the works of Tertullian generally, as well as upon the positive evidence in the tractate of the latter author, *de Carne Christi*.

solitudes of the Sahara, or who could build his hut of reeds nearest the fatal verge of the marsh, whose stagnant waters exhaled pestilence and death :—that in the fourth, the first convent was founded at Bethlehem by certain opulent female devotees, at the instance of Jerome ; and that, very shortly afterwards, the whole of Christendom was covered with a cloud of friars and nuns, “ white, black, and grey, with all their trumpery.”

## CHAPTER X.

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### ASCETICISM.

OF the powerful influence which was exercised over the minds of men by the Pythagorean, or Buddhistical, notions whose origin and progress we have endeavoured to trace, we can give no instance more remarkable than the fact, that they were able to engraft upon Christianity an institution entirely new and foreign to its whole character and design. The active and energetic nature of this principle, is further illustrated by the rapidity with which it converted the moderation and self-denial enjoined in the New Testament, into the rankest asceticism.

The abstinence of the Gospel is in perfect harmony with the whole of that dispensation which is declared to be the “law of liberty.”<sup>1</sup> The motive or principle in which, like every other Christian duty, it is to originate, is thus inculcated:—“Provide yourselves treasures in heaven: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”<sup>2</sup> “Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.”<sup>3</sup> The operation of this principle is embodied in a single sentence: “let your moderation be known unto all men.”<sup>4</sup>—“Let the moderation of your desires after the means of temporal and worldly gratification, and your temperance and abstinence in their use, be

<sup>1</sup> Jas. i. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xii. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Col. iii. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Phil. iv. 5.



such, as that all men may take knowledge, that your affections are not set upon them.' All particular directions are included in this general injunction: not excepting those concerning fasting, with which, as a customary and harmless mode of expressing religious sorrow and humiliation, it formed no part of the mission of our Lord and his apostles to interfere. For, notwithstanding its recommendation by both, as a help to the exercise of devotion, mere abstinence from food, under any form, can never be binding, as a religious act, upon the conscience of His disciple who hath said, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man." <sup>5</sup>

This "commandment is exceeding broad," <sup>6</sup> as he who in simplicity and godly sincerity strives to fulfil it, will not fail to discover:—but, nevertheless, the early church manifested eager impatience to enlarge its dimensions. Symptoms of this change are to be found even in the Shepherd of Hermas. In the fifth Similitude of the third book, the writer is addressed by his guardian angel upon the subject of observing Stations,<sup>7</sup> while he was preparing for that ordinance. He commences in a very proper and scriptural strain, to point out the nature of a true fast:—"Ye know not what it is to fast unto God; this not a fast, for it is not profitable unto God. The Lord does not desire such a needless fast: for by fasting in this manner thou advancest nothing in right-

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xv. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Psal. cxix. 96.

<sup>7</sup> The dies stationarii were half fasts observed, according to Tertullian, on the authority of tradition.—*Adv. Psych.*, c. 12. They were kept on Wednesday and Friday in every Week:—on Wednesday, because on that day the Jews took counsel to destroy Christ:—on Friday, because on that day he was crucified; they were ordinarily observed to the ninth hour of the day, because that was the time of the supernatural darkness.

eousness. But the true fast is this : do nothing wicked in thy life, but serve God with a pure mind ; and keep his commandments and walk according to his precepts, nor suffer any wicked desire to enter into thy mind.”<sup>8</sup> We may safely infer from this passage, that the Stations were entirely destitute of apostolical authority ; an opinion which certainly prevailed also in Tertullian’s time.<sup>9</sup> Notwithstanding this, the angel of Hermas proceeds to point out, both by parable and precept, the excellence of *going beyond* the commands of God ; and sums up the whole in these words,—“Keep the commandments of God and thou shalt be approved, and shalt be written in the number of those that keep his commandments. But if, besides those things which the Lord hath commanded, thou shalt add some good thing, thou shalt purchase to thyself a greater dignity, and shalt be more in favour with the Lord than thou shouldst otherwise have been.” “The Station, therefore, is good and pleasing, and acceptable to the Lord.”

Now where, in the Bible, I shall be glad to know, did Hermas or his angel discover that a mere act of bodily mortification is, in itself, acceptable to the God of love ? —Every thing of this nature is propounded, throughout both the Old and New Testaments, as means conducive to the spiritual improvement of him who performs them ; not that the Almighty takes pleasure in the maceration and sufferings of his creatures. I am equally ignorant of any scriptural authority for the opinion, that it is in the power of man to exceed the commands of God. For the holiness of God himself is the pattern and exemplar which they

<sup>8</sup> This passage is a strong presumption in favour of the high antiquity of the book, which some have been inclined to doubt.

<sup>9</sup> Stationes nostras, ut in *serm* constitutas novitatis nomine incusant. —*Adv. Psy.*, c. 10. He goes on to inform us that they were then newly reappointed by the paraclete Montanus.

set forth for our imitation; “be ye holy, for I am holy:” he then that goes about to add to them, proposes to be holier than God: a notion as absurd as it is impious. But again, we assert that such an addition would be sinful if it were possible; for the state of mind which God requires in his servants is, an earnest desire to fulfil his revealed will in all things; and consequently, to exceed the commandment, is just as much an act of disobedience as to fall short of it. But why seek the living among the dead? Austerities have evidently, according to this writer, an abstract and absolute value with God; and, therefore, the more frequent their repetition, the larger the amount of merit to the ascetic; and these notions he found, not in the doctrines of the Gospel, but in the philosophy of Pythagoras.

To Tertullian we are indebted for a further illustration of the progress of this error in the church. As we are not now engaged in bringing together all the passages from each author which bear upon our subject, but only so much of them as shall suffice to establish the existence of the doctrines we point out and endeavour to combat, we merely premise, that many very strong recommendations of fasting and abstinence are scattered over the works of this father, and proceed at once to a brief epitome of his tract, *adversus Psychicos*. He commences this furious hortative to fasting in all its branches auspiciously; with a passage far too indecent either to translate or quote.<sup>10</sup> To such a

<sup>10</sup> He is tracing the connection between the multi-vorantia and multi-nubentia of the sensualists (*ψυχικοί*;) by which very courteous title, he distinguishes all those who did not keep the exact number of fasts prescribed by Montanus; nor hold with that crazy impostor, or enthusiast, that second marriages were adultery.—*C. 1.* Clement of Alexandria, who was not a believer, speaks of this name in a manner which shows, pretty plainly, that he did not at all enjoy his title of honour.—See 4 *Strom.*, § 13.

frenzy does this raving fanatic lash himself, in favour of the inordinate catalogue of fasts prescribed by Montanus, and his two prophetesses, and against those who presume to curtail, by a single moment, their full duration, that, before he quits this part of his subject, his words, as well as his sentiments, are licentious. When he becomes quotable, we find the points upon which the orthodox had attacked the Montanists to be, first,—the observance of *jejunia propria*, peculiar fasts; that is, fasts not prescribed by the universal church:—second, prolonging the Station-fast to the evening, instead of terminating it at the ninth hour:—third, in the fasts called *Xerophagiæ*,<sup>11</sup> wherein the orthodox abstained only from the flesh and wine, the Montanists prohibited also all juicy fruits, and the use of the bath. Here, then, is a complete schism in the church, the two sections of which revile each other with a most polemical fluency of foul names; the subject of their dispute being, the number of fasts, and the mode of their observance, required of Christians; and both loudly professing themselves, all the while, the zealous disciples of him whose only precept concerning fasting, was, “When ye fast be not as the hypocrites are; for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast: but thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy father which is in secret.”<sup>12</sup> When we further consider, that all this was enacted, scarcely a century and a half after the first propagation of Christ’s religion, we have made out a case of fatuity, perfectly unaccountable,

<sup>11</sup> This fast was a restriction to dry food only, as its name imports.—The origin both of this and the station-fast was really, the discipline of Pythagoras and the Essenes.

<sup>12</sup> Matt. vi. 16—18.

in my opinion, upon any merely natural principle ; and to which (except in our present subject) we shall hardly find a parallel.

He proceeds to recount the arguments of his opponents, who regarded the passion-week fast only as obligatory upon Christians ; the rest as merely voluntary. As they are, for the most part, founded upon pertinent passages in the New Testament, they are, of course, unanswerable ;<sup>13</sup> the summing up which he puts into the mouth of the adversary, is really admirable :—“ I will believe with all that is within me ; I will love God and my neighbour as myself : on these two precepts hang all the law and the prophets, and not on the emptiness of my stomach and bowels.” In his attempt to answer this, he sets out with the somewhat startling assertion, that fasting is in itself valuable and available with God ;<sup>14</sup> and he then endeavours to explain the reason : it is as follows ;—“ Adam ate, and fell ; we must fast, that we may be recovered.—Adam’s sin consisted in eating, all men must abstain from eating, that they may expiate that offence ; man must atone to God in the same matter as that wherein he first offended ; that is, by abstinence.”<sup>15</sup>—Though all this has more the air of a figure of speech than of an argument, he applies it strictly to the latter use : he adduces it in proof of his premise, that fasting is available and acceptable with God ; and upon this he grounds the whole of his reasoning. Moreover, it must

<sup>13</sup> Acts xv. 28, 29 ; Gal. iv. 9, 10 ; Isa. lviii. 4, 5 ; 1 Cor. viii. 8 ; Matt. xv. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Valet apud deum inanitas ista, c. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Quis jam dubitabit omnium erga victus macerationum hanc fuisse rationem, qua rursus interdicto cibo et observato pracepto primordiale jam delictum expiaretur ; ut homo per eandem materiam causæ satis Deo faciat per quam offenderat : id est per cibi interdictionem.—*Idem*.

be borne in mind, that in thus arguing, our author is by no means bringing forward any of the peculiarities of Montanism, by adopting a course of reasoning which the orthodox would have condemned. This error stands charged, with pushing the then prevalent notions of discipline to an insane extreme, rather than, with originating opinions in themselves erroneous.—The orthodox would have applied exactly the same argument in defence of their prescription, against the laxer heretics. All this we infer from the circumstance, that our author was never accused of heresy on this account; far from it, his mode of defence was admired and imitated, long after the ordinances in whose support he applied it were forgotten.<sup>16</sup> Fasting, therefore, which the New Testament enjoined only with a regard to the spiritual advancement of the believer, and which Hermas in the first century termed, a good thing to be added to the commandments, has acquired in the second century, by as unequivocal an acknowledgment as words can convey, that tangible value with God, which we have already endeavoured to show that the notion of the preceding period assigned to it. All allusion to the spiritual state of the devotee, is at an end, or nearly so.—Fasting is not a means of Grace, but an expiatory offering to God, for the sin of our first parents in eating the forbidden fruit, which is efficacious for the removal of the taint and corruption, which our nature has thereby contracted.—Evidently, therefore, the more frequent and severe the fast, the more perfect the purification of the devotee! Are we ascertaining the tenets of the followers of the God of Christianity or of the gods of Hindooism?

We glance at the remainder of the tract, in order to confirm our account of his leading argument, as well as to

<sup>16</sup> See above page, 138.

show how conscious the writer was, that the whole weight of the Scripture authority was overwhelmingly against him, and the miserable shifts to which he resorts to evade its force. He endeavours to prove the doctrine of expiatory fasting from Scripture ; and the first step of his argument is a stumble, and an awkward one. If fasting be the means of recovering the favour of God, whence is it that the permission to eat was extended after the deluge, instead of being curtailed ? for God permitted to Adam the use of herbs and fruits only ; but he allowed Noah to eat flesh also. The answer to this untoward objection is worthy of the entire argument.—“ God conceded this greater liberty, in order that man might acquire more merit by fasting ; and that by the practice of a greater abstinence, upon the occasion of a greater licence, he might make a greater expiation of the primary offence.”<sup>17</sup> He proceeds to quote a number of other passages from the Scriptures, and to comment upon them ; frequently in a strain of inconceivable absurdity. I forbear quoting them, as we are already in possession of the whole of his reasoning.—His citations soon bring him again into an unfortunate dilemma ; for it suddenly occurs to him, that nearly all the worthies, whose powers of abstinence he has so strongly commended, were Jews, and, therefore, fasted under a dispensation of ceremonies, which the Gospel has entirely abolished. The condition in which his argument escapes from this difficulty is truly pitiable.—“ With one exception,<sup>18</sup> the Christian fasts were appointed at *times* altogether different from those of the Jews : ”<sup>19</sup> therefore, Christianity effects no

<sup>17</sup> Quo magis primordiale delictum expiaretur majoris abstinentiæ operatione, in majoris licentiæ occasione.—C. 4., *fin*.

<sup>18</sup> The Passover, Easter.

<sup>19</sup> C. 14.

change whatever in the spirit and temper of Judaism ; and derives its title to be termed a new dispensation, merely from the circumstance, that it abolishes the fasts, and some other ceremonies of the older religion, and prescribes new ones. This contemptible evasion is his only refuge from an objection of his own raising !

In the same spirit of quibble and misinterpretation he informs us, that where the New Testament writers condemn these formal and needless abstinences, they wrote by the Spirit of prophecy, against the errors of Marcion, Tatian and others, who enjoined a perpetual fast out of hatred and contempt for the Creator of the world.<sup>20</sup> After quoting the case of Hophni and Phineas, who were punished, not for sacrilege, but for eating, and of the prophet sent to Jeroboam, who was slain by the lion, not for his disobedience, but for his crapulary indulgence, he tells us that, on the other hand, the fasts of the Heathens themselves, though instituted in honour of false gods, and intermixed with idolatrous rites, were, nevertheless, acceptable and efficacious with God ; he instances the Ninevites.—The resemblance between the fasts of Montanism and those of Heathenism, he traces, as usual, to the prescience of the Devil ; who, foreseeing their excellence, forestalled and anticipated them in the ritual of idolatry. And that the Devil had a good deal to do with the whole matter, we shall probably all agree : though it would seem to fall in better with his ordinary mode of operation, to to engraft Heathenism upon Christianity, rather than Christianity upon Heathenism.

He proceeds to sing the praises of fasting in the following strain of coarse vehemence :—“ O Saint ! God is thy belly, and thy lungs are his temple, and thy stomach

<sup>20</sup> C. 15.



is his altar, and his priest is thy cook, and the Holy Spirit is thy savour of cooked meats, and his grace is thy sauce, and prophecy is the eructation of thy full stomach ! But O thou that indulgest thy gorge ! thou art like Esau, thou wilt sell thy birth-right, any day, for a mess of pottage ; thy charity boils in thy pots, thy faith warms in thy kitchens, thy hope lies in a cradle spit."<sup>21</sup> Then follows as filthy passage as you shall find in Petronius Arbiter. And this is the Christianity of the second century.

Clement of Alexandria has treated the subject of fasting in a manner which curiously contrasts with that of the preceding writer, and which well illustrates the very different views which two individuals obtain of the same subject, though holding the same sentiments upon it, when their observations are made through the media of different mental prepossessions. The bent of Tertullian's mind was towards fanaticism ; Clement, on the other hand, dearly loved the Greek philosophy : and the design of nearly all his remaining works, is to harmonize the Eclectic<sup>22</sup> system with that of Christianity. Accordingly, while the former writer, as we have seen, gives the full energies of his mind to the increase of the number and rigour of the stated fasts, and to rendering more stringent upon men's consciences the canon that prescribed them, Clement lays down a rule of abstinence to the full as rigid, in a book whose purpose is to identify the moderation of Christianity with the happy medium of the Aristotelian philosophers ; its self-denial with the supreme good of the Platonists ; and its entire system with the discipline of Pythagoras !

The second book of the *Pædagogue* is an expansion

<sup>21</sup> Cc. 14, 15. See a similar passage in Clem. Alex., *Pæd.* 2. 1.

<sup>22</sup> See page 33.

into twelve tedious chapters, of that which the Apostle had already declared by the Holy Ghost in a single sentence; “let your moderation be known unto all men.” He attempts to establish a rule for all the common functions of life, eating, drinking, feasting, laughing, sleeping, &c, —but never once enforces it by the apostle’s sanction, “the Lord is at hand :”<sup>23</sup>—he merely adduces argument in favour of abstinence drawn from the nature of things, some of which are absurd even to madness; pronounces philippics against excess, and only appeals to Scripture in order to show the value and acceptableness with God of the course he recommends. His rule is sufficiently rigid; he praises a perpetual Xerophagia,<sup>24</sup> alternating with full fasts.—For those initiated into the occult doctrines, this is indispensable, or nearly so:<sup>25</sup> but for the young and uninitiated, he allows the use of roasted or boiled flesh occasionally, with such vegetable food as may be eaten uncooked; (c. 1.) and also wine, in small quantities, but only that produced in the country of which the drinker is an inhabitant; all importation of foreign wines he forbids as sinful, and counteracting the purpose of the Creator.<sup>26</sup> (c. 2.) In the same spirit he entirely prohibits the use of

<sup>23</sup> Phil. iv. 5.

<sup>24</sup> See note 11.

<sup>25</sup> 7 Strom. § 6.

<sup>26</sup> Tertullian utters exactly the same sentiment, with regard to the importation and use of foreign articles of dress and ornament, in the precious piece of spiritual buffoonery entitled *De Habitu Muliebris*, c. 9.; he declares the very desire after them to be sinful concupiscence: and in a brochure of still more wretched absurdity (if that be possible) *De Virginibus velandis*, c. 10., he proclaims the unlawfulness and wickedness of the whole art of dyeing, as a most impious interference with the order of providence; “if it had been the divine will,” says this profound reasoner, “that wool should be of a purple or scarlet hue, he would have created purple and scarlet sheep.” We will pursue the argument one step further; if the dyeing of a

all costly furniture, (c. 3.) of all music except sacred, of laughter in toto, (c. 5.) of perfumes and garlands,<sup>27</sup> (c. 8.)

fleece of wool be sinful, then is the manufacture of woollen cloth sinful also:—for, had it been intended that such a fabric should exist, sheep would, doubtless, have been created with broad cloth, ready made, upon their backs, instead of wool! I have one other remark to make upon these passages. A late writer greatly rejoices in the discovery, from a passage in the book *De Animâ*, (c. 30.) that Tertullian was an anti-populationist; the passage deeply deplores the dreadful evils of “pleasant farms smiling where formerly were arid and dangerous wastes; of flocks and herds expelling wild beasts; of harbours being excavated,” and many other equally calamitous results of a surcharge of people, and informs us, that “in consequence of these, we no longer look upon famine, and wars, and earthquakes as positive evils, but remedies provided by Providence,” &c. “Professor Malthus himself,” remarks the learned and enraptured divine, “could not have lamented more feelingly the miseries resulting from an excess of population; or have pointed out with greater acuteness the natural checks to that excess.” Sorry as I am to damp the pleasure which those who think with this author upon these subjects, will naturally feel at the discovery of so early a proficient in their favourite science, (and especially when it arises from so rational and benevolent a source,) I am, nevertheless, compelled to call their attention to the passages I have just quoted; which afford lamentable proof, that however versed Tertullian may have been in the principles of Professor Malthus, he was sadly to seek in those of Professor M'Culloch; and that, notwithstanding his acute apprehension of the evils of over-population, he can scarcely, with propriety, be canonised as the Patron Saint of Political Economy.

<sup>27</sup> His reasons against the use of wreaths of flowers are manifold.—1st. Because it is not proper to cull the fields of their beauties and weave them together; 2nd. because flowers worn in the hair refrigerate the brain, and render the use of perfumes necessary as counteractives; 3rd. because no delight can accrue, either to the eye from the sight of them, or to the olfactory organs from their perfume, when garlands of flowers are bound round the hair, and thus the purpose of their creation is defeated; 4th. because flowers were dedicated to heathen deities; 5th. because our Lord was crowned with thorns, and, therefore, it is highly unbecoming in his disciples to be crowned with flowers.” Extravagant and foolish as these reasons may appear, they seem to have possessed considerable influence at the time. Some of the worst of them will be found in Tertullian, *de Coronâ Militis*, c. 5.

of ornamented sandals, (c. 11.) of gold, gems and embroidered garments,<sup>28</sup> (c. 12.) of feather beds and carved bed-posts; of sleep itself, his arguments against which are perfectly laughable, (c. 9.)—nay, he carries his prohibitions further than I shall follow him. (c. 10.)

Now I am willing to admit that much allowance is to be made here, for the state of extreme laxity in which the morals of mankind were sunk, when Christianity first visited the earth; which compelled all the ethical writers of the times, to enter into long dissuasives against excesses and vices, the very name and remembrance of which have now happily perished, or are only called to mind to excite unqualified disgust and abhorrence, even in the most profligate; and in no writer is this more apparent than in the author before us. Nothing, we know, is more natural than that a mind impressed by whatever cause, with the excellence of moral virtue, but compelled, nevertheless, by the subject in hand, to fix its constant regards upon so deformed a picture, should, at length, start from it with horror, and fly into the opposite extreme of a strict and unnecessary rigour. It must also be thankfully acknowledged, that the rigour

<sup>28</sup> The following invective against jewels, and the use of them by females, from Tertullian, is a close approach to madness. "A pearl is nothing more than the scurf of an oyster.—It is said that some precious stones are found in the heads of serpents.—Be this far from a Christian woman, that she should be indebted for her decorations to a serpent! Will she tread upon the serpent's head, while she binds that which came out of his head upon her own head?"—*De Cultu Mul.*, c. 6. All this is worthy of a book which commences with a fierce philippic against the sex in general, to the following tune; "Evam te esse nescis O Mulier?—Tu es *janua diaboli*," &c., &c. He is far surpassed, however, by our Alexandrian philosopher, who, in the place referred to, spiritualizes the pearl in a matchless strain of pure pellucid nonsense. He talks of "the *oyster* regeneration adhering to the flesh of him who is immersed in the baptismal waters, and producing the *pearl* Christ." Tertullian's, may be madness, but this is idiocy.

so originated, was wonderfully overruled by the unerring wisdom of the supreme Disposer of events, to the accomplishment of that great and universal moral purification which certainly took place, when Christianity was established as the religion of the empire, even its enemies being the judges; and to which we are indebted, in a much larger measure than we imagine, for the greatly ameliorated cast of manners that prevails in the present day.<sup>29</sup> But all this affords not even the shadow of a defence for the error we are considering. The present author also entirely overlooked the reasons and motives with which the Bible would have furnished him, and seeks the sanctions for his scheme of morals, in the maxims of that very philosophy and heathenism under whose full influences the horrible depravity he describes had grown up. Where, we may well ask, was the wisdom of rejecting that which he knew must suc-

<sup>29</sup> We shall never know the extent of our obligations to Christianity. The book we are now considering (the second *Pædagogus*) probably abounds with more details of ancient manners and customs, than are contained in any other work of antiquity. And the eye of God never gleamed with indignation upon a scene of more desperate wickedness, and more abandoned profligacy, than was presented by the heathen world in the second century. But it is delightful to observe the mild and gentle influences of Christianity diffusing themselves through this mass of corruption, harmonising its jarring elements, and rapidly raising the moral tone of society to the standard of its own high and holy requisitions. The book before us is in reality a description of this great work in process; it is a series of contrasts between the existing manners of the Heathen, and the existing manners of the Christians.—And no where, in my judgment, does this father appear to so much advantage as here; where, in the true spirit of the religion which he sincerely, though erroneously professed, he does not disdain to employ his learning and eloquence, in enforcing upon the observance of ordinary Christians, rules of conduct and good breeding, for the common occasions and occurrences of life. Though containing many errors and absurdities, (which I scruple not at all, to expose,) there is, nevertheless, no work of the early fathers which will better repay an attentive perusal, than the second book of the *Pædagogus*.

ceed, for the purpose of giving another trial to that, of which he was surrounded with so many tokens that it had signally failed? But Clement's religion was altogether "spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men and not after Christ."<sup>30</sup> He had principle enough to embrace and profess Christianity in times of extreme peril, but he had not enough of the root of the matter in him to enable him to cast down the idol of his heart, philosophy, and honestly to receive Christ's doctrine as Christ in his word propounded it to him.

To pursue, for a moment, the comparison between Tertullian and Clement. The former, though bitterly hating the Gnosticism or philosophical Christianity of the latter, never scrupled to borrow from philosophy either opinions or motives that fell in with the impetuous and headlong torrent of his argument; as in the present instance, where his reasons for the Christian fasts are altogether those of the Pythagorean and Essenian ascetics, though the source is unacknowledged. Clement, on the other hand, glories in being the disciple of philosophy; constantly quotes the philosophers in support of his canon of discipline, which he does not conceal that he had entirely borrowed from them; nay, absolutely enjoins upon Christians the use of the white garment of Pythagoras, on the authority of Plato.<sup>31</sup>

Monachism and Asceticism, then, were introduced into Christianity, not from the Bible, but from the Buddhistical or Pythagorean philosophy: and, like the other errors

<sup>30</sup> Col. ii. 8.

<sup>31</sup> Pæd. 2. c. 10., id. 3. c. 11. In this, doubtless, originated the white Friars, &c., of the Roman Catholics, and probably also the Alb or Surplice; which, now that the habit controversy is as much forgotten as Clement's Gnosticism, few, I think, will be found to deny that it is a harmless custom, as it is certainly a decorous and highly becoming one.

we have considered, their mighty and baneful influence continued to be exerted upon the visible church, ages after the semi-heathenism which led to their introduction was dispelled and forgotten.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> According to the early fathers there were two ways of attaining to Christian Perfection.—The one was by martyrdom, which we shall shortly have to consider, (Chapter XII.); the other was by the practice of such a course of mortifications and macerations as should elevate the ascetic to the divine impatibility of evil impressions.—See Clemens Alex. 4 *Strom.* § 22. *a. f.*, 5 *Strom.* § 11. § *v.*, 7 *Strom.* § 14, 15. As this error, which is a mere corollary of the Pythagorean doctrines we have been investigating, was peculiar to those times and passed away with them, we shall not detain the reader with quotations concerning it; but rather illustrate its effects, and those of the entire system, at a later period, by the following anecdote from Cotelarius, p. 541., and Zöega, p. 343., *ubi supra*.—"Father Macarius relates, 'I was once in the desert, and there came to me two youths, one of whom had a beard, but the other had only down upon his cheek;' and they said, 'we have heard of thy fame, and the fame of the desert, and we are come to see thee,' and they bowed themselves to the ground and said, 'we would dwell here.' And I saw that they had been brought up delicately, and were the children of rich parents; and I said, 'ye cannot remain here;' and the older said, 'then will we go to another place.' And it came into my mind, why do I send them away that they may be offended, labour will soon make them depart of themselves. So I said, 'come hither, and build yourselves a cell if ye will;' and they said, 'show us the place, and we will build it.' Then one of the elders gave them tools, and a scrip with bread and salt, and showed them the hard rock, and said, 'hew stones from hence, and build your cell, and cut reeds from the marsh, and thatch it, and then dwell in it;' for he thought they would soon be weary of their labour, and depart. But they finished it, and then came to me, and said, 'What shall we do in our cell?'—and I said, 'make baskets;' and I took palm leaves, and showed them how to plait them, and join them together, and I said, 'When ye have made baskets, take them to the steward, and he will give you bread for them.'—Then I departed, and they meekly fulfilled whatsoever I commanded them; and for three years they never came to me. Then I thought with myself, How is this? They that dwell far off come to me for spiritual advice, but these youths neither come to me, nor to any one; only at church they receive the Eucharist in perfect silence. And I prayed the Lord, with fasting, that he would reveal to me their manner of life.

Then I arose, and went to their cell, that I might see what they did. When I knocked, they opened, and saluted me silently. And when I had prayed, I sat down: and when the elder had made a sign to the younger to go out, he sat and platted palm leaves, without uttering a word. And at the ninth hour he struck the table lightly with his mallet, and the younger came in and made a little pottage, and placed it on the table when the elder gave him a sign to do so; and he put three cakes of bread upon the table, and stood silent. And I said, 'arise, let us eat;' and we arose and ate. Then he brought a pitcher of water, and we drank. And when the evening came, the elder said to me, 'wilt thou depart?' and I said, 'No; but I will pass the night here.' Then they spread a mat for me, and when I had laid down, they spread their own mat at my feet, and loosed their cinetures, and lay down in their garments. Then I besought the Lord that he would reveal their spiritual state unto me. And at midnight the elder touched the side of the younger, and they arose and girt themselves, and spread their hands to heaven. I saw them, though they perceived it not, for they supposed that I slept. Then were my eyes opened, and I saw that when the youngest opened his mouth to pray, a lamp of fire went forth and ascended upwards: but an unbroken column of flame issued from the mouth of the elder and reached unto heaven. And I knew that the younger still strove with the wicked one, but the elder had attained to perfection. I closed my eyes, and passed the night in silent prayer. When I arose in the morning, both were laid upon their mat, but they slept the sleep of death! I called the brethren together, saying, 'come see the martyrdom of the young strangers!' We dug their grave in silence; we girded them with their own cinetures. We laid them side by side, and covered them with the sands of the desert."

If this be the true spirit of Christianity, far from being a blessing to mankind, a vial more fully charged with the fierceness of the wrath of God was never poured upon the earth, than its entire dispensation! But, nevertheless, there is a frightful earnestness of sincerity in the deeply mistaken pietism of these enthusiasts that never fails to rivet my attention to every thing that relates to the fathers of the desert.



## CHAPTER XI.

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### ECCLESIASTICAL POLITY AND PERSONS.

HAVING gone through the Ritual of Christianity in the two first centuries, I now turn, reluctantly, to the uninviting, (and, to a layman, invidious) subject that remains, before our view of the external discipline of the church, during this period, is completed.

Upon the Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament, conscious of my own inability to add at all to the truths which have been elicited, by the long and irritating discussions which that question has undergone, I shall not presume to enter into any detail here; but will rather proceed, at once, to the passages in the early fathers which appear to me to contain objectionable doctrines on the point, and then give the places of Scripture upon which my objections are founded.

In the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, the following passage occurs:—"The chief priest has his proper services; and to the priests their proper place is assigned, and to the Levites appertain their proper ministries; and the layman is confined within the bounds of what is commanded to laymen: let every one of you, therefore, brethren, bless God in his proper station, not exceeding the rule of service that is appointed to him. The daily sacrifices are not offered every where, but only at Jerusa-

lem : not at any place there, but only at the altar before the temple ; being first diligently examined by the high-priest. The apostles have preached unto us from our Lord Jesus Christ ; Jesus Christ from God, Christ, therefore, was sent by God, the apostles by Christ ; so both were orderly sent according to the will of God ;—these, being filled with the Holy Spirit, went abroad, publishing that the kingdom of God was at hand.—And thus preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first fruits of their conversions to be bishops and deacons over such as should afterwards believe, having first proved them by the Spirit.—Nor was this any new thing ; seeing that long before it was written concerning bishops and deacons. For thus saith the Scripture in a certain place, ‘I will appoint their bishops in righteousness, and their deacons in faith.’<sup>1</sup> And what wonder if they to whom such a work was committed by God in Christ, established such officers as we have mentioned ; when even that blessed and faithful servant in all his house, Moses, set down in Holy Scriptures all things that were commanded of him ?” After giving the particulars of the miraculous selection of Aaron for the priesthood, as related Num. xvii., he proceeds ;—“What think ye, brethren ? Did not Moses before know what should happen ? Yes, verily ; but to the end there might be no division nor tumult in Israel, he did in this manner, that the name of the true and only God might be glorified.—So, likewise, our apostles knew by our Lord Jesus Christ that there should contentions arise upon account of the episcopacy.—And, therefore, having a perfect foreknowledge of this, they appointed persons as we have before said ; and then gave directions how, when they died, other approved men should undertake their

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lx. 17.

office.—Wherefore, we cannot think, that those may be justly thrown out of their office, who were either appointed by them, or afterwards chosen by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole church; and who with all lowliness and innocency ministered to the flock of Christ in peace without self-interest; and were for a long time commended by all.—For it would be no small sin in us, should we cast off those from the episcopate, who offer the gifts holily and without blame.—Blessed are those presbyters who have finished their course before those times; for they have now no fear lest any one should turn them out.”<sup>2</sup>

In this curious and very important passage there are three points which demand our attentive consideration. These are, the appointment, the order, and the authority of the Christian ministry. The appointment was plainly in the entire church; the avowal of this fact<sup>3</sup> in the passage before us, is corroborated by another, wherein he advises the Corinthian ministers, concerning whom the schism arose, to say, “if there be contention, and strife, and schisms through me, I will leave you, I will go wherever ye will, I will do whatever *shall be decided by the majority*.”<sup>4</sup> This mode of appointment took

<sup>2</sup> Clem. Ep. ad Cor., § 40—44.

<sup>3</sup> συνευδοκησάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας πάσης, u. s. § 44. Henry Hammond, an advocate of the powers of the clergy, with more zeal than discretion, translates this; applaudente, aut congratulante totâ Ecclesiâ, and adds in a triumphant parenthesis (nihil hic de *acceptatione* totius Ecclesiæ)—*Episcopatus Jura*, p. 278. He forgot that he was establishing a distinction without a difference; for whether the church applauded or congratulated the ordaining ministers, either act necessarily included the approval of their choice, and consequently the acceptance of the object of it. Archbishop Wake dare be honest; and translates it “with the consent of the whole church;” which is certainly, and beyond all controversy, the right translation.

<sup>4</sup> ὅπο τῇ πλ. π. 95, § 57.

place on the death of the apostles; while they lived, they themselves, or their immediate companions, ordained elders,<sup>5</sup> being inspired in their choice of persons by the miraculous agency of the Spirit. That an arrangement so important as this should not be mentioned or alluded to in the canonical writings, is certainly a strong presumption in favour of the opinion, that Ecclesiastical Polity formed no part of the New Testament Revelation.

The order of the Ministry in the primitive church is plainly declared in this passage. It recognises two degrees of rank only for ecclesiastical persons; the one named indifferently bishops (overseers) and elders, the other deacons or ministers. Several individuals of both these classes ministered to the church at Corinth.<sup>6</sup> No very exact classification, however, seems to have been intended, by these designations; the duties of both are included in the terms, episcopate,<sup>7</sup> or office of a bishop, and diaconate,<sup>8</sup> or office of a deacon:—agreeing exactly with the little we find upon this subject in the Scriptures. The Ephesian ministers are termed presbyters,<sup>9</sup> and bishops;<sup>10</sup> and in the same passage, the office of St. Paul the apostle is styled, “the office of a deacon.”<sup>11</sup> St. Peter, in the same manner,

<sup>5</sup> Tit. i. 5.

<sup>6</sup> The endeavour to extend the superscription of this Epistle to the whole of Achaia by the help of the phrase *τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ παροικίᾳ Κόρινθον*; which they translate “the church dwelling at and near Corinth,” instead of “at Corinth,” is a mere quibble; for which the only excuse is, the spirit of bitter vehemence in which the controversy was carried on by both parties. See Hammond, *Ep. Jur. Diss.* 5. c. 2.

<sup>7</sup> ἐπισκόπη.

<sup>8</sup> λειτουργία, διακονία.

<sup>9</sup> Acts xx. 17.

<sup>10</sup> Ver. 28.

<sup>11</sup> διακονία, v. 24.

exhorts the presbyters to fulfil the duties of a bishop;<sup>12</sup> and St. Paul, in the epistle to the Hebrews, extends the same exhortation to all sorts and conditions of men in the church.<sup>13</sup> That bishops and deacons were the only orders known in the apostolic churches is also evident; the epistle to the Philippians is superscribed to the saints which are in that city, *with the bishops and deacons*.

The authority of the Christian ministry, is by far the most important question which the passage presents for discussion. So great is the diversity of opinions upon this point, that our safest course will be carefully to possess ourselves of the New Testament doctrine regarding it, before we proceed further.

The entire abolition of the Aaronical priesthood, together with the ritual administered by that order, is so unequivocally declared, and made the basis of an argument which establishes one of the offices of our Lord,<sup>14</sup> that the fact can be no longer doubtful with those who admit the authenticity of the Revelation. It follows, "that the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity, a change also of the law;"<sup>15</sup> and surely, the law which regarded the authority and maintenance of the order abolished, would be among the first to undergo the change.—No passage, therefore, from the Old Testament, prescribing to either of these particulars, can, with any shadow of propriety, be adduced in support of similar claims on the part of the Christian ministry. There is an equal impropriety in speaking of the ministers of Christ as the successors, either to the authority of the Jewish priesthood, or to any of the titles or offices attached to that institution. Most justly, therefore, in my opinion, did

<sup>12</sup> 1 Pet. v. 1, 2.

<sup>13</sup> xii. 15.

<sup>14</sup> Heb. v. vii—x.

<sup>15</sup> Heb. vii. 12.

the early seceders from the Church of England object, that in her ritual the elders were distinguished by a title not descriptive of their office, and apt to mislead as to the nature of it; and in a spirit of candour, of which the religious controversies of those days furnish us with but few examples, Hooker, the great champion of episcopacy, defers to this scruple; and admits the expediency of naming the second clerical order in the English church, Presbyters, rather than Priests.<sup>16</sup> It is worthy of observation, that in the short passage in which the inspired apostle St. Paul discusses the reasonable proposition that, "they which preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel,"<sup>17</sup> he seeks his Old Testament authority for it, in the general benevolence of the great Creator, which did not even pass by "the ox that treadeth out the corn,"<sup>18</sup> not in the ample provision which the same law secured to the Levitical priesthood; and when, in a subsequent verse he does allude to it, the tenor of his allusion strictly accords with our present view of the question. He uses it in illustration, not as his authority: "do ye not know that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar?"<sup>19</sup> and, therefore, it was highly probable that a similar provision would be made for the Christian ministry. Such a provision, he is authorised to inform the Corinthians, was made; "for even so hath the Lord ordained, that they that preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel."<sup>20</sup> But evidently there would be no necessity for any new ordinance, if the ministers of Christ were the legitimate successors to the right of maintenance enjoyed by the Jewish priesthood. The idea, therefore, of such succession

<sup>16</sup> Eccl. Pol., b. 5. c. 78.

<sup>17</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 1—14.

<sup>18</sup> Ver. 9.

<sup>19</sup> Ver. 13.

<sup>20</sup> Ver. 14.

cannot, by possibility, have occurred to the writer of this passage.

We infer that the Christian ministry derives no authority of prescription from the ordinances of the Levitical law, but merely that of precedent or analogy ; and, consequently, that the origin of their power, or authority, must be sought in the New Testament.

Our Lord's reply to the celebrated confession of the apostle St. Peter has been interpreted as descriptive of the power conferred upon the ministers of the Gospel generally ; " I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."<sup>21</sup> Of the same import is the charge which he gave to his disciples on a subsequent occasion, wherein he enjoins them to appeal to the whole church, or assembly, against a trespassing brother, after more private methods of rebuke shall have failed to produce amendment ; " but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."<sup>22</sup> After his resurrection, our blessed Saviour was pleased still more amply to confirm this commission. " Then said Jesus unto them, (that is, to a considerable number of the disciples, who were assembled together,) peace be unto you ! as my father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost ; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Matt. xvi. 19.

<sup>22</sup> Matt. xviii. 15—18.

<sup>23</sup> John xx. 19—23.

It will be observed, that all the passages before us treat of the same gift, or grace ; the two first containing promises that it should be imparted to the disciples afterwards, and the last being an account of the promised communication. It must also be borne in mind, that the power of the keys, whatever it may be, though in the first passage promised to Peter only, was afterwards given to all the apostles, and probably to the rest of the disciples also. This consideration removes one of the difficulties in the way of a right comprehension of its nature. The manner in which it was communicated is also important. “ Our Saviour breathed upon his disciples, and said, receive ye the Holy Ghost :” plainly, therefore, the power in question was a gift of the Holy Ghost. Let us now endeavour to ascertain its nature. It is described to be, the power of binding and loosing, or, in other words, of remitting or retaining, the sins of men, with reference to their future and everlasting condition. This promise is in strict analogy with what is revealed in other parts of Holy Writ. No truth is more explicitly disclosed than that judgment shall be committed to the saints of the Most High. The twelve apostles “ shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”<sup>24</sup> “ The saints shall judge the world,” yea, “ they shall judge angels !”<sup>25</sup> And though the latter passages refer to times and events perfectly distinct from the former, yet we can discern, as through a glass darkly, the order and divine harmony of that arrangement which employs the same instrumentality to edify the church militant, in a world that lieth in wickedness, and to minister to the church triumphant, in the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

<sup>24</sup> Matt. xix. 28.

<sup>25</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.



Taking from hence a caution lest our interpretations of these, or any places of Scripture, convict themselves of error by their discordance with other revealed truths, let us return to the subject before us. We ask with the patriarch of old, “shall not the judge of all the earth do right,”<sup>26</sup> and then appeal to the understanding of any one, if it be possible to reconcile with this his essential attribute of justice, the commission of the final adjudication of the eternal destinies of mankind, to the limited faculties and biassed judgments of their fallible and sinful fellow-men? The reply will be given unhesitatingly; if our conceptions of the mutual relations between God and man be taken from Revelation, a proposition could hardly be framed which will so grossly violate our notions of propriety and justice on the subject, as this. We willingly forbear to amplify on an idea from which the mind naturally revolts; but at once infer, that, however high the authority upon which the contrary may have been asserted, the notion that the fiats of eternity were committed either to the apostles, unassisted by the miraculous presence of the Holy Ghost, or to the ministers of the Gospel, in virtue of the apostolic succession, is so plainly contradictory to the whole scope of Revelation, that such cannot possibly be the meaning of the passages before us.

We have, therefore, to enquire into the mode in which this promise of Christ to the apostles received its fulfilment. This, we conceive, would be accomplished to the letter, if by miraculously illuminating their understandings, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, he imparted such an insight into the hearts of men, and into the councils of Omniscience, and so supernaturally guided their judgments upon these, that what they de-

<sup>26</sup> Gen. xviii. 25.

creed on earth, that would the God of justice ratify in heaven.

The inspired history of the apostles informs us that they were actually possessed of this power. The first instance of its exercise is recorded in the melancholy story of Ananias and Sapphira,<sup>27</sup> the particulars of which are too well known to need that they should be repeated here. The miraculous power exercised by St. Peter upon this occasion, was of a very extraordinary character. He was inspired by the Spirit of Omniscience with a perfect knowledge of the transaction he rebuked, though in no way whatever privy to it, and of the thoughts and intents of the hearts of its guilty perpetrators: and thus instinct with the Deity, he declared the sin of those who attempted to deceive him in his apostolical character, to be, “lying unto the Holy Ghost: lying not unto man, but unto God:” and the Lord confirmed his words with signs following: the instant death of both the offenders, bore an awful testimony to the literal truth of his declaration. That in conferring these extraordinary powers upon St. Peter, our Lord abundantly fulfilled the promise he had made to him, will, I think, scarcely be denied. It was manifest that the keys of the kingdom of heaven were in his hands; and that which he bound on earth was, by a terrific display of the divine vengeance against lying and hypocrisy, hurried instantly away to the judgment-seat of God, in order that, as we have reason to fear, the fiat of the inspired apostle might be ratified to all eternity in heaven.

We find St. Peter exercising the same miraculous power in the case of Simon Magus.<sup>28</sup> By that supernatural discernment of spirits, wherewith he was gifted, he denounced him as being “in the gall of bitterness and

<sup>27</sup> Acts v. 1—12.

<sup>28</sup> Acts viii. 20, 22.

bond of iniquity ;” though the proposal he made, would seem, in a young convert, to partake as much of ignorance as of sin.<sup>29</sup>

The same fearful power of discerning the heart, and decreeing the punishment, was also possessed by St. Paul the apostle. When his attempt to convince Sergius Paulus of the truth of Christianity at Paphos, was withstood by Elymas the sorcerer, “ he set his eyes on him, being full of the Holy Ghost, and said, O full of all subtilty, and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness !”<sup>30</sup> Now it was not possible to infer all this, from the mere circumstance that he withstood the the gospel when he first heard it : the apostle himself had done so, and as he informs us, “ ignorantly in unbelief.” But the miraculous blindness which immediately fell upon Elymas, in obedience to St. Paul’s imprecation, was an unanswerable proof that herein he spoke the words of truth and soberness : consequently a supernatural insight into the heart and conscience of the culprit had been afforded him, and full of the Holy Ghost, illuminating his understanding, and directing his judgment, “ that which he bound on earth was bound in heaven.”

We may observe the same, in the healing of the cripple

<sup>29</sup> According to the early fathers, Simon Magus was afterwards the author of a very gross departure from the true doctrine of the Gospel. We would only observe that one material part of the story was certainly a mistake : they supposed that Simon had been worshipped at Rome, under the title of “ the holy God.” Probably the same statue that was seen by the early Christians, has since been dug up ; it is inscribed to the Sabine deity, Semon : they were misled by the resemblance of the names. As the whole story hinges upon this mistake, I cannot help hoping that it is a fable, and that Simon profited by the good advice of the inspired apostle.

<sup>30</sup> Acts xiii. 5—12.

at the temple gate.<sup>31</sup> The steadfast beholding of him by the two apostles, and the command "look on us," which are so minutely particularized, doubtless referred to the exercise of that supernatural faculty which enabled them to discern whether in his heart he had faith to be healed.

Here, then, is a gift of the Holy Ghost, literally fulfilling the terms of our Saviour's promise, and conferred upon St. Peter and the apostles: the individuals to whom it was promised. The purpose also which it subserved in their most arduous labours was that, to accomplish which the power of the keys was to be imparted. The context which introduces the promise of it to St. Peter reads, "thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."<sup>32</sup> Now if, according to the natural import of the words, Peter was the rock upon which the church was to be built, the promised power will necessarily be conducive to that edification. And we find that the other passages, wherein it is mentioned, are also accompanied by allusions to the same purpose, to be accomplished by it. But nothing was of such vital importance to laying the foundation of the church of Christ, as that discernment of spirits which enabled the apostles and disciples to detect and expel hypocritical converts: and in the ordination of the ministry, to lay hands on such men only as were prepared by the grace of God to undergo the fiery trial which awaited them, and to persevere in the work unto the end. The power of the keys, therefore, was a miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost, imparted to the apostles and their cotemporaries, for the same purpose as the power of working miracles generally, that of laying the foundation of the

<sup>31</sup> Acts iii. 1—8.

<sup>32</sup> Matt. xvi. 18.

church of Christ on earth. In common with other gifts of the same nature, it was promised to the disciples by our Saviour after his resurrection,<sup>33</sup> as well as before his death; like them also it was promised, without any allusion whatever to the period of its continuance or cessation, by him who spake, not as man but as God, who “seeth the end from the beginning,” and “with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” Nevertheless, we discover in the mode of speech adopted by our Lord on this occasion, a corroboration of the opinion we have ventured to express. Peter with the power of the keys was the rock upon which Christ would build his church. He was, therefore, the foundation, not the superstructure; and the allusion is to the commencement, not to the progress, of the symbolical edifice. We cannot speak, therefore, of the successors of St. Peter and the apostles inheriting the power of the keys in virtue of that succession, without introducing an intolerable violation of the propriety of the metaphor; for then the church is built, not “upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;” but upon the foundation of the bishop for the time being, every successive bishop being, of necessity, a new foundation.

The inference, we conceive, is inevitable. The power of the keys was one of those miraculous gifts of the Spirit which, as we have seen, so soon passed away from the church; and, consequently, the claims of the Christian ministry to authority cannot, with safety, be rested there. For no inference is more natural, than that all the authoritative acts of persons thus endued, can by no means be pleaded as precedents for similar acts on the part of their

<sup>33</sup> See Mark xvi. 15—18.

successors in the ministry, unless they also are themselves gifted with the same miraculous powers.<sup>34</sup>

Bearing this in mind, we proceed to the passages which actually confer authority upon the Christian ministry.

The first class of them we shall notice, are those which establish orders, or distinctions, of rank in the church. St. Paul, in two places, illustrates this by the analogous constitution of the human body;<sup>35</sup> which consists of many members, some in superior, and others in subordinate capacities; but all harmonized into entire subserviency to the head. In the same manner is the church the body of Christ, the head, and the individuals composing it, members in particular. The meaning cannot be mistaken; St. Paul certainly adopts this illustration for the same purpose as that for which it was originally used in the form of an apologue,<sup>36</sup> to enforce the necessity of subordinations of rank, in all associations of men, whether civil or ecclesiastical; and the duty of obedience on the part of those in the inferior stations, to those who fill the superior ones. No more satisfactory authority could be desired, either for the setting apart of a distinct order of men for the office of the ministry, or for the deference and respect due to them, from those among whom they minister in holy things.

The next point which calls for our consideration is the power entrusted with the clergy, and the measure of obedience to which that order is entitled. The directions,

<sup>34</sup> Tertullian uses exactly the same argument, and from the same instances in Scripture, though for a very different purpose; he wishes to prove thereby that the church has not the same unlimited power of pardoning offences as was possessed by the apostles.—*De Pudicitia*, c. 21.

<sup>35</sup> Rom. xii. 4, 5. 1 Cor. xii. 14—27.

<sup>36</sup> Tit. Liv. 2, 32.

though by no means copious, for it was not a theme upon which the apostles, like some of their successors, loved to dwell, are, nevertheless, sufficient to guide us to a right perception both of the nature and necessity of this Christian duty. The disciple of Christ is required to “know them which are over him in the Lord, and admonish him; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.”<sup>37</sup> He is exhorted to receive the ministers of his Divine Master, “with all gladness, and to hold them in reputation.”<sup>38</sup> “They that labour in the word and doctrine are to be counted worthy of double honour.”<sup>39</sup> The laity generally are also repeatedly enjoined to submit themselves to the ministry.<sup>40</sup> The honorary titles applied to the clergy perfectly correspond with the spirit of these admonitions. They are repeatedly styled, “elders,” having the rule over their people;<sup>41</sup> “stewards of the mysteries of God;”<sup>42</sup> nay, in their capacity of preachers of the gospel, “ambassadors of Christ, by whom God speaks,” exhorting their people “in Christ’s stead.”<sup>43</sup> It will be observed, that in the places of Holy Writ here cited, the claims to authority and obedience are not founded upon the supernatural powers possessed by the first ministers of the Gospel, but upon those which they had in common with all who, at any subsequent period, should faithfully discharge the duties of that office.—Beyond all question, therefore, their application is universal.

Nor are we left in doubt as to the rule and measure of our obedience to the ministry; it is exactly prescribed, and with an exquisite adaptation to the entire system of Christianity, which conspicuously shows forth the infinite

<sup>37</sup> 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

<sup>38</sup> Phil. ii. 29.

<sup>39</sup> 1 Tim. v. 17.

<sup>40</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 16. 1 Pet. v. 5., &c.

<sup>41</sup> Heb. xiii. 17, &c.

<sup>42</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 1.

<sup>43</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19.

wisdom that contrived it.—“Obey them that have the rule over you, (says the apostle to the Hebrews,) and submit yourselves:”—but it was no blind subjugation of the understanding that the apostle sought to accomplish; he immediately gives a reason for it, of all others the most cogent, “for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief.”<sup>44</sup> One purpose, therefore, and one only, is to be answered by the required submission; the spiritual edification of the persons submitting themselves. This doctrine is still more unequivocally laid down in the same apostle’s account of the spiritual gifts of Christ, and of the ecclesiastical orders consequent thereupon, in the early church.—“He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; *for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*”<sup>45</sup> It is not in words more exactly to define, or more strictly to limit, the objects for which spiritual authority was conferred by the Holy Ghost. The writer of this passage obviously regarded the church of Christ as a body mystical, not as a body politic; and the ranks and orders in which spiritual authority originate were, in his apprehension, merely means, subserving the edification of the mystical church, not the end, conferring a political incorporation upon the visible one. The measure, then, of this obedience, is laid down in such terms as cannot be misunderstood. We are required to yield to our spiritual pastors that degree of deference which shall best subserve our own growth in grace, and the advancement of the work of the ministry. Nor is this a question left to the decision of either the rulers or the ruled, exclusively: both are required to exercise their understand-

<sup>44</sup> Heb. xiii. 17.

<sup>45</sup> Eph. iv. 11, 12.



ings upon it, as intelligent beings, and then in simplicity and godly sincerity to follow the dictates of conscience.—When this is the case, it will invariably be found that more than is exacted by the one, will be willingly yielded by the other.

With this view of the subject, all the passages of the New Testament, touching ecclesiastical discipline, are in perfect harmony. Those that illustrate the constitution of the church by that of the human body, to which we have already alluded, refer to the subordinations of the various members, as mere adaptations to the purpose and convenience of the head, Christ. And in the same meek and lowly spirit, St. Paul speaks of his own most successful labours at Corinth:—"Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers<sup>46</sup> by whom ye have believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."<sup>47</sup> In another place he disclaims all idea of having "dominion over the faith" of his Corinthian converts, and styles himself and his brethren in the ministry, "helpers of their joy."<sup>48</sup> With still more fervency does the same apostle disown all power of authoritative interference in the epistle to Timothy:—"The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves."<sup>49</sup> Hereunto also agree the other inspired writers of the New Testament. St. Peter exhorts the elders to "feed the flock of God not as lords over God's heritage, but as ensamples to the flock".<sup>50</sup> The lamp of revelation, then, sheds its clear and unerring light

<sup>46</sup> *διδασκοντες*.

<sup>47</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 5—7.

<sup>48</sup> 2 Cor. i. 24.

<sup>49</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

<sup>50</sup> 1 Pet. v. 2, 3.

upon the general question of ecclesiastical discipline, as well as upon every other point of Christian practice.—Avoiding, as on other questions, particular rules, we find that two general directions are deducible from what is written regarding it. The one is, that a distinct order of men is to be set apart for the work of the ministry:—the other, that such a measure of authority shall be conferred upon them, as may best subserve, “the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ.” This is its exact measure; and all deviations from it, whether in defect or excess, are equally condemned by the inspired writers. But our Lord’s kingdom is not of this world; to accomplish direct changes in the political condition of mankind, formed no part of the object of his mission: nevertheless, the social relations of men are so modified by this and other causes, as continually to alter, at different periods, and in different countries, the measure of authority which shall enable the ministers of Christ’s religion effectually to discharge the functions of their office. Hence it is, that in a revelation which is given for all time, such general principles alone are laid down as shall bring the question fairly within the reach and compass of the human understanding; the framing of the particular rules to meet each emergency that may arise, being left to its conscientious exercise.

Such appears to me to be the New Testament doctrine on the pastoral authority of the clergy. We now return to Clement of Rome, in order to ascertain the opinions he promulgated upon this important subject.

If I rightly apprehend the scope and design of the entire epistle, it is to exhort the laity of the church of Corinth to obedience to the clergy. The question whereupon the schism it rebukes had arisen appears to have

been one of discipline, not of doctrine.—Certain persons<sup>51</sup> had elevated themselves to the office of the ministry, or been irregularly appointed to it by the people. St. Clement wrote to the Corinthian church to procure their degradation, and the establishment of the regular clergy ; who had either been ordained by St. Peter and St. Paul, (both of whom had then suffered martyrdom,<sup>52</sup>) or by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole assembly.<sup>53</sup> The question, therefore, of the apostolic succession, and of the authority derived from thence to the Christian ministry is at issue ; and it is material to enquire if herein he has written according to the mind of the Spirit, which we have already endeavoured to ascertain from Holy Scripture.

The origin of this “ sedition against the presbyters” (as he calls it, c. 47.) he declares to be envy. He illustrates its evil effects by the cases of Cain and Abel, of Jacob and Esau, of Moses and the two contending Hebrews, of Aaron and Miriam, of Dathan and Abiram, and of David and Saul, (c. 5.) To the workings of the same bad passion he ascribes the persecution and death of the apostles, confessors, and martyrs of his own times ; and he thus completes his climax of the evils which envy has occasioned, —“ In a word, envy and strife have overturned whole cities, and rooted out great nations from off the earth.” (cc. 5, 6.)

He draws from hence an exhortation “ to come up to the rule of our glorious and revered calling,” and to repentance : he endeavours to incite the Corinthians to seek after this last grace, by the example of Noah and the antediluvians, Jonah and the Ninevites, and two passages from the prophets.<sup>54</sup> (cc. 7, 8.) He calls upon them to

<sup>51</sup> C. 47., et alibi passim.

<sup>52</sup> C. 5.

<sup>53</sup> C. 44.

<sup>54</sup> Isa. i. 16, c. s. Jer. iii. 4, 19.

cast themselves upon the mercy of God, “laying aside all vain labour and contentions, and envy which leads unto death.”<sup>55</sup> The repentance to which he exhorts them being a return to their former submission to the regularly ordained clergy. He proceeds to enforce the excellencies and advantages of obedience, by the examples of Abraham obeying the call of God, of Lot leaving Sodom, and the not very pertinent one of Rahab the harlot and the spies. (cc. 10—12.)

Having thus endeavoured to turn them by repentance from their evil courses, the next grace which he recommends to their practice is humility:—“Let us, therefore, humble ourselves, brethren, laying aside all pride, and boasting, and foolishness, and anger.” He enforces this by quotations from the Old and New Testament.<sup>56</sup> His inference is as follows:—“it is, therefore, just and righteous, brethren, that we should become obedient unto God, rather than follow such as through pride and sedition have made themselves the ringleaders of a detestable emulation.” (c. 14.) He exhorts them to meekness and gentleness, and declares that the regular clergy only are men of peace, and worthy to be obeyed.—The intruders talk of peace indeed, but it is only pretence. Then follow several perfectly inapplicable texts from the Psalms, strung together by way of invective. (c. 14.)

Afterwards, he once more returns to humility, which he recommends by the example of Christ, whose proficiency in this grace he endeavours to show by quoting the fifty-third of Isaiah entire, and part of the twenty-second Psalm; (c. 16.)—the humility of Elijah, Elisha, and Ezekiel the prophets, is also commended; it consisted in their going about in sheep-skins and goat-skins.—Abraham is also

<sup>55</sup> C. 9.

<sup>56</sup> Jer. ix. 23. Luke vi. 36. Isa. lxvi. 2. Id., xiii.

praised for his humility, because, in addressing the Almighty, he uttered the words, “Behold, I am but dust and ashes.”<sup>57</sup> Job is commended in like manner, for a similar confession.<sup>58</sup> The humility of Moses is next lauded, in acknowledging his own want of eloquence, when God first called him,<sup>59</sup> (c. 17.) and from him he proceeds to David, of whose humility he finds a pregnant proof in the fifty-first Psalm, the whole of which he quotes. (c. 18.) He reminds them, that these examples were written for their learning, and then commends humility and patience to them by the example of God himself; his proof of the patience and humility of the Almighty, he discovers in the works of Providence. (cc. 19, 20.)

In the course of it, he passes from this view of his subject, to another, that of the order observed throughout all his works; he infers that a similar order has been established in the church, and, consequently, that all departure from that order is an act of great sin.—“Let us not, then, forsake our ranks<sup>60</sup> by doing contrary to his will.—Let us choose to offend a few foolish and inconsiderate men, lifted up and glorying in their own pride, rather than God.—Let us honour those that are set over us; let us respect the presbyters that are among us; let us instruct the young men in discipline by the fear of the Lord.” He then digresses into a general exhortation to Christian duties; (c. 21.) and, after dwelling upon them at some length, he again returns to the subject of the epistle:—“Let us, therefore, march on, men and brethren, with all earnestness in his holy laws. Let us consider those that fight under our earthly governors: how orderly, how readily, with what exact obedience, they perform

<sup>57</sup> Gen. xviii. 27.

<sup>58</sup> xiv. 4.

<sup>59</sup> Exod. iii. 11.

<sup>60</sup> λειποτακτιῶν, desert.

those things that are commanded them : all are not prefects, or chiliarchs, or centurions, or commanders of fifty, and so on ; but every one in his proper rank does what is commanded him, by the king and those in authority over him.—The great cannot subsist without the little, nor the little without the great.—But there must be a mixture in all things, and then there will be use and profit too. Let us, for example, take our body ; the head without the feet is nothing : neither the feet without the head.—But all conspire together, and are subject to one common use, namely, the preservation of the body. (c. 37.) Let, therefore our whole body be saved in Jesus Christ, and let every one be subject to his neighbour, according to the order in which he is placed by his gift.<sup>61</sup> Let not the strong despise the weak, and let the weak see that he reverence the strong.” He speaks in the same manner of the gifts of riches, wisdom, humility, and continence.

After another invective against the schismatical clergy, which has more of the character of railing, than is consistent, either with the dignity or propriety of the subject, (c. 39.) he thus introduces the passage which is already before the reader :—“ Seeing, then, that these things are manifest unto us, it will behove us to take care that, looking into the depths of the divine knowledge, we do all things in order, whatsoever our Lord has commanded us to do : particularly, that we perform our offerings and service at their appointed seasons,” &c. A few more remarks upon times and seasons of worship, which we have already quoted,<sup>62</sup> precede the passage in question ; the argument of which is of easy comprehension.—Be-

<sup>61</sup> χάρισμα. See 1 Cor. xii. 5. ; but no miraculous gift is here alluded to, as the context shows.

<sup>62</sup> Chap. VIII., p. 118.

cause there were courses of priests and Levites in the temple at Jerusalem, which was then standing, therefore, there ought to be orders in the Christian church also.— And because the apostles were sent by Christ, and Christ by God, therefore, those whom they ordained as presbyters and deacons succeeded to their authority. This argument he attempts to corroborate by the circumstance, that the apostles left directions for the ordination of ministers after their departure: these he conjectures to have originated in their foreknowledge of the schisms that would arise on account of the ministry. He considers the case to be exactly parallel with that of the miraculous choice of Aaron; and supposes it to have been foretold in an unknown, and probably accommodated, Greek version of a passage of Isaiah. (We shall hereafter consider the mode of quoting and explaining Scripture used by Clement and his cotemporaries.) He infers, that in virtue of the apostolical succession, as well as of their innocent and holy lives, they cannot be displaced from their office; nor can any one refuse a degree of submission and respect, which he elsewhere describes by the expression, “bending the knees of the heart,”<sup>63</sup> without being guilty of a sin equal to that of disobedience to God. To this submission therefore, he exhorts them at considerable length, to the conclusion of the epistle.

It will be perceived by this long analysis, which was rendered necessary by the loose and parenthetical style of the writer, that the question regarding the ministry was one of the earliest that disturbed the peace of the church. As he makes no allusion to the plea upon which the schismatics sought to displace the Corinthian ministers, we can of course form no judgment upon it. The cessation of the

<sup>63</sup> C. 57.

power of working miracles among them, and the bolder pretensions to these gifts of the intruders, would seem to be a very probable one.

I will commence my remarks upon this ancient document by stating my full belief, that the object of St. Clement and the church at Rome, in addressing this epistle to the church at Corinth, was a highly laudable one. The discarded clergy were, beyond all doubt, men of blameless and edifying conversation ; had it been otherwise, the fact would not have been stated so boldly and repeatedly : this alone is enough to criminate the individuals who displaced them, by whatever means. Equally ready am I to acknowledge, that it contains some beautiful passages, conceived in the true spirit of primitive Christianity. Nor do I deny that parts of it display considerable intellectual powers ; as for instance, the argument for subordination in the church from analogy<sup>64</sup> is extremely well managed and expressed, and will not suffer by comparison with any cotemporary production. But, notwithstanding, there is too much evidence that upon the question before us St. Clement had grievously departed from the spirit and design of the New Testament. We have already shown that there, the authority of the ministry was viewed in no other light than that of a means subserving an end, that end being the diffusion of Christianity. But with Clement the pastoral authority is the end, to which he propounds the entire cycle of Christian motives as means subservient. He cites a cloud of witnesses from the Old Testament ; but whatever be the nature of their virtues or their vices, he arranges them all (in some cases at a large expense of sound reasoning) under the two categories of obedience and disobedience to spiritual authority. Yet, the question was merely one

<sup>64</sup> C. 37.



of succession : no difference of opinion, upon any of the doctrines of Christianity, existed between the regular and schismatical clergy at Corinth : such difference is not even hinted at ; and his advice to the apostolic presbyters to leave the church rather than continue the schism, (c. 54.) reduces it to an absolute certainty. Had the schismatics held also heretical opinions, he would unquestionably have called upon them to suffer martyrdom on the spot, rather than leave their flock to the guidance of false teachers.

It is happily in our power to produce a precisely similar instance, which occurred to an inspired apostle. St. Paul writes thus to the Philippians :—“ I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel ; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places ; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ, even of envy and strife ; and some also of good will ; the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds ; but the other of love.”<sup>65</sup> Here is a much worse case of exactly the same schism as that described by St. Clement. Here is a rebellion, not against the presbyters ordained by the apostles, but against an apostle himself, in the plenary exercise of all the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost. Taking a mean and cruel advantage of his bonds for Christ’s sake, these schismatics contemptuously defied his pastoral authority, and preached Christ of contention, not sincerely ; vilifying his apostle at the same time, in the malicious hope of adding affliction to his tedious imprisonment. Their motive, also, in obtruding their unauthorised

<sup>65</sup> Phil. i. 2—17.

ministrations upon the church at Rome, is the same as that of the Corinthian dissentients, "strife and envy." Now it is impossible, that the sin of the one, should not be much greater than the sin of the other. At Corinth they only rebelled against presbyters whose highest honour it would be, to have received ordination at the hand of an apostle ; while at Rome they set at nought the spiritual jurisdiction of an apostle himself. Surely if St. Clement had scriptural authority at all, for the heinous and aggravated character he assigned to the sin of the Corinthian church, and for the severe reproof he administered to the schismatics, he must have found it in this passage. And yet a more perfect contrast is scarcely conceivable. The whole thunder of St. Clement's rebuke is aimed at their intrusion into the office of the successors of the apostles ; St. Paul, in the same circumstances, rebukes nothing but the contentious and envious spirit, and insincerity of the schismatics. All the fervours of St. Clement's eloquence are directed against the ministrations of the rebellious ; his avowed object is to silence them, and reduce them to the most abject submission to the regular clergy : but St. Paul rejoices in their ministrations :—"What then ! notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached ; and I therein do rejoice, yea and will rejoice."<sup>66</sup>

The conclusion is inevitable : the objects which these eminent servants of God had in view were totally different. The apostle regarded, with a single eye, the edification of the mystical body of Christ, or, in other words, the diffusion of the Gospel among men ; and in whatever promoted that he rejoiced. His successor, on the other hand, scarcely looked beyond the maintenance and enlargement of the pastoral authority of the ministry, in order to the founda-

<sup>66</sup> *Idem* v. 18.

tion and building up of the visible church on earth, as a political incorporation.

It now becomes my painful duty to state, that the whole of Christian antiquity is leavened with this wretched error. When the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost departed from the earth, with the apostles and primitive disciples, it was a natural and inevitable consequence that the power and influence of the Christian ministry would be materially diminished ; and instead of resting their claims upon the apostolic writings, this was the figment which was raised by their successors to uphold the authority of their order.

Its dimensions are more perfectly developed in the next author to whom our attention is to be directed. Ignatius soars with a bolder wing, and exalts the authority of the clergy to a still more perilous elevation, than even Clement.

We can have no stronger proof of the overwhelming importance which was attached to this question by the primitive church than the circumstance, that out of the seven extant epistles which this blessed martyr wrote during his forced journey to Rome, the place of his martyrdom, six of them are so pervaded with incessant and vehement exhortations to a submission to the bishops and clergy, as unlimited and universal as words can express, as to render it perfectly evident that this was really the only purpose of the writer in sending them. So entirely absorbed is his whole soul in the accomplishment of this purpose, that no consideration, either from reason or Scripture, seems to have power, for a moment, to check the mad career of his turgid and bloated, but often eloquent, declamation ; or to deter him from working up his exhortations to the highest pitch of hyperbole.

In the following extract from the epistle to the Ephesians, it will be observed that he follows the preceding writer in loudly commending unity in the church,—an object perfectly scriptural and highly desirable ; but, nevertheless, we take leave to doubt that the mode in which Clement and Ignatius propose to accomplish it is either the one or the other : the New Testament no where enjoins the entire submission of the faculties of body and soul, to the absolute and uncontrolled domination of the clergy, as the means whereby the laity are to promote the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. But such was the doctrine of Clement, and it is still more broadly and unequivocally laid down by Ignatius. “ As love suffers me not to be silent concerning you, I have taken upon me to exhort you, that ye would all run together according to the mind of God. For even Jesus Christ, our inseparable life, is the mind of the Father, even as the bishops appointed unto the utmost bounds of the earth, are according to the mind of Christ. Wherefore it will become you to run together according to the mind of your bishop, as also ye do. For your celebrated<sup>67</sup> presbytery, worthy of God,<sup>68</sup> is fitted as exactly to the bishop as the strings are to the harp : therefore, in your like-mindedness and concordant love, Jesus Christ is sung, and every single person among you makes up the chorus : that so being all consonant in love, and taking up the song of God, ye may in a perfect unity, with one voice, sing to the Father by Jesus Christ ; to the end that he may both hear you, and perceive, by your works, that ye are indeed the members of his Son. Wherefore it is profitable for you to live in a spotless unity, that ye may always have fellowship with God. For if I in this little time have had such a familiarity with your bishop,

<sup>67</sup> ἡ ζώνουσα.

<sup>68</sup> τῷ θεῷ ἁγίον.

now much more must I think you happy who are so united<sup>69</sup> to him as the church is to Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ to the Father ; that so all things may agree in the same unity ! Let no man deceive himself ; if a man be not within the altar, he is deprived of the bread of God. He, then, that does not come together in the same place with the church is proud, and has already condemned himself : for it is written ‘ God resisteth the proud.’ Let us take heed, therefore, that we do not set ourselves against the bishop, that we may be subject to God. Whomsoever the master of the house sets to be over his own household, we ought, in like manner, to receive him as we would do him that sent him.—It is, therefore, evident, that *we ought to look upon the bishop even as we would do upon the Lord himself.*”<sup>70</sup> He states the same strange doctrine, and, if possible, in language still more unequivocal, in the epistle to the Magnesians. — “ It behoves you with all sincerity to obey your bishop, in honour of Him whose pleasure it is that you should do so. —He that obeys him with hypocrisy, deceives not the bishop, but affronts God.”<sup>71</sup> Unity is likewise enjoined, and on the same principle :—“ I exhort you, that ye study to do all things in a divine concord, your bishop presiding in the place of God ; your presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles : and your deacons most sweet unto me, being entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ.”<sup>72</sup> Again, “ As, therefore, the Lord did nothing without the Father being united to him—neither by himself nor yet by his apostles—so neither do ye any thing without your bishops and presbyters : neither *endeavour to let any thing seem reasonable to yourselves apart :*” that is, do not

<sup>69</sup> Mixed.<sup>70</sup> Ign. ad Ephes., cc. 4—6.<sup>71</sup> C. 3.<sup>72</sup> C. 6.

think for yourselves, without the sanction of the clergy.<sup>73</sup> He repeats his call to subjection at the conclusion, thus :—  
*“ Be subject to your bishop and to one another as Jesus Christ to the Father, according to the flesh.”*<sup>74</sup>

The epistle to Tralles only differs from that which precedes it, in stating the same doctrine still more objectionably :—*“ Whereas ye are subject to your bishop as to Jesus Christ, ye appear to me to live not after the manner of men, but according to Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, necessary that without your bishop ye should do nothing : also be ye subject to your presbyters as to the apostles of Jesus Christ ; in whom if ye walk ye shall be found in him.”*<sup>75</sup> Again, *“ let all reverence the deacons as Jesus Christ, and the bishop as the Father ; and the presbyters as the Sanhedrim of the apostles. Without these there is no church.”*<sup>76</sup> He that is within the altar is pure ; but he that is without, that is, that does any thing without the bishop, and presbyters, and deacons, is not pure in his conscience.”<sup>77</sup>

The epistle to the Philadelphians is addressed to those especially of that church who are “ at unity with the bishop and presbyters who are with him, and the deacons appointed according to the mind of Jesus Christ ; whom he has settled according to his own will, in all firmness by his Holy Spirit.” After commending the holiness of the bishop of Philadelphia in a strain which is somewhat high wrought, to say the least, and vehemently exhorted them to follow him implicitly,<sup>78</sup> he proceeds :—*“ As many as are of God and of Jesus Christ, are also with their bishop.—Be not deceived, brethren : if any one follows him that makes a schism in the church, he shall not inherit the*

<sup>73</sup> C. 7.<sup>74</sup> C. 13.<sup>75</sup> Ign. ad Trall., c. 2.<sup>76</sup> C. 3.<sup>77</sup> C. 7.<sup>78</sup> Cc. 1, 2.

kingdom of God : if any one walks after any other opinion he agrees not with the passion of Christ."<sup>79</sup>

True to the same doctrine he gives this charge to the church at Smyrna :—" See that ye follow your bishop as did Jesus Christ the Father : and the presbytery as the apostles : and reverence the deacons as the command of God. Let that Eucharist be looked upon as well established which is either offered by the bishop, or by him to whom the bishop gives his consent. Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people also be, as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic church. It is not lawful without the bishop neither to baptize nor to celebrate the holy communion : *but whatsoever he shall approve of that is also pleasing to God.*<sup>80</sup> *It is a good thing to have a due regard both to God and to the bishop : he that honours the bishop shall be honoured of God ; but he that performs any religious act without his knowledge worships the devil.*"<sup>81</sup>

Wide as is the sweep of episcopal jurisdiction in these passages, we find in the epistle to Polycarp, that we still fall short of its full dimensions :—" It becomes all such as are married, both men and women, *to come together with the consent of the bishop*, so that their marriage may be according to godliness and not in lust."<sup>82</sup>

We will now endeavour to collect from these passages the exact doctrine of Ignatius regarding ecclesiastical supremacy. The church on earth is a political incorporation for the purpose of divine worship ; but in order to that worship being acceptable to God, it is needful that its officers be appointed with strict regard to a certain subordination of rank, (that of bishops, presbyters, and deacons,) and that the whole of the laity be in a state of unlimited

<sup>79</sup> C. 4.

<sup>80</sup> Ad Smyrn., c. 8.

<sup>81</sup> C. 9.

<sup>82</sup> Ad Poly., c. 5.

subjection to them. This he illustrates by the strings of a harp, every one of which must be tuned to a nicely graduated harmony beneath the dominant, or master note, before the instrument can be made to discourse sweet music:<sup>83</sup> so, an accepted song of praise can never ascend from the visible church, unless every individual member thereof be, with equal exactness, harmonized and adjusted to his proper place in or beneath the Christian hierarchy. All these adjustments are to be made after one exemplar, from which no departure is on any account to be allowed. It follows, that the acceptable worship of the church does not consist, in the divine mind, of the acts of adoration of its individual members, to whom God has regard on account of the purity and sincerity of the motives that prompt them, but is the result of their harmonized combination; analagous to the pleasing effect of musical sounds so combined on the human ear. And, therefore, no integrity of intention can prevent the utter rejection of the prayers of him who, by violating the unity of the church in any way, shall thereby become a jarring string in this harmony. For it is just as impossible that the worship of an individual Christian should of itself be acceptable to God, as that the twangling of one string of a harp, which is only a single note in the scale, contributing

<sup>83</sup> Whether the combination of musical sounds which is technically termed by the moderns *the common chord*, was known to the ancients or not, my want of acquaintance with the early history of music deprives me of the means of ascertaining. But it has certainly occurred to me that Ignatius in this passage hints at a mysterious analogy, or rather sympathy, between the bishops, priests, and deacons of the church, and the dominant, mediant, and tonic of the harmonic scale. Without presuming to say any thing decisive upon the question, I would only further observe, that such an appeal to the occult sympathies of the universe would have been received as an unanswerable argument in the second century.



to the general effect by sequence or combination with many others, should produce agreeable music. And as, when combined to form one instrument, the slightest deviation in any one of the strings from the intervals of the scale produces dissonance, so is it also with the company of believers that constitute a church: the very thought of dissatisfaction, or of ambition towards the power of the clergy, in any one of the laity, is a violation of its unity; and the worship of the offending member is discordant with the whole, and therefore displeasing and rejected.

The metaphor is a singularly beautiful one; and is in itself sufficient to rescue Ignatius from the censures which have been, in my opinion, somewhat unadvisedly cast upon his style and talents, in common with the rest of the apostolical fathers, by Dr. Mosheim.<sup>84</sup> It is evidently the offspring of a vigorous, imaginative, and highly cultivated mind.

It is also very important to observe, that he does not make use of a single expression regarding submission to the clergy, which is not strictly consequential upon this his premise. Grant but this, and who can deny that it is a condition anterior to every other obligation in the Christian code? For what can be so important as that, for the absence of which, in the remotest degree, no love of

<sup>84</sup> "The apostolical fathers are neither remarkable for their learning nor their eloquence: on the contrary, they express the most pious and admirable sentiments in the plainest and most illiterate style."—*Mos. Eccl. Hist. Cent. I., p. 2, c. 3., § 22.* But the passage commented upon in the text would, in itself, furnish ample proof that Ignatius was a man of high education. Music, in the ancient scholastic discipline, was the finishing accomplishment, and taught only to those who had mastered what were then accounted the lower degrees of learning: but Ignatius was certainly acquainted with music. We shall have other opportunities of pointing out the incorrectness of Dr. Mosheim's estimation of these writers.

God, no faith in Christ, no personal holiness, can compensate? since, however eminent the Christian may be in any, or in all these, unless, by the entire submission of his inmost soul to the control of the bishop, he be at unity with the church, his prayer is abomination to God; his every act of religious worship is regarded as paid to the devil! With perfect truth and sobriety, therefore, does he call upon the laity to revere the bishop as God the Father, the presbytery as Jesus Christ, and the deacons as the Sanhedrim of the apostles, (that is, as the Spirit that inspired the apostles;) not to allow themselves for a moment to imagine that any thing done or ordered by them can be otherwise than according to the mind of God; and, without a metaphor, to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of the clergy.

But we naturally enquire whence did Ignatius learn all this? We turn to the New Testament, but cannot discover the doctrine he lays down: not a vestige, not a shadow of it. To say that it is utterly opposed to the whole tenor of that Inspired Volume, is by no means the fact of the case. It has no relation whatever, not even that of opposition, to any thing that is to be found there. To attempt, therefore, to confute it by a series of texts, would be as judicious as to adopt the same method to disprove the reality of one of Æsop's fables! We are saved the trouble of further conjecture; our author himself informs us that he received it not from the New Testament, but *by inspiration, and from the traditional teaching of the apostles.*<sup>85</sup> This account of the matter proved satisfactory to his successors for many generations; and the question between the laity and the clergy, which so fiercely agitated the church in the times of

<sup>85</sup> See above, Chap. IV., p. 25. Mag. c. 3.

Clement and Ignatius, seems to have been, by this and similar avowals of divine authority for the domination of the latter, entirely set at rest: we hear nothing of it through the remainder of the century.

Tertullian, as we have seen, pleads a similar traditional authority for certain ceremonies which were without sanction from the Scripture. Upon the subject of ecclesiastical supremacy, the following passage will, I think, sufficiently evidence that he did not more frequently enforce it in his writings, only because it was never then called in question. It occurs in the course of an argument wherein he very properly refuses to contend with the heretics out of their own mutilated and corrupted copies of the scriptural books,<sup>86</sup> and brings them back to the previous question of their authenticity. He claims the victory on the ground that the means of authentication, whatever they were, remained in his time with the apostolic churches, by the admission of all parties; and that the copies to which he referred were in agreement with them: and he sends the whole argument triumphantly home by an appeal to the tradition of those churches, which repeated (with minute exactness) the doctrine in these true copies of the Scriptures. We thankfully receive even now this most powerful reasoning, as a valuable aid in confir-

<sup>86</sup> De Præs. Hær., cc. 32—38. The corruption of the Scriptures by the heretics was attempted even in the time of Ignatius. "I hear some say, unless I find it to be written in the originals, (ἐν τοῖς ἀρχαίοις,) I will not believe it to be in the gospel; and when I answer, it is written there, they deny it."—*Ad. Phil.*, c. 8. The *originals* of Ignatius, are evidently the same as the *authentica litteræ* of Tertullian, in the passage referred to in the text.—*U. s.*, c. 36. (See also above, p. 30., note 11.) The fact that the fidelity of transcripts of the canonical books was called in question at so early a period, while the church was still in possession of that most unanswerable of all means of authentication, the autograph copies of them, is a most important one.

mation of our faith, and in refutation of infidel objections : but we much regret, that in contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, its author should have been betrayed by his zeal into such a passage as the following:—"By what right, O Marcion, dost thou fell trees in my wood? By whose permission, O Valentinus, dost thou divert my water-courses? Who gave thee the power, O Apelles, to remove my landmarks? Why do the rest of the heretics till and depasture my land at their pleasure? It is my possession: I inherit it of old: I have the title deeds, drawn by those who first enclosed it. I am the heir of the apostles. As they appointed in their testament, as they entrusted, as they required, all these I fulfil."<sup>87</sup> We have no difficulty in tracing the unscriptural arrogance of this passage to the unseemly elevation given by the apostolical fathers to the Christian ministry, wherein Tertullian was a presbyter. It is but a transcript of that which Ignatius so amply and unequivocally declares, and for which his avowed authority is inspiration and tradition.

Having already dealt with his inspiration,<sup>88</sup> we proceed to another of those thorny questions which beset our path at almost every step. It may be thus stated: did there exist, in the early church, certain maxims regarding clerical orders and authority, and the ceremonial of divine worship, which, being taught by the inspired apostles to the primitive bishops, and by them to their successors, remain with her thenceforward as an ecclesiastical tradition? Bearing in mind the arguments which appear to refute the notion of traditional doctrines,<sup>89</sup> we shall find that they apply also with considerable force to tradition generally, as a vehicle of divinely communicated

<sup>87</sup> De Præc. Har., c. 36.

<sup>88</sup> Above, p. 25., e. s.

<sup>89</sup> See above, Chap. III.

knowledge, independently of the sanction of Scripture. We imagine that their tendency is to establish a principle regarding all Christian tradition, as well as the disproof of the traditional existence of one class of facts. We do not perceive that the improbability that our Lord would have recourse to this mode of conveying divine truths to successive periods of his church, is at all affected by the nature of the truths to be handed down. His own rebuke of oral tradition would apply with equal force against himself, whether the truths entrusted to that mode of perpetuation regarded the polity of his church, and the authority of his ministers, or his own nature and his people's duties.—The argument drawn from the fact there is in the New Testament no allusion to any tradition, except to that which (as the early fathers inform us<sup>90</sup>) itself contains, is equally universal in its application, and bears upon the whole question as strongly as upon any branch of it. Of the same nature is the admirable argument for which we are also indebted to the early fathers, from the accordance between the apostolical tradition and the apostolical writings:<sup>91</sup> nor is it at all weakened in its present application, by the circumstance, that they themselves limit it to traditional doctrines, and assert the existence of traditional ceremonies. To make this apparent, we have only to debate the point of difference with them prescriptively, as Tertullian phrases it;<sup>92</sup> that is, to apply their own argument to their own limitation. Early in the second century, Valentinus, one of the philosophical heretics, succeeded in imposing upon a multitude of individuals, a crude mass of mad impieties regarding the divine nature, which he professed to have received from the oral tradition

<sup>90</sup> De Præs. Hær., cc. 25, 26.

<sup>91</sup> See above, p. 119, &c.

<sup>92</sup> *Ubi Supra*, c. 35.

of the apostles.—The cotemporary fathers of the church answer him, that this must be a fabrication, because the apostolical tradition coincided minutely and in every particular with the apostolic epistles :—and no such doctrine was to be found there. About the same period, Ignatius also states a doctrine regarding clerical supremacy, than which, nothing can be more utterly at variance with the spirit, and tenor, and design of the entire New Testament, and upon the same authority. Now here are two cotemporaries, or nearly so,<sup>93</sup> both claiming the sanction of tradition for doctrines equally opposed to the New Testament. How, I shall be glad to know, can an exception be taken in favour of the one, which is not also an important admission on behalf of the other ? Concede but the apotheosis of the bishop to Ignatius, and Sophia Achamoth<sup>94</sup> and the Eons of Valentinus will leap through the same gap.—The whole value of the argument consists in its integrity. Let it but stand as a fence round our faith, whole and unbroken, and it is a wall of brass, which no error, from this quarter, shall ever be able to surmount ;

<sup>93</sup> Ignatius wrote A. D. 218. Valentinus first made his appearance at Rome, at the commencement of the reign of Antoninus Pius, A. D. 237.—*Iren., lib. 3, c. 4, p. 206.*

<sup>94</sup> One of the thirty Eons, or concentric circles, which constitute the divine nature, or pleroma, according to this heretic. Sophia (σοφία) is the Septuagint rendering of the word, which denotes the female impersonation of Wisdom in the first nine chapters of the Book of Proverbs. Achamoth (Ἀχαμωθ) is the Greek transcription of the same Hebrew word ; חכמה. A very able epitome of this wild fantasm occurs in the Bishop of Lincoln's Tertullian, pp. 510—519. There are many very remarkable resemblances between the system of Valentinus and that of the Jewish Cabbalists. The notions of the divine nature in concentric circles, of male and female Eons, and of wisdom slipping out of the pleroma, and gambolling in the nether world appear to be common to the two.—*See Irira, Porta cœlorum in Cab. Denud., Vol. II.*

but break it down in a single point, and it becomes utterly worthless. Allow but the authority of one tradition, plainly new and additional to the doctrine contained in the Inspired Volume, and all comparisons of other asserted traditional doctrines therewith is at an end.—It is no longer the test by which their truth is to be ascertained. One such admission as effectually disqualifies it as a hundred.

Neither have we any difficulty in discovering the reason why Valentinus, and the rest of the heretics, never availed themselves of this argument against the fathers; they were at least as much interested in the doctrines of Clement and Ignatius, as the latter could possibly be; and as anxious that the question of ecclesiastical supremacy should remain a dormant one. For nearly all the heresiarchs were ecclesiastics, disappointed in their hopes of advancement;<sup>95</sup> and their errors invariably tended to the elevation of themselves, as “the Paraclete,” or “the great power of God,” to the rank of inspired promulgators of a new doctrine. No wonder, therefore, that they never raised the question, when the view of it taken by the opponents, so powerfully contributed to the support of their own pretensions.

With the Church of England then, we utterly deny that “it is in the power of tradition to ordain any thing against God’s word;”<sup>96</sup> and therefore we reject the doctrine of clerical supremacy advanced by the apostolical fathers, and maintained by the early ones.

The whole question of Tradition being now generalized, and one rule being made applicable to every possible case, it is needless to detail our opinions upon each of them. We cannot better express the conclusion to which

<sup>95</sup> See Tert. adv. Valen., c. 4., &c.

<sup>96</sup> Article 34.

this enquiry has conducted us, than in the words of the high authority to which we have just appealed.—“ It is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one and utterly alike ; for at all times there have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times, and men’s manners, so that nothing be ordained against God’s word.”<sup>97</sup>

The tendency of the error we are considering, to corrupt the clergy, by assigning to them an improper measure of authority, and to degrade the laity, by the prescription of an undue degree of deference, is sufficiently manifest. The most obvious evil consequence that immediately followed upon this state of things, was the deplorable ignorance in which the great mass of professing Christians were sunk by it, rendering them an easy prey to the many deceivers that arose in those unhappy times. For it is quite evident that, far from encouraging the mere layman in the pursuit of religious knowledge, the doctrine in question virtually denounced all such enquiries, as the most dangerous that could possibly engage the attention of ordinary Christians, because of their inevitable tendency to incite men to think for themselves rather than by proxy ; and, consequently, to weigh and consider the evidence of all religious tenets, before they received them, by whomsoever they were presented to their credence. But should this reflection raise even the shadow of a doubt regarding the doctrine or practice of the clergy, the unhappy enquirer would thereby be involved in the sin of schism, and his eternal salvation placed in the utmost jeopardy. There is satisfactory evidence of this, in the abstruse and learned character of nearly all the extant works of the early fathers ; they are *conciones ad clerum* :

<sup>97</sup> Article 36.



not intended for the comprehension or edification of any one, of attainments beneath those of a philosopher : and in the complete lists of their writings, preserved by Eusebius, we find that those which are lost, were also of a precisely similar character. How the mere laity were to acquire religious knowledge in those times, we are at a loss to conjecture.

Accordingly we shall find the distinguishing mark of the church's history at the period now under review to be, the number and pestilent nature of the heresies that then made their appearance, and the extraordinary rapidity with which they diffused themselves. The wretches with whom they originated seem, with a wanton impudence of profanity, to have vied with each other in the invention of rank and rampant blasphemies regarding the divine nature, or whatever else is accounted most sacred in religion ;—but, nevertheless, the success with which they propagated their fantastical hell-dreams, is absolutely without a parallel. No depth of absurdity, no height of madness, seem to have been the slightest impediment to their instant and hearty reception, not only by individual professing Christians, but by entire churches, yea, by whole nations.—The numerous works in which the cotemporary fathers oppose these errors furnish, of themselves, sufficient proof of the imminent nature of the danger they apprehended from them. They knew well that the nascent church had infinitely more to fear from the falsehood that “*ate as doth a canker*” within, than from the persecution that thundered without. The one would soon exhaust its impotent rage upon walls and bulwarks, as impregnable as the word and truth of God could make them ; but under the baneful influence of the other, the very foundations of the whole fabric were rapidly crumbling to dust.—It was on

this account, that the later fathers of this period almost entirely passed by the controversy of Christianity with Jews and Heathens, and devoted their whole energies to the refutation of the heretics : and to their efforts, under God, perhaps more than to any other external cause whatever, are we their successors indebted for the pure and undefiled record of Christ's religion which has been transmitted to us.—For, never, so far as I understand ecclesiastical history, was the very existence of Christianity upon earth in such instant peril as in the latter half of the second century. When the educated among the Christians were mixing up the pure precepts of the Gospel, with the mock morals and dreamy reveries of Pythagoras and Plato ; while the giddy multitude rushed by thousands in mad pursuit of the foul distorted spectres raised by Marcion and Valentinus, which were hurrying them with frightful velocity into the deepest and darkest abyss of Heathenism.

Melancholy as is the picture, and strange as it may seem, that such corruptions should follow so closely upon the first propagation of Christianity, there is nothing in all this for which the error we are considering does not furnish us with an amply sufficient cause.—The laity of the church were enjoined upon an authority which to them was as inspiration,—to do nothing without the clergy, to let nothing in religion seem reasonable to themselves without the concurrence of their pastors, or, in other words, only to *think* through the clergy : and the slightest deviation from the most literal strictness of these injunctions, constituted the damning sin of schism.—The consequence is obvious ; the conscientious layman would not, dare not, seek after religious knowledge, lest his researches should, by any chance, lead him to conclusions not in accordance

with those of his ministers. But at the same time, it was impossible for him to sink into that state of apathy and indifference regarding religion, which is the consequence of ignorance in quiet times.—He could not forget that which every human being around him was incessantly discussing; he could not be indifferent to that for which he might, at any moment, be called upon to suffer martyrdom. His mental powers, therefore, were constantly directed to a subject upon which he was very imperfectly informed:—circumstances of all others the most favourable to the workings of the imagination. Men would naturally seek to supply from some source their lack of knowledge upon a subject so all-important, and so universally interesting: and, in consequence, the creations of their own fancies filled the place which the truths of God's word would have occupied, had those truths been accessible to them. In these circumstances originated the wild fantastical heresies of the second century.—The church was possessed with a taste for the marvellous: and it was to pander to this taste that the heresiarchs invented their gaudy, glittering falsehoods, which the ignorance of the generality afforded them no means of detecting. Another circumstance would powerfully co-operate with this prepossession in favour of the heretical doctrines. Their first propagators were (as we have seen) ecclesiastics; and, consequently, the laity were prohibited, by the canon of Ignatius, from calling in question any thing advanced by them in their sacred character. In readily embracing their doctrines, therefore, they complied with the dictates of conscience, as well as inclination.

The argument may be thus summed up. The detestable heresies of the second century could never have been widely diffused among persons professing Christianity,

unless they had been sunk in the grossest ignorance ; but we have shown that the false doctrine of Ignatius regarding the clergy had a direct tendency to promote ignorance among the laity ; and therefore, we do not hesitate to denounce it as one principal cause of their success.

The disastrous consequences of this ignorance may be easily traced through the successive periods that elapsed, until the mystic harlot was firmly enthroned upon the seven hills of imperial Rome ; and to her abandoned impudence it was left to glory in this shame, by declaring *ex cathedrâ* that “ignorance is the mother of devotion.”

We cannot but express our astonishment, that one who had been the hearer of the inspired apostles should have propounded the doctrine we are considering. That he should have altogether forgotten that the God with whom he had to do would not give his glory to another ; and that when the triple ministerial order was installed in the throne of the ever-blessed Trinity, his religion became idolatry. We might have imagined, the holy martyr did not perceive that the commandment regarding this sin “*was exceeding broad ;*” and that he who paid divine honours to any being in the universe, save God alone, was guilty of this most heinous offence, whether the object of his adoration were a graven image or a living man. But this plea cannot be urged in favour of Ignatius, who, at the very time he wrote his epistles, was on his way to Rome to suffer martyrdom for refusing to burn incense to the emperor Trajan. Yet, that Trajan derived the imperial power from God, was as clear and unequivocal a doctrine as any in the New Testament ;<sup>98</sup> and much more of the appearance of an argument from Scripture might be got up in justification of the worship of an emperor, than of

<sup>98</sup> Rom. xiii.

paying divine honours even to an apostle. Truly it is a strange picture that we have to contemplate ;—a Christian bishop on his way to martyrdom, for refusing to pay one single act of outward adoration to an emperor, employs his last moments in earnestly enjoining upon all the churches within the sphere of his influence, an infinitely grosser heart-idolatry of himself, and his brethren in the ministry ! We can only reconcile the anomaly by concluding that there are other phases of the human mind, besides madness, wherein the intellectual powers exercise no influence whatever over the course of action. For we cannot at all admit of the excuse, that Ignatius had a very fervent imagination, and that he often employed Oriental imagery. This is mere drivelling : it is, unhappily, no question either of taste or fancy. The statement of Ignatius was received as exact and literal truth by his cotemporaries, and successors. The single blot in the beautiful epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians is a command to “obey the presbyters and deacons as God and Christ,”<sup>99</sup> and to precisely the same purpose are the few references made by the other fathers of the same century to a subject then entirely at rest. We are not combatting, therefore, a rhetorical flourish of Ignatius, but the doctrine of the church in the second century.

The great importance of the subjects we have been considering, and the subtle nature of the errors we have endeavoured to expose, will sufficiently justify a brief synoptical statement of them, in conclusion of this long chapter.

We have made out the existence of one error with a two-fold bearing. That error consists in an entire misapprehension of the nature and character of Christ’s church

<sup>99</sup> C. 5.

on earth, as revealed in the New Testament : the doctrine of which, upon this point, cannot be better conveyed than in the inimitable language of the Church of England :—  
 “ The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered according to Christ’s ordination,”<sup>100</sup> and, therefore, the only purpose for which they are so congregated is, that those ministrations may, through the Spirit, be attended with the greatest possible success, in the edification of the saints, and in the conversion of sinners. To this purpose, and to this alone, the power and authority entrusted with the ministers of the church were to be entirely subservient. It is not possible that the doctrine of the New Testament regarding the church can be more clearly stated, and we can hardly conceive of any thing more entirely at variance with it than the tradition of the apostolical and early fathers. With them, the church was an association politically incorporated by the Almighty, and having offices of dignity of many degrees in rank. In these offices is vested a very large measure of the divine power, in virtue of the apostolic succession. The purpose for which this power was imparted they do not inform us. From hence the error proceeds in a two-fold direction. They regarded the church as consisting not of the people (with the New Testament and the Church of England) but of the ministers ;<sup>101</sup> that it, and therefore, they were the only media of communication between God and man. In the other direction of the error, they altogether mistook the Scripture regarding the unity of the Spirit, which they taught to be, so entire a subjection of all the mental faculties of the laity to those of the clergy, that when the latter shall address God in the name of

<sup>100</sup> Article 19.

<sup>101</sup> Ign. ad Trall. 3. Supra, p. 194.

the congregation, they shall speak as with one mind and one will.

Here the two branches of the error again converge ; for the duties of the laity, as taught in the second century, are legitimate conclusions from both. They, as we have already seen, were not allowed to act either in their religious or civil duties, without the consent of the clergy ; they were not even to think without them ; they were to render them the homage of the heart and spirit, as well as of the body ; and to have them in reverence, exactly similar both in kind and degree, to that which they paid to God himself. The sanctions which enforced these precepts were tremendous. The slightest mental dissent from any thing advanced by the clergy implicated the dissentient in the sin of schism, cut him off from the unity of the church, and, therefore, shut out all hope for him of acceptably approaching God ; all other Christian virtues, yea, the sacrifice of Christ himself, notwithstanding.

The mode in which these opinions would seem to have co-operated with other causes, in giving success to the rank heresies of the times, we have considered at length : and by showing that the homage demanded by the clergy was clearly idolatrous, we have obviated the necessity of any scriptural disproof of it.

Nor are we at all at a loss for the origin of the error. It is merely a Christianized version of the maxims of social government of every kind, which were then universally current. The ideas of responsible authority, and of government for the benefit of the governed, received no countenance whatever from the practice of those times. On the other hand, dignitaries of every rank, both civil and religious, assumed exactly the lofty, God-deputed bearing with which Ignatius carries it, on behalf of the Christian

ministry. We must also call to mind here our former observation, that it was not the divine purpose, in revealing Christianity, to teach mankind politics; but to impart a rule of life that should adapt itself to the political circumstances of society, whatever they might be. And nothing is more certain than that when such harsh and arbitrary notions prevailed universally, a larger measure of authority would be required to give full effect to the ministrations of the clergy, than in times when milder and more rational theories of government were entertained. We have great satisfaction in being able thus to mitigate the error of Ignatius; whose name, as one of the early martyrs to the faith, must always be fragrant, and whose writings abound, nevertheless, in passages of pure piety and exquisite beauty.

The nature and general bearing of the error upon the Christian system, is the only point that remains to be considered. These we shall find to be in melancholy uniformity with the aberrations from the doctrine of Scripture which have already engaged our attention. It interposed another cloud between the heart of the believer, and that sun of righteousness, whose full splendour it was the purpose of this perfect revelation to unveil. Like the other errors of the period, it debased and sensualized Christianity, rendering it more a concern of time and less of eternity—it cast another defilement on the pure spirituality of its motives, by infusing into it a gross and earthy element; it destroyed the simplicity of its moral code, by enjoining, as imperative duties, acts which the Bible denounces as grievous sins: and thus, by introducing into Christ's religion absurd and irrational motives, and anomalous and incongruous precepts, it marred the harmony of the entire system: and reduced that, whose exact



arrangements and nice adaptations, otherwise, loudly and sweetly utter forth the praises of the infinite wisdom which framed so fair a plan, to a chaotic mass of hopeless confusion.

It was not possible, but that great and grievous practical evils should ensue upon a derangement like this. Besides those immediate effects which we have endeavoured to trace, it were easy to show the rapid advances of the clergy in arrogance, intolerance, and secularity, through this and succeeding centuries ; until “ the man of sin, the son of perdition,” was unveiled in the fulness of his gigantic dimensions. But we rather turn to that which, being the necessary consequence of the error, must always appear under whatever circumstances it is entertained, and however carefully it may have been purified from the idolatrous grossness of Ignatius.

Christianity knows nothing of degrees of requisition ; she asks the dedication of the whole heart and affections, of all the faculties and powers, without the slightest reservation, to her service ; it is impossible to overstate, either the comprehensiveness or the universality, of her demands. She can ask no more from the clergy ; she demands not one whit less of the laity. The one and the other are equally exhorted “ to present their bodies” (and therefore all their outward actions) “ a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,” and this, and this alone, “ is their reasonable service.” Evidently, nothing can be more abhorrent to the spirit of a religion like this, than the notion of a vicarious performance of its duties : of the supererogatory labours of one class in the church, supplying the lack of service of another. Yet, that this is elementary to the error in question, is equally apparent. To make this clear, let us contemplate, for a moment, the

situation in which a lay Christian of the second century was placed by it. We have already shown that, according to the then prevalent theology, the only mode by which man's acts of devotion could pass through the invisible world to the ear of Him to whom they were addressed, was by the free agency of a universe of angels. We now find that, even in this world, the layman had access to his heavenly Father, only through the medium of the bishop and clergy. Thus separated by a double remove from the object of his worship, it would infallibly be concluded that religion was an affair in which the layman had, comparatively, but little concern; and that his safest course regarding it, was to keep on as good terms as possible with the clergy below, and with the angels above, and to leave the rest to be managed between them.

This is, of course, an extreme case, arising out of the gross character of the unhappy times we are considering. But is not the same consequence inevitable upon every shade of the same error, however attenuated? Is the entire figment of a church on earth, the only authorised expositor of the word of God, in virtue of the apostolical succession of her clergy, (a notion as utterly destitute of Scripture warrant as the supremacy of the Pope) any thing more than a dilution of the doctrine of Clement and Ignatius, from which the deduction of the Romish church, that therefore the Scripture is to be denied to the laity, has been somewhat illogically severed? And is it possible to escape the inference, that therefore the laity will do well to leave a very exact and curious attention to religion, to those whose holy orders confer upon them the advantages for such pursuits, whatever they may be, which accrue from the apostolic succession; and not to busy themselves with enquiries which they must necessarily pursue under

unfavourable circumstances, and with which they have, in strictness, no right whatever to intermeddle?

That all this, and worse than this, has been avowed and defended by Protestant divines, I should find no difficulty in establishing by a host of authorities: but I willingly forbear. The subject has been throughout an invidious and unpalatable one; and at such a moment as the present, I shall certainly not arm the adversaries of the Christian church to which I esteem it my privilege to belong, with a weapon of which they too often take an improper advantage, by charging upon every individual of whom that church is composed, the opinions of a few of her wrong-headed members. Another circumstance also, happily obviates the necessity of such an exposure. The avowal of these offensive opinions has been, for some years past, of very rare occurrence in the writings of the divines of the Church of England; and the whole tenor of her theology, in the present day, affords a blessed and unanswerable testimony that, before the bright beams of Christ's gospel, this error also is fast fading away. And while I rejoice, in common with all who profess the name of Christianity, in the larger diffusion of scriptural knowledge which has occasioned this, I cannot refrain from acknowledging that my joy is enhanced by the reflection, that no Christian community upon earth has laboured more abundantly in the promotion of this knowledge than the Church of England.

But we are dwelling upon the tokens for good which, as our hope and prayer is, are bringing to its catastrophe the mystery of iniquity which has been so long enacted upon the earth: whereas we are now considering those rapidly-growing corruptions that introduced it. We turn from the blaze of Scripture light which irradiates the

nineteenth century, and whose clear shining well nigh kindles the ardent faith of the believer to the full assurance of hope, to plunge once more into the thick and palpable darkness of the second. when the faith, as well as the patience, of the saints, was subjected to trials more severe than perhaps at any other period. And we state unreservedly, that an error more deeply fraught with evil consequences, never vexed the church of Christ, than the apotheosis of the clergy.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>102</sup> See Appendix.

## CHAPTER XII.

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### MARTYRDOM.

THE error that arose in the early church, touching the honour conferred by the crown of martyrdom, has so little connection with any opinion now received by Protestants, that it is only enumerated here, for the purpose of further illustrating the nature of the mistakes with which Christianity was corrupted by its early professors.

It is not difficult to conceive that the memory of those who loved not their lives unto the death, “for their Lord and for the word of his testimony,” should be very precious in the hearts of his surviving disciples on earth. Nor can such a feeling be too highly commended. But, unhappily, the utmost latitude of interpretation can never bring the terms in which the martyrs are invariably spoken of by the fathers of the second century within any allowable limit. We have already seen their proneness to assign to ecclesiastical ceremonies the efficacy which belongs to the grace of God alone, and to ecclesiastical persons the honour which is due to the God of all grace only, and in the instance now before us we have another melancholy illustration of it.

The Shepherd of Hermas speaks thus of the martyrs: —“Whosoever have suffered for the name of the Lord are esteemed honourable by the Lord, and all their offences

are blotted out, because they have suffered death for the name of the Son of God.”<sup>1</sup>

Irenæus tells us that “the martyrs despised death, and bore their testimony, not through the infirmity of the flesh, but through the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>2</sup> An expression whereby he seems to indicate that the Spirit was with the martyrs, not in his ordinary sanctifying influences, but miraculously. And the expressions of Tertullian render it pretty certain that such was the universally received opinion at the time. He addresses certain martyrs in prison thus:—“In the first place, beloved, grieve not the Holy Spirit that hath gone with you to prison; for if he had not gone with you, ye would not now have been there. Give, therefore, all diligence, that he may remain with you there, and that he may lead you thence unto the Lord.”<sup>3</sup>

The martyrs were to be the judges of their persecutors in the future state. Irenæus commits those who despise, as well as those who persecute them, to the martyrs themselves:<sup>4</sup> and Tertullian, in the most eloquent address we have quoted, tells the prisoners to whom he writes:—“the world expects its judge, but ye are to judge your judges.”<sup>5</sup>

The intercession of a martyr was always attended to by the church on behalf of the backsliding penitent:<sup>6</sup>—a beautiful and affecting custom, conceived in the true spirit of Christianity, and to which neither Tertullian, nor any

<sup>1</sup> Sim. 9, 28.

<sup>2</sup> Adv. Hæc. 5, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Ad Martyres, c. 1. The occasion of which he addressed them was, that disputes and dissensions had arisen among themselves; a circumstance by no means without a parallel, however extraordinary it may seem.

<sup>4</sup> Lib. 3, 20., p. 247.

<sup>5</sup> U. s., c. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Id., c. 1.

one else in their senses, could discover the slightest objection; though afterwards, when he had fallen into the dotage of Montanism, he attacked it in a furious rant of coarse unfeeling sarcasm.<sup>7</sup>

If the confessor escaped with his life, the prerogative of martyrdom gave him an undisputed claim to the highest ecclesiastical dignities.<sup>8</sup> If he underwent the last and most perfect test of the sincerity of his profession, the spiritual privileges that awaited him were such as to render martyrdom, to a mind of any enthusiasm, a consummation earnestly to be sought after. This is the second laver, the baptism of blood, whereby the blessed receiver is glorified, as by water baptism he has been purified; this is the perfection of all the blessings which Christianity can bestow upon man: and to which there is no other mode whatever of attaining.<sup>9</sup> For while the souls of ordinary Christians remain for a very long period in a state of incomplete happiness, the spirit of the martyr rushes exulting from his mangled corpse into the heaven of heavens, and plunges into the ocean of perfect bliss that flows round the throne of the Most Highest.<sup>10</sup>

When doctrines like these were publicly professed and

<sup>7</sup> De Pudic., c. 22.

<sup>8</sup> Martyrii prærogativa.—*Adv. Valent.* c. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Clement of Alexandria was of a different opinion. "If martyrdom be to confess God, whoever orders his life virtuously, through the knowledge of God, and obeys his commands, is a martyr in life and conversation, by whatever means he comes by his death; for he pours forth his faith like blood throughout his whole life, and even at his death."—4 *Strom.* § 4. But this writer certainly entertained notions regarding martyrdom, which he had borrowed from the philosophical heretics, rather than from the orthodox; though in the same chapter, he indignantly repudiates the notion which some of them held, that this perfection was the only martyrdom.—*See above*, p. 163, Note 32.

<sup>10</sup> Tertullian de Baptismo, c. 16.

firmly believed, what wonder that Ignatius should write to the church at Rome, expressly forbidding them, either by prayer to God, or intercession with the imperial authorities, from hindering him of the crown of martyrdom?—"Now that the altar is already prepared," he exclaims, "ye cannot do me a greater kindness than to suffer me to be sacrificed unto God."<sup>11</sup> It is good for me to set from the world unto God, that I may rise again unto him. I beseech you that ye show not an unseasonable good will towards me. Suffer me to be food to the wild beasts, by whom I shall attain unto God: for I am the wheat of God, and shall be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ. Encourage, then, the beasts, that they may become my sepulchre; pray unto Christ for me, that by these instruments, I may be made the sacrifice of God."<sup>12</sup> As if for the purpose of showing that he was no empty boaster, dealing merely in general declamation, he does not scruple to detail and dwell upon all the horrible particulars of the fate that awaited him. "May I enjoy the beasts that are prepared for me; which also I wish, may exercise all their fierceness upon me, and whom, for that end, I will encourage, that they may be sure to devour me. Yea, if they will not do it willingly, I will provoke them to it. Welcome fire and the cross; welcome the rage of the wild beasts; welcome breaking of bone, and rending of flesh, and tearing off of members; let the shattering in pieces of the whole body, and all the wicked torments of the Devil, come upon me, only let me enjoy Jesus Christ."<sup>13</sup>

He knows but little of human nature, who is not well aware of the highly contagious character of enthusiasm like this: or who is at all surprised to be informed that,

<sup>11</sup> Ign. ad Rom., c. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Id., c. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Id., c. 3.



with the rewards we have described set before her, and with an advocate and example so eloquent and influential as Ignatius, a bright hot fire of false zeal was kindled in the Christian church, wherein the love of life and the fear of death were alike entirely consumed. She clapped her hands for joy at the sound of persecution. Her members rushed in crowds to the judgment-seats of their tormentors, each vying with the other in the boldest profession of Christianity, and the most contemptuous defiance of their malice. The more merciful of the Roman governors were openly insulted, spit upon, and even struck in open court, by frantic zealots who called themselves Christians, in their eagerness for the crown of martyrdom. The idea of flight in persecution was disdainfully scoffed at. Our Saviour's express injunction to this effect was limited merely to the apostles.<sup>14</sup> Persecution, on the other hand, they declared to be an express appointment of God; and as God could appoint nothing but what was good, to fly from it was to decline that which is good.<sup>15</sup> It was the divinely instituted means for separating the wheat of confession from the chaff of denial; he, therefore, that fled from it, counteracted, as much as in him lay, the purpose of infinite wisdom.<sup>16</sup> Besides, flight was altogether in vain; instances were adduced of persons who had attempted to evade persecution, and upon whom the vengeance of heaven had brought ten-fold tortures from the persecutors, before they were committed to the flames of martyrdom.<sup>17</sup> "How," it was triumphantly asked, "could the blessings promised to those that confessed Christ before men, that endured persecution for his name's sake, that continued unto the end, be obtained, if it were lawful to fly from persecution."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Matt. x. 23. Tertullian de Fugâ in Persecutione, c. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Id., cc. 1, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Id., c. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Id., c. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Id., c. 7.

The idea of purchasing the privilege of professing Christianity with money, was even still more contemptuously rejected. "God pronounced a blessing upon the poor," say their admirable logicians, "how then can a man be blessed by his riches? We cannot serve God and Mammon; how then can we be redeemed by God and Mammon? Or who serves Mammon more than he whom Mammon redeems? We who are bought with blood, pay neither blood-money nor head-money; for Christ is our head. Wilt thou redeem that with thy money which Christ redeemed with his blood?"<sup>19</sup>

Now we greatly admire the ingenuity of all this; we produce it as a very talented specimen of the arguments of a school of reasoners, who, by the help of a few flimsy fallacies for which they quote Scripture, and of strong fierce appeals to the conscience, founded upon these fallacies, can make the Bible say any thing: and, we regret to add, (for the school still flourishes) often with astonishing success. But, nevertheless, we entirely deny that the word of God sanctions or enjoins the sin of murder under any circumstances. Nay, it appears to us, that he who promotes his own murder, either by daring a tribunal, or by wilfully neglecting any lawful means whereby it might be prevented, is guilty of a crime of a much deeper dye than that of his murderer: the one is the sinner, but the other is the tempter. But our author quotes the case of St. Paul, who refused to stay from Jerusalem where Agabus<sup>20</sup> prophesied that bonds and imprisonment awaited him, and this he trumpets forth as a triumphant and final settlement of the question in his own favour.<sup>21</sup> What wretched paltering is this! Could a case of more perfect disproof have been possibly selected? For in the first

<sup>19</sup> C. 12.

<sup>20</sup> Acts xxi. 10—14.

<sup>21</sup> De Fugâ, c. 6., a. f.

place, the apostle was inspired as well as Agabus ; and the same Spirit that revealed the fact to the one, revealed also his course of conduct to the other. When this argument suits his purpose, no one is more sensible of the force of it, or uses it more dexterously than Tertullian. But in the next place, the predicted imprisonment did not terminate in martyrdom, but in the apostle's liberation ; this was also foreshown,<sup>22</sup> and this is surely not unimportant to the tendency of his example. But lastly, though the apostle refused to release himself by the illegal act of bribing the Roman governor, yet he pleaded with the utmost fervour for his life ; and on all occasions, exhibited the greatest solicitude for its preservation from the many perils that surrounded him. And yet this fierce fanatic can pass by all such considerations, and ground upon the mere act of his going to Jerusalem a vehement exhortation to his fellow Christians, first to provoke the unsheathing of the sword of persecution, and then to precipitate themselves upon its point !

Upon this particular question, however, the views of Tertullian, though very prevalent in the second century, were not universal. The school of Alexandria promulgated opinions more consonant with Scripture and reason ; for which, as we have before observed, they drew upon themselves from their meek opponents the epithet of “ sensualists.”<sup>23</sup> They do not at all scruple to affirm that God is not the author of persecution, nor of any other evil.<sup>24</sup> They also, and with justice, extend the command<sup>25</sup> to the whole of Christ's disciples. “ We are to flee from persecution,” say they, “ not because we fear death, or because it is an evil to undergo persecution, but because God will not have us

<sup>22</sup> See Acts xxi. 13.

<sup>23</sup> See above, p. 151, Note 10.

<sup>24</sup> 4 Strom., § 12.

<sup>25</sup> Matt. x. 23.

to be the authors or abettors of evil, either in ourselves, or our persecutors. He who disobeys this, throws himself rashly and unadvisedly into danger. Whoso slays a righteous man commits murder; and he who offers himself to the persecutors participates in the guilt of his own murder. He who refuses or neglects to avoid persecution, does what in him lies to abet the guilt of his persecutors; but he who provokes his tormentors is as much the cause of his own death as he who throws himself in the way of a wild beast. It would be just as proper to term one who suffers for a theft a martyr as such a person; both are alike the authors of their own execution."<sup>26</sup> This is manly, scriptural, and rational. We may safely leave Tertullian to Clement of Alexandria; and should any one in his ignorance presume that the patristical writings contain nothing worthy of notice, we conceive we have only to point him out such a passage as this, and he has his answer in full.

We regret, however, that it is only upon this point that we can commend the doctrine of Clement regarding martyrdom. Like the rest of his cotemporaries, he held martyrdom to be the entire purification from all past sins, and the infallible induction of the happy subject of it into the fulness of heavenly felicity. Nay, he goes even beyond this; "our Lord drank the cup of martyrdom only for those unbelievers that plotted against him. The apostles *suffered for the churches they had founded*: and it behoves the true and wise martyr to imitate their blamelessness of life, in order that his martyrdom may also be efficacious."<sup>27</sup> I do not carry this out to all the consequences of which it is capable; because it is plain, from the rest of his writings, that he had no intention either of

<sup>26</sup> 4 Strom., § 10.; see also § 4, of the same book, a. f.

<sup>27</sup> 4 Strom., § 9.

undervaluing, or limiting, the atonement of our Saviour : —but, nevertheless, he certainly did hold, with the universal church in the second century, that martyrdom was in some way efficacious as an expiatory act. He agrees, likewise, with the preceding writers in accounting it a necessary part of the Christian economy, its crown and perfection : this, he tells us, arises from the martyr's assimilation to the divine impatibility : and he enforces the Pythagorean figment, of striving after the indifference of God to earthly pains and pleasures, as the best preparative for it.<sup>28</sup>

Yet the New Testament only teaches, that he “ who endureth persecution ” is “ blessed,” as well as he whose life exemplifies the other Christian graces ;<sup>29</sup> and that he “ who abideth to the end shall be saved.”<sup>30</sup> And far from any thing meritorious in the act of martyrdom, we are expressly told concerning it that, “ he who giveth his body to be burned, and hath not charity, it profiteth him nothing.”<sup>31</sup>

We could not have selected a question, which more forcibly displays the total neglect of the spirit of the New Testament that prevailed in the early church, than the opinions of the fathers of the two first centuries upon the subject of martyrdom.

<sup>28</sup> See § 19, 21. This last opinion seems to have been peculiar to himself.

<sup>29</sup> Matt. v. 10—12, &c.

<sup>30</sup> Id. xxiv. 13.

<sup>31</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

## CHAPTER XIII.

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### THE SUPREMACY OF ROME.

THE error we are now about to consider, like that of the preceding chapter, does not fall within the scope of our original design ; inasmuch as it is expressly repudiated by all the Protestant churches, and by many of the ancient ones. The history of its origin and progress, however, are not without instruction upon a point, on which the eye of the visible church is intensely fixed at the present moment ; and it therefore seemed desirable, to conclude our analysis of the ecclesiastical opinions of the second century with a brief account of them.

The Supremacy of the See of Rome, is a doctrine which, pretending to no scriptural sanction, and resting solely on the unwritten tradition, we shall not waste a word upon its confutation, but at once proceed with its history.

The circumstance that Clement of Rome addressed to the Corinthian church, the epistle to which we have so frequently referred, has been eagerly seized upon by the Romanists as an early avowal of the supremacy of the former see ; and the writer has, in consequence, been honoured with the style and title of *Pope St. Clement* : though nothing can be more humble, or less popish than the tone and temper of the entire production, whatever

may be said of the purport of it. He enforces no authority but that of argument and persuasion: and though he writes, not in his own name, but in that of the church at Rome, yet internal evidence is not wanting, that the Corinthian clergy had appealed to him rather than to any other bishop, merely because he had formerly been a pastor of the church at Corinth, and was, therefore, familiar with the circumstances in which the schism originated.<sup>1</sup> And, far from the assumption of any authority as bishop of Rome, that city is never once mentioned, except in the superscription. These considerations lead me to conclude, that the dogma of Rome's supremacy receives no countenance whatever from the epistle of Clement: a conclusion, be it remembered, altogether unimportant to my view of the question, having already admitted that other false doctrines had an equally early origin.

The superscription of Ignatius's epistle to the Romans addresses, "the church which presides in the region of Rome, worthy of God, most becoming, worthy to be most blessed, worthy to be praised, most worthy to have her prayers answered, most pure, presiding in love, named after Christ and the Father." This is certainly a mode of speaking which strongly favours the doctrine in question: if, indeed, the whole of the epithets have not been artfully interpolated at a later period; which I cannot help suspecting.

Shortly afterwards, also, Irenæus declares it in terms which cannot be mistaken, in the passage we have already referred to, regarding the apostolic tradition:—"Since it would be tedious, in a volume like this, to enumerate the successions of all the churches, we the rather insist upon that of the very great, and most ancient,

<sup>1</sup> Clem. ad Cor., c. 1.

and universally celebrated church, which was founded and constituted at Rome by the two most glorious apostles Peter and Paul.”<sup>2</sup> He proceeds to inform us that it was needful for the churches every where<sup>3</sup> to resort to Rome, because that city was the seat of government ;<sup>4</sup> and, therefore, they had made her the depository of their apostolical tradition. The reason here given for the supremacy in question is a very probable one. The circumstance that Rome was, at that time, the metropolis of the world in every sense of the word, would have an inevitable tendency to confer a corresponding metropolitan dignity upon the church established there.

Tertullian thus enumerates the apostolical churches, to which he exhorts the heretics to repair, in order that they might there hear for themselves the tradition of the apostles, and compare it with their inspired epistles. “ Is Achaia near thee? thou hast Corinth. Art thou not far from Macedonia? there is Philippi. Wilt thou go into Asia? there thou wilt find Ephesus. If thou livest adjacent to Italy, thou hast the Roman church ; whence the authority (of the apostolic tradition) is immediately derived to us, (at Carthage.) Blessed church, to whom the apostles poured forth their whole doctrine, along with their blood ; where Peter’s passion was likened to that of the Lord, (crucifixion) where St. Paul was crowned with John Baptist’s martyrdom, (decollation,) whence St. John, after he had been plunged into boiling oil and suffered

<sup>2</sup> Adv. Hær., lib. 3. c. 3. I strongly suspect that here also, the epithets have been inserted by the Romanists.

<sup>3</sup> Undique.

<sup>4</sup> “ Propter potentiorē principalitatem.” The allusion is, doubtless, to the many appeals which the Christians had to prefer to the emperors against the governors of provinces, as Grabe unanswerably demonstrates in his note on the place.—*Edit. Oxon.*, p. 201.



nothing, was banished to Patmos. Let us see there, what these holy men said and taught.”<sup>5</sup>

It appears to me, that these passages betray considerable anxiety, on the part of their authors, to give to the Roman see the full benefit of the advantages which her situation in the metropolis of the world conferred upon her. Else, why does Irenæus heap laudatory epithets upon the church at Rome, because of a privilege which she only enjoyed in common with so many others of the apostolic churches? Or why does Tertullian enumerate privileges peculiar to that church, the value of which it is not very easy to estimate? That St. Peter and St. Paul were martyred at Rome, and that St. John was there exposed to a cruel torture, from which he was miraculously delivered, are somewhat singular reasons why the supremacy should be conferred upon that see! Our Saviour was of a very different opinion regarding Jerusalem.

We find from other passages of the same authors, that the early church had a more cogent reason than any that are expressed in our citations, for upholding the supremacy of Rome. The well-known prophecy of St. Paul regarding *the man of sin*,<sup>6</sup> was always interpreted by her of antichrist; whom she supposed to be a man who was to possess himself of the dominion of the world, and, by means of unheard-of cruelties towards the Christians, to succeed in re-establishing the Roman idolatry, and the worship of himself as its supreme god.<sup>7</sup> His destruction, which would speedily follow, was to usher in the consummation of all things,<sup>8</sup> and the end of the world. In the course of the prophecy, St. Paul thus addresses the Thesalonians:—“Remember ye not that when I was yet with

<sup>5</sup> De. Præs. Hær., c. 36.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Thess. ii. 1—12.

<sup>7</sup> See Irenæus., lib. 5. c. 25.

<sup>8</sup> Idem, c. 26.

you, I told you these things. And now *ye know* what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work ; only there is that which withholdeth until it be taken out of the way ; and then shall that man of sin be revealed," &c.<sup>9</sup> It was the uniform belief of the early fathers, that this hindering, or restraining, power was the Roman empire : that its dismemberment into ten kingdoms, and the revelation of the man of sin were to be cotemporary events.<sup>10</sup> The following passage from the apology of Tertullian affords us an insight into the practical effect of this belief ; it occurs in the course of an endeavour to show that the Christians were not rebellious subjects. After citing the passages from the New Testament, which enjoin that prayer should be offered for kings, he proceeds :—" but there is another and greater necessity laid upon us that we should pray for the emperors, as well as for the whole empire, and for Roman affairs in general, who know that a very great destroying power now imminent over the whole world, and threatening dreadful afflictions, yea, the end of all things, is retarded by the continuance of the Roman empire. Therefore, we would not experience these things ourselves ; and while we pray that they may be deferred, we ask for the long duration of Rome."<sup>11</sup>

I feel persuaded, that here we have the true reason why the early church manifested such extraordinary anxiety to foster the popular prepossession in favour of the political supremacy of Rome, by elevating the church in

<sup>9</sup> 2 Thess. ii. 5—8.

<sup>10</sup> " Qui nunc tenet teneat, donec de medio fiat. Quis ? nisi Romanus status, cujus abscissio in decem reges dispersa antichristum superducat."—*Tertullian de Res. Carnis.*, c. 24. See *adv. Marc.*, lib. 5. c. 16. See also Irenæus, *ubi supra*.

<sup>11</sup> *Apol.*, c. 31.

that city to a corresponding ecclesiastical dominion. She wished to retard the coming judgment : a motive perfectly scriptural and proper : but instead of searching diligently in her own bosom for that “ mystery of iniquity ” which the prophet had informed her “ did already work,” even in his time, she addressed her whole energies to the proping up and continuance of that impediment, concerning which it was the declared purpose of the divine mind that it should be removed. She was plainly forewarned by the terms of the prediction that the danger was from within, and not from without ; but far from profiting either by this, or by the examples which Scripture afforded her, of timely repentance delaying the progress of threatened judgments, she madly strove to counteract the decrees of Omnipotence. ‘ Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker ! ’—By these her efforts she accomplished the very consummation which she had hoped to defeat : she herself conceived, and gave birth to, that ‘ man of sin,’ who even to this day, ‘ as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.’ ”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Ver. 4.

## CHAPTER XIV.

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### MODES OF INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE ADOPTED BY THE EARLY CHURCH.

WE have now completed our survey of those dogmas maintained by the early Christians, which affect the discipline and ministrations of the church. Those that remain to be considered are points of doctrine, professedly derived from Scripture: it becomes, therefore, important that we should, in the first place, endeavour to acquaint ourselves with the mode in which they interpreted the text of the sacred volume: as upon this, of course, the value of their opinions will altogether depend.

It is quite needful to premise here, that they ultimately appeal, upon all occasions, to the inspired writings, as their only authority for the doctrines they teach. Even Clement of Alexandria only claims the sanction of tradition for certain mystical interpretations and accommodations of the text, never for any doctrines independent of it. The Protestant may triumphantly point to the fathers of the first and second centuries as his precedent and exemplar in the pursuit of a similar course. It is to be regretted that they did not thus defer to the sense, as well as to the letter of Scripture.

We set out with only one principle: regard being had to the scope and drift of the passage that contains it.

the meaning of an inspired sentence is that which a similar collocation of the same words will convey, under any circumstances, to the greatest number of sentient and rational beings. If this be not true, that is, if the inspired writings do not mean what they say, an infinite series of revelations will be required, each in explanation of the preceding one. Of this plain and obvious principle the writers we are considering appear to have altogether lost sight. Nothing can exceed the licentiousness of the canon of interpretation adopted by all of them. The sense and meaning of Scripture are, in their works, engaged in an interminable game at hide and seek with each other; so that, upon their showing, it is morally impossible to decide, either what they do mean, or what they do not mean.

If the tradition of the fathers, as scriptural interpreters, is to be received, we must certainly concede to the Roman Catholics that the Bible is the most difficult book in the world, and of all others, the most dangerous to be entrusted with the laity.

This part of the subject has been necessarily anticipated in a measure, by the course of our enquiry. But, nevertheless, our view of the writings of the early fathers would be a very defective one, if it did not include as well, a special notice upon so important and prominent a feature in them. We shall, therefore, endeavour to make such a selection from the numerous passages that present themselves, as shall put the reader fully in possession of the subject, and at the same time, do as little violence as may be to that feeling of reverential regard for the words of Holy Writ, the wide diffusion of which is the glory of our age and country.

*The early fathers often enforce and illustrate scriptural doctrines by metaphors, or phrases, not employed in*

*Scripture, and apt to convey notions and impressions regarding them, devoid of scriptural authority, and therefore false.*

We have already noticed and observed upon more than one instance of this somewhat subtle mode of false interpretation ; the following partake of the same character.

Clement of Rome thus illustrates the resurrection :—  
 “ Let us consider that wonderful sign of the resurrection which is seen in the eastern countries ; that is so say, in Arabia. There is a certain bird called a Phœnix ; of this there is never but one at a time ; and that lives five hundred years. And when the time of its dissolution draws near that it must die, it makes itself a nest of frankincense and myrrh, and other spices ; into which, when its time is fulfilled, it enters and dies. But its flesh putrefying, breeds a certain worm, which being nourished with the juice of the dead bird, brings forth feathers : and when it is grown strong, it takes up the nest in which the bones of its progenitor lie, and carries it to Egypt, to a city called Heliopolis : and flying in open day, in the sight of all men lays it upon the altar of the sun, and so returns from whence it came. The priests then search into the records of the time, and find that it returned precisely at the end of five hundred years.”<sup>1</sup>

Now here is a most absurd fable, invented by the idolatrous priests of Egypt to countenance their system of fraud and imposture, and having, therefore, an obvious bias in favour of heathenism. Yet a Christian writer does not at all scruple to make the pretended occurrence of this false fact, a *sign* of the fulfilment of one of the most important and momentous truths of his religion. Was he

<sup>1</sup> C. 25.

not afraid, we naturally ask, lest the sign and the thing signified should share the same fate in the estimation of his readers? and that the failure of the one would necessarily produce in their minds disbelief in the other. The excuse that has been so often urged in behalf of Clement, that he only believed this fable in common with Tacitus, Pliny, &c., is not an available one. These authors were heathens, and, therefore, willingly listened to a story which told so decidedly for the religion they professed: but this very circumstance ought to have raised a suspicion in the mind of Clement. For the appearance of the Phoenix was never regarded by any one as a mere fact in natural history, but as a miracle.<sup>2</sup> And to what agency, but that of evil spirits, could Clement ascribe such a control over the volitions of a bird, as should constrain it to bring incense to the altar of an idolatrous temple, to be there consumed in honour of the idol? Besides, the heathen writers themselves speak of the circumstance with considerable doubt and hesitation;<sup>3</sup> and ought not Clement to have been equally careful, that the fact which he propounded to a Christian church as a sign of the resurrection, was a true one? Notwithstanding, then, the very high authority which I know to be against me, I hesitate not to assert that there is no defence for a Christian minister, who, misled by a foolish vanity of displaying his learning, and of improving upon St. Paul, (and I perceive both in the passage before us,) hesitates not to suspend the faith of his readers in one of the most awful verities of Christianity, upon their credulity of one of

<sup>2</sup> "Post longum sæculorum ambitum, avis Phœnix in Ægyptum venit, præbuitque materiem doctissimis, multa super eo *miraculo* disserendi."—*Tacitus Annal.*, lib. 6. c. 28.

<sup>3</sup> "Hæc incerta et fabulosis aucta."—*Tacitus*, *u. s.*

the lying wonders of heathenism.<sup>4</sup> But I may be asked, did any evil effects follow upon it? I answer that they did. The orthodoxy and the heresy of the succeeding century differed from each other in this only, that while the one was Christianity more or less leavened with the dogmas of the heathen philosophy, the other consisted of the same Christianity in all possible stages of admixture with the fables of the heathen mythology; from the paganising errors of Marcion and Hermogenes, down to the heathen Gnostics, who worshipped the idols of Egypt and of Greece with prayers and incantations taken from the Bible. And did not the occurrence of such a passage, in an author so highly esteemed as St. Clement, furnish both with something like a precedent?

Ignatius writes thus to the Ephesians:—"Ye are the stones of the Father's temple, ready to be built in by God the Father; being drawn up on high by the engine<sup>5</sup> of Jesus Christ, that is the cross: the Holy Ghost being the rope, your faith being your sling,<sup>6</sup> and love being the groove<sup>7</sup> which guides, or conducts, you up to God." Here

<sup>4</sup> There is one defence of this passage which it requires a considerable exercise of forbearance seriously to answer. The Christian fathers, of a later period, frequently make the same use of the phœnix. So they do; but it is only upon the authority, and often in the very words, of the passage before us. It, therefore, only proves that Clement originated the practice in the Christian church of holding up an idolatrous fable as a sign of the resurrection; which is not a defence, but an aggravation. See *Tertullian de Res. Car.*, c. 13.; consult also the references to the other fathers given by Junius.—*Note in Clem.*, p. 34.

<sup>5</sup> διὰ τῆς μηχανῆς.

<sup>6</sup> ἀναγωγέως. "Quod alligatur alicui rei quasi ad eam sustollendam." —*Eustathius*.

<sup>7</sup> ὁδός. Either the groove or fixed pulley in which the rope ran; or more probably the *well* in the scaffolding, through which the suspended stones passed in their progress upwards.



he changes the metaphor :<sup>8</sup> —“ All ye, therefore, fall into your places in that procession,<sup>9</sup> as God-bearers, and Christ-bearers, and shrine-bearers, and bearers of purity,<sup>10</sup> being altogether adorned with the commands of Christ as with festal garments.”<sup>11</sup> (c. 9.) This most extraordinary passage commences with an amplification upon St. Peter’s meta-

<sup>8</sup> The very abrupt transition here was probably suggested to the writer by the stupendous machinery employed in ancient architecture, by the agency of which, many blocks of stone were probably drawn up to the builders at the same time. Ammianus Marcellinus describes the engines used in the erection of an obelisk at Rome, in a passage which is not without interest as an illustration of the place before us.—*Rerum Gestarum*, lib. 17. c. 4. He wrote at a period when great architectural undertakings were of rare occurrence there; and consequently, the forest of poles and beams which he describes, high *usque periculum*, crossed in all directions by cables of enormous length and thickness, while many thousand men worked at the winches, were a sight seldom to be witnessed, and therefore exciting the more attention.

<sup>9</sup> ἐπεὶ ἔν καὶ σύνοδοι πάντες. The word, *σύνοδος*, synod, is used for the great assembly of all the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, in the *propylon* or outer court of an ancient temple, which took place on the occasion of a grand procession of the idols. They met there for the purpose of assuming the symbols, or sacred implements, which they were privileged to bear, and of taking their places in the procession.

<sup>10</sup> Θειοφόροι καὶ ναοφόροι χρυσοφόροι, ἀγιοφόροι. These are titles of honour, descriptive of the sacred symbols which those upon whom they were conferred bore in the procession, and by which their places in it were regulated. They were objects of ambition with persons in the most exalted stations, among the ancients. We learn from the Greek inscriptions and papyri, recently recovered in Egypt, that under the Ptolemaic dynasty, members of the royal family, and even the Ptolemies themselves, gloried in the titles of ἀθλοφόροι, crown-bearers, κανηφόροι, basket-bearers, &c., in the religious processions of the Egyptian deities.

<sup>11</sup> κατὰ πάντα κεκοσμημένοι. The word is used generally for ornamental dress. He alludes to the splendid costumes of those who took part in these processions. By the phrase *κατὰ πάντα* he intimates, that the festival to which he invites them is one of peculiar solemnity, in which none of the ornaments and insignia they were entitled to wear must be omitted; or, as we should phrase it in English, *a full dress occasion*.

phor,<sup>12</sup> in the technical language of ancient masonry. The doctrine it conveys is perfectly scriptural, and it is by no means destitute of ingenuity, though the writer has certainly not succeeded in improving upon the inspired apostle. But it was the latter part that gave occasion for its introduction in this place, as another glaring instance of the impropriety we have just remarked upon. He abruptly changes the figure, and describes the Christian walk and conversation in terms and expressions altogether peculiar to the marshalling of those solemn processions of the idols, which formed so conspicuous a part of the ritual of worship in the ancient heathen temples. I willingly admit that the metaphor is, throughout, finely conceived, and clothed in vigorous and glowing language. But its introduction into an address to Christians but recently converted from heathenism, and still surrounded by it, in the plenitude of its gorgeous attractions, appears to me as strange a violation of all the ordinary maxims of prudence and propriety, as I remember to have met with. The reader need scarcely be informed that about a century afterwards, Christianity walked in procession as well as heathenism. And so deeply was the ceremonial of the one indebted to that of the other, that when, after upwards of a thousand years of separation, the two met once more in India, through the medium of the Roman Catholic missionaries, they instantly recognised each other as near relations. And matters have since then been so dexterously managed, by means of a few further concessions on the part of the Catholics, that in an Indian city now, it requires a practised eye to distinguish between a procession of Christian idols, and a procession of heathen ones.

The same father uses the following expression, in his

<sup>12</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 5.

epistle to the Magnesians:—"There is one God who has manifested himself by Jesus Christ his son; who is his Eternal Word, *not coming forth from silence*."<sup>13</sup> Here is an equivocation upon two of the meanings of the Greek word *λόγος*. We merely remark upon it, that when the second person of the Trinity is spoken of as the Logos, or Word, the allusion is to the sense of *reason*, the action of the mental powers, not to the other sense of which the same word is capable, *speaking*, as opposed to *silence*.

He cautions the Trallians against the errors of the Phantastics, (who denied our Lord's humanity, and taught that the crucifixion was an optical illusion) in these terms:—"Flee these evil boughs which bear deadly fruit, of which if any taste he shall presently die. These are not of the Father's planting. If they were, they would have shown themselves to be branches of the cross,<sup>14</sup> and their fruit would be immortal."<sup>15</sup> This passage equivocates upon the double meaning of the word *ξύλον*, which we have stated to signify both "the cross" and "a tree" in the Greek Bible.<sup>16</sup>

The evil effects of this mode of writing (which the epistle of Barnabas seems to have originated) are perfectly apparent in the fathers of the second century. A systematic mode of interpretation was established, called by

<sup>13</sup> "Ὁς ἐστὶν αὐτῷ λόγος αἰδίδιος ἐκ ἀπὸ σιγῆς προελθών. c. 8. Here is an evident allusion to the error which was afterwards maintained by Valentinus: he taught that *silence* (Σιγή) the second Eon in the Pleroma, was the mother of the Logos.—*Irenæus, lib. 1. cc. 1, 5*. This heretic, it appears from hence, did not invent his system, but adopted it.

There are, besides, other allusions to silence in the epistles of Ignatius, which I do not very well understand.—*Ad Ephes. cc. 6, 15, 9. ad Rom. 3*.

<sup>14</sup> κλάδοι τῆ σταυροῦ.

<sup>15</sup> C. 11.

<sup>16</sup> Supra, p. 79, Note 36.

them, that of the *Amphibolia* or double meaning, which they justified in theory, and applied in practice. Upon this we shall presently enter more at large.

With respect to the subject now before us, the foregoing examples will suffice to establish the existence of such a method of comment. The instances might have been greatly multiplied from the fathers of the second century : but with these, unscriptural metaphors rather assume the character of offences against good taste, than of sources of erroneous doctrine ; because their writings exercised a more limited influence over their successors, than was conferred upon those of the apostolical men, by the circumstances under which they were written.

*The early fathers frequently profess to find the truths of Christianity in passages, where obviously no such meaning was intended.*

Of this nature is the place in St. Clement's epistle,<sup>17</sup> in which he attempts to show that Rahab the harlot believed in the doctrine of the atonement, because she hung a scarlet thread out of the window of her house as a sign to the Israelites :<sup>18</sup> a notion which is copied by Justin Martyr<sup>19</sup> and Irenæus ;<sup>20</sup> the latter author improves upon it, and discovers in the three spies, the three Persons of the Trinity !

Some of the scriptural quotations in this epistle, which we have before noticed, p. 184, &c., are also liable to censure on the same ground. I am very doubtful either that Elijah, Elisha, and Ezekiel went about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, as Clement informs us they did, or that we can learn from thence the lesson of humility which he wishes to inculcate. I feel still more hesitation in accept-

<sup>17</sup> C. 12.

<sup>18</sup> Josh. ii.

<sup>19</sup> Dial. cum. Tryph., 338 D.

<sup>20</sup> Lib. 4. c. 37.

ing the humbling expressions regarding themselves, made use of by Abraham and Job, when in the immediate presence of God, as proofs of the humility of those personages; and when I am informed that Moses pleaded with God his own want of eloquence, in the exercise of the same virtue, I can only reply that Clement must have been mistaken; because this plea is spoken of in Holy Writ as an act of sinful diffidence in the divine power; and that which Clement commends, God reproves. But I really lack patience to listen to the praises of David's humility in penning the fifty-first Psalm! Is then the confession of guilt of a criminal openly convicted of adultery and murder, to be held up as a bright example of one of the Christian graces? This most excellent gift would rather have manifested itself (in my apprehension of it) in such a deep mistrust of his own heart, and such earnest and persevering prayer for help against sin in the time of temptation, as should have procured him deliverance from the guilt thereof. I readily grant that it is a beautiful expression of the "true godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation," and that humility is one ingredient of that sorrow: but it is by no means a peculiar one, inasmuch as humility is implied in all expressions of contrition for guilt, even when they are only prompted by "the sorrow of the world that worketh death!" Clement thus introduces the Psalm:—"What shall we say of David, so highly testified of in the Holy Scripture, to whom God said, I have found a man after my own heart, with my holy oil have I anointed him?"<sup>21</sup> But it was not David's holiness, but David's sin that prompted the Psalm in question. And, therefore, I complain that it is a glaring violation of decency and propriety,

<sup>21</sup> Ubi Supra.

to hold up the confession of an offender, in the grossest sins by which he could have transgressed against God and man, as an illustration of the humility of the New Testament.

Let it not be imagined, for a moment, that there is any thing severe and hypercritical in these remarks : and that in making them, we demand of these primitive writers more than their limited acquirements enabled them to furnish. It should be borne in mind, that the times in which they flourished can be called primitive, only in relation to their proximity to the period of the first propagation of Christianity ; and that the effort to connect simplicity with this primitivity, which has been made by some Protestant, and many Roman Catholic writers, partakes largely of the nature of *cant*. Both the literature and the manners of the first and second centuries were remarkable for any thing rather than simplicity : and the epistles both of Clement and Ignatius bear palpable marks of being the productions of such a period. I know of no writer who goes further out of the way for the purpose of displaying his learning, both sacred and secular, than Clement : nor would it be easy to find a more extensive dealer in well-weighed words and measured phrases than Ignatius.<sup>22</sup> As to their style, upon which we have already quoted the criticism of Mosheim,<sup>23</sup> it is plain and unadorned, but not more so than that of the cotemporary classical writers generally. Improperities may certainly be detected in

<sup>22</sup> I imagine that the striking passages which abound throughout the epistles of this writer, were, in reality, those which he had been for years in the habit of using in his public addresses, and which he took this mode of bequeathing to the church universal :—his *stock pieces*, if I may be allowed the expression. There are many similar examples both in ancient and modern oratory.

<sup>23</sup> Page 197, Note 84.

both ; but the Latinisms of Clement and the Orientalisms of Ignatius are nothing more than might have been expected of persons writing in a foreign language, and more intent upon the thoughts they were expressing than upon the words in which they clothed them. The same remarks will apply to the epistle of Barnabas, and to the visions of Hermas : though they (and especially the latter) are the productions of very inferior minds. It would be a strange mistake to talk of the simplicity of Hermas : his conceptions, on the other hand, are clumsily elaborate ; there is, throughout his books, abundant evidence of a dull imagination and feeble intellect, but none whatever of simplicity.<sup>24</sup>

We conclude that the apostolical fathers have not the excuse of simplicity and want of learning, for the vague and equivocal mode of comment of which their writings afford so many instances, in addition to those we have extracted.

Let us now endeavour to trace the effect of this their example upon the fathers of the succeeding period.

Justin Martyr, in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, seems to have entirely neutralized the effect of his many pertinent and admirable quotations of Scripture upon his antagonist, by the introduction of such places as Isa. lvii. 1., which he declares to be, a prophecy concerning the death of Christ ;<sup>25</sup> a sense of which it is plainly incapable. In the same passage, he quotes six Psalms entire, all of which

<sup>24</sup> It is not improbable that the apostolical fathers have acquired the reputation of simplicity from a peculiarity in their writings, which seems to have escaped notice. They studiously copy the style of the canonical epistles. They affect the tone of inspiration. This circumstance certainly gives a simple air and character to their writings, which will not be found to stand the test of a closer examination.

<sup>25</sup> Opera, p. 234 C.

he applies to the exaltation of our Saviour;<sup>26</sup> though four of them only will so admit of such an interpretation as to render them available in an argument with a Jew. He proceeds to assert that Elijah's complaint to God<sup>27</sup> was a prophecy regarding the unbelieving Jews in his (Justin's) time, and that the divine reply<sup>28</sup> was also prophetic of the few that embraced Christianity.<sup>29</sup> We are not much surprised at Trypho's answer to all this: "Thou ravest at a strange rate; I would have thee to know that I think thee mad."<sup>30</sup> Undaunted by this rebuke, Justin overwhelms the astonished Jew with another deluge of misinterpretations. He tells the unbeliever, that his own paschal lamb, roasted whole, with the hind legs tied to the spit, and the forelegs stretched out, is a type of the *cross*; that the oblation of fine flour for the leper, shadowed forth the Christian eucharist;<sup>31</sup> and that the high-priest, with twelve bells at the hem of his garment,<sup>32</sup> was a symbol of Jesus Christ and his twelve apostles. It was inevitable, that the mind of a prejudiced person should dwell upon absurdities like these, to the entire oblivion of the many powerful scriptural reasons with which his antagonist intermixed them. When I state that this is little more than an average specimen of his general mode

<sup>26</sup> Psa. cx., Psa. lxxii., Psa. xxiv., Psa. xlvii., Psa. xcix., Psa. xlv. He calls the 47th Psalm the 46th, the 99th the 98th, and the 45th the 44th. These numbers are still retained in the Septuagint enumeration of the Psalter.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Kings xix. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Id., xix. 18.

<sup>29</sup> 257 D., &c.

<sup>30</sup> 258 B.

<sup>31</sup> 259 B., &c.

<sup>32</sup> 260 D. Trypho would probably hear, for the first time, of the exact number of bells on the high-priest's garments; there is no direction upon that point in the Pentateuch.—Exod. xxviii. 33., xxxix. 25., &c.



of interpretation, and that there are not many passages of equal length throughout the dialogue, which contain a smaller number of such perversions, I need scarcely add, that the conference between Justin and Trypho ended in the interchange of polite expressions ; and that the former was not successful in convincing the latter of his errors.<sup>33</sup>

Irenæus, though in my judgment, superior to Justin both in talent and learning, was equally misled in his rule of interpretation, by the example of the apostolical fathers. The following instances will sufficiently show that his comments upon Scripture are often vague and unsatisfactory. He wishes to prove that the second person of the Trinity administered the Mosaic dispensation. “ In that

<sup>33</sup> 371 B. C. There are one or two points regarding this dialogue, upon which considerable difference of opinion exists. It is doubted by many that such a conference took place at all ; while among those that maintain its reality, an equally difficult question arises as to the city in which it occurred : the latter does not deserve discussion : as to the other point, without presuming in any way to decide upon it, I think the suggestion of the Bishop of Lincoln is fully borne out by the evidence contained in the work itself. A discussion certainly took place between Justin and a Jew named Trypho somewhere : but the “ dialogue ” is by no means an exact account of it : that was committed to writing, probably long afterwards, by the former, at the suggestion of a friend ; and is an attempt to embody the whole question between Judaism and Christianity. The bishop has pointed out the very suspicious circumstance of the close resemblance between the commencement of it, and those of the philosophical dialogues of Plato and Cicero ; and there is a similar resemblance between his account of his own conversion to Christianity by a mysterious old man, whom he met on the sea-shore, after he had tried all the various sects of philosophy in vain, (220 A., &c.), and the passage in the introduction to the *Stromates* of Clement, of which we have already given some account, (See above, p. 21, note 3.) The suspicion is certainly raised, that these are merely the fictitious embellishments of which the teachers of new philosophical doctrines so frequently availed themselves ; and as they then deceived no one, the use of them scarcely amounted to the sin of falsehood.

our Lord says, ‘Henceforth, I call you not servants,’<sup>34</sup> he plainly indicates that he himself bound men to the servitude of the law, as well as delivered them unto the liberty of the gospel.”<sup>35</sup> The text contains no allusion to the doctrine in question; our Saviour is speaking upon a subject altogether distinct from it. He is comforting his disciples in the prospect of his immediate departure, by informing them that, after that event, they will stand in a closer and more endeared relation to him. During his sojourn upon earth, he constantly called them his servants;<sup>36</sup> but he tells them that “henceforth,” that is, after his death and resurrection, “I call you not servants but friends.” We, therefore, complain, that though the doctrine of Irenæus is perfectly true, his quotation affords no proof of it.

He thus confutes the assertion that there were certain traditional sayings of Christ which contradicted the gospels. “Our Lord Jesus Christ is truth,”<sup>37</sup> and there is no lie in him. David prophesied of him who was born of a virgin, and who is the resurrection of the dead, when he said,<sup>38</sup> ‘*Truth hath sprung out of the earth.*’”<sup>39</sup> This has, at first sight, the air of a somewhat ingenious and pretty comment; but it is equally objectionable with the former. If we admit that the interpretation is correct, it is an instance of the bad practice which greatly prevailed with the early fathers, of resorting for their scripture authorities to obscure passages, in preference to plain ones. But the place in question does not admit of the meaning which Irenæus assigns to it. The expression quoted neither alludes to the human nature of Christ, nor

<sup>34</sup> John xv. 14.

<sup>35</sup> Adv. Hær., lib. 4. c. 27.

<sup>36</sup> See Matt. x. 24, 25.; John xii. 26., &c.

<sup>37</sup> John xiv. 6.

<sup>38</sup> Psa. lxxxv. 12.

<sup>39</sup> Adv. Hær., lib. 3. c. 5.

to his resurrection from the dead, nor to any quality whatever inherent in the person of our Saviour : but, as the context shows, is a prophetic description of the happy effects of his sacrifice and death ; whereby the mercy and the truth, the righteousness and the benevolence of God towards fallen man are once more harmonized, so that he can “ be just, and yet justify the believer.” Here also, then, our author fails in producing satisfactory Scripture authority for his doctrine ; even when that doctrine is one so easy of proof, as our Lord’s veracity.

The impropriety and absurdity of the following, need no exposure. He interprets Matt. xxiv. 28., “ Where the carcass is, there will the eagles (*aquilæ*) be gathered together,” of the multitude of believers coming to Christ ; and supposes it to be a parallel prophecy to Isa. xliii. 6., “ I will say to the North (*Aquiloni*) give up :” alluding, as it appears to me, to the resemblance between the two Latin words in the version he made use of.<sup>40</sup>

“ Hosea the prophet took a wife of fornication ;<sup>41</sup> prophecying thereby that ‘ the Land,’ that is, the inhabitants thereof, ‘ had departed by fornication from the Lord.’ But of such persons it pleased God to take himself a church, to be sanctified by communication with his Son ; even as was the sinful woman by communication with the prophet : and, therefore, St. Paul says,<sup>42</sup> ‘ The unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband.’ ”<sup>43</sup>

“ Moses married an Ethiopic woman, whom he made

<sup>40</sup> *Lib. 4. c. 28., p. 316.* The Greek of this portion of Irenæus is not extant ; but the allusion is very apparent in the Latin version, and I see no reason to doubt that the translator found it in the original.

<sup>41</sup> Hos. i. 2, 3., &c.

<sup>42</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 14.

<sup>43</sup> *Lib. 4. c. 37.*

an Israelite,<sup>44</sup> to show that ‘the wild olive would be grafted into the olive tree, and partake of its fatness.’<sup>45</sup> For since he who was born Christ was enquired after by his own people, that they might slay him, and was saved in Egypt, that is, among the Gentiles; and there he sanctified the infants, whereof he afterwards composed his church, (for Egypt was Gentile from the beginning, like the Ethiopic woman) so by the marriage of Moses, the nuptials of Christ are shown forth: and the Gentile church is typified by the Ethiopic bride. It was on this account that they who derided and slandered her<sup>46</sup> were struck with leprosy and cast forth of the camp.”<sup>47</sup>

Similar instances of misapplication abound throughout the works of this father.

The same remark is also true of Tertullian; of whose mode of interpretation several examples are already before the reader. In order to show that the error of quoting texts of Scripture in proof of doctrines to which they make no allusion, prevailed universally in the second century, we give a few additional instances from his tract against the Jews: a point of controversy depending altogether upon the mode of interpreting the Old Testament, and, therefore, necessarily giving occasion for the appearance of this error. He informs us at the outset<sup>48</sup> that God hath called the Gentiles in these latter days, lest the Jews should be too much lifted upon by the expression in Isaiah, “Behold the Gentiles are accounted as a drop of a bucket, and as the dust of the threshing-floor.”<sup>49</sup> And in the same passage, in expounding the account of the birth of Jacob and Esau, with a particular reference to the

<sup>44</sup> Exod. ii. 21.

<sup>45</sup> Rom. xi. 17.

<sup>46</sup> Num. xii.

<sup>47</sup> Ubi supra.

<sup>48</sup> Adv. Judæos., c. l.

<sup>49</sup> Isa. xl. 15.

expression “ the elder shall serve the younger,”<sup>50</sup> he interprets Jacob, the progenitor of the Jews, as a type of the Gentiles, and Esau, the father of a Gentile nation, as the representative of the Jews ! Shortly afterwards (cc. 2, 5.) he finds the same truth prefigured in the rejected sacrifice of Cain and the accepted one of Abel ; (Cain was of course the Jews, and Abel the Gentiles :) and mars an admirable train of reasoning, showing that a divine law existed previous to the Mosaic one, by endeavouring to demonstrate that the inhibition on our first parents in Paradise from the fruit of the tree of knowledge, includes in itself the whole Decalogue ! He often refers to those interpretations in the course of his book, and even expounds other places by them. As for instance, after having interpreted the desolations described in the first chapter of Isaiah, of the dispersion of the Jews by the Romans, he thus comments upon the passage at the commencement of the following chapter :—“ ‘ Come ye, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.’ The prophet here predicts that a new law would come forth, not from Esau, the elder people, (that is, the Jews,) but from Jacob, the younger people, that is, from us, the Gentiles, whose mountain is Christ ; the stone of whom Daniel prophesied,<sup>51</sup> that it should become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth.”<sup>52</sup>

The commentator here has not touched upon a single point on which he is not mistaken. The introduction to Isaiah’s prophecies is a description of the Jews and Judea at the time they were written ; and so many allusions in it limit the predictive parts to periods immediately succeeding, that with no shadow of propriety can it be interpreted of any other. The promise also, with which it

<sup>50</sup> Gen. xxv. 23.

<sup>51</sup> Dan. ii. 35., &c.

<sup>52</sup> C. 3.

is concluded, predicts blessings to the same land which the prophet had just described as desolate ; the Mount Zion being put, by a well-known figure, for the whole land of Judea : the gross impropriety, therefore, of pointing to another mountain, and of interpreting that of the rejection of the Jews which was intended for their consolation, is sufficiently obvious. Moreover, while we admit that the comparison of this place with the prophecy of Daniel holds good in some particulars, we altogether deny that the mountain he speaks of is Christ. The figure of the mountain filling the whole earth is certainly taken from the temple worship on Mount Zion : and signifies the establishment of a ritual of true worship, in which the inhabitants of the whole earth should participate, even as all the dwellers in the Holy Land worshipped at Mount Zion. It typifies, therefore, the Christian church, as distinguished from the Jewish temple ; not the person of Christ. The whole of the works of this father evidence that he was well able to have detected the true meaning of these passages, and to have estimated the importance of adhering to it. But so loose and vague were the notions of scriptural interpretation that prevailed in his day, that probably he would have been justified before his cotemporaries had he stated the true reason for his false gloss : namely, that it rounded his period better, and was a somewhat harder hit at the Jews.

From the works of Clement of Alexandria the difficulty of selection becomes ten-fold, inasmuch as he scarcely quotes a text of Scripture upon which he does not give an objectionable comment.

The ground-work of one of his longest tractates is as silly a notion as ever entered into the heart of man. He calls it the *Pædagogus*, and gives you Scripture for

including the whole of the Christian life under figures taken from the internal regimen of a school. We have the plan of the establishment : it is an academy for an unlimited number of young ladies and gentlemen.<sup>53</sup> The moral, intellectual, and disciplinary qualifications of the Pædagogue himself are next described.<sup>54</sup> We have also an account of the lessons he teaches,<sup>55</sup> and amongst other particulars, of his modes and implements of punishment, all of which are in exact conformity with ordinary usage, and all of course proved by passages of Scripture.<sup>56</sup> One of his punishments deserves to be noticed, as perhaps somewhat inconsistent with the character of mildness with which he elsewhere<sup>57</sup> invests him :—“ As the shipman guides his unmanageable vessel through the storm by holding the helm :—so our good pædagogue lays hold on the rudder of his unruly boys, that is their *ears*,<sup>58</sup> and never quits them until he has steered them safely into the harbour of submission.”<sup>59</sup> Well may the reader turn with a scornful smile from the perusal of such a tissue of blattering idiocy, or doting anility. But his contempt will rise to indignation, when he is informed that the being thus degraded and vilified, is no other than the divine nature of our Lord, the second person of the Trinity ; and that, therefore, it is the blasphemy, as well as the folly, of such writing, which we are called upon to reprove.

A very imperfect idea, however, is conveyed even by

<sup>53</sup> Pædag., lib. 1. c. 4.

<sup>54</sup> Idem, cc. 2, 3, 7, 8, 10.

<sup>55</sup> C. 11.

<sup>56</sup> C. 9. I decline giving the texts thus desecrated.

<sup>57</sup> C. 3.

<sup>58</sup> I need not say that he alludes to preaching.

<sup>59</sup> C. 7. This is the most *assinine* metaphor I ever happened to fall in with.

this, of the depths of folly to which our philosopher descends in search of gnostical wisdom.

The following is distressingly foolish. He is endeavouring to extend the term childhood, as used in Scripture, to persons of adult years also. "I discover," says he, "a spiritual childhood (*παιδεία*) even in Isaac. For Isaac signifies laughter; 'and the curious king saw him sporting (*παίζων*) with his wife Rebecca.'<sup>60</sup> The king's name was Abimelek, which appears to me to denote the supermundane wisdom,<sup>61</sup> looking into the hidden mystery of this childhood. Rebecca means patience. O! what a wise sport was this! Laughter is at play with patience, and the king looks on from the window." He soon discovers in Abimelek a type of Christ: and then proceeds thus:—"But what was the window through which the Lord showed himself? Doubtless it was the flesh wherein he was manifested."<sup>62</sup> Bad as all this is, let it not for a moment be imagined that "the force of nonsense can no further go." What follows is, in my judgment, infinitely worse. It is an avowed comparison between two passages. The one is, "I have fed you with milk and not with meat;"<sup>63</sup> the other, "I will bring you into a good land flowing with milk and honey."<sup>64</sup> He tells us at the outset, that he is met with a formidable difficulty: if perfection consists in abstinence from meats,<sup>65</sup> whence is it that St. Paul takes a directly opposite view of the subject, and terms those who eat meat, spiritual, and men, and those who abstain from it, and restrict themselves to milk only, carnal and babes? The mode in which he gets over this, is very ingenious. He calls in to his aid two other

<sup>60</sup> Gen. xxvi. 8.

<sup>61</sup> σοφία τις εἶναι ὑπερχόσμιος.

<sup>62</sup> 1 Pet., lib. i. c. 5.

<sup>63</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Exod. iii. 8.

<sup>65</sup> See above, Page 163. Note 32.



passages :—“ My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed ;”<sup>66</sup> and the expression of St. Peter, “ the milk of the word.”<sup>67</sup> He discovers that the apostle does not say I have *suckled* you, but I have *fed* you with milk, I have given you milk to drink (ἐπότισα,) and that this, and the Greek word translated “ drink,” in the other place (πόσις) are both from the same root. Here he begins a physiological dissertation upon the several properties of milk, blood, and flesh : the first, he informs us, is blood spiritualized by contact with air in the arteries ; flesh, on the other hand, is blood solidified.<sup>68</sup> After running off into a digression upon conception, &c., which is utterly unquoteable, he returns to the question, for the purpose of identifying the expressions, “ blood of Christ,” and “ milk of the word ;” both, he tells us, are descriptive of the same substance, the milk that flows from the person of Christ. Then he bursts forth into a rapturous address to Christ the *mother* of the church, suckling his spiritual children, and discharging towards them, at once, the functions of father, mother, schoolmaster, and nurse ! Now, the only remaining difficulty is with the “ meat,” of which St. Paul speaks. This he disposes of at first, by identifying it with the “ honey” in the other passage ; but he soon strikes out a more satisfactory solution. “ Meat,” or flesh, we have seen, is blood solidified ; the apostle, therefore, spoke not of the prohibited meats, but of milk solidified, that is, *cheese*.<sup>69</sup> I am not called upon to insult the reader’s under-

<sup>66</sup> John vi. 55.

<sup>67</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 2.

<sup>68</sup> These were the opinions received by the physicians of the day ; for these, therefore, our author is not accountable.

<sup>69</sup> τῦρος. Pæd., lib. 1. c. 6.

standing, and degrade my own, by a formal exposure of such aberrations as these. Their unutterable absurdity is surely sufficiently apparent ! I have only one remark to make upon the latter of them. In extracting this passage, I have taken the main shoot of his reasoning, lopping off the digressions which it throws out in every direction, all of which are to the full as objectionable as the comment ; so that my extract conveys far too favourable an impression of the qualifications of Clement as a commentator.

Many other modes of false interpretation were in use among the early fathers. But those that will now require consideration must be classed under that particular system of comment which is termed by themselves ἀμφιβολία, or equivocation.<sup>70</sup> The fundamental principle of this system may be thus stated. The Septuagint being an inspired version,<sup>71</sup> any word in the Greek Bible may be interpreted with any meaning of which it is capable in the whole compass of that language, without regard to the obvious sense of the sentence in which it occurs. As a direct proof that the principle is here correctly stated, I give two comments from Clement of Alexandria. The one is upon *Psa. xlviii. 9, 10., LXX.* :—“ He shall live for ever ; he shall not see corruption, for he seeth that the wise men (σοφούς) die.” This he declares to be a prophecy of the destruction of the sect of the *Sophists*, to whose mode of philosophising he had a rooted antipathy.<sup>72</sup> The other is from *Eccles. v. 2.* :—“ Let thy words be few ;”<sup>73</sup> which he supposes to be a caution against giving too much attention to *verbs* ῥήματα.<sup>74</sup> This new sense being once struck out, the same word may be so interpreted wherever it occurs in either Testament, without the slightest regard to the context ; and by

<sup>70</sup> Clem. Alex., 1 Strom., § 9.

<sup>71</sup> See above, p. 32.

<sup>72</sup> 1 Strom., § 10.

<sup>73</sup> μὴ πολλὰς ἐν ῥήμασι γίνεσθαι.

<sup>74</sup> Ubi supra.

the collation of a number of such passages, the commentator supposed that he arrived at the second, or hidden, meaning of which the Word is capable, in addition to the primary one which appears on the surface, and which is plain and obvious to any understanding. Thus, they held the Bible to be an *occultation*,<sup>75</sup> as well as a revelation; it was not given merely for the insipid purpose of teaching a few truths, of easy comprehension, to simple and unlearned persons; but also for one much more congenial to the pride of philosophy. Besides these ordinary senses, the words of Holy Writ contained also the mysterious and recondite truths of a sublimer system, wrapt up in them, as in dark sayings and enigmas: and the same text of Scripture, which only confirmed the faith, assured the hope, and kindled the love, of the common Christian, the professor of philosophical Christianity cast into the alembick of his philology, subjected to many a strange and uncouth process, resolved into its primary elements, and at length pointed out, with an air of triumph, amid the dense fumes which enveloped it, the subtle drop of true gnostical wisdom that his art had elicited, often too subtle for perceptions less practised than his own.

We will endeavour to trace the error along one or two of its principal ramifications.

This system of interpreting afforded the facility, which was so eagerly taken advantage of at a very early period, of inoculating Christianity with heathen philosophy. The philosophical enquirer had only to assign to such words as *νοῦς*, *ἐννοια*, *γνώσις* in the Sacred Writings, the senses in which they were accepted by the sect to which he belonged, and to accommodate the context, which, in a language so copious in meanings as the Greek, was seldom

<sup>75</sup> See 5 Strom., § 5.

attended with much difficulty ; and then the Bible taught the Platonic, or Aristotelean doctrines, according to the prepossession of the commentator.

We, for the present, pass by this part of the subject ; and proceed to another branch of the error which is more pertinent to the matter in hand : the process by which the early fathers extracted these hidden meanings from the text of Scripture, by the aid of the ἀμφιβολία.

We have already mentioned the epistle of Barnabas, as the probable means of introducing this mode of comment into Christianity. This production has received less attention than the other writings of the apostolical fathers, because its authenticity is now generally doubted. The internal proofs of it are, notwithstanding, to the full as strong in this as in any of them. It was written very shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus,<sup>76</sup> and is principally directed against the errors of the Judaizing Christians, which that event would have a natural tendency to diffuse and aggravate. Its tone and temper is, I think, more becoming a hearer of the apostles, than any thing that is ascribed to the apostolical fathers, except the epistle of Polycarp. It is conceived in a meek and gentle spirit ; in which the writings of Clement and Ignatius are very defective. Nor are the passages which evince the writer's experimental acquaintance with the peculiar doctrines of Christianity inferior, in point of piety, to those which have been collected from the cotemporary fathers, as we shall presently have the opportunity of showing.

As the objections to its authenticity principally hinge upon certain strange and absurd comments that occur in it, concerning which they assume the impossibility, that one so highly privileged and gifted as Barnabas, should

<sup>76</sup> Cc. 4, 16., Ed. Ox.

have been their author, I, in the first place, refer to the unanswerable demonstration of Archbishop Wake,<sup>77</sup> that such a mode of comment was in use among the cotemporary Jews. It may then subserve a double purpose, if I so arrange the instances of the ἀμφιβολία which I propose to lay before the reader, as to demonstrate that the very passages in this epistle on which the objection is founded, are proved to be authentic by the circumstance, that they are quoted by an unbroken series of writers, down to the commencement of the third century; when they are expressly ascribed to St. Barnabas by Clemens Alexandrinus.<sup>78</sup>

We have before stated that with this father originated the amphibological meanings of the word ξύλον (*Cross, tree, wood*): and we have just seen that Ignatius has also copied him.

We will now give instances of the same interpretation from the fathers of the second century. Justin Martyr thus addresses Trypho the Jew:—"The *tree* (ξύλον) of the cross, after he had been crucified upon it, of whose glorious advent the prophets foretold, became a symbol of the tree (ξύλον) of life, which is planted in the paradise of God. Moses by a rod (ῥάβδος shoot of a *tree*) accom-

<sup>77</sup> Ubi supra. Prelim. Diss. pp. 81—86.

<sup>78</sup> Tertullian also mentions St. Barnabas as the author of an epistle; but the quotation he ascribes to him occurs in St. Paul's to the Hebrews. As there is, however, no other evidence to connect it with Barnabas, and as its author is satisfactorily demonstrated to have been St. Paul, it seems probable that this fiery and impetuous writer has confounded St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, or Jewish converts, with that of St. Barnabas to the Judaizing Christians,—a mistake which this similarity would easily occasion. The probability is heightened by the circumstance that the quotation occurs in the tractate de Pudicitia, which is one of his most frenzied productions, written under the influence of a fierce exacerbation of the madness of Montanism.

plished the deliverance of the children of Israel; with that *rod* he divided the Red Sea, and caused the water to flow from the rock. Casting a *tree* (ξύλον) into the bitter waters of Mara, he made them sweet.<sup>79</sup> Jacob made his uncle's sheep conceive by casting *rods* (ῥάβδοι) into the water.<sup>80</sup> The same Jacob boasts that with his *rod* he passed the river.<sup>81</sup> He also anointed the stone in Luz with oil, to signify that Christ was anointed a king. The *rod* of Aaron, that budded, proclaimed Christ to be a priest.<sup>82</sup> for he was the *rod* that was to spring out of the stem of Jesse, as Esaias says:<sup>83</sup> and David speaks of him 'as the tree ξύλον planted by the rivers of water, which beareth its fruit in its season.'<sup>84</sup> God appeared to Abraham from the tree (ξύλας); as it is written, 'from the oak in Mamre.'<sup>85</sup> The children of Israel, in passing through the wilderness, found seventy-two palm *trees* and twelve wells.<sup>86</sup> David said that he was comforted by the *rod* and staff of God.<sup>87</sup> Elisha cast wood (ξύλον) into the river Jordan, and raised the head of the axe, wherewith the children of the prophets were about to fell trees (ξύλα) to build a house, that they might therein meditate on the law of God;<sup>88</sup> and we also, sinking and being submersed in the waters of baptism, through the weight of our most heavy transgressions, are delivered by one Christ crucified upon the *tree*, (ξύλας) who purifies us by water, and makes us a *house* of prayer and worship.<sup>89</sup> It is impossible to withhold our admiration, at the familiarity of acquaintance with the sacred text which

<sup>79</sup> Exod. xv. 25.

<sup>80</sup> Gen. xxx. 37, 38.

<sup>81</sup> Idem xxxii. 10.

<sup>82</sup> See above, p. 166.

<sup>83</sup> Chap. xi. 1.

<sup>84</sup> Psa. i. 3. Barnabas makes the same comment on this passage, c. 11.

<sup>85</sup> πρὸς τῇ δρυὶ τῇ Μαμβρῇ. Gen. xviii. 1. LXX.

<sup>86</sup> Exod. xv. 27.

<sup>87</sup> Psa. xxiii. 4.

<sup>88</sup> 2 Kings vi. 6.

<sup>89</sup> Justini Opera, p. 312 D. et seq.

this passage displays,<sup>90</sup> however deeply we may regret the use to which the writer applies it.

That the obstinacy of the Jew was proof against such an appeal, will be matter of no surprise to us: but it was very differently estimated by his cotemporaries. Irenæus has deemed it worthy of introduction into an argument to prove, against the Marcionites, that the Creator of the world sent Jesus Christ. As he has made many variations and additions, we will also give his version of it:—"Christ destroyed the hand-writing that was against us and nailed it to his cross, that as by a *tree* we became debtors to God, by a *tree* also, our debt might be cancelled. This is plainly shown in many parts of Scripture, and especially by Elisha the prophet. When the prophets who were with him were felling *wood* to build a tabernacle, and the head of their *axe* fell into the river, and they could not find it, Elisha came to the place. And when he learnt what had happened, he threw a *stick* into the water, and the iron swam, and they took it from the surface. The prophet showed, by this miracle, that the word of God was sure: and that what we had lost by the *tree* of knowledge, nor could find, we should recover by the dispensation of the *tree* of the cross. For the word of God is like a hatchet. John Baptist says of it, 'and now the axe is laid to the root of the tree:' and Jeremiah in like manner, 'the word of God is as a hatchet that cutteth a rock.'<sup>91</sup> This, even the dispensation of the cross, hath manifested to us that which before was hidden: since, as we have already said, we lost by the tree that which by the tree is

<sup>90</sup> It must, of course, be borne in mind, that the apparatus of indexes, concordances, lexicons, &c., which afford such incalculable advantages to the biblical student now, had no existence in Justin's time.

<sup>91</sup> ὡς πέλουξ κόπτεσθαι πείραυν. Jer. xxiii. 29. LXX.

again manifested unto all, showing in itself, (that is, the cross,) height, and length, and breadth. By the extension of its arms (the transverse beam) gathering two people (Jews and Gentiles) to one God. Two arms, because it gathers in two dispersed people from the ends of the earth; one summit, because unto one God."<sup>92</sup> It may be observed, that the same gloss is applied to very different purposes by these divines; according to the interpretation of the one, Elisha's miracle was a type of baptism; but if we are to defer to the authority of the other, it was symbolical of the fall of man by the tree of knowledge, and of his recovery by the tree of the cross. The incoherence and perplexity of metaphor, which either meaning introduces, are sufficiently apparent.

We proceed to show, that not only was St. Barnabas's gloss current with the early church, but that his interpretations were also received with the same deference. He thus treats the preceding subject, that of the cross:—"The Lord determines concerning the cross by Moses, (when Israel was fighting with, and beaten by, Amelek :) yea, the Holy Spirit put it into the heart of Moses to represent both the sign of the cross, and of him that was to suffer; that so they might know that if they did not believe in him they should be overcome for ever. Moses, therefore, piled up armour upon armour, in the middle of a rising ground, and standing up high above all of them, stretched forth his arms, and so Israel conquered. But no sooner did he let down his hands, but they were again slain. And why so? to the end they might know, that except they trust in him they cannot be saved."<sup>93</sup> It is not

<sup>92</sup> Iren., lib. 5. c. 17. There is an allusion to the crucifixion in the latter part of the passage which I preferred omitting.

<sup>93</sup> C. 12. However strongly I may object to the entire system of



surprising that the early fathers should have been greatly captivated with this comment, and adopted it, with the addition of the many embellishments of which it is evidently capable. Justin Martyr gives the following version of it:—"When the Jews had waged war against Amalek and the son of Nun, whose name was  $\text{Ιησους}$ , (Jesus)<sup>94</sup> fought in the fore-front, Moses himself prayed to God with his arms stretched forth, and Hor and Aaron held them up the whole day, lest he should let them fall when he was weary. For when he at all relaxed from the perfect figure of the cross, Amalek prevailed, but so long as the figure remained perfect, Amalek was conquered. Plainly indicating that the battle was won through the cross. For it was not because Moses prayed that Israel conquered; but because (the name of *Jesus* being at the fore-front of the battle) he exhibited the sign of the cross."<sup>95</sup>

Tertullian also agrees with Justin. "Why did Moses, when *Jesus* fought against Amelek, only pray, standing upright, and with his hands stretched forth, when he ought rather, under such urgent circumstances, to have commended his prayers by genuflexion, with his hands smiting his breast, and his face in the dust?"<sup>96</sup> Doubtless

doubtful interpretation, I cannot help remarking upon the great beauty of this passage. The prophet king standing in the midst of the battle, upon piles of armour, with his arms stretched forth; at once the ensign around which the discomfited Israelites were to rally, the token of the divine presence through which they were to conquer, and the symbol of that more glorious dispensation whereby all the Israel of God were at length to overcome their spiritual enemies, is a fine conception; betraying nothing of the illiterate simplicity which Dr. Mosheim charges upon the apostolical fathers.

<sup>94</sup> That is Joshua.

<sup>95</sup> Dial., 317 D. See also 361 A.

<sup>96</sup> See Justin., u. s. 318 B.

the reason was, that wherever the Devil is to be conquered, in the name of *Jesus*, the form of the *cross* must also be exhibited, whereby alone Jesus himself gained the victory."<sup>97</sup> No comparison, perhaps, will more strikingly elicit, either the decline of doctrinal piety in the second century, or the danger of the entire system of the ἀμφιβολία. We can find nothing to reprehend in the doctrine of Barnabas; it is pure scriptural truth: he sets forth the atonement and sacrifice of him who was extended on the cross as the only means whereby either Jew or Gentile can be saved: we only complain that this truth is fancifully and not wisely illustrated. But the fathers of the succeeding period adopt his illustration, for the purpose of introducing a new and most portentous doctrine into Christianity. Israel conquered Amalek, not because God heard the prayers of Moses, but through certain hidden virtues which reside in the name of their leader, (Joshua, or Jesus,) and in the figure of the cross which the person of Moses exhibited; the one acting after the manner of a spell, or incantation, the other as a charm, or amulet.

There are other passages in the epistle of Barnabas, whence his successors have deduced the same false doctrine. He thus paraphrases the Mosaic account of the brazen serpent:<sup>98</sup>—"Moses made a type of Jesus to show that he was to die, and then that he, whom they thought to be dead, was to give life to others, in the sign"<sup>99</sup> of those

<sup>97</sup> Adv. Judæos., c. 10.

<sup>98</sup> Num. xxi. 4—10.

<sup>99</sup> ἐν σημείῳ. This is the Septuagint rendering of the word translated "pole" in the English Bible. Both the English and the Greek give the meaning of the Hebrew word correctly (Num. xxi. 8): it signifies the *pole* on which a standard is set up; but Barnabas's gloss is amphibological: he adopts another meaning of the Greek word, that of a *sign* or *type*. For this he was indebted to the Hellenising Jews. See Wisdom, c. 16.

that fell in Israel. For God called all sorts of serpents to bite them, and they died; forasmuch as by a serpent transgression began in Eve: that so he might convince them that for their transgressions they shall be delivered into the pains of death. And so the same Moses, who had commanded them, saying, ‘ye shall not make to yourselves any graven image, or molten image, to be your God,’ yet now did so himself that he might represent unto them a type of Jesus. For he made a brazen serpent, and set it up on high,<sup>100</sup> and called the people together by proclamation. And when they begged of Moses that he would offer sacrifice for them, and pray that they might be healed, he said unto them: if any one among you is bitten let him come to the serpent, which is placed upon the tree,<sup>101</sup> and let him believe with hope, that though it be dead yet it can make alive, and immediately he shall be saved; and they did so. Ye have also here the glory of Jesus, in whom, and to whom, are all things.”<sup>102</sup> There appears, at first sight, little of any thing to except against in this passage. That “Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness” was a type of “the lifting up of Him unto whom “all the ends of the earth were to look and to be saved,” we know upon inspired authority.<sup>103</sup> The orthodoxy and the piety of the writer are again very apparent: and as to his making the pole a symbol of the cross, and one or two other little embellishments, by which he hoped to commend his annotations to his readers, they were the

<sup>100</sup> ἐν ὀψείῳ, honourably.

<sup>101</sup> ἐπὶ τῷ ξύλῳ. He returns to the sense in which the word *σημεῖον* was used in the Greek Bible; that of a pole or flag-staff. These double meanings constitute the ἀμφιβολία.

<sup>102</sup> C. 12.

<sup>103</sup> John iii. 14.

taste of the times ; and after all, it may be asked, Where was the great harm in them ? We shall see.

Justin Martyr thus improves upon Barnabas :—  
 “ When the Israelites went forth from Egypt, and were in the wilderness, they were met by many venomous creatures, of all kinds ; vipers, asps, and serpents, and the people were slain. But Moses, by the inspiration and operation of God, took brass and made the sign of the cross, and set it upon the holy tabernacle, and said, ‘ if ye look upon this type, and believe in it ye shall be saved.’ When this was done, we are told that the serpents died and the people escaped.”<sup>104</sup> It is abundantly evident here that Justin adopted the comment of Barnabas ; but in transfusing it into his own language, he has made many changes, and all for the worse. Barnabas only hints at the pole upon which the serpent was lifted up, as a type of the Lord’s cross. But with Justin it becomes a brazen figure of the cross. The former says that it was erected in a conspicuous place, the latter places it on the summit of the tabernacle. But worst of all, the heartfelt allusions to the doctrine of the atonement, which cover such a multitude of minor faults in the gloss of Barnabas, are entirely omitted ; and scarcely even the cold orthodoxy of the passage remains. It is to the efficacy of the figure of the cross, not of the atonement of him who died thereon, that Justin directs the faith of his readers.

Tertullian completes the work which Barnabas had so unconsciously begun. “ After Moses had prohibited making the similitude of any thing, why did he set forth a brazen serpent, placed upon a cross,<sup>105</sup> and hanging therefrom, as a healing sight for the children of Israel, when the people

<sup>104</sup> Justin, *Apol.* I., 93 A.

<sup>105</sup> Lignum.

were slain by serpents for their idolatry?<sup>106</sup> Surely hereby he intended the Lord's cross; and, at the same time, pointed to that serpent the Devil,<sup>107</sup> showing forth that whoever was bitten by such snakes, that is, his angels, and looked upon the dispensation of the cross of Christ, should be saved."<sup>108</sup>

Every circumstance in the sign is now harmonised with the thing signified. The pole on which the brazen serpent was set up, was a cross, and denoted the cross of Christ. The serpent itself, hanging thereupon, shadowed forth to the arch enemy that destruction of his works which awaited him, through the sufferings of the Saviour of the world. And the Israelites were healed, and the fiery serpents destroyed, by the occult virtues residing in the brazen image of a cross with a serpent hanging upon it, which Moses placed on the summit of the tabernacle. All this tissue of strange and idolatrous fiction originated in the pious and well-meant comment of St. Barnabas.

As this double sense has certainly the appearance of scriptural authority, it is quite needful that we should here endeavour to point out in what the mistake of Barnabas consisted. Our Saviour applies the healing miracle of the brazen serpent to his own atonement in the following terms:—"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up; that

<sup>106</sup> This thought of St. Barnabas seems to have been considered by the early fathers as a very powerful argument against the Jews. Justin makes Trypho admit that he was himself greatly puzzled by the divine command to Moses to perform an act which the second commandment had prohibited, and that he had frequently referred his doubts to his own Rabbins without obtaining any solution of them.—*Dial. p. 322 B. C.*

<sup>107</sup> This idea has been adopted from Barnabas by Justin (*ubi supra*) as well as by Tertullian.

<sup>108</sup> *Adv. Jud.*, c. 10.

whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."<sup>109</sup> It may be observed, that the type bears upon the antitype in two particulars, and in two only. The lifting up of the serpent resembles the lifting up of the Son of Man, and as they who looked upon the one were healed, so also shall they who believe in the other be saved; and as the slightest extension of the metaphor introduces the intolerable solecism of Christ typified by a serpent, this limitation is obviously imposed upon it, in the strictest sense. That, therefore, which is in no case desirable, (the amplification of Scripture types and metaphors,) is, in the present instance, absolutely inadmissible. But, unhappily, Barnabas, in his zeal and anxiety to multiply the points of resemblance between the type and the antitype, has taken very unwarrantable liberties with the text of Moses. It is evident that there is not the allusion to the serpent that beguiled Eve, which he and his imitators have pointed out, in the instrument here employed by the Almighty to chastise the murmurings of the Israelites. This could only have been the case, had the plague of venomous serpents been the invariable mode in which the divine indignation was expressed, during their whole sojourn in the wilderness. The selection, in this instance, merely exemplifies a rule to which all the miracles recorded in Scripture will be found conformable. The supernatural agency is there exerted, where it will least interfere with the established order of nature. We have another example of it in the miracle of the quails.<sup>110</sup> Vast flocks of these birds traverse the same regions even now; and instances are upon record of their alighting through fatigue, in masses as dense as those described in Holy Writ, when they have been deflected from their ordinary course of

<sup>109</sup> John iii. 14, 15.

<sup>110</sup> Exod. xvi. 13.; Num. xi. 31., &c.

migration by sudden storms. The miracle consisted in so controlling the agency of the wind as to direct the living shower to the camp of the Israelites. Thus was it also with the miracle we are now considering. Israel murmured against God in the desert that lies at the foot of the mountains of Edom: and he employed the agency of the venomous serpents which abound there, even to this day, to chastise their ingratitude; by causing them, contrary to their natural instincts, to infest the camp in countless multitudes. On these accounts, therefore, while we are fully aware of the pious intentions of St. Barnabas, and readily grant the perfect propriety of associating our scriptural annotations with reminiscences of an event so important as the fall, wherever the text will bear such an allusion, we, notwithstanding, contend that his gloss in the present instance, is an accommodation of the text which can on no account be permitted.

That Moses, in making the brazen serpent, apparently violated the second Commandment, is mere folly. This prohibition is only directed against the fabrication of idols for the purpose of worship: by no means against the whole art of sculpture, of which such ample use was made in the construction both of the tabernacle and the temple. As then the serpent was not intended to be worshipped, there was no more appearance of sin against the second Commandment in casting it, than in constructing the cherubs that overshadowed the mercy seat.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>111</sup> The difficulty upon this point, which Justin puts into the mouth of Trypho, is a strong presumption that this part of the dialogue is fabulous. A well-read Jew like Trypho, would at once have overthrown his antagonist's argument by replying, that the brazen serpent was not intended to be worshipped; and that afterwards it was destroyed by Hezekiah, acting under the inspiration of God, because the apostate Jews had included it among the objects of their idolatry.—2 *Kings* xviii. 4.

There are, besides, instances where Barnabas accommodates the inspired narrative to the antitype. This account informs us that Moses prayed to the Lord, because the people came and humbled themselves when they were bitten, and received instructions to make the brazen serpent as an answer to his prayer. According to Barnabas, Moses first erected the serpent upon the pole, and then called the people together by proclamation. In the Scripture narrative, the people entreated Moses to pray for them. Barnabas says they entreated him both to pray and to make an atonement<sup>112</sup> for them. The one merely reads, that when those who were bitten beheld, or looked upon, the brazen serpent, they lived. But in St. Barnabas we find, that Moses told the people they were to come to the serpent, and believe in its powers of vivification, before they could be saved. Now I entirely acquit this venerable writer of wilful fraud and perversion here. He evidently quoted the book of Numbers from memory ;—a frequent practice, as it appears to me, with the early fathers ; and one for which the great scarcity of copies of the sacred books in those times, will satisfactorily account : and nothing is more probable than that he should, unconsciously, alter the text, so as to accommodate it to the purpose for which he quoted it. But let it be observed, that his successors construct their versions entirely upon the corrupted and interpolated readings of Barnabas. They do not give one point of resemblance which is not, either in his comment, or founded upon his mistakes.

We can, therefore, have no hesitation in rejecting the whole of the gloss with which the early fathers have supplied us upon this passage. The pole upon which the

<sup>112</sup> Or *ablation*, ἀναφίρεσις.



brazen serpent was suspended, was neither a brazen figure of the cross, nor a type of it : nor do we find in the brazen serpent a clumsy inapposite representation of the destruction of Satan. The resemblance holds in the points indicated by our Lord, and in no other ; and, consequently, the relation which he establishes, between the two events, may be properly termed illustrative, rather than typical.

This false comment has the same tendency as the preceding ones ; to set forth the hidden virtues of the cross. There are also other places in St. Barnabas, of which the same use has been made by his successors. He thus paraphrases the Scripture account of Jacob blessing the sons of Joseph : <sup>113</sup>—“ Joseph brought Manasseh to the right hand of Jacob because he was his first-born, and Ephraim to the left ; but Jacob, by the Spirit foresaw the token<sup>114</sup> of the people that was to come afterwards, and he *crossed* his hands, and put his right hand upon Ephraim, the younger son.”<sup>115</sup> Even an obscure and casual hint, like this, at their favourite subject, was not lost upon his successors. Tertullian amplifies it to its full dimensions. “ The Christian ceremony of the imposition of hands,” he informs us, “ is derived from the ancient dispensation, wherein Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, by putting his *crossed* hands upon their heads : and they were extended *cross-wise* unto them, that thus forming the symbol of Christ, they might foreshow the blessing that was to come in him.”<sup>116</sup> The folly of all this will now no longer surprise us ; we merely notice that here is another emphatical allusion to the figure of the cross.

The fathers of the second century by no means

<sup>113</sup> Gen. xlviii. 14., &c.

<sup>114</sup> τύπον.

<sup>115</sup> Bar. Ep., c. 13.

<sup>116</sup> De Baptismo, c. 7.

confined themselves to the adoption of St. Barnabas's comments: they also profitted by his example. They, too, could discover the figure of the cross in Scripture, by the help of the ἀμφοβλία. The following, from Justin Martyr, is highly ingenious:—" 'His beauty is as the first begotten of a bull, his horns are as the horns of an unicorn.'"<sup>117</sup> In this, the blessing of Joseph, God by Moses indicates the power of the mystery of the cross. For 'the horns of an unicorn' can have no other signification than that of a type thereof. One of the beams is upright, and when the transverse beam is fastened to it, the two ends of this stick out like the horns of a bull, while the summit of the other stands up like the horn of an unicorn. That also which projects from the middle of the upright, and sustains the weight of the crucified person, is shaped like a horn, so that the cross seems made up of horns. 'And with them shall he gore the nations even unto the ends of the earth.'<sup>118</sup> This predicts what is now fulfilled among all nations. For some every where are transfixed by the horns of the cross; that is, are converted by that mystery from the worship of vain images and demons."<sup>119</sup> This is, perhaps, a more vigorous conception, and better expressed, than any thing else that remains of this not very striking writer. The double meaning he elicits has, in addition, the merit of being capable of extensive and convenient application. He himself gives us an instance, in another place, of the same dialogue. The expression in the twenty-second Psalm, "save me from the mouth of the

<sup>117</sup> Πρωτότοκος ταύρου τὸ κάλλος αὐτοῦ κέρατα μονοκέρως τὰ κέρατα αὐτοῦ.  
—Deut. xxxiii. 17. LXX.

<sup>118</sup> ἐν αὐτοῖς ἔσται κέρασι ἅμα ἕως ἀπ' ἄκρου γῆς.—Deut. u. s.

<sup>119</sup> Dial., p. 318 C.

lion, and my humility from the horns of the unicorns,"<sup>120</sup> he declares to have been spoken of our Lord, signifying by what death he should die; the unicorn's horn being a type of the cross.<sup>121</sup>

Tertullian has deemed both these comments worthy of adoption and amplification; and as his version further illustrates the nature of the entire system of the ἀμφιβολία, we will lay this also before the reader. "Joseph was a type of Christ, not only in being persecuted by his brethren, because God had favoured him, even as was Christ by his brethren in the flesh, the Jews, when the Father had blessed him, but also in these words, 'His beauty is that of a bull, his horns,' &c. (u. s.) By the *unicorn* here, the prophet did not allude to a rhinoceros, nor to a *wild bull*<sup>122</sup> by the two-horned creature,<sup>123</sup> but Christ is denoted by the entire passage. He was to be a *bull* in both his offices, fierce to some, as a judge, gentle to others, as a Saviour; whose horns would be the extremities of the cross: for the two points of the transverse beam thereof are called horns:<sup>124</sup> and the upright is like the horn of an unicorn. Thus armed with the virtue of the cross, and so horned, he now tosses all nations by faith, throwing them up from earth to heaven; but hereafter

<sup>120</sup> Σῶσόν με ἐκ σώματος λέοντος, καὶ ἀπὸ κεράτων μονοκεράτων τῇ ταπεινώσίν μου.—Psa. xxi. 21., LXX.

<sup>121</sup> U. s., p. 332 D.

<sup>122</sup> Minotaurus.

<sup>123</sup> Bicornis.

<sup>124</sup> He terms the transverse, *antenna*, "a sail yard;" the two ends of which are frequently named *cornua*, "horns," by the Latin poets. This is both clever and learned; though it will be observed, here as well as elsewhere, that the early fathers were not all particular as to the language in which they found their double meanings. They equally availed themselves of them, whether they occurred in Latin, Greek, or Hebrew!

he will toss them in judgment, casting them down from heaven to earth. The same bull is alluded to in the prophecy of Jacob, regarding Simeon and Levi, that is, the Scribes and Pharisees, for such is its spiritual interpretation. He says of them, ‘in their anger they slew men,’ that is, the prophets, ‘and in their fierce anger they houghed a bull,’<sup>125</sup> that is, Christ; whose sinews they lacerated with nails, after they had slain the prophets.”<sup>126</sup> The mode in which the double meaning here multiplies itself is somewhat remarkable. The horns are a symbol of the cross, and, therefore, the bull that wears the horns is a type of Christ; and any text in Scripture which contains that word, may be so interpreted. The cool unceremonious manner in which, without a single explanatory remark, he transfers the imprecations upon Simeon and Levi to the Scribes and Pharisees, is somewhat amusing. But the writers and admirers of such interpretations were, of course, far superior to the weakness of endangering so ingenious a comment by the nice investigation of trifles like these.

The early fathers discovered the cross in Scripture by another process, (borrowed probably, like the preceding, from the Jewish Cabbalists,) which St. Barnabas also introduced into Christianity, in the following passage:—“Understand, children, these things more fully, that Abraham, who was the first that brought in circumcision, looking forward in the Spirit to Jesus, circumcised, having received the mystery of three letters. For the Scripture

<sup>125</sup> Εν τῷ θυμῷ αἰτῶν ἀπέκτειναν ἀνθρώπους, καὶ ἐν τῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ αὐτῶν ἐνευροκόπησαν ταῦρον.—Gen. xlix. 6., Sept.

<sup>126</sup> *Adv. Marcionem*, lib. 3., c. 18. Nearly the identical passage also occurs, *Adv. Judæos*, c. 10. In the same places will also be found Justin’s comment on the 22nd Psalm, which Tertullian, with the Septuagint, calls the 21st. See Note 26.

says that Abraham circumcised three hundred and eighteen men of his house. But what, therefore, was the mystery that was made known unto him ? Mark, first the eighteen and next the three hundred ; for the numeral letter of ten and eight are  $\iota\eta$ , and these denote  $\text{I}\eta\sigma\epsilon\varsigma$  Jesus. And because the cross was that by which we were to find grace, therefore, he adds, three hundred, the note of which is  $\tau$  (the figure of the cross.) Wherefore, by two letters he signified Jesus, and by the third his cross."<sup>127</sup> We again object to this comment, that Barnabas quotes Scripture incorrectly. The number of persons whom Abraham circumcised is not specified in Scripture.<sup>128</sup> We find that long before that event he led forth three hundred and eighteen armed servants to the battle with the five kings ;<sup>129</sup> and as every male of his household, from eight days old upwards, underwent the rite, we conclude that the number of persons circumcised would be much greater. Barnabas has evidently confounded the two passages. This is the only serious objection I shall offer to a comment, the whole of which has, nevertheless, been deemed worthy of a serious defence.<sup>130</sup> His erroneous quotations of Scripture I have before endeavoured to account for, and in some measure to excuse. But, in the present instance, it must be borne in mind, that his comment is grounded altogether

<sup>127</sup> Bar. Epis., c. 9.

<sup>128</sup> See Gen. xvii. 23—27.

<sup>129</sup> Gen. xiv. 14.

<sup>130</sup> The defence rests upon a similar use of the Greek enumeration by St. John, in the Apocalypse, xiii. 17, 18. But I do not see how the application of numerals to a name by an inspired author, who wrote in Greek, and at a time when such applications were common, establishes the probability that a mystical number involving a prophecy, should be revealed, ages before the invention of the cypher which was to be the key to the mystery.

upon his blunder. He wishes to show that Abraham, in instituting the seal of the old covenant, typified the sign of the new one, that is, Christ crucified, (Ιησους σταυρωθεις) in the number of persons whom he circumcised: and it is, therefore, the more to be regretted that he should have wound up such a comment in the following terms:—"He who put the engrafted gift of his doctrine within us knows that I never taught to any one a more certain truth!"<sup>131</sup> With due deference to the apologists of this comment, both ancient and modern, there is one difficulty connected with it, which the early fathers, and especially Clement of Alexandria, were well able to have apprehended. Since Abraham lived some ages before Cadmus, the inventor of the Greek alphabet, how came he, notwithstanding, to be so well acquainted with it? This objection had already been very skilfully applied by Irenæus, in confutation of the not more absurd numerical mysteries of the heretic Marcus.<sup>132</sup> Yet even this consideration was not powerful enough to overcome the love of this species of the marvellous that possessed Clement of Alexandria: he, oddly enough, introduces it into a long argument intended to allay the fears of a large class of his cotemporaries, "who," as he says, "were as much afraid of the Greek philosophy as children of hobgoblins."<sup>133</sup> He wishes to show the great advantages which religion may derive, not only from the metaphysical pursuits of philosophy, but also from her researches in the natural sciences; by citing the example of certain Old Testament worthies who had

<sup>131</sup> This claim of inspiration, for a comment founded upon a misquotation of Scripture, satisfactorily disposes of all similar claims on the part of the apostolical fathers. See above, pp. 25. e. s.

<sup>132</sup> Adv. Hær., lib. I. c. 12., § 4.

<sup>133</sup> *μερομήνια*. 6 Strom., § 10.

successfully cultivated them: David, for instance, who was a proficient in the theory and practice of music; and Moses, whose attainments in geometry are so conspicuous in his account of the dimensions of the tabernacle. Abraham also rose “through nature up to nature’s God” by that long series of observations upon the starry heavens, and upon the motions of the planetary bodies, which have given him so high a reputation for skill in astronomy; <sup>134</sup> and he also arrived at an equal proficiency in the sister science of arithmetic. This he demonstrates in the following terms:—“When Abraham heard that Lot was carried away captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants,<sup>135</sup> attacked the enemy, and conquered a greatly superior force. It is said that the numeral for 300 (τ) is the sign of the Lord’s cross, and that the iota and eta (ιη), which stand for 18, denote the saving name (Ιησους the Saviour.) Showing forth, therefore, that they are the servants of Abraham, as it respects salvation, who fly to the cross and name of the Lord, and overcome those that lead into captivity, and the many Gentile nations who follow them.”<sup>136</sup> Here it will be observed, that Clement tacitly corrects the blunder of Barnabas, but,

<sup>134</sup> For this notion he was indebted to Philo Judæus, *περὶ Ἀβραάμ*, p. 282 B. A book, the purport of which is to show that Abraham attained to the knowledge of divine things, with which he was favoured, by dint of his researches in astronomy and other branches of philosophy. Clement’s Christianity was built altogether upon Philo’s Judaism. The wretched philosophising of Josephus and Philo upon the miracles of the Old Testament, is now taken much advantage of by the infidel writers on the Continent.

It has long been a prevalent notion in the East, that Abraham was a great astronomer. The origin of it being merely that he was a native of Chaldæa, which was afterwards celebrated for such pursuits.—*Fab. Cod. Pscud. Vet. Test. Vol. I., pp. 341., e. s.*

<sup>135</sup> Gen. xiv. 14.

<sup>136</sup> 6 Strom., § 11.

notwithstanding, is quite as successful in giving a pious application to the mystery. It is, therefore, evidently of no importance whether the mystical cypher represent the number of Abraham's trained servants that went forth to fight, or (by a mistake of the commentator) the number of males in his household who underwent the rite of circumcision. For we find that, though the mistake suggested the interpretation, a little ingenuity has discovered an equally edifying paraphrase upon it, when the blunder is corrected! But we are by no means to imagine, that the principal of the school of philosophy at Alexandria would rest contented with the humble office of copyist and corrector of Barnabas. He also has favoured us with his own variations upon so promising a theme. It is in the following strain of sublimity:—"The number three hundred is a triad in a century: the decad (10) is, without controversy, the all-perfect number: and the eight is the first cube, having equality in all its dimensions length, breadth, and thickness. 'The days of man,' says the word, 'shall be one hundred and twenty years;'<sup>137</sup> this number is, by synthesis, the fifteenth from the monad,<sup>138</sup> and the moon becomes full on the fifteenth day. Otherwise, 120 is a triangular number, (a multiple of three), and is composed of the numbers 64 and 56. Sixty-four is composed of the first cube 8, being an even number of uneven parts ascending in arithmetical progression from the monad;<sup>139</sup> fifty-six is compounded of

<sup>137</sup> Gen. vi. 3.

<sup>138</sup>  $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10 + 11 + 12 + 13 + 14 + 15 = 120.$

<sup>139</sup>  $1 + 3 + 5 + 7 + 9 + 11 + 13 + 15 = 64.$

He means that there are eight terms in this progression, and that all of them are odd numbers.



an odd number of even parts, commencing with the dyad, (2) that odd number being seven, one of the perfect numbers.<sup>140</sup> By another signification, 120, is compounded of four numbers, fifteen a triangle ( $3 \times 5$ ); twenty-five a square ( $5^2$ ); thirty-five a pentagon ( $7 \times 5$ ); forty-five a hexagon;<sup>141</sup> these numbers are constructed upon the analogy of the number five, which is the basis of all of them. Now the number twenty-five is said to be the symbol of the tribe of Levi,<sup>142</sup> &c. &c. &c. Mr. Faber, in his admirable work on prophecy, speaks of a school-boy with a slate and pencil adjusting the numerical name of the seven-headed monster in the apocalypse! I would only remark upon the preceding quotation, that I know what the school-boy would deserve, who should prostitute his slate and pencil to the intolerable nonsense which our Alexandrian philosopher gravely propounds as the very summit and perfection of Christian knowledge. Let me not be told that the Pythagoreans and Cabbalists had already awakened a taste for researches into the hidden properties of numbers, and that Clement merely wrote in accordance with the philosophy of the times. The perfect Revelation of God is invested with a dignity and simplicity which ought always to have guarded it against such profanations, from those

<sup>140</sup>  $2 + 4 + 6 + 8 + 10 + 12 + 14 = 56$ . This progression consists of seven even numbers.

<sup>141</sup> So says the author, and so it certainly ought to be, to answer the purpose of his argument; but, unfortunately, there is an arithmetical objection to the arrangement, which probably he got over thus:— $6 \times 5 = 30$  the hexagon; and the remaining fifteen, which completes the forty-five, is a repetition of the triangle, with which the series commenced.  $15 + 25 + 35 + 45$  (that is,  $30 + 15$ )  $= 120$ . I suppose that this is the philosopher's meaning; if it is not, "I am free to confess" that I don't know what he meant.

<sup>142</sup> 6 Strom., § 11.

who profess themselves its defenders. And, moreover, the entire insanity of mystical arithmetic had been already most ably exposed, and by his immediate predecessor, Irenæus ; with whose works he was evidently very familiar. I have the more pleasure in laying before the reader an extract from his masterly argument, because I have to acknowledge that it has completely exploded a few grains of this folly, which still lurked in my own mind, regarding the triad and the heptad. He is confuting the dogma of the Marcosian heretics, that the divine nature existed in ogdoads, or eights :—" We will grant that their argument is a perfectly true one ; and that the instances they give us of the occurrence of the number eight in Scripture, are deduced from thence by a correct rule of interpretation, and to be received.<sup>143</sup> But we contend that there is another number, which neither aids their argument, nor concurs with their figment, but which, nevertheless, rests upon a much more extended basis of Scripture authority. There are *five* letters in the name Σωτηρ Saviour, and the words πατηρ father, and ἀγαπη love, are formed also of the same number. Our Lord blessed *five* loaves, and with them satisfied the hunger of *five* thousand persons. He also informs us that there were *five* wise virgins and *five* foolish. Again, there were *five* persons with our Lord at his transfiguration, Peter, James, John, Moses, and Elias ; Dives, in hell, told Abraham that he had *five* brothers. The pool of Bethesda had *five* gates. The form of the cross has *five* points ; the four extremities of the two beams, and that in the middle, which sustains the

<sup>143</sup> Adv. Hær., lib. 2. c. 42. I have here somewhat paraphrased the original, in order to connect it with the subject of the two preceding chapters ; in which he shows the foolish and unwarrantable liberties they have taken with the text to obtain the number they wanted.

person to be crucified.<sup>144</sup> There are also *five* fingers on each hand ; *five* books of Moses, *five* Commandments on each of the tables of the Decalogue. *Five* priests were consecrated in the desert ; Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Their garments were woven of *five* colours.<sup>145</sup> There were also *five* kings of the Amorites, whom Joshua shut up in the cave. And many thousands of such coincidences upon this number, may be found by any one who will be at the trouble of looking for them, either in the Word of God, or in the works of nature. But we do not, on this account, teach that there are *five* æons in the pleroma above the demiurge (creator) ; nor do we consecrate the pentad (5) as something divine ; nor do we endeavour to corroborate such ravings by this our vain labour ; wresting the well-ordered creations of God into types which have no existence, and introducing thereby, impious and wicked dogmas, which any one of ordinary understanding may overturn.” How Clement of Alexandria, or any one else in his senses, could withstand the overwhelming force of this reasoning, and persevere in such trifling, I cannot comprehend.

After these quotations the following will appear but vapid : He thus defends the use of instrumental music :—  
 “ ‘ Praise him on the ten-stringed Psaltery.’<sup>146</sup> By the ten-stringed Psaltery we are to understand the incarnate Word : for the cypher for 10 is iota (ι) which is also the first letter in *Ιησους* Jesus.”<sup>147</sup> “ Our pædagogus is firm and upright ; this is denoted by the first letter in his

<sup>144</sup> According to later authorities, the scabella, or footstool. There is the same allusion in our quotation from Justin Martyr, p. 270.

<sup>145</sup> Exod. xxviii. 1—5.

<sup>146</sup> Psa. xxxiii. 2.

<sup>147</sup> Pæd., lib. 2. c. 4.

name, I in *Ιησους*.<sup>148</sup> These, however, further illustrate the use of the numerical mode of the *ἀμφιβολία*; the instances of which are not of very frequent occurrence in the writings of the early fathers, and will not, therefore, require any more particular observations.

Our amphibolical quotations hitherto have borne altogether upon the cross. We have noticed a constant effort to multiply the number of scriptural allusions to it, by giving such a meaning to the most improbable places. All the particulars of its external appearance are diffusively dwelt upon. That which in the first century was ascribed to the divine energy of him who was crucified, is, in the writers of the second, (frequently by implication, and more than once by express declaration) taught to be the effects of certain magical virtues residing in the figure of the cross. This error, like so many of the preceding ones, soon yielded its fruits. Very shortly afterwards, all who professed the Christian name were called upon, not to prostrate their hearts before Christ crucified, but their persons before the crucifix; and, instead of worshipping “him who died on tree,” to pay their adorations to the tree on which he died!

It will also have been observed, that several of the glosses which we have quoted, equivocate upon the names and titles of our Lord. As this is, with the early fathers, an ordinary mode of applying the canon of comment we are considering, we will exemplify it by an instance or two, which will again illustrate the influence which the epistle of St. Barnabas exercised over the church in the second century.

“*Jesus* (that is, Joshua) is said to have circumcised the people a second time ‘with stone knives,’<sup>149</sup> because

<sup>148</sup> *Pred.*, lib. I. c. 9.

<sup>149</sup> *μαχαίρας πέτρinas*. Josh. v. 2. LXX.

Jesus Christ is the herald of that circumcision wherewith he hath circumcised us from stones and other idols. And he hath made ‘heaps of the foreskins’<sup>150</sup> of those that were uncircumcised from the error of the world, who are now circumcised with the ‘stone knives’ of *Jesus* our Lord, that is, with his words. For *Jesus* is often called by the prophets ‘a stone’ and ‘a rock :’ by stone knives, therefore, we are to understand his words, whereby so many who were in error through uncircumcision have been circumcised with the circumcision of the heart. All, therefore, who enter into the heavenly Canaan, undergo this circumcision by the stone knives of *Jesus*.<sup>151</sup> “When the ark of the covenant had been taken by the men of Ashdod and was returned by them on account of the plagues wherewith they were smitten,<sup>152</sup> the heifers that drew the car which contained it, under no mortal guidance, took it to the field of a certain man named *Jesus*, (that is, *Joshua*,) and stood still; whereby we are to understand that they were directed by the power of that name.”<sup>153</sup>

I will mention here an objection to the practice of throwing the narratives of the Old Testament into types of the New Dispensation, which appears to me an important one. Has it not a direct tendency to raise and to confirm the infidel notion that the events there narrated are by no means to be viewed in the light of literally historical facts, but of mere parables, founded indeed upon history, but embellished by the narrator, to suit

<sup>150</sup> βενὸς τῶν ἀκροβυστίων. Id.

<sup>151</sup> Justin. Dial., p. 341 A. The extract is preceded by much more to the same purport, and followed by a dissertation at length upon Christ the stone; I have only taken what appeared to be the most remarkable passage.

<sup>152</sup> 1 Sam. vii. 7—14.

<sup>153</sup> Ubi supra., p. 362 B., where see more.

the purpose for which he relates it? The idea that the two dispensations of God have been so ordered that the one is, not merely the type, but the very protoplast of the other; the resemblance holding throughout every possible particular, with such minute exactness, as to justify the obscure, and scarcely comprehensible allusions which the early fathers so often discover, and of which our present quotations afford us the example, is, in itself, so complex, and, therefore, so discordant with every thing that is revealed to us regarding the divine mode of operation, that we are not surprised that they who maintain it should endeavour to rid themselves of the difficulty by the invention of some easier expedient; by the supposition that the inspired historians altered and embellished their narrations in the spirit of prophecy, or, in plainer terms, that they *lied* by the Holy Ghost.<sup>154</sup> Philo, who wishes to identify Judaism with philosophy, was certainly of this opinion; and I am not prepared to

<sup>154</sup> That my meaning may not be misconceived, I will further illustrate it from the example before us. There is a perfect propriety in elucidating the captivity of the world to sin by the Egyptian bondage; the conversion to Christianity, of which water baptism is the figure, by the passage through the Red Sea; the vicissitudes of the Christian life, by the sojourn in the wilderness; and the "rest that remaineth for the people of God" by the promised land of Canaan: because for all these we have scriptural authority. Nor am I insensible to the beauty, as well as the propriety, of the illustration. But the connection between the two is purely metaphorical; it partakes not at all of the nature of protoplasm, or sympathy; we allow of nothing beyond that air of general resemblance which justifies the use of the figure. In the instances before us, therefore, we cannot hesitate to deny that there is any relation, typical, or sympathetical, between the names of the son of Nun and the Son of God, because such an application runs the metaphor aground, which is a greater offence in divinity than even in literature. And besides, the inspired writings connect the two names, not in the way of type, but of antithesis. Heb. iv.

say that the philosophical Christianity of the second century was entirely free from it. I have sometimes been led to entertain the suspicion in perusing the works of its professors.

The following very objectionable comment well exemplifies, both the evil of these historical types, and the extent of licence allowed in the second century to the ἀμφιβολία; which, it will be seen, was by no means confined to the cross and names of Christ, but applied to every thing relating to him. “If any one will look into the acts of Jacob, he will find them not unmeaning, but full of dispensation. In the first place, at his birth; he was called Jacob, a supplanter, because he laid hold on his brother’s heel; holding, not being himself held; binding feet, not being bound himself; holding in his hand the heel of his adversary, that is the victory. Even unto this also, the Lord was born, of whom Jacob was the type as well as the progenitor; and of whom John says in the Apocalypse: ‘he went forth conquering and to conquer.’ Jacob then attained the primogeniture, when his brother despised it, even as also we, the younger people, obtained Christ, when our older brethren in grace (the Jews) rejected him, saying, ‘we have no king but Cæsar,’ There is a universal blessing in Christ; and, therefore, the Father’s blessing upon the first people the last stole away: even as Jacob got the blessing from Esau. And as on this account he was greatly persecuted by his brother, so also the church at this day suffers persecution from the Jews. The descendants of Jacob became twelve tribes, and Christ hath founded his church upon the twelve-pillared basis of the apostles. The spotted sheep were Jacob’s wages;<sup>155</sup> and the wages of Christ are men

<sup>155</sup> Gen. xxx. 32.

of various and differing nations, gathered together into one cohort, and made of one faith ; as the Father hath promised, ‘ Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance.’<sup>156</sup> And as Jacob’s numerous family were prophetic of the multitude that should be born unto the Lord, it was needful that he should beget them of two sisters, even as Christ’s children came from two laws, of one and the same lawgiver. A part of Jacob’s family was also by two hand-maidens ; signifying how, according to the flesh, Christ makes the sons of God both of bond and free, giving the Spirit that quickens us, unto all. But Jacob did all things for the sake of her who had beautiful eyes, even Rachel, who prefigured the church on account of which Christ suffered. No part of Jacob’s history is without significancy.”<sup>157</sup>

There is a gravity in the style of Irenæus, as well as an ingenuity, in the application of the amphibolical meanings in this passage, which gives it, at first sight, a very imposing and plausible appearance : but a slight examination will suffice to detect its real character ; it is a tissue of wretched trifling, surpassed in utter absurdity, yea buffoonery, by nothing which is before the reader. Nor can we better expose the folly of the entire system, than by comparing it with the gloss we have already given from Tertullian upon the same passage ;<sup>158</sup> when it will be observed that the same Jacob and Esau, in whom the one discovers a type of Gentiles and Jews, the other finds to be an equally instructive symbol of Christ and Satan ; and that the very events which the one interprets as predictive of the acceptance of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews, the other, with the aid of the ἀμφιβολία, applies to the victories of Christ and the dis-

<sup>156</sup> Psa. ii. 8.

<sup>157</sup> Iren., lib. 4. c. 38.

<sup>158</sup> Page 249.



comfiture of his enemies: and that both are equally fortunate in the discovery of coincidences.<sup>159</sup>

We will conclude our view of the mode in which the early fathers interpreted the Scriptures, by a few examples of their comments upon the ceremonial law. These, like the last quotation, are also strictly and properly amphibolical; they only differ from the others in equivocating upon the sense of a sentence, instead of upon the meaning of a word. These also originated with the epistle of Barnabas, and the argument for its authenticity is, therefore, placed in this commanding position; the whole of those passages which were supposed to throw discredit upon it, we can authenticate by a host of authorities from the works of his immediate successors. Consequently the identity of no book out of the sacred canon rests upon so firm a basis of evidence as the epistle of Barnabas.

The reasons of the Mosaic precepts and prohibitions regarding animal food have formed a favourite subject of speculation both with Jewish and Christian mystics in all ages: and even commentators of a graver and more solid character seem to become mystical when they approach this portion of Holy Writ. Professing the utmost regard for the general character of many admirable commentaries, which give an ethical interpretation to the eleventh of Leviticus and the fourteenth of Deuteronomy, and teach us to regard the natural habits of the animals there permitted and prohibited, as types of moral qualities

<sup>159</sup> The fact that certain prophecies regarding the advents of our Lord have received an inchoate accomplishment at the first, and wait until his second coming for their complete fulfilment, gives no countenance whatever to these interpretations: which refer to events chronologically identical, and point out the same historical personages, as types of two different sets of actors in the same drama.

in men, the possessors of which are in like manner to be sought or avoided, I would submit, that it is by no means an ordinary mode of the divine procedure to wrap up rules and maxims which regard the ordinary conduct of life in amphibologies and enigmas. Types and figures are employed in the Bible to foreshadow future events and dispensations, not to "darken the council" of moral precepts. Another formidable difficulty also arises from the circumstance, that we have not yet ascertained the animals which many of the names employed in these passages are intended to designate: and as, until this question is set at rest, we certainly cannot decide upon the qualities which their habits are to symbolise, it must of course be conceded, even by those who maintain that such is their true meaning, that the whole subject demands further investigation; and I feel persuaded, that if the enquiry be properly conducted, it will be fully elucidated. If I may be permitted to hazard a conjecture upon a matter as yet so imperfectly known, I suspect that they merely embody the customs upon the subject of animal food which the Israelites had adopted during their long sojourn in Egypt; and that they were so sanctioned for the purpose of purifying them from the idolatrous associations with which, in that nation of animal worshippers, they were sure to be mixed up. For if we carefully observe the mode in which the revelations of God have invariably borne upon those nations, or families of men, to whom they were immediately vouchsafed, we shall find that not only have all needless interferences with the existing customs of ordinary life been avoided, but the new dispensation has, in certain instances, been so framed as expressly to adopt and sanction them. The case before us, (should my conjecture prove correct), will furnish

an example of this : and similar ones occur also in the Christian, as well as in the Jewish, economies.

Barnabas thus spiritualises the precepts in question : —“ Why did Moses say ‘ Ye shall not eat of the swine, neither the eagle, nor the hawk, nor the crow, nor any fish that has not a scale upon him ?’<sup>160</sup> I answer, that in the spiritual sense he comprehended three doctrines that were to be gathered from thence. Besides which, he says to them in the book of Deuteronomy, ‘ and I will give my statutes to this people.’<sup>161</sup> Wherefore it is not the command of God that they should not eat these things ; but Moses in the spirit spoke unto them.<sup>162</sup> Now the sow he forbade them to eat ; meaning thus much : thou shalt not join thyself unto such persons as are like unto swine : who, whilst they live in pleasure, forget their God ; but when any want pinches them, then they know the Lord : as the sow when she is full knows not her master ; but when she is hungry she makes a noise ; and being again fed, is silent. ‘ Neither,’ says he ‘ shalt thou eat the hawk nor the kite, nor the crow ;’ that is, Thou shalt not keep company with such kind of men as know not how to labour and sweat to get themselves food : but injuriously ravish away the things of others ; and watch how to lay snares for them ; when, at the same time, they appear to live in perfect innocence. So these birds seek not food for themselves, but, sitting idle, seek how they may eat of the flesh

<sup>160</sup> Lev. xi. 9—19. Deut. xiv. 9—19.

<sup>161</sup> Deut. iv. 8.

<sup>162</sup> He probably meant to say, that the part of the Mosaic writings upon which he is commenting was not inspired to the same *degree* as the Decalogue. This notion of degrees of inspiration originated with the Hellenising Jews, from whom Barnabas adopted this comment, and is closely allied to the error that the Scripture narratives are parables, which we have traced to the same source.

which others have provided, being destructive through their wickedness. ‘Neither,’ says he, ‘shalt thou eat the lamprey, nor the polypus, nor the cuttle fish;’ that is, thou shalt not be like such men by using to converse with them; who are altogether wicked and adjudged to death.<sup>163</sup> For so these fishes alone are accursed which wallow in the mire, nor swim, as other fishes, but tumble in the dirt at the bottom of the deep. Moses, therefore, speaking as concerning meats, delivered three great precepts to them in the spiritual signification of these commands: but they, according to the desires of the flesh, understood him as if he had only meant it of meats. And, therefore, David took aright the knowledge (*γνῶσις*) of this three-fold command, saying in this manner, ‘Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly;’ as the fishes before mentioned in the bottom of the deep in darkness; ‘nor stood in the way of sinners,’ as they who seem to fear the Lord and yet sin as the sow. ‘And hath not sat in the seat of the scorers;’<sup>164</sup> as those birds who sit and watch that they may devour. Here you have the law perfectly set forth according to the true knowledge of it. But says Moses, ‘ye shall eat all that cleaveth the hoof and cheweth the cud;’<sup>165</sup> signifying thereby such a one as having taken his food, knows him that nourisheth him; and resting upon him rejoiceth in him. But why might they eat those that cleave the hoof?

<sup>163</sup> I, for obvious reasons, omit here his comment upon the prohibitions regarding the hare, the hyæna, and the weasel:—their gross absurdity, and filthy indecency, are too well known already. Clement of Alexandria makes this passage in Barnabas the text of an extended and elaborate comment, *Pæd.*, lib. 2. c. 10., concerning which, it may suffice to remark, that in both the qualities just specified he far surpasses his original.

<sup>164</sup> *Psa.* i. 1.

<sup>165</sup> *Lev.* xi. 3, &c

because the righteous liveth in this present world ; but his expectation is fixed upon the other. See, brethren, how admirably Moses commanded these things.”<sup>166</sup>

This comment, which is little more than the adoption and Christianization of certain philosophical speculations upon the Mosaic law by the semi-infidel Jew, Philo,<sup>167</sup> was both copied and imitated by the fathers of the second century. We will give a single instance.

Irenæus quotes two texts<sup>168</sup> for the purpose of showing that men may, with propriety, be compared to beasts, and then proceeds thus:—“ The law also hath figuratively predicted all these things, delineating men by animals. Those that divide the hoof and chew the cud it declares to be clean, but those that fail in either of these are unclean. Who then are clean ? They who walk firmly by faith in *the Father* and *the Son* ; this is *the cloven hoof* that imparts firmness unto them : ‘ and who meditate in the words of God day and night ;’<sup>169</sup> this is their power of ruminating. The unclean are those who have neither a cloven hoof nor ruminate, that is, who have neither faith in God nor meditate upon his word, which is the abomination of the Gentiles. By them ‘ that chew the cud but divide not the hoof,’ the Jews are figuratively described ; who have, indeed, the Word of God in their mouths, but do not rootedly establish themselves in the Father and the Son. On this account they are liable to stumble ; for whole hoofed animals easily slip, but those that are double hoofed walk with a firmer step, because the one hoof supports the other. They also are unclean ‘ which cleave the hoof and chew not the cud ;’

<sup>166</sup> Barn. Ep. Cath. c. 10.

<sup>167</sup> Περὶ Γεωργίας. Opera, pp. 160 F. *et seq.*

<sup>168</sup> Psa. xlix. 20. ; Jer. v. 8.

<sup>169</sup> Psa. i. 2. See Barnabas above.

this shows forth the heretics, and those who do not meditate upon the Word of God, nor adorn it with good works ; of whom the Lord says, ‘ Why say ye unto me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I tell you ?’<sup>170</sup> They who are such say indeed that they believe in the Father and the Son, but they never meditate on the Word of God as they ought, nor are they adorned with good works ; but as we have said they live the life of swine and dogs, giving themselves over to impurity and gluttony.—Justly, therefore, are such termed by the apostle ‘ carnal,’<sup>171</sup> and by the prophets, cattle and wild beasts.”<sup>172</sup>

This grievous perversion and waste of great ingenuity of conception, and remarkable neatness of construction and application is evidently founded upon the gloss of St. Barnabas ; and, therefore, proves that it was accepted by his successors as the standard comment upon the passage.

Clement of Alexandria also repeatedly quotes and adopts this interpretation,<sup>173</sup> and in two places<sup>174</sup> expressly ascribes it to St. Barnabas. As this is the passage upon which the objection to the authority of the epistle has mainly rested, we may, I think, fairly presume that the doubt regarding it is satisfactorily set at rest.

Having now sufficiently shown the mode of comment and interpretation of the Word of God which the early fathers employed, the arguments by which they justified and defended it, will next claim our brief consideration.

One principal purpose of the Stromates of Clement of

<sup>170</sup> Luke vi. 46.

<sup>171</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 14.

<sup>172</sup> Adv. Hær., lib. 5. c. 8.

<sup>173</sup> Pæd. 2. c. 8., 3. c. 11., &c.

<sup>174</sup> 2 Strom., § 15. ; 5 Strom., § 8. He frequently quotes him : sometimes with the title Βαρνάβας ὁ ἀπόστολος. 2 Strom., § 7., &c.

Alexandria is the defence of the ἀμφιβολία, which he grounds upon one of those fancied analogies, or sympathies, by which the ancients so often allowed themselves to be misled. These glosses held in Christian doctrine the corresponding place to asceticism in Christian practice; and together constituted its highest style, its consummation and perfection: and he whose life and opinions exhibited this combination, was the only true professor of Gnosticism,<sup>175</sup> by which title he was honourably distinguished. His gifted eye pierced through the mere external sense of the written word, and surveyed the inner mysteries of Christianity; those sublime and recondite truths to which the amphibolies we have quoted were the introduction, which it was one purpose of Revelation to *conceal*, (if the solecism be allowed) and which were, therefore, not to be written, lest they should fall into the hands of the uninitiated. “Some of the secret doctrines,” says Clement, “I of purpose pretermit, having made a selection, and fearing to write that which I must have warned some against reading. Not that I envy others the possession of them; that would be unjust; but I was afraid lest they should prove the means of leading men into error. And thus we should have been found to have given a child a sword to play with, as the proverbialists have it.”<sup>176</sup> Again he says, “I am afraid to cast these pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend us; for it is difficult to speak pure and perspicuous words concerning the true wisdom to swinish and unlearned auditors, who will laugh at

<sup>175</sup> I need scarcely remark that this is an amphibolical interpretation of the New Testament word, γνῶσις.

<sup>176</sup> 1 Strom., § 1. Had he exercised this discretion soundly, his eight books of Stromates would have shrunk into a very small compass.

mysteries which men of loftier intellect deem most wonderful, and redolent of inspiration."<sup>177</sup> His defence of these hidden meanings, and of the mode of interpretation which elicits them, is so scattered through the whole of this diffuse and parenthetical production, that I find great difficulty in collecting and arranging it. He sometimes justifies them by arguments drawn from the nature of things: thus, "When truth is exhibited covered with a veil it appears greater and more majestic, as ripe fruits seen in a vessel of clear water are invested with a brighter and softer beauty; and as all things seem larger and more important beneath the folds of a mantle."<sup>178</sup> He cites the example of our Saviour, who, by his account, repelled the temptations of Satan by means of amphibolical applications of Scripture;<sup>179</sup> of Moses, the whole of whose five books are an enigma admitting of a quadruple solution,<sup>180</sup> or, if it be considered as a law, of a triple reception;<sup>181</sup> and of the prophets, whose writings so abound with mystic sayings and equivocations that it would be tedious to bring them together.<sup>182</sup> He also quotes Scripture in defence of this mode of interpretation; but his comments are themselves amphibolical in almost every instance.<sup>183</sup> He does not seem to have been aware, that

<sup>177</sup> 1 Strom., § 12. If this is the standard of intellectual superiority, I certainly must acknowledge myself to be one of "the swinish multitude."

<sup>178</sup> 5 Strom., § 9.

<sup>179</sup> 1 Strom., § 9. This is a mistake.

<sup>180</sup> It may be interpreted historically, nomothetically, (or legally,) physically, or Theologically.

<sup>181</sup> It may be received as a sign revealing, as a command exhorting, or as a prophecy predicting.—1 Strom., § 28. He probably found this nonsense in Philo.

<sup>182</sup> 5 Strom., § 6.

<sup>183</sup> See 1 Strom., § 9—12.; 2 Strom., § 2.; 5 Strom., § 4., a. f.; like-



when he made his rule prove itself he was arguing in a circle.

But the most important and instructive part of his defence remains to be considered. He justifies the double meanings in the Bible, and the secret doctrines to be deduced therefrom, by the example of the Egyptian hieroglyphics, which were used for the purpose of concealment;<sup>184</sup> of the Greek wise men, philosophers, and poets, all of whom had their dark sayings;<sup>185</sup> —of Pythagoras, whose aphorisms were capable of no other mode of interpretation;<sup>186</sup> and finally by the universal practice of all idolatries, both Greek and barbarian, of wrapping up certain abstruse dogmas of their religion in types and mysteries which were not revealed but to the initiated.<sup>187</sup>

This invaluable admission at once furnishes us with the key to that which must have hitherto appeared so extraordinary and unaccountable. The same heathenism which warped the opinions and dogmas of the early fathers upon every point of divinity we have hitherto considered, we now find to have dictated even their mode of interpreting the Scriptures. They regarded them exactly in the light of the *μύθου* or sacred books of idolatry.—As these consisted altogether of ridiculous,

wise sections 6, 8, and 10, of the same book, where absurdities will be found far surpassing any thing we have quoted. In the 12th Section also will be found a number of texts cited in defence of these secret doctrines, which have no other relation to the subject than that they contain the word *κρύπτειν*, “to hide,” or some of its compounds.

<sup>184</sup> 5 Strom., § 4. This is the well-known passage which contains an explanation of the systems of writing in use among the Egyptians. See also § 7, 9.

<sup>185</sup> Ubi supra., § 9, 10, 11, &c.

<sup>186</sup> § 5.

<sup>187</sup> § 3.

and often unclean, fables, it became customary to uphold their authority by the fiction, that under them were concealed (as in parables and allegories) disclosures regarding the visible and invisible creation, profound maxims of wisdom, and other abstruse and hidden verities: the literal meaning being the veil by which they were enshrined from the vulgar gaze, and which was lifted up to those only who submitted themselves to that series of washings and other probationary ceremonies which constituted *initiation into the mysteries*, as it was then termed. By a very natural process, this notion passed from the religion into the philosophy of the ancient world. We have the *exoteric* and *esoteric*, the outer and inner doctrines of the Aristoteleans. Pythagoras also constructed two sets of interpretations of his own dogmas, as well as two codes of discipline, for the two classes of his followers:—the one for those who mingled in the affairs of life; the other, which was much more abstruse and mystical, for the ascetics who conformed to the more rigid code.—The same peculiarity is also observable of the Essenes; a sect amongst them, probably distinguished by the title of *Therapeutæ* (devotees), were remarkable for the severity of their discipline, and for the lofty mysticism of their strain of comment upon the sacred text. So that the union of mysticism with monasticism was by no means the invention of the early Christians, but was borrowed by them from the source to which, as we have already seen, so many of their opinions are to be traced. Neither can they be charged with inventing the ἀμφιβολία; the Jews had long before discovered the art of extracting equivocal and doubtful meanings from the writings of the Old Testament, as from mythic fables:—and nothing can be more evident than that Barnabas, its originator in Christianity, had

found it in the school of Judaism ; though his successors improved upon his model by still further assimilations, through philosophy, to the heathenism whence it had at first been derived.

The strange and absurd comments, therefore, which we have been compelled to lay before the reader, are now abundantly explained and accounted for. Their authors looked upon the word of God as a mythology ; of which, the only parts to be understood in their literal sense were those that treated of the invisible world, of the divine nature, character, and attributes, of the mode of the divine existence,<sup>188</sup> and other similar topics. All the rest they considered dark and enigmatical ; the apparent meaning being merely the veil that concealed “those allegorical senses in which the gnostical truth delivers itself, whereby one thing is shown and another meant ;” as Clement phrases it. <sup>189</sup>

<sup>188</sup> That the early fathers were orthodox upon these subjects has been abundantly demonstrated ; I need scarcely name the elaborate *Defensio Fidei Nicænæ* of Bishop Bull, and the admirable treatises upon the works of Tertullian and Justin Martyr by the bishop of Lincoln, as embodying every thing that can be desired upon the question. It appears to me that these were the only doctrines upon which these authors accepted aright the teaching of the Scriptures. Their comments upon all texts relating to the divine nature, are characterised by a scrupulous anxiety to give the literal unsophisticated meaning of the passage : so much so, that they needlessly refine upon it : and the later creeds will be found more accurately to define the revealed truth upon these mysterious subjects, than the works of the Anti-Nicene fathers ; because the former are constructed upon the scope of the whole Bible, whereas the latter make a series of separate deductions from the sense of particular passages. This peculiarity in the early fathers I would thus explain :—The nature and mode of existence of divine personages were precisely the subjects upon which the heathen mythologies were supposed to speak plainly, and without figure or parable : and, therefore, the early church forbore to equivocate or amphibolise upon them ; she expected that the sacred books should instruct her upon these points in plain and direct language.

<sup>189</sup> 1 Strom., § 14.

And, therefore, he who would attain to the perfection of Christianity must pass over the obvious import of the inspired word, and endeavour, by the exercise of his ingenuity and philosophy, to develop the hidden meanings. Thus then, “ they made the word of God of none effect by their tradition :” with them it was not “ a light unto the feet, and a lamp unto the path” of the believer, but a dark lanthorn ; emitting, indeed, a few glimmerings of light through a crevice or two, by the help of which the vulgar and common Christian might possibly find his way to heaven ; but these only kindled the ardour of the aspirant after gnostical wisdom to withdraw the slide, and to gaze upon the splendour it concealed ; which, however, was secured by a clasp of so rare and ingenious a device, that the most vigorous exertions of his astuteness and philosophy were required to unloose it.

## CHAPTER XV.

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### PECULIAR DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY.

I HAVE now met with an important question which is certainly previous to any other, in the present stage of our enquiry. Is not every useful purpose of our investigation already answered?—or are the opinions of those who have erred to the extent of the early fathers in their mode of interpreting the Sacred Volume, at all to be regarded upon those portions of the Christian scheme of which they could really know nothing but from thence? We certainly deal thus with writings of a more recent date. Who troubles himself to investigate the precise shade of the Calvinism of Jacob Behmen, or of the Sabellianism of Emmanuel Swedenborg? Yet both these enthusiasts were men of respectable talent, and extensive scriptural knowledge; we only condemn their opinions on divinity, because of the frantic absurdity of their ordinary mode of scriptural comment: and I really know of nothing in either of their works, which would not successfully dispute the palm both for sanity and sobriety, with the ἀμφιβολία of the early fathers!

But passing by this consideration, some of the erroneous opinions which they maintained, had a necessary tendency to influence and bias their doctrinal deductions from the sacred text.—Upon the all-important subject of

inspiration, we have seen that their opinions were very vague and incoherent; they held the verbal and even literal inspiration of the Septuagint: they often appealed to spurious and apocryphal books as to inspired authority; they also invariably assign a measure of this gift to the teachers of the Greek and barbarian philosophies: and when we add to all this, that they held that every inspired sentence involved two meanings, the one obvious, and the other mystical, I see not how it is possible to avoid concluding *à priori*, that the doctrinal inferences of Theologians thus grossly erring upon vital points ought, by no means, to be invested with any degree of authority in our estimation; much less are they to be followed as the guides of our faith.

Their claims to authority have always rested upon their proximity to the apostolic times: of these we have already disposed; but I will here state an opinion regarding the apostolical tradition, concerning which I have only to observe, that it has been suggested to me by the perusal of all that remains of early Christian antiquity, and that I offer it with the utmost diffidence. It would appear that the apostles were inspired with the truths they revealed, under those mental aspects alone in which they have recorded them: they were not so disclosed to their understandings, as that they were able also to view them under other aspects, and declare of them from thence infallibly, and by inspiration. So strict was the limitation, that they seem to have varied little, if at all, upon any occasion, even in the phraseology and diction by which they conveyed them, either in speaking or writing: so that had one of the bold enquirers of these latter days into "free will, foreknowledge, fate," been privileged to propound his doubts and his deductions to an inspired apostle, the

only reply that he would have received, would probably have been a rebuke of his impertinence, and a reference to, or repetition of, that which is written ; the apostle would not, because he could not, have satisfied his curiosity. Nothing, then, can be more erroneous than the notion, that the doctrinal opinions of the apostolical and early fathers are inspired glosses upon the New Testament, handed down by tradition from the apostles ; not only do they never assume such an authority for them, but the tenor of their writings makes it evident that such glosses had no existence ; and, therefore, the hearer of the apostolical preaching had, in this respect, no advantage whatever over the reader of the apostolical epistles ; since both would receive the same truths, and probably in the same words.

Repeating, therefore, the inference at which we had before arrived,<sup>1</sup> that the early fathers had no inspired or traditional authority for their doctrinal opinions, of which we are not ourselves also in possession, we proceed to enquire, whether there is evidence in their writings that these their errors have influenced the views they entertained of those fundamental principles, by which their doctrinal deductions would necessarily be determined.

We will take the much tossed question regarding the Freedom of the Will ; upon which there will be no necessity that we should disturb any point in discussion between the Calvinist and the Arminian : the doctrine of the church upon it in the second century, being utterly valueless in that controversy, and not possessed of the weight even of a feather in either scale ; inasmuch as it is not derived from the Bible at all, nor was any such origination pretended for it by its supporters. This interminable

<sup>1</sup> See Chapters II. and III.

controversy was as fiercely debated between the Stoics and the Platonists in the schools of Athens during the second century, as between the Calvinists and Arminians at the synod of Dort in the seventeenth. The philosophers of the Porch asserted that all things came to pass by the decrees of fate; of a stern iron necessity which exercised as invincible a control over the volitions of the human mind, as over the motions of the heavenly bodies. This was vehemently denied by the rival philosophy of the Grove, which asserted the entire and perfect free agency of man. At the time we are considering, the Halls of Philosophy had rung with these wranglings for a long period; and there were evident symptoms that the combat would speedily terminate, in the rapid decline of the stoical doctrines, and the triumphant advance of those of the Platonists.

But the circumstance that of all others most powerfully contributed to the establishment of the Platonic theory regarding the freedom of the will, in the Christianity of the second century, was the conversion of Justin the philosopher. This event probably took place at a period, when not many of the same standing and pretensions in literature had embraced the tenets of the then despised and persecuted sect of the Christians: and it is pretty certain, that Justin was the first of the rank of a philosopher who set the seal of martyrdom to the sincerity of his profession. These incidents conferred upon his writings an astonishing degree of authority and influence with his cotemporaries and successors, for which we should scarcely find any thing to account, in the intrinsic merits of those of them that remain. But Justin had been a rigid disciple of Plato: he informs us that it was from hence that he passed into the school of Christ; and the tenor of



his narrative would make it appear that the transition was not a very difficult one:<sup>2</sup> for his Christianity was so framed as to include the whole of his Platonism, which he grasped as firmly and retained as jealously as his philosopher's cloak:<sup>3</sup> and if there was any one tenet of that philosophy to which he clung more firmly than another, it was that of the τὸ αὐτεξούσιον, the unlimited freedom of the will of angels and of men. There is a passage in his second apology which goes far to account for this: he speaks of the doctrine of the Stoics regarding necessity, with a warmth and bitterness which certainly implies that he had controverted that question with them, long before his conversion to Christianity.<sup>4</sup> This hostility was the immediate cause of his death; the information upon which he was brought before the Emperor Marcus Antoninus, (when he delivered his second Apology) was laid by one Crescens a Stoic, whose licentious life sufficiently evinced the abominable nature of the doctrines he maintained; and it was upon this occasion that, according to Eusebius, he suffered martyrdom.<sup>5</sup> The wretch took this mode of revenging himself on Justin for a defeat which he had sustained from him in a public disputation; and I cannot

<sup>2</sup> Dial., pp. 223—225.

<sup>3</sup> Id., p. 217 C. He frequently quotes the writings of Plato, Apol. I., pp. 81 C., &c.

<sup>4</sup> P. 45 D. See also Dial., p. 318 D., where he says that the Stoics knew nothing of God, and taught that such knowledge was unnecessary: and it is not impossible but that some individual among them may have covered his own ignorance by returning such an answer to an enquirer. But I must observe upon it, that no sect of philosophy speculated so boldly and so freely upon the divine nature as the Stoics: and, also, that no imputation was so likely to cast a contemptuous reproach upon any mode of philosophising in the second century, as such an answer to a question then so universally popular and under discussion as that, *de naturâ Deorum*.

<sup>5</sup> Eccl. Hist., lib. 4.

help thinking that they had often before been antagonists.<sup>6</sup> This, in my judgment, is the true reason of Justin's very decided opinions regarding the freedom of the will; it was a subject in which his feelings were already warmly interested, when he embraced Christianity; and upon which he was most probably fully committed in the schools. It is on this account that he never once quotes scripture authority for the doctrine, nor does he even cite that or any thing else in proof of it, but he invariably assumes it as an axiom antecedent to all proof.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the example and authority of Justin combined with other circumstances to identify this tenet of Platonism with Christianity, in the divinity of the second century.

Irenæus dogmatizes upon the entire freedom of the will in the same style as his predecessor:<sup>8</sup> and also endeavours to establish it from Scripture. His mode of proof is sufficiently comprehensive: every hortative passage in the Sacred Volume which addresses man as a rational and accountable being, he conceives to be unanswerable demonstration of his unlimited free agency. Nor does he at all scruple to carry the doctrine out to all the consequences of which it is capable. Man is the author of his

<sup>6</sup> Though the occasion will excuse almost any thing, it is, nevertheless, to be regretted, that Justin should have been betrayed in the intemperate language he uses regarding this man; he terms him *ὁ φιλόψοφος καὶ φιλόκομπος* ἔ γὰρ φιλόσοφον εἰπεῖν ἄξιον τὸν ἄνδρα, p. 46 D., shortly afterwards he applies to him the epithet *κυνικὸς*, p. 47 C., evidently not in its conventional, but in its literal sense; in the former it merely denotes a professor of the Cynical philosophy (the earliest form of Stoicism); but in the latter, it is an opprobrious nickname, the meaning of which will be best conveyed to the English reader by translating it, *Dog's-face*.

<sup>7</sup> Apol. I., pp. 58 C., 71 B., 80 D. Apol. II, ubi supra. Dial., pp. 316 A., 329 A., &c.

<sup>8</sup> Adv. Hær., lib. 4. cc. 7, 29, 71, 76, &c.

own faith ;<sup>9</sup> he accomplishes at the first his own election, and he achieves at the last his own salvation !<sup>10</sup>

Tertullian did not allow his own antipathy to philosophy to prevent him, either embracing the doctrine of Plato, or availing himself of the argument by which that philosopher supported it. He contends at great length for the freedom of the human will, on the ground that without it there can be no human responsibility :<sup>11</sup> which is the Platonic argument.<sup>12</sup>

Regarding Clement of Alexandria I would observe, that I suspect there was some hypocrisy in the pompous

<sup>9</sup> C. 72.

<sup>10</sup> Ubi supra.

<sup>11</sup> Adv. Marcion., lib. 2. cc. 5—9.; also c. 27. It is an argument to show that the fall of man neither proved that the Creator was a wicked spirit, nor that he was ignorant of the future, as had been impiously asserted by his opponent. His commencing sentence is a highly characteristic one : —“ Jam hinc ad quæstiones omnes *canes* quos foras Apostolus expellit, *latrantes* in deum veritatis.—Hæc sunt argumentationum *ossa* quæ *obroditis*,” c. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Plato was hampered in this question, with human responsibility on the one hand, and on the other, with the notion of destiny, which then formed so important an article of the popular belief. The mode in which he reconciles the difficulty is beautifully ingenious. He teaches that destiny exerts no direct control over the course of human action, but acts as a law connecting events in the relation of cause and effect. He thus illustrates it :—the rape of Helen was not predestinated ; but it was decreed that if that event took place, the destruction of Troy should follow. His Christian admirers and imitators had also to deal with another jarring element in the question, that of the goodness of God ; but their escape from the difficulty was by no means equally felicitous. Since those times, seventeen hundred years of bitter experience have taught the church of Christ an apparently simple and obvious principle, which completely forestalls this and all similar inquiries. She has very recently discovered that where the premises are matters so entirely out of the sphere of human cognizance as man's responsibility and God's sovereignty, the conclusion is to be sought, not in the deductions of the human understanding, but in the declarations of the word of God.

boast of *election*, with which he commences the Stromates : the tenor of this work abundantly evidences that its author was a Platonist in the strictest sense of the word. We have already stated that he claims a considerable measure of inspired authority for philosophy, which he considers to have been imparted to the Greeks for the same purpose as the Old Testament to the Jews.<sup>13</sup> We have also noticed that one of the sources from which it derived a measure of divine truth was the writings of Moses.<sup>14</sup> The reasons by which he supports this opinion, are such as might have been anticipated in behalf of a notion so utterly devoid of foundation in probability. One of his modes of proof is by the amphibolical interpretation of Scripture. Thus, he interprets the expression, “all that ever came before me are thieves and robbers,”<sup>15</sup> not of the false Christs, of whom so many made their appearance about the time of our Saviour’s coming, but of the Greek philosophy, which was not sent from God, but came from him surreptitiously and by stealth. God was, of course, not ignorant of this, though he did not prevent it, but so directed the course of events as to make it subservient to the purposes of his providence.<sup>16</sup> He finds another proof in the occasional

<sup>13</sup> See above, p. 33.

<sup>14</sup> See above, p. 55, Note 109. This notion originated with Justin, Apol. I., pp. 81 D., 92 C.

<sup>15</sup> John x. 8.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Strom., § 17. In the same passage he uses expressions which would seem to imply, that this revelation had been made to the Gentiles through the agency of some power or angel, who knew the truth and continued not in it : the inspiration of the Greek philosophy, and the direction of its professors to the writings of Moses, being the offence in which his fall consisted. We have already seen that there was nothing in the theology of those times to exclude either three or any greater number of angelic defections. See also, 6 Strom., § 8, 17, where he argues that philosophy may not be evil in itself, even though the Devil inspired it.

adoption of expressions from the Greek poets by St. Paul. But his main argument is to show that the early Greeks must have been acquainted with the writings of Moses and the prophets; and that from thence they derived knowledge of every description, as well as philosophy. To the former, especially, they were indebted for the regal, legislative, and military wisdom which their history so largely evidences.<sup>17</sup> His proof that Moses taught the Greeks the art of war is not a very convincing one: he asserts that the strategics of Miltiades at the battle of Marathon, were entirely derived from the Mosaic account of the Exodus!<sup>18</sup>

But of all the Grecian sages and philosophers, there was no one who had borrowed so extensively from Moses, and drunk so entirely into his spirit, as Plato. He styles him “the Hebraizing Philosopher;”<sup>19</sup> yea, “Moses *Atticising* :”<sup>20</sup> and often prefaces the quotations from his works, which abound throughout the Stromates, with remarks, calling to mind the high authority to which the opinions of Plato are entitled on this account.<sup>21</sup> It is scarcely needful to add, that Clement of Alexandria enforces the freedom of the will to the full extent in

<sup>17</sup> 1 Strom., § 22—26.

<sup>18</sup> § 24.

<sup>19</sup> ὁ ἐξ Εβραίων φιλόσοφος Πλάτων. 1 Strom., § 1.

<sup>20</sup> Μωσῆς Ἀττικίζων. Id., § 22.; that is, Moses in an Attic dress, writing according to the taste of Attica; he has borrowed this piece of flippant foppery from Numenius, a Hellenising Jew.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Strom., § 25.; 5 Strom., § 14., &c. He gives only one or two instances of this resemblance between Moses and Plato, upon which he insists so largely; they are so ridiculously trivial, that they would not at all repay the trouble of the long explanation which would be required to make them intelligible. 1 Strom., § 1, 24.; 5 Strom., § 1, 14, &c.

which it was maintained by the Platonists,<sup>22</sup> and frequently upholds his opinion, by the express sanction and authority of passages from the works of Plato.<sup>23</sup>

We are now saved the trouble of all further investigation: the opinions of the early fathers upon free-will, we have traced in an unbroken line of descent from Justin, the Platonist, down to Clement, one of the founders of the school of the New Platonics; and we have found that none of them appeal to any authority in support of their doctrine, but that of Plato; and that they only attempt to countenance it from Scripture by citing passages in which men are addressed as rational and responsible agents: which is, of course, to beg the entire question, if there be one, between Plato and the Bible.

If, then, the ultimate appeal upon this most momentous question is to be made to the Scriptures, nothing can be more certain, than that the opinions of the fathers of the second century are utterly unimportant and valueless in the controversy; since they only prove that Plato maintained the entire freedom of the will:—a fact with which we were already acquainted, upon the more unexceptionable authority of his own extant works.

What would be the fate, with these writers, of the portion of the Christian scheme which depends upon the solution of this question, and which, since the Reformation, has been comprehended under the technical expression *doctrines of Grace*, it is not very difficult to divine. The large and liberal canon of scriptural interpretation then in use, or, in a case of emergency, the timely aid of the ἀμφιβολία, could scarcely fail to remove all impediments

<sup>22</sup> 1 Strom., § 17, 18.; 2 Strom., § 4, 6, 12, 13.; 3 Strom., § 5.; 4 Strom., § 24.; 5 Strom., § 3, 12, 14.; 7 Strom., § 2.

<sup>23</sup> 5 Strom., § 14., &c.

from this quarter, to a system of divinity in entire harmony with the Platonic principle. And such is certainly the fact of the case. Upon these points, the Bible is only quoted to be disregarded, or explained away where it seems to oppose the doctrine to be proved: it is perfectly powerless against this their prepossession. If we are saved by faith alone,<sup>24</sup> faith is merely that assent of the understanding, which, by the express doctrine of both the Stoics and Platonists, is in our own power.<sup>25</sup> If the grace of God be needed at all, beyond the ordinary grace of baptism, it is only for those whose ambition, and whose nerve, have prompted and enabled them to climb to perilous elevations on the giddy eminences of gnosticism<sup>26</sup> and martyrdom.<sup>27</sup> If there be any thing like depravity in human nature, it is that which, it is entirely within the power of the will to rectify; nor does it, in any one of the fathers of the second century, overstep the dimensions which the academic philosophy had assigned to it; namely, that man has a pure soul dwelling in an impure body.<sup>28</sup> We may, indeed, in our anxiety to apologise for the early representatives of the

<sup>24</sup> *Μία καθολικὴ τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος σωτηρία, πίσις.*—Clem. Alex., *Pæd.* lib. 1. c. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Irenæus, *ubi supra*, Clem. Alex. 2 *Strom.*, § 12.; in the same book he speaks of *τὴν ἐκούσιον πίσιν*, § 2.; he also terms faith, *τέχνη φυσικὴ*, in the sixth section, which is an argument to prove that it is a voluntary act of the understanding, and only to be called divine on account of its excellent nature and properties: he uses the same argument § 11. See also 5 *Strom.*, § 13.

<sup>26</sup> 5 *Strom.*, § 12, 13.

<sup>27</sup> See above, p. 218.

<sup>28</sup> Tertullian *de Animâ*. c. 41. Clem. Alex., 2 *Strom.*, § 3.; 4 *Strom.*, § 3.; 5 *Strom.*, § 1., &c. It was this notion which gave rise to the error of the Basilideans and Marcionites, that the soul was created by a good god, and the body by an evil one. See the last section of the 4th book.

visible church, cite passages from the works of Justin,<sup>29</sup> which apparently give some degree of countenance to these doctrines ; but though I readily acknowledge that more of this phraseology will be found there than in the writings of his successors, yet I cannot help fearing that they will not admit of an orthodox interpretation, without doing considerable violence to the entire scope of the author's meaning. And I feel compelled to state, unhesitatingly, that upon this part of the great question between God and man, which constitutes religion, the fathers of the second century were the disciples, not of Christ, but of Plato :—nor are the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel to be found in their works, and for this most obvious reason, because they did not maintain them.

We have no difficulty in accounting for this circumstance. Their mode of interpretation has already shown us that they regarded the Bible in the light of a mythology ; revealing certain truths regarding the divine nature and worship, but concealing, under the semblance of moral maxims, twisted together in amphibologies, or enshrined in allegorical histories, the elemental germs of an ethical system, which it was the province of philosophy to develop. And to what philosophy could they so naturally apply for this assistance, as to that from whence the protomartyr of this phase of Christianity had stepped into the new religion ; which had already been applied as the solvent of the Mosaic dispensation by the Hellenising Jews ; and the intellectual beauties of which project the shadow of an apology for those who have denominated its founder, the divine Plato ?

As the rule which we have hitherto invariably fol-

<sup>29</sup> See the bishop of Lincoln's Justin., pp. 74—78. ; also Milner's Church History, Vol. I.



lowed, of endeavouring to point out wherein the error we have to expose consists, is at this advanced stage of our enquiry necessarily made absolute, it gives me the most sincere pleasure to be able to state, that my view of the question of free-will pretends to nothing new or original ; but, on the other hand, is now so generally entertained, that a very brief notice of it will suffice. It appears to me, that whichever part we take in this controversy, we are ultimately thrown upon insuperable difficulties. We soon refute the Calvinist, as we imagine, upon the imputed injustice of unconditional election and reprobation, or preterition. But does he not turn our own argument against us, and with exactly equal force, in the next step of the enquiry, upon the imputed injustice of the original permission of evil ? As this is, notwithstanding, a subject on which it is plainly needful that man should know something, here is a strong case in favor of a revelation. That revelation has been imparted, and its purport is entirely embodied in the following passage :—“ Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling : for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.”<sup>30</sup> I readily grant that here is no solution of the metaphysical difficulty ; but, nevertheless, every ethical purpose for which such knowledge was required is abundantly answered by it. Here is a rule, so regulating the faith of the devout enquirer, that receiving the whole of that it hath pleased God to disclose to him upon these mysterious subjects, he ascribes all “ to the praise of the glory of his grace,” from the first movement of conviction in his heart, to that blessed manifestation of the divine presence, which (as his hope is) shall at the last enable him “ to walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

<sup>30</sup> Phil. ii. 12, 13.

and fear no evil ;” yet, at the same time, so directing the practical bearing of the question regarding the will, that he shall be constrained to labour as anxiously, as earnestly, and as perseveringly, “ to adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things,” as though the whole work of his salvation depended upon himself. This is the purpose for which the revelation was imparted, and it will answer no other : for the Bible was not intended to make men metaphysicians, but Christians ; and, therefore, it leaves the question between the Stoics and the Platonists exactly where it found it.

Our task then is accomplished ; we have ascertained that, almost from the moment they issued from the hallowed lips of the apostles, the doctrines of Christianity suffered by amalgamation with the prepossessions of their Gentile hearers. Their immediate disciples and cotemporaries did indeed retain perfectly those of them which form the distinguishing features, the peculiar characteristics, of Christ’s religion, though, upon many other points, they erred grievously : but even these soon disappear from the writings of their successors ; and nothing of Christianity remains in them, beyond the facts recorded in the Bible. All the rest is a mash of Platonism and heathenism.

If, then, it be objected to the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, that they were unknown, or disregarded, at so early a period as the second century, we appeal at once from the fathers of that era to their immediate predecessors. We will convey the view of Christianity for which we contend, in the words of the apostolical fathers ; for in no uninspired language can they be more perfectly, or more beautifully embodied. “ God glorified his saints of old,” says St. Clement, “ not for their own sake, or for their own works, or for the righteousness that they them-

selves wrought, but through his will. And we also being called by the same will in Jesus Christ, are not justified by ourselves, neither by our own wisdom, or knowledge, or piety, or the works which we have done in holiness of heart: but by that faith by which God Almighty has justified all men from the beginning: to whom be glory for ever and ever.—Amen. What shall we do, therefore, brethren? shall we be slothful in well-doing, and lay aside our love? May God keep us, that such things be not wrought in us! But rather let us give all diligence, that with earnestness and readiness of mind we may perfect every good work.”<sup>31</sup> In another place of the same epistle the following passage occurs:—“How excellent, beloved, are the *gifts* of God. Life in immortality! glory in righteousness! truth in confidence!<sup>32</sup> faith in full assurance! continence in holiness! All these are comprehensible to us. But what shall those things be which he hath prepared for them that wait for him? The Creator, the Everlasting Father, the All-Holy; he only knows their greatness and their beauty. Let us then agonise, that we may be found among the number of those that abide in him, that we may be made partakers of the free-gifts he hath promised. But how shall this be, beloved? If, having our minds confirmed in faith towards God, we seek those things which are pleasing and acceptable unto him; fulfilling that which is agreeable to his holy will;

<sup>31</sup> I ad Cor. cc. 32, 33.

<sup>32</sup> ἀλήθεια ἐν παρρησίᾳ, literally “truth with freedom from doubt;” so Clement of Alexandria, ἄλλως τις περὶ ἀληθείας λέγει, ἄλλως ἢ ἀλήθεια ἑαυτὴν ἐρμηνεύει· ἕτερον σοχασμὸς ἀληθείας, ἕτερον ἢ ἀλήθεια· ἀλλ’ οὐμοίωσις, ἄλλο αὐτο τὸ ὄν. I Strom., § 7. To perceive the force and beauty of these allusions, we must call to mind the doubts and perplexities regarding religion, and the state after death, from which Christianity liberated its early converts.

and following the way of truth, we cast off from us all unrighteousness and iniquity. This is the way, beloved, wherein we find our salvation, even Jesus Christ, the high-priest of all our offerings, the support and help of our infirmities; by (faith in) him we gaze upon his pure and most exalted countenance, and behold therein, as in a glass, the heights of the heavenly felicities.<sup>33</sup> By him are the eyes of our hearts opened; by him our foolish and darkened understandings rejoice to behold his marvellous light.”<sup>34</sup> This is the Christianity for which we contend; these are the doctrines which our Saviour and his apostles taught, and of which scarcely a trace is to be found in the fathers of the second century.

Nor is St. Clement the only witness to the correctness of our deduction, that such is the religion of the New Testament. The misguided, and not very wise, author of the epistle of St. Barnabas, was also thoroughly indoctrinated in the same blessed truths. In addition to the quotations from thence upon which we have already remarked, we give the following passage, which is certainly inferior in point of diction to those from St. Clement, though it enforces the same doctrines, and with equal zeal and fervour. It commences with a reproof of the folly of the Jews who had put their trust in the temple at Jerusalem; in the mere house, and not in the God who created the builders thereof. Through their fightings and violences, that temple had been just razed to the ground by their enemies. But was God, therefore, to

<sup>33</sup> Such I imagine to have been the writer's meaning; it is evidently an allusion to 2 Cor. iii. 18.. There would appear to be an error of transcription in this sentence in the original; the sense is scarcely intelligible.

<sup>34</sup> *Idein.* cc. 35, 36.

remain without a temple in the earth? He quotes certain passages from the prophets which, as he supposes, prove that another temple was to be erected, and thus explains them :—" Before that we believed in God, the habitation of our heart was frail and corruptible, even as a temple merely built with hands. For it was a house full of idolatry, a house of demons; inasmuch as there was done in it whatsoever was contrary unto God. By what means shall a house like this be gloriously rebuilt in the name of the Lord? I will tell you. *Having received remission of our sins through faith in the name of the Lord, we are made anew, being created as it were from the beginning.* Then God truly dwells in our house, that is, in us. But how does he dwell in us? By the word of his faith, by the calling of his promise, by the wisdom of his righteous judgments, by the commands of his doctrine; he himself speaks within us, he himself dwelleth in us, and openeth to us who were in bondage of death, the gate of our temple, that is the mouth of wisdom, having given repentance unto us. By this means he hath made us an indestructible temple. He then that desireth to be saved must not look for help to man, but to him that dwelleth in his servants, and speaketh by them. This is the spiritual temple that is built unto the Lord."<sup>35</sup>

We could not have more satisfactory evidence than is afforded by these quotations, that the doctrines of grace were maintained and taught by the companions of the inspired apostles.

Let us now turn to the writings of those that represent to us the Christian church in the succeeding generation, and who had, in their early youth, been the hearers of the apostles. From the epistles of Ignatius

<sup>35</sup> Barn. Epis., c. 16.

and Polycarp, I feel compelled to give extracts of this character, at the risk of repeating that which is already familiar to the religious literature of the day, because, were the reader to form his judgment of either of these eminent servants of God, upon the quotations that have hitherto been given from the former, he would arrive at a very unjust and false conclusion regarding them. Ignatius thus addresses the Ephesians:—"Nothing shall be hidden from you if ye have perfect faith and love to Jesus Christ, which is the beginning and the end of life. For the beginning is faith, and the end is love, and these two joined together are of God; and all other things that concern a holy life are the effects of these. No man professing a true faith sinneth; neither does he who hath love hate any. The tree is made manifest by its fruit: so they who profess themselves Christians are to be judged by what they do. For Christianity is not the work of an outward profession; but the power of faith enduring unto the end."<sup>36</sup> This is "the faith once delivered to the saints" in perfect purity. Nor is there a single allusion to these subjects throughout his epistles which is not in harmony with it. With all his errors, therefore, Ignatius declared to the visible church the truth of God, untainted by the leaven of heathen philosophy, at the commencement of the second century.

I have already expressed my admiration of the epistle of St. Polycarp to the Philippians, which was written at the time of the martyrdom of Ignatius, and, therefore, immediately after his epistles, though the pious author long survived him; and according to the tradition of the church,<sup>37</sup> suffered in the persecution of Antoninus Pius, and about the same time as Justin. The beauty of this

<sup>36</sup> Ignatius ad Eph., c. 14.

<sup>37</sup> Eus. Eccl. Hist., lib. 4.

production consists altogether in its close adherence to the spirit of the New Testament. Here are no displays of learning, no flights of rhetoric, no bold essays to assume the tone and style of inspiration. The chastened and humble mind of its author had no other ambition than to sit at the feet of the apostles, and to write to the church at Philippi, not as they wrote, but that which they delivered; and, therefore, he did not disdain frequently to adopt their own language. Many other proofs of the same blessed frame and temper are to be found in it, some of which I cannot refrain from laying before the reader. Ignatius and others had shortly before passed through Smyrna bound, condemned by the irreversible decree of the emperor, on their way to Rome, the place of their martyrdom, and rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of the Lord. We can find no scripture sanction for their mode of rejoicing, and, therefore, can bestow no commendation upon it. But though the entire church of Christ was, as we have seen, carried away by the force of an example so illustrious as that of Ignatius, the deep humility with which Polycarp was invested, seems effectually to have defended him from their specious and seductive error. I gather this from the following passage:—"Brethren, watch unto prayer, and strengthen yourselves therein with fasting: with supplication beseeching the all-seeing God not to lead us into temptation; for the Lord himself hath said, 'the Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.' Let us, therefore, without ceasing, hold unto him who is our hope and the pledge of our righteousness, even Jesus Christ: 'Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree: ' who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: ' but suffered all for us that we might live through him. Let us, therefore, imitate his

patience: and if we suffer for his name, let us glorify him; for this example he himself hath set before us, that believing in him we might follow it. Wherefore, I exhort all of you, that obeying the word of his righteousness, ye exercise yourselves unto all the patience which ye yourselves have beheld, not only in the blessed Ignatius, and Zozimus, and Rufus, but in Paul also, and the rest of the apostles; being confident of this, that all these have not run in vain, but in faith and righteousness; and are gone to the place which was prepared for them of the Lord, with whom also they suffered. For they loved not this present world; but him who died and was raised again by God for us."<sup>38</sup>

The meek and lowly spirit of this passage contrasts very beautifully with the lofty assuming tone of Ignatius. While he is courting persecution, eager for the crown of martyrdom, forbidding his friends from preventing him of it by supplication to God or man, writing boastful letters to various churches, calling upon them to observe his zeal for his master, and, to the utmost of his power, making his progress towards martyrdom a triumphal procession of which he was himself the hero; his humbler friend and brother in the Lord, Polycarp, who was exposed to the same danger, and, doubtless, expected every hour to be in the same condition, is fervently praying not to be led into temptation, bemoaning his own weakness and inability to endure the fiery trial, and staying himself, in the exercise of faith, upon Jesus Christ and him crucified, and upon him alone.

The prudent and guarded manner also, in which, while speaking of Ignatius and his companions with all the affection and respect he so evidently felt for them, he,

<sup>38</sup> Poly. ad Philip. cc. 8, 9.



at the same time, gently draws off his readers from the then very recent event of their martyrdom, to the contemplation of the soberer and safer examples of our Lord and his apostles, is greatly to be commended.

If any reliance whatever is to be placed upon the highly embellished account of this holy man's martyrdom, preserved by Eusebius, the God who had begun a good work in him also perfected it in the day of trial. For while Ignatius, upon the same authority, rushed into the presence of the emperor Trajan to avow himself a Christian, Polycarp gave better evidence of his fitness to glorify his Lord in the flames of martyrdom, by exactly fulfilling his commandments. "When they persecuted him in one city, he," in obedience thereto, "fled to another:" though at the last, no one in the annals of the church professed the faith of Christ more nobly, or submitted to his tormentors more cheerfully than St. Polycarp.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Eusebius, lib. 4. With respect to miraculous martyrdoms, I may perhaps be permitted to observe that I have read too many of such narratives not to feel the utmost hesitation in giving credence to them. It was not the occasion upon which miraculous interference ordinarily took place; and when it was exerted at all, the interposition was invariably an effectual one; as in the cases of Daniel, of the three Holy Children, and of St. Peter. I, therefore, hold it to be incredible that, by a miraculous agency, the flames should enshrine the person of Polycarp without injuring it, swelling from him on all sides like the distended sails of a ship, and yet that the confector should be allowed to dispatch him: for when God will work, who shall let it? Had the divine energy been there, doubtless it would also have unnerved the executioner's arm, or rendered innocuous the point of his lance. If we are to include narrations like these among the verities of Christianity, with what show of reason can we reject the fables of the martyrologists under the Dioclesian persecution, not more than a hundred years after; as for instance, of the Egyptian saint Apa Til, who, according to an *eye-witness*, suffered martyrdom, after being cut to pieces ten times in the course of as many days, by the tyrant Maximin, and every night put together again by the archangel Gabriel? See *Georgi. Acta S. Coluthii*.

There is another evidence of the depth and sincerity of St. Polycarp's humility, which has occurred to me as even still more remarkable. He had just before received the highest honour that Christianity could confer upon him. While all the churches of Asia were contending for the privilege of a missive from Ignatius on his way to martyrdom, and deemed them sufficiently important to dispatch special messengers for the purpose of obtaining them, that eminent personage not only wrote an epistle to Smyrna, the church over which he presided, but also addressed one of the same public character to Polycarp himself; wherein he commends his Christian graces in the following terms:—"Having known that thy mind towards God is fixed, as it were, upon an immoveable rock, I exceedingly give thanks that I have been counted worthy to behold thy guileless countenance, wherein may I always rejoice in God:" he also exhorts him "by the grace of God, with which he is clothed, to press forward in his course:" nay, he points him out as a chosen and appointed instrument whereby great good was to be accomplished to the church.<sup>40</sup> "We look unto thee in these times, even as the ship that is tossed in a tempest to the haven of rest:" and the purpose of his address is to commission Polycarp to answer some of the many churches who had applied for epistles from Ignatius, but which his guard prevented him from sending, by suddenly determining to sail from Troas.<sup>41</sup> It is not easy to conceive of a severer test for the humility of any man, than the praise to this extent, from him whom all were praising: for whatever may be asserted to the contrary, Christianity, in its highest style, was not intended to annihilate, either the proper love of approbation, or any other generous and exalting sentiment of which our

<sup>40</sup> Ign. ad Polyc. cc. 1, 2.

<sup>41</sup> Idem., c. 8.

nature is capable: but even from this trial the humble spirit of Polycarp came forth unblemished. In addition to the proofs of this we have already given, it is not in words to express more unfeigned humility than the conclusion of his opening address to the Philippians:—"These things concerning righteousness, my brethren, I should not have taken the liberty of myself to write unto you, had not you yourselves before encouraged me to it."<sup>42</sup> And we find in another passage,<sup>43</sup> that full of the same blessed spirit, this was the only pastoral letter he presumed to indite. He complied with the last request of Ignatius, by transmitting to the churches which had applied for missives, copies of all the epistles he wrote before his departure from Troas.

In what but the pure doctrines of the New Testament, could this beautiful exemplification of the spirit of Christianity have originated? Upon the subjects we are now considering, they dwelt in the heart of St. Polycarp undefiled with the slightest admixture of error. We require no other evidence of this than the passage with which his epistle commences. "Polycarp and the presbyters that are with him in the church of God, which is at Philippi: mercy unto you, and peace from God Almighty, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour, be multiplied. I rejoiced greatly with you in the Lord Jesus Christ, that the root of the faith which was preached from the beginning remains firm in you, and brings forth fruit to our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered himself to be brought even to the death for our sins. 'Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death.' 'Whom having not seen ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full

<sup>42</sup> C. 3.<sup>43</sup> C. 13.

of glory,' into which ye earnestly desire to enter ; knowing that by grace ye are saved ; not by works, but by the will of God through Jesus Christ."<sup>44</sup>

Whatever errors, then, were introduced into Christianity by the apostolical fathers, it is perfectly evident, that upon the doctrines of grace, the written and unwritten traditions of the church were, in their times, in perfect harmony. Both taught plainly and unequivocally, that there was none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but only the name of Christ : according to both creeds, man through the depravity and moral corruption of his nature, had no power of himself to help himself, nor was there any other help for him, save the special grace of God in Jesus Christ. And as the apostolical fathers are not one whit behind the apostles in enforcing upon the consciences of Christians, all the details of a holy life, as the fruit and only evidence of that saving faith which God works in the hearts of his people, so neither do they at all come short of them in earnestly disclaiming the efficacy of good works, as the meritorious and procuring causes of our salvation, and ascribing it altogether to the undeserved grace of God.<sup>45</sup>

We have already pointed to the Platonism of Justin as the first apparent cause of the disturbance of this harmony. We have also remarked upon the rapidity with which, through the force of his example, and through the popularity of the Platonic philosophy in the second century, the opinions of Plato, and the doctrines of the New

<sup>44</sup> Polyc. ad Phil., c. 1.

<sup>45</sup> It will be observed, that the office of the Holy Spirit is not assigned in these extracts from the apostolical fathers. It may be given as a further proof, that the early church did, in some sort, confound the second and third persons of the Trinity. To this subject we have already frequently alluded.

Testament, were then identified, as far as the historical facts of the latter admitted of such a process. The atonement of Christ they certainly taught to be the ground of their hope of salvation ; but beyond this, it seems to have remained altogether in abeyance in their system of divinity ; it acted no part therein ; it was denuded of all practical bearing : the writers of this period can treat of the subject to which, of all others, it would seem the most indispensable, that of the forgiveness of sins, as though no such doctrine were in existence : never once alluding either to the atonement, or to the necessity of faith in it.<sup>46</sup> They also mistook both the extent and nature of its efficacy ; they taught that the blood of the martyr washed away his own sin, and, in some sense, the sins of others also :<sup>47</sup> it was likewise their opinion, that its purifying efficacy consisted in certain hidden virtues, residing in the cross and names of Christ,<sup>48</sup> rather than in his merits. With regard to all the peculiar doctrines, they manifested more anxiety to square their Christianity with their Platonism, than their Platonism with their Christianity. In utter disregard of the Bible, they maintained the boundless free-agency of man, as it was taught by the academics. They admitted the corruption of human nature only in the extent to which Plato admitted it. They totally deprived the grace of God of speciality ; they interpreted all scriptural allusions to it, of those extended and general senses in which all things may be ultimately referred to God as to the First Cause :<sup>49</sup> if any thing more than this was

<sup>46</sup> *Supra.*, p. 120., e. s.

<sup>47</sup> Page 224., &c.

<sup>48</sup> Page 261., &c.

<sup>49</sup> Justin. *Dial.*, p. 280 B., &c. &c. ; so Irenæus defines grace to be,

given or required in any case, it was only upon great and special occasions, as at baptism, or martyrdom ; and even then, it acted merely by the suggestion of good thoughts and emotions, after the manner of the demon of Socrates.<sup>50</sup> It was inevitable to such a scheme, that a large measure of value and efficacy should be ascribed to good works. We have already laid before the reader their opinions of the power and prevalence with God of fasting, and the other ceremonies of religion ; and that they would assign the same value to the fulfilment of the moral law of the

“*consilium bonum omnibus a Deo datum.*,” *lib. 4. c. 71*. And it certainly occurs to me that Tertullian generally means nothing more than this, when he speaks of the grace of God. (See *de Animâ. c. 21.*, *adv. Marc.*, *lib. 2. c. 5—8.*) See also above, p. 120., the doctrine of Hermas.

<sup>50</sup> “The divinely imparted wisdom, which is the power of the Father, excites our free will.”—*Cl. Alex.*, *5 Strom.*, § 13. In the same passage he interprets the expression “I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh,” *Joel ii. 28.*, of the Spirit that is in all of us, not as a part of God, but probably merely as an emanation from him at the first. He evidently means to say, that there is no promise of divine assistance in the passage, beyond the presentation of some good suggestion to the free-will of man. What Clement intended by this spirit in man, he proposed to explain in his work on the soul, which has not come down to us. Tatian, however, supplies this deficiency. He informs us that our first parents were created with two spirits, or souls ; the one material, the other immaterial, and emanating from God. All their offspring are also similarly created ; they have an earthy and an heavenly spirit. But when Adam and Eve sinned, the latter quitted the former, because it refused to obey its suggestions, and returned to heaven. In this situation also are all their descendants ; they have a material soul within them, and an immaterial soul, or in Platonic language, a demon, in heaven. The material soul, however, has a spark of the divine nature still in it ; and is able, by the exercise of its free-will, to exalt itself above the earthy taint it had contracted, so as to be fitted for receiving the suggestions of its immaterial counterpart, without which it can never attain the knowledge of heavenly things.—*Contra Græcos.*, pp. 150—153. I strongly suspect that this rhapsody embodies the universal belief, in the second century, on the subject of divine grace.

New Testament, is a corollary too self-evident to require that we should work it out.

This was the doctrinal religion of the fathers of the second century. If the tradition, either of the apostles, or the apostolical fathers, is to be received, it was not Christianity. If the works of Plato, and their own constant admissions are to be regarded, it was Platonism.

## CHAPTER XVI.

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### CONCLUSION.

WE conclude with a brief resumption of the course of reasoning with which we commenced. From the well-known fact, that the older dispensations of God were preparing mankind for that of the New Testament, we there inferred that when its divine origin was once demonstrated, this last was broadly distinguished from them by a mark of completion, or perfection, in which they were deficient ; consisting in the absence of all necessity for further miraculous interference. Now the new circumstances in which the relations between God and man were hereby placed, evidently point out the commencement of a new epoch in the divine economy ; differing, in this particular (amongst others) from those that had preceded it. Miracles were no longer to be employed for the purpose of coercing the assent of the human understanding, through the evidence of the outward senses. “ The weapons of the warfare,” which, in the terms of its first annunciation, it declared against sin in its origin in the heart, and sin in all its consequences in the world, and will never cease to prosecute until it has obtained the victory, were not to be, even in this sense, “ carnal.” The first diffusion of Christianity once accomplished, and the laws of nature resumed their sway over the universe, never again to be



disturbed for the purpose of teaching religion to mankind. The manifestations of the power of God, whereby the high purpose for which Christianity was sent into the world was to be fulfilled, were thenceforward to be restricted to the influences of the Holy Ghost, making effectual upon the heart the presentation of its truths to the understanding. These, whatever part they may have acted in the older dispensations, constitute, as we have already shown, the distinguishing characteristic of the new one.

At the outset of our enquiry, we also observed upon the operation of a law by which the whole of the visible works of God are regulated: that of the crudeness and imperfection of the earlier modes of all existences, and of all dispensations. We might have conjectured that Christianity would throw no discord into this sublime harmony, which blends into indissoluble oneness our conception of the Mind by whom all things were created, and are administered: and the declarations of the Word of God entirely confirm our conjecture. The glories of the latter days are dwelt upon by the prophets, both of the Old and New Testament, in terms which it is needless that we should here repeat; inasmuch as, in anticipation of their near accomplishment, they are now in the heart and on the lips of all who name the name of Christ. While, on the other hand, the apostles themselves complain of monstrous and rapidly growing corruptions in their times, which even their authority, armed with the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, was unable to repress. Christianity then formed no exception to this canon of the created universe. To adopt the metaphor of its divine founder, when, by miraculous agency, "it was first sown in the earth, it was, indeed, the smallest of seeds;" and its first symptoms of

organic existence were as crude, as imperfect, bearing as little resemblance to the productions which would be thrown forth by its maturer growths, as the first leaves from a grain of mustard-seed. If by this our appeal to the remaining records of early Christianity, we have in any degree developed this truth, and made it more evident, our purpose is accomplished.

Whence, then, did they derive their information, who babble of the fountain being purest, nearest its source; who talk of Christianity in its nascent state as Christianity in perfection? Where did they discover that in regard of the purity and moral efficacy of her doctrines, she was only sent into the world to sicken and to languish? That she has never recovered the shock of her first collision with human depravity; that if we would contemplate any thing like the effect of her proper influence upon the hearts of men, we must confine our regards altogether to the primitive times; for her subsequent history has been little else than a series of deteriorations and corruptions, which at length have reduced her, in our day, to so abject a state of anile decrepitude, that heaven and earth wait with impatience for the fiat that shall consign her to unlamented oblivion, and establish in her place some new economy of miracles? Such jaundiced and distorted views may, perhaps, soothe, in some degree, the impotent rage of foiled and baffled Papistry, or prove a convenient medium for the exhibition of the wild phantasms of our modern Fifth-Monarchy-men; but we have endeavoured to show that they are no more the true reflections of the page of history, than of that of inspiration.

We assert, therefore, upon the authority of its own declarations, that the New Testament is the last revelation which God will vouchsafe during the continuance of the

present economy : and, consequently, that the Bible is the only instrument whereby, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, mankind are to be instructed in the duties and obligations comprehended under the term religion, to the end of time. And we further state, as the result of the investigation we are concluding, that there has been no miscalculation here, on the part of Omniscience: the provision is abundantly sufficient to meet the emergency. The oppositions and dangers with which Christianity has had to contend, from the day wherein the Spirit was first effused on the primitive disciples until now, and over which it has invariably triumphed, have, in our times, rendered needless any very painful exercise of faith to discover her efficacy to accomplish the work that remains for her on the earth.

Let, then, the zeal of the church of Christ be damped, and her energies unnerved, no longer, by these puling lamentations over the departed purity of the primitive times. There is, probably, no question in religion, upon which greater misapprehension prevails, than here. In thus speaking of the early church, it is too common to include in our conception, the miraculous dispensation whereby Christianity was first established; whereas that formed no part whatever of this world's economy. It was as "the great sheet," in St. Peter's vision, "let down to the earth," indeed, but "knit at the four corners," in heaven. They upon whom the miraculous gifts were effused, were "in the world but not of the world," in a more emphatic sense, than even that in which the apostle employed the expression. They walked the earth, as Lazarus is said to have done after his resurrection. It was not the mere power of working miracles that distinguished them from ordinary men; in all the varied circumstances

through which they passed during their sojourn here, the bright line of demarcation which separated them from things visible, and connected them with the world of spirits, was constantly apparent throughout its whole extent. Such was certainly the impression of the early church ; for whatever anxiety she may have betrayed to retain these gifts, it was with feelings not at all allied to surprise or astonishment, that she beheld the entire dispensation of miracles “ received up again into heaven.”

The church on earth, then, they never represented, at any period which comes properly within the scope of ecclesiastical history. An overwhelming majority of the early converts necessarily consisted of those, whose prepossessions and whose ignorance had called forth this display of the divine power. And they were exactly in the situation of men translated in a moment, from total darkness to the unclouded blaze of noon. That truth, in search of which they had groped in vain in every corner of their prison-house, and which was still the subject of their anxious enquiry, had been shot at once into their hearts and understandings by the energy of Omnipotence. And we are not surprised to find, that they were dazzled and confounded with the intensity of the light it diffused : their overwhelming astonishment being far more excited by the undoubted certainty and vast importance of the truths which Christianity revealed, than by the miracles which had first called their attention to them. The whole tenor of their works evidences this : and I speak it, to the shame of modern infidelity. But we maintain that persons so circumstanced were no more qualified for the office of commentators and expositors of the doctrines of the New Testament, than the just liberated prisoner to gaze upon the noon-day sun. Their errors are exactly

what might have been anticipated, under the circumstances in which they were placed. They were not able to endure the direct rays of the divine truth; and, therefore, they endeavoured to shade their aching eyes with the veil of their former prepossessions, and to look upon Christianity through the medium of certain notions which they drew from the ritual of heathenism, and from the Platonic philosophy.

The testimony of the early fathers, then, to the authenticity of the Holy Scriptures, and to their sole authority as the guide of our faith, is invaluable. But this is the only material purpose in religion which their writings will subserve. It is a grievous and dangerous error to set them forth, either as the infallible expositors of the Christian faith, or as the authorised exemplars of Christian practice. We have endeavoured to show, how largely the doctrine and spirit of Christ's religion were corrupted and adulterated in passing through their works: and to trace to their several sources the many evil admixtures wherewith they were there defiled.

It now only remains that we state the inevitable conclusion to be drawn from these considerations, as our general inference. *The tradition of the early fathers is possessed of no power of prescription whatever over the Church of Christ in succeeding ages.* Like the opinions of authors of any other period, it is to be received "so far as it is agreeable to God's word," and no further.

As several of the errors which they introduced into Christianity, still remain in the creeds of many churches and individuals, and upon the sole authority of their tradition, (under one aspect or another) if we have succeeded in establishing the premises upon which this our

conclusion rests, our labour will not have been altogether in vain.

I have hitherto, by abstaining from the many ethical deductions that presented themselves to my mind in the course of my investigation, studiously endeavoured to avoid the appearance of invading the sacred function. There is a decorum in leaving to those "who minister in holy things" the discussion of the subjects proper to their office, which I feel the utmost unwillingness, in any degree, to violate. But, notwithstanding, one of these deductions has so close a connection with the obligations of Christianity which are peculiar to our own times, that I cannot refrain from recording it, before I finally take leave of the subject.

No prophecy regarding the final triumphs of Messiah's kingdom, can possibly have received its accomplishment, in the circumstances of the first propagation and establishment of Christianity in the earth. If I have read their history aright, its corruption always kept pace with its diffusion, during these early periods. Let, then, those who bear, in our days, the ark of the New Covenant between God and man, and all who have joined the solemn and mysterious procession whereby it is rapidly borne onwards, "thank God and take courage." The clouds of ignorance and of error lower in dense and accumulated masses, over the perilous paths which were the scenes of the early progress of this precious depository of the hopes of the human race: the future, and the future only, is refulgent with the glory of God !

## APPENDIX.

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I HAVE felt myself called upon, in the preceding work, to avow my attachment to the Church of England. And the circumstances of the times seem also to render imperative upon me, the duty of stating my reasons for that attachment, on such parts of the question between her and her opponents, as have been brought under my notice in the course of the investigation.

I commence with the subject of church government; regarding which, I hesitate not to repeat my conviction, that its details do not come within the scope of the revelation of the New Testament; because it is absolutely impossible for any church to arrange its internal polity in exact uniformity with the exemplar of the primitive times, unless its members be also endued with the same miraculous gifts. We cannot entertain the supposition, that the presence or absence of so important a circumstance would in no way modify or influence the form of church government: it is in itself highly improbable, and is, moreover, directly contradicted by the inspired writers. No list of ecclesiastical dignities occurs in the New Testament,<sup>1</sup> in which all the higher ranks are not assigned to those who were miraculously gifted; to apostles, prophets, evangelists,<sup>2</sup> &c. The

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 28. Eph. iv. 12.

<sup>2</sup> If any distinct office is designated by the title evangelist, and of this there can be but little doubt, it probably consisted in a miraculous power conferred on certain of the immediate disciples of our Lord, of detailing the

ordinary offices, whether they be termed those of pastors, or teachers, or bishops, or presbyters, or deacons, are invariably spoken of, either directly or by implication, as subordinate to these. We have admitted that two distinct functions only of this nature existed in the primitive church; and that the same state of things continued in the time of Clement of Rome; the date of whose epistle, from casual allusions to certain historical facts, we are able to limit to within five years of the death of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul. But half a century afterwards, when Ignatius wrote, we find that a change had taken place in the mode of enumerating these offices. A third and superior order had been erected over the other two, for the purpose of overlooking the entire concerns of the church; of which duties the title of bishop is descriptive. Let it be observed that I only quote this author as an evidence to the fact: my opinion of the strain of mad blasphemy in which he enforces the authority of the clergy, I have, I trust, not at all scrupled to give elsewhere.

Hermas also, his contemporary, or, perhaps, his predecessor, speaks to the same purport of "the bishop who is also the president:"<sup>3</sup> and I believe it has never been denied that this order prevailed uninterruptedly in the church, from their times down to the period of the Reformation.

I feel no doubt that this change in church government, which took place during the latter half of the first century, originated in the disorders and confusions that disturbed the church, after the removal, by death or martyrdom, of those who

acts and discourses of their divine Master, with perfect and undeviating accuracy. I think there is an allusion to some such gift possessed by the apostle St. John, in the epistle of Irenæus to Florinus, (see above, p. 13.); and nothing is more certain, from the whole tenor of the early Christian writings, than that the facts, afterwards recorded in the Gospels, were very sedulously detailed to their converts universally, by the first propagators of Christianity; a circumstance which pretty clearly shows the necessity of the supernatural endowment we are supposing.

<sup>3</sup> Episcopus qui et præses.



were possessed of miraculous gifts, and who in virtue of them, exercised a supreme authority therein. We know well, that it was against these, that the sword of persecution was especially unsheathed, and that they were always among the first to suffer. Nothing, therefore, is more probable than that, when the apostles had all returned to him that sent them, and the gifts of prophecy and evangelism had well nigh passed away, great and grievous inconveniences would be experienced, from the want of their superintendence and authority. It was in vain that their successors called upon their spiritual charges for the same deference which had been willingly paid to the inspired and gifted apostles: they asked for the visible credentials which these gifted persons had presented to them, but, in the great majority of instances, they had them not; and, therefore, most probably, (for unhappily we have no historical records to guide us,) they hesitated to entrust with an uninspired and ungifted man, the powers which hitherto had only been exercised by the accredited ambassadors of heaven.

The epistle of Clement to the Corinthians establishes two points in favour of our assumption. The one is, that great confusions and disorders agitated the church at the time it was written; not confined to Corinth, but diffused very widely. The other is, that all these originated in the refusal of the people to yield to the clergy that degree of deference, which was deemed needful for the maintenance of ecclesiastical discipline.

Evidence of the same state of things is also to be found in the Shepherd of Hermas, which was probably composed in order to procure for its author the credit of inspiration. And many unintelligible places, in his Visions and Similitudes, are probably allusions to persons and events connected with the quarrels in the Christian community to which he was, in some way or other, immediately attached.

We have also seen enough in the writings of Ignatius and Polycarp, to show that the question, in their time, remained a very sensitive one.

We know, then, that the church was agitated with continual dissensions regarding the authority of the clergy during the latter part of the first century:—that the persons upon whom the Holy Ghost had conferred miraculous gifts at the first annunciation of Christianity by the apostles, must, in the course of nature, have died somewhere about this period, (and we have historical evidence that many of them had then already suffered martyrdom); we have also ascertained, that these persons exclusively administered the supreme authority in the church; the symbol by which they held their high offices being the supernatural powers possessed by them. We, therefore, draw the conclusion that these divisions originated in the absence of miraculous endowments, from the ministerial qualifications of their successors.

We conceive that these are the circumstances which led to the change in question. The supreme authority which had been exercised by the apostles, was still found to be indispensable to the maintenance of ecclesiastical discipline, and was, therefore, vested in one of the presbyters of each church, to whom, as the functions of the several orders became better defined, the title of bishop was appropriated. Nor am I prepared to deny, that the foundation of such an arrangement may have been laid at an earlier period. St. Clement mentions the triple order of High Priest, Priest, and Levite, in the Jewish economy, in an argument which certainly implies, (though he does not formally express it) the existence of a corresponding triple order in the Christian church, (Epist. ad Cor. I. c. 40., *ad finem.*) And the title *Præses*, President, which the bishop retained up to the end of the second century, seems, at a very early period, to have been applied to one among their number, in each synod of Presbyters.

But waiving this point altogether, the mode of ecclesiastical polity for which we contend, was first adopted immediately upon the cessation of miracles, and remained unquestioned to the time of the Reformation. And though no one can possibly estimate the logical force of this consideration, unaided by other circumstances,

more lightly than I do ; though I readily grant that there are also errors of equal antiquity ; which maintained their influence in the church with almost equal uniformity : yet, I require to be shown, that the presbyter-bishops and deacons of the primitive church administered the whole of her affairs, in entire independence of the control and superintendence of the apostles, before I concede this to be no longer tenable, as one of the defences of episcopacy. If this be not demonstrated, (and in my judgment, it never can be) I contend that the two uninspired orders of the New Testament have nothing to do with the question ; inasmuch as they were subjected to an authority and control from these gifted personages, far more extensive than that which we claim on behalf of the bishop, over the corresponding orders in our own church.

I have, however, denied, and I still deny, that there is any prescription whatever of the details of ecclesiastical polity. It is a question of discipline : one of those which (as we have before remarked) revelation brings within the compass of the human understanding, and leaves there. If, then, it can be shown, that the retention of the episcopal order has a tendency to impede the progress of vital Christianity in the hearts of men, by an appeal to facts ; by demonstrating the superiority, in life and doctrine, of those Christian communities which have discarded, over those which have retained it, (a corroboration which, as the experiment has now been tried for upwards of three centuries, we have a perfect right to demand,) we concede, that this would be a justification of the change in question. But though this is too invidious a view of the subject to be dwelt upon for a moment, we venture to say, it is not upon this ground that our antagonists will choose to argue the question with us.

Episcopacy, then, being neither contrary to God's Word, nor subversive of true godliness, we ask those who are at this moment so loudly calling upon us to forsake the old paths, and to follow them through new, and to us, untried ones, what is the argument whereby they will prove, *a priori*, that such a superin-

tendence is either inexpedient or unnecessary, in ecclesiastical discipline? Can they produce one, which is not refuted, even by their own universal practice? For where is the widely extended and flourishing community among them, in which the power and authority of the bishop are not fully represented, though the name be abolished?

In this state of the question, the example of the early church seems to me of very great importance to its final decision. This, in my judgment, is exactly the case wherein the earliest precedent is the most valuable. Nay, for myself, I go even further than this: I deny that I have any right to change an institution of the visible church, of so venerable an antiquity, either by way of experiment, or for any other reason, short of a conscientious conviction that it is a plain infraction of the recorded will of God. I feel that in that case I should be justly amenable to the "open rebuke," which the Church of England directs to be administered to such as "offend against the common order of the church, by willingly, purposely, and openly breaking the traditions thereof, which be not repugnant to the Word of God."<sup>4</sup> But I beg to be understood, that I strictly limit the decision to my own case. I am not called upon to decide the conscientious scruples of others, and it is as far from my right as from my inclination, to dictate the faith of any man.<sup>5</sup>

The other debated point in the controversy, upon which our subject has any particular bearing, will require but a brief notice. It is now asserted that National Religious Establishments are not only National evils, but evils also to religion itself, of the most heinous and aggravated nature. Volumes, I understand, (for I have not seen them,) are written, comprehending in their "grasp enorm," the history of the human race, from the expulsion from Paradise, down to the year of their publication: their general purport being to trace to this "horror of horrors," (such, I am

<sup>4</sup> Art. 34.

<sup>5</sup> Sed nec religionis est cogere religionem, quæ sponte suscepi debeat non vi.—*Tertullian, ad Scap. c. 2.*

informed, is the phrase,) all the evils that have afflicted humanity; and their particular one, to ascribe the existing corruptions of the Christian religion altogether to its national establishment by Constantine. According to these Christian writers, the atrocities of a Nero, or a Diocletian, shrink into nothing when compared with his unpardonable crime, in declaring Christianity to be the religion of the empire! Of those they are altogether oblivious: it is at the memory of Constantine that they "void their rheum" incessantly. My answer to all this shall be confined to a single chronological observation. The perpetrator of the enormity in question did not succeed to the imperial power until the commencement of the fourth century. At the period I have been considering, (which is limited to the two first centuries of ecclesiastical history,) the temporal affairs of the church were administered exactly in the way which they so vehemently recommend for universal adoption. On their own showing, therefore, I have merely to introduce to their notice the state of Christianity at that time, as a practical illustration of the working of "the voluntary system." What becomes of the argument, I leave those who have advanced it to determine: I really do not take sufficient interest in its fate, to pursue it any further.

I am aware that there are many excellent persons, who conscientiously dissent from the discipline of the Church of England, and who, notwithstanding, greatly disapprove of the wanton and unprovoked aggression she is now sustaining. I am also aware that those who hold such opinions have ground of complaint upon certain points in politics. I only regret that the character of fierce partisanship, by which the present times are distinguished, will no more allow me to co-operate with them in obtaining their removal, than it will permit them openly to disavow the conduct of these aggressors; though I am well satisfied of their disapprobation of it.

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